

INSPECTION REPORT FOR SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT AND DETENTION FACILITIES

This report documents the results of the San Luis Obispo Civil Grand Jury's inspections of the County's detention facilities and select public safety facilities as described in the following summary.

SUMMARY

The 2022-2023 San Luis Obispo County Civil Grand Jury (SLOCGJ) inspected the Coroner's Facility, Sheriff's Crime Lab, Evidence Room, County Jail, Juvenile Hall, County Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF), all City and County detention facilities and the California Men's Colony State Prison (CMC). During these inspections and in subsequent follow-up communications, supervisory staff gave an overview and addressed jurors' specific questions. Recent renovations to the CMC produced notable enhancements to mental health and medical services, and the peer counseling program that leads to inmate certification as substance abuse counselors is impressive. There remains concern regarding the safety and security of both clients and staff at the PHF, though the Request for Proposal (RFP) process to secure private management of this facility may impact that in the coming months. Overall, the Grand Jury was satisfied with both the management of the facilities and the professionalism of the staff in their day-to-day operations.

INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE

The State of California requires county grand juries to inspect all jails, holding cells, and state prisons within their respective counties on a yearly basis. Per this directive, the SLOCGJ visited and inspected all city, county, and state detention facilities within its jurisdiction during the months of September through December 2022. Additionally, and while not required, the SLOCGJ inspected related public safety facilities, including the Sheriff's Crime Lab, Property Room, Dispatch Center and the Coroner's Facility. This report compiles the observations, findings and recommendations resulting from those inspections.

AUTHORITY

The issuance of this report is authorized under investigative powers of the Grand Jury pursuant to California Penal Code Sections 919, 921, and 925.

METHOD/PROCEDURE

Over the course of four months in late 2022, members of the SLOCGJ personally visited and inspected the following sites:

- California Men’s Colony (CMC), including:
 - East Facility
 - West Facility
- County Jail, including:
 - Main Jail
 - West Jail Facility
 - Men’s Honor Farm
 - Women’s Jail (Kansas Facility)
 - Medical Programs Unit
- Juvenile Hall
- Holding cells within*:
 - San Luis Obispo Police Department
 - Pismo Beach Police Department
 - Paso Robles Police Department
 - Grover Beach Police Department
 - San Luis Obispo County Courthouse
- San Luis Obispo County Coroner Facility
- San Luis Obispo County Crime Lab Facility
- San Luis Obispo County Sheriff Dispatch Facility
- San Luis Obispo County Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF)

*The cities of Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, and Morro Bay do not operate holding cells.

The data for this report came primarily from the inspections conducted at each of the facilities. Grand Jurors interviewed various officials during the site visits, and when necessary, submitted follow-up questions by email. Jurors also reviewed policies, procedures, and statistics from facility records.

The Appendix to this report contains inspection guidelines that were utilized during the site inspections to gather relevant information. The SLOCGJ provided a list of written questions to the Command Staff of the County Jail, Juvenile Hall and the Crime Lab prior to the inspection. Whether posed in advance, in person, or by follow-up email, all questions to detention facility staff were answered in a timely and complete manner.

The supplementary material reviewed by the SLOCGJ included:

- inspection reports and records
- applicable written policies and procedures
- web-based reports and documents posted by inspected agencies
- local media coverage of the referenced facilities during this time

NARRATIVE

CALIFORNIA MEN'S COLONY (CMC) STATE PRISON

CMC is a medium-security prison housing a current inmate population of approximately 3,300. On the date of the first SLOCGJ site visit (October 26, 2022), there were 1,649 inmates assigned to the higher-risk East Facility and 1,691 inmates assigned to the lower-risk West Facility, with five inmates housed at an outside hospital on that date. At the time, the current capacity for inmates throughout CMC, including the 50-bed Mental Health Crisis Bed Unit, was 4,480.

CMC continues to operate under the organizational structure and management regulations of recent years, with a few notable updates. The opening of a new mental health clinic occurred July 31, 2020. More recently a secured pathway and entry to this clinic was created for inmates housed in the administrative segregation unit (ASU). This pathway allows these inmates to access mental health care without traveling through the general population, thereby improving security and confidentiality for this population.

Physical space at the East Facility is divided into four yards (A, B, C, and D) surrounded by tiered fencing that includes an electric middle layer. Each yard includes kitchen and eating facilities as well as exercise yards. On the D Facility, an extensive mural project has involved inmates in the creation of vibrant, large-scale outdoor art. On Facility B, there are secure, sectioned-off exercise modules for high-risk inmates to spend time outdoors. Additionally, CMC has a central plaza with space for religious practice, classrooms (through which inmates can pursue education up to and including an AA degree), a library, and the aforementioned mental health and medical units.

