



**2015/2016 DEL NORTE COUNTY GRAND JURY
FINAL REPORT**



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June 21, 2016

The Honorable William Follett
Judge of the Superior Court of Del Norte County
450 H Street
Crescent City, CA 95531

RE: Del Norte County 2015-2016 Grand Jury Final Report

Your Honor:

On behalf of the 2015-2016 Del Norte County Grand Jury, we submit our final report to you, the citizens of Del Norte County, the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors, and the City Council of Crescent City.

The Grand Jury starts its jury year in June and is made up of 19 citizens of Del Norte County who serve for one year on one or more committees, performing investigations and interviews of government agencies within Del Norte County. With the exception of Pelican Bay State Prison and Alder Camp detention facility, we do not investigate any State or Federal organizations.

I am proud to have served with this group of citizens, who, with little or no prior knowledge of how a Grand Jury functions, came together to produce this document. Recognition should also be given to a volunteer group known as the California Grand Juror's Association, who yearly provide a two-day complete training seminar, including a manual that is used throughout the year for reference.

We would encourage anyone to let the Superior Court know you would be willing to serve as a Grand Juror.

This Final Report reflects not only the required investigations mandated by law, but also areas of concern brought to the Grand Jury's attention by the citizens of Del Norte County, and selected by the members of the Grand Jury.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matthew Wakefield, Foreperson
2015-16 Del Norte County Grand Jury

Del Norte Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

“There is frequently more to be learned from the unexpected questions of a child than the discourses of men.” - John Locke

“There will be tragic outcomes.” This was the observation of Barbara Pierson, previous director of the DHHS, four months before she resigned. It was the recognition that try as one might, there would be inevitable tragedies in the lives of children and families subject to abuse and neglect, despite being targeted for services by DHHS. It was a response that framed an approach of compassion. It is compassion that carries forward the work of Social Workers who face frustration and “burn out” when sometimes their best efforts come up short against the fate and hardship with some children and their families, as well as the slow wheels of bureaucracy. In this change of chapters of DHHS direction, it remains to be seen if there will be a new path toward both humanizing and making a more transparently effective agency.

The budget of the DHHS is the largest portion of any department of the County of Del Norte. At approximately 36 million dollars per year, according to the county budget office, it reflects our social values about what is important. But just as bureaucracies were developed to provide a continuity of response, by instituting an agency that survives between responses to unplanned, immediate needs, the two-fold function of an agency is to survive, as well as to provide services. One of the needs of the agency is to sustain itself.

How we measure the outcomes in the Department of Health and Human Services can determine how we direct our resources of staff and finances. However, the successful meeting of Federal and State standards does not necessarily meet the actual needs of children and families living the problem. There can be a lot of distance between documentation of a problem and the actual experiences and needs of the people living the problem. As Alfred Korzybski stated, “The map is not the territory.”

This brings us back to observing, measuring, and hopefully, acting to avert tragedy. The conventional way of evaluating work done, is to simply do that; measure the work that is done. It is to quantify the efforts, such as to ensure the development of case plans, follow up and monitor, prepare and present the case to court with the full gravity of the situations being presented. Interventions of placement in foster care, family support and integration of services to the “wraparound program” (a supportive network) are all elements of work that need oversight and evaluation. However direct this approach may be, it can be seen as lacking, because measuring the work of the agency is not the same as measuring the impact upon the clients or the population it serves.

A different approach was being pursued by the most recent former director. That is an implementation of a more “client-centered, or need-centered” focus. This is a different perspective from the historical one, both in this locality and many others, but appears to follow suit with a national trend. The phrase “No Wrong Door” actually comes from the Affordable Care Act; the idea being to simplify access to care and services. The implementation of this policy may require a reworking, as it appears there has been significant turmoil in the agency about how to achieve this and not disrupt smooth agency functions.

In the Grand Jury's interviews with recent and former clients of the system, it appears that access to services was not always effective or protected their dignity. While not a complete characterization of all of the encounters, or even the majority of workers, there are accounts of glaring failures with individual children. Outcomes that could be avoided, by developing a more user friendly, client-centered focus.

In inquiring after our concerns with the outcome of child abuse interventions, staff with the DHHS outlined the typical scenario of how an extensive amount of reports of suspicion of abuse and neglect, could be narrowed down to a select smaller group of substantiated reports. The national average for Suspicion of Child Abuse Reports filed, which do not proceed further for lack of substantiation is about 50%. The average in Del Norte County fluctuates from year to year, with 51% of referrals going on to investigation in 2014. 16% of the allegations within those referrals were returned as substantiated. (Usually a referral includes more than one allegation of abuse or neglect.) In the first 11 months of 2015, 40% of referrals were investigated, of which 22% of the allegations within the original referrals were substantiated (report from the previous DHHS Director). While these figures illustrate a picture of an agency keeping up with its job, matching a pace with California and National averages, we must however look at the actual rate of abuse and neglect that occurs within the local population. Statewide, the rate of 8.7 substantiated allegations per 1000 residents, serves to underscore the near epidemic rate of 21.7 per 1000 in Del Norte County (Kids Data.org, June 2015)

We need to spell out what these figures mean, as the numbers for the past 15 previous years reflect a substantial reduction of cases from the high 30's per 1000 residents, a resting level in the 40's/1000 and a peak near 50/1000 in 2009. Are these high numbers of substantiated cases over the previous decade a mirage of data, and the current numbers a more accurate reflection? Could it be that the situation has changed, with more effective and pervasive interventions, as well as a change in the predicament of children in this county? Is there a possible change with fluctuations in the epidemic use of methamphetamine peaking in 2009? These remain unanswered questions for this Grand Jury.

Across the board, most counties in the state have a rate of Suspicion of Child Abuse and Neglect Reports per 1000, that come in around the California state average of 55.6, (2014 data). Affluent counties that reflect demographics of stability, with higher rates of employment, education, etc., all come in at the range of 20's such as Marin 28.5, Monterey 26.6, San Mateo 27.2, and Sonoma at 21.1. Counties that are rural, isolated, and experience underemployment, such as Del Norte, have report rates at the other end of the scale, such neighboring Humboldt at 85.7 per 1000, Shasta 93.0, Mendocino 93.2, Lassen at 101.6, and Modoc County at 130.4. There are several other counties in this range, and the vast majority of other counties fall in the range of 40's to 80's. For 2014, Del Norte stands alone at 145.9 reports of abuse and neglect per 1000 residents. DHHS can confirm that cases of neglect are more prevalent than abuse, which speaks to a condition of poverty that is resilient to intervention. While abuse is more likely to receive direct intervention, neglect cases often represent situations of entrenched poverty and chronic problems that are resistant to change.

The greatest impact is on our high rate of very young children subjected to neglect, who in their critical years are at the highest risk of their situations being a catalyst for future enduring problems. In Del Norte the rate of early childhood abuse and neglect reports are higher than most of California. Of the group of initial Del Norte reports on Child Abuse and Neglect, 10.4% are regarding children under the age of 1 year. Only Lake County comes in above this at 12.4% for children under age 1. Between the ages of 1 and 2 years, the portion of initial Child Abuse and Neglect reports is 12.3%, of which only Inyo, Kern, Lassen, and Mono Counties come in higher at 12.9 to 14.9%. Bear in mind that the rate of reporting in Del Norte County is more than double than that of most counties at 145.9 per 1000.

It appears that in recognizing the vulnerabilities of the very young, the agency has made some positive steps. The former director reported that there is a perinatal team to help with prevention as well as intervention, making sure that pregnant clients have their housing and treatment needs planned out before childbirth. But as has been noted by administrators, supervisors, and social workers in DHHS, it is difficult to substantiate abuse and neglect reports in families where children are too young to speak for themselves, or can be coached by parents to present differing information.

In comparing the testimonies of both clients and staff, it appears that there are disparities between the accounts. It is beyond the capacity of this Grand Jury to conduct a complete and exhaustive survey of the authenticity of reports made to DHHS by children and families. But without fail, among those former clients and families that gave testimony to the Grand Jury, all reported that the DHHS staff had preconceived notions regarding their believability. The clients felt their credibility had been routinely discounted and deemed unbelievable. To staff, a client may be considered unbelievable because of their need to protect some hidden status or facts. This perspective was common at all levels of staff and supervision, but not all staff took this perspective to discredit the clients, but viewed it as part of a process of gaining trust, to facilitate obtaining accurate assessments of multifaceted situations.

Central to the inquiry about the factors that make for effective service to children, beyond the issues of available money, resources, and various administrative practices, is the issue of effective advocacy for clients. In the range of staff that were interviewed, all seemed dedicated, and even paradoxically, the most seriously committed, could seem the most resigned. Apathy is partly a response to the learned helplessness that comes from trying to fix problems that sometimes take more than a generation to resolve. Social workers try not to get discouraged over every case that does not work out to the best result.

Given the overwhelming workload that agency social workers have as well as trying to make direct contact and providing services, they will be bogged down by bureaucratic structures that will by nature become inefficient. At some point, they have to limit client access to social workers, in order for those same workers to attend to their work. With a 60/40 ratio of paperwork to client contact, it is clear that administrative duties will often take precedence in due course. Looking at the spectrum of advocacy for clients by staff, there appears to be a range, and no one is without empathy. Some appear to have a close identification with clients as part of their advocacy. Others may not, yet may be effective nonetheless.

On one side there are the social workers who represented their orientation as more towards the interests of the clients, and have indicated an original inclination towards client's rights. In the middle of the spectrum is a moderate response of advocacy that seemed to bridge the issues of agency needs versus client needs. This was represented by a social worker that indicated the importance of spending more time with children in order to gain the trust and establish a relationship that would allow a more complete assessment of their situation. There was an observation by this person that recent program directives to be more supportive and less punitive in family intervention was proving to be more useful. This indicates an advocacy orientation; an orientation that was client-oriented and focused on the processes necessary to successfully engage clients in service. This appeared to be a balanced approach that incorporated agency needs and policies with realistic implementation of services for the client. (This may be an inherent process in the programs such as the "Wrap Around" program itself, a comprehensive, multi agency team approach to addressing complicated and difficult cases.) This kind of approach seems to be oriented to addressing and meeting the client's needs more than getting the client to adapt to the needs of the agency.

