

PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY

GJ04-042

Reason for the report

The 2004-2005 Grand Jury, per Penal Code 925, inspected several county buildings, parking lots, and adjacent grounds. We also followed up on some of the concerns identified by previous Grand Juries.

Scope of the Investigation

People Interviewed

- Prison Staff
- Fire Marshall – Placerville/South Lake Tahoe
- Interim Director General Services
- Real Estate Manager
- Program Coordinators
- Senior C.A.D.D. Technician, General Services
- Engineering Specialist, Public Works City of Placerville
- Engineering Technician, Public Works / Placerville Engineering Department
- Risk Manager, County Administrative Office
- Director Mental Health Department
- Nutrition Services Supervisor
- Engineers, Department of Transportation
- Field Supervisors, Animal Control
- Kitchen Staff, Placerville Senior Center

Sites Visited

- Jail – Placerville
- Juvenile Hall – Placerville/South Lake Tahoe
- Growlersberg Conservation Camp
- Georgetown – Airport / Library
- Senior Center – Placerville
- Mental Health Buildings & Services – Placerville / South Lake Tahoe
- Animal Control – South Lake Tahoe
- Department of Transportation – South Lake Tahoe
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Documents Reviewed

- Placerville topographic map
- Risk Management Claim Register / Litigation Report
- Risk Management Facility Incident Report
- Property Lease Agreements
- Grand Jury Final Report / Responses for 2003-04; 2002-03; 2001-02; 2000-01

Background

Mental Health Services, South Lake Tahoe (SLT) and Georgetown Airport and Library were chosen for inspection, since they had not been visited in the last four years. The leased facility at 3rd Street, SLT (a prior residence) has modifications with safety concerns. **We requested the Fire Marshall to inspect several buildings when safety issues were found.** Previous Grand Juries identified potentially hazardous conditions at the Placerville Spring Street Complex and South Lake Tahoe Animal Control.

MENTAL HEALTH BUILDINGS – South Lake Tahoe

1a. Finding: The leased building at 1120 3rd Street has an awkward floor plan. Kitchen area, offices, and storage areas are inadequate. Although three floors are in use only the first floor is ADA compliant. A wheel chair lift to the basement is under construction.

Response to Finding 1a.: The respondent agrees with the finding.

1b. Recommendation: Relocate this department to a facility adequate to serve the clientele, to create a safe work environment for the employees and to meet ADA requirements.

Response to Recommendation 1b.: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Staff within General Services have met with representatives from Mental Health and both departments agree that the current space meets the needs of this program, but would be greatly enhanced with improvements to the floorplan. The findings do not identify specific safety issues and the Department of General Services is not aware of outstanding safety concerns. All floors of this facility do not require ADA access. The clientele that need ADA access are served on the main floor together with the basement that now has a wheel chair lift. Although clientele do occasionally meet on the third floor, all meeting functions can occur on the main floor. Access to the third floor is not required of the clientele. In an effort to better serve the clientele of this program, Mental Health wishes to combine the functions of this program with others under the same Department, currently located at the Silver Dollar Building. Under this plan both functions would move to another facility of proper configuration and size to better meet the program needs. General Services will begin a search with the goal of relocating this function within the next 24-36 months.

2a. Finding: Cleanliness is a problem. The bathrooms are potential health hazards. There are cobwebs in stairwells, bathrooms, and ceiling vents. Several fluorescent lights have been flickering for months. Staff and clients perform janitorial duties.

Response to Finding 2a.: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. While acknowledging that cleanliness could be improved, the respondent is not aware of any actual health hazard in the bathrooms.

2b. Recommendation: Hire a janitorial service.

Response to Recommendation 2b.: *The recommendation has been implemented.* The department contracts with a private company for the provision of janitorial services at this location. The Mental Health Department is considering increasing the frequency of service, and will be working with the vendor to ensure compliance with the contract.

3a. Finding: The Fire Marshall and the County Building Inspector found the inside stairway failed to meet required codes. The building inspector has condemned the stairway until it is rebuilt to code.

Response to Finding 3a.: *The respondent agrees with the finding.*

3b. Recommendation: Require the landlord to provide a proper inside stairway

Response to Recommendation 3b.: *The recommendation requires further analysis.* Although the respondent agrees with the finding, it is important to note that another covered stairway access exists on the outside of the building. The internal stairway has been blocked off with access now routed to the stairway on the outside of the building. This is considered to be a short term solution to access issues for the third story of this building. Because this is a leased facility, a commitment cannot be made by the County that an inside stairway will be considered. Staff within General Services will meet with the landlord before the winter to discuss alternatives, including construction of an inside stairway to the third story of this building.

4a. Finding: The basement furniture is dirty and worn. This room was a former swimming pool and has no windows.