The East Facility of CMC is also home to the Offender Mentor Certification Program, which is operated by the Department of Rehabilitative Programs (DRP) with California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation institutions. DRP also provides oversight of the Substance Abuse Program and the Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program.

At present, each inmate is assigned to a single-occupancy cell within his assigned cell block. Cells inspected were clean and well-lit, although the absence of air conditioning in the more than 60-year-old cell blocks is an issue.

During the inspection, inmates were seen being escorted to the health facilities as well as moving around freely within the yards and classroom areas. In all instances, inmates appeared orderly and there was evidence of mutual respect between inmates and correctional officers. Visiting policies for inmates were well articulated and space was allocated for scheduled family visitation. CMC leadership reported that gang activity is minimal due to continuous monitoring.

On the West Facility of CMC, which houses lower-risk offenders, the inmates have more freedom of movement and enhanced programming. Examples of work programs available to inmates meeting certain behavioral thresholds include firefighter training, culinary arts and a two-year program for raising service dogs.

The firefighter training program is run by Cal Fire and is a unique work training opportunity for inmates. The more than 50 inmates involved are trained in brush clearing and related tasks to

support the work of Cal Fire responders during fire events. Days worked in the field translate to days deducted from their sentence.

The nine-week Certification of Specialization in Culinary Arts program is offered three times per year (January, June and October). It trains inmates in various aspects of culinary arts and leads to this certification that is also transferable to the Cal State University system. With the certificate, they are equipped to work in a commercial kitchen in roles including chefs, cooks, food prep workers and caterers upon release from CMC. The program is run by a Chef Rosanne Feild from Cuesta College. Inmates train in a mobile kitchen (i.e., a food truck) set up on site and are sometimes deployed with the firefighters to provide meal prep during firefighting assignments. In 2022, there were 34 inmates who completed this program.

The New Life K9 program pairs inmates with dogs from eight weeks old to two years, as they train to be service animals for first responders and veterans with PTSD. CMC officials highlighted the often life-changing value of this program, which allows inmates to experience unconditional love and inspired one of its first inmate graduates to continue working as a trainer.

Buildings on the West Facility are quite old, most having been built more than 75 years ago as military barracks during WWII. For their age, the buildings appear in reasonable condition and adequately maintained. As noted in past SLOGJ reports, security concerns remain regarding the northwest corner and the continued potential of that area to smuggle in drugs and cell phones by people outside the fence throwing them over. Adding to CMC's challenges for planning and resource allocation, the facility remains on the closure list due to the contraction of prisons in California. It does appear that the West Facility is likely to close at the end of 2023.

Overall, current staffing levels remain sufficient and are attributed in part to adequate benefits. Hiring remains a challenge statewide and CMC is no exception. Employees interviewed expressed appreciation for the facilities and working conditions.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY JAIL

The SLO County Jail is composed of four main sections: the Main Jail, the West Jail, the Men's Honor Farm, and the Kansas Jail (Women's Jail). At present, there are approximately 160 sworn and administrative personnel who adequately cover the basic needs of the overall facility. Throughout the Jail complex, staff members appeared to the SLOCGJ to be dedicated and committed to their work. The inmate population at the Honor Farm, however, is currently low, and because this section of the Jail relies on the labor and contributions of eligible inmates, programs there are functioning only at a minimal level. There do not appear to be supplemental human resources available to backfill for the lack of Honor Farm inmates.

As noted in last year's SLOCGJ report on detention facilities, the Sheriff's Office continues to achieve recognition for exemplary programs and services across the facilities. In October 2022, for example, the comprehensive health program, including mental health services, received accreditation by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care. In addition, the ongoing bicycle refurbishment program remains a successful component of the Sheriff's Office programming.

The Jail facilities overall were found to be extremely clean, updated to modern standards, and run efficiently. The bathrooms and shower areas have recently undergone notable renovations, and the kitchen area presented as clean and orderly.

While there has been some SLOCGJ concern in the past regarding coordination between the Sheriff's Office and County Behavioral Health when handling inmates with mental health issues, there appear to be substantive steps undertaken to address these concerns. Jail leadership meets monthly with staff from the PHF and Wellpath, the agency contracted for medical services, to improve communication, collaboration and operations.

