

# 2002-2003 SANTA CLARA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

## INSPECTION REPORT SANTA CLARA COUNTY ELMWOOD CORRECTIONAL CENTER COMPLEX

### Summary

Members of the Grand Jury conducted an inspection of the Elmwood Correctional Center Complex on August 12, 2002. This inspection is one part in a series of the Grand Jury's periodic reviews of the many government agencies and facilities that serve the citizens of Santa Clara County.

### Department Of Correction Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Correction is to serve and protect the citizens of Santa Clara County and the State of California, by detaining the people under its supervision in a safe and secure environment, while providing for their humane care, custody and control.

The Department will maximize opportunities for offenders to participate in programs that reduce criminal behavior and enhance the offenders' reintegration into the community.

This objective will be accomplished in a cost-effective manner in the least restrictive setting, without compromising public safety.

### Department of Correction Organization

The Elmwood Correctional Center Complex is organized under the Santa Clara County Department of Correction (DOC). The Chief of Correction, James Babcock, oversees the total operation of the jail system in the county, which is the fifth largest jail system in California, and the fourteenth largest in the United States. The Elmwood Complex is rated as a medium and minimum security facility. The DOC system includes the following:

	<u>Facility</u>	<u>Approximate Capacity</u>
◆	Elmwood Correctional Complex – Milpitas	2,600 male inmates
◆	Correctional Center for Women - Milpitas	500 female inmates

- ◆ Main Jail South - San Jose 500 male inmates
- ◆ Main Jail North - San Jose 740 male inmates
- ◆ North County Jail - Palo Alto Day Operations Only
- ◆ Brokaw Road Day Reporting Center - San Jose 120 inmates

The Grand Jury inspected the Elmwood Correctional Center Complex, which is located off Highway 880 in Milpitas. The facility commander is Captain Sandra Padgett, who supervises a total staff of 476 badged personnel and 41 non-badged personnel.

## Department of Correction Statistics

Data shown is for calendar year 2002. This information was taken from the department's FAQs sheet (Frequently Asked Questions) for the summer of 2002 and is for the entire DOC:

- ◆ Population: Annual Bookings: 65,000  
Total Daily Holdings: 3,840  
Avg. Length of Stay in Days: 95
- ◆ Inmates: Main Jail: 1,335  
Elmwood: 2,367  
Women's Center: 459
- ◆ Other Custody Programs: Electronic Monitoring: 110  
Public Service: 64  
Regimented Corrections: 156  
Weekend Work: 917  
Work Furlough: 186
- ◆ Other Data (per year): Budget: \$121.0 million  
Revenue: \$ 8.5 million  
Staff: 1,125  
Med/Dental Appointments: 50,000  
Meals Served: 5,300,000

## Grand Jury Review

Members of the Grand Jury spent about six hours inspecting the Elmwood Complex. The day began with a meeting with the chief administrative staff, during which department managers gave the Grand Jury an overview of their particular operation. Time was spent explaining the various programs the DOC offers to its inmates. These cover a wide array of

subjects, from Positive Parenting, Anger Management and Twelve-Step Programs, classroom educational and literacy courses, to craft shops such as metal working and carpentry. We observed several of these programs while on the inspection, having a chance to meet with staff members supervising the programs and the inmates participating in the programs. The inspection included the dormitory areas for male and female inmates. As we moved from place to place, we noticed there was a sufficient number of guards to accomplish a given task, without creating an overwhelming presence. At least in our presence, guards and inmates appeared to respect each other, with the guards addressing the inmates firmly but politely. A number of the Grand Jury members on this inspection spoke to inmates out of earshot of the staff. Inmates claimed they were generally well treated by the guards—no one complained of harsh treatment. There were a few complaints about the food, especially lunches. Inmates do not like the cold box lunches and plain sandwiches which constitute daily fare.

The dormitories were somewhat crowded, lacked any privacy, were clean though very plain. Inmates are responsible for cleaning their living areas, and we saw many inmates engaged in these tasks. The bathroom facilities offered only the bare minimum of privacy. We noticed in some of the dormitories that bunk beds were improperly assembled, leading to minor injuries from protruding metal parts to inmates on the top bunk. In one dormitory, two of five showers were not working, creating a minor hardship for the some 20-30 inmates housed in that area. Facility staff commented that sometimes the inmates will deliberately damage the plumbing.

