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## Valley State Prison

Madera County Grand Jury conducted the mandated Detention Facility Inspection at the Valley State Prison, located at 21633 Avenue 24 in Chowchilla, CA on April 12, 2022. Although a new warden was assigned to the facility following the retirement of the previous warden, members of the Madera County Grand Jury did not meet the warden nor was the Public Information Officer available during the mandated and scheduled Detention Facility Inspection. Despite multiple attempts to contact the Warden and Public Information Officer, they failed to respond. In the end, the Inspection of the facility was handled by the Litigation Coordinator who was extremely polite, familiar with the facility, personnel, and the programs in place at Valley State Prison. Their primary responsibility is not public information but to process intimate litigation for inmates.

**General Information:** Valley State Prison is a Level 1/Level 2 facility, although the facility does have inmates who are sentenced to life. Inmates consider themselves fortunate to be assigned to Valley State Prison. The capacity of the facility is 1980 with a population on April 12, 2022 of 2950. The State of California will allow 137.5 per cent of capacity, or 2722 inmates. The population on April 11, 2022 was 2,950. This is well over State mandate as well as the designated capacity of the institution. .

Over the course of the last two years, 433 inmates were placed in a one-on-one watch.

**Staffing:** State staffing standards are designed to provide a “base” staffing level which is the minimum staffing necessary for institutions to operate.

**Local and State Inspections:** Fire Inspections of the facility take place every quarter with the last inspection in February of 2022. The state-conducted medical inspection took place over a three-day period in March of 2022. In January of 2022, the State Corrections Standards Authority Inspection took place in conjunction with the Security Audit.

**Conditions of the Grounds:** Well-maintained landscaping is a distinctive feature at Valley State Prison. A special prayer garden has been developed by the inmates and serves as a photo backdrop. Several large boulders surrounded by trees, flowers, benches, and wildlife are featured in the tranquil garden created and maintained by the inmates. The exterior of the buildings looked to be in good condition and there were no visible signs of damage. The interior of the buildings was clean and well kept.

**Housing:** Inmates are housed at eight per cell. The cell within the block observed by MCGJ had six inmates. The cell appeared neat and orderly with a shower and toilet within the unit. The inmates are allowed to shower unsupervised at any time between 6 am and 9 pm. Linens, such as sheets and towels, appeared dingy. Honor Dorms house those demonstrating best behavior. N95 or KN95 masks were required in common areas at the time of the inspection on April 12, 2022. Room inspection for contraband is conducted every day.

**Orientation of Inmates at Intake:** All inmates arriving to Receiving and Release (R&R) are given an orientation packet, Prison Rape /Elimination Act (PREA) brochure, and a self-assessment guide. The inmates are shown a video and given an explanation concerning PREA. Inmates were also instructed how to report if they witness or are a victim of sexual violence. A signature acknowledges receipt of the information. Safety issues are also addressed. The Disability Placement Program (DPP), a 602 grievance, and an 1824 Reasonable Accommodation Request are explained.

During a typical intake interview an individual is interviewed and each file is reviewed. The inmate is admonished that, “Valley State Prison is a Non-Designated Institution, and they must be able to live with any race.” Safety concerns are addressed and verified. Housing restrictions are reviewed for proper placement.

The healthcare needs of the inmate population are addressed. Two mental health programs are provided at Valley State Prison. Enhanced Outpatient Program (EOP) provides weekly individual therapy. The Correctional Clinical Case Management System (CCCMS) provides individual therapy and groups are mandatory. Services are provided by psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, recreational therapists, pre-doctoral interns, and practicum students.

**Discipline of Inmates:** A progressive discipline process for conduct violations is handled in accordance with the California Code of Regulations Title 15. There are three progressive levels of discipline: verbal, counseling, and a rules violation report.

