

## Ventura County Detention Facilities: Conditions and Management

### Summary

California Penal Code §§919(a) and 919(b) require that the “Grand Jury shall inquire into the conditions and management of jails.” To fulfill this mandate, the 2007-2008 Ventura County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) visited seven detention facilities under the jurisdiction of the Ventura County Sheriff’s Department (VCSD), five facilities operated by Cities within the County, and the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility in Camarillo which is owned and operated by the California State Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. This state facility currently houses 231 Wards, nine of whom are Ventura County residents. The Grand Jury also visited the County Juvenile Justice Detention Facility and the Work Furlough Program site which are under the jurisdiction of the Ventura County Probation Agency.

The Grand Jury found that countywide arrest bookings are increasing. The VCSD Pre-Trial Facilities (Main Jail) and the Todd Road Detention Facility (Todd Road) are currently overcrowded with inmates being housed in common room areas of holding facilities. Plans for build-out of Todd Road are currently being reviewed by the VCSD, Board of Supervisors (BOS) and the County Executive Officer (CEO).

The Grand Jury found that approximately 25% of the County jail population is undocumented foreign nationals. The County actively cooperates with the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. However, the VCSD’s practice requiring convicted undocumented foreign nationals to complete their full County jail sentence before transfer to ICE for deportation contributes to overcrowding.

The Grand Jury concluded that jail overcrowding within County facilities has led to an increase in inmate-on-inmate assaults, as well as increased medical and mental health costs.

The Grand Jury further concluded that overcrowding may force early release of inmates which could expose communities to people who have a tendency to repeat criminal acts.

The Grand Jury determined that in spite of the over crowded conditions, the County jail facilities reviewed conduct their services in an exemplary manner, with each facility meeting or exceeding the standards mandated by the California State Corrections Standards Authority.

The Grand Jury recommends increasing jail capacity by proceeding with the build-out of Todd Road, and the renovation of the County Probation Agency’s Work Furlough facility located in Camarillo. The Grand Jury also recommends

that the VCSD should, in conjunction with the Ventura County District Attorney and the Superior Court, give strong consideration to transferring identified undocumented County jail inmates to ICE detention facilities prior to completion of their sentence.

## **Background**

There are 10 cities in Ventura County plus unincorporated areas totaling 1,864 square miles. Ventura County contains 15 detention facilities. Four of these are for long-term incarceration, and 11 are short-term (24-hours or less) booking facilities. The VCSD has law enforcement service contracts with five cities: Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Ojai, and Thousand Oaks. The cities of Port Hueneme, Oxnard, Santa Paula, Simi Valley, and Ventura have independent Police Departments. The Grand Jury reviewed occupancy capacity, environmental conditions, fire, safety, health, and nutritional issues. Social issues, such as housing of gang members, were also reviewed.

Detention facilities in the County fall into four categories:

- short-term (city jails and other holding facilities)
- long-term (county jails and state prisons)
- juvenile facilities (juvenile halls and California Division of Juvenile Justice)
- Work Furlough Program (County Probation Agency)

In response to jail overcrowding, courts have placed inmate population caps on some California counties. These caps have resulted in early releases of inmates, prior to their serving their full sentence. Currently, there is no court mandated inmate population cap for Ventura County.

## **Methodology**

The Grand Jury gathered information during briefings from each law enforcement agency management team, direct observations, and questions during site visits. Law enforcement agencies handouts and internet Websites were also reviewed. Staffs of various assignment levels, on duty at the time of the visits, were questioned.

In order to standardize the inspection procedure, a form was used to ensure that the same questions were asked and the same areas were reviewed at each detention facility. [Att-01]

## **Findings**

**F-01.** The annual number of arrest-bookings countywide is increasing:

- in 2006, a total of 29,979 adult males and females were booked, a 5.2% increase over the previous year [Ref-01]

