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Yuba County Juvenile Facilities

Summary:

The Yuba County Probation Department operates two juvenile detention facilities within the city of Marysville. They are the Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center and the Yuba-Sutter Juvenile Hall which contains a Secure Housing Unit. These facilities are used to house youths aged nine to eighteen, from Yuba and Sutter Counties. Bed space, if needed, is reserved for six northern California counties (Amador, Calaveras, Colusa, Placer, Tehama and Tuolumne). The Grand Jury found these facilities to be generally well maintained and provide many supportive programs. It was found, however, that the video surveillance system in Juvenile Hall continues to be inadequate, as noted in previous Grand Jury reports. The facilities are jointly funded through Yuba and Sutter counties. In the future additional funding will be provided by Colusa County and through contracts with other counties housing offenders within the facility.

Introduction and background:

California Penal Code (PC) Section 919(b) mandates that the Grand Jury annually inspect all prisons and jails located within the county which it serves. Due to the bi-county arrangement, the facilities are inspected yearly by Yuba and Sutter County Grand Juries and recently also by an informal visit by the Colusa County Grand Jury. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation also inspects these facilities. Under a joint agreement between Yuba and Sutter counties, the Yuba-Sutter Juvenile Hall and Camp Singer were established in 1976 and 1996 respectively.

Methodology and Approach:

The Grand Jury met with senior staff and toured Juvenile Hall, Camp Singer, and the Special Housing Unit (SHU).

Site visits: The Grand Jury conducted their yearly visitation in October 2013 and a short follow-up visit in January 2014

Interviews: Interviews on both site visits were conducted with the facility director and staff as well as housed juveniles.

Discussion and Narrative:

The Grand Jury was given tours of the two facilities. Areas observed included the intake and visitation areas, the general housing units, SHU, kitchen, dining hall, indoor and outdoor recreational areas, Camp Singer and classrooms. There is a medical office, staffed by medical

professionals, where each juvenile is given a complete medical, mental and physical examination soon after arrival.

Juvenile Hall is a 60-bed detention facility for less-violent offenders under the age of 18. This facility consists of four parts: a common area, visiting room, classrooms and an outdoor recreational area. The juveniles are housed separately by male and female, associating during school hours, meal times and other supervised special activities. Juveniles held in this facility are awaiting court proceedings. The typical stay in Juvenile Hall is three weeks to three months, averaging 25 days. An internal process is in place to ensure and document grievances and follow up measures. Visitation is limited to two hours per week in order to minimize the possibility of negative outside influences. On the Grand Jury's first visit it was reported that an increase in physical altercations was occurring within the facility. On the second visit it was reported that a dramatic decrease in physical altercations was occurring due to a change in procedures. Parts of these changes are attributed to a more personal, pro-active approach to individual behaviors, stressing and teaching tolerance with constant monitoring of the facility environment. Camp Singer juveniles have more opportunities to earn more privileges.

During a second visit to the Juvenile Hall facility it was reported to Grand Jurors that the State of California recently conducted an environmental health pre-inspection of the facility and identified environmental health issues. The inspection revealed lead based paint on the walls of the facility. The Probation Manager was told that current conditions would allow for the facility to be shut down, if the issues were not resolved, due to violations noted by the State. A physical inspection of the facility by Grand Jurors noted that painting of the affected areas is currently in progress.

The separate 15-bed SHU is for the separation of more serious and violent offenders. The SHU is a single building with its own enclosed outdoor recreation area, classroom, shower and bathrooms. The SHU was not in use at the time of the Grand Juror visits.

Camp Singer is a minimum security facility with a maximum capacity of 48 male and 12 female offenders. The juveniles housed there are assigned by the case judge for rehabilitation, rather than incarceration. The main objectives of Camp Singer are the redirection of negative or undesirable behavior and rehabilitation. At Camp Singer, the juveniles are separated by gender, yet unlike Juvenile Hall, there are no cells. Juveniles are housed in a dormitory-style setting, with individual sleeping cubicles. The juveniles are responsible for the daily upkeep of their individual sleeping areas as well as the outside grounds and other chores as assigned.

Singer has its own classrooms and indoor/outdoor recreational areas. The kitchen is shared between Camp Singer and Juvenile Hall. The kitchen staff prepares three hot meals each day, and between meal snacks, for both juveniles and staff.

Both Juvenile Hall and Camp Singer run on a points system. Points are awarded by staff and teachers. As the minors earn more points, they attain a higher status. With the higher status comes increased privilege which may include: later bedtime, different recreational activities and special visits with immediate family, who may bring in food from outside.

The philosophy at Camp Singer is to develop a sense of achievement and personal responsibility, in both the offenders and their families. The program's purpose is to teach life skills to assist them in overcoming negative outside influences after juveniles are released. The average detention time for a juvenile at Camp Singer is 7-12 months. There are higher expectations of conduct at Camp Singer than at Juvenile Hall or the SHU.

Camp Singer's emphasis is education, with classes taught by teachers provided by the Yuba County Office of Education. Camp Singer offers vocational certificates which include: Basic tool knowledge, general construction techniques and basic electrical. A certificate can also be obtained for the successful completion of a drug and alcohol counseling program. These certificates allow Camp Singer juveniles to be competitive in the job market and instill a sense of individual accomplishment.

The Grand Jury observed that these facilities are well positioned to lease bed space to other counties. The population within these facilities varies from day to day. On the day of the Grand Jury's second visit, the population of Juvenile Hall was 26, and the population of Camp Singer was 20. On that day, the majority of the population in both facilities originated from Yuba and Sutter counties.

Findings:

- F1. Staffing is minimally adequate to meet the needs of resident juveniles. Juvenile hall has been authorized to hire two new staff members in the near future.
- F2. Current camera monitoring system and its ability to record is not adequate for the current needs of the facility.

- F3. Due to one on one, individually tailored policy changes, staff is instilling a sense of tolerance and respect in housed juveniles towards each other and members of the community.
- F4. Staff and volunteers within Juvenile Hall are well trained and show a level of care and concern towards the residents above what is expected.
- F5. The needs of housed offenders are being met, including an internal grievance system.

Recommendations:

- R1. Yuba County Supervisors make additional funding available to the facility manager to maintain compliance with established State environmental health standards.
- R2. Yuba County Supervisors provide funding to upgrade the existing inadequate security camera system.

Request for Responses:

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

From the following:

- Yuba County Board of Supervisors

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.

