

# **INSPECTION REPORT FOR SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY**

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT AND DETENTION FACILITIES 2023-2024**

This report documents the results of the San Luis Obispo Grand Jury's inspections of the County's detention facilities and select public safety facilities.

### **SUMMARY**

The 2023-2024 San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury (SLOGJ) inspected the Sheriff-Coroner's Facility, Sheriff's Crime Laboratory, Sheriff's Property Facility, San Luis Obispo County Jail, Juvenile Hall, County Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF), all actively used 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. 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. Concerns raised in the 2022-2023 SLOGJ inspection report regarding client / staff safety and security at the PHF have been partially answered through a new contract with Crestwood Behavioral Health to manage the facility.

### **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 SLOGJ visited and inspected all actively used city, county, and state detention facilities within its jurisdiction during the months of September through December 2023. Police department detention facilities not in active use and thus not inspected were in the cities of Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, and Morro Bay. Additionally, while not required, the SLOGJ inspected related public safety facilities including the Sheriff's Crime Laboratory, 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 the 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 2023, members of the SLOGJ personally visited and inspected the following sites:

- California Men’s Colony (CMC):
  - East 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
  - San Luis Obispo County Courthouse
- San Luis Obispo County Coroner Facility
- San Luis Obispo County Crime Laboratory & Property Room Facility
- San Luis Obispo County Sheriff’s Dispatch Facility
- San Luis Obispo County Psychiatric Health Facility

\* The cities of Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, 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 as needed.

The Appendix to this report contains inspection guidelines that were utilized during the site inspections to gather relevant information. The SLOGJ provided a list of written questions to the Command Staff of the County Jail 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 SLOGJ 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 2,150. On the date of the SLOGJ November 9, 2024, site visit, there were 2,000 inmates assigned to the higher-risk East Facility and 150 inmates assigned to the partially closed lower-risk West Facility. Grand Jurors were briefed by the Warden and command staff who gave an overview of CMC's organizational structure, physical layout, and correctional programs.

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. The East facility has a central plaza with space for religious practice, a

library, and classrooms. Through classes inmates can pursue education up to an AA degree. The East facility houses CMC's mental health and medical units. The Correctional Treatment Center, a 50-bed mental health unit, is located here and serves a variety of inmates. East facility is also home to the Offender Mentor Certification and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Programs, which are operated by the Department of Rehabilitative Programs (DRP.)

The New Life K-9 program is located in the East facility and pairs inmates with dogs from eight weeks to two years old for training as service animals. The service animals are then given to first responders and veterans with PTSD. Grand jurors met with some of the inmates participating in the program and learned how the program had affected them personally. One inmate recalled how his bond with the dog he was training helped him deal with the recent death of one of his children.

The East facility houses the California Prison Industry Authority (PIA) workshops. They provide inmates with opportunities to work and learn job skills which might assist them in transitioning to society upon their release from CDCR. The PIA units the SLOCGJ saw in operation were the Print Shop and Mill Knitting. The Print Shop produces vehicle registration tags for the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Last year they produced approximately 45 million registration tags for DMV. The supervisor of the Print Shop was highly experienced and motivated. The Print Shop had well-established safety and tool-control procedures that inmate workers appeared familiar with and followed.

The PIA Mill Knitting unit was actively engaged in the production of cloth for various items of clothing. The shop used various heavy machinery to spin and knit cloth which was then manufactured by other machines into inmate T-shirts and socks. Inmates operating this specialized machinery (e.g. "sock iron") were observed monitoring their product. Less than 50% of the shop's machinery was active during our tour compared to the Print Shop, which was fully operational.

At present, each inmate is assigned to a single-occupancy cell within his assigned cell block. All housing units were not available for inspection during the tour. The inspected cells were clean and well-lit.

During the inspection, inmates were seen being escorted to the health facilities as well as moving 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 and conjugal visitation. CMC leadership reported that gang activity continues to be minimal in the East facility, and they credit continuous monitoring and previous changes to CDCR's gang housing policy.

CMC's West facility is partially closed. The 150 inmates housed there are in specialized programs: Fire Camp, Culinary Program, and facility maintenance. The housing for these programs at CMC West is anticipated to be continued.