**Kitchen/Nutrition:** A monthly menu is provided, and meals are served during a 15-minute shift in the Dining Hall following COVID social distancing regulations. For every meal served, one 'dead man's meal' is refrigerated and tested if anyone becomes ill. Inmates working in the kitchen must be cleared by medical and are able to complete a 52-week California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Food Service Training program. Commissary provisions are also available for purchase by inmates with funds deposited to their account. A maximum of \$250 can be spent monthly.

**Personal Appearance of Inmates:** Inmates are clean, neat, and well-groomed.

**Dog Training:** Inmates can work with dogs in a service dog program. Dogs are trained to assist in a home setting and to retrieve specific personal items on command, open and close doors, and operate ADA access buttons.

**Program/Vocational:** Vocational programs offered to inmates at VSP include masonry, cosmetology, computer and related technologies, small engines, welding, and electrical works.

**Optical Production:** VSP is the location for an optical production facility and trains screened and select inmates. This operation makes lenses for Medi-Cal patients in northern California. The optical facility receives 1500 to 2500 new orders per day. At the time of the MCGJ-conducted inspection, approximately 70 inmates were working in the optical center from 7am until 8pm to fill the incoming orders for eyewear. Upon successfully completing the program, the inmates receive a certification that can help them gain employment when released.

**Programs/Educational:** Twenty-one full time teachers, including 12 academic teachers, two testing coordinators, five college coordinators, one EOP teacher, and one recreational coach provide educational services to inmates. Each academic class has 54 student-inmates assigned. As of the April 12, 2022 inspection, 648 inmates were participating in Adult Education I, II, III, and GED classes.

**Family Visiting Areas:** Weekly visits are held in the visiting room for up to 6-hours. Inmates also have the option of using tablets for face-time visits with family members. All visitors must be approved. Family conjugal visits are determined by the inmate's counselor. An application must be filed to request visitation and be scheduled. Every 90 days, overnight conjugal visits are permitted based on availability.

#### **Findings:**

1. **MCGJ finds that** neither the Warden nor the Public Information Officer at Valley State Prison made themselves available to meet with the Grand Jury during the mandated and scheduled Detention Facility Inspection as per Penal code 919a, 919b, 925a, and 925b.
2. **MCGJ finds that** the Litigation Coordinator was extremely polite, familiar with the facility, personnel, and programs at the institution.
3. **MCGJ finds that** VSP's inmate population exceeds the state capacity of the facility by 228 inmates and exceeds the design capacity by 970 inmates.

4. **MCGJ finds that** the grounds are well-maintained by inmates who have created a tranquil prayer garden.
5. **MCGJ finds that** the optical program at VSP provides excellent training for inmates, using state-of-the-art equipment, to earn certification that can assist in securing employment upon release.

**Recommendations:**

1. **MCGJ recommends that** the Warden of Valley State Prison must find time to meet with the Madera County Grand Jury during a mandated and scheduled inspection as per Penal Code 919a, 919b, 925a, and 925b.
2. **MCGJ recommends that** a specifically designated Public Information Officer must find time to facilitate the Detention Facility Inspection as per Penal Code 919a, 919b, 925a, and 925b.
3. **MCGJ recommends that** VSP work to reduce the inmate population within state designated capacity by December 31, 2022.
4. **MCGJ recommends that** inmates continue to maintain the tranquil setting in the prayer garden.
5. **MCGJ recommends that** the optical facility program continue to provide training on state-of-the-art equipment for inmates to develop employment-ready skills.

**Required Respondents:** Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Grand Jury request responses as follows:

From the following elected officials within 60 days:

Governor Gavin Newsom

1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95841

**Invited Respondents:** Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Grand Jury request responses as follows:

From the following governing bodies within 90 days:

Warden Landon Bird

Valley State Prison  
21633 Avenue 24  
Chowchilla, CA 93610

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## Responses to 2019-2020 Reports



**To the Reader:** Responses to the Final Reports, filed by the 2019-2020 Madera County Grand Jury, are mandated by California Penal Code. Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05 and requests that a response to the report be filed. In this section, the reader will find the summary, background, findings and recommendations made by the Grand Jury to each of the filed reports. The received responses follow the respective report's highlights. The entire report is available at the website, **Madera County Grand Jury Final Reports 2019-2020**.

