

Madera County Juvenile Detention Facility

Background:

The Madera County Grand Jury (MCGJ) conducted the state-mandated inspection of Madera County Probation Department Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF) on October 11, 2023. Personnel provided the MCGJ information, reports, and a guided tour of the facility. Youth and staff were readily accessible to the Grand Jury. The MCGJ had one-on-one conversations with youth who were polite and respectful. Throughout the inspection, the staff exhibited pride and compassion in their work with the youth.

The facility was under renovation at the time of inspection, but security was not compromised. Local Madera County fire, health, and safety inspections have been conducted at the facility and are current. In August 2023, the JDF was recognized as one of only three facilities in California not cited by the Bureau of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) for compliance issues.

Discussion:

The JDF has a capacity of 70 individuals. At the time of the MCGJ inspection, there were 21 youths, 17 males and four females. The facility holds youth pending court appearances for alleged charges and/or sentencing. Common reasons for detention are probation violations, criminal involvement in gangs, fighting, and/or drugs. Youth accused of or convicted of committing felonies are kept in custody. Misdemeanor offenders are usually released to homes or other programs to await court proceedings.

The average length of detention is 30 days. Incarcerated youth up to the age of 18 are known as "detainees." Some under 18 are also enrolled in the "Cadet Program" and are referred to as "Cadets." With the closure of the California Department of Juvenile Justice, formerly California Youth Authority (CYA), youth convicted of serious offenses are now housed in JDF until age 25, and are designated as Secure Tract.

Exterior/Interior of the Building:

Signage for the facility is located at the parking lot entry. Ample parking for employees and visitors is in front of the building with handicapped parking spaces well-marked. The exterior of the building features well-manicured plants contained in a weed-free area. Entrance to the facility is granted by monitoring personnel. Facility renovations include a new air conditioning unit, an upgraded camera system, and a family picnic area.

Youth who enter the facility are initially processed at the intake area. Youth enter via the sally-port, a secured and controlled area, to begin the booking process. In booking, youth are fingerprinted, photographed, directed to shower, and are issued clothing. New institutional clothing was purchased, as JDF transitions away from traditional orange to dark green and

charcoal gray. The booking, search, and shower areas were clean. A solitary cell (one-on-one) was observed and is not frequently used.

Murals throughout the facility were designed and painted by the youth. These murals include the Great Seal of the State of California located in the lobby. Another mural is *Making Positive Changes in the Lives of Young Men and Women*. This message on the mural is reaffirmed by the personnel working throughout the facility. Through established routines, the teachers and staff provide positive recognition to the youth, reinforcing mutual respect.

The youth have painted the gray cinder block walls of assigned cells with light-colored, pastel paint. In a cell viewed by MCGJ, a triangular desk was fastened in a corner area with a stool secured to the floor. An upright metal locker holds clothing and other personal items. A pair of boots were placed on top of the metal storage unit and positioned perpendicular to the front of the locker. A towel was crisply folded, and reading materials were stacked horizontally on top of the locker surface. The bed was made in military style with folds and tucks and was free from wrinkles. Toileting facilities were located inside the cell and not readily visible through the door window.

The facility has visitation and communication areas available to the youth with staff approval. The JDF staff shared that visitation by any individual who may have a positive impact on the youth is welcomed. Outdoor family picnic and activity areas are currently under construction by the youth.

Medical/Counseling Services:

Madera County contracts with Wellpath for medical services with personnel who are available 24 hours a day, seven days per week. A registered nurse or licensed vocational nurse is on-site throughout the day. A medical doctor is also available as needed. A full-time mental health clinician, assigned by Madera County Behavioral Health, is available onsite during the weekdays. All services provided in the facility meet or exceed the standards required by California Code of Regulations, Title 15.

Youth are introduced to the on-site clinician within 48 hours of booking and have access to the clinician 40 hours a week as well as on-call mental health support. Individual and group counseling sessions are available. The continuation of mental health services as well as alcohol and drug diversion services are often a condition of probation. During incarceration and after release, these services are also extended to the families of the youth. In addition to the expertise provided by the mental health counselors, Correctional Officers and staff are provided with training including suicide prevention, verbal de-escalation strategies, and trauma-informed practices to support the well-being of the youth.

Meals:

The daily meals are prepared by Aramark at The Jail, located next door, and delivered to the JDF. The menus were reviewed and found to be nutritionally balanced and meet the requirements of the State of California.

