

# **Jails & Facilities**

## **SUMMARY**

Each year the Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury (HCCGJ) is required by law to inspect the condition and management of all correctional and holding facilities in Humboldt County. To fulfill this mandate, the HCCGJ visited 12 facilities within the county that are either jail facilities or are otherwise related to law enforcement. The HCCGJ found the managers of these entities are maximizing their resources and utilizing their facilities within the limitations of budget and available space.

The HCCGJ commends the Sheriff and his staff for efforts in expanding and greatly improving educational and post release employment opportunities for Humboldt County Correctional Facility (HCCF) inmates. In 2017 a total of 288 programs were in contention for the Correctional Facility Educational awards. While 31 counties received Merit Awards, HCCF was one of only 16 county correctional facilities within the state to receive the Challenge Award, which is the highest of the Correctional Facility Educational awards. Receiving this award shows the positive direction of the program.

The Humboldt County Sheriff's Work Alternative Program (SWAP) provides an alternative to incarceration for eligible inmates who have a sentence of 180 days or less. Qualified inmates may choose to participate in the wood or farm operations instead of serving a sentence in jail.

A majority of the HCCGJ members toured Humboldt County's Juvenile Hall and Northern California Regional Center (NCRC). These facilities were found to be well maintained and clean. The staff prioritizes the best interests of detainees by placing a strong emphasis on educational programs and self-awareness.

Overall, the HCCGJ was impressed with the services being provided given the parameters of tight budgets, understaffing, and the need for physical improvements to facilities.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury's mandate to conduct inspections of jails is rooted in the State Constitution. The grand jury is one of the oldest civil institutions in America and has been part of California law since statehood in 1850. County civil grand juries are required by the State Constitution (California Constitution, Article 1, Section 23, 1850). The grand jury is an independent body and, as an instrument of the court, subject only to the court's jurisdiction. The primary function of the grand jury is to act as the public watchdog by investigating and reporting on affairs of local government. As part of this watchdog mandate, the HCCGJ annually visits and evaluates the physical condition and management of public prisons (holding facilities) located in the county (California Penal Code, Section 919(b)). This includes county jails, state prisons and work camps, or any place in the county a prisoner may be taken, including all police stations and county work yards. The HCCGJ visited additional facilities with direct ties to law enforcement.

## **METHODOLOGY**

HCCGJ members made scheduled visits to the various law enforcement facilities in the county between September 2017 and January 2018. Reports of the visits were brought back to the HCCGJ for discussion and follow-up questions were emailed to the appropriate administrators. Follow up visits were scheduled as needed.

### **County Facilities Inspected**

- Humboldt County Correctional Facility
- Sheriff's Garberville Substation
- Sheriff's Work Alternative Program (SWAP) Woodyard
- Sheriff's Work Alternative Program (SWAP) Farm
- Humboldt County Coroner's Office
- Fortuna City Police Department
- Fortuna Animal Shelter
- Humboldt County Juvenile Hall
- Northern California Regional Center

### **State of California Facilities Located in Humboldt County**

- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Eel River Conservation Camp #31
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, High Rock Conservation Camp #32

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Jail Facility Tour**

Upon the inmates' arrival to the Humboldt County Correctional Facility (HCCF), medical staff complete both a medical and mental health screening. Medical staff are on-site 24 hours a day, seven days per week. If indicated, further mental health evaluation referrals are requested. Presently mental health professionals are on site Monday through Friday during business hours.

A Silver RS Scan is used when correctional staff or other local law enforcement agencies determine it is necessary. The scanner creates an image of the body without being invasive. If contraband is found within an inmate's body or if they refuse the scan, they are put on contraband watch. Deputies feel the scan is a deterrent for bringing contraband into the facility during intake. Other law enforcement agencies may request the use of a scan upon an individual's processing.

**Effects of Recent Legislation on Jails**

The culture of the jail has undergone a major transformation in the past several years because of AB 109 and the resulting California Public Safety Realignment Act of 2011 (CPSRA 2011). The CPSRA 2011 transferred jurisdiction and funding for managing lower-level criminal offenders from the state to the county. California’s recent corrections realignment, authorized under AB 109, is the most significant change in the state’s corrections system in decades. Ordered by a federal court to reduce the state’s overcrowded prison system, this legislation, was signed by Governor Brown in 2011. It sought to reduce the prison population by sentencing lower-level offenders to county jails rather than state prisons. This transferred substantial incarceration responsibility, as well as funding, from the state to its 58 counties. There is evidence this realignment has shifted the overcrowding problem from state prisons to local jails.

