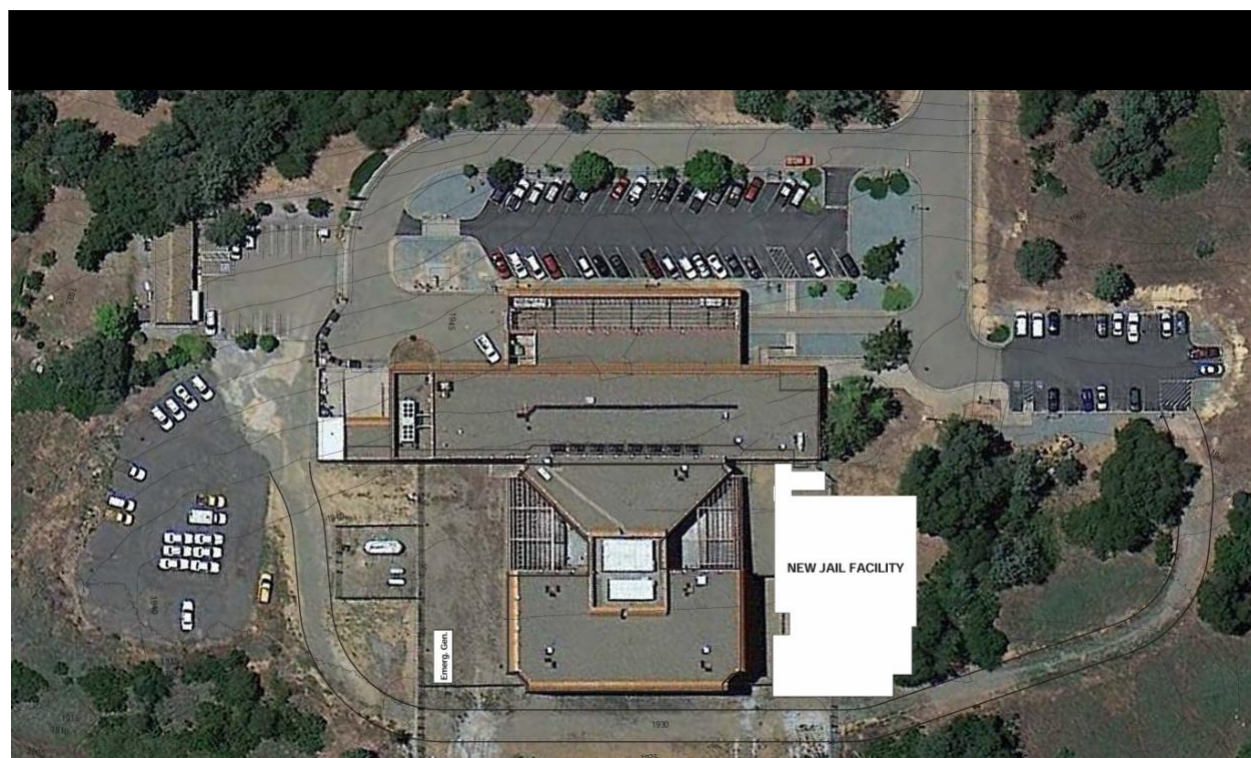




Civil Grand Jury 2025-2026

# El Dorado County Detention Centers

Placerville and South Lake Tahoe Jails and the South Lake Tahoe Youth Treatment Center Inspections



El Dorado County Jail – Placerville Facility Expansion Project

Case No. 26-01

April 29, 2026

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## SUMMARY

Security is a top priority at El Dorado County jails and detention centers. The Sheriff's Office and Probation Department take that responsibility seriously. The 2025-2026 El Dorado County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) completed annual inspections of El Dorado County (County) jails at South Lake Tahoe (SLT), Placerville, and the South Lake Tahoe Juvenile Treatment Center (JTC).

Inspections included physical examination of the facilities and interviews with staff and inmates. The buildings' exterior and interior are well maintained. No facility exceeded its inmate capacity.

Maintaining adequate staffing is a concern for both jails. Staff interviews revealed shortages resulting in overtime. Staff identified competitive compensation as a problem in recruiting and retaining qualified personnel.

**M**aintaining adequate staffing is a concern for both jails.

The Sheriff's Office implemented a successful recruitment method by streamlining the application and testing process.

