



**2010-2011  
Madera County Grand Jury  
Final Report  
Madera County Department of Corrections  
Madera County Jail**

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**Introduction:**

On January 31 and February 22, 2011, in accordance with California Penal Code section 919 (b) which states "...the Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county," the Grand Jury visited the Madera County Department of Corrections (MCDC) located at 14191 Road 28, Madera, California 93638 and met with the Director, a Corporal and Sergeant from Administration/Training/Records, and an Officer from the Classification Services Unit. The Director gave the Grand Jury an overview of the current and future plans for operation of MCDC.

**Findings:**

The Grand Jury found that the Director is appointed and serves at the pleasure of the County Board of Supervisors (BoS). MCDC is one of three county correctional facilities in the state that is operated in this manner instead of being under the direction of the County Sheriff. There is duplication of effort between the Madera County penal system and the Sheriff's Department in several administrative areas. The Director is holding discussions with the Sheriff's Department to take over the warrants division. It is anticipated that this transfer will generate savings.

The Grand Jury found that MCDC staffing is 97 supervisory and correctional officers. Correctional officers are required to provide direct supervision by remaining on duty in the housing unit with the inmates. Employees are mandated to take two furlough days per month with minimum staffing levels of ten-to-one. Staffing levels are assigned per department, administration, county policy, state law, and Title XV of the California Code of Regulations. Officers receive 24 hours of training per year.

The Grand Jury found that the annual budget of MCDC is \$10,700,000, which includes \$30,000 for overtime. The budget was cut by \$1,300,000 for this fiscal year. Forty-three percent of the budget is spent to house prisoners. The average cost per prisoner is \$70 a day.

The Grand Jury found that the booking process at MCDC has been streamlined and can be completed within 30 to 45 minutes. Every prisoner is processed and in their assigned module within three hours of arrival and booking. Each prisoner is immediately tested for tuberculosis and evaluated for other illnesses. A wrist band is given to each inmate before moving on in the system, and the prisoner is placed in a holding cell awaiting a final classification and assignment.

The Grand Jury found that, in order to maintain safety and security in the gang unit, different gangs are housed separately. The housing and monitoring of gang members is a major issue and expense at MCDC.

The Grand Jury found that MCDC's centralized Records Department is currently automating all records pertaining to any inmate, converting from paper to digital. This process, now 80% completed, allows MCDC to communicate and work with Immigration, the Courts, and various other county and state entities.

The Grand Jury found that MCDC has a state-of-the-art on-site video screen room used for arraignments, which reduces the costs of court appearances significantly.

The Grand Jury found that plans have been approved to expand the capacity of MCDC by 144 beds at a cost of \$30,000,000. Funding for the project is pending. The tentative construction start date is July 1, 2011, with a 22-month completion schedule, i.e., May 2013.

The Grand Jury found that the inmate capacity rating of MCDC is 419. On January 31, 2011 they had 381 male and female inmates. As of February 22, the inmate population had expanded to 401. Throughout the jail, inmates wear different colored clothing to distinguish their classification level. Inmates who demonstrate violent tendencies and are considered a threat to the staff and other prisoners are in lock-down 23 hours a day with one hour a day allowed in the common area; they are alone during this period. The current length of incarceration at MCDC is one year or less with the exception of those inmates with mental health issues, who remain incarcerated for however long it takes to process their case through the courts. The Governor has proposed an Assembly Bill which would change the maximum length of incarceration of inmates in the county from 12 to 36 months. This Bill is of utmost interest and concern to MCDC administration. Inmates from the Chowchilla women's prisons, upon completion of sentence, are transferred to MCDC when they have outstanding warrants or pending court dates from other agencies until all legal issues are resolved.

The Grand Jury found that staying aware of inmate activities is a constant challenge for all prison personnel. The camera system throughout the jail is sophisticated, state-of-the-art, and a vital tool. It is monitored in several areas, including the Director's office. Two command posts, positioned in the Security Housing Unit (SHU), afford a view of all modules. Because of the number of physical moves inmates make each day, it is vital to keep track of them. Six actual counts of each inmate are made in a 24-hour time-frame. The new telephone system allows guards to listen to all incoming/outgoing telephone calls, with the exception of those calls that are confidential in nature, i.e., attorney/client and medical issues. MCDC has a contract with an outside security firm to secure and monitor inmates while outside the facility.

