

2014-15 Jail Inspection Report

Summary

The Santa Cruz County Grand Jury inspected the county detention facilities from January to April of 2015. With the passage of AB 109, the Public Safety Realignment Act (effective 11/1/2011), responsibility for supervising specified lower-level inmates (excluding inmates charged with serious, violent, and sexual crimes) and parolees, shifted from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to the counties. This resulted in inmates who were detained for crimes with longer terms serving their sentences in Santa Cruz County detention facilities designed for short-term stays. As a result of Proposition 47, passed by voters in November 2014, the status of a number of low-level, nonviolent drug and property offenses changed from felonies to misdemeanors. The facilities were clean, and for the most part well-maintained, but show their age.

Background

In Santa Cruz County there are four county-run detention facilities:

- Water Street Maximum Security Jail (commonly known as the Main Jail), located in downtown Santa Cruz
- Blaine Street Women's Minimum Security Facility, adjacent to the Main Jail
- Rountree Men's Medium Security Facility in Watsonville
- Santa Cruz County Probation Department-Juvenile Hall on Graham Hill Road in Felton

The Santa Cruz Corrections Bureau, with a staff of 116 correctional officers and supervisors, oversees approximately 10,000 arrestees who are booked each year into the adult detention facilities and the Custody Alternatives Program. Juvenile arrestees and inmates are overseen by the Probation Department of Santa Cruz County.

As part of its duties, the Grand Jury serves as a civil watchdog looking at issues of safety and security in the jails. The goal is to ensure that, while protecting public safety, the jails treat the inmates (both adult and juvenile) in a humane and safe manner. The charge given to the Grand Jury states:

“Every year, the Grand Jury must inquire into the condition and management of all the local correctional facilities within the county each year, including the county jail and the juvenile hall. Grand jurors are entitled to free access to these public detention and correctional facilities.”^[1]

Scope

The Grand Jury toured the jails as part of its orientation, then returned for inspection visits at later dates using inspection guidelines recommended by the California Grand Jurors' Association.² Selected documents, such as previous local and state inspection reports, were reviewed. Some of the areas the Grand Jury examined during the inspections were entry ports, security observation posts, individual cells, recreation areas, food prep areas, medical treatment areas, interview rooms, holding and transfer areas, and classrooms. Inmates, corrections officers, medical staff, and administration officials were interviewed.

Inspection

The following table summarizes the Santa Cruz County Grand Jury 2014-2015 Jail Inspection results:

Facility	Responsible Department/ Division	Date Inspected	Areas Inspected	Conditions Found	Inmate Population
Water Street Maximum Security/ Main Jail	Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office Corrections Bureau	8/5/14-tour 3/13/15 4/2/15 4/13/15	Entry ports, holding areas, sobering cells, safety cells, medical area, individual cells, restrooms, food prep area, recreation areas and courtyards.	General impression at time of inspections, noticeably improved, compared with the tour of August, 2014.	Capacity: 311 On 3/13/15 300 inmates
Blaine Street Women's Minimum Security Facility	Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office Corrections Bureau	8/5/14-tour 4/2/15	Outside patio area, living spaces, restrooms, kitchen area and meeting areas.	All areas appeared clean and mostly well maintained, although aged.	Capacity: 32 On 4/02/15 11 Inmates
Rountree Men's Medium Security Facility	Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office Corrections Bureau	8/22/14-tour 2/20/15	Outside grounds, food prep and serving areas, cells, restrooms, classrooms, medical treatment area.	Grounds and interior were pleasant and well maintained.	Capacity: 96 On 2/20/15 75 Inmates

Facility	Responsible Department/ Division	Date Inspected	Areas Inspected	Conditions Found	Inmate Population
Santa Cruz County Probation Department Juvenile Hall	Santa Cruz County Probation Department	9/25/14-tour 1/30/15	Entry port, dining and food prep area, classrooms, restrooms, medical treatment area, common space, individual cells, court/hearing area, recreation areas.	Clean and well maintained, a dedicated staff.	Capacity: 42 On 1/30/15 24 Inmates

Water Street Maximum Security Jail

The facility was completed in two phases, 1981 and 1986. The general impression of the Main Jail (as it is more commonly known) at the time of the Grand Jury tour (8/4/14), was that the facility seemed gloomy and poorly lit. By contrast, at the time of the inspections (Spring 2015), there had been visible efforts to improve and clean up the physical aspects of the facility. The lighting was brighter and most areas were repainted in lighter colors, with painting in progress for the rest of the areas. The linoleum flooring, which looked like it needed replacing during the tour, was clean and shiny as the floor buffer had been fixed and put to use. A cracked holding cell window had been replaced.

Inmates at the main jail appeared clean and in fresh clothing. From interviews with inmates, their two main complaints were about the variety of food served and the lack of contact visits. The Grand Jury was told that rising food costs have had an impact on the variety of food served. The Grand Jury also learned that contact visits are not currently allowed because of security concerns, staffing impacts and lack of appropriate space.

As a result of AB 109, the average stay of inmates in county jails is longer. The jail's educational and self-improvement programming is not set up for long-term inmates. The Grand Jury learned there are approximately 105 hours per week of programming offered by about 30 different groups.

Grand Jurors noted the many improvements made within the facility since the 2013-14 Grand Jury performed and reported on its inspection. Current Grand Jurors noted the improved security provisions, including the absence of posters or large pictures on walls or windows. The main jail did not have inmates sleeping on the floor in pallets in Spring 2015 as they had been during the tour in Fall of 2014.