The staffing concern requires additional action to ensure appropriate staffing levels at both the South Lake Tahoe and Placerville locations.

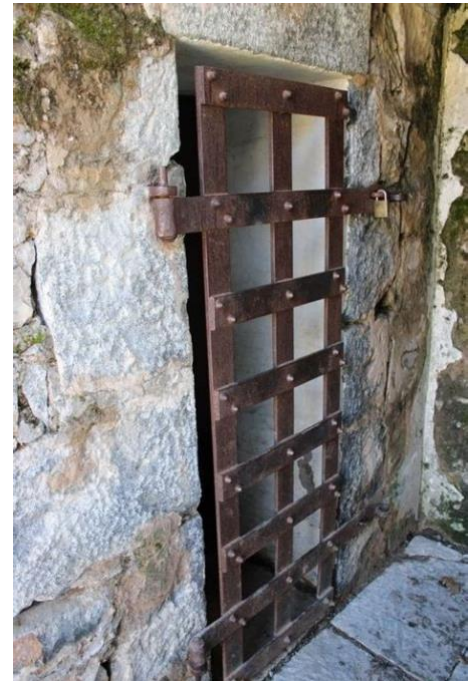
The expansion project at the Placerville Jail scheduled for completion in 2026 will add 22,000 square feet to the facility. The expansion includes a new medical services area, female housing, and other ancillary services. The expansion will not add inmate capacity. This addition amplifies the need to fill vacant positions for correctional officers and jail staff, especially at the Placerville jail.

## BACKGROUND

Penal Code (PC) Section 919(b) mandates that, annually, the Civil Grand Jury in each California county "... inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons

within the county.” The term “public prisons” was clarified in a California Attorney General (AG) Opinion (No. 18- 103) dated March 10, 2022. The term “public prisons” in PC Section 919(b) includes “local detention facilities” that confine prisoners for more than 24 hours. Both El Dorado County jails are considered local detention facilities. The AG concluded that each Grand Jury must inquire into at least one local detention facility located within its county.

County jails were originally built to serve as pretrial detention centers and to house criminals sentenced to no more than one year. According to California Penal Code Sections 4000-4030, county jails were not designed to house prisoners serving long-term sentences. In 2011, the Public Safety Realignment Act [Assembly Bill (AB) 109] reduced California’s overcrowded prison system by moving lower-level offenders to county jails. Counties became responsible for incarceration and all ancillary services related to long-term incarceration. Prior to AB 109, criminals were sent to state prison or county jail based mostly on length of sentence.



## METHODOLOGY

### SITE VISITS

El Dorado County South Lake Tahoe Jail on September 18, 2025

El Dorado County Juvenile Treatment Center (JTC) in South Lake Tahoe on September 18, 2025.

El Dorado County Placerville Jail on October 7, 2025

## DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Prior El Dorado County (EDC) [Grand Jury Reports and Responses - El Dorado County](#)

County of El Dorado [Fiscal Year 2025-26 Adopted Budget Book](#) including Law and Justice – Sheriff budget document.

Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) 2023/2024 [Inspection Report \(Dated February 4, 2024\) Local Detention Facility Inspection Reports](#) – BSCC

Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) 2025-2026 [COMPREHENSIVE INSPECTION, WELFARE & INSTITUTIONS CODE](#)

[SECTIONS 209 & 885, EL DORADO COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT](#)

[DETENTION FACILITIES](#)

[BSCC Jails Inspection Handbook for Grand Jury Sample Documents](#) - Civil Grand Jurors' Association

[California Grand Jury Association of California](#)

Detention Facility Inspection Form Sample Documents

## INTERVIEWS

El Dorado County Sheriff's Department staff

El Dorado County Probation Department staff

County Correctional Officers

Select Inmates

# DISCUSSION

## JAIL OPERATIONS

Inspections conducted at both County jails included, but were not limited to, housing, holding cells, medical units, culinary facilities, indoor gym recreation facilities, library, classrooms, and control rooms.

Each main control room monitors the entire facility, including adjacent grounds. Separate control rooms monitor the housing units. The



Grand Jury inspected the booking and intake areas, public access spaces, isolation cells, and the sally port—a secure entrance where inmates are brought into the facility for processing.