A third position in the progression of advocacy was also encountered in the interviews with staff who make a significant attempt to manage the conflict between client needs, and the clients' difficulty in accessing the program services in a cooperative and efficient manner. Given the workload that the agency social workers have, these staff appear to be in a common position of being overwhelmed, and that usual process of access to agency services was a system that at least allowed for some efficiencies. The unmediated, emergent, and crisis needs of clients will predictably be set in contrast with agency needs. The job of the agency is to contain the crises of the client and draw them into a resolution.

A highly responsive client-centered approach, as advocated for by the most recent administration, seems to have been oriented to identifying with the client's needs as paramount. An appearance of disengagement by staff is in part, realistic, as the staff must channel their responsiveness through the workload and systems requirements of the agency. An attempt to shape staff towards a more engaging style may not have recognized the entrenched practices that are reflective of this agency. In different interviews with staff it also became evident that there was at least the perception that the most recent administration did not fully understand the processes and procedures by which the agency and its staff functions. Conversely, there exists a perception in the community that the staff was not adequately and personally responsive. Still, when one further considers the polarities within the agency, there is another position of identification by staff, perhaps more identified with the needs of the agency as superseding the needs of clients. The Grand Jury interviewed staff of this agency and other organizations that have working relationships with the agency, as well as recently engaged clients. There is a perception by some in the community that the management has a priority placed on agency versus than client needs. It would be an unfair exaggeration to interpret this to mean that management does not care. Agency goals would appear to be nearly synonymous with the needs of clients as perceived by the agency, but they are not necessarily the same. Agency goals and actions also are responsive to State requirements to address client needs in a timely and appropriate manner; investigating reports of abuse, intervening, opening casework plans and following through with all the legal and social matters that continue afterwards. Interviews with management at all levels indicate that there is an earnest attempt to be meet identified needs with the required response.

Whether or not a staff person or social worker is empathic may not be apparent to a client. Sometimes the demands of the agency are necessarily more pressing. Indeed, agency needs may seem clearer and more achievable than client needs. As in all health and human service organizations, staff identification and empathy with agency needs may evolve without a self-perceived shift. Among the staff interviewed for this report, it appears that historically, those most likely to advocate for client needs may have the most friction with management. The Pierson administration attempted a change in that equation, but created confusion in transition to being more client centered within the agency's established structure and practices.

This brings us to an uncomfortable observation. In speaking with youthful clients and young adults with recent cases, as well as with foster parents, a picture of struggle and spotty service appears. In defense of the Child Welfare Services and staff, every staff member and every client could not be interviewed. However the former clients interviewed were very clear about their experiences.

Woven into the accounts of their personal histories, are some experiences with caseworkers that tried and managed to be engaging and effective. But with others, it was not the case. As with any evaluation of a social service program, assessments can only be done utilizing the data that is available, an extension of what the agency and its staff are aware of and are willing or able to find out. The data identifying who is a current minor client is confidential, and those clients are unavailable for interviews.

The Grand Jury has had to compare and contrast two factors: the job as it is done, and the problems as they are presented. The answers discovered were begging the questions: how could major failures be missed and was it a simple matter of a string of minor errors and misses that obfuscated the big picture? It is an established observation that the phenomena of child abuse can go undetected as victims, perpetrators, and those close enough to observe can all be in denial. Our whole community at large can also be in denial, one person at a time.

Testimony was presented to the Grand Jury regarding children and young people who had open cases for years without getting a sense that their case managers knew the situations they were in, concerning being homeless, or in oppressive foster care homes. If the task at hand is to do a good job at meeting regulations and expectations, then a Social Worker can be successful while still accomplishing less than the goal. In Del Norte County, we have only to look at our child welfare statistics as compared to the rest of the state, and at the toll of poverty and associated problems, to know that we are in a place where tragedies live. No agency prefers to come up short acknowledging that the problems got the better of them. Every county in every state recognizes that there are always going to be situations of abuse and neglect. We also need to look at what we have not been doing.

Such policies and programs as "No Wrong Door" in trying to initiate user-friendly access, and "The Breakfast Club" in reaching people at their first levels of need are attempts to redress the basic alienation that happens with the disenfranchised. Granted there have been problems in initiating these changes. It is hard to effect a rapid change that does not adversely affect staff.

The Grand Jury interviews included former clients and foster parents who revealed similar experiences and who provided the Grand Jury with recommendations that were presented with vigorous clarity. Primary to the shared experience of these clients was the sense that the Case Workers had not really gotten to know them, and others still seemed incapable of gaining their trust, or were naive in their assessments. One of the former clients, who had been in an open case since very early childhood related, "By age 12, I was on Meth, soon after, Heroin. It wasn't that they just 'missed' it, they would have to be stupid, because they are trained."

While her narrative might seem overly skewed, she acknowledged that one of the Social Workers did have a sense of what was going on, and helped her. Her sense of being able to access a secure home with foster care was uneasy. "I would keep running away from foster homes, and I kept a journal about what was happening. CPS would not do anything about it. I would have to get up at 4 am everyday to go with this person on their job ...they never would evaluate us together, to catch the sense of what was really going on in the relationship. By age 12, I was on probation for public drunkenness...smoking dope... with a positive drug test. I would be sent to Juvenile Hall, sometimes for a few days, sometimes 45-60 days... at least I could be safe there. There was a time when I was about 8, they sent me and my sisters and brothers on the bus to some aunt in Sacramento by ourselves. Luckily my brother had stolen the Social Worker's cell phone, so we could call back to Del Norte when there was no one to pick us up." Most of all, she had the sense that "A lot goes under the radar with CPS. It took a lot of calls to get a report taken seriously. The kids are telling the truth most of the time." She had clarified her whole position that she felt she and others like her were ignored.

There were other pieces of this person's history that were noteworthy. While she had a therapist assigned to her for several years, she felt like she never was able to talk to her. Whatever the case, there was not a good match up. Her sense was a lack of being believed: "Why would I lie?" and in sizing it up "It's a class thing..." And she described her sense of not being connected to power and feeling disenfranchised. Rather than having a completely jaded view, she reported that the lady who taught at the McCarthy School believed her, and also the teacher at the Paragon Charter School had noticed what she was writing. Her continued observations about teenagers in particular noted themes of disengagement: "A lot of kids in high school are homeless, they just drift from one friends house to another...what we need is something like a Boys and Girls Club that would open early, so they could get showers and do laundry." A sense of belonging and a place of permanence was what she was speaking about, and she had the authority of a person who will not be disputed about her own experience. Her final concern was about the dignity of being counted as a person with rights.

Not every child who comes up through the system of Foster Care and broken homes develops such an ability to be articulate. There were others who spoke to a similar experience in providing foster care as well as having it provided for them. Another person, not yet technically an adult, but a seasoned client who has not yet "aged out" at 17, recounted her and her siblings history.

"We were taught by our parents not to tell CPS about the abuse (Fathers violence, Mother's drug use) but eventually because of the hardship, hunger and homelessness we told CPS. When I was age 12, we went there, (DHHS) and were made to wait in the waiting room for hours. We had nowhere to go, but they told us to go, and we ended up staying at a friend of our parents, but they were drug addicts." Eventually CPS split us up, because it was easier to place us in separate foster care homes one at a time, and sent yet another sister to an uncle. Eventually, even though my dad was abusive, we went to him, and even though CPS knew it was bad...the social worker told dad that if we left, to call the cops...he made sure we did not talk after that. The catalyst for the next foster care placement was while we were staying with friends, my sister was drinking, stole from the liquor store, the cops turned us over to CPS, and they placed us. We had no contact with the Social Worker for weeks. It seems like kids who break the law get attention."

There were allegations of mental illness on the part of the Foster Care mother who eventually, with the foster care father became adoptive parents, ostensibly for the amount of subsidization funds that came with the adoption. It seemed that the Social Worker was aware of these allegations, but was unwilling to do anything about it, and did little to keep up with timely visits. They were terrified about saying the wrong thing to the social worker in front of the foster care mother, and suffering severe consequences as a result. This situation felt more harmful than living on the street, and came with food restrictions, forced running on a treadmill, forced social isolation, and enduring close scrutiny that detailed their every move aside from school. Eventually a letter was smuggled out, and CPS intervened. None of the visitations, court hearings etc., ever amounted to a close observation of the problems, and the representing attorneys were in conflict of interest. Caseworkers were reassigned frequently over time, and by and large did not catch on to the real dynamics. There is more to the case, but the theme was marked by a lack of thorough assessment or close case management. Finally though, the complaint of this client was not so much about hardship, it was about the lack of dignity; lack of rights. "Once with my sister and I in the car the Social Worker referred to a group of young women on the street as the Ninth Street Hoes, Seriously?!" It felt like the Social Worker was demeaning them all, herself included.

When asked about whether she felt the CWS workers were well trained, she reported that the CPS staff themselves had told them that she and her sister were "Letter-smart, we have to go to Google" with the letters she and her sister had written to them, and it seemed to her that they were not educated well. In reviewing this person's testimony, it seemed that these two sisters, to their credit, had found solace in the stability of the world of school and academics. The credibility of her presentation to the panel of the Grand Jury was considerable.

Testimony before the Grand Jury in these matters seems to fly in the face of the established credibility of the administrators, managers, social workers, and supervisors that were called to testify. The question becomes how does this happen? And how does it escape the purview of dedicated professionals? Any professional in Human Services has an uneasy sleep wondering if someone might be hurt, molested, or become the victim of suicide in an unguarded moment. They try to avert the risks of these failures in client safety, wondering on their watch, just how much they don't know about what is going on. Case conferences are held in earnest with many of the involved parties, and protocols are followed on the process of handling the casework. We can examine the variety of forces that come into play with this. But let us not deny that failures happen, and that close unblinking scrutiny needs to be held, even though these problems go rushing by.

Professional Development

Del Norte County DHHS has one of the lowest salary structures in the state. A middle range of salaries would be represented by the example of nearby Humboldt county, beginning at \$2,100 dollars per month more for a starting salary. The pay scale in Del Norte is consistently lower through all levels of advancement and remains \$1,600 less at the top scale. Among counties with similar demographics, only Modoc County, a much smaller community, pays less than Del Norte (and not significantly at \$200 less per month). It is an opinion held by management at DHHS that, "Low salaries continue to cause difficulty with recruiting and retaining social work staff." Management reports that DHHS is participating in the California Social Worker Education Center program (CALSwec) working with Humboldt State University. Through this program eleven CWS staff of this community were enabled to continue their education in social work. This includes two graduates of the Masters program (MSW), five graduates at the Bachelors level (BASW), five current MSW students, and three new BASW students. Even after education, training, and gaining competency in this community, staff occasionally will still leave for higher pay in other counties. Recently an MSW has resigned due to claims of adverse relations with management.

