



JOHN D'AGOSTINI

SHERIFF - CORONER - PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR  
COUNTY OF EL DORADO  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

July 11, 2017

The Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury  
Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court  
1354 Johnson Blvd.  
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

RE: Report No. GJ 2016-013, May 9, 2017 – El Dorado County Placerville Jail Inspection

The Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury,

This Office has received and reviewed a report by the 2016-2017 Grand Jury relating to the El Dorado County Placerville Jail Inspection. Please find the below responses to those findings and recommendations relevant to the Sheriff's Office.

**Sheriff's Response to Specific Findings GJ 2016-013 El Dorado County Placerville Jail Inspection**

F1. The main entrance area of the Placerville Jail is not equipped with a full body metal detector which creates a safety issue for staff, inmates and visitors at the jail.

**The Sheriff agrees with the finding.**

F2. There are only two safety cells at this time, limiting the placement of at-risk individuals.

**The Sheriff disagrees wholly or partially with the finding.**

Safety Cells are for inmates who are suicidal and in a crisis state. They are only for inmates who are actively displaying suicidal ideation or gestures; and/or display violent behavior which results in the destruction of property or reveals intent to cause harm to self or others.

***"Serving El Dorado County Since 1850"***

HEADQUARTERS- 300 FAIR LANE, PLACERVILLE, CA 95667  
JAIL DIVISION- 300 FORNI ROAD, PLACERVILLE, CA 95667  
TAHOE JAIL- 1051 AL TAHOE BLVD., SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, CA 96150  
TAHOE PATROL- 1360 JOHNSON BLVD., SUITE 100, SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, CA 96150

The inmate in a safety cell is checked on a minimum of twice every thirty minutes and will be removed from the safety cell when they are no longer displaying behaviors which lead to their placement.

The intent of the safety cell is not only to protect the individual from self-harm but to stabilize the individual as soon as possible for removal from the safety cell; not just a placement for at risk individuals.

A third safety cell in Placerville would be desirable for those infrequent occasions when there are more than two inmates in need of safety observation; but its absence does not limit our ability to place or protect at risk persons. There is a Transition/ Stepdown cell and additional cells in the holding area in which inmates can safely be observed or restrained if needed.

- F3. Lack of vocational programs does not serve the rehabilitation needs of the inmates. Availability of additional vocational training programs could lessen the chances that an inmate will reoffend upon release.

**The Sheriff agrees with the finding.**

- F4. Tobacco controls are not effective and result in inmates setting off fire alarms when they illegally smoke.

**The Sheriff disagrees wholly or partially with the finding.**

The Sheriff has effective controls in place to ensure tobacco and other contraband smuggling is minimized. Additionally, the fire alarms are rarely set off by tobacco use.

The fire system is dated and Facilities staff are working to upgrade and modernize it. Currently, the alarm can be set off and charged by just smoke detection; which can occur even when there is no smoke. Through the years the charging of the system has added to the wear and tear causing more frequent false activations of the alarm system. Facilities plans to replace the antiquated system with a dual sensor system, which would require smoke and heat, to set off and charge the system.

This upgrade has been an ongoing project being conducted through CAO Facilities Division in conjunction with the State Fire Marshall. The estimated time of completion is six months.



**Sheriff's Response to the Grand Jury Recommendations GJ 2016-013 EI**  
**Dorado County Placerville Jail**

- R1. Installation of a full body metal detector in the main entrance of the Placerville Jail. Hand wand detectors should also be made available for screening of visitors.

**The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.**

Research is currently being conducted to determine the cost, requirements, and timelines to implement the recommendation through the County budgeting process.

El Dorado County was recently awarded \$25,000,000.00 of State financing through Senate Bill (SB) 844, Adult Local Criminal Justice Facilities Construction Financing Program. Pending Board of Supervisor (BOS) approval, the award would be used for an expansion of the Placerville jail. The jail expansion will affect the lobby and administrative areas and will be able to accommodate the recommendation.

Implementation for either option may take 1-3 years. The BOS decision regarding SB 844 is expected within the next six months.

Hand held metal detectors are already available to the Officers.

