



Mendocino County Juvenile Hall February 21, 2006

Summary

In accordance with duties required, the Mendocino County Grand Jury visited the Mendocino County Juvenile Hall (MCJH).

Background

California Penal Code Section §919 (b) states that "The Grand Jury may inquire into the conditions and management of the public prisons within the county." Juvenile Halls fall under this directive, so the 2005/2006 Mendocino County Grand Jury undertook their charge with visits to the MCJH.

Methods

The Grand Jury toured the MCJH, including the cells, recreation areas, education facilities and dining facilities. The Grand Jury reviewed the inspection document for compliance with the Minimum Standards for Local Juvenile Facilities, California Code of Regulations, issued by the Corrections Standards Authority. The jury also interviewed supervisory personnel and staff.

Findings

1. The majority of crimes committed by juveniles in Mendocino County are property crimes and alcohol/drug offenses.
2. Approximately 75% of the juveniles returning to MCJH have violated probation, mostly for drug and/or alcohol offenses.
3. In general, juveniles can be sentenced up to one year in MCJH.
4. Juveniles sentenced to more than one year generally serve their sentence at a California Youth Authority (CYA) facility.
5. Approximately three inmates a year go to CYA from Mendocino County.
6. MCJH had 681 bookings in the calendar year of 2005.

7. The maximum inmate capacity for MCJH is 43, with an approximate daily average of 41 inmates.
8. It costs approximately \$160 a day to house an inmate.
9. Parents or guardians are charged \$15 a day towards costs of incarceration, with a maximum of \$750 per stay.
10. Approximately 30% of the amount billed to parents or guardians is actually collected.
11. The staff turnover rate at the MCJH is very low.
12. At the time of the Grand Jury's visit, two staff members were bilingual in English and Spanish.
13. Funds budgeted to cover anticipated costs of mandated training for future hires are insufficient.
14. West Hills School, which is located at MCJH, is operated by the Mendocino County Office of Education.
15. JH inmates can earn a high school diploma or a GED and earn college credit.
16. Proceeds from the inmates' payphones at MCJH are used exclusively for youth programs, including recreational equipment and magazine subscriptions.
17. There are Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) programs available for MCJH inmates.
18. There currently is no work program available to which the courts can refer youth in Mendocino County.
19. A previously funded Mendocino County work program was demonstrated to be effective and beneficial in the rehabilitation of juveniles.
20. A work program can serve as an effective court diversion for youth who otherwise would be in MCJH.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

1. additional funding be budgeted for mandated training of MCJH staff. (Finding 13)
2. a work program for juvenile offenders be reinstated (a recommendation also made in the Mendocino County Grand Jury report on the MCJH of 2004-05). (Findings 18, 19, 20)

Comments

According to Mendocino County law enforcement personnel, gang activity is increasing drastically; the implications of that for MCJH are extensive and serious.

The Grand Jury found the facility to be clean and safe and wishes to commend the staff and administration of the MCJH for their excellent work despite budgetary constraints.

It has been estimated that a limited work program for juvenile offenders in the Ukiah Valley could be implemented for \$70,000, to be operational within three weeks of funding. A fully funded county-wide program would cost approximately \$280,000, the same amount budgeted in the past. The Grand Jury believes that such a program would significantly reduce costs to the County for MCJH as well as other programs.

Response Required

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors (Findings 3, 8, 9, 10, Recommendations 1, 2)
Mendocino County Juvenile Hall Facility Manager (Findings 3, 8, 9, 10, Recommendations 1, 2)
Mendocino County Chief Probation Officer (Findings 8, 9, 10, Recommendation 2)
Judge, Mendocino County Juvenile Court (Findings 8, 9, 10, Recommendation 2)