

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT RESPONSE
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY 2003-2004 GRAND JURY
CRIMINAL JUSTICE DETENTION FACILITIES REPORT

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SPECIAL REPORT: VIDEO ARRAIGNMENT

FINDING 1

The installation of a video arraignment system would be a cost cutting and safety enhancing method of conducting the arraignment of prisoners in Santa Barbara County.

Response to Finding 1

The Sheriff's Department partially disagrees with the finding. While the department strongly agrees that safety would be greatly enhanced by the use of a video arraignment system, the actual cost savings of such a system is yet to be determined.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Grand Jury recommends that a video arraignment system be installed in both North and South Santa Barbara County.

Response to Recommendation 1

This recommendation requires further analysis. Until a north county jail is constructed, transportation will still be required on a daily basis to the north and south county for other criminal hearings and arraignments that require mandatory appearances. The reduction of the number of inmates transported to and from an arraignment court will probably not result in the relief of an entire transport vehicle or the personnel needed to perform this duty. The definite benefit of this program would be the reduced ratio of inmates to officers. This will increase safety and security for both the inmates and staff.

In addition to the concept of a video arraignment system, a combination of an "on-campus" arraignment court with video arraignment capabilities is being considered on the property of the main jail.

Through collaboration with the Superior Court, Public Defender, District Attorney and the Sheriff's Department, this project will need to be developed with all of these interests considered. A committee of members from the criminal justice system has been formed to research the cost/benefit analysis and the procedural aspects of this system.

We expect a staff report with this analysis to be completed by November 1, 2004.

SPECIAL REPORT: EARLY RELEASE

FINDING 1

Different criteria are used to release male and female inmates when overcrowded conditions exist at the Main Jail in Santa Barbara County. Males are released based on the seriousness of the crime committed; females are released on time served only – "first in, first out."

Response to Finding 1

The Sheriff's department agrees with this finding.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The disparity between the male and female early release criteria should be eliminated for the sake of equality and public safety.

Response to Recommendation 1

The Sheriff's Department will request from the Superior Court a modification to the court order regarding the early release criteria for female inmates in the main jail to mirror the release criteria for the male inmates in the main jail.

CARPINTERIA STATION

FINDING 1

The Carpinteria Police Department/Sheriff's Coastal Station is outgrowing the existing facility.

Response to Finding 1

The Sheriff's Department agrees with this finding.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Expansion or relocation, if not already under consideration, should be taken under advisement.

Response to Recommendation 1

The issue of adequate space for the Coastal Bureau Station is and has been addressed since the past visit by the Grand Jury. The current Bureau Lieutenant has developed a plan for additional locker room space. Cost estimates have already been obtained and we hope to proceed with the project in the new budget year. This remodel was included in the budget request for FY 2004-05.

A remodel plan for the report/evidence area and is waiting for the new fiscal year to proceed. We expect to complete this modification within the 2004-05 Fiscal Year.

The Department has arranged for a storefront office in the Montecito area. The Montecito Association has dedicated a desk, computer and phone for deputies to use 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This alleviates some of the space needs at the Coastal Station and provides a visible presence of Sheriff's personnel in the Montecito area as well and greater community interaction.

CORONERS OFFICE

FINDING 1

There is no signage on Hollister Avenue at San Antonio Road, indicating the Coroner's Bureau location further down San Antonio Road (especially needed for bereaved clientele). The signage at the Bureau's driveway is also inadequate.

Response to Finding 1

The Sheriff's Department agrees with the finding.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Place a county sign on Hollister Avenue at San Antonio Road, indicating "Coroner's Bureau," and another at the driveway entrance to the office.

Response to Recommendation 1

The Coroners Bureau supervisor will contact the County Roads Department and research the feasibility of placing a sign on Hollister Avenue at San Antonio Road. The Coroners Bureau can also replace the current sign, at its driveway, with a larger sign.

FINDING 2

Staff time is not used efficiently while autopsies are performed at Cottage Hospital and there is a possibility of worker's compensation issues due to the current system of transporting corpses from the Coroner's Bureau.

Response to Finding 2

The Sheriff's Department agrees, in part, with the findings.

RECOMMENDATION 2

All autopsies should be performed at the Coroner's Bureau.

Response to Recommendation 2

In researching the Coroners information we found the following number of autopsies and total number of cases that were handled throughout the last 12 months.

June 03	9 autopsies out of 115 cases	
July 03	8 autopsies out of 110 cases	
August 03	11 autopsies out of 118 cases	
September 03	11 autopsies out of 92 cases	
October 03	12 autopsies out of 125 cases	
November 03	10 autopsies out of 114 cases	
December 03	6 autopsies out of 127 cases	
January 04	9 autopsies out of 141 cases	
February 04	5 autopsies out of 108 cases	
March 04	9 autopsies out of 125 cases	
April 04	6 autopsies out of 90 cases	
May 04	10 autopsies out of 110 cases	
Totals	106 autopsies @ \$175.00 ea. = \$18,550.00	Total cases = 1375

In reviewing the Grand Jury's report we discovered that the issue of conducting autopsies at the Coroners Bureau, instead of Cottage Hospital, may not just be an efficient operation. At the present time, the \$175.00 cost to use Cottage Hospital includes the salary of a Cottage Hospital Morgue Technician and all other necessary equipment and supplies such as needles, tubes and medical gowns. This fee does not cover the cost of tissue slides, which Cottage Hospital supplies to us for a fee that ranges between \$15.00-\$25.00 per autopsy. Even though the trip to Cottage Hospital takes an investigators time, an evaluation would have to be made to see if we would truly save money. The salary for the Morgue Technician and the other additional supplies would have to be factored into our budget, as well as the additional Workers Compensation costs for the additional Sheriff's Department part-time employee. We would also have to check and verify if there are any State Health requirements, which we would need to adhere to, prior to conducting autopsies at our facility on a full time basis. We believe that a full study should be made prior to any change in our current procedure.

FINDING 3

The toxicology laboratory is only able to run a limited range of tests.

Response to Finding 3

The Sheriff's Department agrees with the finding.

RECOMMENDATION 3

All laboratory testing can be outsourced to a contracted facility at a savings to the county.

Response to Recommendation 3

The Grand Jury is correct in their finding that the Toxicology Laboratory currently can only run a limited range of tests. Currently 79% of the tests that the Toxicology Laboratory conducts are for County Probation. The other 21% is for the Sheriff's Department. A current study of our laboratory's efficiency is in progress.

The use of the laboratory affects two County Departments, the Sheriff's Department and the Probation Department. Part of the study is to verify how the laboratory should operate and what its capabilities are; the other part of the study is to research the financial benefits of having a County laboratory versus sending all required tests to an outside contract laboratory. At the conclusion of the study, a recommendation will be made to either keep the laboratory, give it to another county department, or close it and send all required tests to an outside laboratory. We believe that this study will be completed and submitted for Sheriff's Department staff review within the next fiscal year.