

Ventura County Grand Jury 2008 - 2009



Final Report

Detention Facilities: Condition and Management

**Date Issued
May 29, 2009**

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Detention Facilities: Condition and Management

Summary

The 2008-2009 Ventura County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) inspected the Ventura County (County) Jails, the Work Furlough Facility, the County Juvenile Complex, and the various police holding facilities, in accordance with California Penal Code, § 919(b), which states, “. . . the grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county.”

The Grand Jury found that the facilities visited were staffed with efficient and professional personnel. It should be noted that there is a marked difference among the ages of the various facilities. However, all facilities were observed to be both clean and well maintained.

The Grand Jury concluded that there is continual overcrowding in two of three County jails. In spite of these overcrowded conditions, the County jails are being operated in a safe, effective, and efficient manner.

The Grand Jury recommends that the Ventura County Sheriff’s Department (VCSD), the Board of Supervisors (BOS), and the County Executive Officer (CEO) continue the discussions regarding the overcrowding in the jails and develop alternate solutions to alleviate this problem.

The Grand Jury also recommends that the City of Santa Paula immediately procure and install an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) device and train the appropriate personnel in its operation.

The VCSD, Ventura County Probation Agency (Probation), and City Police Departments are to be commended for the excellent condition and management of their respective facilities.

The Grand Jury recognizes the professional and dutiful manner in which the staffs function within the jail environment.

Background

The Grand Jury inspected the various detention facilities within the County in accordance with California Penal Code, § 919(b). These facilities include adult and juvenile detention facilities and holding facilities operated by VCSD in contract cities and by the City Police Departments.

The County contains fourteen local (non-state) adult detention facilities.

- three for long-term incarceration jails
- one work furlough facility
- ten short-term holding facilities (24-hours or less)

The sole juvenile facility provides for both short-term and long-term confinement.

The VCSD, Probation, and City Police Departments operate jails and/or temporary holding facilities within the County. These agencies are responsible

for complying with applicable standards under California Code of Regulation (CCR) Title 15, Subchapters 4 & 5, *Minimum Standards for Local Detention Facilities and Minimum Standards for Juvenile Facilities*. [Ref-01, Ref-02]

In addition to policing the County's unincorporated areas, the VCSD has law enforcement service contracts with the following five cities:

- Camarillo
- Fillmore
- Moorpark
- Ojai
- Thousand Oaks

The cities of Port Hueneme, Oxnard, Santa Paula, Simi Valley, and Ventura have independent police departments.

Methodology

The Grand Jury gathered information through briefings from each law enforcement agency, direct observations, and from questions asked during site visits. Law enforcement agencies handouts and internet websites were also reviewed. Additionally, the members of the Grand Jury familiarized themselves with the provisions of CCR Title 15, Subchapters 4 & 5.

The Grand Jury made announced and unannounced visits to the three County jails: Pre-trial Detention Facility (Main Jail), Todd Road Facility, and East Valley Detention Center. The Grand Jury interviewed the commanders, their assistants, and various staff members at each of the jails.

The Grand Jury made at least one inspection of each of the five holding facilities under the jurisdiction of the VCSD, the holding facilities operated by City Police Departments, and the two facilities operated by Probation. The officers and staff on duty were interviewed during these visits. Two or more Grand Jury members were present during each visit.

The Grand Jury reviewed inmate capacity, environmental, fire, safety, health, and nutritional conditions. Social issues, such as, housing of gang members and the mentally ill were also reviewed.

Findings

Sheriff's Department

F-01. The VCSD operates three major detention facilities within the County:

- Main Jail
- Todd Road Facility
- East Valley Detention Center

F-02. A former detention facility, VCSD Branch Jail Honor Farm (Honor Farm), located in the Ojai Valley, was closed in 2002. This jail facility, with a capacity of 234, housed only female inmates.

F-03. At the time the Honor Farm closed, 200 female inmates were transferred to the Main Jail.

F-04. Main Jail:

- is located at the County Government Center in the City of Ventura
- is a Type II Facility for the detention of persons pending arraignment, during trial, and awaiting transfer to state prison upon sentencing
- houses both male and female inmates
- has a total rated capacity¹ of 793, sentenced and un-sentenced inmates
- has an overflow capacity² of 108 beds above its rated capacity
- processes over 29,000 bookings and releases every year
- segregates general population, violent offenders, and inmates needing medical or psychiatric services



Pre-trial Detention Facility (Main Jail)

¹ Rated Capacity means the number of inmate occupants for which a facility's single- and double-occupancy cells or dormitories, except those dedicated for health care or disciplinary isolation housing, were planned and designed in conformity to the standards and requirements in CCR Title 15.