AB 109 is aimed at keeping low-level offenders in county jails instead of transferring them to state prisons. Although AB 109 was enacted in 2011, the HCCF felt the major impact beginning in 2015 when the population shift started. Propositions 47 and 57, approved in 2014 and 2016 respectively, downgraded some felonies to misdemeanors and fast tracked the parole process for good behavior felons. Assaults on staff increased tenfold between 2014 and 2015. Fights and assaults among inmates are trending up. The following chart shows a nine-year history of increasing violence, the major cause being AB 109 and Propositions 47 and 57.

**Humboldt County Correctional Facility  
Pre- and Post-AB 109 Statistics**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Fights<br/>(mutual combat)</b> | <b>Assaults on Inmates</b> | <b>Assaults on Staff</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>2009</b> | 37                                | 42                         | 5                        |
| <b>2010</b> | 41                                | 38                         | 2                        |
| <b>2011</b> | 36                                | 25                         | 7                        |
| <b>2012</b> | 36                                | 39                         | 6                        |
| <b>2013</b> | 49                                | 45                         | 6                        |
| <b>2014</b> | 47                                | 52                         | 4                        |
| <b>2015</b> | 57                                | 61                         | 39                       |
| <b>2016</b> | 59                                | 106                        | 29                       |
| <b>2017</b> | 78                                | 88                         | 38                       |

Hiring and retention of Correctional Deputies are major concerns for the Sheriff. At the time of this report there are more than 13 full-time positions unfilled. Correctional staff working within the jail are required to work mandatory overtime, a minimum of one 12-hour shift, every two weeks. Except for Trinity and Del Norte Counties, Humboldt County has the lowest pay scale in California and is finding it difficult to recruit and hire correctional deputies.

## Medical and Mental Health

Healthcare includes medical, dental, and mental health services. Inmates are escorted to the healthcare services area. All encounters with clinicians are conducted privately. If inmates have specific medication needs, these are addressed while they are housed in the jail. Meeting the medical needs of the inmates seems adequate and professional.

Upon release, care for inmates with diagnosed medical or mental issues is often difficult. Factors include substance abuse, insufficient transportation and inconsistent follow up. Instructions are given to inmates upon release as to how to obtain needed medications. This can be problematic if an inmate taking psychiatric medication is released on a Friday. Clinical outpatient services are not available until the following Monday.

Medical and mental health professionals as well as HCCF staff stated the jail would be best served if there was onsite round-the-clock coverage for mental health issues. During our interview process with nursing, mental health, and deputy staff we heard the following statements:

- “I wish the jail had a full-time social worker.”
- “There are a lot of people in here with mental health issues--well over 50%.”
- “They [referring to mental health staff] do the best with what they have. There is just not enough of them.”
- “They’re sick in here. They really are sick and they come back over and over again.”
- “The public does not understand the extent of the mental health problem.”
- “The percentage of mental health inmates is absolutely on the rise.”
- “We are flooded with referrals every day.”

Currently mental health staff functions with three vacant positions, resulting in staff having to take on multiple tasks and clinical roles. The impact on inmates includes a longer wait-time to be seen by a clinician and a reduction in allotted time for appointments.

The HCCGJ learned the county is experiencing difficulty recruiting and hiring mental health staff to work in the jail. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is responsible for staffing mental health positions for HCCF. Interviewees suggested multiple times that DHHS explore the possibility of expanding the contract with the California Forensic Medical Group to include mental health staffing. This would result in competitive wages for mental health personnel and optimal staffing levels thus improving the overall quality of services.

HCCGJ found the current staff to be passionate, professional, and dedicated to doing the best job possible. It was reported there is a countywide shortage of mental health professionals. When asked what services they would like to see improved, professionals told us they want a fully staffed team and a psychiatrist hired specifically for the jail.

## **Education Programs**

At the time of this report, 40-50 inmates are enrolled in GED and high school equivalency classes. Resume writing classes are available, and inmates receive a flash drive with their resume on it. This is beneficial for inmates when they are released and seek gainful employment.

