

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

### ***El Dorado County Juvenile Hall – Placerville***

#### **Reason for the Report**

California Penal Code authorizes and directs Grand Juries to inspect and report annually on operations of all public prisons located within the boundaries of each county.

#### **Scope of the Inspection**

Members of the Grand Jury inspected El Dorado County Juvenile Hall - Placerville on August 21, 2002 and April 9, 2003.

- Jury members met with the Chief Probation Officer and the Deputy Chief Probation Officer;
- The Chief Probation Officer and the Deputy Chief Probation Officer jointly conducted comprehensive tours of the facility with the Grand Jury Members
- Inspection reports were reviewed;
- The Principal/lead teacher/counselor and teachers were interviewed;
- Kitchen supervisor and assistants were interviewed;
- Several wards were interviewed;
- Grand Jury reports for 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 were reviewed.

#### **Background**

Juvenile Hall was built in 1971 as a “direct supervision” jail for juveniles (wards) where they have direct contact with the staff. The facility, originally built to house 22 juveniles, has been expanded to house 40. When necessary, extra beds are used to accommodate additional wards. Due to Court Orders capping the number of juveniles housed at the facility at 42, Court approval is required and obtained for all exceptions. Juvenile Hall has housed as many as 56. Due to space limitations, counselors, who are contracted, are required to meet with the wards in open activity areas.

While currently there are not any plans for new or expanded juvenile facilities in Placerville, plans are underway for a new juvenile hall in South Lake Tahoe. Groundbreaking for the new facility is scheduled for April 30, 2003, with completion anticipated in about a year. This new facility which will accommodate up to 40 juveniles will help alleviate the periodic overcrowding condition of the current Placerville juvenile facility.

Juvenile Hall is used to house both male and female juveniles between the ages of 8 to 19. On the date of the Jury’s last visit there was a total of 36 juveniles comprised of 29 male and 7 female. Of these juveniles, 25 were from the west slope, 10 from South Lake Tahoe and one from Alpine County. Juvenile Hall does on occasion house, by contract, juveniles from Amador and Alpine Counties. Amador County does not have a juvenile hall facility. Special arrangements have been

made with Alpine County to house four wards a year, one at a time, for 30-day drug/substance abuse treatment.

While the average stay is between 28 to 30 days, some juveniles may stay a day while others up to a year. Juveniles requiring longer detention time are placed at a youth ranch within California as directed by Court Order. In addition, some juveniles are placed on electronic house supervision, which allows them to stay in their homes and continue to go to school.

Four supervisors and 16 permanent line employees staff the facilities. The facilities appear neat, clean, and well run. However, it is in need of painting, as it has not been painted in seven years. New baseboards are needed in the entry, halls, and general-purpose gym. Cell #14 has a cracked door window. In addition, the HVAC vents in the classrooms are dirty.

Juvenile Hall has an outstanding school program administered on premises by the Principal/lead teacher/counselor with three teachers in two classrooms. Individual school programs are prepared and administered for each ward, including Special Education. Juveniles attend school Monday through Friday and weekly meet with a teacher to review the individual's progress in work packets. When juveniles are to be released, their next school is contacted to help provide a smooth transition. In most cases the juveniles are placed back in their previous school.

All food for the juveniles is prepared on premises by the kitchen supervisor and two cooks with clean up performed by the juveniles. Menus are planned for several weeks in advance, and reviewed annually for nutritional value by a contract dietician. Special meals are provided as needed for diet, doctor's orders, allergies, and religious needs with medical related requests approval by the facility nurse.

Medical needs are provided through contracted nursing services with a medical doctor on call. Mental health counseling is provided through contract. In addition drug/substance abuse programs are available. The health facility room has no running water; the nurse has no water to wash her hands between patients.

While the facility is constructed of non-flammable material, any fire could create smoke conditions, which could cause serious harm to anyone in the facility. This Grand Jury concurs with the 2001/2002 Grand Jury recommendations that air packs (emergency breathing apparatus) should be available on premises and staff trained in their use. During our review of all the other correction facilities in the County, with the exception of Juvenile Hall, air packs are available and staffs are trained in their proper use.

## **Findings**

F1. Adequate space is not available for individual counseling.

***Response to F1: The respondent agrees with the finding.***

F2. The facility needs painting.

***Response to F2: The respondent agrees with the finding.***

F3. The baseboards in the entry, halls and general-purpose gym need to be replaced.

***Response to F3: The respondent agrees with the finding.***

F4. Cell #14 door window is cracked.

***Response to F4: The respondent agrees with the finding.***

F5. The HVAC vents in the classrooms are dirty.

