

Madera County Grand Jury Report 1415-05

Madera County Department of Corrections

Pursuant to section 919(b) of the California Penal Code, the Madera County Grand Jury inquired into the condition and management of the Department of Corrections (jail). The Grand Jury found the Madera County Correctional Officer salaries to be the lowest in the Central Valley, making it nearly impossible for management to recruit and retain qualified officers.

The inmate to Correctional Officer ratio is excessive, creating a safety risk to officers, inmates and the public. Mandatory overtime puts stress on the staff and is costly to the county, as is training officers only to have them leave for higher pay at one of 10 correctional institutions within a 100-mile radius.

The Grand Jury recommends that Madera County establish parity in pay with other local correctional agencies by increasing Correctional Officer salary 20 percent.

The jail management and staff are commended for keeping themselves and the inmates as safe as possible despite the dangerous inmate to officer ratios.

Full report is available on the Madera County Grand Jury website:
info@maderagrandjury.org



2014-2015
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Corrections

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Introduction:

On December 11, 2014, pursuant to section 919(b) of the California Penal Code, the Madera County Grand Jury visited the Department of Corrections jail facility located at 14191 Road 28, Madera, CA. The Director of the Madera County Department of Corrections, who is appointed by the Board of Supervisors, manages the jail.

On May 1, 2015 the Grand Jury interviewed the Director regarding Correctional Officer staffing. Staff shortages, mandatory overtime and increased inmate population are a constant drain on jail management. The recruiting, hiring, and retention of Correctional Officers in Madera County is nearly impossible due to salaries that are uncompetitive with other correctional institutions in the Central Valley.

Facts:

1. The Madera County Department of Corrections (DOC) had 410 inmates on the date of our interview.
2. The DOC Director oversees all sworn and non-sworn support staff.
3. When there are no absences on a given day, 16 Correctional Officers (CO) and one supervisor are on duty each shift. The mandated minimum staffing level is 12 officers and one supervisor.
4. Ten CO positions were unfilled on the date of our interview.
5. Starting salary for Correctional Officer I is \$2,710 per month.
6. The cost to train a new CO is \$18,000.
7. The DOC has used 130% of budgeted overtime to date.
8. CO's do not carry firearms in the jail.
9. A 2003 Madera County Jail Security Audit reported that the inmate to officer ratio of 60:1 was excessive.
10. The inmate to officer ratio today is approximately 100:1 for medium security housing and 64:1 for maximum security housing.
11. The 2003 audit report recommended increased officer staff. The DOC operates with the same staffing levels today as 2003.

Findings:

1. Unfilled CO positions, sick leave, training time and administrative leave necessitate mandatory overtime to comply with minimum staffing levels.

2. Less overtime would be required if all open positions were filled.
3. Mandatory overtime puts stress on the staff increasing the use of officer sick time.
4. Over the last five years, CO vacancies have never been fully filled.
5. In the last three years the DOC hired 30 officers and lost 32, costing Madera County approximately \$576,000 in training costs.
6. The DOC competes for the recruiting and hiring of qualified CO's with approximately 10 state and federal correctional institutions within a 100-mile radius.
7. The Madera County DOC has the lowest CO salaries in the Central Valley and is 20 percent below the next highest county.
8. The average daily DOC inmate population has increased 31.7% since 2003, but staffing has not increased. Due to Public Safety Realignment (2011 Assembly Bill 109), the jail houses more violent offenders today.
9. CO's are armed only with a chemical agent. When called to assist, outside law enforcement agencies cannot enter the jail with firearms.
10. The inmate to officer ratio is even more excessive today, twelve years after the 2003 Security Audit Report, creating a safety risk to officers, inmates and the public.

Recommendations:

The Madera County Grand Jury recommends that Madera County Board of Supervisors:

1. Establish parity in pay with other local correctional agencies by increasing Correctional Officer salary 20 percent.
2. Fund all authorized Correctional Officer positions for 2015-2016 fiscal year.

The Madera County Grand Jury recommends that Madera County Department of Corrections:

3. Expedite the hiring of 10 Correctional Officers.
4. Be commended for prioritizing safety concerns despite dangerous inmate to officer ratios.

Respondents:

Director Madera County Department of Corrections
14191 Road 28
Madera, CA 93638

Madera County Board of Supervisors
200 West 4th Street
Madera, CA 93636