The firefighter training program has 55 inmates assigned. Cal Fire coordinates the program which trains inmates in brush clearing, fire suppression, and tasks related to assisting Cal Fire personnel during fire events. Workday credits are given to inmates assisting during fires which reduce an equal number of days from their sentence.

CMC West offers inmates a nine-week Culinary Arts program through Cuesta College. The training includes preparation to work in a commercial kitchen as a chef, cook, food-prep worker, or caterer. Inmates train in a mobile kitchen (i.e., a food truck) which may be deployed with the inmate firefighters to provide meals during their firefighting assignments.

The CMC West facility was not inspected by the 2023-2024 SLOCGJ because of the partial closure. As noted in the 2022-2023 SLOCGJ report, "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."

CMC Staffing levels for correctional personnel are adequate as reported by CDCR staff, but vacancies for therapeutic staff are significant. For example, CMC is authorized 46 psychologists but has only been able to hire and retain 29. According to CDCR staff, this shortfall is due to market shortages of medical professionals and the difficulty the state system has in keeping up with the rapidly increasing salaries and benefits offered by other sectors in the market. CMC staff also reported a difficulty in hiring and retaining drug and alcohol counselors for similar reasons. Hiring and retention problems experienced by CMC are consistent with countywide feedback received from other employer agencies. CMC staff, who were interviewed by the SLOGGJ, seemed to be positive about their workplace and fellow employees.

#### **SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY JAIL**

The SLO County Jail is comprised of four main sections: the Main Jail, the West Jail, the Men's Honor Farm, and the Women's Jail (Kansas Facility). On December 13, 2023, the SLOGGJ visited all these sites. Prior to the inspection tour, a briefing of the various operations and programs at each facility was given by the Sheriff's Custody Bureau Command Staff. At the request of the Sheriff's Office, the SLOGGJ submitted questions before the inspection date. These questions were answered and discussed with grand jury members attending the briefing.

At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 169 sworn peace officers and 27 administrative personnel assigned to the County Jail facilities. Throughout the visit SLOGGJ members noted the jail staff appeared to be dedicated to their work and professional in their interactions with inmates. One staffing concern noted in the briefing was the low experience level of the correctional staff. Approximately 62% of the correctional staff have less than five years of experience, and 20% have less than one year of experience working in the jail.

The current inmate population averaged approximately 449 inmates per day from July to October 2023. This has been an 8-10% increase in daily population since the first six months of 2023. Approximately 33% of the daily average inmate population experiences moderate to severe

mental illness. One facility where the inmate population has seen a decrease over the past year is the Honor Farm. The Honor Farm relies on the labor contributions and voluntary participation of inmates. This decrease in eligible inmates has caused the various Honor Farm programs to operate at minimal levels. The kitchen, laundry, and bicycle-refurbishment programs are fully staffed; however, nonessential programs (e.g., landscape and gardening) have seen their staffing reduced.

On the date of inspection, the Sheriff's Office bicycle program had recently completed their annual giveaway event. The bicycle program began in 1989 to promote holiday spirit by giving away refurbished bicycles and new helmets to children in need in San Luis Obispo County. SLOCGJ members observed over 100 new and refurbished bicycles at the Honor Farm which were awaiting delivery to their new owners.

As noted in last year's 2022-2023 SLOCGJ Detention Report, the "Sheriff's Office achieved recognition for exemplary programs and services in their facilities." In October 2022 the Sheriff's health program, including mental health services, received accreditation by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care. In 2023, in support of this accreditation and state law mandate (AB133), the Custody Bureau initiated the Early Access to Stabilization Services (EASS) program in conjunction with the Department of State Hospitals (DSH.) The EASS program added a staff of one Correctional Sergeant, one Senior Correctional Deputy, four Correctional Deputies, and administrative support staff. The Sheriff's Office contracts with DSH to provide additional bed space for mentally incompetent inmates pending trial and awaiting space in overcrowded DSH facilities.