As noted in the Sheriff's Office written responses, there are also two contracts executed with the Department of State Hospitals (DSH) to address the needs of inmates who are designated Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST). These contracted services enable inmates to resume their court proceedings efficiently. The Jail Based Competency Treatment (JBCT) program has expanded

from five beds to eight, and there is now a program to allow remote re-evaluation of jail-restored IST inmates. The Sheriff's Office reports that these contracts have had a moderate impact on the Jail's IST waitlist for state hospital beds.

Additionally, terms of the Jail's contract with Wellpath were modified in Fall 2022 to increase mental health staff to 24/7 and on-site Medical Director hours to 40 per week. The relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions means that therapeutic group programs and services have largely been reinstated. These improvements are viewed as critically important, as severely mentally ill (SMI) inmates now make up 28% of the population – up from 26% in 2021 and 18% when data was first collected in December of 2019.

While these improvements are indeed positive developments in the area of inmate care, there continues to be tension regarding the Main Jail's role and responsibilities in terms of mental health. As the Sheriff's Office put it themselves in their written responses to SLOCGJ questions, while they “continue to excel at providing the best custodial care possible . . . severely mentally ill (SMI) individuals belong in a therapeutic environment. By definition, that is not a county jail. The Jail has taken on responsibilities that should reside with the State and County Behavioral Health Departments in some cases.”

Sheriff's Office staff also point to the fact that many inmates are dually diagnosed with both mental health and substance use disorders. The rapid rise in fentanyl use has necessitated closer monitoring of patients for potential withdrawal or overdose symptoms. The jail has increased the number of patients participating in the medication assisted treatment (MAT) program. In addition, all individuals released from the jail receive an Overdose Safety Kit that includes Narcan and training instruction on how to use it.

As was noted in last year's Inspection Report for SLO County Law Enforcement and Detention Facilities, the proximity of the Oklahoma Avenue Safe Parking Site to the Honor Farm causes concern for the safety and security of inmates and staff. This remains a critical issue. There have been hundreds of calls for service at the safe parking site, as well as an increase in unauthorized communication and introduction of contraband along the fence line. During the site visit in

December 2022, SLOCGJ representatives learned of specific instances where materials, including a bottle of urine, were tossed over the fence from the parking site into the adjacent Property Section. Bodily fluids and other infectious waste can create a hazardous condition.

In contrast, the management of COVID-19 appears to be a bright spot regarding inmate health and safety. At the time of the SLOCGJ visit, there were no known positive cases within the inmate population. A robust education campaign for both staff and inmates, coupled with ongoing availability of vaccination and booster shots, seem to have kept individuals within the Main Jail facility protected from this public health threat.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY JUVENILE HALL

There are three categories into which youth are placed at Juvenile Hall:

- a) Detention
- b) Coastal Valley Academy (CVA) which is a residential camp with an average length of stay of 6-12 months
- c) Felonious.

Juvenile Court judges are the only individuals who can transfer a juvenile case to adult court, and two-thirds of youth housed at Juvenile Hall do not have the court involved. The youngest residents are approximately 12 years old, and approximately one in 20 residents has a developmental disorder or delay.

On the date of the SLOCGJ's visit, the population included 15 individuals in detention and five in CVA. The population fluctuates day to day, but there is capacity for 65 beds (30 CVA). There is a third dorm space that has been used for COVID-19 isolation during the pandemic; during that time, it required a dedicated staff person with each COVID-19-positive resident.

Staffing can be an issue of particular concern at Juvenile Hall because the 22% drop in the rate of qualified applications exacerbated by the pandemic. There are currently 34 officers and six shift leaders. On the day of the GJ site visit, Juvenile Hall leadership reported being down six staff.

There is one classroom dedicated to detention residents and one to CVA, and the three teachers contracted for instruction (on 180-day contracts) all have dual credentials for both regular and special education. The facility is a Western Association for Schools and Colleges (WASC) accredited high school. Last year they graduated eight youths. There is always an officer present in each classroom. The teachers also have a support person in the classroom, providing at least three adults in each classroom.

The classrooms were clean and well-organized and were described as “at least as well-equipped as those on a comprehensive campus.” The tour of the classrooms did appear to confirm this, and SLOCGJ members were also shown some new Care and Technical Education (CTE) equipment that had been acquired within the past few months; this equipment will be integrated into instruction and will enable students to complete technical vocational pathways of education like those offered through local comprehensive high schools.

Staffing teams meet every morning to discuss the specific population for that day and to identify potential risks. There are currently 3.5 full-time behavioral health clinicians (two in detention/crisis and 1.5 in CVA/therapy). There is a low recidivism rate; leadership targets 30% and generally sees rates up to 20% or lower.

