

Madera County Juvenile Detention Facility

General Information: The Madera County Grand Jury (MCGJ) conducted the mandated detention facility inspection of the Madera County Juvenile Detention Facility (MCJDF), located at 28219 Avenue 14 in Madera, CA on October 21, 2022. The staff of the MCJDF, who facilitated the inspection of the facility, were accommodating to the MCGJ's request for information and access to the facility.

Summary: "Changing Lives" is the motto of the Administration, teaching staff, and Detention Officers at the MCJDF. The staff focuses on changing the lives of the youth through the implementation of routines, established and enforced requirements, and recognition of the achievements of the youth. As a result, there has been a reduction in recidivism.

The facility has a capacity of 70 juveniles. At the time of the inspection, there were a total of 24 individuals. This total includes 19 juveniles in the facility (17 males and two females) and five individuals returning due to the statewide closure of the California Youth Authority Facilities.

Incarcerated youth up to the age of 18 are known as "detainees." Some of those under the age of 18 are also enrolled in the "Cadet Program" and are referred to as "Cadets."

The most common reasons for detainment are fighting, gangs, and drug-related activities. Direct supervision of the youth is required at all times which extends staff in the facility. At the time of the inspection, there were two staffing vacancies. California State Title 15 requires one staff member per ten individuals.

Exterior and Interior of the Facility: Local fire, health, and safety inspections have been conducted at the facility. No deficiencies were noted. Chemicals and cleaning supplies are kept in a locked area. The overall condition and maintenance of the facility both inside and outside appeared well-maintained. The detainees are responsible for cleaning floors, making beds, and maintaining dorm rooms.

Daily Routine: The daily routine begins with breakfast at 7:45 AM. Lunch is at 11:30 AM, and classes resume at 1:00 PM. Afternoon classes end at 2:30 PM. After-school programs include workforce, Youth for Christ, drug awareness, art classes, guitar classes, and Wednesday dog walking. Dinner is at 5:00 PM. Evening activities include access to Endovo/computer tablets, journal writing, table games, reading, and TV. The facility benefits from a Two-year Jump Start Art Grant provided by the Madera Arts Council. This grant provides art supplies and guest artists instruction and demonstrating art techniques. Shower time is at 7:15 PM, followed by phone calls, and lights out at 9:00 PM. Family visits are held on the weekends.

Educational / Vocational Programs: All in-custody youth, Cadets, and detainees, have a regular daily schedule that includes education, work detail, physical activity, bay clean-up, sports competitions, religious services, and monthly haircuts.

Educational programs have three full-time teachers, a special education teacher, and a teacher's aide. Regular courses are offered for those who need to earn high school credits for graduation. Education extends to counseling for alcohol and drugs, library access, and cooperative games to enhance the learning experience.

Health Care: Madera County contracts with Well Path for medical services. Services are available twelve hours per day, seven days a week for all detainees. Depending on the need, a licensed physician is on-site one to two days a week and is on call when not on site. A registered nurse is on duty eight hours a day, and a licensed vocational nurse covers the remaining shifts. A full-time mental health clinician is available on-site five days a week.

Kitchen: Meals provided by Aramark are prepared and meet the nutritional requirement for California schools. All food is prepared at the Madera County Department of Corrections kitchen, which is located next door, and food is delivered to the Juvenile Detention Facility.

Leaving the Cadet Academy: A graduation ceremony is held for those youth completing the Cadet Academy Program. During the ceremony, the colors are presented, and a video is shown chronicling the Cadet Academy activities. Staff, teachers, family, and community members recognize graduates. A youth slated for release from the facility has a case plan developed to help the youth transition from custodial care with a smooth transition into the community. The case plan includes the involvement of the parents, academy staff, and other community agencies.

The Challenge of Senate Bill 823: With the passage of SB823, taking full effect in June of 2023, the closure of the California Youth Authority facilities, a realignment target population (up to age 25) will be returning to home county juvenile facilities. These youth will become part of a realignment population who will require additional security. The requirements of SB823 will bring new staffing challenges to the Madera facility. According to the Madera County SB823 Justice Realignment Plan and Fiscal Summary, a portion of the current facility will be designated as the secure Tract Treatment for the realignment population.

Findings:

1. The MCGJ finds that the Madera County Detention Facility provides structure and support to reduce the recidivism of youth at the facility.
2. The MCGJ finds that the staff throughout the facility demonstrate concern for the youth and take the success of the youth seriously.
3. The MCGJ finds that with the passage of SB823, Madera County will face unique challenges with the realignment population.

Recommendations:

1. The MCGJ recommends that the administration, teachers, and staff continue to provide a nurturing environment.
2. The MCGJ recommends that the administration, teachers, and staff continue to build social and emotional support to further the success of the youth.
3. The MCGJ recommends that administration and staff work with all relevant stakeholders to meet the needs and success of the SB823 realignment population.

Required Respondent: Pursuant to Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, the Madera County Grand Jury requests responses as follows from the following elected officials within 60 days:

Board of Supervisors
200 West Fourth Street
Madera, CA 93637

Invited Respondents: Pursuant to Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, the Madera County Grand Jury requests responses as follows from the following governing body within 90 days;

Mr. Chris Childers,
Madera County Chief Probation Officer
209 West Yosemite Ave.
Madera, CA 93637

Mr. Jose Pantoja
Madera County Deputy Chief Probation Officer
28219 Avenue 14
Madera, CA. 93638