During our inspection the SLOCGJ found the four Jail facilities to be clean, well-maintained, and efficiently run. Inmate programs are operated in classrooms, which during the pandemic were utilized as emergency courtrooms during the court's five-day schedule. With the Superior Court returning to normal pre-pandemic scheduling, the classrooms are once again being used to facilitate educational classes and other programs. These programs are provided for the Sheriff's

Office by community-based organizations and service providers. The inmate classes address anger management, substance abuse, community re-entry issues, and other programs.

As a result of a new automated Jail Management System (JMS) launched by the Sheriff's Office in December 2022, staff are able to complete forms and logs electronically. Housing units now contain informational kiosks that electronically communicate jail rules and other information to inmates. Inmate grievances are generated through hard copy and entered into the JMS system. The JMS system is crucial to monitoring and tracking grievances once they are generated. This new automated system reduces the possibility of loss or mishandling of the grievance.

Another issue for Jail staff involves mandated services for inmates. One example of this is the Board of State and Community Correction's requirement for seven additional hours of "out-of-cell time for incarcerated persons." This requirement changed the previous 3 hours-per-week standard to 10-hours-per-week. This has put additional pressure on jail staff working in the housing units to schedule increased "yard time" for inmates. This can be especially difficult in housing with mixed-classification inmates who are not allowed to be in close proximity to each other. An example of this would be rival gang members.

In past SLOCGJ Detention Reports there have been concerns expressed regarding coordination between the Sheriff's Office and County Behavioral Health involving inmates with mental health issues. Command Staff was asked by the 2023-2024 SLOCGJ about the relationship between the Sheriff's Office and Crestwood Behavioral Health, the Psychiatric Health Facility's (PHF) new contract provider. Jail staff recently took a tour of the PHF to observe changes made by Crestwood Behavioral Health. Jail management has continued their monthly coordination meetings with staff of both Crestwood Behavioral Health and Wellpath. Wellpath is the contracted medical provider for the jail, which includes providing 24/7 mental health staff and an on-site Medical Director 40 hours per week.



As was noted in last year's 2022-2023 SLOCGJ Detention Report, the proximity of the Oklahoma Avenue Safe Parking Site to the Honor Farm caused concern for the safety and security of inmates and staff. This remains an ongoing concern due to continued law enforcement calls for service to the site as well as the problem of contraband being concealed for inmates along the fence line. During the current site visit, the SLOCGJ observed improvements implemented at the Oklahoma Avenue Safe Parking Site by the Sheriff's Office. They included 100 yards of new perimeter fencing with security cameras, installation of bullet-resistant glass, and securing the Honor Farm lobby area.

### **SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY JUVENILE HALL**

At the time of the September 26, 2023, SLOCGJ inspection, the Juvenile Hall population consisted of 18 individuals in detention with a maximum capacity of 65 beds. Thirty beds are assigned to the Coastal Valley Academy (CVA) program. The CVA is a residential camp, which has taken the place of the California Youth Authority (CYA), with an average length of stay of 6-12 months.

All juveniles, whether detained or cited and released, are assigned to a Probation Officer upon intake. The Probation Officer utilizes a multi-faceted assessment to ascertain how best to meet the youth offender's needs. One of the tools used is Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS), which is a State program that rewards youth for respectful behavior. Since the 2022-2023 SLOCGJ inspection tour, the PBIS program has emerged as a major focus for implementing constructive change among juvenile offenders. As noted by staff feedback during the current inspection, the PBIS model has been widely adopted by personnel throughout the facility.

Juvenile Hall has experienced staffing issues consistent with other County departments, which were exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic. Staffing seems to be sufficient, with extraordinary effort devoted to youth having difficulty adjusting to the detention environment. These efforts are continual until the detainee understands the facility staff is there to help them and not punish them.

This inspection found the facility to be clean, suitable, and in a safe condition. Dormitory rooms were well furnished. Coastal Valley Academy living areas provide a comfortable environment with kitchens, sofas in common area, reading material, and a television. The bathrooms for CVA residents are being upgraded due to approved funding. Outside the living area is a garden, complete with BBQ, succulent/rock garden, and a raised planter bed where vegetables are grown.