One outgrowth of COVID-19-era modifications was Zoom visits with family. While residents are allowed two hour-long visits a week, via the Zoom web application they can choose to have more family engagement. Staff described how one resident had regular Zoom visits with family through which she participated in cooking family recipes. These Zoom opportunities are seen as a positive practice that will continue going forward, as they allow additional supportive contact with family which can contribute to positive outcomes.

Throughout the facility there is an emphasis on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS). The tenets of this approach are being **safe**, **responsible**, and **considerate** at all times. This framework is supported through messaging on signage in every physical space (and tailored to the specific space). All witnessed interactions between staff and residents during the site visit were

mutually respectful, and leadership seemed genuinely engaged with those individuals placed in the facility.

CITY POLICE AND COUNTY COURTHOUSE HOLDING CELLS

The SLOCGJ inspected holding cells maintained by the police departments in the cities of Grover Beach, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and San Luis Obispo, as well as holding cells at the SLO County Courthouse. No other cities within the county maintain holding cells.

In every case, all holding cells were found to be clean, reasonably equipped and in good working order. As in recent years, no deferred maintenance or unacceptable conditions were noted. In all cases, city police departments reported that their holding cells are used only occasionally and always for brief periods of time, with the average being around 20 minutes. There is a standard operating procedure of checking on held individuals every 15 minutes while in custody and of holding individuals for no more than two hours for processing before they are either released with a citation or transported to County Jail for booking. Juveniles are kept in separate areas and within the presence of officers during the time they are held.

The SLO County Sheriff's Office operates the busiest holding cell facility in the county, which is located in the lower level of the County Courthouse. The space has been reconfigured and now includes nine holding cells with a capacity of approximately 75 inmates. During the past year, while COVID-19 limited in-person courthouse interaction and many court appearances were virtual, the holding cells were used less frequently than normal; as of the SLOCGJ's site visit on August 31, 2022, the courthouse detention facility was back to fully operational.

Sheriff's Office deputies occupy an office/command area at the center of the cells, which would benefit from better lighting. They do have the opportunity for breaks, during which they can get outside to experience daylight and fresh air, but the work area has no window access and thus good lighting is important. The nearby supply closet housing cleaning and janitorial equipment appeared somewhat disorganized and in need of steps to secure cleaning supplies.

Deputies working in the holding cell facility are trained in first aid and are CPR-certified. They have access to Narcan for administration in the case of on-site drug overdoses. In the event of any other medical emergency, deputies call upon local EMT services. There is a self-contained breathing apparatus on-site for use during an emergency impacting air quality.

The holding cells themselves are equipped with toilets and sinks and included access to drinking water. In addition to the holding cells, there are interview rooms, attorney-client rooms, and a sally port used for arriving and departing inmates. Inmates are provided with a sack lunch during their time in the holding facility.

While in custody within the Courthouse holding facility, inmates remain in waist restraints and leg irons, and there are clearly marked paths for moving individuals to and from the courtrooms upstairs. While not a security concern, some of the stairwells did appear to need patching and new paint.

The migration from hand-written documentation to tablet-based digital forms is in its final stages. Staff again expressed appreciation for the security cameras added to stairwells, something that was an outcome associated with a previous SLOGGJ report.

As mental health concerns continue to rise within the county, police and sheriff staff are increasingly called upon to transport individuals in mental health crisis to local hospitals. In some cases, these individuals are transported by ambulance with an accompanying officer, but more often they are transported by patrol car and transferred to hospital staff for evaluation. This is in contrast to the approach used in some other counties, where mental health patients are transported exclusively via ambulance, thereby freeing up officers to address other field concerns.

In addition to the inspection of holding cells within police stations, department staff updated SLOGGJ members on the status of programs, tools, and issues related to policing in their communities. Of note was Grover Beach's new drone camera program and the Pismo Beach Police Department's mobile command vehicle -- which is deployed during large events in the community and onto which drone footage can be broadcast -- and the PBPD's adoption of a camera system at

city entry and exit points, which will facilitate the apprehension of suspects traveling through the city.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY CORONER'S FACILITY

The Coroner's facility is located in an office park near the San Luis Obispo Airport. The location includes a central autopsy room surrounded by a break/meeting room that doubles as an autopsy viewing room (it has an internal window into the autopsy space), an evidence room with storage lockers, a medical examiner's office, desk space for a legal clerk, an office area with cubicles for Sheriff-Coroner deputies, and a refrigerator unit for storing bodies awaiting autopsy or transport to a mortuary. In February 2021, a new ventilation system was installed, which has helped minimize health hazards, including COVID-19, in the tight quarters.