The kitchen facility is a large-scale operation. The Elmwood kitchen provides all the meals for the entire Department of Correction inmates, over 5000 meals per day. This is accomplished by use of highly mechanized preparation and cooking equipment. The kitchen staff has developed ways to process meals on a very large scale, using freezers, warm up trucks and the like to transport the food throughout the jail system. We inspected breakfast trays and box lunches. While the food is plain, it is varied and well balanced. There appeared to be plenty of food served to the inmates. An exceptional service is the kitchen's ability to meet the dietary needs of every inmate, including medical and religious diets of every kind. The system of dispensing these special diets during the meal time when hundreds of inmates are served at a time is impressive. The kitchen was spotless, and the basic foodstuffs of good quality. A number of tasks in the kitchen and warehouse are performed by inmates on the *trusty system*.

We were informed by senior staff that a potentially serious problem related to security involves delivery trucks bringing supplies to the complex. At present there is no secure place for trucks to be inspected

before entering or leaving the complex. This poses the possibility of contraband being brought into the facility, or perhaps inmates leaving suspended under the delivery truck. While guards are cognizant of this problem and are careful around delivery trucks, such procedures as using mirrors and routine inspections would help improve this situation.

Two programs were of particular interest. One was the garden that the inmates have developed, growing both flowers and a variety of vegetables. This appears to give a number of inmates something positive to do each day, as well as prepare them for potential outside employment. The second, a most impressive program to see in action, was the RCP—Regimented Corrections Program. This is a voluntary program in which inmates subject themselves to a mini boot camp experience in Phase I. Participants are given special orange uniforms and army type boots, and they are required to keep them military clean, pressed and polished. In Phase II, inmates are released to their homes or work furlough programs, where they take supervised courses in behavior and addiction management, trade skills and job readiness. A number of inmates participate in psychological assessments and group therapy sessions. We spoke to both male and female participants (the sexes are kept strictly separate) and found them to be enthusiastic about the program. This part of the inspection was not scheduled but took place at the request of several of the Grand Jury members who asked to speak with the inmates. Inmates informed us that the program is making a big difference in their attitudes and lives. Several thought that, as a result, they would never return to Elmwood or any other jail. Surprisingly, perhaps, inmates not participating in the RCP laugh at those who do, poke fun and, if given an opportunity, engage in fights. For this reason, RCP inmates are housed separately from the general population.

## **Conclusion and Observations**

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Recognizing that this inspection reviewed only the highlights of the Elmwood Complex and its programs, the Grand Jury members have concluded that Elmwood is currently a well run, orderly facility. Inmates are treated humanely, with ample programs provided to take care of ordinary physical, mental and health care needs. Opportunities are afforded inmates to improve themselves and thereby reduce the chances that they will return to Elmwood in the future. Facility maintenance is at an acceptable level, with the caution that better attention might be paid to minor items such as bunk bed repair and plumbing fixtures.

## **Observation 1**

**The Grand Jury was most impressed with the Regimented Corrections Program (RCP), and sees this program as a great hope for restoring inmates to productive lives once they leave the jail. The Department of Correction is encouraged to continue to develop this program, expanding its capacity and initiating educational programs to convince as many inmates as possible of the advantages of participating in RCP.**

## **Observation 2**

**Even though the escape record at the Elmwood Complex is acceptable, the matter of security related to delivery trucks causes some concern. The Grand Jury believes facility staff have the capabilities and means to improve this situation and suggests that steps be taken immediately to do so.**

## **Observation 3**

**The matter of proper assembly of some of the top bunks is a minor maintenance issue. When improperly assembled, the top bunk projects metal fittings into the area used by the inmate to access the top bunk. This can lead to cuts. One such situation was observed. The Grand Jury suggests that facility maintenance staff inspect the top bunks to determine if repairs are necessary.**

**PASSED and ADOPTED** by the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury on this 6<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2003.

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Fred de Funiak  
Foreperson

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Ron R. Layman  
Foreperson Pro Tem

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Patricia L. Cunningham  
Secretary

## **REFERENCES**

*Annual Report: Corrections and Beyond—DOC 2000-2001 Informational Brochure: Elmwood Correctional Center Complex*