Many of the local staff have worked their way up the ladder of their profession in Del Norte County. It is difficult in the scope of this investigation to have a full assessment of the degree of professionalism in this county. Maintaining strong ties to Humboldt University, pursuing ongoing continuing education from outside the area, as well as hiring in accomplished professional staff from other areas is useful in attaining a high degree of professionalism in this isolated community. In addition to ongoing monitoring and supervision that help maintain standards of casework, changes were introduced agency wide, that are both philosophical and practical. It remains to be seen what the direction of the agency will be with the current changes in its directorship.

Becoming more client-centered and user-friendly was one change. It appeared to be part of a turn away from a close management style of another administration. Across the range of services, from County Mental Health, to the contracted agency for children's mental health, Remi Vista, there is a move to try to implement a new standard of mental health treatment model that is informed by current professional research on "Trauma Based Treatment." To say this has been accomplished would be premature. Managers inform us that this model of trauma-based treatment is lacking at this time. Keeping pace with the workload has always been the cornerstone of morale for Social Service workers. The current ratio of documentation time versus direct service is about 60/40, and according to some managers, "It kills them". Generally speaking, the Grand Jury has heard of a decline in morale with recent changes, but on further investigation it was not as simple as a change of direction or Directors. Interviews with other staff supervisors indicate that after some initial adjustments that staff morale is not a prominent issue. However, interviews with staff indicate a range of digression on this matter. Some point to a number of staff who have left DHHS due to morale issues.

Professional autonomy is one of the operational markers of a mature seasoned staff, and supervision that nurtures this development is a critical function of management. The social worker in the field is using his or her individual judgment as a tool of intervention. Professional independent judgment is an essential tool. Some staff have related to the Grand Jury that they have been required to change court reports to reflect content that differs from the social workers own perspective. An alleged pattern of intimidation of multiple staff was described. The effect that was communicated by this staff member was to create a staff work culture that insures through intimidation the axiom "Don't admit when you are wrong". Other staff will reflect a completely different picture, reporting no pressures for censoring of reports and a supportive, cohesive team for mutual support.

The issue of how professional autonomy is developed and maintained may be related to some of the case management problems previously described by former clients. Regardless of the varied perceptions on whether or not there is a negative work culture or infringement of autonomy, there must be a process to redress case management issues without punitive actions. A work culture that does not allow for this, invites unchecked failures to spiral.

To be fair, not all staff report that the work culture is intimidating, or have the feeling of not being able to admit when you are wrong. However we have seen that there has been a variety of opinions and experiences by staff. There may even be two distinct camps, but effective management should be able to solve the problems for both sides.

This Grand Jury's interviews also solicited the foster parent perspective. Certainly, it may not be representative of all experiences in foster care, but our interviews provided a clarity of perspective that requires attention. One particular foster parent that was interviewed put it this way publicly regarding the early process of placement of foster children in the family:

*“We had no idea what we were doing
We had no idea what Social Services was doing
Social Services had no idea what we were doing
Social Services had no idea what they were doing.”*

What was clear to this foster parent was that in the preceding decade of previous case work with her foster children, years of questionable placements were ignored for too long. This may have been because no one had the time to visit, but given the gravity of having multiple foster kids cycling through one questionable foster family, DHHS did not own up to the chronicity of the problem. A significant lack of available foster homes was part of the precipitating situation of the need to place children in a hurry. Without always having the time or resources to completely qualify if there was a good fit, case workers may not know if a home was meeting expectations for foster care, and social workers must seek an improvised temporary solution. There is always the risk that some foster parents are ill suited for the job, or even may become abusive. The national average is that some 28% of foster children will experience some form of abuse or neglect in foster homes. As in so many of life's challenging situations, the question becomes one of “not if, but when.”

What became clear in the observations with one foster parent was that the experience of interaction with the DHHS was that of the agency being less engaged, rather than more.

The experience for this family was described in the following words.

“[DHHS Social Workers]... did not do regular, required home visits, did not speak privately with each child, did not ensure children were receiving counseling, were not open to hearing reports of [previous] abuse or neglect, and failed to build trust with children that they served”

In trying to remain in communication it was additionally reported:

“It was ...a defensive fortress instead of an office of compassion; it was difficult to contact our social worker, or have a call returned. No email connection or a way to track communications. The attitude was that foster children are 'manipulative' and somehow to blame for their status.”

This foster parent's impression was that the social workers were “overworked and under-qualified.” As far as preparation or support for the provision of foster care, this foster parent thought that there was, “Inadequate training, inadequate support, reactionary rather than proactive strategy, and that workers permitted fraud rather than solved problems.”

Not all foster parents or children within the Children’s Welfare Services will have the inclination for being as outspoken or have the sense of empowerment and skills to speak out.

Interviews regarding the Mental Health Department indicated that there were positive changes being put into place. In previous years there had been little use of the capacity to utilize psychiatric hospitalization, due the distances involved with Eureka and Redding being the closest inpatient units. Also, the assignment of open beds to be used for Del Norte County patients historically has been sparse. With the new supervisor for the Mental Health Department this situation has been changing with agreements being made to free up the use of psychiatric inpatient hospitalization. Availability of psychiatric care through Telemedicine for children is stable, and a locum tenens psychiatrist has been brought in to help service the need.

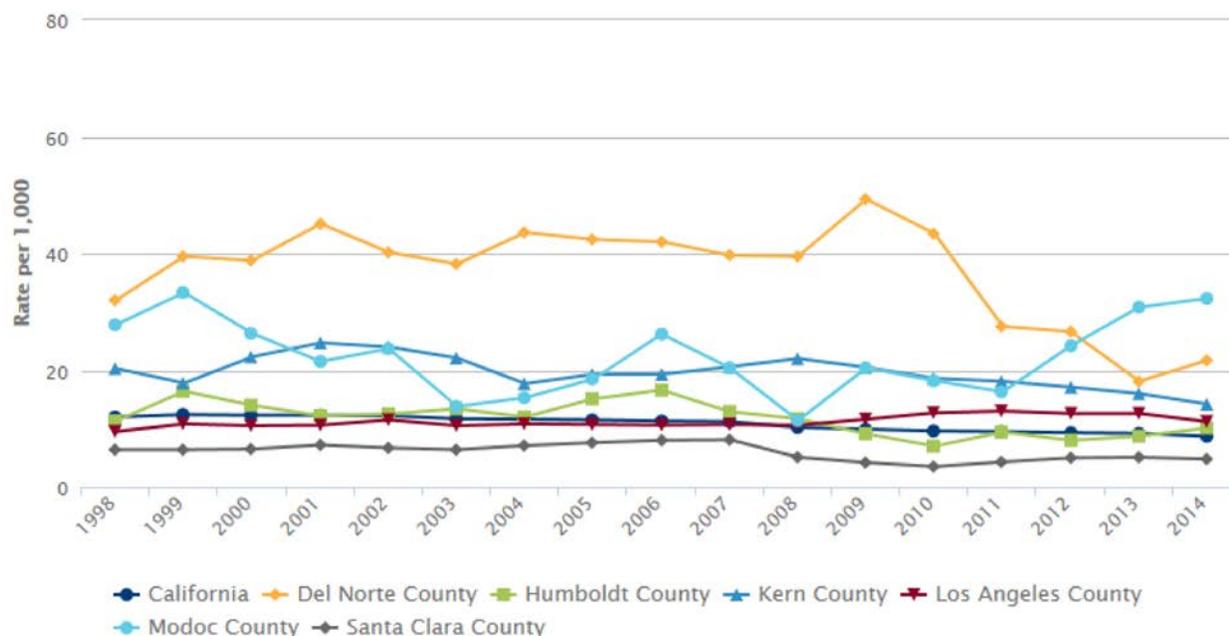
Conclusion

One cannot summarize where the DHHS has been without recognizing it is in the midst of a full sweep of change and reform, from within and without. Recent resignation of the director, after a brief season of turmoil, and a previous retirement have left an agency reeling. Stepping into the breach after two months on the job is the newly appointed Assistant Director who by all reports is fresh, able and respected by staff. This is hopeful, as solid leadership that is also accepted is what is needed to give the agency a fair chance. Recognition of the need to pay attention to protocols and policies has been expressed as important. The most recent Grand Jury interviews that were conducted to review the situation appear to be reinforcing this perspective anew. When the Grand Jury began its inquiry in the fall of 2015, the status of the agency was in flux and has remained in a state of change until this day. So summary conclusions can also be addressed as the question of the outlook for the future. Staff are reported as discouraged and need empowerment. The consensus is that most all are trying to do the best they can, even though the Grand Jury heard credible reports of lapses in the system and case work failures. The new quality assurance measures (California Child and Family Service Reviews [C-CFSR]) are scheduled for implementation in January 2017. This new program is being taken in hand by the DHHS as a serious factor that may help to revitalize a focus on the actual impact of services on the clients themselves. It may help remake the agency in the image of the people it serves, the unique population that is Del Norte County.

This ongoing model of Continuous Quality Improvement will be an integration of qualitative analysis with statistical outcomes that will allow the agency to strengthening the program, according to plans by the California State Department of Social Services. The desired effect for this will be qualitative reviews that have their start at the point of practice with the staff and Social Workers themselves. They need autonomy and a chance to inform the agency of what will work best. Knowledge of best practices needs to come from the Social Workers as well a chance to help form policy along the way as the State Department of Social Services has intended. Most of all, this may include information direct from the families themselves, as the Grand Jury has also heard.

It is the Grand Jury's hope and expectation that this will be a coming together of the voices of children, their families, and the staff trying the hardest to help them. It is the expectation of the Grand Jury that the County of Del Norte will implement the following recommendations in order to improve the effectiveness of the services provided by DHHS to families and children in need.

Substantiated Cases of Child Abuse and Neglect: 1998 to 2014



Definition: Rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect cases per 1,000 children under age 18.

Data Source: As cited on kidsdata.org, Webster, D., et al. California Child Welfare Indicators Project Reports, UC Berkeley Center for Social Services Research (May 2015); Child Trends, analysis of data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, as cited on KIDS COUNT (Jun. 2015).