As a division of the SLO County Sheriff's Office, the Coroner is staffed by two deputies, two senior deputies, a sergeant and a legal clerk who comes in one day a week. There is currently not a permanent medical examiner or autopsy tech on staff, even part-time. When the most recent medical examiner retired, the Sheriff's Office began contracting with an outside vendor to conduct autopsies, and that is the arrangement currently in place. The Sheriff had attempted to hire a permanent staff person for this role, but there was only one applicant – who ultimately opted for another position at a higher pay rate. There has been a 13% pay increase allocated for the position recently, which brings the salary offered from \$275,000 to \$310,000. In comparison, for instance, the salary for the same position in Stanislaus County is \$440,000.

The contractor with whom SLO County works, National Autopsy Assay Group (NAAG) Forensic, currently covers the following counties in addition to SLO: Tulare, Kings, Imperial, San Diego, and Madera. While the schedule under the permanent medical examiner had been for autopsies to be conducted Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, the current contractor comes in one day a week and all autopsies are conducted then. This is generally workable but does occasionally make for long days. The contractor often brings along an autopsy tech who is responsible for cleaning up after the procedures; when that does not happen, deputies cover those duties. While deputies assist with this clean-up when necessary, it remains the case that “no one with a gun touches a body.”

The coroner's office is responsible for determining the cause and manner of death in cases; the doctor/medical examiner is responsible for cause and the sheriff deputies are responsible for manner. There are on average 900-1,000 deaths in the county each year, and the coroner is required to perform an autopsy on any that are accidental, suicide, homicide and/or of a person not under direct care of a doctor. There are approximately 280 bodies brought to the coroner facility for autopsy/external exam each year, with approximately 150 of these requiring a full autopsy. A single basic autopsy results in a report of approximately seven to nine pages, while a homicide autopsy report will run approximately 40 pages.

There are four investigators who cover department responsibilities 24 hours a day. They have two trucks that can transport a body, and there is a capacity for approximately 19 bodies in the onsite cooler (with the option to store more densely within it if needed). There is a 50-foot refrigerator-trailer available for large-scale needs (e.g, it was parked at the facility during the COVID-19 pandemic) and mutual-aid arrangements are in place both regionally and statewide.

The current trend is an increase in the number of drug-related deaths in the county; in fact, drug cases are now at three times the rate of 2017-2018. Of the 123 drug-related deaths investigated by deputies last year, about 75 were related to fentanyl. The Coroner Facility does keep Narcan on site for the safety of staff, but the supply needs to be updated to avoid ever using expired doses.

Physical space remains at a premium in the Coroner's Facility, while the autopsy suite is fully functional. Work space for staff seems cramped. At the time of the site visit, there were plans to expand into square footage on the floor above the existing operation in June 2023, when the current tenant vacates. The plan also provided for the Crime Lab to move into the expanded facility. As of January 2023, however, the SLOGJ was informed that the Sheriff opted not to lease the upstairs portion of the building, so the Crime Lab will remain in its location on the main campus of Sheriff Office operations.

Regarding staff retention and overall health, the current limit of three to four Employee Assistance Program (EAP) visits per year is very likely insufficient. The nature of the work for coroner staff is mentally and emotionally taxing, and in many cases the affected personnel would benefit greatly

from enhanced support. In Santa Barbara County, there is a full-time psychologist, and while this person has been contracted in the past to work with SLO County employees, a permanent, full-time option would be ideal.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY PSYCHIATRIC HEALTH FACILITY

The Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) is a 16-bed inpatient hospital facility licensed by the California State Department of Health Care Services to provide psychiatric services to adults who are experiencing psychiatric emergencies. The facility provides psychiatric evaluation and treatment. Law enforcement is also able to bring adults from the field for care. Located in the former General Hospital building since that institution closed in 2003, the PHF accepts patients who have been medically cleared through any of the County's emergency rooms and can hold them from 72 hours to 14 days.

The 16-bed limitation means that rather than a recommended 1:2,000 bed to resident ratio¹, SLO County currently offers only 1:17,500. Supervisory staff told the SLOCGJ that the PHF ideally needs more beds as well as a new organizational structure with specialized treatment and limited mix of populations.

Despite the age of the physical facility, the PHF is clean and well maintained, including the hallways, common spaces, rooms, and bathrooms. The most recent SLOCGJ report on detention facilities noted that there were safety and security issues at the PHF related to a lack of consistency in security staffing, but within the last year the SLO County Behavioral Health Department has contracted with Condor Security to ensure that there are two guards available to ensure 24/7 coverage. Even so, at the time of the Grand Juror's site visit, there remained some concerns related to the doors becoming unlocked in the event of a power outage or fire alarm, which means individuals may be able to leave through any facility door. This year, the Health Agency installed a Tesla Power Plant which immediately restores and covers power needs immediately restoring power in the event of an outage or fire.