***Response to F5: The respondent agrees with the finding.***

F6. No running water is available in the health facility room.

***Response to F6: The respondent agrees with the finding.***

F7. Air packs are not available in case of fire.

***Response to F7: The respondent agrees with the finding.***

### **Recommendations**

R1. The facilities should be painted.

***Response to R1: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.*** A work order was filed with General Services on July 3, 2003 to have the interior of the Juvenile Hall painted. General Services is in the process of obtaining proposals/bids. The painting is expected to be complete on or before December 15, 2003.

R2. Baseboards should be replaced as needed.

***Response to R2: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.*** A work order was filed with General Services on June 30, 2003, to replace all damaged baseboards within the Juvenile Hall. Baseboards have been placed on order by General Services. Baseboards will be replaced as needed beginning October 1, 2003.

R3. Cell #14 door window should be replaced.

**Response to R3: The recommendation has been implemented.** The door window to Cell #4 was replaced on April 18, 2003.

- R4. The health facility room should have running hot and cold water and blankets.

**Response to R4: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is unreasonable.** The medical examination room is seriously lacking in square footage. Placing additional fixtures or storing additional items in an already undersized room is unreasonable. There are acceptable alternatives located in the immediate vicinity. The laundry room is directly across the hall, where blankets are available to the medical staff. When requested by medical personnel, Juvenile Hall staff have immediately provided blankets. Toilets and hot and cold running water are also available in the B-Wing bathroom and shower area located about 5-6 feet outside the clinic door and another restroom and sink is available in the B-Wing intake shower area directly next to the medical room. Although the medical examination room does not meet the new Title 24, California Code of Regulations pertaining to size and plumbing mandates, the Board of Corrections and California Youth Authority have “grandfathered” the medical examination room in our Juvenile Hall as acceptable.

- R5. The HVAC vents in the classrooms should be cleaned.

**Response to R5: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.** A work order was filed with General Services on July 10, 2003, to clean the HVAC vents in the classrooms in the Juvenile Hall. This work is expected to be completed on or before October 30, 2003.

- R6. Air packs should be available in Juvenile Hall for life safety and to limit potential liability.

**Response to R6: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is unreasonable.** Contact with the State Fire Marshall Consultant and the Board of Corrections indicates that there are no Juvenile Halls in the State of California that utilize Air Packs. Additionally, there are no mandates for either adult or juvenile detention facilities to have Air Packs. Although used in many jails, the specialized equipment and the ongoing training required to use it, makes the use impractical. It should be noted that in large detention facilities, Air Packs are a necessity due to the poor response time of the fire fighters. When considering the small size of the El Dorado County Juvenile Hall, and the quick response time of professional fire fighters, calling the local Fire Department is the preferred practice.

- R7. The staff should be trained in the use of air packs.

**Response to R7: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is unreasonable.** In addition to the statements provided in R6 above, there are inherent staffing and training problems associated with the decision to mandate detention staff to utilize Air Packs. In an issued paper prepared by the California State Sheriff’s Association on the use of Air Packs (issued April 18, 2002), it was learned that there are Fit Tests required for all staff assigned to use Air Packs, as well as a required medical evaluation. It states, “Persons assigned to

tasks that require the use of a respirator must be physically able to perform the work while using the respirator. Accordingly, employers have the responsibility of ensuring that employees are medically fit to tolerate the physical and psychological stress imposed by respirator use, as well as the physical stress originating from job and workplace conditions.” Further, it states, “Employees must be medically evaluated and found eligible to wear the respirator selected for their use prior to fit testing or first-time use of the respirator in the workplace.” A serious staffing and hiring issue would exist should existing staff fail to meet the physical and psychological mandates, and contract requirements would not allow the implementation of these new standards to existing employees. To meet the existing staffing, the Board of Corrections mandate of 1 staff per 10 minors in Juvenile Halls, at least 2 additional staff would need to be hired on each shift to utilize Air Packs, since our basic staffing would be needed to supervise the evacuated minors. During these already difficult fiscal times, the cost of Air Packs, additional staff, monthly mandated testing of equipment, additional physical and psychological requirements, and contractual conflicts, the use of Air Packs appears to be unreasonable.

### **Commendations**

The Chief Probation Officer and the staff of Juvenile Hall in Placerville provide outstanding service in an inadequate, old, facility, which is often over capacity. Special recognition is given teaching staff for the exceptional individual educational program.

### **Responses Required for Findings**

F1 through F7

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors  
El Dorado County Probation Department

### **Responses Required for Recommendations**

R1 through R7

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors  
El Dorado County Probation Department