- in 2007, a total of 31,893 adult males and females were booked, a 6.4% increase over the previous year [Ref-01]
- F-02.** In 2007, the adult inmate populations in the two main County jail facilities were:
- Main Jail had an average daily population of 851 inmates versus the approved capacity of 793. [Ref-01]
  - Todd Road had an average daily population of 846 inmates versus the approved capacity of 782. [Ref-01]
- F-03.** Over the last five years (2003-2007), 1,171 inmate-on-inmate assaults (including mutual combat) occurred within County jail facilities which amounted to an increase of 22%. [Ref-01]
- F-04.** The VCSD, BOS, and CEO are in discussion to identify funding sources for build-out of Todd Road. Four funding options are being considered with the least expensive option estimated to cost \$100 million. A construction start date has not been determined.
- F-05.** The East Valley Detention Center in Thousand Oaks re-opened in January 2008. The dormitory style facility was designed to house 35 minimum security adult male inmates. [Ref-01]
- F-06.** The current costs to the County to house an adult inmate in jail facilities are:
- Main Jail - \$153.43 per day
  - Todd Road - \$114.62 per day
- F-07.** The California State Corrections Standards Authority (formerly the Board of Corrections) reimburses the County \$77.17 per day for adult inmates who are sentenced and awaiting transfer to state prison.
- F-08.** There are currently 21 counties in California under court ordered inmate population caps. To date, no court mandated cap has been established for the County of Ventura. [Ref-01]
- F-09.** Undocumented foreign nationals constitute approximately 25% of the adult inmates in County jail facilities. [Ref-01]
- F-10.** There are currently four ICE Agents assigned to the Ventura County jail system, including three who were added in 2007. [Ref-01]
- F-11.** In 2006, 568 ICE detainers (holds) were placed on inmates; in 2007 there were 1,132 detainers, an increase of 99%. [Ref-01]
- F-12.** Two VCSD Deputies are scheduled to attend a two-month ICE Agent Certification Course which will enable them to enforce federal immigration laws.
- F-13.** Current VCSD practice requires all inmates, including undocumented foreign nationals, to serve their complete sentence in the County jail system prior to their release or transfer to ICE Agents for deportation.

- F-14.** The County Probation Agency's Work Furlough Program has a published capacity of 235 adult inmates.
- F-15.** There are currently 140 inmates enrolled and housed in the Work Furlough's 64 year-old Camarillo facility because of the dated condition of the facility. A decision to remodel or build a new facility is under study by the County Probation Agency and CEO's office.
- F-16.** Each inmate enrolled in the Work Furlough Program reimburses the County up to \$62.00 per day.
- F-17.** The Probation Agency's Juvenile Justice Complex, detention and commitment components, was built to house 420 male and female youths. The current California state certified capacity is 250. In May of 2008 there were 205 youths residing at the facility.
- F-18.** The Probation Agency's Juvenile Justice Complex has partnered with the Boys and Girls Club of America in a unique and innovative approach to diversion for at risk youths.
- F-19.** The American Heart Association recommends that all public service personnel have access to and receive training in the operation of the Automated External Defibrillator (AED), which is intended to administer definitive treatment for persons experiencing a ventricular fibrillation episode prior to the arrival of emergency medical personnel.
- F-20.** Of the twelve booking/holding facilities in the County, ten have an AED available in their police stations or jail facilities.
- F-21.** The cities of Oxnard and Santa Paula do not have an AED in their police stations.

## **Conclusions**

- C-01.** County jail over-crowding contributes to increased inmate assaults, and costs associated with operating the facilities. (F-01 through F-06)
- C-02.** If current jail population trends continue, the VCSD may be faced with a court imposed inmate population cap mandating early release of all inmates. (F-08)
- C-03.** The rising number of inmates incarcerated in the County jail system, including undocumented foreign nationals, has increased operating costs. (F-02, F-06, F-09, F-11, F-13)
- C-04.** The VCSD practice of limiting the early release of inmates results in the County incurring the total costs for detaining undocumented foreign nationals for the entire term of their incarceration. (F-13)
- C-05.** The increase of three ICE Agents in 2007, assigned to the Ventura County jail system, reduces the time to identify criminal undocumented foreign nationals for deportation. (F-10, F-11)
- C-06.** The County Probation Agency's Work Furlough Program has the potential for housing 235 inmates if funding is available to upgrade and

staff current facilities. If this capacity is fully attained, overcrowding within the County jail system could be partially alleviated. (F-14 through F-16)

- C-07.** Prisoner healthcare will be enhanced and potential liability will be mitigated if all detention facility staff within the County have access to, and receive training in the use of the AED device. (F-19 through F-21)

## **Recommendations**

- R-01.** The VCSD, BOS and CEO should determine the most appropriate build-out option for Todd Road, and set a start date. (C-01, C-02)
- R-02.** The BOS should continue to explore alternate funding sources for Todd Road build-out, such as issuing Certificates of Participation, (a type of bond which places liens on county assets), and/or other alternatives such as direct financing through private entities. (C-01, C-02)
- R-03.** The County Probation Agency and the CEO should decide whether to remodel, expand, or rebuild the Work Furlough Program facility so that the maximum capacity of 235 inmates can be attained. (C-06)
- R-04.** The BOS should secure funding for the remodel and/or rebuild of the County Probation's Work Furlough Program facility. (C-06)
- R-05.** The VCSD, in conjunction with the Ventura County District Attorney and the Superior Court, should give strong consideration to transferring identified undocumented County jail inmates to ICE detention facilities prior to completion of their sentence. (C-02, C-04)
- R-06.** VCSD should request additional ICE Agents or have more Sheriff's Deputies receive certified ICE Agent training if the County adult inmate population of undocumented foreign nationals continues to increase. (C-05)
- R-07.** The cities of Oxnard and Santa Paula should procure and install an AED device near their police detention holding cells with personnel receiving training in use of the AED. (C-07)

