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Yuba County Juvenile Facilities

Summary:

The Yuba-Sutter Juvenile Hall and Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center are operated by the Yuba County Probation Department to house youths aged nine to eighteen years old from Yuba and Sutter Counties. Juvenile Hall was established in 1976, under a joint agreement between Yuba and Sutter Counties. The Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center was built in 1996, with grant monies from Colusa County in an agreement that guaranteed some bed space to Colusa County juveniles. Courtesy housing may be offered to surrounding counties when available. Facilities appeared well-maintained. There are numerous programs offered to the residents for their well-being and growth. Facilities are mainly funded by Yuba and Sutter Counties.

Staffing remains at a minimal level. If anyone is ill or wants time off, it can create problems in ensuring the supervision of the juveniles. This problem was noted previously in the 2013-2014 Grand Jury Report. Although additional employees were hired as recommended, other personnel left, creating a continuing deficit in personnel.

The surveillance system is inadequate and has not been upgraded as was recommended by previous Grand Juries (Yuba County Grand Jury Reports 2011-2014).

Introduction and Background:

Under California Penal Code §919(b) the Grand Jury is mandated to inspect prisons and jails in its county annually. The Yuba-Sutter Juvenile Hall and the Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center operate under a joint agreement between both Yuba County and Sutter County. As such, it is inspected by both the Yuba County Grand Jury and the Sutter County Grand Jury annually. Any other counties that utilize the facilities for their juveniles may also inspect at any time. The Corrections and Standards Authority, a division of the State of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, also inspects these facilities in depth. Within the last year inspections were also performed by Marysville Fire Department, the local health officer, Yuba County Environmental Health and Nutritional Health officer in compliance with the Board of State and Community Corrections §1313 County Inspection and Evaluation of Buildings and Grounds (“Title 15”, 2014, pg. 18).

Methodology and Approach:

The Grand Jury met with senior staff and toured Juvenile Hall, Camp Singer and the Special Housing Unit (SHU) in September, 2014. Staff interviews were held during the tour. No juveniles were interviewed as they were in classes. The juveniles were observed in their interactions with teachers, the Facility Director, and with other juveniles.

Documents and Reference Sources:

- Yuba County Probation Department Juvenile Services web site:
<http://www.co.yuba.ca.us/departments/probation/juvprobserv.aspx>
- Yuba County Probation Department Detention Services web site:
<http://www.co.yuba.ca.us/departments/probation/detention.aspx>
- The Yuba County Grand Jury Reports and Responses for 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014,
<http://www.yubacourts.org/divisions/grand-jury/reports>
- Juvenile Probation Community Service man hour logs
- Computerized admission forms and records on file at Juvenile Facilities
- Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) report on Title 15 from:
http://www.bscc.ca.gov/downloads/Juvenile_Title_15_Strike_Out_Underline_REVISIONS_effective_2014-4-1.pdf
- Yuba-Sutter Camp Singer from: https://localwiki.org/yuba-sutter/Camp_Singer

Site Visits:

- Annual Grand Jury tour was performed in September, 2014.

Interviews:

- Assistant Chief Probation Officer
- Deputy Superintendents of Institutions
- Registered Nurse
- Staff members

Discussion and Narrative:

The Grand Jury tour of the facilities included areas for intake, visiting, medical, housing, the Special Housing Unit (SHU), kitchen, dining hall, indoor and outdoor recreation, and classrooms. The medical office is staffed by a Registered Nurse on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. A physician is present on Mondays and Fridays, and is available on-call anytime.

The area referred to as Juvenile Hall has 60 beds used by juveniles under 18 years of age who are charged with less serious acts and are awaiting adjudication. Juveniles are housed according to gender but have supervised interaction during school, meals, and

special activities. Juveniles usually stay less than three months in Juvenile Hall.

The SHU is a 15-bed area for individuals charged with more serious or violent crimes. The SHU is a separate building with its own enclosed outdoor recreation area, classroom, shower and bathroom.

Camp Singer is a minimum security facility which can house 48 males and 12 females. These individuals are involved in a program to redirect negative or undesirable behavior and for rehabilitation. Separated by gender, the juveniles are housed in dormitories with individual sleeping areas separated by waist high cinder block walls. They are responsible for daily upkeep of those areas including bathrooms and the grounds. The insulation on a wall in the indoor recreation area is falling down. This was also noted in the Grand Jury Report for 2010-2011, Finding #4: “Members of the Grand Jury noted that there was damage to the exposed insulation within the indoor recreation area of the Camp Singer building. This building also houses classrooms, laundry facilities, as well as woodworking and construction classes.”

