

# **EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY 2013-2014**

## ***EL DORADO COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITIES INSPECTIONS***

Case Number GJ-13-03

### **REASON FOR THE REPORT**

Each year, the grand jury is mandated by California Penal Code §919(b) to “inquire into the conditions and management of the public prisons within the county.”

### **BACKGROUND**

Both South Lake Tahoe and Placerville have Juvenile Detention Centers. They are managed by the El Dorado County Probation Department. The South Lake Tahoe facility is relatively new (2005), while the Placerville facility was built in 1971. Both facilities can accommodate approximately 40 wards, and at the time of our inspection were at about 50% capacity. The average age of the wards is 13 years.

### **ACTIONS**

This grand jury conducted on-site inspections of the South Lake Tahoe Juvenile Detention Center on September 23, 2013, and the Placerville facility on October 21, 2013. We interviewed both staff and wards regarding the condition and management of the facilities.

### **FINDINGS**

1. Both facilities appeared to be well maintained.
2. Both facilities appeared to be well managed.
3. The kitchen areas were sanitary, and the menus indicate a variety of well-balanced meals.
4. We observed an abundance of programs for the wards, including substance abuse, life skills, work skills, aggression replacement training, goal setting, and a couple of girls only programs.
5. We were told that the local community is involved in providing bible study and church services. The Juvenile Services Council conducts various activities and parties monthly, especially during holidays.
6. Both facilities operate a school program with one principal who oversees Placerville and South Lake Tahoe teachers on staff. The curriculum is tied in to public schools, but specific needs of each ward are incorporated into the study plan. School is in session every weekday for all wards even if incarcerated for only one day.
7. Maintaining adequate female staff had been a problem, primarily at the South Lake Tahoe facility. Recent aggressive recruitment efforts have been effective in mitigating that problem.

8. In the Placerville facility, the south exercise area is not used due to drainage problems. There are cracks in the asphalt, the surface is uneven, and it is not covered. This causes the usable north area to be over-crowded.
9. The Placerville facility does not have a “sally port” (separate entrance for new wards). The public front door of the building is the only accommodation for all entrants. This lack of a separate entrance for new wards creates potential confidentiality and safety concerns.

## EVALUATION OF FINDINGS

We were impressed with the school principal and program manager. We commend the El Dorado County Probation Department for its wide array of schooling and behavior programs for the wards. We liked their stated goal for the kids: “Don’t Come Back”!

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Because of its age, the Placerville facility should be evaluated for replacement or extensive refurbishment.
2. The surface of the south exercise area at the Placerville facility should be repaired and an overhead cover installed.
3. A “sally port” (separate entrance for new wards) should be added to the Placerville facility.

## RESPONSES

Responses to both findings and recommendations in this Report are required by law in accordance with California Penal Code §933 and §933.05. Address responses to:

The Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury, presiding judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court, 1354 Johnson Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150.

This Report has been addressed to the El Dorado County Sheriff for review and response, and provided to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.

The Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court additionally requests that the responses be sent electronically as a “Word” file or “PDF” file to facilitate the economical and timely distribution of such responses. Please email responses to the El Dorado County Grand Jury at:

[courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org](mailto:courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org)