Governing boards and elected county officials are required to respond to the report's findings and recommendations that are directed at them within the timeline prescribed in Penal Code section 933(c)- 60 days for elected county officials and 90 days for governing boards. The additional time to governing boards affords them adequate time to conduct a public meeting on the topic. The Grand Jury may also invite responses from elected city officials or an appointed official of a local governmental entity to which findings or recommendations are directed. Penal Code 933.05 specifies the mandated wording and content of the responses.

For each relevant finding in the report, PC 933.05(a) requires the responding governing board or elected county official to give one of the two possible responses:

1. Agrees with the finding, or
- 2 disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, with an explanation of the reasons for the disagreement.

For each relevant recommendation, the board or elected county official is required to select one of four possible responses (PC 933.05(b) :

1. The recommendation has been implemented with a summary of the action taken;
- 2 it will be implemented, with a timeframe for implementation
3. it requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope of the analysis and a timeframe for further discussion of up to six months from the release of the report: or
4. It will not be implemented because it is not warranted or it is not reasonable with an explanation

# **1920-01 California Department of Corrections' And Rehabilitation Facilities**

## **MADERA COUNTY JAIL**

### **SUMMARY:**

As mandated by California Penal Code §919(b), the Madera County Grand Jury (MCGJ) is charged with inquiring into the condition and management of detention facilities within the County. Sections 919 (a), 925, and 925(a) authorize the Grand Jury to investigate County and City jails and other detention facilities. Such investigations highlight efficiencies and ensure that those incarcerated are treated in a humane manner.

### **BACKGROUND:**

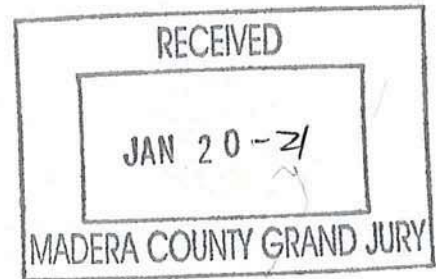
The Madera County Grand Jury (MCGJ) is authorized to visit and inquire into the conditions of any public prison within the County, including County jails. Inspecting safety and security in jails are priorities along with ensuring inmates are treated in a safe and humane manner. This report is about the MCGJ inspections of the Madera Department of Corrections, Madera County Juvenile Detention Center, and two California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation facilities.

### **FINDINGS - MADERA COUNTY JAIL:**

- F1.** The MCGJ finds there are unfilled and unfunded Correctional Officer positions.
- F2.** The MCGJ finds that the booking and intake area is small.
- F3.** The MCGJ finds a lack of mental health treatment options available in Madera County.
- F4.** The MCGJ finds there is a limited conduit for released inmates to find employment.
- F5.** The MCGJ finds MCDC works well with individual inmates with limited financial support.
- F6.** The MCGJ finds that the MCDC was very accommodating and open to taking questions.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS – MADERA COUNTY JAIL:**

- R1.** The MCGJ recommends that, by the beginning of the fiscal year 21-22, the Department of Corrections secure funding to fill vacant positions.
- R2.** The MCGJ recommends that, by the beginning of the fiscal year 21-22, the MCDC redesign the workflow of the booking/intake area.
- R3.** The MCGJ recommends that, by the beginning of the fiscal year 21-22, Madera County Probation and Department of Corrections investigate an outsourcing option for mental health services.
- R4.** The MCGJ recommends that, by the beginning of fiscal year 21-22 MCDC and Madera County Probation work cooperatively to seek employment opportunities in the local area.
- R5.** The MCGJ recommends that the MCDC continue to work cooperatively with inmates to provide work opportunities to increase a financial support system for released inmates.
- R6.** The MCGJ recommends that the MCDC continue their work in providing open communication to the MCGJ.



