

Report on the Rountree Facility

Background

The Rountree Lane Jail is located at 90 and 100 Rountree Lane, Watsonville. It consists of two detention installations at one site near Buena Vista Landfill in Santa Cruz County: a minimum-security and a medium security facility. Inmates may be incarcerated for various criminal offenses including Vehicle Code, Penal Code, or Health and Safety violations.

Rountree 1, referred to as “Medium Security”, is a medium security jail for men with two direct-supervision-housing units. The men detained are serving sentences of over 60 days but less than one year. One-half of the facility was opened in May 1996, and the other half was opened in February 1999. Medium Security is located next door to Rountree 2, referred to as “the Jail Farm”. The Jail Farm is a minimum-security facility housing male inmates. The Jail Farm is for men sentenced to less than 60 days. Jail Farm inmates may participate in educational and vocational programs or are assigned to work details.

An on-site kitchen services both Medium Security and the Jail Farm. Medical and other services are also provided. Educational programs are available from Government funded providers, Community providers (programs funded by the Inmate Welfare Fund) and Volunteer groups.

The underlying philosophy of the Sheriff’s Department is rehabilitation of inmates. The Santa Cruz County Inmate Programs have two main goals: to release the inmate better equipped to lead a productive life outside; and to provide meaningful programs that improve behavior, thereby increasing security within the facility and outside.

Sources

- a. Chief of Detention, Santa Cruz County Sheriff’s Dept.
- b. Rountree Facility Commander
- c. Alcohol and Drug Program Administrator
- d. Santa Cruz County Sheriff’s Dept. Web site <http://www.scsheriff.com/>
- e. Santa Cruz County Sheriff’s Office, Sheriff’s Detention Bureau 1999
- f. IWF Trust Annual Report 2001-2002
- g. Rountree Jail tour

Findings

1. Medium Security has a total rated capacity of 96 inmates. Population on the day of our visit was 77. The Jail Farm has a rated capacity of 162 inmates and on the day of our visit the population was 115. Both Rountree facilities are clean and well maintained by inmates under staff supervision.

2. There is no staff relief for illness, vacation, etc. after a recent 12.5% cut in funding led to a loss of officers. The economy and State budget crisis will likely require new budget cuts at County jails.
3. On occasion, inmates are separated for disciplinary reasons. Inmates can only be separated temporarily due to the open plan at Medium Security.
4. There are currently about 10 women in the county who qualify for medium security incarceration. No women are housed at Rountree. (See the Main Jail Report).
5. Staff estimates that 80% of inmates countywide are substance abusers. Most do not qualify for drug treatment under Proposition 36 Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act of 2000 (Prop. 36). Furthermore, Prop. 36 does not apply to alcohol abuse. There are no Prop. 36 cases at Rountree.
6. Drug and alcohol treatment is available for inmates at a lower cost than from outside providers. For instance, residential drug treatment costs approximately \$135 per person per day. Rountree cost is about \$75 per inmate per day using Pajaro Valley Prevention (which is also an outside provider). However, comparison of service is difficult due to the large number of variables in the programs.
7. About one-half of inmates at Medium Security are illegal aliens. When each inmate's sentence is up the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) picks the inmate up for deportation. INS requires that illegal aliens convicted of crimes be housed in at least a medium security facility until sentences are served. This federal requirement provides no funding.
8. Medium Security offers English as a Second Language (ESL) and preparatory classes for the General Education Diploma (GED). Substance Abuse Prevention classes are also taught at this facility. Classes in both English and Spanish are provided in substance abuse, anger management and job skills.
9. The County Office of Education, in cooperation with the Sheriff's Office, provides five teachers to the Jail Farm. These teachers instruct Regional Occupational Programs (ROP) classes in auto body repair, food services, landscaping, building maintenance and computer operation. The facility also offers English as a Second Language and preparatory classes for the GED and an animal-bonding program. Substance Abuse Prevention, anger management and job skills training are provided in both English and Spanish.
10. The GED program at Rountree directly interfaces with outside programs. Due to short tenure many inmates start programs and must finish GED and other programs outside when their sentences are over. Self-motivation is required to complete unfinished programs.
11. A significant portion of inmate training programs are self-funded through pay phones, commissary sales and other such income and do not require the use of tax money.

12. At the Jail Farm, a number of programs including Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, AIDS education classes, yoga, and church services are offered and operated by volunteer organizations.
13. Many inmates at the Jail Farm are on work release, which is available to qualifying inmates sentenced to less than 60-days. They work at outside jobs or for state parks, the dump, animal control, and beach or road debris clean up.
14. It appears from the most recent statistics that recidivism countywide has increased from 85% to 89% (1995-1999). There are no accurate up-to-date mechanisms to assess the impact of various programs on recidivism.
15. In follow-up to last year's Grand Jury report, a review of the Inmate Welfare Fund indicates an accounting system is in place.

Conclusions

1. Rountree jail is well run and the staff is doing a good job of operating these facilities.
2. Another budget cut would likely require closing a unit at Medium Security due to lack of staff.
3. Staff loss requiring closure of a unit at Medium Security would increase inmate to staff ratio. This could lead to overcrowding and compromise security.
4. Rountree jail is below capacity and therefore exceeds standards in that area. Although occupancy is below capacity it would be difficult to add a medium security jail for women at this site because of the design of the facilities.
5. Due to the open plan at Medium Security, no locked restraint area is available except for temporary inmate separation. Security could potentially be compromised.
6. Incarceration of illegal aliens mandated by the federal government is expensive for the County. The cost of implementing this mandate should be reimbursed.
7. Effectiveness of the Vocational and Educational training programs and marketability of learned skills at Rountree are unknown. The success of these programs should be judged by the effect they have on the recidivism rate.
8. If available space were utilized at Rountree for Prop. 36 drug treatment, the County may have an opportunity to save money while improving access to Prop. 36 treatment.
9. Current reliable statistics are needed to determine success of programs. Inmate Programs should lower recidivism. However, it appears recidivism has increased in spite of the programs offered. Recidivism causes must be addressed.

Recommendations

1. In order to maintain quality of services and adequate staff, the Board of Supervisors should not cut funding.
2. The County should seek compensation from the Federal government for unfunded mandates resulting in jail expenses for illegal alien deportees.
3. The Sheriff’s Department should consider utilization of unused space at the Rountree facilities by renting or subcontracting this space for Prop.36 drug treatment and other related purposes.
4. The Sheriff’s Department should compile, track and report accurate data and crime statistics for substance abuse, recidivism and program success rates.

Responses Required

Entity	Findings	Recommendations	Respond Within
Santa Cruz County Sheriff	1-15	3, 4	60 Days (Sept. 2, 2003)
Santa Cruz County Alcohol and Drug Program Administrator	5, 6	3	90 Days (Sept. 30, 2003)
County Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz	1, 2, 7	1, 2	60 Days (Sept. 2, 2003)