During the day detainees receive a hot meal for breakfast and dinner and a cold meal at lunch. Medical needs are initially assessed at the Nursing station upon intake into the facility. Ongoing medical evaluation and treatment is provided by medical staff to ensure juveniles' needs are met (e.g., birth control, immunizations, et cetera). One nurse on the medical staff indicated that some of the juveniles had never received vaccinations prior to being in custody. Clothing is provided to individual detainees, and it is laundered on a regular schedule.

The classrooms that were examined appeared well-organized and highly functional. Jurors were shown examples of updated Care and Technical Education (CTE) equipment that enhances student achievement. These CTE programs mirror those currently offered in local comprehensive high schools. One classroom visited had a large state-of-the-art computerized touch-screen board for instruction. An instructor was using it to teach students a science class. Student artwork adorned the classroom walls. The instructor reported that youth at the facility fully participated and were engaged in the academic program.

All juvenile detainees are assessed for post-secondary education by determining interest and ability. Four youth are enrolled at Cuesta College via remote distance learning. Per staff, Cuesta College is building a facility to help destigmatize youth who have become involved in the criminal justice system. The goal is to assist them in transitioning into a college environment by giving them a sense of belonging at that level.

Detainees are allowed two hours of visit time per week. Most visits are conducted via Zoom calls, a practice first implemented during the pandemic. Opportunities for Zoom visits with family are

seen as a positive practice. Zoom calls have allowed additional contact with family members which helps reduce stress and contribute to positive outcomes for the individual.

All interactions witnessed between staff and residents during the site visit were mutually respectful. Leadership seemed genuinely engaged with those individuals placed in their facility.

### **CITY POLICE AND COUNTY COURTHOUSE HOLDING CELLS**

The SLOCGJ inspected holding cells maintained by the police departments in the cities of Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and San Luis Obispo as well as holding cells at the San Luis Obispo County Courthouse. No other cities within the county maintain holding cells which were in current active use. All holding cells inspected 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 (i.e., less than an hour). This reduced demand has led to some holding cells and adjoining infrastructure to be used for non-custody purposes. For example, the City of San Luis Obispo's "sally port" i.e., a secure area used to remove a prisoner from a transport vehicle, has been utilized for long-term storage of a vehicle used in a homicide case.

There is a standard operating procedure of checking every 15 minutes on individuals held in custody. Additionally, individuals are held 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. Many of the facilities inspected had closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in the holding areas, which were monitored live by Dispatch personnel.

The San Luis Obispo 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 includes nine holding cells with a capacity of approximately 75 inmates waiting for their court appearances. During past years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person courthouse interactions were limited and many

court appearances were virtual, decreasing the use of the holding cells. At the time of SLOGJ's site visit on October 3, 2023, the courthouse detention facility had returned to full operational use.

In addition to the inspection of holding cells within police stations, department staff updated SLOGJ members on the status of programs, tools, and issues related to policing in their communities. Of note was Pismo Beach Police Department's newly approved Public Safety facility, which will be built adjacent to the current facility. Consistent with the trend away from smaller police departments holding prisoners for short periods of time, the new building will not have a temporary detention facility.

#### **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, a break/meeting room that doubles as an autopsy viewing room via 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.

As a division of the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office, the Coroner's facility is staffed by two Deputies, two Senior Deputies, a Sergeant, and a Legal Clerk who works one day a week. Currently there is no permanent Medical Examiner employed by the County. The Sheriff's Office contracts with the National Autopsy Assay Group (NAAG), an outside vendor, to conduct all autopsies. The Sheriff's Office has attempted to hire a permanent staff person for this role but has had difficulty attracting applicants based on current pay and benefits. In addition to San Luis Obispo County, NAAG also contracts with other counties (e.g., Tulare, Kings, Imperial, San Diego, and Madera) leading to autopsies being conducted on a limited basis, often one day per week. The Coroner's Office is responsible for determining the cause and manner of death in certain cases. The cause of death is the expert opinion of the Doctor or Medical Examiner. The manner of death is determined by the investigation conducted by the Deputy Sheriff-Coroner.