December 23, 2020  
Judge Michael Jurkovich  
Madera County Supervising Judge  
300 South G street  
Madera Ca 93637

Dear Judge Michael Jurkovich:

This is the written response per Penal Code 933.05, Requires that I, Manuel L. Perez Director of Corrections respond separately to specified Findings and Recommendations contained in the Madera County's Department of Corrections' Facility / Grand Jury Final Report 1920-1 December 21, 2020.

**Findings:** Madera County jail

- F1.**MCGJ finds there are unfilled and unfunded Correctional Officer positions. (I concur)
- F2.**MCGJ finds that the booking area and intake area is small. (I concur)
- F3.**MCGJ finds a lack of Mental Health treatment options available in Madera County. (I concur)
- F4.**MCGJ finds there is limited conduit for release inmates to find employment. (I concur)
- F5.**MCGJ finds MCDC works well with individual inmates with limited financial support. (I concur)
- F6.**MCGJ finds MCDC was very accommodating and open to taking questions. (I concur)

**Recommendations:** Madera County Jail

**R1.** MCGJ recommends that, by the beginning of the fiscal year 21-22, the Department of Corrections secure funding to fill vacant positions.

**Response:** BOS and HR Department in Madera County have been excellent to work with. The jail currently has Ten Vacancies and fiscal year 2020-21 provided funding to hire all ten with qualified candidates. Madera County has a continuous testing on meeting the need and commitment of the department. The department does have unfunded positions and in my ten years of being the director, I've never had the opportunity to ask for the opportunity to fill because of no vacancies. I hope with the start of the new SB1022 Construction Project, We will have an opportunity to address unfunded frozen positions.

**R2.** The MCGJ recommends that, by the beginning of the fiscal year 21-22, MCDC redesign the workflow of the booking/Intake area.

**Response:** In August of 2020, Madera County jail started SB1022 Pre-Design Review that includes the redesign of the Intake area in include widening the work area and adding two safety cells. Madera jail working with Dewberry: Architects/ Kitchell: Engineering + Architectural Services





**R3.** The MCGJ recommends that, by the beginning of the fiscal year 21-22, Madera County Probation and Department of Corrections investigate an outsourcing option for mental Health services.

**Response:** Madera County Department of Corrections received an award of 19 million for Behavioral Health Treatment Facility to address the Mentally ill in Madera County that are incarcerated. We are currently in the pre-design review, being nearly completed. January 08, 2021 with Probation and law enforcement partners. A meeting was initiated in regards to applying for SAMHSA Mental Health Awareness Training (MHAT) Grant.

**R4:** The MCGJ recommends that, by the beginning of fiscal year 21-22 MCDC and Madera County Probation Department work cooperatively to seek employment opportunities in the local area.


**Response:** Madera County Department of Corrections with cooperation with our food vendor Aramark, provide a Food preparation and food service certificate to address employment opportunities when out of custody. Madera County Department of Corrections also with cooperation with Grid Solar Company provide training for inmates in the field of solar to assist when they leave the jail. We also work closely with Workforce Development Agencies to help address recidivism. Probation has been a great partner with Community Corrections Partnership and I will continue to work closely on this issue to address future opportunities for the jail population.

**R5:** The MCGJ recommends that the MCDC continue to work cooperatively with inmates to provide work opportunities to increase a financial support system for released inmates.

**Response:** Madera County Department of Corrections also provides educational tablets that have a large sort of subjects and learning topics that can assist the inmate population if they chose to. For example: section in the automotive repair, teaches the students how to service and repair carburetors. MCDC will continue to be innovative and seek out more resources to assist the jail population.

**R6:** The MCGJ recommends that the MCDC continue their working in providing open communication to the MCGJ.

**Response:** I will always do my best to be available for any questions or tours, and to be transparent on my direction to staff on how the facility stays affected in providing the highest level of service and keeping Public Safety a priority.

Director of Corrections  
Madera County  
  
Manuel L. Perez