¹ McBain, Ryan K., Jonathan H. Cantor, Nicole K. Eberhart, Shreya S. Huilgol, and Ingrid Estrada-Darley, Adult Psychiatric Bed Capacity, Need, and Shortage Estimates in California—2021. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2022. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1824-1-v2.html.

There is a very low incidence of seclusion or restraint at the PHF, which speaks to the ability of staff to deescalate situations before they rise to the need for such restrictive measures. The facility was cited last year for having a mat on the floor in the seclusion room which was present during the GJ site visit. Two doors in the day room were noted during the SLOCGJ visit as having hardware presenting a ligature risk.

One other subject that the SLOCGJ noted was the status of transportation resources. At present, transportation of patients to other facilities is contracted out, but the current contract is not meeting the needs. At times, County staff must assist with transportation, using County vehicles, which also pulls them away from their regularly assigned duties. Additionally, the PHF transportation office itself has a window to the outside recreation area, which is covered by a piece of artwork rather than an actual screen.

Perhaps the areas of concern outlined here will be addressed in 2023, as the SLOCGJ learned during its visit that the SLO Behavioral Health Department has opened a Request for Proposals (RFP) process in an effort to identify new management for this facility. The timeline proposed would result in the new management structure to be in place by July 2023. This will necessarily impact staffing, even before it is formalized, as some staff may leave early to secure other job opportunities, but at present staffing gaps are not yet acute.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY CRIME LAB

The Crime Lab is located at the SLO County Sheriff's Office complex. Crime Lab personnel conduct crime scene investigations for the Sheriff's Office and for any County law enforcement agency that requests their help.

The Crime Lab consists of the following units:

- A Forensic Alcohol Unit

Function:

- Analyzes biological samples supporting DUI investigations
- Maintains and calibrates the County's alcohol breathalyzers calibrated every 10 days

- Trains County Sheriff's deputies in breathalyzer use

Staffing:

- One full-time staff.
- This staffing fits the current workload. There is no backup for this role.

- Chemistry/Toxicology Unit

Function:

- Analyzes narcotics and controlled substances using gas chromatography

Staffing:

- One full-time staff and one half-time staff.
- Workload is heavy and backlogged. The supervisor interviewed noted that this unit would benefit with an increase to two full-time positions. The run cycle time of the gas chromatograph also contributes to the backlog, and staffing is not adequate to keep the machine running appropriately.

- Forensic Services Crime Scene Unit

Function:

- Collects and analyzes crime scene evidence in criminal cases
- Fingerprints
- Biological fluids
- Hair and fibers
- Tire and footprint impressions
- Processes physical evidence submitted to the unit

Staffing:

- Two full-time staff.
- The workload is heavy due to activities such as collection at the crime scene, analyzing evidence, report writing and testifying. One staff member is always on call after hours. Due to the experience, dedication, and good working relationship of the staff in this unit, the two staff positions are currently meeting County forensic needs. However, this workload could be difficult to meet with two positions if there were any changes in staffing.

- CAL-ID Program:

Function:

- Operates the County's new automated fingerprint identification system
- Maintains mobile fingerprint identification devices

A new system has been installed that facilitates the rapid scan of DNA for preliminary identification of unknown persons before samples are sent to an out-of-county lab for formal processing. This aids in the initial and early possible identification of both suspects and victims in cases under investigation. For DNA samples to be admissible as evidence they must be sent to the Department of Justice (DOJ) Crime Lab in Goleta. The time it takes for analysis with the DOJ lab is lengthy.

The Crime Lab building is 70 years old and shows its age. The area was kept clean and organized. Space was limited. The break room also functions as the evidence tote storage area.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DISPATCH CENTER

The SLO County Sheriff's Office Dispatch Center and Watch Commander Office are located on the Sheriff's Office complex off Highway 1 on Kansas Avenue. These functions are staffed continuously on a 24/7 basis. The building housing the facility is owned by PG&E and is shared with the SLO County Office of Emergency Services (OES). Much of the OES space sits empty but ready to be employed in the event of a major emergency. The current Dispatch Center location in San Luis Obispo is scheduled to be replaced by a new center in Templeton in 2025.