Blaine Street Women's Minimum Security Facility

The facility was completed in 1986. The Grand Jury found Blaine Street clean, but aged. Most of the fixed furnishings looked like original equipment and in need of updating. There was painting in progress, but kitchen and bath areas had not been maintained well; jurors observed dripping faucets and a non-functional stove hood. The outside patio area, while pleasant, was a bit run down, and the fence was sagging and low enough to

allow contraband to be passed over the top.

As a minimum security area, women assigned to Blaine Street frequently leave the facility for educational and work assignments and may receive supervised contact visits. Several inmates were interviewed in the common area next to the individual living cells and were clean, and interacting well with each other and staff.

Approximately thirty different programs are offered that provide education and treatment to reduce recidivism. The Grand Jury was told that the facility is underused, raising the possibility of closure.

Rountree Men's Medium Security Facility

The facility was completed in 1993. Inmates are assigned to Rountree, known as "The Farm," from the Main Jail if they meet certain criteria, such as low-level or first-time offenses. The Grand Jury was told that over 30 programs are offered to inmates, including substance abuse therapy, meditation classes, anger management strategies, community college workshops, and academic classes. The programs are focused on improving the lives of inmates and their relationships with their families and lowering recidivism rates. Inmates are strongly encouraged to take self-help courses and not miss opportunities to improve their lives. If inmates do not hold to the standards of Rountree they are sent back to the Main Jail.

With expanded medical services provided through the California Forensics Medical Group (CFMG) contract, inmates who formerly had to stay at the Main Jail to receive certain medical treatments can now be treated at the Rountree facility. The inmates appeared to be well-groomed, although there were complaints from a few inmates about the quality of footwear and problems with foot fungus. Other inmate complaints were of food and the lack of contact visits. The Grand Jury was told that rising food costs have also had an impact on the variety of food served at Rountree. Some of these issues will be addressed when the planned adjacent Men's Rehabilitation and Re-Entry Facility is opened.^[3] The building and grounds were well-maintained with colorful murals on the interior walls and the food service and prep areas were clean.

Santa Cruz County Probation Department-Juvenile Hall

The facility was completed in 1968. Staffed by a team of dedicated people, the Juvenile Hall is a model site for the Annie E. Casey Foundation Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative.^[4] The day before the Grand Jury visited, a group of 30 judges, prosecutors, probation staff and public defenders from Georgia, Mississippi, and Louisiana visited to see how Santa Cruz handles the problem of local youthful offenders.

The Grand Jury was told that most youthful offenders are released back to their families, but those who pose a risk to public safety are given tightly controlled counseling and training in nonviolent solutions to problems and furthering their education.

The facility offers more than 24 programs, such as gang prevention, music, and yoga, and is a certified high school (Hartman High School), granting both high school diplomas and General Education Development (GED) certificates.^[5]

Though the building and grounds are in need of updating, they were well maintained and clean. The Grand Jury members had lunch in the cafeteria and sat and talked with several of the youthful offenders. Several said that they felt listened to and cared for. The food was freshly prepared and the food prep area was clean.

Definitions

- **AB 109:** the Public Safety Realignment Act (effective 11/1/11) which transferred lower-level inmates from California State prisons to county jails
- **Blaine Street:** *Blaine Street Women's Minimum Security Facility*, located behind the Main Jail and administered by the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office Corrections Bureau
- **CFMG:** *California Forensics Medical Group*, the provider of medical services to the Main Jail, Blaine Street, and Rountree facilities
- **Correctional Facility:** a place to house inmates, generally long term; prison
- **Custody Alternatives Program:** designed to lower inmate population through the use of work release and electronic monitoring programs
- **Detention Facility:** a place to house inmates, generally short term; jail
- **Entry Port:** secure area where inmates enter or leave correctional or detention facilities
- **GED:** *General Education Development* test, a high school equivalency certificate
- **Inmate:** inhabitant of a correctional or detention facility, either sentenced by the Courts or held before trial
- **Juvenile Hall:** *Santa Cruz County Probation Department-Juvenile Hall*, detention facility for offenders between the ages of twelve and eighteen, located in Felton and administered by the Santa Cruz County Probation Department
- **Lower-level inmate:** inmate who is detained for a lesser offence with a shorter sentence, and is not convicted of a serious, violent, or sexual crime
- **Main Jail:** *Water Street Maximum Security Jail*, located downtown Santa Cruz and administered by the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office Corrections Bureau
- **Men's Rehabilitation and Re-Entry Facility:** 64-bed facility adjoining Rountree, with classrooms for technical and vocational training, set to open late 2017
- **Non-contact visits:** inmates and visitors are separated, usually by glass, to prevent the exchange of contraband
- **Rountree:** *Men's Medium Security Facility* for Santa Cruz County located in Watsonville and administered by the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office Corrections Bureau
- **Safety Cell:** holding cell with restraints for inmates who are a threat to their own safety or the of safety of others
- **Sobering Cell:** easily cleaned padded holding cell for intoxicated inmates who are a threat to their own safety or the of safety of others
- **Title 15:** from the California Code of Regulations, establishes minimum standards for local detention facilities

Sources

References

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4. Annie E. Casey Foundation Juvenile Detention Alternatives (JDAI) website.
Accessed June 1, 2015. <http://www.aecf.org/work/juvenile-justice/jdai/>.
5. County of Santa Cruz Probation Department-Juvenile Hall Grand Jury Binder,
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