

CALIFORNIA MEN'S COLONY FROM THE INSIDE

AUTHORITY

Penal Code §919(b) states, "The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county". Penal Code §921 states, "The Grand Jury is entitled to free access, at all reasonable times, to the public prisons, and to the examination, without charge, of all public records within the county."

METHOD

Members of the 2007/2008 Grand Jury toured and inspected the state prison in San Luis Obispo. We went to the California Men's Colony-East (CMC-E) on October 16th, the California Men's Colony-West (CMC-W) on October 23rd and participated in the Substance Abuse Program (SAP) on November 13th, 2007. The Grand Jury met with the warden, his managers, many of his supervisors, instructors and inmates. During our visits we had ample time for questions and answers.

NARRATIVE

SECURITY LEVELS

The security level in California state prisons are listed as level I through level IV. The classification score designates the level of prison in which an inmate is to be housed. Following are the scores for each level:

Table 1 – Inmate Classification Score and Associate Security Levels

CLASSIFICATION SCORE	LEVEL OF SCORE	TYPE OF SECURITY
0 - 18	Level I	Minimum Security or camp/community placement
09 - 27	Level II	Medium Security
28 - 51	Level III	Medium Security
52 and above	Level IV	Maximum Security

Classification scores are calculated at reception to state prison and are adjusted as needed. Scores include, but are not limited to type of conviction, prior convictions and/or incarcerations, escape risk, length of sentence, performance in prison, etc.

CMC-E was designed to house level III inmates. CMC-W was designed to house level I and II inmates. Both facilities continue to house more than their designed capacities. As of February 2008 the inmate population consists of the following:

- 1 CMC-E design population **2425**. Currently at **3735**. Maximum population may reach **3871**.
- 2 CMC-W design population **1459**. Currently at **2730**. Maximum population may reach **2814**.

PROGRAMS

The Grand Jury has chosen to focus on the following programs: Academic, Vocational, Prison Industry Authority, Fire Camp, Gold Coats, the Drama/Theater and the Substance Abuse Program.

Academic:

Classes include, but are not limited to English as a second language (ESL), Adult Basic Education ranging from first grade through obtaining a high school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED). Inmates also have access to college correspondence courses.

Vocational:

Classes include, but are not limited to machine shop, small engine repair, automotive body repair and finishing, landscaping (including some horticulture), welding and dry cleaning. The Director of Divisions for Education, Vocations and Offender Programs has notified state prisons, including CMC, that one or more of these vocational programs may be discontinuing due to lack of funding, environmental issues or hazardous materials concerns. Some of these programs are considered to have bleak employment opportunities when an inmate paroled.

Table 2 – Number of Inmates Completing Instructional Program in 2007

CLASS	EAST	WEST	TOTAL
G. E. D.	64	68	132
VOCATIONAL	89	56	145
A. A.	3	2	5
A. S.	1	0	1
B.A.	2	0	2
Ph. D.	1	0	1
TOTAL	160	126	286

Prison Industry Authority (PIA):

PIA includes the following programs and services:

- 1 Knitting Mill – Manufactures knit jersey, rib and socks.
- 2 Knitting Mill (Finishing) – Manufactures finished knitted material.
- 3 Jacket Factory – Manufactures jackets, vests, Nomex products, and silk screened materials. (The Nomex materials are used to make fire-resistant shirts and jackets for

firefighters employed through the Department of Forestry, the Conservation Corps, and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.)

- 4 T-Shirt Factory – Manufactures T-shirts.
- 5 Glove Factory – Manufactures gloves.
- 6 Shoe Factory – Manufactures work and camp boots.
- 7 Print Plant - Prints Department of Motor Vehicles products, forms and publications.
- 8 Laundry – Provides laundry services.
- 9 Maintenance – Provides maintenance and repairs for all PIA at CMC.
- 10 Warehouse – Manages the distribution of raw and finished PIA materials/products.

CMC's PIA manufactures and ships over \$20,000,000 in products each year to other state entities. The PIA provides undergarments for male and female inmates statewide. The PIA work programs also help to reduce prison violence, reimburse victims of crime, train inmates and develop work skills. The inmates gain valuable work experience and develop good work habits that will assist them with job preparation and placement upon release from prison.

Fire Camp:

Level I inmates utilized on fire crews are well trained and are deployed throughout California to assist agencies that need experienced firefighters. In 2007, CMC firefighters were dispatched numerous times to work in communities and rural areas. These inmate firefighters should be recognized for their valuable assistance in working with city, state and county firefighters.

Gold Coats:

Within the Mental Health Department at CMC, there are carefully screened inmates assigned as Gold Coats. These inmates provide services such as mentoring and escorting the developmentally disabled inmates to appointments. The Gold Coats must be able to get along with their peers (other inmates) and the staff in a challenging environment. The Grand Jury was impressed with the professionalism of these inmates. They should be commended for the time and patience they exhibit when working with the developmentally disabled and the mentally impaired inmates.

Drama/Theater Department:

This program is part of Arts in Corrections and provides opportunities to inmates who are willing to work hard in theater. Inmates write their own plays, design the stage sets and participate in the performances.

In 2007, these inmates were extremely fortunate to have theater professionals come from as far away as England to work with them. The executive director of the London Shakespeare Workout came to CMC and taught an extraordinary 3-day voice and movement workshop.

Actors from the Pacific Conservatory of Performing Arts, the San Luis Obispo Little Theater, and the former Director of Cuesta College's Theater department provided coaching and training in areas of acting and production.

This program is successful because of the endless hours of supervision put in by custody and non-custody staff for rehearsals, design, etc. Since 2001 six original plays have been written and produced.



Substance Abuse Program (SAP):

Our House is the substance abuse program and is made up of a community of men (inmates) who have volunteered and made a personal commitment to improve their lives. Inmates participating in the program are given an opportunity to do something positive about changing their behavior and lifestyle that lead to incarceration and separation from their family.

The Grand Jury observed and participated in an SAP session. This experience provided jury members with insight into the benefits gained by these men who will be returning to our communities. This program has approximately 10 inmate volunteers as “mentors”. They are carefully interviewed and screened. They facilitate the various stages of the SAP program with the final approval of the SAP director.

SAP consists of several stages:

1. **Orientation** which explains the benefits of joining the program.
2. **Breaking Barriers** addresses the unhealthy thinking and behaviors that develop from addictions and lifestyles.
3. **Alternatives to Violence and Life Skills** helps the inmates to look at their behavior patterns and pick up new skills to deal with life.
4. **Pre-Release** is the phase that prepares the inmate for parole by addressing practical subjects such as: continued education, employment, credit, and resumes.
5. **Truck Driving** provides instruction in preparation to pass the written examination that is required to obtain an Instructors Permit. A simulator is available for “hands on” experience, providing training toward a Class “A” license. *Our House* at CMC is the only class of its kind in a California state prison.

As of May 2007, *Our House* established a relationship with California State Polytechnic University-San Luis Obispo to developing an internship program for students desiring to pursue a career in the substance abuse treatment field.

An instructor from the University of California San Diego stated after a training seminar he provided to the mentors of the SAP program, "I truly believe *Our House* can and will be an example to the rest of the state."

CONCLUSION

After several visits and interviews with question and answer periods, the Grand Jury concludes that CMC is well managed. Staff appeared professional in performing their duties. Moreover, we observed staff and inmates showing respect for one another. With the overcrowding and the antiquated facility, the Grand Jury concludes CMC functions well in part because of inmate cooperation and well trained staff. Our community should be pleased to know that CMC is providing rehabilitation programs. All at CMC should be commended for creating such a positive prison environment.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

No responses to this report are required.