

Mendocino County Jail, Courthouse Holding Cells, and Fort Bragg Sheriff's Holding Cells

Summary

In accordance with duties required, the Grand Jury visited the Mendocino County Jail (MCJ), the Mendocino County Courthouse Holding Cells, and the Fort Bragg Sheriff's Holding Cells.

Background

California Penal Code Section § 919 (b) states that "The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county." The 2004-2005 Mendocino County Grand Jury undertook their charge with visits to the Mendocino County Jail, the Mendocino County Courthouse Holding Cells, and the Fort Bragg Sheriff's Holding Cells.

Methodology

The Grand Jury toured the Mendocino County Jail Facility, including the Sally Port (inmate delivery) and Booking Area, and the Holding Cells in the Courthouse and Fort Bragg. The Grand Jury interviewed Jail personnel: officers, medical personnel, education instructors, and kitchen staff.

Findings

1. The MCJ is currently understaffed at 39 Corrections Deputies, although the County Budget provides funding for 44.
2. The MCJ can currently accommodate 302 inmates.
3. A new 64-bed addition to the MCJ is expected to open in July, 2006.
4. The MCJ has two padded Safety Cells in the men's wing.
5. A doorframe in one of the men's Safety Cells is missing padding and poses a safety concern.
6. The MCJ has one padded Safety Cell in the women's wing.
7. The MCJ Holding Cells do not contain television or any other means of occupying inmate time.
8. There is continuing staff turnover at the MCJ because the patrol division is considered more desirable work.
9. The Booking Area lacks adequate organizational space for efficient use.
10. There is only one MCJ Booking Officer per shift.
11. A new electronic control board for monitoring and controlling inmate activity was recently installed.
12. The remote video monitoring station has a digital video recorder to monitor inmate behavior and provide staff liability protection.
13. In the coming year, MCJ will provide video conferencing for remote attorney/client consultation and family visitation.
14. A renovation of the laundry room has not been completed.
15. Classroom education and computer lab instruction under the direction of the Ukiah Adult School are offered to inmates.

16. A Life Skills class, offered through the Ford Street Project, includes instruction in anger management, health, and abusive behavior reduction.
17. Inmates may attend on site meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.
18. Religious services are available to the inmates.
19. The money generated from MCJ pay phones, through a service provider contract, defrays the cost of Inmate Services.
20. There is a significant number of outstanding maintenance issues.
21. The Courthouse Holding Cells now provide space for attorney/client consultation.
22. Graffiti exist on holding cell walls in Ukiah and Fort Bragg.
23. A significant number of the transients arriving in Mendocino County further stress the criminal justice system.
24. Since the closure of the Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) in November, 2000, many of the individuals who would have been served at that location are now under the care of the MCJ, at a higher cost to Mendocino County.
25. The kennel used for detainees' dogs at the Fort Bragg Holding Facility is not clean.

Recommendations

1. The Grand Jury recommends that the staffing for 54 Corrections Deputies be implemented upon completion of the new MCJ addition. (Findings 1 and 3)
2. The Grand Jury recommends that the doorframe of the Safety Cell be repaired. (Finding 5)
3. The Grand Jury recommends that the MCJ increase the number of Safety Cells from three to ten. The men's wing needs four additional cells and the women's wing needs three additional cells. (Findings 4 and 6)
4. The Grand Jury recommends that the MCJ provide television in Holding Cells. (Finding 7)
5. The Grand Jury recommends that an assistant be available to allow the Booking Officer to efficiently perform required duties. (Finding 10)
6. The Grand Jury recommends that the MCJ complete renovation of the laundry area. (Finding 14)
7. The Grand Jury recommends that the MCJ's maintenance problems be addressed and solved with adequate funding to Building and Grounds. (Finding 20)
8. The Grand Jury recommends that the graffiti on the walls of the Courthouse Holding Cells and the Fort Bragg Holding Cells be removed. (Finding 22)
9. The Grand Jury recommends that further study be done to resolve the costly problem created by the closure of the PHF, with particular consideration given to the establishment of dual-diagnosis beds. (Finding 24)
10. The Grand Jury recommends that a policy be established to ensure timely cleaning of the Fort Bragg dog kennels. (Finding 25)

Comments

The three major reasons for inmates coming to MCJ are substance abuse, theft, and domestic violence. Ninety-nine percent of these inmates have problems related to alcohol, other drugs, or mental health issues. Methamphetamine is a factor in 80% of the arrests in the County. The use of this drug increases the combative and suicidal tendencies in the inmate population. The use of Methamphetamine is a primary factor in the higher rate of women incarcerated. There is an increase of indigent inmates in MCJ during the cold winters and hot summers.

The Booking Officer needs an assistant to answer telephone calls and take messages in regard to bail-related matters, court appearances, attorneys, and other relevant matters. This would increase the efficiency of the booking process. The recently installed electronic control board ensures the reliable function of all the security doors in the facility.

Jail personnel do an excellent job of providing basic custody services with available facilities and funds.

Response Required

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
Mendocino County Sheriff

Response Requested

Mendocino County Building and Grounds Director