The Dispatch Center operates four radio channels and provides dispatch services for the SLO County Sheriff's Office, the police departments in Morro Bay and Arroyo Grande, and for ambulance service throughout the County. They also handle dispatch for SLO County Probation, rescue helicopters and the Sheriff's Special Enforcement Detail. In addition to handling 911 calls, dispatchers answer business lines and emergency lines while also managing their assigned primary radio channel throughout their shifts. The SLO County Dispatch Center does not use encryption. County Dispatchers receive training in Emergency Medical Dispatch and in CPR. The training enables them to offer limited medical assistance over the phone, providing emergency instruction for issues such as CPR, choking, major bleeding and other situations to help stabilize patients prior to the arrival of emergency medical service providers.

The Dispatch Center is critically understaffed. To maintain this essential service at full operations, staff are working extensive overtime; previous staff now in other Sheriff's Office departments are picking up shifts; and supervisors are working staff Dispatch shifts. This understaffing is difficult to correct since the hiring process for this challenging position takes at least two to four months and training takes six months. Remarkably, even during this staffing shortage, the Dispatch Center seamlessly replaced and retrained all the staff on new Computer Aided Dispatch that replaced their outdated technology. Despite limited staffing resources, the Grand Jury observed the Dispatch Center running as a well-oiled machine by highly skilled staff that are remarkable at maintaining split attention, prioritizing, and providing timely responses. Training of new staff is incorporated into daily operations.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE PROPERTY ROOM

The Property Room is in a well-secured, locked warehouse facility at the SLO County Sheriff's complex off Highway 1 on Kansas Avenue. The space allocated to the facility is limited and is filled near capacity with items stored as evidence. Most of the warehouse is not temperature controlled, making the area a challenging work environment during the warmest and coldest times of the year. In a follow up communication with the Sheriff's office, budget has been allocated to address the climate control issues. Within the warehouse is a walk-in refrigerated room that is at full capacity. All items booked into the property room are tagged with a bar code and indexed in a computer database for easy location. Items related to homicides are held in perpetuity. Other items are held for 90 days following case disposition and then are disposed of according to policy. All firearms are held until cleared by the California Department of Justice. Staff must stay on top of purging all items that can be destroyed or disposed of to allow additional space for newly received evidence. The assistance of the judges to expedite the process of allowing property staff to destroy outdated property could free up some more space.

CONCLUSIONS

Public safety personnel in SLO County continue to do excellent work despite the challenges of an on-going pandemic and significant staffing, budget, and space limitations. Even with these challenges, there exist notable opportunities for improvement as presented in the Findings and Recommendations sections of this report.

FINDINGS

CALIFORNIA MEN'S COLONY

- F1. In the West Facility, facilities E, F and G are scheduled for closure by November 6, 2023. Facility M, which houses inmates trained to fight wildland fires throughout California will remain open.
- F2. There are a number of notable, successful programming opportunities that serve inmates by preparing them with life skills to be productive members of our community.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY JAIL

- F3. The location of the Oklahoma Avenue Safe Parking Site next to the Honor Farm creates a safety hazard to inmates and staff. Materials – including illegal substances, drug paraphernalia, and human waste -- have been tossed over the fence from the Safe Parking Site, landing within the confines of the Honor Farm.
- F4. Honor Farm programs are operating at minimal levels due to the current low inmate population, and there are no employees available to supplement the staffing due to staffing challenges throughout the county.
- F5. Jail management has successfully managed the COVID-19 pandemic through staff and inmate education and vaccination, resulting in an eradication of active cases within the jail.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY JUVENILE HALL

- F6. There is an ongoing staffing challenge due to a 22% reduction in applicants since 2016, exacerbated by the pandemic while occupancy rate of juveniles has remained stable
- F7. The labor-intensive programs appear successful in thwarting recidivism among the juvenile residents.

CITY POLICE AND COUNTY COURTHOUSE HOLDING CELLS

F8. Despite waiting on progress by the State to build a new courthouse, the current holding cells are functioning well and meeting the needs of the inmate population.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY CORONER'S FACILITY

F9. Physical space is limited impacting the overall work atmosphere. Recent improvements to the autopsy suite have made it fully functional.

F10. The limited number of EAP visits for staff is likely not sufficient for supporting deputies with the trauma fatigue associated with their duties.

F11. The facility has a supply of Narcan for use if needed by Coroner staff, but onsite Narcan had an expired date.

F12. The transition between the former full-time pathologist to the current provider caused some backlog in cases.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY PROPERTY ROOM

F14. There remains a need for additional storage space and climate control.

