

1999 - 2000 Ventura County Grand Jury Report

Protocol Visits

Protocol Visits

Background

The 1999-2000, Ventura County Grand Jury has oversight powers as defined in the California Penal Code Section 888-946 and Penal Code Section 919B, which states “the Grand Jury shall inquire into the conditions and management of public prisons within the county.”

Introduction

During the period of its term, the Grand Jury visited detention and holding facilities in Ventura County, Twin Towers Jail and Emergency Operations Center in Los Angeles County and Santa Barbara Tri-County Boot Camp (Table 1). In addition, the Grand Jury visited the Ventura County Fire Department, Sheriff’s Department, and Academy, ten city police departments and various County Courts. We observed the operations, received formal presentations by supervisory personnel and toured the facilities. This report has been submitted based on this exposure to the law, justice and public safety activities of Ventura Counties agencies.

Methodology

The Grand Jury had full access to the facilities and activities of the agencies listed in Table 1. We concentrated on an extensive cross-section of the public safety environment and the services that support their activities.

Our concerns were focused on the following:

- Observing the ability to perform the duties assigned to them.
- The conduct of professional personnel.
- The inmate population, security and safety.
- Support services, e.g., medical care, nutrition, transportation and administrative procedures.
- Booking and classification procedures.
- Grievance procedures.

In support of these observations we received a formal tour and presentations by supervisory personnel and talked to the guards and inmates regarding inmate/authority relations.

Oxnard Police Department	Ventura County Community College Police
Ventura Police Department	Ventura County Sheriff's Crime Lab
Port Hueneme Police Department	Ventura County Medical Examiner
Simi Valley Police Department	Ventura County Emergency Operations Center
Santa Paula Police Department	Ventura County Fire Department (H.Q.)
California Highway Patrol, Ventura H.Q.	Ventura County Sheriff's Aviation Unit
Ventura County Sheriff's Department	United States Coast Guard (Channel Islands Harbor)
Ventura County Main Jail	Ride-a longs (with city police departments)
Todd Road Jail	Juvenile Court
Brand Road Honor Farm, Ojai	California Youth Authority
Probation Department Work Furlough and Work Release (Camarillo)	Ventura County Superior Court
Los Angeles County Jail (Twin Towers Facility)	Ventura County 911 H.Q.
Clifton Tatum Center (Juvenile Hall)	Oxnard Airport (Safety and Rescue Simulation)
Colston Youth Center	Family Court
Tri County Boot Camp (Santa Barbara, CA)	District Attorney's Office
Wasco State Prison (Wasco, CA)	Public Defender's Office
Sheriff's Academy	Ride-a-longs with California Highway Patrol
Los Angeles County Emergency Operations Center	

Table 1. Sites Visited by the Grand Jury

Another category of protocol visits was made to those activities that provide the public with daily support services, namely:

- Fire and emergency operations
- 911 dispatch (Sheriff's Department)
- Emergency Operations Center (Los Angeles County)
- Patrol ride-a-longs with police and highway patrol
- Santa Barbara County "Tri-County Boot Camp"
- Sheriff's Department Crime Lab

Findings

- F-1 "Tri-County Boot Camp" - Santa Barbara. Ventura County is allocated twenty beds for male youths who have committed serious crimes and have been sentenced by the Juvenile Court. This program addresses life skills, drug and alcohol problems, peer relationships, and provides medical and psychiatric intervention for those with more serious problems. Ventura County entered a five-year contract in April of 1997 with Santa Barbara County for twenty beds. This contract can be renewed for an additional two years.
- F-2 All the detention and holding facilities visited met the standards under Title 15 "Crime Prevention and Correction Facilities in Ventura and Los Angeles County".
- F-3 Emergency operations centers and 911 dispatch are fully staffed and operate on a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week basis. Both have state-of-the-art equipment and are coordinated within the county and with neighboring counties.
- F-4 All departments and cities contacted willingly shared their performance statistics, organizational and operations data with the Grand Jury.
- F-5 Training and continuing education of personnel observed by the Grand Jury, indicated a concentrated effort by County agencies to promote positive community relations.
- F-6 The Sheriff's Department Crime Lab provides vital services to Ventura County Law Enforcement. The square footage attributed to this organization appears to the Grand Jury to be insufficient. The premises were overcrowded. For example, four supervisors shared a small closet-like office; file cabinets lined all available hallway space.

- F-7 Records and Historical Data at the present time are stored at an off-site secure location.

Conclusions

- C-1 The “Tri-County Boot Camp” environment is conducive to life-changing strategies in self-discipline, educational goal setting, and motivating young people to make better choices.
- C-2 The Grand Jury has found through its announced and unannounced protocol visits, orientations, demonstrations and observations that all of the facilities and departments visited displayed full compliance with the codes, statutes and regulations under which they operate.
- C-3 Additional space is needed for Crime Lab personnel and storage of records.

Recommendations

- R-1 The Ventura County Probation Department should review the current agreement with Santa Barbara County and negotiate a two year extension through May 2004. In addition, the Probation Department should direct long range planning and financing to establish a similar program and facilities in Ventura County to provide ongoing activities after May of 2004.
- R-2 The Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff’s Department should consider allocating or creating additional space for the overcrowded Crime Lab including on-site storage space for records and historical data.

Commendations

The Grand Jury expresses its thanks to all the dedicated personnel and agencies of Ventura County who participated and gave us the opportunity to observe them in action. We commend those providers of services in the law, justice and public safety disciplines and their dedication and commitment to the citizens of Ventura County.