

Blaine Street Women's Facility

Background

The Blaine Street Women's Facility was established in 1984 at 141 Blaine Street to incarcerate non-violent minimum-security women. Women serving time at Blaine Street are sentenced and fulfilling sentences of up to a year.

Findings

1. Currently there is no medium security facility for women only. Medium and maximum security women are incarcerated at the Main Jail, where the majority of women fit medium security criteria.
2. The Board of Corrections rated capacity for Blaine Street is 32. At the time of our visit on August 9, 2002 there were 30 women incarcerated at the facility. The accepted officer-to-inmate ratio is one to fifty/sixty inmates. Therefore, only one officer is required to be on duty at all times.
3. Inmates are interviewed by the Blaine Street Supervising Correctional Officer after sentencing. If an inmate qualifies to be housed at Blaine Street she is informed of house rules, behavioral expectations, work assignments, and class attendance requirements. These expectations must be met in order to maintain one's assignment at the facility.
4. The majority of women serving sentences at Blaine Street are substance abusers. Proposition 36 the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act of 2000 requires treatment in lieu of incarceration for minor drug offenders. Once a third drug treatment program violation occurs, a jail sentence is mandatory. Proposition 36 offenders will likely be sent to the Blaine Street facility.
5. The facility is dormitory-like and adjacent to the Main Jail. Staff and inmates are dedicated to keep the environment clean and well maintained. The facility consists of 21 rooms and a backyard which includes a sandbox and vegetable garden.
6. Each inmate is assigned chores that may include kitchen duty, cleaning, and various other tasks around the facility.
7. The facility contains a small kitchen in which meals are prepared by inmates under the supervision of the Food Service Manager.
8. Inmates are allowed to move freely inside the facility and its grounds. There are no locked doors and inmates are able to walk away at any time. Staff reported three recent walk-aways and stated that addiction is the main reason women walk away.

9. Inmates have access to television, exercise equipment, videos, board games, and a library. Blaine Street inmates have smoking privileges and use the backyard as the designated smoking area.
10. Doctors from the Main Jail attend sick calls in the morning on weekdays. The County's Health Service Agency provides medical, pharmacy and diagnostic services.
11. Classes are offered at the facility, many times by volunteers, in job training and high school education. Some of the programs offered include:
 - computer classes
 - narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous
 - smoking Cessation
 - career and job development
 - GED preparation
 - art classes
 - parenting classes
 - knitting and crocheting classes
12. Some inmates are able to participate in various work release programs. These programs allow participants to work during the day and return to the facility in the evening. This arrangement can allow inmates to continue a job they had before incarceration.

Conclusions

1. The Blaine Street facility was exceptionally clean and appeared to be well managed.
2. The full implementation of Proposition 36 should result in fewer women serving sentences in minimum-security facilities.
3. Creation of a medium security wing at Blaine Street would reduce over-crowding at the Main Jail and provide a more secure space for potential walk-aways who otherwise do not fit Main Jail criteria.

Recommendations

1. The Board of Supervisors should allocate adequate funds to create a medium security wing at Blaine Street.

Responses Required

Entity	Findings	Recommendations	Respond Within
County Board of Supervisors of Santa Cruz County	1-17	1-4	60 Days (Sept. 2, 2003)
Santa Cruz County Sheriff	9-10	2	60 Days (Sept. 2, 2003)