## **Responses**

### Responses Required:

- Board of Supervisors, County of Ventura (R-01 through R-04)
- Sheriff, County of Ventura (R-01, R-05, R-06)
- District Attorney, County of Ventura (R-05)
- City of Oxnard (R-07)
- City of Santa Paula (R-07)

Responses Requested:

Probation Agency, County of Ventura (R-03)

Responses Accepted:

Corrections Standards Authority, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

**References**

Ref-01 Ventura County Sheriff's Department/Detention Services  
Division/Memorandum/State of the Jails – 2008

**Attachments**

Att-01 2007-2008 Ventura County Grand Jury Inspection Form

**Attachment-01**

**2007-2008 Ventura County Grand Jury Inspection Form**

(Derived from California State Grand Jurors Association Handbook)

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INSPECTION FORM
VENTURA COUNTY GRAND JURY 2007-2008

Please fill in sections that apply to the facility you are inspecting

Facility Name: Investigation Date:

Facility Capacity: No. Presently Housing:

Last visit or inspection date if known:

Address:

Facility Type: [ ] Jail [ ] Lockup/Temporary Holding [ ] Court Holding
[ ] Juvenile Hall [ ] Juvenile Camp [ ] Other

Telephone Number: FAX Number:

Facility Administrator/Position: /

Investigative Team Lead(s):

Staff Interviewed

Name/Position: /
/
/

Summary, Findings and Recommendations:

Areas inspected or reviewed (check all that apply):

- Quality of Life: [ ] Physical Plan, [ ] Meals/Nutrition, [ ] Mental Health, [ ] Physical/Dental Health, [ ] Religious Opportunities, [ ] Visitors/visiting, [ ] Volunteer Involvement, [ ] Other
Program: [ ] Educational, [ ] Vocational, [ ] Community Services, [ ] Domestic Violence, [ ] Victim/Gang Awareness, [ ] Substance Abuse, [ ] Other
Any Others Interviewed?: [ ] Inmates1, [ ] Facility Manager, [ ] Medical Staff, [ ] School Staff, [ ] Mental Health Staff, [ ] Line Staff, [ ] Food Services Staff, [ ] Other

1 The generic term inmate is defined as someone who has or is confined to an institution, either adult or juvenile.

General Information

- 1. Has the facility's rated capacity been exceeded? Y N. If so, when?
2. What is the inmate classification system? Describe below:

[Empty box for describing inmate classification system]

- 3. Any recent suicides?
- 4. Number of attempted suicides: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Number of deaths from other causes: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Number of escapes: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Number of attempted escapes: \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Percentage of inmates on psychological medication: \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Inspections**

- 1. Last fire inspection Conducted (Date): \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Medical/Mental Health (Date): \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Environmental Health (Date): \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Nutritional Health (Date): \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Corrections Standard Authority (Date): \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Other (Describe) (Date): \_\_\_\_\_

**Staffing**

- 1. Is the staff adequate to monitor the inmates? Y N
- 2. Does the staff communicate in a language the inmates understand? Y N
- 3. Is the staff a diverse group of personnel? Y N  
Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. What are your impressions of staff/inmate interaction? \_\_\_\_\_

**Condition of the Grounds (lawns, recreation areas, blacktop, asphalt, other)**

**Exterior of Buildings (general condition, paint, roof, drains/gutters, other)**

- 1. Are cleaning fluids and chemicals labeled and safely stored? Y N
- 2. Is there a weapons locker present? Y N
- 3. Is there recreational and sports equipment available? Y N
- 4. Are the hallways clear? Y N Are the doors propped open or are they closed? Y N
- 5. Holding areas (cells/rooms if present): Is there access to drinking water and a toilet? Y N
- 6. Are there individual cells/rooms or dormitories? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Beds: Type of bed and is it off the floor? \_\_\_\_\_ Y N
- 8. Is the lighting adequate? Y N
- 9. What is your impression of the temperature? \_\_\_\_\_

**Orientation of Inmates**

- 1. Are inmates briefed or instructed as to the facility rules and procedures? Y N
- 2. Are the rules and grievance procedures posted? Y N
- 3. Are the rules and grievance procedures understood by the inmates? Y N
- 4. Were you able to interview inmates? If so, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

