

## Central California Women's Facility

Madera County Grand Jury (MCGJ) conducted the mandated Detention Facility Inspection at the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) located at 23370 Road 22 in Chowchilla, California on several occasions, including November 3, 2022, December 5, 2022, and January 17, 2023. The Madera County Grand Jury met with the Public Information Officer (PIO) and were presented with a PowerPoint presentation of the prison grounds, buildings, programs, and amenities for the inmates. After the presentation, the MCGJ met with the Warden who answered questions.

**General Information:** The Central California Women's Facility is a level one through four, which is a minimum to maximum security women's facility. The facility does have inmates who are on death row. The capacity of the facility is 2,756 inmates, and the population on November 4, 2022, was 2,284 which is within California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) capacity guidelines.

Over the course of the last two years, 878 inmates were placed in a "One-on-One watch" observation status. "One-on-One watch" means twenty-four-hour observation for the safety of the inmates and staff. There are currently 11 inmates on death row; although the death penalty has been suspended in California. During this time, 1,870 inmates were released back to the county of conviction.

**Staffing:** The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Division of Adult Institutions mandates staffing standards designed to provide a "base" staffing level, which is the minimum staffing necessary for institutions to operate. This allows for different levels of staffing to be provided as augmentations for design, special programs, and custody levels. Additional augmentations are given for various levels of healthcare needs of the inmate populations.

**Local and State Inspections:** Fire inspections of the institution take place every quarter. At the time of the MCGJ inspection, they were current. The state conducted Medical/Mental Health inspections, which took place over several days beginning May 11, 2022. The Environmental Health inspection was conducted from August 29, 2022, through September 2, 2022. No violations or concerns were documented or observed.

**Health Care:** The healthcare needs of the inmate population are addressed within seven days of arrival and a follow-up is within 14 to 30 days if needed. There are two mental health programs provided at CCWF. Enhanced Outpatient Program (EOP) provides weekly individual therapy and a minimum of 10 hours of group treatment. Correctional Clinical Case Management Services (CCCMS) provides individual therapy for 30 to 90 days. Services are provided by a team of

Physicians, Registered Nurses, Physicians Assistants, OB/GYNs, Licensed Psychiatrists, and Nurses Aid's. Those requiring trauma services are routed to an acute care hospital. Inmates also have access to Behavioral Health Services provided by psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, recreational therapists, and predoctoral interns.

**Conditions of Grounds:** Landscaping around the housing units are well-maintained at CCWF. Due to the California governor's drought mandate, the Administration building grounds, yards A, B, C, and D, as well as the main yard are brown.

The exterior of all the buildings toured were well maintained with no signs of damage. The interior of the buildings toured were clean. While touring the Education Facility, the MCGJ observed a classroom with missing and water-stained, suspended ceiling tiles. The classroom computers not being used were covered with plastic. Recent rains caused the damage, and Plant Operations was in the process of fixing the leaking roof.

**Housing:** Inmates are housed at a maximum of eight persons per cell. The cells viewed were clean and organized. Each cell has four bunk beds, eight lockers, two sinks with mirrors, one toilet, and one shower. Linens on the bunks and towels hanging on lockers appeared to be clean and tidy. Correctional Officers conduct daily random searches of inmate rooms for contraband.

**Orientation of Inmates:** All inmates arriving at Receiving and Release (R&R) are given a briefing and orientation packet, which includes a Prison Rape/Elimination Act (PREA) brochure, and a self-assessment guide which helps to gauge their level of education, language skills, and maturity. The inmates are shown a video and given an explanation concerning PREA. Inmates are also given instructions on how to report witnessing or being a victim of sexual violence. A signature is required by inmates after the training. Safety issues are also addressed with the inmates. A Disability Placement Program (DPP), a 602 grievance, and an 1824 Reasonable Accommodation Request are explained.

**Discipline of Inmates:** A progressive discipline process for conduct violations is handled in accordance with the California Code of Regulations Title 15. There are three progressive steps of discipline: verbal, counseling, and rules violation reports.

**Kitchen:** The MCGJ toured one of the satellite kitchens as well as the main kitchen at CCWF. Both kitchens appeared to be sanitary and operating efficiently. Inmates working in either kitchen are required to be cleared by Medical Services and able to complete a 52-week food service training program, which qualifies them in food preparation and food handling.