Child Abuse and Neglect Reports, by Age: 2014 (Age: All)

| California | Percent |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Under 1 | 6.9% |
| Ages 1-2 | 10.4% |
| Ages 3-5 | 17.2% |
| Ages 6-10 | 29.7% |
| Ages 11-15 | 26.2% |
| Ages 16-17 | 9.5% |

| Del Norte County | Percent |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| Under 1 | 10.4% |
| Ages 1-2 | 12.3% |
| Ages 3-5 | 17.1% |
| Ages 6-10 | 29.8% |
| Ages 11-15 | 22.3% |
| Ages 16-17 | 8.0% |

County of Del Norte
 Department of Health and Human Services
 Social Services Branch
 Workload Comparison for CWS Social Workers
 For Month of Sept 2015

| CWS Basic Program Area | SB 2030 Best Practice Workload Standard per Worker | SB 2030 Best Practices Recommended Hours per Referral/Case | Del Norte Workload per Worker | Del Norte Hours per Referral/Case | Del Norte County Social Worker Positions | Position Variance* |
|--------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Screening/Hotline/Intake (ERA) | 68.7 | 1.69 | 74 | 1.57 | 1 | (0.08) |
| Emergency Response (ER)* | 9.88 | 11.75 | 8 | 14.50 | 3 | 0.57 |
| Family Maintenance (FM) | 10.15 | 11.44 | 19 | 6.11 | 1 | (0.87) |
| Family Reunification (FR) | 11.94 | 9.72 | 27 | 4.30 | 3 | (3.78) |
| Permanent Placement (PP) | 16.42 | 7.07 | 27 | 4.30 | 2 | (1.29) |
| | | | | | Total Variance | (5.45) |

| CWS Basic Program Area | SB 2030 Minimum Workload Standard per Worker | SB 2030 Minimum Recommended Hours per Referral/Case | Del Norte Workload per Worker | Del Norte Hours per Referral/Case | Del Norte County Social Worker Positions | Position Variance* |
|--------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Screening/Hotline/Intake (ERA) | 166.1 | 1 | 74 | 1.57 | 1 | 0.55 |
| Emergency Response (ER)* | 13.03 | 8.91 | 8 | 14.50 | 3 | 1.16 |
| Family Maintenance (FM) | 14.18 | 8.19 | 19 | 6.11 | 1 | (0.34) |
| Family Reunification (FR) | 15.58 | 7.45 | 27 | 4.30 | 3 | (2.20) |
| Permanent Placement (PP) | 23.69 | 4.9 | 27 | 4.30 | 2 | (0.28) |
| | | | | | Total Variance | (1.11) |

* positive value exceeds recommended number of positions
 negative value falls below recommended number of positions
 * vacant position

Definition: Percentage of child abuse and neglect reports, by age of child (e.g., 10.4% of child abuse and neglect reports in California in 2014 concerned children ages 1-2).

Data Source: As cited on kidsdata.org, Webster, D., et al. California Child Welfare Indicators Project Reports, UC Berkeley Center for Social Services Research (May 2015)

Findings

F1. Despite reasonable and credible DHHS reports of follow up on child welfare cases, both historically and recently, there have been situations that indicate a kind of “falling through the cracks” of cases. These are cases for which follow-up is below standard and these cases may be significant in number.

F2. Staff salaries are inadequate to recruit and retain an essential number of trained professionals. Salaries are near the lowest in the state, and seriously below that of the adjoining Humboldt county. Del Norte salaries are grouped with the lowest four counties with the lowest income per capita.

F3. There are insufficient numbers of staff available, and the workloads are up to twice the minimum recommended state “Best Practice Workload Standard per Worker” average in terms of time available for case management. (See addendum chart D, California SB 2030 study, pg. 1)

F4. While not uniquely a problem to Del Norte County, there are reported to be significant problems in foster children receiving adequate case supervision and interventions for maintaining appropriate levels of care. A comprehensive overview of this problem is not within the scope of this investigation, but testimony regarding this problem by individuals contacted was presented to the Grand Jury.

F5. Responsibility for foster care recruitment is through an office in Humboldt County. The staff here in Del Norte working to develop licensed homes and doing investigations associated with background checks, licensing and approval is minimal. Future developments in the implementation of Foster Resource Homes, beginning in 2017 will likely require more in depth investigations and training, as standards for foster care evaluation will approach the much more detailed home study required of families preparing for adoption.

F6. There are sometimes difficulties with finding an immediate placement for children that are removed from families in crisis. The degree to which this has been a problem is anecdotal and does not match official accounts, but the Grand Jury considers that the rate of occurrence is likely to be significant due to testimonies received.

F7. There are reports of significant numbers of teenagers who are not quite homeless but are sheltered by moving from friend to friend, “couch surfing”. This population may be underserved and may require a “Point in time” survey to estimate the actual rate of occurrence.

F8. There can be a less than thorough connection with staff social workers when children are placed in foster homes. This has been problematic when children are placed in foster care families that have proven to be socially, psychologically or geographically isolated.

F9. There may be a lack of timely contact with children in placement by social workers.

F10. Full assessment of situations of children in placement may go for months or years without a comprehensive review.

F11. A full review and evaluation of the DHHS services that can be understood in layman’s terms is difficult to produce. Without such an evaluative assessment, it is difficult to gauge the ongoing successes and problems from year to year.

Recommendations

R1. With the passing of California Assembly Bill 403 (Signed October 11th 2015), reforms and changes are being made to the “Continuum of Care” that involves an evolution in the provision of care to children with the Child Welfare System, particularly for those in out-of-home placements with care from relatives and from foster care resource families to institutional group homes. While the focus of the bill is in reducing the number of children in long-term group homes, it also sets into motion the development of a higher intensity of service and care at the local foster care level. This includes the substitution from large group home care to short term care in FFA (foster family agency) and FFA/Ts (foster family agency/treatment) that will be much smaller, localized, transparent to outside monitoring and supervision, and more amenable to cooperative team work with agencies and families. While most counties will opt to turn the development and running of these facilities over to independent nonprofit corporate agencies, this bill also comes with some alternative recommendations from the State as follows:

In the California Department of Social Services, Foster Care Reform report to the California Legislature, on the Continuum of Care Reform (AB403) in the section regarding Home Based Family Care, Recommendation #4, (pg26) ...”Currently, licensed FFAs are operated by private, nonprofit agencies. Public agencies should be allowed to be licensed to operate FF/NT (foster family agency/non treatment) and FFA/Ts (foster family agency/treatment) to serve children, youth and families in their care if appropriate and where FFA/Ts are not available. This promotes counties ability to develop programs focused on specific populations for which there may be a local need. This also may facilitate better integration with other county programs.”

Because forty percent of foster care cases in Del Norte County are from tribal populations, with significant cultural identities within tribal geographical areas, Del Norte has an opportunity to directly shape programs that are specific to their needs. In many ways Del Norte has a distinctively different feel and isolated culture compared with the rest of California. Developing an in house program by Del Norte DHHS itself will allow for that better integration as well eliminating a layer of bureaucracy between client families and the county. Small group homes run by the county itself could be efficient in offering frequent, in-depth social worker contact; more ease of placement, and could take pressure off of other foster care/resource families to place children who are not appropriate for less intensive care.

Direct management by the county DHHS will allow for more easily integrated services. Development of expertise from the beginning by the initiation of services locally may help with creating a more robust professional quality of services.

R2. Assembly Bill 403 allows children to choose up to two members of staff on the team that develops their case plans. This enables children to have more input into their planning, and maintain developed relationships with case workers. All children should be informed as a matter of course, and have the chance to make a deliberate choice and have a review of which individuals are assigned to their case planning. Maintaining continuity of care, by keeping some developed professional relationships is important to children who are traumatized by removal from homes, and often confused by the transfer of caseworkers. Allowing children and families to have some say in the continuity of care may contribute to fewer children “falling through the cracks”.

R3. Per Federal Case Review, State Department of Social Services All County Information Notice I-40-14 , an auditing function of qualitative case reviews should be engaged. The State recommends in this notice that “in order to maintain integrity of the QA (quality assurance) process, the ideal reviewers of the information would not be responsible for services or decision making for the case/referral being reviewed.” However, being a relatively small department, with a risk of interpersonal relationships having influence, it is a Grand Jury recommendation that this person not be someone who is currently dividing casework hours and qualitative review hours. It is the recommendation of the Grand Jury that this be an independent person, especially if the current DHHS option is to create a half time job assignment. Conduct of the case reviews is done in order to ensure independent assessment and should be free from extraneous pressures. In a year that has illustrated conflicting factions and the ensuing drama played out on the public stage, it should point out the need for an independent reviewer someone not subjected to intra agency pressures.

At this time the mandated review process of the California-Child and Family Service Reviews (C-CFSR) have the goal of strengthening the state's quality assurance processes through the model of continuous quality improvement. However, there is no indication that this review is responsible back to any party but the state and for the purposes of holding to the standards of the federal CFSR processes. These are the children of Del Norte and often more specifically of local tribes. Accountability can and should be delivered at home also. There are two possible venues for this: the Del Norte Board of Supervisors is one. They are responsible back to the community. It can be suggested also that a little used, but still viable entity for oversight of children's services, could be enacted with support from the Board of Supervisors and the local community. This would be developing a Citizen Review Panel for the Del Norte County DHHS.

R3a. In 1996, the US Congress amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to require states to establish Citizen Review Panels. The federal statute commissions Citizen Review Panels to evaluate the extent to which the state and local agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with the State's child protective services system plan, which is required for funding under CAPTA and the specific child protection standards contained in CAPTA. Panels may review Child Protective Services cases, data reports, policies, and procedures and any other data considered important to ensure the protection of children.

Only one California County currently uses this process, San Mateo County, but it is a national organization, with federal funding and a long-standing history of operating as an oversight organization that requires county services respond to their recommendations.

R4. The salaries are below par for the area, as well as for the entire state of California. Salaries should be brought up to par with the local adjoining county to the south, Humboldt County, a middle ground range of salaries when compared to the rest of the state. This will enable recruitment and retention of professional staff as well as encourage the educational development of a locally based staff.