**Meals/Nutrition**

- 1. Kitchen area: Is it clean? Are knives and chemicals locked? Y N
- 2. Have inmates who work in the kitchen been trained appropriately trained? Y N
- 3. Have inmates received a medical clearance/review before assignment? Y N
- 4. Are meals served in the cell, dayroom or in a central cafeteria? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. How much time is allowed for eating? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Are inmates allowed to converse during meals? Y N

**Personal Appearance of Inmates**

1. What is the appearance of the inmates (dirty, unkempt, well groomed, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Showers: frequency, privacy, maintenance of shower facility, and supervision by staff. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Are there any reported assaults by inmates on other inmates? Y N
4. Condition of inmate clothing (does the clothing fit? Is it appropriate for the weather, etc.?) \_\_\_\_\_

**Programs**

1. Is physical exercise inside or out? How frequently is it offered? How much time is each inmate offered? Do men get more exercise time than women? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Is clergy available to the inmate upon request? Y N
3. Is there access to religious services? Y N
4. Are anger management and other applicable programs available? Y N
5. Are medical services available? Y N
6. How frequently is medical staff onsite? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How long do inmates have to wait to be treated? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Is a physician available by phone to come onsite? Y N
9. Are mental health services available? Y N
10. How often does mental health staff come to the facility? \_\_\_\_\_
11. How long do inmates have to wait to be seen? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What kind of vocational classes are available (cooking, gardening, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_  
Is there a work program? Y N

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13. Is there a program to involve community volunteers? Y N

**Discipline of Inmates**

1. How often is discipline enacted? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What discipline options are available or used? \_\_\_\_\_

**Grievances**

1. What are the most common types of grievances filed by inmates? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is there a record kept based on type and number? Y N

**Telephone**

1. Do inmates have access to telephones? Y N

**Correspondence**

1. Is there limited free postage for inmates without money? Y N
2. Incoming/outgoing mail: do inmates know that their mail can be read by authorities? Y N
3. How is confidential correspondence - letters to attorneys, legislator, CSA etc., handled? \_\_\_\_\_

**Visiting**

1. Is there adequate space for visitors? Y N
2. Are the visiting times convenient for families? Y N
3. Are there special provisions for visits by attorneys and clergy? Y N

- 4. Are visits supervised? Y N
- 5. Do all inmates have access to visiting? Y N  
If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

**Educational Program**

- 1. What levels? [ ] College level [ ] High school level [ ] Basic literacy level [ ] Other
  - 2. Name of school district providing educational services: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3. Teachers: Number of full-time, part-time and substitute teachers: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4. Number of inmates in the educational program: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5. What is the atmosphere in the classroom? \_\_\_\_\_
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- 6. Are the supplies adequate (books, paper, computers, etc.)? Y N
  - 7. What kind of activities and coursework are assigned by the teachers? \_\_\_\_\_
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- 8. What is the relationship between the educational staff and the facility staff? \_\_\_\_\_

**Juveniles in Adult Facility**

- 1. What is the proximity to adult inmates? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Is staff available to supervise juveniles? Y N
- 3. Is there constant auditory access to staff? Y N
- 4. Is the juvenile provided a snack if requested? Y N
- 5. Is there access to toilet facilities? Y N
- 6. Is there access to drinking fountains or water? Y N
- 7. Are there provisions to provide clothing or blankets to assure comfort? Y N

**Conditions of Secure Detention Outside a locked Enclosure (e.g. Cuffing Rail)**

- 1. Is there contact with other juveniles? Y N
- 2. Is there constant supervision? Y N
- 3. Are there any timed intervals of supervision? If so, what are the time limits? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Is there access to toilet and washing facilities? Y N
- 5. Is there access to a drinking fountain? Y N

**Conditions of a Non-secure Detention**

- 1. Is there constant supervision? Y N
- 2. Are there males and females in the same room? Y N

**General Observation for Kitchen Facilities**

- 1. Is all food stored at least 6 inches off the Floor? Y N
- 2. Is raw food separated from cooked? Y N
- 3. Are prep areas for protein products and fruits and vegetables separated? Y N
- 4. Is there a thermometer on the refrigerator door? Y N. What is the temperature? \_\_\_\_\_°
- 5. Is frozen food frozen? Y N
- 6. Are employee uniforms clean? Y N
- 7. Are rubber/plastic gloves available and used? Y N
- 8. Is employee hair covered? Y N
- 9. Are restrooms used as storage? Y N

(Rev. 11/06/07)