The El Dorado County Office of Education (EDCOE) offers a range of educational classes at both facilities, including court-ordered narcotics and alcohol abuse treatment and anger management. Inmates can complete General Educational Development (GED) requirements, giving them an alternative to a high school diploma. EDCOE is working with both jails to upgrade classroom technology and opportunities.

Inmates have access to computer tablets for education and entertainment. Tablets are gathered in the evening to be recharged. Permission to use the tablets depends on an inmate's good behavior. The Network Computer Integrating Company provides controlled internet access that is preloaded on tablets. Tablets are used for communication with people outside the jail as well as watching movies as a reward for exhibiting good behavior. Officers monitor all electronic communications within 24 hours of receipt before sending them to recipients. Inmates may also use phones located in the communal areas.

Each jail has a culinary program. To participate in the program, inmates must meet guidelines and complete a food safety course. Qualified candidates prepare daily meals

for inmates and staff under the supervision of a registered dietician and a cook. Food storage and refrigerated areas at both jails were clean and well organized. Cleaning fluids and other chemicals were labeled properly and secured safely. Knives and other sharp instruments are used under supervision, counted, and secured when not in use.

Meals are served in a communal area and cell. Each inmate is given up to 60 minutes for a meal with a minimum of 15 minutes.



The County contracts with Wellpath, an independent medical care provider, to provide health care services to inmates. All

inmates are medically cleared through a preliminary screen before they are accepted into custody. Once accepted into custody, a thorough evaluation is done before they are housed. Inmates needing medical care can see the appropriate medical professional on the same day for an urgent problem and within three to five days for a chronic problem.

Exercise is done outside if the weather permits. There is an indoor gym where inmates can exercise. SLT also has an all-weather, indoor recreational area available year-round.

Showers are available daily for each inmate.

Both Placerville and South Lake Tahoe jails have the same rules and procedures. Rules are posted in communal areas, and inmates are oriented to jail procedures. Inmates are given an Inmate Orientation Handbook in either English or Spanish, covering a variety of topics from inmate rights and disciplinary process to health services and visitation.

Discipline is enforced as needed and is progressive. The first minor offense is a verbal warning. The second warning results in removing benefits, and a major offense will result in a lockdown. The jail utilizes Moral Recognition Therapy (MRT) with its inmates to redirect inmates' behavior.

Discipline is enforced as needed and is progressive.

Both facilities showed signs of age but were clean and well maintained at the time of inspection. No graffiti was observed, although staff reported that graffiti is evident at times due to inmate access to pencils.

Maintaining adequate staffing is a concern for both jails. Staff interviews revealed shortages resulting in overtime. Some studies warn that excessive overtime can lead to fatigue, reduced work rate, absenteeism, and negatively impact employee morale. Staff identified competitive compensation as a problem in recruiting and retaining qualified personnel. The Sheriff's Office implemented a successful recruitment method by streamlining the application and testing process. The staffing concern requires ongoing attention to ensure appropriate staffing levels at both the South Lake Tahoe and Placerville locations.

Compensation studies were conducted by the Department of Human Resources prior to labor contract negotiations in 2023 for the position of Correctional Officer II. Compared to other comparable county positions, El Dorado County pay was substantially below the average. Compensation was adjusted pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the County and Operating Engineers Local No. 3, representing the Corrections Bargaining Unit employees, but wages still lag. Staff interviews revealed that efforts are being made at recruitment fairs as well as other events and have been successful in attracting more candidates. New hires must complete training prior to assignment on site.

More recently, staff indicated that while the County is filling positions, staffing needs have increased over the years, and approved staffing ratios have been stagnant.

Current minimum staffing levels are not in alignment with today's demands and inmate population needs. Since the State changed the population makeup of county jails in 2011 with the Public Safety Realignment Act [Assembly Bill (AB) 109], duties that previously required one officer to oversee now require two or more officers to address safety concerns and/or inmate needs. Staffing ratio plans are dependent upon staffing allocations. The plan has not been updated since 2008.

## SOUTH LAKE TAHOE JAIL



The El Dorado County South Lake Tahoe (SLT) jail was built in 1973 with an addition in 1992. The Grand Jury conducted a site visit and inspected the jail on September 18, 2025. The maximum capacity of the facility is 158 inmates. On the date of inspection, it housed 106 males. Due to female staffing shortages, female inmates are housed at the Placerville jail. In the past year, the facility has experienced one suicide, one attempted suicide, and one other death. The South Lake Tahoe jail has maintained a record of zero escapes over the past two years.

