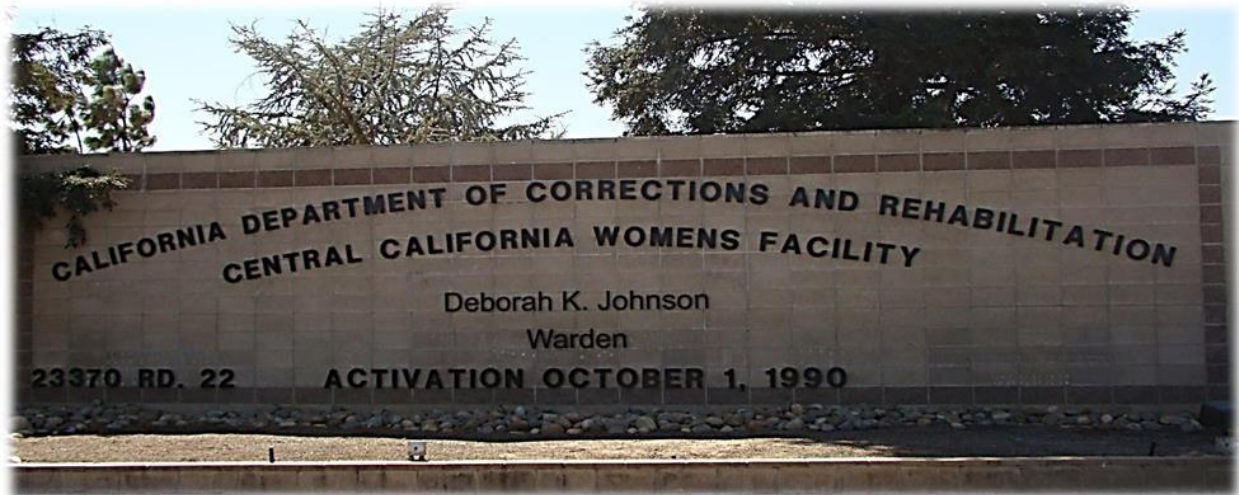


2015-2016
Madera County Grand Jury
Final Report
1516-01 Central California Women's Facility Chowchilla
March 8, 2016

The primary mission of the Central California Women's Facility Chowchilla (CCWF) "is to process, rehabilitate and incarcerate California's female offenders in a secure, safe, disciplined and ethical institutional setting".

Pursuant to Section 919(B) of the California Penal Code, the Madera County Grand Jury visited CCWF, located at 23370 Road 22, Chowchilla, California 93610. This facility is a part of the California State Prison System.

Observation, interviews, discussion and requested information of the site tour produced facts pertaining to prison life and processes. 1516-01 of the CCWF fact and finding recommendations are found in the published 2015-2016 Madera County Grand Jury Final Report 1516-01.



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Chowchilla

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Introduction:

On October 19, 2015, pursuant to Section 919 (B) of the California Penal Code, the Madera County Grand Jury visited the Central California Women's Facility Chowchilla (CCWF), located at 23370 Road 22, Chowchilla, California 93610. This facility is a part of the California State Prison system.

The Grand Jury Committee was given a tour of inmate's housing, medical, mental health, recreational, vocational, intake and visiting facilities. The committee was allowed to interview and interact with honor inmates. Observation, interviews, discussion and requested information of the site tour produced facts pertaining to prison life and processes.

The stated primary mission of the CCWF "is to process, rehabilitate and incarcerate California's female offenders in a secure, safe, disciplined and ethical institutional setting".

Facts:

1. CCWF is the largest women's prison in the United States. Maximum inmate capacity is 4000.
2. In 2014 the inmate population was 3614. Implementation of Proposition 47 reduced the number to 2644.
3. Of the 2644 inmates, 923 are serving life sentences of which 166 are serving their sentences without possibility of parole. Twenty-one inmates are condemned to death without possibility of parole.
4. There have been no suicide attempts within the last two years.
5. There were three natural deaths in 2015.
6. Of the 2644 inmates, 1500 are suffering from mental health issues.
7. Inmates are housed in four separate quads. Each quad consists of housing and adjacent grounds.
8. Inmates wear different colored uniforms according to security risk status.

9. CCWF is the only women's facility in the state prison system where new inmates are processed. Processing inmates takes approximately 65 days.
10. CCWF has a recently constructed Mental Health Facility. Inmates participated in the construction.
11. CCWF employs a staff of approximately 1000; 500 sworn officers, 300 medical staff and the remainder being administration, maintenance and general service staff.
12. CCWF has various prison industry program opportunities for qualified inmates.
13. Inmates can earn privileges by good behavior.
14. An honor inmate is required to be discipline-free for two years.
15. All inmates are eligible for self-help studies, GED and/or AA degree opportunities.
16. CCWF is a smoke-free facility.
17. CCWF has two K9's, one docile and one aggressive, for special needs and utility.

Findings:

1. The condition of the building's interior and exterior grounds was clean and well maintained.
2. Individual inmate's cells were clean and required to be kept clean at all times.
3. Shower doors were modified by inmates for additional privacy.
4. Recreational equipment was sparse outdoors, but inside the facilities provided televisions, reading material and games.
5. For qualified inmates, family visits are allowed in special units Thursday through Sunday on a rotating basis.
6. All of the inmates who interacted with the grand jury were cordial and polite.
7. The custody staff was professional, approachable and informative providing documentation as requested.
8. Qualified inmates may work in one of the prison's industrial facilities. These positions are highly sought and have waiting lists.
9. CCWF has various opportunities for qualified inmates. These include assembling wiring harnesses (for Al-Wire Inc., Chowchilla, CA), agricultural training, manufacturing flags, working on the fire crew and attending cosmetology school.

10. Inmates participating in industrial programs are paid wages.
11. Inmates are offered vocational training that will enable a head start toward employment when released. Employers often seek out and hire selected inmates immediately upon their release.
12. As part of the agricultural training, inmates work in adjacent almond orchards and alfalfa fields.
13. CCWF fire crew inmates staff Institutional Fire Station No. 5. They respond to fires and emergency calls within a 250 mile radius of the prison. They also work with Cal Fire as mutual aid. They conduct 10 fire drills per year and an annual evacuation drill.
14. Since 2013, there have been 48 high school diplomas, 210 GEDs and 70 AA degrees earned by inmates.

Recommendations:

The Grand Jury recommends:

1. Inmates should not be allowed to alter required shower doors.
2. Prison warden and staff should be commended for emphasizing rehabilitation.

Respondent:

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