The Grand Jury report of 2012-2013 found the facility to be deteriorating. They recommended adequate funding be made available for maintenance. The Program Manager agreed and advised that there are many costly repairs and maintenance for the facility and that they were looking into possible State funding (“Grand Jury Report Responses”, 2012). This condition does not pose a health hazard; however, it is unsightly and messy. While the staff works hard to build self-esteem of these juveniles, this neglect is sending a message that they are not worth the time and money it would take to repair the insulation in the recreation area.

The 2012-2013 Grand Jury found, “*Staffing in the Juvenile complex is only minimally adequate*”.

The Probation Program Manager responded: “*We agree with this finding. Current staffing levels make it increasingly difficult to provide program and rehabilitative services.*”

The 2012-2013 Grand Jury recommended that “*Additional funds be made available for additional staffing.*” The Probation Program Manager responded:

“Increasing the staff allocation would benefit the quality of programming offered to the residents of the facilities. Additionally, it would alleviate current logistical problems that are encountered during various aspects of daily operations. In light of the current economic climate, funding for additional staffing is unlikely. Once the county coffers regain fiscal sustainability, increasing staffing allocations will be of the highest priority.”

The 2013-2014 Grand Jury Report also found the minimal staffing and that Juvenile Hall had been authorized to hire two additional staff members; this finding is agreed to by both Probation and the Yuba County Board of Supervisors. There was no recommendation for this finding, however. The current Grand Jury has determined that the staffing levels remain low. When asked this year about possible overtime issues created by being short staffed, the Deputy Superintendent of Institutions advised that they normally use extra help employees to fill in when needed. Although there were new employees hired, other employees left; therefore the recommendation of the 2013-2014 Grand Jury has not been resolved.

Camp Singer programs encourage the development of a sense of achievement and personal responsibility, teaching life skills which can aid these minors in making positive decisions after release so that are not negatively influenced by peers. Length of stay varies from 7-12 months.

Camp Singer's teachers are provided by the Yuba County Office of Education. A variety of vocation certificates are offered including basic tool knowledge, general construction techniques, and basic electrical. Juveniles have the opportunity to receive a certificate for successful completion of a drug and alcohol counseling program. In addition to the vocation certificates, there is a woodworking and furniture building class.

The Deputy Superintendent of Institutions advised that two companies; Titan American CNC Machine Experts, Grass Valley, and GoEngineer, Sacramento, have donated several computers with a 3-D Computer Animated Drafting program. This introduces these juveniles to the design and engineering processes. GoEngineer also sends one of their highly skilled employees to work with the youths; training them on the ideas and concepts of working with computer drafting. Once they become proficient in the software programming they are allowed to submit their project for approval and, if approved, the project is then printed out in 3-D on the Makerbot 3-D Printer. Juveniles are encouraged to use their imaginations, conceptualize, apply cognitive skills, and actually see their product developed in front of them.

All of these programs; from understanding and working with basic tools, electrical and construction skills, woodworking and engineering training, give the participants a sense of accomplishment. This training gives them basic skills that can be used in the outside world and allows them to see themselves as more desirable in the workforce.

Both facilities use a points system in which the inmates can elevate their status, increase privileges, which may include; a later bedtime hour, additional recreational activities and special family visits with outside food.

The 2011-2012 Grand Jury Report stated:

“Members of the Grand Jury were told by Juvenile Hall’s interim superintendent that the surveillance system was ‘inadequate’. The current system has no recording capability, and there is a need for additional cameras to cover several high security/high liability areas of the property.”

The 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 Grand Juries also found the surveillance system to be inadequate. All three Grand Jury Reports recommended that the system be updated. In response to the 2011-2012 Report both the Probation Office and the Board of Supervisors agreed with the finding and advised that plans were being developed to determine the system requirement costs for this project. In response to the 2012-2013 report the Probation Program Manager advised that they were still looking into the cost requirements. In response to the Grand Jury Report 2013-2014 the Yuba County Board of Supervisors advised that it is not cost effective to update the system at this time, it will be implemented with the construction of the new Tri-County Juvenile Hall facility. When questioned by the current Grand Jury about the expected date for the new facility, the Deputy Superintendent of Institutions replied that beginning construction is expected in September, 2016 with occupancy expected in 2018. At this time, the surveillance system has been “inadequate” for more than five years and this deficiency is not expected to be corrected for another three years, minimum. This security surveillance system does not have recording capability and too few cameras to cover several high security and high liability areas.