COMMENDATION[S]

In October 2022, the SLO Jail received accreditation for its health care services from the National Commission on Correctional Healthcare.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY JAIL

R1. Improve barriers and security between the Oklahoma Safe Parking Site and the Honor Farm by end of December 2023.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY CORONER'S FACILITY

- R2. Consider increasing the number of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) visits for trauma fatigue and mental health wellness support for staff by end of December 2023.
- R3. Hire a full-time Medical Examiner and additional support staff as required to manage ongoing case load by end of March 2024.
- R4. Increase the number of Narcan units on site and develop an inventory checklist and procedure for monitoring medication expiration dates by October 1, 2023.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY CRIME LAB

- R5. Identify area in facility where staff can have break room by end of December 2023.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY PROPERTY ROOM

- R6. Follow through on property room climate control enhancements.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office is required to respond to: R1, R2, R3, R4, R5 and R6.

The San Luis County Board of Supervisors is required to respond to: R1, R2, R3, R4, R5 and R6.

All responses shall be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the San Luis Obispo County Superior Court within 60 days of submission of the report. A paper copy and an electronic version of all responses shall be provided to the Grand Jury.

933.05. Findings and Recommendations

- (a) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
 - (1) The respondent agrees with the finding.
 - (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding; in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons, therefore.

- (b) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
- (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
 - (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.
 - (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
 - (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation, therefore.

Presiding Judge	Grand Jury
Presiding Judge Craig van Rooyen Superior Court of California 1035 Palm Street Room 355 San Luis Obispo, CA 93408	San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury P.O. Box 4910 San Luis Obispo, CA 93403

APPENDICES

INSPECTION GUIDELINES

The following summarizes (but is not limited to) the data examined by the Grand Jury prior to or during each inspection:

- Population
 - Current census
 - Average daily census
 - Capacity
 - Average time a person is held
 - Are people ever held without charges
 - Significant changes in inmate population
- Disciplinary actions taken against staff for inmate-related issues
- Escapes
 - Details
 - Remedial actions
- Use of force incidents
- Health Services
 - How delivered
 - Common medical problems
 - Public health concerns
- Injuries
 - Injuries to inmates due to aggression/agitation
 - Accidental injuries to inmates requiring medical attention greater than first aid
 - Injuries to staff by inmates due to assault or managing inmate aggression/agitation
- Suicide
 - Suicide attempts/deaths
 - Serious self-injury requiring medical attention beyond first aid

- Drugs
 - Drug overdoses
 - Drug deaths by overdose
- Deaths
 - Other deaths
- Training (title, hours, and instructor credentials for each type)
 - Managing inmate violence
 - Handling mental health behaviors
 - Responding to drug/alcohol related problems

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO SLO COUNTY JAIL LEADERSHIP IN ADVANCE OF SITE VISIT:

How has the relationship improved between Sheriff and PHF staff in recent years?

1. Describe recent improvements into the mental health program to serve those in jail who have a primary mental health diagnosis.
2. Do you have enough support and services available to assist you with this group of inmates?
3. What are the assessment criteria for assigning inmates to housing in the facility?
4. What are the criteria used for determining your various levels of “Risk”?
5. What is the percentage of Covid-positive inmates now? What are you doing to provide services and protection regarding Covid?
6. Share with us details of the recent Service Award Accreditation your agency received on October 31.
7. Does this healthcare award include mental health services?
8. What is the percentage of mental health patients coming into the jail? Is this an increase or decrease relative to recent years?
9. What is the interaction/relationship between the Honor Farm program and the Safe Parking program? Are there any issues?
10. Have there been any fentanyl incidents in the jail?
11. What is your Narcan protocol and who carries it?
12. What is the protocol for inmates who come in on prescription medication(s)?

13. Do they continue to receive these medications while in jail?
14. Who administers these medications?

**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO SLO COUNTY JUVENILE HALL LEADERSHIP IN
ADVANCE OF SITE VISIT:**

1. Do individuals in Juvenile Hall get mixed in with other individuals experiencing mental health issues?
2. What percentage of individuals in Juvenile Hall have a special needs disorder (i.e., autism or other spectrum disorder)?
3. How are educational needs met for the special needs population?
4. How are mental health needs addressed in Juvenile Hall?

**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO SLO COUNTY CRIME LAB LEADERSHIP IN
ADVANCE OF SITE VISIT:**

1. Please describe the chain of custody of samples
2. Is there a LIMs system to log, track and record sample results?
3. Who performs data verification of results?
4. Are assays used validated?
5. What security/password control procedures are in place?
6. Who cleans the lab after hours?
7. What is the training program for lab technicians?
8. How is hazardous waste disposed of?