

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT RESPONSE
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY GRAND JURY'S 2008-2009 REPORT
"SANTA BARBARA COUNTY DETENTION FACILITIES"

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1:

Overcrowding at the Santa Barbara County Main Jail continues to have a negative impact on jail operations.

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

The Sheriff's Department appreciates the Grand Jury's recognition that, in spite of the negative impacts of overcrowding, the Sheriff's Department operates its custody facilities in a professional manner.

The Sheriff's Department has been in litigation regarding overcrowding since 1989. The case has progressed to a point where the Plaintiffs are now seeking sanctions against the Sheriff due to some inmates sleeping on the floor as a result of overcrowding.

In 2008, efforts to manage the jail population resulted in 1,802 inmates being released an average of 15 days prior to their sentence completion date. Also in 2008, 1757 inmates completed their sentence in the Sheriff's Work Alternative Program (SWAP) and Electronic Monitoring (EM) which keeps them out of the facilities. During the period of time from 1999 through 2007 there has been a consistent increase in assaults in the facilities from 60 to 179.

The Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department provides quality medical and mental health services to over 11,000 inmates annually. These on-site medical services include over 4000 inmates annually attending doctor's sick call, 4300 nurses sick call, medication dispensing, communicable disease testing, TB testing which includes 3880 PPD tests administered, as well as referrals to specialists and consults. Our medical services are comparable to community standards, and in some cases, exceed this measurement. Our mental health professionals which include a psychiatrist are on-site daily, evaluating and assisting over 1000 inmates with special needs while in our system.

The above medical and mental health services are inspected and audited annually by the County Public Health Department, as well as the bi-annual inspection by the California Corrections Standards Authority (CSA) for quality assurance.

The Sheriff's Department copes daily with the accelerated deterioration of our facilities. The newest facility is the Inmate Reception Center (IRC), built in 1994. The oldest is the Medium Security Facility (MSF), built in 1961. The MSF is a wooden constructed building which we have to monitor and treat for termite infestation periodically.

The Sheriff's Department and General Services are currently working together to complete the first of a multi-phased project to address serious inadequacies identified in

the sewer system serving the Main Jail campus. Work on this project is scheduled to commence by the end of April, 2009.

The security controls in the facilities also vary widely in age, condition, and operating style. Improvements to these systems have been repeatedly requested in the County's Capital Improvements Plan since 2003.

During 2008, the Sheriff's Office has made significant progress toward building of a new jail. The purchase of 50 acres of land for the new jail in the Santa Maria area provides an opportunity to make progress on construction of a new jail facility in the North County. Planning and design of this facility are proceeding, in conjunction with an award of \$56.3 million AB 900 Grant funding through the State.

The County's partnership in the Central Coast Regional Secure Community Reentry Facility, planned for construction in Paso Robles, will also serve to reduce returns to custody by parolees. The success of this program will directly impact the jail population.

In the meantime, intermediary programs that reduce the need for future beds are being planned and pursued. A Community Corrections Program incorporating day reporting is the basis of a Second Chance Act grant request from the Federal Government. This program is consistent with recommendations from the National Institute of Corrections and the Sheriff's Blue Ribbon Commission on Jail Overcrowding, which was commenced in 2008.

The Sheriff's Office will continue to maintain a safe and secure facility despite overcrowded conditions, and will continue to pursue alternatives to alleviate jail overcrowding through expanded capacity and programs to reduce recidivism.