

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT RESPONSE
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY 2004-2005 GRAND JURY
A SOBERING THOUGHT

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDING 1

The Sobering Center has four major benefits:

- *Saves Booking Fees and other jail-related costs*
- *Reduces overcrowding in the County jail*
- *Improves public safety by promptly returning police officers to patrol duties*
- *Provides a humane alternative for those temporarily under the influence of alcohol.*

Response to Finding 1

The Sheriff's Department disagrees with this finding with respect to the communities for which we provide law enforcement services.

There is no cost savings to be found in the induction of booking fees, as the Sheriff's Department does not pay booking fees for those arrested by Sheriff's deputies in unincorporated areas of the county or for those arrested in our contract cities. Other jail related expenses would be minimal as the only cost savings would be the expense of the paperwork involved with the booking, other costs are already absorbed in the normal day-to-day operations of a jail.

While it is true that the jail is overcrowded, inmates that would normally qualify for a sobering center would not add to the overcrowding conditions, as these inmates remain in a holding cell until sober and thereafter released on a "Promise to Appear" or without charges, per 849(b) of the Penal Code.

The intake process, for the arresting officer, is not much longer than the process would be for taking a detainee to a sobering center. The jail prides itself in the "turn-around" time it takes to get a patrol officer back to their patrol duties.

While we realize there are other arrangements that may accommodate human comforts, we take exception with the implication that the jail somehow provides a less than humane setting for those temporarily under the influence of alcohol. On the contrary, those arrestees brought into the jail found to be under the influence receive a pre-booking examination by jail medical personnel prior to admission. If there are any medical concerns identified with an arrestee, the arrestee is transported to a hospital, examined and treated by competent medical staff for any immediate medical needs, and returned to the jail for admission. If the medical problem is of a serious nature, the arrestee is released on a "Promise to Appear" and transported to a hospital for admission.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Other Santa Barbara County communities should establish similar sobering centers.

Response to Recommendation 1

This recommendation will not be implemented within the unincorporated areas of Santa Barbara County, or within the cities wherein there exists a contract for law enforcement services with the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department.

As aforementioned, the Sheriff's Department will not find a significant cost savings in this recommendation, and implementation will not reduce jail overcrowding given the particulars of this recommendation, namely those held until sober do not count toward overcrowding as they are released prior to a housing assignment. Again, it is our belief that Sheriff's patrol deputies promptly and expeditiously return to their duties under our current arrangements and the opening of a sobering center would not enhance the overall timeliness of their actions. Finally, the Sheriff's Department offers a safe and secure holding facility as directed and regulated by the Board of Corrections. We believe the conditions and treatment available to everyone received into our facilities adheres to the standard of excellence prescribed by this regulating authority.