



**SOLANO COUNTY GRAND JURY  
2011-12**

**California State Prison-Solano**

# **CALIFORNIA STATE PRISON-SOLANO**

2011-12 Solano County Grand Jury

## **I. SUMMARY**

The Solano County Grand Jury is required by Penal Code to inquire into the condition and management of all prison facilities in the County. California State Prison-Solano is operated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The Grand Jury had three concerns: lack of sports equipment for the recreational use of the prisoners; excessive amount of overtime needed to run the prison; and illegal use of cell phones by inmates in the prison.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

The primary mission of California State Prison-Solano (CSP-SOLANO), which is located in Vacaville, is to provide custody, care and treatment, and rehabilitative programs for inmates committed to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) by the courts. CSP-SOLANO was designed as a medium-security prison to provide housing for general population inmates.

CSP-SOLANO houses Level II and Level III inmates. Level III inmates are considered higher risk, requiring additional security. The security level assigned to an inmate is based on an individual assessment of the inmate's criminal history, prior incarceration history, current commitment offense, and behavior during incarceration.

The housing units consist of four separate facilities, with Level III inmates assigned to Facilities One and Two, and Level II inmates assigned to Facilities Three and Four. The institution also contains a 400-bed Administrative Segregation Unit used to house inmates away from the general population because of disciplinary or other reasons, and a 16-bed Correctional Treatment Center licensed by the California Department of Health Services to provide both medical beds and mental health beds for inmates.

CSP-SOLANO was built in 1984. The original institution was designed to hold 2,610 inmates. One thousand beds were added in 1996 to the Level II dormitory facility, bringing the institutional capacity to 3,610 inmates. At the time of the Grand Jury's visit on September 19, 2011, the inmate population was 5,200, which was 144% of capacity. Pursuant to Penal Code §919(b) the 2011-12 Solano County Grand Jury inspected CSP-SOLANO.

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

The Grand Jury:

- Interviewed the CSP-SOLANO Warden, assistant wardens, all captains, and all department heads
  - Reviewed inspection reports issued by various agencies
-

- Reviewed correspondence and documents provided by CSP-SOLANO staff in response to written follow-up questions from the Grand Jury
- Toured and inspected the institution on September 19, 2011 and November 14, 2011
- Toured and inspected the Prison Industry Authority enterprises
- Reviewed the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation website
- Reviewed all departmental budgets
- Reviewed Correctional Standard audits

#### **IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS**

Fiscal Year 2010-11, the facility employed a total of 1,350 staff, reduced by 64 positions from the previous year. CSP-SOLANO management has been ordered under a State directive, Assembly Bill 109 (AB109), to cut employees to 1,085 as a result of reduction to inmate population. The prison administration expressed concern over staffing cuts. Staff stated that these cuts have lowered their morale.

During the inspection of the prison, the Grand Jury inspected housing units for Level II and Level III inmates, food facilities, and medical facilities including the 16-bed Correctional Treatment Center which contained beds for both medical and mental health inmates. The Grand Jury also toured the enterprises operated by the Prison Industry Authority (PIA), which includes an optical program, a metal fabrication plant, and a bindery.

The PIA employs and trains inmates, enhancing their ability to obtain employment upon their release from prison. PIA operates three self-supporting enterprises. Due to budget cuts, the waiting list to participate in PIA has increased to 635 inmates, which extends the time for an inmate to get into the program. All qualified inmates are interviewed before they are accepted into the programs. Inmates are paid a small wage, and the money can be spent on food and other personal items. PIA enterprises can only perform work for tax-supported entities.

The PIA programs are:

- **Metal Fabrication:** This enterprise program produces a variety of furniture used in detention facilities, such as metal shelving and lockers. It also produces equipment for Caltrans, including snowplow components, truck bodies, and hydraulic tanks.
- **Bindery:** This enterprise program produces different kinds of ring binders, folios, diploma covers, business card/ID holders, CDCR health files and central files (an inmate's official record), placards for Caltrans, and disabled person placards for the Department of Motor Vehicles.
- **Optical Lab:** This enterprise program manufactures prescription eyewear for distribution to Medi-Cal recipients, prison inmates, Division of Juvenile Justice wards, state hospital patients, and various State agency employees. The Optical Lab currently has one inmate certified as a Master Optician.

CSP-SOLANO offers a variety of inmate yard time activities and self-help programs to assist in rehabilitation with the intent of reducing recidivism and increasing public safety. These programs are operated or coordinated by paid staff sponsors and/or community volunteers. Staff also stated that there is a lack of recreational equipment for inmates' use. This, along with frequent lockdowns, may lead to situations such as fights and riots, according to staff.

During interviews of prison staff, the Grand Jury learned that CSP-SOLANO spent \$40,000 weekly or \$2,200,000 annually on overtime. This overtime translates to 28 full-time positions. CSP-SOLANO staff stated that most of the overtime was used to transport inmates to medical appointments outside of the facility. The overtime problem is a result of the confluence of two things, both requiring increased medical care to inmates: the inmate population is aging, and inmates engaged in various behaviors prior to incarceration that made them susceptible to major illnesses. Increased staff duties as a result of implementing the *Plata v. Schwarzenegger* decision also led to the use of more overtime. *Plata* involved an inmate challenge in Federal Court to the sufficiency of health care in California prisons. The *Plata* Court decision found that inmates were not receiving adequate care while in custody, and ordered CDCR to institute major changes in the delivery of health care to inmates.

All inmate medical transportation outside the facility requires a minimum of two guards per transport. Custody staff is routinely reassigned from their duties within the facility and assigned to transport prisoners to medical appointments. This reduction of staff at the facility results in frequent lockdowns of inmates that may result in increased tension within the prison population.

CSP-SOLANO staff stated there is a problem with cell phones being smuggled in by staff members and vendors for inmates' illegal use. According to CDCR statistics, 672 cell phones were confiscated at CSP-SOLANO during the calendar year 2011. This can be a safety issue for prisoners, staff, and community because it facilitates criminal activities. Staff said that the use of a product called "Managed Cell Phone System," which restricts unauthorized cell phone use by blocking signals within the facility, would be a solution.

## **V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**Finding 1** – There is a lack of sports equipment for the prisoners.

**Recommendation 1** – CSP-SOLANO is advised to allocate community outreach resources more effectively and coordinate with the community to get donated equipment.

**Finding 2** – There are excessive overtime costs and frequent lockdowns caused by medical transport.

**Recommendation 2** – CSP-SOLANO utilize one correctional officer and a contracted driver for medical transport.

**Finding 3** – Inmates' possession and use of cell phones create safety issues for the prison as well as the community.

**Recommendations 3 – CSP-SOLANO is advised to acquire and implement the “Managed Cell Phone System.”**

**COMMENTS**

The staff appeared to be managing the California State Prison-Solano well, in light of the inmate populations exceeding capacity and the present budget restrictions.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

None

**COURTESY COPIES:**

Secretary, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation  
Warden, California State Prison-Solano  
State Senator Lois Wolk, 5<sup>th</sup> District  
Assemblymember Mariko Yamada, 8<sup>th</sup> District  
Solano County Board of Supervisors  
Mayor, City of Vacaville