This professional recruitment is an important issue as the State Child Welfare Services Program General Requirements (Regulation 31-070 California DSS Manual CWS) has the following Staff Requirements: “At least 50 percent of the professional staff providing emergency response services, and at least 50 percent of the professional staff providing family maintenance services, shall possess a master's degree in social work, or its equivalent in education and/or experience as certified by the State Personnel Board or a county civil service board.” And in addition: “ One hundred percent of the supervisors of staff providing emergency response and family maintenance services shall possess a master's degree in social work or its equivalent....”

The program requirements go on to explain that the remainder of staff aside from the 50 percent masters level should be at a bachelor of social work or equivalent.

While counties can present a letter explaining why this cannot be met at the current time they must also present a plan for reaching this goal within a three-year time frame. It is highly unlikely that Del Norte County will be able to meet staffing standards without offering salary compensation that is commensurate with the profession.

R5. In view of the importance given in the California's Child Welfare Continuum of Care Reform (SB 1013) , January 2015, to multiple reforms including “Wraparound” services, there should be care and consideration given to whether or not \$100,000 of Wraparound money should be transferred to the Recreation Department. This was listed as a transfer in from SB 163 funding, from DHHS as a line item in the Recreation Department budget, and was done in the fiscal years 2014-15, was budgeted for this year 2015-16 and was not done in 2013-14. We recommend that the Board of Supervisors review this action with the guidance and directions from the California Department of Social Services regarding such transfers of funds out of DHHS.

R6. Ongoing communication between DHHS case management and clients can be enhanced. Due to the time constraints of caseworkers involvement with documentation and direct services, as well constraints on the time and availability of clients, the most effective methods for tracking communications need to be sought out. Conventional communications with Email, telephone text messaging, may have something to offer, as well as automated communications. CRM or Customer Resource Management programs for Healthcare from the business community may be considered in order to facilitate communications with clients.

R7. Staffing for the development of Foster Care homes and Foster Resource homes could be localized instead of being sourced from another county. Extra staff hours or positions to assist with background investigations would be useful as the future of development of Foster Care indicates a higher level of training, development and orientation toward a treatment model for children.

Del Norte County Fairgrounds Recreation and Parks District

Background

The State of California's 41st District Agricultural Association (hereinafter referred to as the 41st District) maintains and operates the fairgrounds and runs the County Fair for citizens of Del Norte County. In 2011 the State Legislature made budgetary cuts and eliminated approximately \$200,000 in funding from the 41st District. In 2011, the 41st District started to look at options for keeping the County Fairgrounds open.

These options included:

- 1) Seeking possible legislation to create a law that would allow the county to operate a local fair district to take the place of the 41st District, or
- 2) Create a new special district to control, manage and operate the fairgrounds.

A survey was conducted by ECM Research to determine whether the fairgrounds should be funded locally. The survey stated that the public would support a 0.25% temporary sales tax increase and the establishment of a new district to operate the fairgrounds.

The 41st District presented this proposal to the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors (hereinafter called the BOS) on August 28, 2013. The 41st District asked the BOS to assist in the creation of the new Del Norte County Fairgrounds Recreation and Parks District. This new special district would have control and jurisdiction over the Del Norte County fairgrounds facilities and the Fair. As a result of this presentation, the BOS directed county staff to assist in the development of this new special district.

By September of 2013, the 41st District determined that a new special district should be created and that a 0.25% temporary sales tax should be imposed to fund it.

On December 10, 2013, the BOS made a determination that the Local Agency Formation Commission's (LAFCO) would not be required to have the proponents of the new district collect and submit the signatures of 25% of the registered voters in the county. The 41st District then filed an application for the formation and creation of a new special district with LAFCO.

On January 14, 2014, the BOS passed Resolution 14-002, directing LAFCO to hold hearings on the formation and creation of a new special district.

On May 19, 2014, LAFCO passed and adopted the formation of the new special district under the provisions of Section 5780 et seq. of the Public Resources Code. LAFCO Resolution 14-02, placed the following conditions and restrictions upon the creation of the new special district.

The following is the actual text of LAFCO's conditions and restrictions:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Del Norte LAFCO orders the following:

1. Formation of the Del Norte County Fairgrounds Recreation and Park District [*hereinafter referred to as the Local Fair District*] is approved, subject to the conditions outlined below.
2. The Boundaries of the district, as set forth in the proposal are hereby approved as described as attached hereto and by reference incorporated herein.
3. The district is authorized to provide a range of services specified in the Recreation and Parks District Law, commencing with Section 5780 et seq. of the California Public Resources Code; as stated in the Municipal Service Review. This includes the following:

Contract with other public agencies to provide recreation facilities and programs of community recreation within the districts' boundaries.
4. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5781.1, the District will not have the power of eminent domain.
5. The district will be funded by a special sales tax approved by the voters and shall not be formed unless an adequate funding mechanism has been approved.
6. The Special Sales Tax shall have a minimum initial term of seven (7) years to allow the District to create a capital reserve fund to sustain the operations beyond the initial seven year period.
7. The District shall be governed by a five-member board elected at large by the voters of the district.
8. Pursuant to G C [*Government Code*] Section 56425, the Commission concurs with the determinations outlined in the Municipal Service Review and the MSR is hereby adopted.
9. The Sphere of influence boundary for the District, to be coterminous with the District boundary, is hereby approved, subject to the conditions outlined below.
10. LAFCO staff is directed to initiate protest proceedings pursuant to G C (commencing with §57000) in compliance with this resolution.
11. The District shall repay the 41st District Agricultural Association for the formation costs including LAFCO processing and County election costs.

Note: As stated under this Section 3 above, the Local Fair District was formed under Sections 5780 et seq. of the Public Resources Code. In order for the Local Fair District to have control and jurisdiction of the Fairground property and facilities, the Local Fair District needed to enter into a lease and contract agreement to fulfill Sections 5780.1(c) and 5780.1(h) of the Public Resources Code.

On June 24, 2014, the BOS held a public hearing on the creation of the new District. The BOS then adopted Resolution 14-009 which provided for:

- 1) The creation of the new district, and
- 2) The creation of a temporary (0.25%) sales tax, and
- 3) The requirement of a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote by the electorate.

Resolution 14-009 was then placed upon the November 2014 Ballot as Measure F. Measure F passed with a vote of 66.87% in favor of the measure and 33.13% against. With the passage of Measure F the new **Del Norte County Fairgrounds Recreation and Parks District** (hereinafter called the Local Fair District) was created.

In February of 2015, the Local Fair District Board met to discuss the Lease Management Agreement and Contract (hereinafter called the Lease Contract) between the 41st District and the Local Fair District. The Lease Contract was designed to give the Local Fair District control and jurisdiction over the fairgrounds and County Fair.

In March of 2015, the Local Fair District Board adopted the final version of the Lease Contract, which was then sent to the 41st District for submission to the State of California's Department of Food and Agriculture for approval.

On April 1, 2015, the temporary sales tax revenue started to be collected. As of this report, the County has received more than \$600,000 from the California Board of Equalization for the sales tax revenue that has been collected. The County auditor has established account funds for the Local Fair District to draw upon for their operations. Currently, the Local Fair District is required to place 30% of the sales tax monies collected into a reserve fund.

By October 2015, the Governor of the State of California had not signed the Lease Contract. Because the Lease Contract had not been signed, the Local Fair District could not legally spend sales tax funds to keep the fair open. The Local Fair District Board needed to find a method to transfer funds to the 41st District.

The Local Fair District Board then decided to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the 41st District in order to transfer the sales tax revenue. On November 17, 2015, the MOU was signed by members of the Local Fair Board and members of the 41st District. The MOU labeled the transfer of funds as a “gift” of public funds.

At their October 27, 2015 meeting the Local Fair District Board passed Resolution 15-05 which allowed the opening of a separate bank account in accordance with Section 5784.9 of the Public Resources Code. Two board-members were appointed to oversee the use of this separate bank account at Coast Central Credit Union. The Grand Jury is unsure as to the total amount of money deposited into this account.

The 41st District spent \$48,000 to pay for the creation of the Local Fair District. The Local Fair District reimbursed the 41st District \$48,000 for the creation the Local Fair District (see Item 11, of the LAFCO conditions sited above).

At their January 2016 meeting, the Local Fair District Board passed Resolution 16-01 which revised the MOU. The new MOU changed the word “gift” of public funds to a “grant” of public funds.

In April of 2016, the Local Fair District Board was informed that the Governor of the State of California *declined* to sign the Lease Contract.

Findings

F1. The Local Fair District is not posting Minutes of their monthly Board Meetings online for the Public to review.

F2. Since January of 2016, the Local Fair District has been either gifting or granting funds to the 41st District while waiting for the Governor to sign the Lease Contract.

F3. The Governor of the State of California declined to sign the Lease Contract in March of 2016. In testimony given to the Grand Jury, the Chairman of the Local Fair District Board stated that the Governor did not want to give up the control and jurisdiction of the fairgrounds and the Fair.

The Grand Jury would like to know if the Local Fair District can continue to function or operate as a special district without a signed lease contract from the State of California. The Grand Jury has asked for legal counsel for an opinion on this issue and has not received any direction to date.

F4. Section 5780.1 (c) and 5780.1(h) of the Public Resources Code requires that the fairgrounds and the facilities be *under the control and jurisdiction of the district*. Since the Governor declined to sign the Lease Contract, the Local Fair District is not in control of nor does it have jurisdiction over the fairgrounds and the facilities. The Grand Jury has asked legal counsel if the Local Fair District can continue to operate as a special district because of these deficiencies. In addition, the Grand Jury has asked legal counsel if the sales tax that has been collected to support the Local Fair District can be used or spent until these deficiencies are addressed.

Because the Governor of the State of California declined to sign the Lease Contract, the fairgrounds are still owned by and under the control of the State of California, and the operation of the facilities are under the jurisdiction of the 41st District. Therefore, the Grand Jury has asked legal counsel if the Local Fair District is in compliance with the provisions of Sections 5780.1(c) and 5780.1(h) of the Public Resources Code and the Grand Jury has asked legal counsel whether the Local Fair District can continue to operate.

F5. When the Grand Jury reviewed the statutes associated with the formation of the Local Fair District (specifically Sections 5780 et seq.) no reference was found in those statutes for the creation of a Fair, Local Fair, Local Fair District, or Local Fair Board. There were references to the terms "Recreation & Parks District" but not a Fair District. The only reference to a Fair, Local Fair, Local Fair District, or Local Fair Board, that was found were those that created the State Fair District Associations within the Department of Agriculture. Section 5780 et seq. was specifically designed for the creation of a Recreation & Parks District.