Response to Finding 4a.: *The respondent agrees with the finding.*

4b. Recommendation: Purchase better furniture for the basement.

Response to Recommendation 4b.: *The recommendation has been implemented.*

5a. Finding: Clothing, boxes, bags, suitcases, etc, are stacked in corners and on counter tops. New tires (about 12) are stored in the corner of the main meeting room.

Response to Finding 5a.: *The respondent agrees with the finding.* Most of these items belong to participants in the Tahoe Opportunity Project (TOP), which is a program for homeless mentally ill people. Because the clients are homeless, they bring all their belongings with them to the facility for meetings. The Mental Health staff work to manage the clutter while remaining sensitive to the clients' situations.

5b. Recommendation: Provide lockers or cabinets for clients' belongings, and store tires at DOT.

Response to Recommendation 5b.: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.* The Mental Health Department has expressed that their staff and program clients

can manage these items without additional storage. Mental Health is working to get the tires moved to DOT. The facility was recently inspected by the State during a site visit, and passed.

6a. Finding: The front entrance is hazardous in the winter due to melting snow and ice falling off the roof. The outside basement entrance is a concrete stairwell where ice accumulates. The rear entrance is icy and uneven. Sign on outside building wall warns of falling ice and snow. This dangerous condition should not be allowed to exist. *See photo on page 26.*

Response to Finding 6a.: The respondent agrees with the finding.

6b. Recommendation: Ensure entrances and fire exits are free of ice and snow as needed (daily or hourly).

Response to Recommendation 6b.: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Department of General Services will meet with the Department of Mental Health and the landlord in an effort to resolve the issues associated with the buildup of ice and snow on the roof and walkways prior to winter storms (less than 6 months).

7a. Finding: The main door sticks. Pulling/pushing may result in slipping and/or falling.

Response to Finding 7a.: The respondent agrees with the finding.

7b. Recommendation: Request landlord to repair front door.

Response to Recommendation 7b.: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Staff within General Services will arrange to meet with the landlord and make the necessary repairs to the front door. Work to be completed within the next three months.

8a. Finding: Wood rot resulting in peeling paint under eaves was evident on the upstairs balcony.

Response to Finding 8a.: The respondent agrees with the finding.

8b. Recommendation: Request landlord to repair roof and gutter.

Response to Recommendation 8a.: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Department of General Services will notify the landlord of the problem with the current condition of the roof and gutter and make arrangements with the landlord to have the area repaired. Work to be completed within the next six months.

9a. Finding: The heating system results in a difference of 10 degrees between the basement and first floor and a similar difference between the first and second floors. The top floor is too warm while the basement is too cool. The multi-stage construction of this former private residence has resulted in inadequate air circulation with inadequate thermostat controls.

Response to Finding 9a.: The respondent agrees with the finding.

9b. Recommendation: Request landlord to improve heat and air circulation.

Response to Recommendation 9b.: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Staff within General Services will meet with the landlord in an effort to improve the heating and air circulation within this building. These efforts will be coordinated with the Department of Mental Health and every effort will be made to make improvements to the system. These actions will occur within the next 90 days.

10a. Finding: The second floor bathroom is under re-construction due to mold abatement.

Response to Finding 10a.: The respondent agrees with the finding.

10b. Recommendation: Ensure mold problems have been eliminated.

Response to Recommendation 10b.: The recommendation has been implemented. The subject work, mold abatement, was completed in April 2005. Testing for the presence of mold has been completed. Results indicate that mold has been abated.

MENTAL HEALTH and PUBLIC HEALTH BUILDINGS – Placerville

11a. Finding: The building at 344 Placerville Drive has numerous areas where carpet seams have separated and worn bumpy areas have erupted. Since May 2000 five accidents occurred in various county buildings due to carpet problems.

Response to Finding 11a.: The respondent agrees with the finding. It is important to note that the respondent agrees with the poor condition of the carpet in the subject building but does not have information confirming the number of accidents within county buildings relating to carpet problems, dating back to the year 2000.

11b. Recommendation: Replace “bumpy/worn” carpet as soon as possible to minimize County liability and prevent injury accidents/lawsuits.

Response to Recommendation 11b.: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. This is a leased facility. Staff within the Department of General Services have met with the landlord and plans are currently in place to replace the subject carpet, together with the painting of a portion of the interior of the building. Anticipated completion date of this work is 4 months from the date of this response.

12a. Finding: The Fire Marshall required inappropriate exit signs removed, and proper fire exits clearly marked. The “Fire Escape Routes” will be clearly posted.

Response to Finding 12a.: The respondent agrees with the finding.