- R2. Develop a plan to expand the number of safety cells and present it to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

**The recommendation will not be implemented, because it is not warranted.**

The safety cell is an empty cell, with padded walls and, a hole in the floor for sanitation. An individual is isolated and placed in the cell because they actively pose a threat to themselves or others due to a mental disorder. Only inmates who are actively displaying suicidal ideation or gestures; and/or display violent behavior which results in the destruction of property or reveals intent to cause harm to self or others will be placed in a safety cell.

The inmate in a safety cell is checked on a minimum of twice every thirty minutes and will be removed from the safety cell when they are no longer displaying behaviors which lead to their placement.

Further analysis of the need for additional safety cells was determined not warranted. The current safety cells meet all Title 15 and Title 24 requirements of a safety cell, including monitoring.

Through our analysis it was determined it would be more beneficial to our inmates, and cost efficient, to convert one of our two Sobering cells into a Transitional/ Step down cell for those individuals coming out of the safety cell.

This Transition cell provides a higher level of care for mental health inmates in the Placerville jail. The inmate in the Transitional cell receives twice every thirty minutes checks from the Floor Officer and is also monitored via camera by the control personnel. It is also padded for safety but similar to the traditional housing cell the inmate will be returning to.

The cell conversion is complete and fully operational.

Additionally, the County was recently awarded \$25,000,000.00 of State financing through Senate Bill (SB) 844; to address medical, mental health and programing needs. Pending BOS approval, the jail will be expanded to include a new medical wing, which will include cells to better treat those suffering from mental illness.

If approved the timeline for this project is 3-4 years.

- R3. Expand the culinary program and add more vocational training opportunities for the inmates.

**The recommendation has been implemented.**

The Culinary program has been expanded to include the Placerville Jail inmates. Its scope has also been expanded to include catering curriculum and participation in culinary competitions. The Culinary program staff are always seeking ways to improve the program and help the inmates learn vital job skills.

The Sheriff's Office would like to offer more vocational programs and are always looking for opportunities to increase them. The challenge for the jail is the limited classroom space, security considerations, and inmate classifications.

The Placerville jail only has two classrooms (for the rated capacity of 303 inmates) to provide our current programs; scheduled 7-days a week. We currently offer: MRT (Moral Reconciliation Therapy), Substance Abuse Treatment, Anger Management, Parenting Class, Pre- Release Class,



HEARTS, and Adult Education. The classroom is also used for multiple religious services and volunteer groups such as: Men's and Women's AA, Men's and Women's NA, Al-anon (women's), Spanish Speaking Ministries, Celebrate recovery, Free on the Inside, and U turn for Christ.

Vocational programs require tools, equipment and space. The Culinary program is afforded these accommodations within the facility because we must maintain a kitchen and staff to feed the inmates. The equipment/potential weapons can be monitored more easily. Other vocational programs are not as easy to accommodate.

Being a small jail with the variety of classifications of inmates, the number of inmates who could participate together in other vocational training would be limited and cost prohibitive.

The Sheriff's Office is currently reviewing an RFP which includes an education based tablet computer system. With this system we will be able to offer additional educational programs to all inmates. The vendor for his RFP will be chosen within the next six months.

Also, if SB844 is approved by the BOS, the jail expansion will include programming and classroom space. Additionally, two existing dormitory style housing units will be taken off line and converted into programming/classroom space. With this plan additional vocational opportunities such as: Waste Water Treatment Plant certification and Job Skill/ Employment Success (available through the El Dorado County Office of Education (EDCOE)) may be added to the curriculum.

Timeline for the SB 844 project is 3-4 years.

- R4. Implement an effective plan to prevent unauthorized smoking by inmates.

**The recommendation will not be implemented, because it is not warranted.**

Through the mere nature of the jail environment and the inmates within, contraband to include cigarettes and drugs, will always be an issue for jail staff to combat.

Policy and procedures require all inmates who are housed in locations other than holding cells to be visually strip searched and given jail clothing and bedding. Although the strip searches are thorough it is still possible for inmates to conceal contraband within their bodies without detection.

The inmates will often conspire with friends or family to plant contraband so they may try to bring it into the facility.

No plan is fool proof, but with the diligence of the Officers in their oversight of workers and searches upon their return, supervision of inmate activities, safety checks, and cell inspections the introduction of contraband in the facility has been/ and will be greatly minimized.

Sincerely,



JOHN D'AGOSTINI  
Sheriff-Coroner  
Public Administrator