

EL DORADO COUNTY  
2015-2016 GRAND JURY  
REPORT



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**JUVENILE DETENTION  
FACILITIES INSPECTION**

CASE 15-10 • JUNE 9, 2016

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Public Release  
JUNE 24, 2016

# EL DORADO COUNTY 2015-2016 GRAND JURY

## *JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITIES INSPECTION*

Case 15-10 • June 9, 2016

The Grand Jury is authorized to visit and inquire into the conditions of any public prison within the county, including juvenile facilities, as outlined in Section 919 (b) of the California Penal Code. Safety and security are vital elements in operating any detention facility. An important aspect of a facility inspection is to ensure the proper programs are in place for the betterment of juvenile inmates, and that they are treated in a safe and humane way. Additionally, the El Dorado County Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission inspects juvenile facilities on an annual basis.

El Dorado County has juvenile facilities in South Lake Tahoe (SLT) and Placerville. Both are 40 bed facilities. Both are focused on juvenile rehabilitation and serve as locked detention facilities, holding both adjudicated, or convicted, and non-sentenced offenders. The South Lake Tahoe site is referred to as a Juvenile Treatment Center and Placerville as Juvenile Hall, yet the programs are the same.

Juvenile facilities face new challenges. They house more detainees today who are serious offenders, highly incorrigible and criminally-oriented requiring strict supervision not unlike adult offenders. These are not the juvenile offenders of the past, whose shenanigans resulted in a phone call for parents to come get them and take them home. Juveniles with minor offenses do not tend to be detained in the hall.

The Grand Jury observed the functions and services provided first-hand, bringing about a better understanding of law enforcement, corrections facilities and juvenile operations.

### **BACKGROUND**

It was important to the 2015-2016 Grand Jury to inspect the Placerville Juvenile Hall because the Probation Department is currently attempting to obtain adequate funding to replace the aging facility. The grand jury inspected the much newer (2004) and amply sized SLT Juvenile Treatment Center (JTC) because of concerns about mental health services at that facility. El Dorado County Mental Health stopped providing services at the JTC in August 2015. Tahoe Turning Point Mental Health has provided limited mental health services since that time, and the grand jury wanted to review how that contract was working.

### **METHODOLOGY**

- Reviewed juvenile facility inspection reports from the fire authority, medical and mental health administrator, building and grounds, registered dietitian, and education
- Reviewed Policy and Procedure manual
- Discussed grievances with the juveniles
- Interviewed administrators, staff and juveniles

- Reviewed Title 24 and Title 25 regulations for facility management
- Reviewed Board of State Community and Corrections (BSCC) website biannual report, laws and regulations, facility standards and operations and health inspections checklist
- Reviewed AB109 (2011) Community Corrections Partnership Plan for El Dorado County
- Reviewed reports of 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 El Dorado County Grand Juries

## **DISCUSSION**

The grand jury inspections at Placerville and South Lake Tahoe were of the juvenile detention facilities overseen by the Probation Department. The tour followed the processing path of a youth, starting in the receiving area, medical unit, housing areas, dining hall, common safety areas and both indoor and outdoor exercise areas. The Juvenile Court system provides guidance for the social and personal development of juveniles with systematic rehabilitation counseling and establishing life goals.

Juvenile detention centers provide valuable programs to decrease recidivism in youthful offenders, to increase their awareness of what is criminal behavior, increase their education level and provide a good foundation for life skills within society. Each juvenile is assigned to one of the available programs when sentenced and attends the program daily along with school provided by the El Dorado County Office of Education.

Programs available at both the Placerville and SLT facilities are the Matrix Model Alcohol and Drug treatment, the Matrix Model Relapse Prevention Program and Matrix Model Adolescent Education. Also available is the Family Reunification Program that encourages preservation of family values and ties to the family, reinforcing interpersonal skills, and positive values. The Challenge Program is only available at the Juvenile Treatment Center in SLT.