Provision of electronic tablets for inmates involved in educational programs has been implemented. Educational opportunities available on-site during 2017 were offered through the College of the Redwoods' Adult Education program. These classes consisted of Getting Started with Computers and GED/HiSET preparation. There were 374 non-replicated students who attended classes (298 men and 76 women). With the work scheduled to begin on the new county jail building, staff hopes to offer on-site apprenticeships and vocational classes. "We're on the right track," staff says.

Multiple job fairs have been held in the jail. The goal of staff is to conduct one job fair every six months. Due to the success of these job fairs, they were expanded to two days. The response from potential employers has been extremely positive. Employers report ex-offenders are motivated to succeed. Deputies involved in the program are very proud of the work they have been doing. This year the HCCF received a state award for their job fair program. Humboldt County Jail was one of 16 out of 288 programs that participated within the state to receive the "Challenge Award," the highest in Correctional Facility Educational awards.

## **Juvenile Hall and Northern California Regional Center**

HCCGJ members toured Humboldt County's Juvenile Hall and Northern California Regional Center (NCRC). These facilities were found to be well maintained and clean. The residents' best interests are the highest priority of the staff. This is accomplished through personal responsibility training and other educational programs.

A maximum of 26 Juvenile Hall detainees are evaluated and managed according to individual needs and behavior. Complex issues have developed as a result of proliferation of drug use in recent years involving many juvenile detainees. Additional resources may be needed to deal with these new situations.

The NCRC is located directly west of Juvenile Hall. This facility is a statistically successful innovative effort to deal with California's most serious juvenile offenders. Coed detainees can be held up to 18 months and provided classroom instruction and group counseling in a dormitory setting.

Construction is underway on the adjacent property to replace the Juvenile Hall built in 1968. This new facility will provide enhanced security for residents and staff while increasing maximum capacity. More programs for juveniles will also be possible.

## **Eel River Conservation Camp #31**

The Eel River Camp is run by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). The CDCR manages 44 conservation/fire camp facilities throughout California, 43 for adults and one for juveniles. The primary mission of the camps is inmate rehabilitation. One well-established program provides a trained workforce for fire suppression and other emergencies, including floods and earthquakes. In addition, inmates engage in conservation

projects on public lands and provide labor for local community service projects. There are specific physical requirements that must be met to be eligible for the program, including restrictions on medications.

The property and buildings are owned by Cal Fire, which shares the site with the Conservation Camp. The facility can house up to 130 inmates. Although the facility is old, it is well maintained. The camp consists of:

- an administration building
- kitchen and cafeteria
- two separate dormitories
- a recreational building (which includes television rooms, a library, and pool table)
- a small sanctuary for religious services
- a music room
- a hobby shop with woodworking equipment

There is a large greenhouse which provides produce for this and other camps. In addition to their work with Cal Fire, inmates provide community services such as producing firewood for senior centers, maintenance for school districts and state parks, cleaning up homeless camps, and working on county owned land and property.

A correctional administrator from Sierra Conservation Center met with the HCCGJ and explained the goals of the camp system. CDCR and Cal Fire work closely together throughout the entire camp process. Inmates undergo intense physical fitness conditioning and training prior to being assigned to firefighting crews. The facility and grounds appeared extremely well maintained. Inmate dorms were undergoing renovations, including repainting and standardizing the living areas of each inmate as well as lockers and the storage area. The inmates take a great deal of pride in the camp and appear to be satisfied with their success in the camp program.

### **High Rock Conservation Camp #32**

The camp includes a wood shop and garden which are very impressive. Grounds and facilities were immaculate. Exercise and recreational facilities are available, including a track circling the camp where inmates can jog, and a large television room with a pool table and small library. Camp inmates mill and cure redwood lumber for crafting into tables, benches, signs, jewelry boxes, etc., many of which have earned a reputation for quality and excellence. Woodworking projects were beautiful and displayed proudly throughout the camp.

The main meeting room was recently renovated by inmate workers in conjunction with assigned staff. It appeared to be professionally done. The inmates use the meeting room for family visits. The camp staff use the room for various activities including staff meetings and providing medical care for the inmates.