² Overflow beds are bunk beds placed in dayrooms of housing sections during overcrowded conditions. The majority of these beds are normally occupied and one cell remains open to give inmates housed in the dayrooms access to a toilet.

F-05. Todd Road Facility:

- is located in an unincorporated area of the County near the City of Santa Paula
- was completed in 1995 as a Type III Facility for the detention of convicted and sentenced inmates
- houses only male inmates
- is currently being operated as both a Type II Facility and Type III Facility
- has a rated capacity of 782 beds
- has an overflow capacity of 98 beds above its rated capacity



Todd Road Facility

F-06. East Valley Detention Center:

- is located in the City of Thousand Oaks and was re-opened in January 2008
- is a Type III Facility designed to house 35 minimum security adult male inmates



East Valley Detention Center

F-07. The total capacity of the VCSD detention facilities is:

Facility	Rated	Overflow	Total
Main Jail	793	108	901
Todd Road Jail	782	98	880
East Valley	35	N/A	35
Total	1,610	206	1,816

F-08. In October 2008, County jails housed approximately 1,680 inmates as follows:

- Main Jail 822
- Todd Road Jail 833
- East Valley Jail 25

F-09. The *Ventura County Todd Road Jail Needs Assessment and Engineering Analysis* report ([The Report](#)), prepared for the County by HDR Architecture, Inc., was published April 4, 2007. It listed four options for the build-out of the Todd Road Jail. [Ref-03]

F-10. The Report stated: “Since the 2002 closing of the Honor farm and due to the growing volume of jail admissions and the increasing average length of stay of jail inmates, overcrowded conditions for the Ventura County Jail system are common.”

F-11. The Report identifies a number of jail diversion alternatives and criminal process procedures to reduce jail population:

- Proposition 36 Drug Diversion
- Work Furlough
- Work Release
- Direct Work

The report fails to identify any specific jail diversion alternatives associated with the mentally ill.

F-12. The Report identifies the potential reduction in the Average Daily Population (ADP)³ when utilizing these diversion programs:

Diversion Program	ADP Reduction
Prop. 36 Drug Diversion	21
Work Furlough	40
Work Release	107
Direct Work	30
Total Est. ADP Reduction	198

F-13. There are currently 20 California counties where an inmate population cap has been imposed by the federal courts and an additional 12 counties with a self-imposed population cap. In counties with such population caps, inmates are sometimes released early to comply with the limit imposed by the cap. Currently, there is no court-mandated inmate population cap for the County.

F-14. Plans for a build-out of Todd Road Jail are still under discussion among the VCSD, the BOS, and the CEO.

F-15. The Grand Jury visited the three jail facilities and found the physical conditions to be clean and well maintained.

F-16. The Grand Jury observed professional and efficient performance by staff members.

F-17. Sheriff’s Service Technicians actively monitored and controlled access to various areas of the jails.

F-18. Housing Security Deputies actively supervised the inmates by conducting periodic patrols of cell block day rooms and individual inmate cells.

F-19. The five city holding facilities operated by VCSD were found to be clean and well maintained.

³ Average Daily Population is the average number of inmates housed daily during the prior fiscal year.

Probation (Adult Facility)

F-20. Probation operates one adult detention facility under the Work Furlough Program:

- is a Type IV Facility for the housing of inmates eligible under Penal Code § 1208 for work/education furlough and/or other programs involving inmate access into the community
- was established in January 1973
- is located at the Camarillo Airport Complex
- is a minimum security facility with a capacity of 240 adult inmates (200 male and 40 female)
- the inmates serve court-ordered confinement while maintaining their employment or school attendance in the community
- the inmates are released to their jobs or schools daily
- each inmate in the Work Furlough Program reimburses the County based on a sliding scale from a minimum of \$43.00 to \$73.00 per day based on the inmate’s income or ability to pay
- the typical confinement at the facility is 45-60 days

F-21. The Grand Jury visited the Work Furlough Facility and, in spite of the advanced age of the facility, found it to be clean and well maintained.

F-22. The Grand Jury observed professional and efficient performance by staff members.



Work Furlough Facility

Probation (Juvenile Facility)

F-23. The Ventura County Probation Agency Juvenile Facilities (Juvenile Complex) sit on a 45 acre parcel in an unincorporated area of the County near the community of El Rio.