**Personal Appearance and Attitude Of Inmates:** Throughout the institution, inmates were properly dressed, well groomed, and appeared to be using proper hygiene.

The MCGJ interviewed several inmates throughout the institution who spoke highly of the institution and its various programs for their rehabilitation with an upbeat and positive attitude.

**Vocational Programs:** Vocational programs offered to inmates at CCWF are autobody and fender repair, building maintenance, building construction, cosmetology, computer-related technology, dental manufacturing, and electronics. Each of these vocational programs offers certification following course completion which can help inmates acquire employment once released from prison.

**Educational Programs:** Central California Women's Facility has 23 credentialed teachers in the educational department. Classes offered are Adult Basic Education 1 (1st-3rd grades), 2 (4th-6th grades), 3 (7th- 9th grades), and high school GED, which are earned through Sierra Adult Education. The AA degrees are earned through Merced City College. The BA degrees are earned through Fresno State University.

**Mail:** Mail arriving from the Chowchilla Post Office to the CCWF mailroom is processed and delivered to the inmates within seven days. All mail is scanned, screened, opened, and read. Any mail found to contain suspicious messages or contraband is immediately delivered to a custody officer within the mailroom.

**Family Visiting:** Weekly visits for inmates are held in one of two visiting rooms in the institution. Visiting days are Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Visits with family are up to six hours in length. All visitors must be pre-approved and screened before entering the institution. Family conjugal visits are determined by the inmate's counselor based on their behavior. The inmate must apply for the conjugal visit. These visits are only granted every 90 days.

**Firehouse 5:** The CCWF is the only full-time, fully functioning firehouse in the County of Madera with eight to ten firefighter-trained inmates. The firehouse inmates are supervised by a Chief and two Captains. Inmates in this program are screened and interviewed during the selection process prior to joining the firehouse crew. Physical conditioning is part of the daily routine. A mutual aid agreement with Madera County is in place. These firefighters respond to calls ranging from wildland fires, structure fires, auto accidents, and basic medical emergencies. These firefighters are on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The firefighters train with CalFire, are CPR certified, and meet all physical requirements. The firefighters' records are expunged according to legislation passed by the State of California. The firefighter's maximum

term of stay in the program is five years.

**Puppies Uplifting Inmate's Spirits (PUPS):** Inmates that participate in the PUPS program become full-time trainers/handlers. Inmates with no record of harm to animals or others and without any discipline issues can apply to the PUPS program. The assigned dogs live in the cell with the trainer/handler. In each eight-person cell, up to three dogs and three trainers/handlers share the space. The dogs sleep in crates. The dogs are trained to respond to commands and changes in the trainer/handler's emotions. The dogs leave the facility after 18 months for further training at the San Diego Little Angels training facility. When fully trained, the dogs will provide mobility and stabilizing assistance, and serve as diabetic alerts, and seizure-alert dogs.

The Warden highlighted the positive impact the PUPS program has had on the inmate trainer/handlers, the staff, and the administration.

**CDCR Press Release of December 28, 2022:** Since MCGJ visited CCWF there has been a correctional officer charged with sexual misconduct against incarcerated women. The case has been forwarded to the Madera County District Attorney's office.

### **Findings:**

1. The MCGJ finds that a classroom in the Education Department has a roof leak.
2. The MCGJ finds the vocational programs and educational programs offered at CCWF assist inmates with employment opportunities upon release.
3. The MCGJ finds that the PUPS program has a positive effect on inmates/trainers, staff, and the administration.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The MCGJ recommends that, even though the roof leak in the Education Classroom has been fixed on MCGJ's return visit on January 17, 2023, CCWF needs a replacement plan for the roofs.
2. The MCGJ recommends that the Warden of CCWF needs to continue to research and implement innovative programs.
3. The MCGJ recommends CCWF continue to offer the PUPS program for the benefit of the trainer/handlers, staff, and administration.

**Required Respondents:** Pursuant to penal code sections 933 and 933.5, the MCGJ request responses as follow:

From the following governing bodies within 60 days:

Governor Gavin Newsom  
1021 O Street, suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95841

**Invited Respondents:** Pursuant to Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, the Grand Jury request responses as follows:

Anissa De La Cruz,  
Warden (A)  
Central California Women's Facility  
23370 Road 22  
Chowchilla, CA 93610