The camp provides several community service projects, including grounds maintenance for schools, fairgrounds, and cemeteries, and fundraising services for agencies including Miranda Pet Rescue and CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates).

The camp firefighting programs benefit the state as cost-effective support for professional firefighters. It is a win-win situation. In addition, the camp offers impressive rehabilitation programs which help train inmates and prepare them for jobs upon release. When not fighting fires, they engage in community service projects, including maintenance for community and county parks, schools, roadside cleanup, airports and nonprofit organizations. Inmates learn how to work together as a team, a skill needed to succeed in society.

An area of concern shared with the HCCGJ is the reduced number of qualified inmate workers for the conservation camps. As a result of California's Public Safety Realignment Act of 2011 there are fewer inmates in the CDCR system with the appropriate custodial levels required for camp eligibility. This has created a shortage of eligible inmates to be assigned to the fire camps. The inmates who would normally be assigned to them are serving time in county jails. Camp administrative staff stated they have had conversations with administrative law enforcement staff in Humboldt County about the possibility of developing a Memorandum of Understanding allowing inmates serving longer sentences in the County Correctional Facility to apply and be considered for assignment to the conservation camps. This could alleviate the shortage of inmates available to be housed and participate in the conservation camp program.

### **Fortuna Police Department**

The HCCGJ toured the Fortuna Police Department headquarters located at 621 11th Street. The facility was clean and well organized. The HCCGJ was informed the department is now using body cameras for all calls and contact with the public. The issue of officer retention was discussed. The Police Chief stated the retention rate for uniformed staff was good at the time of the tour. The facility has two holding cells that are used for non-custodial functions. One is being used as the department's armory and the other by the school resource officer for materials and supplies. According to staff interviewed during the tour, the department has outgrown the facility and a new headquarters is needed. The department has a K-9 unit, which is a valuable asset in terms of suspect apprehension and locating drugs and explosives. Fortuna also has a Citizens on Patrol unit which provides several important security and crime-prevention related activities.

The Fortuna Police Department also operates an animal kennel at a separate site in town. The HCCGJ toured the facility and found it clean, organized, and well supplied.

### **SWAP Farm**

The Humboldt County Sheriff's Work Alternative Program (SWAP) provides an alternative to incarceration for eligible inmates serving a sentence of 180 days or less. Qualified inmates may choose to participate in the wood or farm operations one day a week instead of serving a sentence in jail. This program allows individuals to keep their jobs, homes, and families together while being productive and serving time as sentenced. Each day at SWAP takes one day off an individual's sentence. Both operations provide community service and job skills that can prove valuable upon completion. Participant and community safety are priorities. Those inmates with a history of violence, sexual misconduct and/or mental illness are not eligible to participate. Inmates may choose to participate regardless of whether it is their first, second, or third offense. There are up to 20 inmates participating daily. About 200 inmates annually participate in SWAP.

The SWAP farm began in 1985 on 84 acres of airport property adjacent to the Rohnerville Airport in exchange for airport landscaping and other maintenance activities. The upper 56 acres of the farm area are primarily used for growing hay to feed the cows and for the pigs' bedding. The Humboldt County Animal Shelter in McKinleyville, which is unable to hold large animals, uses this site as needed. Two horses were being held at the time of the tour. Pigs and cattle are fed with expired produce donated from local supermarkets within the county. Unused produce is composted for agricultural use. There was a large vegetable garden and an area for processing firewood. The officer on duty when we toured was extremely dedicated and knowledgeable about the operation. Officers are assigned to the farm for three-year rotations.

### **SWAP Wood Yard**

The SWAP Wood Yard is located on 2.75 acres west of the new juvenile facility currently under construction. Approximately half of the wood yard's area is being used to store construction materials for the new juvenile facility. This has resulted in a reduction of firewood production to about 1000 cords available for sale annually, approximately half of normal production.

The SWAP workers were wearing protective gear and conducting themselves in a safe manner. The Deputy Sheriffs supervising the wood yard conduct daily safety briefings and monitor workers' activities during the work day. All supervising deputies interviewed were positive and enthusiastic about the SWAP program.

### **Garberville Sheriff Substation**

The HCCGJ toured the Sheriff's Garberville substation. The facility has been in disrepair for years and needs major renovation. During this year's tour, it was again noted the roof was leaking and large tarps were in place to keep water from entering the building. There are four unused holding cells within the substation which could conceivably be used to house suspects/arrestees awaiting transport to the Humboldt County Correctional Facility.

