

Solano County Justice Center and Claybank Detention Facilities

2007-2008 Solano County Grand Jury

Reason for Inspection

California Penal Code section 919 subdivision (b) provides: “The grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of public prisons within the county.” Pursuant to the statute, the 2007-2008 Grand Jury inspected the Solano County Justice Center and the Claybank Detention Facilities.

Grand Jury Actions

- Inspected and toured Solano County Justice Center and Claybank Detention Facility October 2007
- Interviewed Solano County Sheriff and senior staff
- Observed and talked with inmates

Background/Inspection

Facilities and Staff

The Solano County Sheriff’s Office Custody Division manages two detention facilities: The Solano County Justice Center Detention Facility (Justice Center) and the Claybank Detention Facility (Claybank).

The Justice Center was designed as a low risk pre-sentenced facility used for those awaiting arraignment and trial. It opened in 1989 with a 537 bed capacity. Modifications were made in 1999 to increase the capacity to 740 beds.

The Claybank Facility was originally designed for the detention of those who were convicted and sentenced. It opened in 1979 with a 203 bed capacity. As a result of double bunking and remodeling, the capacity has been increased to 411 beds. Increases in the number of inmates have resulted in housing more dangerous inmates at Claybank.

Several capital projects will be completed at the Justice Center this year. They include roof replacement, refacing the building, elevator electronic upgrade, a pipe replacement project and a shower refurbishment project.

An expansion project at the Claybank Facility is scheduled to break ground in April of 2008. The original plan called for eight units with a capacity of 512 beds. The configuration was changed to save money. Instead of eight units, the configuration was changed to seven units but the capacity will remain at 512 beds. The effect of this change will result in more inmates housed in fewer units. The expansion is designed to house inmates who require maximum security. It includes administration, laundry, dining areas, medical offices, video visitation area and multi-purpose classrooms.

In April 2007, AB900 which provided for major reforms to California's overburdened prison system was passed. This legislation provides funding for state prisons and county jail facilities. The Justice Center staff consists of 166 correctional officers and one facility lieutenant. The Claybank facility consists of 50 correctional officers and one facility lieutenant.

Detention Facility Programs

The Threat Assessment Team is a workgroup that identifies and evaluates the severity of any situation that poses a threat to staff, inmates, facilities or the surrounding community. The team develops and implements action plans designed to mitigate threats and insure the safe operation of the facilities. The team also disseminates information. It reviews and updates policies and procedures and evaluates training requirements.

The Custody Response Team is a highly trained 15 person team that responds to incidents. One member of the team is trained to quickly defuse a situation using Tasers. Each incident is videotaped by a camera mounted on the helmet of the lead person. The group started in October 2002 and was called out 35 times between January and October of 2007. The program is extremely successful. There have been no staff or inmate injuries, no facility damage and no litigation. Money has been saved by avoiding the costs associated with injuries and facility damage.

The Facilities Search Team (FST) is one of only three in the United States and consists of specially trained individuals who search for contraband. It consists of 20 search operators, one K-9 unit and one sergeant. The team operates as a large 22-member team or a small three-member team. The size of the team depends on the specific mission. This versatility has enabled the team to operate efficiently and effectively.

The team is dedicated to keeping the detention facilities contraband free creating a safe environment for inmates and staff. A safe environment reduces the opportunity for inmate assaults, violence and disruption of the rehabilitation process. The team conducts detailed meticulous searches of all areas in and around the detention facilities. The FST conducted 17 operations between July 1, 2007 and September 30, 2007 resulting in the discovery of numerous unauthorized/contraband items.

The Custody Division strives for continuous process improvement through a system of work groups. These groups review the following processes: bookings, cell searches, facility inspections, re-integration, policy and procedure review process and computer network. Employees are encouraged to bring new ideas to the group. This year a new stab vest is being tested. While vests to deter bullets have been used for years, a vest to prevent injury from sharp weapons has been difficult to create.

Claybank Programs

Claybank provides programs to help those serving sentences of one year or less to be successful when they are released. The Drug/Alcohol treatment program helps inmates deal with drug and alcohol problems. It provides group and individual counseling. The Foster Kitty Care program helps the Animal Shelter by caring for kittens that are too young to be adopted. Inmates feed and care for the kittens until they are at least two pounds and then return them to the shelter for adoption. A limited GED and literacy program is provided when instructors are available. The Recovery 2 program is a self-help therapeutic program that involves group and individual

discussions. Two chaplains teach Bible studies, Bible correspondence, personal crisis intervention, perform marriages and provide religious services. The Institutional Homeless Case Management program is available for inmates in custody for 30 days or more. The program provides re-entry services, transitional housing, financial aid, medical assistance and drug/alcohol treatment for those who will be homeless upon release. A pilot program implemented in October 2007 provides released offenders a 10 to 14 day supply of prescription medication. This ensures continuation of medications while applying for Medicare.

Future plans include a “hand off” program for those who are released and need assistance from other county programs. This assistance is intended to make individuals more successful.

Minimum security inmates incarcerated at the Claybank Facility are eligible to receive day for day credits for each day they participate in the work programs. Work programs are designed to provide jobs for inmates within the facility and in the community. Inmates can be assigned to a variety of jobs including cleaning, commissary duties, kitchen duties, laundry work, serving on work crews along the highways and providing maintenance at the fairgrounds.

A garden run by inmates provides some food for inmate meals and provides donations to the Solano County Food Bank and the school lunch program. A portion of this facility also houses inmates eligible for work furlough, work education and other programs involving inmate access to the community.

The Alternative Sentencing program includes work furlough, work release, and electronic home monitoring. The program is designed to assist not only the participants but also the Sheriff’s Office and Solano County by allowing low risk offenders the opportunity to serve their court ordered sentences out of custody. The offenders are allowed to remain a productive member of the community while supporting themselves and their families. Before an inmate can participate in the program a thorough background check is completed to assess any threat to the community. Each applicant is considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Work Furlough program allows the participants to be housed in custody and to leave the facility for the purpose of employment or accredited education. The maximum allowable time outside the facility is 12 hours per day.

The Work Release program allows each participant to perform physical labor at a Solano County approved and assigned worksite for approximately eight hours per day. Each day worked takes a day off the participant’s sentence.

The most restrictive of all the Alternative programs is the Electronic Home Monitoring. It requires an employer verification of schedules, verification of wages, Workman’s Compensation insurance, random drug tests, tenant agreements, valid transportation, a home telephone and compliance with random home checks. Each individual is monitored 24 hours per day and non-compliance is reported promptly. These programs provide relief for jail overcrowding and save the County money. This year the Electronic Monitoring Program saved taxpayers over \$2.5 million and the Work Release Program has saved \$162,000.

Population

The average daily inmate population grew from 722 in January 1999 to 1,131 in April 2007. There are several reasons for this increase including an increase in the population in Solano County, changes in legislation, the availability of drugs and an increase in gang activity.

Findings and Recommendations

Finding 1 - One unit was eliminated from the expansion of the Claybank Facility to save money.

Recommendation 1 - The Board of Supervisors should reconsider its decision to eliminate a unit from the Claybank Detention Facility expansion. The additional construction costs will be cheaper today than in the future and AB 900 may provide supplemental funds.

Finding 2 - The Sheriff and his staff are doing a commendable job.

Recommendation 2 - The Sheriff and his staff should continue to maintain high standards demonstrated through their innovative programs and well run facility.

Comments

The Solano County Sheriff's Office staff strives for continuous improvement as it provides safe, humane and secure jails. Facilities are clean and well kept. Staff morale is good.

Affected Agencies

- Solano County Sheriff's Office
- Solano County Board of Supervisors