

JUVENILE ASSESSMENT CENTER

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

California Penal Code Section 919 (b) requires the Civil Grand Jury inspect all detention facilities within the county.

PROCEDURE FOLLOWED

Members of the Grand Jury physically inspected the facility on several occasions. The Grand Jury interviewed the Chief Probation Officer John Wardell, members of his staff and the Presiding Judge of Juvenile Court Carl Bryan. Several members of the Grand Jury spent a day attending Juvenile Court. The Grand Jury reviewed three previous Grand Jury reports, various county responses, reports prepared by other governmental agencies, internal documents, Board of Corrections (BOC) inspection report dated June 2, 1997, and the Mark Morris Associates Report dated March 30, 1995, that forecast the need for an expanded facility because of overcrowding.

FINDINGS

1. The Juvenile Assessment Center was built in 1955 and modified in 1979. It has beds to house 19 juvenile wards. Recent BOC requirements has reduced this capacity to 18 maximum wards.
2. The facility is in compliance with BOC criteria. The Probation Department has complied with the safety recommendations of the prior Grand Jury reports and has made other modifications to the facility to increase the safety of the wards.
3. The facility is constantly at or near capacity. On any given day there are as many as six to ten sentenced juvenile wards awaiting space in the facility. When full capacity is reached additional options are: transfer to Crystal Creek Boys Ranch, temporary release, early release and electronic monitoring.
4. The Board of Supervisors has proposed a sales tax increase on the November 1998 ballot to finance the construction of a new facility. No definitive plans exist for the design of a new facility. The Board of Supervisors has selected a site for review that would be used for a new facility.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The safety recommendations from previous Grand Jury reports have been followed. However, the more serious core problem of inadequate capacity has not been addressed and still exists.
2. The staff of Juvenile Assessment Center is to be congratulated for its response to difficult issues with available funds and an inadequate facility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Should the sales tax measure fail, the Board of Supervisors must be prepared to develop alternative methods for funding a new and enlarged facility.
2. A preliminary design for a new facility with a cost estimate must be finalized immediately.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Board of Supervisors
Due September 30, 1998.