### **Humboldt County Sheriff-Coroner/Public Administrators**

The Coroner's Office, located in the Clark Complex, is under the jurisdiction of the Humboldt County Sheriff. The Sheriff assumes responsibility for overall management and staffing of and accountability for the facility but is not active in the day-to-day operations. This 24-hour facility is staffed by a lieutenant, four deputies and one administrative clerk. We found the staff to be professional with a conscientious attitude toward a difficult job.

A number of volunteers work under direction of the Coroner's staff to perform duties within the facility. The Coroner's Office has a contracted pathologist who works part-time as needed to perform the autopsies. During 2017 the Coroner's Office processed a total of 272 deaths.

The building where the Coroner's Office is located was constructed in the early 1930s. This building has been used for various medical purposes since then. The ventilation system is outdated and inadequate for the work performed. This is apparent in the autopsy room. There are visible water marks from leaks involving old pipes in the ceiling with some areas being unusable due to water damage. Every available space is in use for storage, except for a small room used for counseling grieving families.



Working in an area with a large transient population creates challenges to rapid identification. The Coroner's Office is using a new Live Scan fingerprint machine that is connected to available databases improving timely identification of bodies. This technology increases identification accuracy to 98%.

The Coroner's office lacks an on-site x-ray machine; therefore, overtime is required for staff to transfer bodies to Mad River Hospital when an x-ray is required. Mad River Hospital provides this service for a nominal fee as long as it is performed between 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM.

## FINDINGS

- F1. Humboldt County law enforcement personnel are hardworking, dedicated, and committed to public service.
- F2. The current entry level salary is insufficient to recruit and retain new hires in the Humboldt County Correctional Facility.
- F3. If the Humboldt County Correctional Facility staffing level was adequate, the need for mandatory overtime would be eliminated.
- F4. Medical staff is professional and the staffing levels are adequate to meet the needs of the Humboldt County Correctional Facility inmates.
- F5. Mental Health staffing levels at the Humboldt County Correctional Facility are inadequate and there is insufficient discharge planning to provide inmates access to mental health services upon release from the facility.
- F6. The Humboldt County Coroner's Office needs an onsite x-ray machine to improve efficiency and reduce staff overtime and fatigue.
- F7. The Humboldt County Sheriff's Substation in Garberville is in disrepair and in need of major renovation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Humboldt County Sheriff and the Board of Supervisors raise entry level salaries for deputies working in the Humboldt County Correctional Facility to achieve competitiveness with other counties of similar size. This change should be in place by December 25, 2018. **(F2, F3)**
- R2. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors develop a contract for mental health services within the Humboldt County Correctional Facility similar to the contract for medical services with the California Forensic Medical Group. This change should be in place by December 25, 2018. **(F5)**
- R3. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends a coordinated plan be developed between the Director of Mental Health Services and the Humboldt County Sheriff to facilitate aftercare for inmates with mental health concerns when they are released from the Humboldt County Correctional Facility. This plan should be in place by December 25, 2018. **(F5)**

- R4. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office request a budget adjustment for the purchase of an x-ray machine for the Humboldt County Coroner's Office. The 2018-2019 budget adjustment should occur by September 15, 2018. **(F6)**
- R5. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors approve the budget adjustment requested by the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office for an x-ray machine for the Humboldt County Coroner's Office. This approval should be made by October 15, 2018. **(F6)**
- R6. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Humboldt County Public Works Department inspect the Humboldt County Sheriff's Garberville Substation and issue a written report addressing the physical condition of the facility. This report should be submitted to the Humboldt County Sheriff by September 1, 2018. **(F7)**
- R7. The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors include in a budget adjustment the funds to address any concerns found by the Humboldt County Public Works Department's inspection report of the Humboldt County Sheriff's Garberville Substation. This adjustment should be made by October 15, 2018. **(F7)**

## REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury requires responses from the governing bodies as follows:

- Humboldt County Board of Supervisors **(R1, R2, R5, R7)**
- Director of Mental Health Services **(R3)**
- Humboldt County Sheriff **(R1, R3, R4)**
- Humboldt County Public Works Department **(R6)**

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.