F6. LAFCO placed certain conditions (see the LAFCO conditions cited above) on the creation of the Local Fair District under Resolution 14-02. In addition, the BOS required the Local Fair District to maintain and operate the property and the Facilities in the BOS Resolution 14-002. The Local Fair District tried to enter into a "contract" with the 41st District (see item 3, of the LAFCO conditions cited above). The contract took the form of a Lease Management Agreement (Lease Contract). A copy of the suggested contract was attached to and made a part of the LAFCO requirements as an attachment to the resolution. It was the intention of the 41st District, when going through the creation of the Local Fair District to give up control and jurisdiction over the operation of the fairgrounds.

The Grand Jury requested legal clarification as to whether the Local Fair District is in compliance with the LAFCO and BOS requirements as set down in the LAFCO Resolution 14-02 and the BOS Resolution 14-002.

F7. The Local Fair District Board entered into an MOU with the 41st Fair District to provide for funding of the Fairgrounds facilities while waiting for the Governor to sign the Lease Contract.

The Grand Jury would like to know from legal counsel:

- a) if the Local Fair District can continue to provide funding to the 41st District for the continued operation of the Fairgrounds, and
- b) if the Local Fair District can continue to use an MOU to replace the Lease Contract which the Governor declined to sign, and
- c) if the Local Fair District can use the MOU to continue to operate in place of the requirements of Sections 5780, 5780.1 (c) and 5780.1 (h) of the Public Resources Code, and
- d) if the Local Fair District can use the MOU to continue to operate and continue to collect taxes despite their non-compliance with all of LAFCO's formation requirements in Resolution 14-02?
- e) if the Local Fair District can use the MOU to continue to operate and continue to collect taxes despite their non-compliance with all of BOS formation requirements in Resolution 14-002?

F8. The MOU dated November 17, 2015 between the Local Fair Board and the 41st District states that the funds transferred between the two boards was initially given as a gift of public funds and later reclassified as a grant of public funds.

F9. Currently the Local Fair District is accruing an average of \$55,000 per month in local sales tax revenue. The sales tax has generated more than \$600,000.00 to funding the Local Fair District. The Grand Jury would also like to know if the funds that have been given to the 41st District need to be returned to the coffers of the Local Fair District pending a determination of the status of the special district.

F10. LAFCO requires the Local Fair District to reimburse the 41st District for the cost of being formed. The Grand Jury questions why LAFCO would make this requirement? Did the 41st District use public funds to create the Local Fair District? If so, the Grand Jury would like to know if this was an improper use of public funds by the 41st District. Since the Grand Jury does not have responsibility or oversight authority over this State Agency, should this matter be referred to the Attorney General's Office for further review?

Request for Legal Opinion

The Grand Jury requested a legal opinion from the Del Norte County Counsel in order to ascertain if in fact the Local Fair District has been legally formed in accordance with the statutes of 5780, 5780.1(c) and 5780.1(h) of the Public Resources Code and if the Local Fair District is in compliance with the LAFCO requirements and the BOS requirements (questions 5 through 7 in the Findings Section above). In addition, the Grand Jury further requested the County Counsel provide legal opinions and guidance on all of the above listed questions 4, and 8 through 11 in the Findings Section above. The County Counsel's Office recused itself citing a conflict of interest since that office helped with the formation of the Local Fair District. The Grand Jury has subsequently referred the above questions to the presiding Judge of the Superior Court. The Judge has subsequently referred the questions to the District Attorney's office for review. Lacking further legal counsel and guidance the Grand Jury cannot complete its review of the Del Norte County Fairgrounds Recreation and Parks District.

Recommendations

R1. The Grand Jury cannot make a complete list of recommendations due to the fact that we have requested legal advice for Items 4 through 11 in the Findings Section. When the Grand Jury receives proper legal opinions, guidance and instruction on how to proceed, the next Grand Jury will be better able to complete this section of this report.

R2. The Grand Jury recommends the Local Fair Board needs to post the monthly agendas in two or more public places and online so that the public can have better access to the information.

R3. The Grand Jury recommends the Local Fair Board post their monthly Meeting Minutes more publicly and online so that the public can have better access to the information.

Closing Statement of the Grand Jury

This Grand Jury very strongly suggests that the next Grand Jury take up the issues raised herein. The Grand Jury discovered these problems in late March. The Grand Jury recognizes that the delay of timely legal advice was due to the late discovery of the fact that the Governor declined to sign the Lease Contract.

It is evident to the Grand Jury after reviewing all of the documentation, that the public voted for the establishment of the Local Fair District and the sales taxes increase which was to be specifically used for the control, management and operations of the Fair and the fairgrounds and questions whether the sales tax can be given to another district (the 41st District in this case) to accomplish that function.

The Grand Jury is unable to complete its task of reviewing the Local Fair District due to the lack of timely legal advice. We are certain that the community of Del Norte County eagerly awaits the legal opinions and guidance of the District Attorney.

REPORT ON CRESCENT CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

BACKGROUND

The Crescent City Police Department has been subjected to numerous on-site reviews and interviews of personnel in the last few years. This is due to community interest in local law enforcement and the fact that the police is an agency which accounts for many interactions with citizens. These contacts with citizens are both positive and negative in nature resulting in both praise and criticism of the department.

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

The Crescent City Police Department is responsible to the City Manager for the efficient operation of law enforcement duties for the city. This includes, but is not limited to: crime prevention, criminal investigations, traffic accident investigation and enforcement, and other public services as required. The composition of the Police Department changes over time based on political and budgetary constraints. The following is the general structure of the department: there is the Chief of Police who is the department head; sometimes a middle-management position (Lieutenant), which is currently vacant; two first-line supervisors (Sergeants); a civilian clerk, and seven officers who may be assigned to various duties such as patrol, investigations, School Resource Officer, and Canine Officer. The Lieutenant's position was created to act as the department commanding officer in the interim period between Chief Plack's leaving and Chief Minsal's appointment. There are no current plans to create a Lieutenant's position on a permanent basis. In addition to the above full-time, paid and sworn officers, the department also has four volunteer reserve officers (one of whom is a retired regular officer performing duties as a detective), civilian Volunteers In Policing (VIP) personnel whose duties are limited to "observe and report," and finally the Explorer Scouts (Cadets). The 911 calls for assistance go to a central communication center (dispatch) located in the Sheriff's Office, which are then routed to the City Police Officers on duty to respond to requests for service.

PURPOSE OF ENQUIRY

The purpose of this enquiry was a routine periodic review of the department to ascertain potential problem areas and any needs of the department in providing the best service possible to the community. The current Grand Jury has not received any complaints regarding the Police Department.

METHODOLOGY

A subcommittee of three Grand Jury members met with the Chief of Police, Ivan Minsal, for an interview at the Crescent City Police Department on October 9, 2015. After the interview, the Chief conducted a tour of the police facility for the benefit of the subcommittee.

PERSONNEL

Chief Minsal was appointed to the position of Crescent City Chief of Police on March 1, 2015. He was recruited out of the Los Angeles Police Department where he had served in excess of thirty years in numerous assignments and various ranks, culminating in his retirement from that organization as an Area Command Captain.

In an article appearing in the September 22, 2015 Del Norte TriPLICATE, Chief Minsal was quoted as saying

the department was experiencing an all-time deficit of officers. He clarified in the Grand Jury interview that recruitment of the two open positions is currently in process. The Chief is currently seeking grant funding for a School Resource Officer. Due to personnel shortages, no department personnel are currently assigned to the Narcotics Task Force on a permanent basis. The department does not have a full-time detective position. Due to the small size of the department, officers are providing cross duties of patrol, investigations, community relations, school resource, and police facility maintenance. In the same article, Chief Minsal remarked that the lack of statewide standardization of officer pay and benefits contributes to the trend of officers leaving for agencies with higher pay. It is a common situation for newer members to the career field to gain training and experience in a smaller agency which enhances their value, and then transfer to a larger agency with better compensation plans. Aside from the article, the Chief does consider current pay and benefits to be adequate for the region's cost of living.

Reserve Officers

The Crescent City Police Department has a Reserve Officer Program with a complement of four officers. Each reservist donates one or two shifts per month. One of the reservists is the retired detective of the department who conducts follow-up investigations.

K-9 Program

Chief Minsal briefed the subcommittee on the K-9 Program in the department. The Chief stated the department currently has two patrol animals: a narcotics dog and an apprehension dog. The Sheriff's Department does not presently have a K-9 unit. The two departments share these resources as circumstances require.

Narcotics Task Force

The Grand Jury report of 2009-2010 indicated that due to a shortage of personnel, the City Police Department did not have an officer assigned to the Narcotics Task Force, which continues to be the case due to budgetary constraints. There are no plans to assign an officer on a full-time basis in the foreseeable future. Chief Minsal stated that the cooperation with the Sheriff's Office is very good and they assist one another whenever possible.

Explorer Post Program

The police department has an Explorer Program consisting of fifteen juvenile cadets. The Explorers assist the police in community events and projects, such as the Sea Cruise, providing crowd and traffic control. The cadets have their own uniforms and the Chief was able to obtain Police Explorer T-Shirts to instill unit pride. Additionally, the Chief obtained a \$300 donation from the Crescent City Chamber of Commerce, which he intends to share equally with the Sheriff's Department Explorer Cadet Program.

VIP Program

The Volunteers in Policing (VIP) program can be summarized as civilian volunteers who have a specially marked vehicle for patrol and are only charged to observe and report. They do not take any enforcement actions.

Entry Team-SWAT

Chief Minsal's predecessor, Doug Plack, reported to the 2009-2010 Grand Jury that he anticipated having a specialized entry team trained and in place by the year 2011-2012. Chief Minsal stated that while the department does have officers trained in entry team tactics, they are not organized as a SWAT team. Additionally, the Sheriff's Department personnel does SWAT training and the two departments assist each other as needed.

Body Cameras

At the Crescent City City Council meeting of September 8, 2015, Chief Minsal gave a presentation in which he described his intent to supply each officer with a "body cam." He related that the department has utilized body cams for the previous two years and he views the items as an important tool, the use of which is becoming a standard police practice across the nation. The Chief stated that the department has six body cameras that are wearing out and are insufficient in number. Chief Minsal is requesting funds from the City to provide a new body cam for each officer in his department.

TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT

Accident Investigations

A Del Norte Triplicate article of September 15, 2015 reported an 11% drop in injury accidents in the county area in the preceding year. Chief Minsal was asked if this was the experience inside the city as well. The Chief expressed his pride in the fact that the injury accident rate inside the limits of Crescent City was very low.

Motorcycle

In the past, the Police Department received a grant through the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) to obtain a motorcycle with trailer and to train a rider. Chief Minsal was asked to explain the use of the motorcycle patrol and its effectiveness. He stated that the Motorcycle Officer position is being eliminated due to a lack of need. The Police Department still has the motorcycle but it is his intention to sell the motorcycle, possibly at auction, thereby eliminating the program.

POLICE FACILITY

Previous Grand Jury Reports have included findings that the police facilities are inadequate causing crowding and forcing male and female officers to share restrooms and a changing room. These concerns have been addressed and each gender now has their own restroom and locker room. As for the inadequacy of the facility itself, changes have been made to the interior to better utilize space and the facility is now adequate, in the opinion of Chief Minsal. But of course he would like a larger facility. When asked if any consideration had been given to enlarge the facility by expanding to the west, the Chief said he would like to fence in the back lot and provide exercise and training space for the K-9 units. The dogs currently have no outdoor space. Surprisingly, minor repairs and janitorial tasks are being done by police staff, including the Chief.

LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMUNICATIONS

Regarding requests for service and the 911 system, the 2014-2015 Grand Jury Final Report criticized the dispatch facilities as having an inadequate number of personnel manning the dispatch center and handling emergency 911 calls. Chief Minsal related that the responsibilities for the dispatch/communications function lies with the Sheriff's Office. However, he felt there should be a minimum of two dispatchers on at all times. This same Grand Jury report also indicated that all of the users of the dispatch function were not paying a fair share for the cost of the service. Chief Minsal stated that the City of Crescent City is paying for the service under contract with the county at an estimated rate of \$90,000 per year.

The computerized reporting system utilized by the City Police is antiquated and needs revision, modification, or replacement. Currently, the reporting of an incident starts with the initial officer recording events electronically and then forwarding the report to the Sergeant for review. After review by the supervisor, it is forwarded to the clerk for processing and distribution to allied agencies as required. The Chief's complaint with the system is that in the current configuration, it is not compatible with the one at the Sheriff's Office and therefore hampers exchange of information. He envisions acquiring the system in use by the Sheriff's Office in order to better exchange information between the two departments and other allied agencies.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

Asset Seizures

Nationally there have been several reported incidents of asset seizures/forfeitures being made by law enforcement in which the suspect is not held for charges but has difficulty in having those assets returned. Chief Minsal does not place any emphasis on asset seizures or intentionally trying to seize assets, but will seize assets as a normal process as evidence of a crime. If the assets are forfeited by the court, the assets are transferred to the General Fund of the city. The funds are not tracked separately solely for law enforcement use.

Use of Drones by Law Enforcement

Chief Minsal does not currently support the use of drones in law enforcement. He believes their use has not yet been clarified by the courts and there are too many concerns pertaining to invasion of privacy to justify the use of drones.

CHIEF MINSAL'S MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS

Chief Minsal expressed that the immediate and important needs of the Crescent City Police Department are as follows:

- 1.) There is a need for more officers.
- 2.) There is a need for a new interagency-compatible, computerized reporting system.
- 3.) There is a need for a K-9 training and exercise area at the police facility.

FINDINGS

- F1.** There is an immediate need for more officers to fully staff the police department. Even when the current vacancies are filled, there will be a need to increase the number of officers.
- F2.** There are only four Reserve Officers, one of whom is a retired regular officer who volunteers his time. The current Reserve Officer staff is insufficient in number to properly augment the patrol function.
- F3.** The computerized reporting system is not compatible with allied agencies.
- F4.** Maintenance, repairs and janitorial tasks are being performed by police officers.
- F5.** The police department building is at best adequate. There is inadequate utilization of the available adjacent lot.
- F6.** The motorcycle currently assigned to the police department is not needed.
- F7.** The Explorer Post Cadets provide a valuable service to the department and are a credit to the community.
- F8.** The rapport between the law enforcement agencies is impressive and all involved should be commended.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1.** In a recent review of the City's financial status, it was found that the City currently has a surplus of \$800,000 and has been looking into various ways these monies can be utilized. It is recommended that some of these funds be used to facilitate recruitment and retention of officers in the Crescent City Police Department. There should never be a time when one officer is working alone, but should have a "back-up" to assist for officer safety purposes. This would address current and anticipated personnel shortages and should include a dedicated detective position. The officers have been working a plan of three twelve-hour shifts per week in addition to covering for one another for all vacancies, sick leave, etc. These Herculean efforts should be applauded. However, staff burnout is an eventuality under conditions of personnel shortages.
- R2.** Funding should be obtained either through the regular budgetary process or grant funding to increase the number of reserve officers up to a minimum of eight. Further, training needs to be provided to reserve officers in order that they reach a Peace Officer Standards and Training Level I proficiency.
- R3.** Support for the Explorer Cadets should be made by the City Council in the budgetary process and they should be given public recognition for their valuable service to the community.
- R4.** Chief Minsal's intent to sell the department motorcycle should be encouraged, with the proceeds transferred to the General Fund of the city.

R5. Although the Chief terms the facility as “adequate”, it was noted during a tour of the facility that quarters are cramped. Outside of minor modifications, nothing significant has been done to improve the facilities for the police department since acquisition of the building approximately twenty-five years ago. The building is old and in need of repair and remodeling. There is also an immediate need for a canine exercise and training yard at the Police Department location.

R6. The current computerized reporting system needs to be upgraded in order to be compatible with allied agencies such as the Sheriff’s Office, District Attorney, etc. This would provide better exchange of information and networking to the betterment of the community.

R7. In order to free up officers for police work, the City should provide maintenance personnel to perform janitorial and maintenance tasks for the police facility. This would allow for a more efficient use of the highly trained officers.

CONCLUSIONS

The members of the Grand Jury recognize that much of the above recommendations are reliant on budgetary constraints and policy decisions of the City Council. However, not much has been done in the last two decades to improve the conditions under which the Police Department personnel have had to work. Therefore, the City Administration should implement the recommendations in this report.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS ALDER CAMP

Summary

On April 7, 2016 members of the Del Norte County Grand Jury made a site visit to Department of Corrections Alder Camp in Klamath California, as authorized by the California Penal Code. Steve Cagle Sr., Associate Warden from Susanville and Tom Nix, Division Chief-North Ops of Alder Camp and Officer Sergeant Jeff McBride met the Grand Jury members, discussed the facility and provided a tour.

Background

The Alder Camp facility was constructed in 1965. It has the capacity to hold 109 inmates who are assigned to this facility from the CA Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) facility in Susanville, CA. Each inmate goes through an extensive screening process to determine if they are a candidate for Alder Camp. Since AB 109 was passed (a law reducing the number of Level 1 or non-violent offenders that are held in detention facilities statewide), Alder Camp has been having a hard time filling the camp to capacity. Currently there are 88 inmates assigned to Alder Camp. The camp officials conducting the tour explained that many Level 1 inmates who are new to the prison system are not interested in working as hard as Alder Camp requires and would rather just bide their time doing nothing until their sentence has been served. Alder Camp is a working vocational facility where each inmate is assigned to a Cal Fire Supervisor for training and to gain experience fighting forest fires. When they have down time they work on other projects for county, government, and other groups who have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the camp system for working with inmates from Alder Camp.

Methodology

Before the tour an extensive interview was held with Associate Warden Cagle, Division Chief Nix, and Officer Sgt. McBride. They generously answered all of the questions presented to them in a very helpful and informative way. They are quite proud of this camp system that has been in existence for many years. They informed us of the way the camp system works and how inmates become eligible to be a part of this facility. Each official was very knowledgeable about their area of expertise. Tom Nix was very helpful in discussing the responsibilities of the Cal Fire program in the camp system and about his staffing of each crew.

Discussion

The tour of Alder Camp was led by Officer McBride. Every officer encountered during the tour was very helpful in answering questions about the facility. The camp appears to be very clean, well organized and smoothly run. The tour included the canteen, barracks, kitchen (which is in the middle of a remodel), laundry room, wood shop, recreation room, a small library, a weight room, hobby shop and the Cal Fire buildings. The buildings and yards are maintained by the inmates who are responsible for cleaning all areas of the camp. The fire crews are sent all over the state, often for several days or weeks at a time. Each job in the camp is a paid position with higher-level jobs receiving a higher hourly wage. They can spend their money at the state-supplied camp canteen where they can buy many items.

The area around the camp has no fencing, but there are markers which let the inmates know which areas are out of bounds. If an inmate is found beyond these borders they are considered an escapee; which happened twice this last year. Once this happens they are sent back to CDCR Susanville and are no longer eligible for a low-security prison setting.

Findings

F1. Alder Camp is very clean and is set in the trees and away from the main road. The camp is reached by driving down a long road which is well marked with "Stay Out" signs. The Grand Jury members approaching the camp were stopped by camp personnel in a fire truck ensuring they were authorized visitors. The facility is old but looks to be in great shape. It has a measure of self-sufficiency with its own septic system and back-up power generators.

F2. The barracks were found to be very sufficient with each inmate having his own personal space. It is small but each space is very clean and organized. Each barracks has its own bathroom and one of the barracks buildings holds the laundry system for the entire camp. There are inmates assigned the duty of doing laundry. The inmates drop off their items in the morning and pick them up upon their arrival back at camp at the end of the day.

F3. The kitchen is being remodeled because it required multiple upgrades including a new cooling system. At the time of the Grand Jury tour the remodeling project was about halfway through. The workers in the Alder Camp kitchen are very proud of their meals. They make everything from scratch and are known for their homemade bread. Each inmate gets three meals a day and is also eligible to buy snacks at the canteen to keep in their own cabinets.

F4. Each project that the inmates participate in, such as the wood mill or workshop, is supervised by a paid staff officer or Cal Fire Staff. The Alder Camp inmates make many things from wood including toys for donation to the Christmas-time Toys for Tots Program. There is a wood mill where the inmates plane their own boards from timber that has been donated to the program.