According to Penal Code Section 6031.1, inspections of local detention facilities shall, at a minimum, be made biennially. SLT inspections are current as follows:

Fire Inspection conducted August 28, 2024

Medical/Mental Health inspection conducted July 26, 2024

Environmental Health inspection conducted April 16, 2024

Nutritional Health inspection conducted April 9, 2024

Correction Standards Authority inspection conducted November 12, 2025

US Marshall inspection conducted September 27, 2024

## SOUTH LAKE TAHOE STAFFING

Daily staffing Includes one Commander, five Sergeants, and 27 Correctional Officers on the floor. Allocated staff positions are about 50% filled. Existing staff work significant overtime to meet schedule demands. Correctional Officers stated they believe the primary reason for the staffing shortage is because jails in surrounding counties pay higher wages.

Recruiting staff in South Lake Tahoe presents unique challenges, including the high cost of housing and the requirement that mandatory department training be conducted in Placerville.

Federal law requires same-sex supervision of inmates under the 2003 Prison Rape Elimination Act. Jail staff stated that they do not have the appropriate number of female Correctional Officers to monitor females for 24 hours, seven days per week. Female inmates are transferred to the Placerville jail where appropriate female staffing is available.

## PLACERVILLE JAIL

The Placerville (PV) jail was built in 1988. The Grand Jury conducted a site visit and inspected the jail on October 7, 2025. The maximum capacity of the facility is 303 inmates. At the time of inspection, Placerville jail housed 194 inmates - 146 males and 48 females. In the past year, there have been



three attempted suicides. The facility has maintained a record of zero escapes over the past two years and no deaths.

According to Penal Code Section 6031.1, inspections of local detention facilities shall, at a minimum, be made biennial. All inspections are current or scheduled as follows:

Fire Inspection conducted December 3, 2025

Medical/Mental Health inspection conducted June 5, 2025

Environmental Health inspection conducted May 20, 2025

Nutritional Health inspection conducted June 20, 2025

Correction Standards Authority inspection conducted November 12, 2025

US Marshall inspection conducted September 27, 2025

## PLACERVILLE STAFFING

There are 85 staff positions with 21 vacant at the time of the site visit. This shortage requires ongoing overtime for the current staff.

The primary factor contributing to staff shortages is the higher wages offered by neighboring counties. According to County staff, the Human Resources Department conducted a compensation study in 2023 for the Correctional Officer II classification. El Dorado County paid 15% below the median of the State of California and comparable counties of Butte, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Solano, Sutter, and Yuba.

A similar compensation study in 2024 for Sheriff's Correctional Lieutenant revealed that the County paid 34.73% below median comparable counties of Amador, Napa, Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo.

## PLACERVILLE INMATE INTERVIEWS

The Grand Jury interviewed three inmates. Topics discussed were food quality and educational opportunities within the jail. One male inmate working in the kitchen stated he was happy working there, did not have any complaints, and enjoyed contributing. Two female inmates working in the laundry area were also interviewed. One said she was treated well, enjoyed the food, but would like more learning opportunities. The second inmate agreed.

## PLACERVILLE EXPANSION

New construction for a 22,000 square foot facility expansion in Placerville is underway adjacent to the current facility.

The project is funded by a grant awarded to El Dorado County under California Senate Bill 844 for \$25 million. The expansion project includes a separate housing area for female inmates and a



new medical wing. The medical wing increases treatment capacity and expands mental health services for all inmates. The expansion also includes ADA-compliant cells and a computer lab. The expansion will not increase overall inmate capacity.

According to the County’s 2025-26 Budget book, “the Jail Expansion project is expected to be completed mid-summer 2026, and although inmate capacity will not increase with the expansion, it will significantly impact operational demands by adding services provided to inmates. It is anticipated that ten Sheriff’s Correctional Officer I/II’s and two Sheriff’s Correctional Sergeants will be needed once the expansion is complete. The expansion will also increase Services and Supplies costs, such as utilities, maintenance, equipment, and supplies. It is estimated that the annual costs could increase by \$2.5 million. To help smooth the impact of these increases over the next few years, it is recommended to place \$2.5 million in a designation for Jail Expansion Operational Costs.”