## **SOUTH LAKE TAHOE JUVENILE TREATMENT CENTER**

The SLT Treatment Center is in an exceptionally pleasant area surrounded by natural forest. The facility was built in 2004 to house forty minors; the current census is eight. It is well-kept. The staff take obvious pride in caring for the cleanliness and safety of the juvenile's environment. The exterior, grounds, exercise areas and playing fields are in good condition. The general cleanliness of the facility was noted. The common living areas are built for safety allowing supervised socialization, the sleeping areas are well lit and ventilated and general maintenance takes place at night

The Challenge Program, implemented in 2005 only at the SLT site, is a comprehensive evidence-based program including rehabilitation for alcohol and drugs, anger management, dynamic thinking skills, life skills and work success goals. It includes *girls circle* and *boys council*, separate support groups for each sex, and community work. Art programs, yoga, church and bible study are optional.

Also available are programs for work/school release, and individual/group counseling. Family and parent education is an integral part of all programs. The Challenge Program focuses on juvenile education rather than detention with reinforcement through behavior modification and an emphasis on changing criminal thinking with moral recognition therapy. It has four phases of mandatory school attendance with a research paper and a term paper required for completion.

Medical services include a private medical provider onsite six days a week and daily administration of medications. Minors can request medical care on their own. Barton Memorial Hospital provides emergency medical services.

Education services are provided by the El Dorado County Office of Education High School. It operates 26 hours a week having the California standards-based curriculum for grades 9 - 12. All high school requirements are met and all earned credits are transferrable throughout the state. The California High School exit exam is administered five times annually.

Nutritional service is excellent. There is a Registered Dietician on staff to oversee creation of the menus prepared in the onsite kitchen that exceeds Title 15 code and child nutrition standards.

*Petra* is a 15 month old Shepard-mix puppy trained in Nevada as an inmate prison dog. She is animal therapy at its finest giving the unconditional affection a dog can provide to each youth. The Nevada Humane Society has partnered with the Nevada prison system to allow inmates to raise puppies as hands-on therapy dogs. *Petra* is one of the first therapy dogs to be placed in a juvenile facility.

### **SLT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

El Dorado County (EDC) Mental Health had provided juvenile psychiatric services, including medication and emergency services, to the Juvenile Treatment Center (JTC) until services were discontinued in August 2015.

Probation contracted with Tahoe Youth and Family Services (TYFS) to provide mental health care at the JTC. TYFS currently, provides 10 hours per week of individual and group counseling by two mental health therapists. That level of service is inadequate. SLT mental health providers have been struggling to adequately provide the number of appointment hours needed.

The JTC Mental Health program coordinator, employed by Probation, also provides some counseling services; however, an additional 20 hours per week would best meet the needs of the youths. Currently, appointments are only available Monday mornings and all day Wednesday. Tahoe Youth and Family Services provides quality services with individual and group counseling, and the alcohol and drug program. However, there are inadequate appointment times available to meet the needs of all the youths.

In addition, there is a need for additional counseling hours to be available for grief and suicide intervention counseling. From time to time, EDC Mental Health Services has responded to a crisis situation, even though they no longer provide *regular* services. The JTC does the best they can with what's available to provide quality service, but availability is inadequate.

## PLACERVILLE JUVENILE HALL

Juvenile Hall in Placerville is a forty bed co-ed facility. The census was 19 on June 17, 2016; 12 males and 7 females The average population is 13 youths although it may vary frequently. It was 22 on June 13, 2016.

Entry is through the lobby; there is no real booking entrance. An interview space in the lobby area is where the juvenile's mental health, medical history and juvenile justice history is recorded and a pat down search is conducted. Juveniles as young as eight years old have been at the facility. After a juvenile is sentenced, he or she could stay in Juvenile Hall until they reach 21 years old. However, they are usually transferred to an adult facility after turning 18. El Dorado County also has contracts with neighboring counties to house juveniles.

An orientation packet is provided to all newly incarcerated youth. The packet materials are openly posted along with the schedule of activities. Grievance forms and a complaint/suggestion box is available for discrete use. There are two outdoor areas for exercise, one covered and one open.