F5. There have been no actual escaped inmates this year from Alder Camp. However, there were two inmates who were found beyond the borders and were considered escapees. They will be tried and were immediately sent back to CDCR Susanville. Since the Grand Jury toured Alder Camp, a news story has reported an inmate who ran away and left the camp. That inmate has since been captured and returned to CDCR Susanville where he will be placed in a more secure facility

Recommendations

R1. The impressive facility was found to be running smoothly and well managed. It is located in a peaceful setting in a very beautiful area. The Grand Jury wishes to commend the hard-working, knowledgeable staff at the Alder Camp facility. It is our recommendation that this camp continue to be funded and managed as it has been and any needs for upgrading and maintaining the facility be attended to in a timely manner by the appropriate authoritative body. With fewer Level 1 inmates in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation system due to AB 109, perhaps more education of inmates in the traditional state prison system as to the benefits of participating in the work camp system could boost enrollment and interest in the Alder Camp facility.

R2. The incidence of escapism is relatively low, as most of the Level 1 inmates who participate in Alder Camp prefer the interest and challenge of the work camp to the prospect of serving their sentences out in a traditional manner in state prison. The whole basis of this program is built on trust and cooperation of the inmates. With few annual escapees, it seems the screening process for eligibility is sufficient and should be maintained at the status quo. The opportunity to learn and grow in technical skills and self-assurance is not only valuable but could be transformative for inmates inclined to try a new path and adventure in their lives.

BAR-O BOYS RANCH

Background

Bar-O Boys Ranch is a residential treatment center located in Del Norte County. This facility is available to court committed males between 14-19 years of age. Several Northern California counties send their youth offenders to Bar-O Boys Ranch. In addition to accepting wards from the court system, the ranch can also contract directly with parents for the placement of their children who are currently in the juvenile justice system.

Originally known as Bar-None Camp, this rehabilitation camp has been in operation since 1956. John Ostrum and his wife, Mary, purchased an old dude ranch on sixty acres of land, situated within the Six Rivers National Forest, for the express purpose of opening a rehabilitation camp. Boys who were committed to the state would be given the opportunity to develop positive character traits in this unique environment.

Methodology

On January 20, 2016, three members of the Del Norte County Grand Jury traveled to Bar-O Ranch to meet with the Deputy Director, Kent Burrow. The Grand Jury members were given the history of the Bar-O Ranch followed by a question and answer session. The Director then provided an extensive tour of the facility.

Discussion

The tour began in the administrative building where daily business is conducted and all records are kept current. The surrounding grounds were immaculate and the impressive landscaping skills learned by the boys were evident in every area of the ranch. It is one of the only treatment centers of its kind left in California which functions as a therapeutic vocational program. The Ranch has a 42-bed capacity and generally houses around 25 wards. However, the barracks are very outdated. The bathrooms in the barracks were undergoing minor renovation at the time of the tour.

Clergy and mental health professionals visit on a weekly basis. Medical services are also provided as needed and emergencies are sent to the hospital in Crescent City. The classrooms are clean and functional. The Del Norte County Office of Education provides the educational component of Bar-O Boys Ranch. Emphasis is placed on improving each individual student's knowledge and abilities. High School Diploma and GED courses are offered, complete with a graduation ceremony where the families are encouraged to attend. They offer certificates in Construction Technology and Culinary Arts; including ServSafe certificates. In addition, they host a Wild land Fire Academy on-site twice per year in which the students can earn all but one certification needed to become a Wild land Firefighter. The tour continued through shops where woodworking skills, welding, leatherwork, construction, and pottery are taught. There are opportunities at every turn to learn something new and enrich the life experience of the students while receiving certification for future employment.

The staff of Bar-O Boys Ranch brings eligible wards to community events in town where they can display the skills they have learned such as catering and woodworking. They make and sell Christmas wreaths and outdoor furniture. The large gym, built on-site with the help of the wards, was almost completely funded by the boys and their fundraising. The ranch motto of "contributors rather than takers" is evident in the way the boys are taught to deal with the personal weaknesses that led them to the Bar-O Boys Ranch and to develop a new self-image based on responsibility and skills that are hard-earned while living at Bar-O. There is a 3-step program in place for the wards. As each boy progresses through the 3-step program he is equipped to accept more responsibilities. There are different colored shirts for each step of the program and they don't get released until the final step is completed. Advancement is considered on a monthly basis.

Findings

F1. Deputy Director Kent Burrow was very informative and accommodated all inquiries.

F2. Bar-O Boys Ranch is a 42-bed facility and there are currently 18 boys in residence.

F3. The staff encourages the youth to better themselves physically, educationally, and vocationally.

F4. The barracks are maintained in a neat and orderly manner, but the physical condition of the barracks and bathroom remain outdated and in dire need of remodeling or replacement. The time is well past due for these issues to be addressed.

Recommendations

R1. The Grand Jury continues to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that the barracks be replaced. This is the fourth year that we have made this recommendation and it is apparent that the right level of priority is not being placed on this problem.

Commendations

The 2015-2016 Grand Jury commends the impressive dedication and hard work demonstrated by the staff and wards at Bar-O Boys Ranch. The life skills and experience gained by the youth who graduate from this program should set up these young men as productive and positive members of society. It was very enlightening to visit a detention facility and leave with a positive outlook on how some of our troubled youth are being rehabilitated and given life skills needed to succeed as adults.

PELICAN BAY STATE PRISON

SUMMARY

Three members of the 2015/2016 Grand Jury made a visit to Pelican Bay State Prison on April 5, 2016, as authorized by the California Penal Code.

BACKGROUND

Pelican Bay State Prison opened in December of 1989. The prison currently holds 2,209 inmates. The prison capacity is 3,319 inmates. Pelican Bay State Prison is a maximum-security state prison. There are no death-row inmates housed at this prison. Pelican Bay has a separate facility that houses 78 non-violent, minimum-security Level 1 prisoners.

METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury members were given an extensive tour of the prison by the Public Information Officer. At every area visited, the personnel were available to provide information and answer questions. After the tour, Warden C. Ducart, Chief Deputy Warden D. Bradbury, and Public Information Officer J. Berg held a brief discussion, including a question and answer session.

DISCUSSION

The tour of Pelican Bay State Prison showed the facility to be a very well run institution. The housing, feeding, and care of inmates are done in a professional and secure manner. The staff members are well trained and appear to do an excellent job maintaining security.

FINDINGS

F1. Dental, Optometry, x-rays, disease and wound care are available for inmates on-site. Telemedicine is being utilized on an increasing basis for medical issues requiring outside expertise.

F2. There is a comprehensive list of educational opportunities. Courses include computer literacy classes, Adult Basic Education classes, Arts in the Prison, creative writing classes, guitar lessons, and college courses administered by College of the Redwoods, which can lay the foundation leading to an AA/AS degree. The GED is being administered on site for inmates lacking a high school diploma.

F3. Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotic Anonymous, PEACE Leadership and conflict resolution, Choices for Common Ground, Incarcerated Veterans and Reaching Out Convicts to Kids (ROCK) are programs available to inmates.

F4. Various paid work assignments are available to inmates whereby they earn from \$0.14-\$0.32 per hour, depending on the position.

F5. The atmosphere of the complex is one of professionalism where security is stressed at all times.

COMMENDATIONS

The facility appears to be very secure and well run and the level of knowledge held by the staff is appreciated by the 2015/2016 Del Norte County Grand Jury. We are interested in seeing how the reduced numbers of those incarcerated due to AB109 and the Public Safety Realignment will continue to affect the local institution and our community.

DEL NORTE SHERIFF STATION AND COUNTY JAIL

Summary

Six members of the 2015/2016 Grand Jury made a visit to the Del Norte Sheriff Station and County Jail on November 23, 2015, as authorized by the California Penal Code. In addition to the detention facility tour, the same six Grand Jury members held an interview with Commander Bill Steven of the Del Norte County Jail.

Background

The current jail was originally constructed in 1960. A remodel in the early 1990's included a new wing with a more modern design. While the jail has 168 beds, it currently houses a range of 90-105 inmates due to a self-imposed cap, which is a result of staffing limitations.

Methodology

An interview with Commander Steven was held before the tour of the facility in order to allow Grand Jury members to become more familiar with the jail and its operations before viewing the facility.

Discussion

The tour of the Del Norte County Jail was led by Commander Steven who was very informative and answered all questions asked of him. The jail appears to be well organized and running efficiently. The facility provides weekly programs which include: Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, religious services, mental health and parenting classes. GED assistance is available through College of the Redwoods, and they are currently in the process of setting up a computer tablet lab. Inmates are also afforded the opportunity to receive a ServSafe Certificate while working in the kitchen.

A single dispatcher handles all sheriff, city police, ambulance, fire, state park, and 911 emergency calls, along with the receptionist duties of the Sheriff Department, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All of this work is completed in a very small, cramped office space located within the Sheriff Station. There is a plan in place to expand the dispatch area into the outer office by building a wall separating the outer office area from the main hallway. This construction is expected to be completed within the next year.

Findings

F1. The facility is very clean. The kitchen area is spotless; however the facility appears to require constant maintenance primarily painting and sealing leaks. There appears to be mold growth on the upper wall of the exercise room presenting a potential health risk.

F2. A request was made for funding to convert, improve, and expand the minimal space that is currently available for the weekly programs previously described through Senate Bill 863. The request was denied. Without this expansion the current available space is insufficient to meet the needs of the multiple programs.

F3. The southern wall of the facility leaks extensively and is in a general state of disrepair. This is due to the faulty composition of the original masonry construction.

F4. The Sheriff's Department dispatch area is very small and needs to be expanded to afford more room for additional dispatcher positions. One dispatcher handling all 911 calls for Del Norte County, with no backup, is unacceptable. A busy signal is given when the dispatcher is on another call. This should not happen for emergency 911 calls.

Recommendations

R1. Continued mold removal and painting throughout the facility should be supported with adequate funding.

R2. The Sheriff and Board of Supervisors should continue to pursue State Funds and grants to complete the planned jail remodel and other efforts to modernize and improve the facility.

R3. The disrepair of the southern wall of the facility should be addressed immediately with a plan established for repair.

R4. The dispatch staffing issue and work area should be continually reviewed by subsequent Grand Juries until resolved.

R5. The Del Norte County Board of Supervisors must revise the budget to allocate funding for additional dispatcher positions. Priority should be given to this situation due to our community being at a higher risk while this problem continues.