# JUVENILE TREATMENT CENTER SOUTH LAKE TAHOE

The current Juvenile Treatment Center (JTC) in South Lake Tahoe is a 40-bed facility built in 2003. The County moved all juvenile treatment operations from Placerville to the South Lake Tahoe facility in June 2020. The Grand Jury conducted a site visit and inspected the South Lake Tahoe JTC on September 18, 2025. At the time of inspection JTC housed 13 male youths.

The Probation Department is responsible for the operations of the JTC. There are 34 staff positions at JTC with 7 currently vacant. The Department employs temporary “extra help” staff to cover vacancies until positions are filled with permanent staff.

The age range for youth placement at JTC is 14 to 25 years old. No escapes or deaths occurred last year, though six suicide attempts were reported. The facility was clean, free of graffiti, and well maintained, with carpeting and furniture giving it a more homelike atmosphere. Current staffing meets the minimum standards established by the El Dorado County Probation



Department, who are responsible for operating and staffing the facility.

Inspections are current as follows:

Fire Inspection conducted November 14, 2024

Medical/Mental Health inspection conducted March 18, 2025

Environmental Health inspection conducted March 10, 2025

Nutritional Health inspection conducted March 25, 2025

Correction Standards Authority inspection conducted April 15, 2025

The County contracts with Wellpath for medical care. A Registered Nurse (RN) is onsite daily, and a physician is at the facility during the week. On-call medical services are available. A mental health care program coordinator, therapist, psychiatrist, and other medical staff provide mental health care. Medications are kept locked and dispensed by the RN.

The JTC is developing vocational educational programs, including a culinary training program. The EDCOE provides high school and community college instruction. Youth have a structured daily schedule that includes designated times for meals, exercise, hygiene, educational instruction, counseling, and a minimum of one hour participation in a program determined through an assessment by a probation officer. Visitations take place in person and by Zoom.

The 2025-2026 BSCC Comprehensive Inspection of JTC was completed on May 16, 2025. The report stated that the facility complies with the California Code of Regulations, Title 15 Minimum Standards, and Title 24 Minimum Standards. The full report is available on the BSCC Juvenile Detention Facilities Standards and Operations website at [Facilities Standards & Operations \(FS.O\) – BSCC](#)

## FINDINGS

F1. Staff vacancies at the County jails require current staff to work overtime on a regular basis. Excessive overtime can lead to fatigue, reduced work rate, absenteeism, and negatively impact employee morale.

F2. The Sheriff's Office has made progress in recruitment by streamlining the application and testing process.

F3. Attracting qualified individuals to live and work in South Lake Tahoe and drive to Placerville for testing and training is a deterrent to recruitment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The El Dorado County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of Human Resources to conduct a compensation study for Correctional Officers. The study should consider comparing with neighboring counties in State of Nevada to be completed no later than December 9, 2026.

R2. The El Dorado County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Sheriff, in cooperation with the Director of Human Resources, develop a plan for recruitment opportunities to specifically address the application process, testing, training, and incentives for open positions located in South Lake Tahoe by December 9, 2026.

## REQUIRED RESPONSES

A Civil Grand Jury report details a single investigation. Each report lists FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS. The organization responsible is notified and is required to respond to the report.

The California Penal Code § 933(c) specifies response times.

- **PUBLIC AGENCIES.** The governing body of any public agency (also referring to a department) must respond within 90 days from the release of the report to the public.
- **ELECTED OFFICERS OR AGENCY HEADS.** All elected officers or heads of agencies/departments are required to respond within 60 days of the release of the report to the public.
- **FAILURE TO RESPOND.** Failure to respond to a Grand Jury report violates California Penal Code Section § 933.05 and is subject to further action that may include additional investigation into the subject matter of the report by the Jury.

The following responses are required pursuant to Penal Code § 933 and § 933.05:

From the following governing boards within 90 days:

- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
  - All Findings
  - Recommendation 1

From the following elected county official within 60 days:

- El Dorado County Sheriff's Office
  - All Findings
  - Recommendation 2

For more information refer to “How to Respond to an El Dorado County Civil Grand Jury Report” available on the El Dorado County Grand Jury Reports and Responses webpage at <https://www.eldoradocounty.ca.gov/Public-Safety-Justice/Safety-Justice/Grand-Jury>.

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury do not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.