While in residence, juveniles have a daily routine. They are awakened at 6:15 am. They clean their sleeping and living areas, and are ready for school by 7:55 am. Segregated showers are provided.

The Family Reunification Program has been in effect for 20 years and is reportedly having a positive effect on youth and family in the Placerville area. The current family-centered program moves away from an *institutional* setting to working with juveniles as they return to their families. There is an emphasis on assisting a juvenile's community integration with both family counseling, and drug and alcohol counseling. The program assessment includes the latest matrix-modeled programs to meet the needs of youthful offenders geared toward reunification with their family and reintroduction into society with better education and job skills. Assistance is available to youths getting their California ID card, if necessary.

Educational services are provided at Golden Ridge School, an El Dorado County Office of Education High School. A classroom is used as a study hall having individual desks for students. An El Dorado High School woodshop class built desks with side walls to help students stay focused on their own work. School classes and study hall are held each week day. Library materials and textbooks are available in the *group* room during off-school hours. All earned school credits are transferrable.

Mental health services are currently provided by New Morning Youth and Family Services. A major concern with mental health services in Placerville is the lack of private space to conduct therapy. Confidentiality is extremely important in drug/alcohol and mental health therapy, however, due to space constraints, mental health staff share one office with two desks without much privacy when youth are being counseled.

The security camera system has been updated to cover the facility entrance, stairs and the hallway leading to the juvenile court stairway. The new camera system has doubled the number of cameras to 32, and recordings can now be saved for up to three months.

## **PLACERVILLE JUVENILE HALL GRANT**

The facility was built in 1969 and is now outdated. In December 2014, a facility needs assessment determined the juvenile hall was not up to date, was near end of life and not able to be repurposed. SLT was not included because it is a newer facility.

A grant application to fund a new 40 bed facility was submitted to the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC). In January 2015, the BSCC found the application was in compliance with the criteria and accepted the application. In April 2015, the BSCC stated the grant award would be \$9.6 million from SB81 state funding. The original 40 bed facility would cost approximately \$19 million, having the county fund \$9.4 million.

The BSCC allowed the county to amend the application to a downsized 20 bed facility in March 2016. The BSCC approved it and allowed the county to maintain the available \$9.6 million grant for the reduced size facility. The reduced facility is estimated to cost \$10 million; with the \$9.6 million grant, the county's required 5% funding match would be approximately \$500,000. Currently, the project is pending review by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors. The county must identify and select a construction site to locate the new facility that is appropriate. Preliminary planning for the new facility have been developed.

It appears that a 20 bed facility will not accommodate enough youths all the time. However, the Probation Chief assured the grand jury that there are options available, including sending some youths to the SLT JTC where there is ample space. Further, the proposed 20 bed facility will be designed with the infrastructure (such as kitchen, medical and common space) for 40 beds. The site and the design will allow the future construction of an additional 20 bed space.

## **FINDINGS**

- F1. The Placerville Juvenile Hall, built almost 50 years ago, is an outdated and outmoded facility.
- F2. The existing Placerville Juvenile Hall does not have adequate space devoted to the provision of confidential mental health services. Having multiple clients being counseled in the same room does not provide adequate privacy for those services.
- F3. The mental health services available in the JTC are inadequate. While the quality of service provided by TYFS seems good, there are not enough service hours available to serve all the youth needing services.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- R1. Continue the progress by obtaining approval from the Board of Supervisors for a new 20 bed facility that will meet the immediate needs of our youthful offenders.
- R2. Improve mental health services for youth in the SLT JTC by increasing the hours the outside contractor provides to 20 hours per week.

## **REQUEST FOR RESPONSES**

Responses to both findings and recommendations in this report are required by law in accordance with California Penal Code §933 and §933.05 from the Eldorado County Chief Probation Officer on or before August 23, 2016.

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

The Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court additionally requests that responses be sent electronically as a *Word* or *PDF* file to facilitate the economical and timely distribution of such responses. Please email responses to El Dorado County Grand Jury reports to: [courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org](mailto:courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org).

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.