

Kings County Jail

SUMMARY

The Kings County Grand Jury inquired into the condition and management of the Kings County Jail.

BACKGROUND

As part of an annual examination of the conditions and management of the public prisons, the Kings County Grand Jury inquired into the Kings County Jail. Pursuant to California Penal Code §919(b): “The grand jury shall inquire into the conditions and management of public prisons within the county.”



METHODOLOGY

The Kings County Grand Jury conducted a tour of the Kings County Jail facility and interviewed several employees on-site.

DISCUSSION

Mission Statement:

“The Kings County Sheriff’s Department is dedicated to providing the finest quality law enforcement and correctional services. To ensure a tranquil quality of life, we stand unified, determined to protect and safeguard human rights. We shall provide top quality, responsive, efficient law enforcement services. This commitment of excellence is a sacred trust. Working in partnership with our communities is our mission. Together, we cannot fail. We have ethics, honesty, and integrity in both our professional and personal lives. Ethics are the foundation upon which our organization is built. We are a service organization that values professionalism, civility, and innovation, delivered with a positive attitude. We value respect; honoring the rights and dignity of each person we are called upon to serve. We value the citizens we serve. It is the public’s perception of the quality of our service that is the defining criteria.” (Kings County Sheriffs Office)

Kings County Jail History

The original jail for Kings County was the Bastille located on Douty and the old Court Street. In 1964, the jail was moved to the Kings County Main Jail located at 1441 West Lacey Blvd. In 1984 the Kings County Branch Jail located at 690 East Drive, Hanford CA was opened. The Kings County Main Jail was officially closed in 2007 when the new County Jail was completed. The Branch Jail was originally built as a minimum-security facility. However, with the need to house more violent offenders, a new addition was opened in 1999. With the building of the new Kings County Jail located on Kings County Drive in 2006, the Branch Jail transitioned into a Juvenile Center. On August 5, 2013, due to increasing populations (AB109) at the Kings County Jail, the Sheriff's Department moved inmates back into the Branch Jail.

New Jail: 2006

The new jail facility located at Kings County Drive is currently a maximum security facility consisting of two housing units divided into six "Pods" each, segregated by the level of security needed for each inmate. The men, women and juveniles being held in the Kings County Jail are either awaiting trial or have been sentenced in the Kings County Court System. Prior to AB 109, inmates sentenced to one year or less were housed at the jail. Currently, inmates can be housed for an unlimited amount of time, depending on their sentence and security requirements.

Inmates at the jail are fed three times a day totaling 2,500 calories, are allowed to access phones to contact friends and family members, are allowed at least one hour a day for exercise in the outdoor recreation yard and have access to books, law library, chaplains, bathrooms and shower facilities.

The Kings County Jail currently has a population of 363 inmates with 133 inmates located at the Branch Jail. Total capacity of the Kings County Jail is 373 inmates with an additional capacity of 203 inmates at the Branch Jail. Once construction is completed, the Kings County Jail will be able to house up to 625 inmates.

The new construction also includes a tunnel from the Kings County Jail to the new Kings County Courthouse. This allows for the transfer of inmates via underground access versus vehicle transfers. The tunnel provides for an increase in safety for both inmates and the Sheriff's staff. While on the tour,

the Kings County Grand Jury was impressed that even with construction and the jail supervisor's office being located in a janitor's closet, the operations and security of the jail itself was not affected.

Video Visitation

Currently, visitors are not allowed personal or one-on-one contact with the inmates. Visitations are conducted by video screens. In the future the Kings County Jail hopes to be able to allow video-conferencing from remote locations outside of the jail. This would allow family members located outside of the county to "visit" the inmates.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1

The Kings County Grand Jury found the facility to be organized, well maintained, and technologically impressive, even during a time of construction.

Recommendation 1

None

COMMENTS

The Grand Jury thanks the Assistant Sheriff and staff of the Kings County Jail for their hospitality during the very informative and instructive tour.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

None

INVITED RESPONSES

None