During the tour, the Grand Jury members were advised by the Deputy Superintendent of Institutions and the Assistant Chief Probation Officer that it was financially desirable to wait until the new facility is built which will include a new surveillance system. When questioned by the current Grand Jury about the expected date for the new facility, the Deputy Superintendent of Institutions replied that beginning construction is expected in September, 2016 and occupancy is expected in 2018. On April 20, 2015, it was reported in the Appeal Democrat that funding has been allocated, but the County is awaiting approval from CA State Public Works Board and CA State Department of Finance (web site: http://www.appeal-democrat.com/news/new-juvenile-hall-funding-complete/article_421b940a-e727-11e4-96fe-6390fbbce1a8.html).

Findings:

- F1. The surveillance system is inadequate to handle the security for Juvenile Hall. The 2010-2011 Grand Jury Report stated:

“Members of the Grand Jury were told by Juvenile Hall’s interim superintendent that the surveillance system was ‘inadequate’. The current system has no recording capability, and there is a need for additional cameras to cover several high security/high liability areas of the property.”

<http://www.yubacourts.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/GrandJury/GJR2010.PDF>)

The 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 Grand Juries also found the surveillance system to be inadequate. The Probation Office and the Yuba County Board of Supervisors agreed with these findings.

<http://www.yubacourts.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/GrandJury/GJR2012.PDF>;
<http://www.yubacourts.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/GrandJury/GJR2013Resp.pdf>;
<http://www.yubacourts.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/GrandJury/GJR2014Resp.pdf>)

All three Grand Jury reports recommended that the system be updated. Two responses advised that the cost was being examined and the third response advised that it was not cost effective at this time. As of this date the surveillance system has been ‘inadequate’ for more than five years and this security deficiency is not expected to be corrected for another three years, minimum. This security surveillance system does not have recording capability and too few cameras to cover several high security and high liability areas.

- F2. Staffing levels remain low which can create problems in the supervision of the juveniles when staff members take time off due to vacation or illness, however extra help employees are available to reduce overtime. The recommendation of the 2013-2014 Grand Jury has not been met.
- F3. The 2014-2015 Grand Jury found insulation on a wall in the indoor recreation area continues to be in disrepair. No action has been taken to remedy this same finding from previous Grand Jury Reports.

The 2011-2012 Grand Jury found:

“Members of the Grand Jury noted that there was damage to the exposed insulation within the indoor recreation area of the Camp Singer building. This building also houses classrooms, laundry facilities, as well as woodworking and construction classes.”
(<http://www.yubacourts.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/GrandJury/GJR2012Resp.pdf>)

The 2012-2013 Grand Jury found that the facility was deteriorating due to inadequate funding and recommended that funding be allocated for maintenance. The Program Manager agreed and advised that there are many costly repairs and maintenance for the facility and that they were looking into possible State funding (<http://www.yubacourts.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/GrandJury/GJR2013Resp.pdf>).

Recommendations:

- R1. The Yuba County Board of Supervisors approves funds to upgrade the presently inadequate surveillance cameras to provide broader security. Although funding has been allocated for a new facility, it is not expected to be occupied for a minimum of three years. For the safety of the juvenile inmates, this deficiency must be corrected immediately. Further recommend that the Chief Probation Officer immediately, upon approval of funding by the Board of Supervisors, should direct installation of needed cameras. (See F1)
- R2. The Chief Probation Officer and the Facility Director immediately hire additional staff. (See F2)
- R3. Repair the insulation in the indoor recreation area. (See F3)

Commendations:

- C1. The staff of both juvenile facilities were observed during the site visit showing a caring manner in which they interact with juveniles encouraging the youths to express themselves in socially acceptable ways. The staff was also observed guiding the juveniles to view themselves as worthy and capable.
- C2. Camp Singer has implemented highly admirable enrichment programs. Vocational programs include basic tool knowledge, general construction techniques, and basic electrical. There also is a woodworking/furniture building class as well as computerized drafting and engineering training.

Request for Responses:

Pursuant to Penal Code §933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

From the following governing bodies:

- Yuba County Chief Probation Officer (F1-F3, R1-R3)
- Deputy Superintendents of Institutions (F1- F3, R1- R3)
- Yuba County Board of Supervisors (F1- F3, R1- R3)

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted in accordance with Penal Code §933(c) and subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