The Sheriff-Coroner is required to perform an autopsy on deaths involving accident, suicide, homicide, and/or are “unattended,” i.e., a person not under the direct care of a doctor. The Coroner’s Office has a caseload of approximately 250-265 annual death investigations, including 80 drug overdose deaths which is a decrease from recent years. The 2022-2023 SLOGJ reported that of the 123 drug-related deaths investigated by deputies in 2022, about 75 were related to fentanyl. The Coroner’s facility keeps Narcan® on site for the safety of staff. The 2022-2023 SLOGJ inspection reported the Narcan® to be expired. During the current inspection on September 27, 2023, the SLOGJ found the Narcan® supply to now be in-date.

There are four Deputy Sheriff-Coroner Investigators who cover department responsibilities 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week. The office’s onsite walk-in refrigerator has a capacity for approximately 19 bodies; nine bodies were present on the date of the inspection. Additional storage space is available, including a 50-foot refrigerated trailer, for large-scale needs. Regional and statewide mutual aid arrangements are in place for emergencies requiring more storage space. The Coroner’s Facility, while fully functional, seems small for the number of employees and activity in the office. Prior plans to expand into an upstairs area of the building and become co-located with the Crime Lab have been put on hold.

#### **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 evaluation and treatment to adults who are experiencing mental health emergencies. Law enforcement agencies bring adults from the community for crisis care to the PHF, which is located in the former General Hospital building. The PHF accepts a variety of patients who initially must be medically cleared through one of San Luis Obispo County hospital emergency rooms.

Patients can be held for 72 hours pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) section 5150. The involuntary hold can be extended an additional 14 days. Patients involuntarily detained,

under WIC 5150, are generally experiencing a mental disorder(s) that may cause them to be a harm to themselves or others. The PHF also serves persons in custody who have been determined to be incompetent to stand trial, or in need of treatment to restore mental competency, so they may participate in legal proceedings (Penal Code Section 1370.) Additionally, individuals in the public conservator program who are gravely disabled and in need of stabilization may be cared for by PHF staff.

The PHF's 16-bed limitation results in a higher than recommended ratio (i.e. 1:17,500) of bedspace to county residents. The recommended ratio of bed space to county residents is 1:2,000. A 2021-2022 Grand Jury report on mental health noted that additional psychiatric facilities are needed in San Luis Obispo County to address this deficiency.

As of July 1, 2023, San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health entered into partnership with Crestwood Behavioral Health to manage this facility. Crestwood Behavioral Health, Inc., is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). The 2023-2024 Grand Jury reviewed the July 2023 contract between San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health and Crestwood Behavioral Health (Crestwood) to better understand the roles, responsibilities, and obligations of Crestwood. The contract identifies the Crestwood scope of services including quality assessment and performance metrics. Some metrics were provided to the Grand Jury via the San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health Agency. In addition, the health agency provided the Crestwood transition plan which identified the responsibilities and obligations from the county operation of the PHF to Crestwood management.

On September 27, 2023, the 2023-2024 SLOGJ toured the PHF facility. Despite the outdated character of the building, the interior was found to be clean, well-maintained, and to display a welcoming atmosphere. The common rooms, hallways, dormitory-type rooms, and bathrooms all appeared neat and orderly, with no obvious signs of disrepair.

Since taking over management of the PHF, Crestwood has established a new food server for the facility. Citing healthier alternatives and ease of operation, Crestwood utilizes 'Meals That Connect' to provide nutritional meal service for its' patients. Meals That Connect is a program of the national nonprofit, Senior Nutrition Program of San Luis Obispo, CENCAL Health, and the Area Agency on Aging. Another change of note by Crestwood management was the decision to eliminate the 24/7 security coverage provided by Condor Security.

Because Crestwood has operated the PHF for less than one year, at the time of this report, the current Grand Jury recommends the 2024-2025 Grand Jury follow up with the SLO County Behavioral Health and Crestwood to evaluate Crestwood's performance as part of its annual detention facility inspection report.

