

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT RESPONSE
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY'S 2006-2007 REPORT
"DETENTION FACILITIES INSPECTIONS"

Finding 1: *In all inspections of detention facilities throughout Santa Barbara County, none were found to be sub-standard with respect to regulations.*

Response to Finding 1: The Sheriff's Department agrees with this finding.

Finding 2: *Inspections revealed no major flaws or shortfalls in staff performance.*

Response to Finding 2: The Sheriff's Department agrees with this finding.

Finding 3: *Staff have used initiative and ingenuity to achieve positive results during periods of reduced resources.*

Response to Finding 3: The Sheriff's Department agrees with this finding.

Finding 4: *The Sheriff's Department currently has to move detainees for arraignment to Santa Maria, Lompoc and Santa Barbara Superior Court locations on a daily basis.*

Response to Finding 4: The Sheriff's Department agrees with this finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: *Supervisory staff should continue to encourage personnel to use initiative to have a positive impact on the work environment.*

Response to Recommendation 1: The Sheriff's Department will continue to implement this recommendation.

Recommendation 2: *The Sheriff should pursue a course of action aimed at implementing video arraignment procedures in the jail system.*

Response to Recommendation 2: This recommendation requires further analysis. The Sheriff's Department will revisit the previous study on Video Arraignment and provide an update on December 18, 2007.

Video arraignment was studied in 2004. These are the results of that study:

The Sheriff's Department formed a committee of representatives from the Sheriff's Department, Public Defender's Office, District Attorney's Office, and Superior Court to further analyze this recommendation.

The benefits of implementing a video arraignment system were believed to be a reduction in costs due to decreased transportation costs and staffing requirements. In addition, safety and security would be enhanced due to a decrease in inmate movements to and from court.

The committee personally observed an established video arraignment system in southern California to determine the feasibility of such a system for Santa Barbara County. This committee also researched other systems in the region. The results of this study did not realize any significant cost savings and noted several obstacles to overcome if a video arraignment system were implemented in Santa Barbara County.

In regards to a decrease in transportation costs, a video arraignment system in the North and South County would not reduce the number of bus transportation runs during a day. Although the number of inmates that would be required to be transported to and from court would be reduced, this minimal decrease in vehicle occupants would not be enough to eliminate an entire transportation vehicle. The result would be more open seats on a vehicle that is still required to travel to and from court for purposes other than arraignments. If a video arraignment system or even an arraignment court were to be established at the main jail campus, additional staff would be required to provide security and inmate escorts for these proceedings.

The geographical make-up of Santa Barbara County also contributes to the obstacles in implementing such a system. Because the courtrooms in Santa Maria, Lompoc, and Santa Barbara are from seven to seventy miles from the jail, the logistics of delivering discovery and court files to the jail within the specified amount of time for arraignment would be problematic. One such video arraignment system that the committee researched revealed that the system was not workable due to the distance between the courtroom and jail. The program had to be discontinued.

Additionally, the Public Defender, District Attorney, and Superior Court also concluded that existing staff would either have to be reassigned with increased workload or additional staff would have to be hired in order to operate a video arraignment system.

The committee recommends that a video arraignment system could have a likelihood of success if the logistics of information sharing could be solved. As technology develops, reports and files could be transmitted on a shared network. This would be of great benefit in regards to discovery and filing deadlines.

In addition, building a north county jail would also help solve these logistical concerns. A north county jail that had the capacity for an arraignment court on its property would eliminate the need for transportation to and from the north county courts for arraignment purposes.

It is the desire of the affected departments to continue to scrutinize the concept of video arraignment and/or an on-site arraignment court. If technological and staffing issues could be minimized, the program has its advantages.

Sheriff's Department staff will confer with other justice system members to determine if new technological advances and staffing issues would facilitate implementation of a video arraignment system.