Ventura County Juvenile Facilities

- F-24.** The Juvenile Complex was built to house a total of 420 male and female youths.
- F-25.** There were approximately 210 wards at the time the Grand Jury visited the Juvenile Complex.
- F-26.** *Detention* housing is intended for juveniles going through the court process. It also serves to provide temporary custody of juveniles in need of short-term removal from the community and for those awaiting transfer to other jurisdictions or suitable placement facilities.
- F-27.** *Commitment* housing is intended for juveniles who are serving court-imposed commitments of up to one year.
- F-28.** The Grand Jury visited the Juvenile Complex, interviewed various staff members, and spoke with several of the wards.
- F-29.** The Grand Jury observed proceedings of the Juvenile Mental Health Court, known as Solutions Court, on two occasions.

F-30. The Grand Jury observed professional and efficient performance by staff members at the Juvenile Complex.

City Police Departments

F-31. The Grand Jury inspected temporary holding facilities operated by the Police Departments located in:

- Oxnard
- Ventura
- Simi Valley
- Santa Paula
- Port Hueneme



Ventura Police Department

F-32. A temporary holding facility is used for the confinement of adults for 24 hours or less pending release, transfer to another facility, or appearance in court.

F-33. CCR Title 15, Subchapter 4, *Minimum Standards for Local Detention Facilities*, contains very specific requirements regarding the segregation and treatment of minors in custody in a law enforcement facility.

F-34. The procedures for the treatment of minors detained at all five police departments comply with the requirements of CCR Title 15.

- F-35.** The 2007-2008 Ventura County Grand Jury recommended that the cities of Oxnard and Santa Paula install an AED in their holding cell areas. To date, the City of Santa Paula has not installed an AED.
- F-36.** The age of the facility and number of holding cells varies among the cities.
- F-37.** The overall physical condition of the holding areas was observed to be clean and well maintained.
- F-38.** There were no noteworthy deficiencies in either the overall condition or in the management of the holding facilities.

Conclusions

- C-01.** The 2002 closure of the Honor Farm is a major contributor to the continual overcrowding of inmates in the Main Jail and the Todd Road Jail. (F-02, F-07, F-10)
- C-02.** This continual overcrowding could result in a court mandated inmate population cap for Ventura County. (F-10, F-13)
- C-03.** To date, the VCSD, BOS, and CEO have not agreed on a decision dealing with the continual overcrowding in both jails. (F-14)
- C-04.** The *Ventura County Todd Road Jail Needs Assessment and Engineering Analysis* Report fails to identify any specific diversion program for the mentally ill to reduce the jail population. (F-09, F-11, F-12)
- C-05.** In spite of the overcrowded conditions, the County jails are being operated in a safe, effective, and efficient manner. (F-15, F-16)
- C-06.** Both the Juvenile Complex and the Adult Work Furlough facilities operated by the Probation Agency are being operated in a safe, efficient and professional manner. (F-21, F-22, F-30)
- C-07.** Each of the five City Police Departments operates its holding facilities in an exemplary manner. (F-37, F-38)
- C-08.** The installation of an AED in the City of Santa Paula's holding facility would enhance the health and safety of the detainees.

Recommendations

- R-01.** The Ventura County Sheriff's Department, the Board of Supervisors, and the County Executive Officer should continue discussions regarding the overcrowding in the jails and develop alternate solutions to alleviate this problem. (C-01 through C-04)
- R-02.** The Ventura County Sheriff's Department should support an expanded diversion program for the mentally ill with the goal of reducing the jail population. (C-04)
- R-03.** The City of Santa Paula should immediately procure and install an AED device near the holding cells and train the appropriate personnel in its operation. (C-08)

Responses

Responses Required From:

Sheriff, County of Ventura (R-01, R-02)
Board of Supervisors, County of Ventura (R-01)
City Council, City of Santa Paula (R-03)

Responses Requested From:

County Executive Officer, County of Ventura (R-01)

Commendations

The Ventura County Sheriff's Department, Ventura County Probation Agency, and the City Police Departments are commended for the excellent condition and management of their respective facilities.

References

- Ref-01.** California Code of Regulations Title 15, Subchapter 4, *Minimum Standards for Local Detention Facilities*
<http://nicic.gov/Library/022900>
- Ref-02.** California Code of Regulation Title 15, Subchapter 5, and *Minimum Standards for Juvenile Facilities*
<http://nicic.gov/Library/022898>
- Ref-03.** *Ventura County Todd Road Jail Needs Assessment and Engineering Analysis* Report, prepared for County of Ventura, California, by HDR Architecture, Inc. dated April 4, 2007
www.vcsd.org/detention_services/todd_road/todd_road_jail_needs_accessment_april_2007.pdf

Disclaimers

This report of the "Detention Facilities: Condition and Management" is issued by the 2008-2009 Ventura County Grand Jury. A member of this Grand Jury, because of a potential conflict of interest, was excused from Participating in the generation of this report. This report is based on information obtained from outside sources with none of the information being obtained from the excused Grand Juror.

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