#### **SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY CRIME LABORATORY**

The Crime Lab is located at the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office complex off Highway 1 on Kansas Avenue. Crime Lab personnel conduct crime scene investigations for the Sheriff's Office and as requested by other county law enforcement agencies. The Crime Lab consists of the following units: Forensic Alcohol Unit, Chemistry/Toxicology Unit, Forensic Services Crime Scene Unit, and the CAL-ID Program. The Forensic Alcohol Unit analyzes DUI-related biological samples, maintains, and calibrates the county's alcohol breathalyzers, and trains San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Deputies in proper breathalyzer use. The Chemistry/Toxicology Unit analyzes narcotics and other controlled substances using gas chromatography and other tools. As of the September 27 inspection the two most analyzed controlled substances tested by the crime lab in 2023 year-to-date were methamphetamine (40%) and fentanyl (23%).

The Forensic Services Crime Scene Unit collects and analyzes crime scene evidence in criminal cases. Evidence can consist of fingerprints, biological fluids, hair, and fibers, along with tire and footprint impressions. The unit processes physical evidence collected from crime scenes, suspects, or other involved parties. The workload is heavy for the two full-time staff due to the varied aspects of their job function. These activities include crime scene processing, evidence

booking and analysis, report writing, and court testimony. The nature of the unit's work requires at least one staff member to be on call after hours. The unit has been rightfully praised for their work during the Kristen Smart cold-case homicide investigation.

The CAL-ID Program operates the County's Automated Fingerprint Identification System and maintains mobile fingerprint identification devices. The program also oversees the ANDE® rapid DNA system that facilitates the timely testing of DNA samples for identification of suspects, victims, or unidentified persons. This automated system aids in early identification of DNA profiles in a matter of hours, as opposed to the days or months-backlog once experienced by the State Crime Lab system.

The San Luis Obispo County Crime Lab building is 70 years old and shows its age. The work areas were clean and fully utilized as space was limited. A recent plan to relocate the Crime Lab with the Coroner's Office has yet to occur.

#### **SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DISPATCH CENTER**

The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Dispatch Center and Watch Commander Office are located at the Sheriff's Office complex adjacent to Highway 1 in San Luis Obispo. These functions are staffed continuously on a 24/7 basis. The current building, housing the dispatch facility is shared with the San Luis Obispo County Office of Emergency Services (OES). Much of the OES space sits empty but is utilized as the County Operations Center in the event of a major emergency. A new Dispatch Center with an estimated completion in 2024-2025 is being constructed in Templeton.

The Dispatch Center operates three law enforcement radio channels, providing dispatch services for the Sheriff's Office, Morro Bay, and Arroyo Grande Police Departments. Other dispatch responsibilities include county ambulance service, San Luis Obispo County Probation Office, and Sheriff's Special Enforcement Detail. Dispatchers answer 911 emergency calls for service and non-emergency business lines while monitoring their assigned primary radio channel throughout their shifts.



At the time of the inspection on October 11, 2023, the Dispatch Center had three of their sixteen positions vacant, with four personnel in field training. Dispatcher training includes formal classroom training, but the majority of the training is on-the-job (OJT) with another experienced dispatcher. Additional instruction includes CPR and Emergency Medical Dispatch training, which enables dispatchers to offer limited emergency medical assistance and first aid instructions over the telephone.

Low Dispatch Center staffing has necessitated dispatchers working overtime and having supervisors and other qualified Sheriff's Office staff working dispatcher shifts. Hiring of dispatchers can take months because of the various application requirements, which may include a psychological exam, financial review, polygraph, and law enforcement background investigation. Despite the staffing shortage and ongoing OJT, the SLOGJ observed the Dispatch Center running in a seamless professional manner.

#### **SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE PROPERTY ROOM**

The Property Room, inspected on October 11, 2023, is in a secured, locked warehouse facility on Sheriff's Office Property. The staff in the property room consists of two fulltime and two part-time employees.

The facility is nearing capacity with evidence items often stored for long periods of time. Most of the building is not temperature controlled which creates issues for employees during the coldest and warmest times of the year. Plans to begin construction and complete enhancements to the building's climate-control system are scheduled to be completed in 2024. The facility has a walk-in refrigerated room to store perishable evidence. The refrigeration equipment is aging, causing concerns for staff during the summer months. The refrigerated room is also nearing full storage capacity.

