

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

El Dorado County Juvenile Hall

Reason for the Report

The California Penal Code requires Grand Juries to inspect and report annually on the operations of all public prisons located within the boundaries of each county.

SUMMARY OF IMMEDIATE CORRECTIONS NEEDED

Fire and life safety measures are inadequate. The Juvenile Hall is constructed of materials that will not burn, but the interior contains flammable materials. In places of confinement, smoke is the primary threat. The facility does not have adequate equipment or procedures in place to deal with the potential devastating effects of fire in a locked facility.

Scope of the Investigation

The following inspections and presentations were made:

- Members of the Grand Jury inspected the facility on September 19, 2001.
- Members of the Criminal Justice Committee inspected the facility on three additional occasions.
- The Chief Probation Officer made a formal presentation to the Grand Jury.

The following documents were reviewed:

- The future plan for juvenile beds as presented to the Board of Supervisors (BOS);
- Title 15, Code of California Regulations (CCR), State Board of Corrections;
- South Lake Tahoe Juvenile Hall building plans;
- Detention Survey submitted monthly by Probation Department;
- Board of Corrections Inspection Report;
- Public Health Report;
- Fire Marshal Inspection Report (August 20, 2001);
- Building Department Annual Inspection (August 29, 2001);
- Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission Inspection Report (August 20, 2001);
- Environmental Management Inspection Report (September 5, 2001);
- Needs Assessment, 2000, Suzie Cohen and Associates;
- Grand Jury Reports, 1998/1999, 1999/2000, and 2000/2001;

- County budget; and
- Superior Court Order imposing population cap on Juvenile Hall.

The following persons were interviewed:

- Chief Probation Officer;
- Chief Deputy Probation Officer in charge of Juvenile Hall;
- City of Placerville Fire Marshal; and
- Chairman of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission.

Findings

F1: This Grand Jury agrees with 98/99 Grand Jury's Report following Findings and Recommendations:

- Facility overcrowded;
- Good job by staff with the resources provided; and
- Build additional Juvenile Hall, South Lake Tahoe.

F2: This Grand Jury agrees with the 99/00 Grand Jury's Report following Findings and Recommendations:

- Recreation space inadequate;
- Security and supervision good;
- Juvenile Hall is overcrowded; and
- Juvenile Hall needs to be expanded.

F3: This Grand Jury agrees with 00/01 Grand Jury's Report following Findings and Recommendations:

- Generally clean and well run;
- Food, education services good;
- No running water, toilet, or blankets in Health Facilities Room;
- No room available for counseling;
- Males and females use common facilities on different schedules;
- Facility inadequate; and
- Especially need to correct the inadequacy of the Facility.

F4: To the staff's credit, they are trying to function in a very inadequate facility.

F5: Adequate space is not available for programs. For example, counselors are required to meet with wards in a corner of the general-purpose gym.

- F6: The Juvenile Hall was designed for 20 wards; the count is typically over 40. Accordingly, all space (living, recreation, program, visiting, administration, food service) is undersized.
- F7: The number of wards with mental problems continues to increase.
- F8: The number of wards with drug abuse problems is also increasing.
- F9: Juveniles who probably should be detained are not being detained because of lack of space. This problem exists in both the South Lake Tahoe and Placerville areas.
- F10: There are no rooms to place wards in need of removal from the general population of the Juvenile Hall.
- F11: There are some cleanliness issues. For example, the windows need washing, and the kitchen should be cleaner.
- F12: Outside and inside recreation space is inadequate.
- F13: Several thousand square feet of the facility are being utilized for community programs. This space is found on the lower level of the facility.
- F14: The Ward Education Program is outstanding. The teachers have devised methods to individualize programs for wards and methods to interest them and reinforce learning.
- F15: The Chief Probation Officer must request waivers from the State Board of Corrections' Title 15 CCR requirements almost monthly because of the space and staffing problems.
- F16: The current problems regarding the serious inadequacy of the facility have a long history of disclosure without having been corrected.
- F17: The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission are aware of the problems at the Hall and are supportive in developing short-term solutions.
- F18: The Probation Department has developed a plan, which the Board of Supervisors (BOS) has adopted, to correct the major juvenile bed deficiencies within the County. The elements of the plan are to:
- Build a 40-bed Hall in South Lake Tahoe, the opening of which is anticipated in 2003;
 - Build a new 40-bed Hall, financing for which has been requested from the State Board of Corrections, next to the main jail in Placerville; and
 - Renovate the existing Hall to house only 20 wards, in accordance with the original design capacity.

- F19: As the county population and its problems grow, the need to provide more juvenile beds and appropriate programs will certainly increase.
- F20: Fire doors were propped open on the day of inspection. This was a violation of both Juvenile Hall procedure, and fire and life safety requirements.
- F21: The Hall is constructed of non-flammable materials. Any fire, however, would create smoke conditions, which could cause serious harm to anyone in the facility. This potential problem is exacerbated because, within the facility, there are:
- No smoke alarms;
 - No central fire alarm;
 - No air packs (portable, self-contained breathing apparatus);
 - No sprinklers;
 - No training for smoke conditions; and
 - No centrally controlled unlocking system (each room must be unlocked manually).
- F22: The Probation Department staff checks the rooms every 15 minutes, conduct regular security/fire inspections, conduct monthly fire drills, and keep combustible load, such as paper products in wards' rooms, to a minimum.
- F23: In their last inspection reports, the Fire Marshal, the County Delinquency Commission, and the Board of Corrections did not report that the fire and life safety issues, found by this Grand Jury, were a problem. This Grand Jury chooses not to ignore those issues.
- F24: Since 1997, there has been a Superior Court Order limiting the number of wards in Juvenile Hall to 40. Any deviation triggers reports to the Court. The Hall count of 40 is frequently exceeded each month.
- F25: Renovating Juvenile Hall might mean that the State Board of Corrections would impose 2002 facility standards. The much greater risk, however, is doing nothing about these problems.

Recommendations

- R1. A sprinkler system should be installed throughout Juvenile Hall.
- R2: Air packs should be made available in Juvenile Hall.
- R3: Smoke alarms should be appropriately installed in the control room.
- R4: A central alarm system should be installed in the Control area of the Hall.
- R5: Staff training in the use of air packs during smoke conditions should be conducted.

- R6: A centrally controlled unlocking system should be installed in Juvenile Hall.
- R7: The BOS should contract with a space management expert to review the current facility and make recommendations about better utilization of the space in the upper and lower levels.
- R8: The BOS should continue to pursue the plan described in F18. If the State Board of Corrections decides not to provide funding for the plan this year, alternate sources of funds should be pursued and a request for funding should be made next year (2003).
- R9: The Cohen and Associates Report of 2000 needs to be updated. It should set forth current county demographics and future trends. It should include not just numbers of juvenile anticipated to become wards in detention but also other relevant information such as gender, age, type of problems and type of programs that will be needed.

Commendations

The El Dorado County Probation Department is well led by experienced, professional supervisors and managers. They know the problems and want them corrected. The line-staff are functioning with an inadequate facility not designed or constructed for the numbers of wards or programs. The educational program for wards is excellent. The Probation Department has developed a plan which should correct the problems by 2006.

Responses Required for Findings

F5 through F25 El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
El Dorado County Probation Department

Responses Required for Recommendations

R1 through R9 El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
El Dorado County Probation Department