The Grand Jury found that the inmates provide the labor for the food services, working under the supervision of an outside contractor. Each shift includes 10 inmate workers. Inmates are served 2,800 calories per day. There are four different menus per week. Food is free to staff. The cost of food is approximately \$0.85 per meal. The outside contractor uses three main sources for food and supplies. All meals are delivered to the housing units and distributed to the inmates. Inmates with special dietary needs (medical or religious) are accommodated. The Grand Jury noted the kitchen is old but clean.

The Grand Jury found that inmates are responsible for cleaning their own common areas. On February 22, the condition of the general housing units was in stark contrast to the cleanliness of

the SHU housing units viewed on January 31. In general housing, the lower level offenders are housed in a dorm setting. It was dirty and had an odor. At 10:00 a.m. inmates remained in bed; some beds were made while some were not. Open containers of food were visible. Trash bags were piled up in shower and toilet areas. Although cleaning supplies are made available on a daily basis, there was no evidence of any routine regimen or cleaning efforts. The Grand Jury was told that administration is contemplating making cleaning supplies available every other day as a budgetary cutback measure.

The Grand Jury found that MCDC contracts for inmate medical services. The current outside medical service is the third group to serve MCDC in the past five years. They follow the guidelines of Title XV for services and costs. Full medical services are available 24/7. The medical staff can handle most minor injuries. They distribute prescribed medications to the inmates daily. Complete medical records are kept on each inmate including if he or she refuses to take the medications. Sick calls average 15 to 20 per day. A local dentist, under contract with the County, makes two four-hour visits a week to perform fillings and extractions. Pre-natal care, x-ray, and laboratory services are available. As of January 31 there were three pregnant inmates. At the six-month point of an inmate's pregnancy, she is evaluated, and usually moved to the medical area of MCDC until she gives birth. There are four treatment rooms that are locked when occupied. Two of the rooms have high efficiency particulate air filters that can be activated if an inmate with a suspected contagious disease is admitted for treatment or observation.

The Grand Jury found that crisis workers are available to help inmates, and staff members have Interpersonal Skill training. Suicide attempts occur weekly. In 2010 there were 120 attempts. None have been successful in the last five years; only three were successful in the last ten years.

The Grand Jury found that Module B currently houses 88 to 91 inmates. Some cells have triple bunks. There is a general gathering area with secured visiting cubicles, telephone access, coffee pot, microwave, newspapers, and books available for the inmates. Inmates are allowed two 30-minute visits per week. All inmates have Canteen privileges once per week and can spend up to \$150 weekly. The source of funds is either from the inmate's personal funds or from family. There is a high mark-up on goods.

The Grand Jury found that, in addition to court-ordered welfare and social services programs, Module B offers non-mandated educational opportunities for inmates. They are able to obtain a GED if they so desire.

The Grand Jury found that the property storage area for housing of inmate personal items and clothing is streamlined, secure, and well managed.

The Grand Jury found that the emergency lighting system was not functional in all areas. The system is a series of lights which flash when there is a problem. Without emergency lighting, safety issues exist.

The Grand Jury found a lack of use of protective vests by officers and questioned why all officers did not wear them. The vests are being issued, but they are not required to be worn.

**Conclusions:**

The Grand Jury concludes that, while the existing MCDC facility is old and in need of repair and modernization, it is a solidly run institution. The officers and staff who conducted the tour of MCDC did not hesitate to let the Grand Jury members see every facet of the facility.

The Grand Jury concludes that areas of MCDC are in need of cleaning and sanitation.

The Grand Jury concludes that the officers and staff encountered were dedicated to their profession, the safety of the public, the MCDC population, and their fellow workers.

The Grand Jury concludes that all officers should be issued and required to wear protective vests.

The Grand Jury concludes that the emergency lighting system is not functional throughout the facility.

**Recommendations:**

The Grand Jury recommends that the County continue modernizing MCDC to enable it to expand its inmate capacity.

The Grand Jury recommends that the County identify and clarify functions and reduce or eliminate duplication between MCDC and the Sheriff's Department.

The Grand Jury recommends that MCDC acquire protective vests and require the officers to wear them.

The Grand Jury recommends that MCDC make functional the emergency lighting system immediately.

The Grand Jury recommends that daily cleaning of all general housing by inmates be mandated.

**Respondent:** Written response required pursuant to PC 933(c)

Madera County Board of Supervisors  
200 West Fourth Street  
Madera, CA 93637

**Respondent:** Response optional

Madera County Department of Corrections  
14191 Road 28  
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