Items stored in the property room are tagged with a bar code and indexed in the department's records management computer database for easy location and chain of custody. Items related to homicides are held in perpetuity. Other items are disposed of according to policy, usually within 90 days following a case disposition. Firearms are held until cleared by the California Department of Justice per state law. The staff focuses on purging evidence and property that can be legally disposed of, destroyed, or returned to create space for new property.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Public safety personnel in San Luis Obispo County continue to do excellent work despite the challenges of a recent pandemic and significant staffing, budget, and space limitations.

## **FINDINGS**

### **SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY JAIL**

- F1 The location of the Oklahoma Avenue Safe Parking Site next to the Honor Farm continues to create a safety hazard to inmates and staff. Despite increased physical security, illegal substances are still placed in close proximity to the Honor Farm perimeter.
- F2 Honor Farm programs are operating at minimal levels due to the current low inmate population which may affect the ability to provide the benefits traditionally associated with inmate vocational training.

### **CITY POLICE AND COUNTY COURTHOUSE HOLDING CELLS**

- F3 Despite waiting for 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**

- F4 Physical space at the County Coroner's facility is limited, thus negatively impacting the overall work atmosphere.

**SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY PROPERTY ROOM**

F5 The need for improved climate control at the County Property Room continues to cause concern for staff well-being and preservation of evidence.

F6 Property room evidence storage capacity for the walk-in refrigerator and the overall facility is of concern.

**SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY PSYCHIATRIC HEALTH FACILITY**

F7 The transfer of management of the PHF from the County to Crestwood Behavioral Health has been in operation for a limited time, therefore it is premature to conduct a thorough analysis of their performance at this time.

**COMMENDATION[S]**

The recent implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) at the San Luis Obispo County Juvenile Hall has shown early indications of constructive change among youth offenders. The adoption of PBIS by Juvenile Hall staff rewards youth for respectful behavior and is demonstrating a model for success within Juvenile Hall.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY JAIL**

R1 The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff should continue to work with the Homeless Services Division regarding closing the Oklahoma Safe Parking site in 2024.

**SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY PROPERTY ROOM**

R2 The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff should complete property room climate control enhancements in 2024.

R3 The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff should develop a plan by January 1, 2025, to deal with evidence storage reaching maximum capacity levels.

## **SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY PSYCHIATRIC HEALTH FACILITY**

R4 The San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health Department should forward all performance and assessment reports (outlined in the operating agreement) regarding PHF's management by Crestwood Behavioral Health to the 2024-2025 San Luis Obispo Grand Jury by November 1, 2024.

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff is required to respond to: R1, R2, R3.

The San Luis Obispo County Behavioral Health Department is invited to respond to: R4.

All responses shall be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the San Luis Obispo County Superior Court within 90 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 therefor.
- (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 therefor.

| Presiding Judge   | Grand Jury  |
|---|---|
| Presiding Judge Rita Federman<br>Superior Court of California<br>1035 Palm Street Room 355<br>San Luis Obispo, CA 93408 | San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury<br>P.O. Box 4910<br>San Luis Obispo, CA 93403 |

## APPENDICES

### INSPECTION GUIDELINES

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

- Population
  - Current census
  - Average daily census
  - Capacity
  - Average time a person is held
  - People 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 services are 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
- Inmate violence management
- Mental health behavioral management
- Response to drug and alcohol-related problems

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

Have there been any significant inmate population changes within the last year?

Have there been any changes with the approximately 160 sworn and administrative personnel?

Are programs still functioning at a minimal level due to low inmate population at the Honor Farm?

Have there been any budgetary or staff changes (increases) in the last year because of the accreditation received by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care?

Do severely mentally ill (SMI) inmates still make up approximately 28% of the population, or has that number increased as it did in 2021 from 26%?

Despite the announcement of impending closure, are there still safety and security concerns due to the proximity of the Oklahoma Safe Parking Site and the Honor Farm?

What changes within the last year have affected programs or services provided for inmates?

Are there recruitment difficulties in maintaining adequate, qualified staff within the County Jail?

What current issues are associated with Gang culture within the Jail?

What is the current relationship between the Sheriff's office and the Crestwood management team at the PHF?

What are some of the most recent challenges that have arisen in the last year?