

# **CORRECTIONAL AND OTHER FACILITIES UNDER JURISDICTION OF NEVADA COUNTY SHERIFF**

## **REASON FOR INVESTIGATION**

California Penal Code §919(b) requires: “The grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county.” The Nevada County Grand Jury defines public prisons as any adult or juvenile correction or detention facility within the county.

## **PROCEDURE FOLLOWED**

The Grand Jury inspected Wayne Brown Correctional Facility, Nevada County Courthouse Holding Facility, and Sheriff’s Substation at Truckee. The Grand Jury interviewed the Nevada County Sheriff and the management and staff responsible for the operations of each facility. The Grand Jury reviewed various documents obtained from these facilities, including the April 2007 Nevada County Jail Needs Assessment prepared by Steven Reader Enterprises, *et al* (Needs Assessment.)

### **Wayne Brown Correctional Facility (WBCF)**

## **FINDINGS**

1. WBCF was opened in 1992 and currently has a total capacity of 250 beds.
2. At the time of inspection, August 31, 2006, the average daily population was 185. There were 26 female inmates but only 16 beds available in the female section.
3. Space limitations, current inmate classification requirements, and the dramatic increase in female population necessitates some females being housed in the minimum-security dormitory-style wing, and sharing a recreation room area with male inmates.
4. All inmates are assigned to housing units and activities using California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 15 Classification Plan. Classification is based on gender, age, criminal sophistication, seriousness of crime charged, physical or mental health needs, assaultive/non-assaultive behavior and other criteria, which provides for safety of inmates and staff.
5. Inmates are assigned housing based on available number of distinct housing units or cells in the facility.

6. WBCF was built with expansion in mind. Land, facilities, plumbing and power hookups are in place to expand capacity to 450 inmates.
7. The Needs Assessment, which is currently under review by Nevada County officials, found that, “The primary need for inmate housing at Wayne Brown Correctional Facility is a complete and comprehensive female housing unit. The current housing situation for females is very inadequate.”
8. The Needs Assessment offered three options to address the primary need noted in Finding 7: Option One - “new female housing unit with new centralized visitor center”; Option Two - “new male housing unit with new centralized visitor center”; and Option Three - “remodel only, add housing units inside the existing jail.”
9. In 2006 4,216 inmates, 3,458 male and 758 female, were transported between WBCF and the courthouse. Another 405 inmates were transported to the courts in Truckee.
10. There is a closed circuit video system installed linking WBCF to the courts in Truckee and Nevada City but it is not utilized.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

1. The available housing units prevent complete segregation of male and female inmates.
2. Current proximity of male and female inmates in the minimum-security area creates a serious risk of liability to the county.
3. Option One under the Needs Assessment “new female housing unit with new centralized visitor center” would give WBCF a total of 259 male beds and 84 female beds which would meet the primary need noted in Finding 7.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The evaluation and review of the Needs Assessment by Nevada County officials should be expedited, with Option One being given the most serious consideration.

### **Courthouse Holding Facility**

## **FINDINGS**

1. The Nevada County Courthouse contained the county jail until WBCF was built in 1992. The original jail had a capacity of 63 inmates.

2. Inmates are brought to this facility daily for court appearances.
3. Inmates are confined to cells on the second floor, then escorted through a public hallway to the courtrooms.
4. The hallway is not always cleared of people when inmates are moved to the courtrooms, exposing the public, inmates, and deputies to risk. This finding was also reported in the 1998-1999 and 2001-2002 Grand Jury Reports.
5. There are few security cameras in the public areas where deputies escort inmates to the courtrooms and do not cover the entire area. There is wiring for cameras in many locations, but the cameras have been removed. This finding was also reported in the 1998-1999 and 2001-2002 Grand Jury Reports
6. All doors are alarmed but not all can be viewed by a security camera. This finding was also reported in 1998-1999 and 2001-2002 Grand Jury Reports.
7. To avoid transporting prisoners a closed circuit video system is in place, linking the Nevada City and Truckee courts to WBCF.
8. The closed circuit video system is not utilized.
9. In 2006, 4,216 inmates were transported from WBCF to the courthouse holding cells.
10. A finding in the 2001-2002 Grand Jury Report stated, "Nevada County is one of the few counties in California that does not have a courtroom inside their correctional facility." Both the Sheriff and the Board of Supervisors (BOS) agreed to the finding but stated "...a closed circuit video system for arraignment has been installed at WBCF."

## **CONCLUSIONS**

1. The Grand Jury has repeatedly called attention to the lack of security within the Nevada County Courthouse, and the BOS and the Sheriff have repeatedly promised to address these problems without result. This inaction does not well serve the public or the inmates.
2. It is irresponsible for the County to move inmates through crowded public hallways. Continuing this practice places inmates, the public, and law enforcement personnel in harm's way and exposes the taxpayers of Nevada County to potential liability.
3. Furthermore, labor, vehicle maintenance, and fuel expenses could be significantly reduced if the courts made better use of video arraignment equipment available to them.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Again, the Grand Jury recommends additional security cameras be installed, particularly in public areas.
2. For safety and efficiency, the Grand Jury renews its recommendation that arraignments be conducted utilizing available video equipment.
3. The County should consider locating a courtroom inside WBCF.

### **Sheriff's Substation at Truckee**

## **FINDING**

There were no substantive findings. The Grand Jury acknowledges a "sallyport gate" has been installed. This corrects a deficiency identified in previous Grand Jury reports

## **RESPONSE REQUIRED**

Nevada County Sheriff August 27, 2007

Nevada County September 25, 2007