

DETENTION FACILITIES REPORT

SUMMARY

Under California Penal Code, Section 919(b), the Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the “public prisons” within the county. This report contains results of the inspection of the jails, and detention and coroner facilities, by the 2009-10 Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury (Jury).

In the Jury’s opinion, all facilities are well managed and the staff of each facility performs well with limited resources. This Jury’s observations concerning the manner in which these agencies conduct their affairs are all positive. Particularly worthy of praise is the Los Prietos Boys Camp and Academy for its success in the academic aspects of its multifaceted approach to juvenile rehabilitation. The Jury will file separate reports on the overcrowding of the Santa Barbara County Main Jail and on the two deaths that occurred at that facility during this Jury’s tenure.

METHODOLOGY

Inspections were conducted of each location listed below. Teams comprised of two or more jurors conducted these evaluative inspections. Facilities are separated into three categories: (1) the Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Department (Sheriff) including the Coroner, (2) municipal police departments, and (3) the Santa Barbara County Probation Department (Probation). In some instances on-site visits occurred more than once. Staff at all locations was interviewed, inquiries relevant to operations were made, and documents specific to organizational rules and procedures were reviewed. Wards of the court were also interviewed.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Department:

The Sheriff maintains the adult detention facilities and substations within the county and operates the Main Jail for the detention of persons going through various phases of the judicial system. The Sheriff also oversees the Coroner’s Bureau.

Jury members visited the following facilities:

- Main Jail, Santa Barbara
- Coroner’s Bureau
- Sheriff’s Jail in Santa Maria
- Sheriff’s Substation, Isla Vista
- Sheriff’s Substation Solvang
- Sheriff’s Court Holding facility, Figueroa Street
- Sheriff’s Substation, Santa Ynez

- Sheriff's Court Holding facility, Lompoc
- Sheriff's Court Holding facility, Santa Maria

The Jury found each of the Sheriff's facilities well managed and operated in a professional manner. The new state-of-the-art Isla Vista substation serves the community well and can be adapted to deal with increased law enforcement activities during Halloween as well as other events.

Municipal Police Departments

Members of the Jury inspected holding facilities in Lompoc and Santa Maria. The Jury found that each of these municipal departments manages its jail operations in an exemplary manner.

Santa Barbara County Probation Department

In addition to its other duties, Probation is responsible for three juvenile detention facilities:

- Juvenile Hall, Santa Barbara
- Susan J. Gionfriddo Juvenile Justice Center, Santa Maria
- Los Prietos Boys Camp and Academy

Youthful offenders placed in the custody of Probation may be sent to one of the above facilities for varying periods of time. These youths are considered wards of the court. The Jury visited each of these facilities, interviewed staff, reviewed documents describing facility operations and spoke with wards.

Of note is the Los Prietos Boys Camp and Academy. The results of the staff's commitment to the ideals of the camp and to the success of their wards are evident by the academic progress many of the wards achieve. Working with the Santa Barbara County Education Office, Los Robles High School (the camp school) bestowed high school diplomas on 14 young men in May 2009 and 22 young men in October 2009.

The Jury commends Probation for implementing the 2008-09 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury's recommendation to continue and strengthen existing mentoring programs in spite of budget shortfalls.¹ The Jury believes the mentorship programs are vital to youth rehabilitation.

The juvenile hall facility in Santa Barbara is significantly larger than usage warrants and the Jury is concerned it is being underutilized. The Jury is aware of the obstacles preventing that facility's conversion to adult detention. However, given the overcrowding problems faced by the main jail (see separate report), the Jury encourages Probation to work with other county agencies to develop creative ideas for a more efficient use of that space.

¹ May 8, 2009, Probation Department response to 2008-09 Jury recommendations