12b. Recommendation: Inform employees of the necessity to keep Fire Exits clear. The Fire Marshall should perform unannounced inspections periodically.

Response to Recommendation 12b.: The recommendation has been implemented. The replacement of the signs has been completed and staff was informed of the need to keep the fire exits clear. These activities were completed during the month of May 2005. The performance of unannounced periodic inspections by the Fire Marshall are subject to the discretion of that individual and are out of the control of County staff.

13a. Finding: The building at 2808 Mallard Street is sometimes closed and locked during regular business hours, with no explanation posted on the locked door.

Response to Finding 13a.: The respondent agrees with the finding.

13b. Recommendation: Post hours open/closed for each day, when they vary from the regular business hours. This should go into effect immediately.

Response to Recommendation 13b.: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The building on Mallard Lane is referred to as the “annex”. It is the physical location for day rehabilitation and case management services, both of which can occur on and off site in the course of any work day. While the building is generally open and occupied during normal business hours, this is not always the case. Staff may be transporting clients to or from the facility or be providing case management services in the community. In addition, even if staff members are working in the building, there is not necessarily a receptionist at the front desk if clients are not expected. Participating clients and their families are well aware of this, and there have been no reported problems or complaints during the more than 13 years that this location has been in operation. Administrative offices, clinic reception, and crisis services are all located at the Placerville Drive site, which is always open and accessible during business hours.

14a. Finding: The Mallard Street building is generally well maintained. The kitchen area was cluttered but clean. The office layout, meeting rooms and general traffic flow promote efficient service to clients.

Response to Finding 14a.: The respondent agrees with the finding.

14b. Commendation: The Grand Jury commends the staff at 2808 Mallard Lane for their friendly and helpful environment.

SENIOR CENTER – Placerville Spring Street Complex

15a. Finding: Access to the Spring Street Complex is via a narrow road, Robin Court.

Response to Finding 15a.: The respondent agrees with the finding.

15b. Recommendation: Construct a proper encroachment on Robin Court per County specifications.

Response to Recommendation 15b.: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.* The encroachment of Robin Court with Tunnel Street has adequate sight distance, surfacing and width. It meets County and/or City Standards. There exists a short section of Robin Court that has a narrow width, approximately 15 feet. That portion of the road provides access to the Spring Street Facility together with three private residences. Traffic from the Spring Street Facility is directional, one way, while traffic from the residences is in both directions. The area in question, the narrow portion, is limited in length. In an effort to limit the volume of two way traffic, a directional traffic sign, indicating “one way” and/or “do not enter” will be placed at the beginning of the County parking lot, which will help to further limit traffic volumes on this narrow section of roadway. Sign to be in place within 90 days of this response.

16a. Finding: Emergency shut-off valves and electrical sub-panels are poorly marked.

Response to Finding 16a.: *The respondent agrees with the finding.*

16b. Recommendation: Mark emergency shut-off valves and sub-panels.

Response to Recommendation 16b.: *The recommendation has not yet been implemented , but will be implemented in the future.* Staff within General Services will provide upgrades and additions to the markings of the emergency shut-off valves and sub-panels. This work will be completed within 90 days of this response.

ANIMAL CONTROL – South Lake Tahoe

17a. Finding: Architectural drawings have been done to remodel the existing buildings, and add a new building (per GJ Report 2003-2004). The County is in the process of purchasing adjacent land. Needed improvements should be completed by the end of 2005.

Response to Finding 17a.: *The respondent disagrees partially with the finding.* Drawings were substantially complete to remodel the existing building, which included the addition of a second story. There has been a change in the scope of work. Subsequently, a parcel of land became available, adjacent to the existing building which allowed the facility design to have a better single story building with greatly enhanced fenced areas and parking. The Department of General Services is in the process of purchasing the adjacent land, permit processing with TRPA and designing the new building additions. Improvements should be completed by midyear 2006.

17b. Recommendation: Complete improvements as soon as possible.

Response to Recommendation 17b.: *The recommendation has been implemented.* Staff within General Services have made every effort to complete the improvements as soon as possible. Anticipated completion date is midyear 2006.

JUVENILE HALL – Placerville / South Lake Tahoe

18a. Finding: The Placerville Juvenile Hall is well run and functions just under capacity with the opening of the new facility at South Lake Tahoe. The new facility at South Lake Tahoe is clean, modern and well run.

Response to Finding 18a.: The respondent agrees with the finding.

18b. Commendation: The Grand Jury commends both staffs for their efficiency.

GROWLERSBERG CONSERVATION CAMP – Georgetown

19a. Finding: Growlersberg is well run and in good condition, however, the woodworking shop, which offers excellent training to inmates, is not operating due to lack of funds.

19b. Recommendation: Make funds available for the woodwork shop.