Rosa's Pantry, similar to a commissary, is an incentive program created to reward the youth for positive, prosocial behavior. Youths can earn *Pro Bucks* to use at Rosa's Pantry to purchase additional snacks, upgrades for headphones, slippers, and towels. This program has been replicated at two other juvenile facilities within the state.

Daily Routines:

Youth are required to attend school Monday-Friday. Classes begin at 7:45 am, following breakfast, cleanup, and hygiene time. Lunch is served at 11:30 am, and classes resume at 1:00 pm. Afternoon classes end at 2:30 pm followed by snack time. Dinner is served at 5:00 pm. Evening hours can be spent participating in individual or group mental health counseling, Alcohol and Other Drug diversion programs, or other recreational activities such as sports, games, reading, or watching TV. Tablets are available to every youth and are loaded with educational programs that earn points for movies and music. Shower time begins at 7:15 pm and is followed by a snack and phone calls with lights out at 10:00 pm.

Program-Educational:

The JDF's three full-time teachers have been long-time employees. The teaching staff meet students' individual academic needs including Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for additional support. Opportunities to attend online college courses, including dual enrollment are also available. Weekly student progress team meetings include up to 20 members from the staff and the community to support the youth with a systematic and collaborative approach.

A grant from the state made Wi-Fi available in the facility. The youth now utilize laptops and tablets for education and activities. The "intranet-controlled" system denies outside source access. Additional available programs include Workforce job preparation training, Anger Regression training, Youth for Christ religious services, virtual welding, a Master Gardeners' program, and other life skill training and counseling. The Leaders and Readers program has been highly successful in encouraging youth to read and complete book reports. A collaboration with Madera County Animal Services allows youth the opportunity to socialize with adoptable dogs.

Special grants have provided the facility the opportunity to purchase art supplies and guitars for each youth. Art and music instruction is offered weekly by local volunteers and teachers. Student artwork has been displayed in the family visiting room and Madera County Government Center. Youth involved in the music program were given the opportunity to perform at the Cadet Graduation. Youth have participated in the Martin Luther King speech competition with two youth from the facility receiving a cash prize from the local NAACP chapter. Students have also entered writing pieces in the Fresno State Young Writers Project, and several students were recognized for their work published in the project booklet.

Off-Site Activities:

All off-site activities are supervised by staff members who accompany the youth to the event site. Youth have participated in community service projects such as laying wreaths for the

nationwide Wreaths Across America program which honors fallen veterans. Youth have also cleaned a rural cemetery. In conjunction with in-class reading of books by American author John Steinbeck, students were able to visit the John Steinbeck Museum near Salinas and tour Cannery Row in Monterey. Youth have also visited Yosemite National Park and attended a live theatrical production.

Recognition of Achievement:

A graduation ceremony is held on-site for youth who complete the requirements for a high school diploma. The ceremony includes the presentation of colors by the Youth Honor Guard, the awarding of diplomas, speeches by each graduate, and a video highlighting the academic and social interaction of youth. Parents, friends, local dignitaries, and staff attend the ceremony. For those youth completing the requirements of the Academy Cadet Program, lasting six to 18 months, a separate recognition ceremony is also held.

Release from the facility:

Prior to release, an individualized plan is developed for the continued support of the youth. JDF staff ensure that youth along with parents/guardians have knowledge of the resources available and are connected to school, mentor/counseling, and community services.

Findings:

FI. The MCGJ finds that the JDF provides education, counseling, and training programs to enable youth to transition into life with families and communities.

Recommendations:

RI. The MCGJ recommends that the JDF continue to provide excellent services and programs.

Required Responses:

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933 and 933.05, the Madera County Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

From the following elected officials within 90 days:

Board of Supervisors
200 West Fourth Street
Madera, CA 93637

Invited Responses:

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933 and 933.05, the Madera County Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

From the following governing body within 60 days:

Madera County Chief Probation Officer
300 South G Street Suite 100
Madera CA 93637

Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC)
2590 Venture Oaks Way, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA. 95833

Madera County Juvenile Justice Commission
300 South G Street Suite 100
Madera CA 93637

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury. The California State Legislature has stated that it intends the provisions of Penal Code Section 929 prohibiting disclosure of witness identities to encourage full candor in testimony in Grand Jury investigations by protecting the privacy and confidentiality of those who participate in any Civil Grand Jury investigation.
