



# EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY 2024-2025



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## FINAL REPORT

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June 30, 2025



EL DORADO COUNTY  
CIVIL GRAND JURY  
2024-2025

FINAL REPORT

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El Dorado County Civil Grand Jury  
2024-2025

Presiding Judge

Gary Slossberg, Judge of the Superior Court

Jurors

Gary Kinghorn – Foreperson  
Robert Biton  
Steve Boilard  
Rena Bugge  
Susanne Colby  
Brian DeBerry  
Michael Galane  
Eric Mettler  
Mike O’Dell  
William Vassmer

Debera Jackson – Pro-Tem  
William Blaylock  
Jack Budmark  
Richard Burge  
Curtis Darnell  
Carol Everson  
Jeff Lerner  
Lon Milka  
Ken Pauley



# Civil Grand Jury

El Dorado County  
P.O. Box 1003  
Placerville, CA 95667



June 30, 2025

Honorable Gary Slossberg, Presiding Judge  
California Superior Court, County of El Dorado

Judge Slossberg,

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury Final Report is the product of a dedicated panel of El Dorado County citizens. Each juror shares responsibility for the investigations, deliberations and ultimately, this Final Report. It is my privilege to present it to you.

The 2024-2025 Grand Jury was comprised of a mixture of returning and new members this year, providing us the continuity and experience for a very productive year. Many of our jurors brought significant professional expertise and interests in a diverse set of careers from law enforcement to 9-1-1 emergency services, high-tech, health care, and a range of government agencies. The collective experience contributed greatly to the detailed investigations found in this Final Report.

Although many of us were surprised by the level of effort that a full Grand Jury term could entail, every person found the experience tremendously educational and rewarding. Speaking on behalf of my colleagues, each one of us is a better person for having served the County this past year and is grateful for the friendships we have made.

We wanted the tone of the reports to not only effect change, but to enhance public awareness of County operations. As a watchdog organization for the public, we can only be effective with follow-on public interest and involvement. We hope the level of detail presented in these reports stimulated public interest in these topics to that end.

I would like to thank Assistant County Counsel Janeth D. SanPedro for her tireless support throughout the year as the Grand Jury's legal advisor and for contributing mightily to the quality of our reports. Also, a similar thanks to Assistant District Attorney James A. Clinchard whose efforts and insights were valuable to our investigations. I would like to thank the Superior Court for the support and coordination we have received, particularly from yourself and Administrative Assistant Cindy Denton. We would be remiss in not thanking the County IT organization for all the technical support, despite our calls for change in that organization in one of our reports. From what I have seen in other rural counties, the resources and support provided by El Dorado County to the Civil Grand Jury have allowed us to be one of the more impactful and productive Grand Juries in the state.

Again, it has been my sincere pleasure to lead the Grand Jury this term and to serve with this dedicated and inspirational group of fellow jurors!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Kinghorn".

Gary Kinghorn  
Foreperson, 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury



**SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY OF EL DORADO**

2927 Meder Rd  
Cameron Park, CA 95682

May 20, 2025

To the Members of the 2024/2025 El Dorado County Grand Jury,

On behalf of the El Dorado County Superior Court, I would like to express my appreciation for all your hard work and dedication. The importance of the Civil Grand Jury cannot be understated. The time and effort involved in Grand Jury service is significant. You have risen to the occasion, working tirelessly to conduct thorough investigations and provide comprehensive reports and recommendations.

During the past year, as members of our Civil Grand Jury, you have provided independent oversight of the operation of various local governmental agencies. You have reviewed processes and procedures, looking for ways in which government can operate more efficiently, effectively, and with more transparency. Additionally, you have evaluated the adult and juvenile detention facilities operating in El Dorado County.

You are each to be commended for your willingness to serve on our Civil Grand Jury. Your efforts, and those of your predecessor Grand Jurors, have made El Dorado County a better place. Thank you for your service.

Very truly yours,

Gary Slossberg, Judge of the Superior Court

# How to Respond to an El Dorado County Civil Grand Jury Report

## Instructions for Respondents

California law (PC §933.05) requires that those responding to the Grand Jury Report must prepare responses for individual findings and recommendations within the Grand Jury Report rather than a generalized response to the entire report. Explanations for disagreements must be provided. (PC § 933.05 is included in its entirety at the end of this section.)

Please follow the format below when preparing your response.

## Response Format:

1. Find the response grid that appears near the end of each Grand Jury report, look for the row with the name of the entity you represent, and then only respond to those Findings and/or Recommendations listed on that row.
2. Provide the title and page number from the Grand Jury report.
3. Provide the date of your response.
4. For Findings
  - a. Provide a copy of the original Finding.
  - b. Respond with one of the following:
    - i. **AGREE.**
    - ii. **PARTIALLY AGREE** (specify and explain disagreement).
    - iii. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE** (specify and explain disagreement).
    - iv. **DISAGREE** (specify and explain disagreement).
5. For Recommendations:
  - a. Provide a copy the original recommendation.
  - b. Respond with one of the following:
    - i. **Has been implemented.**
    - ii. **Has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future** (specify expected implementation date).
    - iii. **Requires further analysis** (specify the type of analysis required and the expected completion date, not to exceed six months).
    - iv. **Will not be implemented** (either because it is not warranted or is unreasonable; please include an explanation).
6. If responding to more than one report, respond to each in a separate document or on separate pages of one document.

If you have questions about the response format, please contact the Grand Jury by email: [complaints@edcgrandjury.com](mailto:complaints@edcgrandjury.com).

## Where to Respond:

1. Send a hard copy of your response to:  
The Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Civil Grand Jury  
Superior Court of El Dorado County  
(The Presiding Judge and their address at one of the El Dorado Courts changes each Grand Jury term. For specific details, please reach out to the Court Administrator.)
2. Send an electronic version of your response via email to the Grand Jury: [complaints@edcgrandjury.com](mailto:complaints@edcgrandjury.com). Please send all responses as either Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF files.

## Due Dates

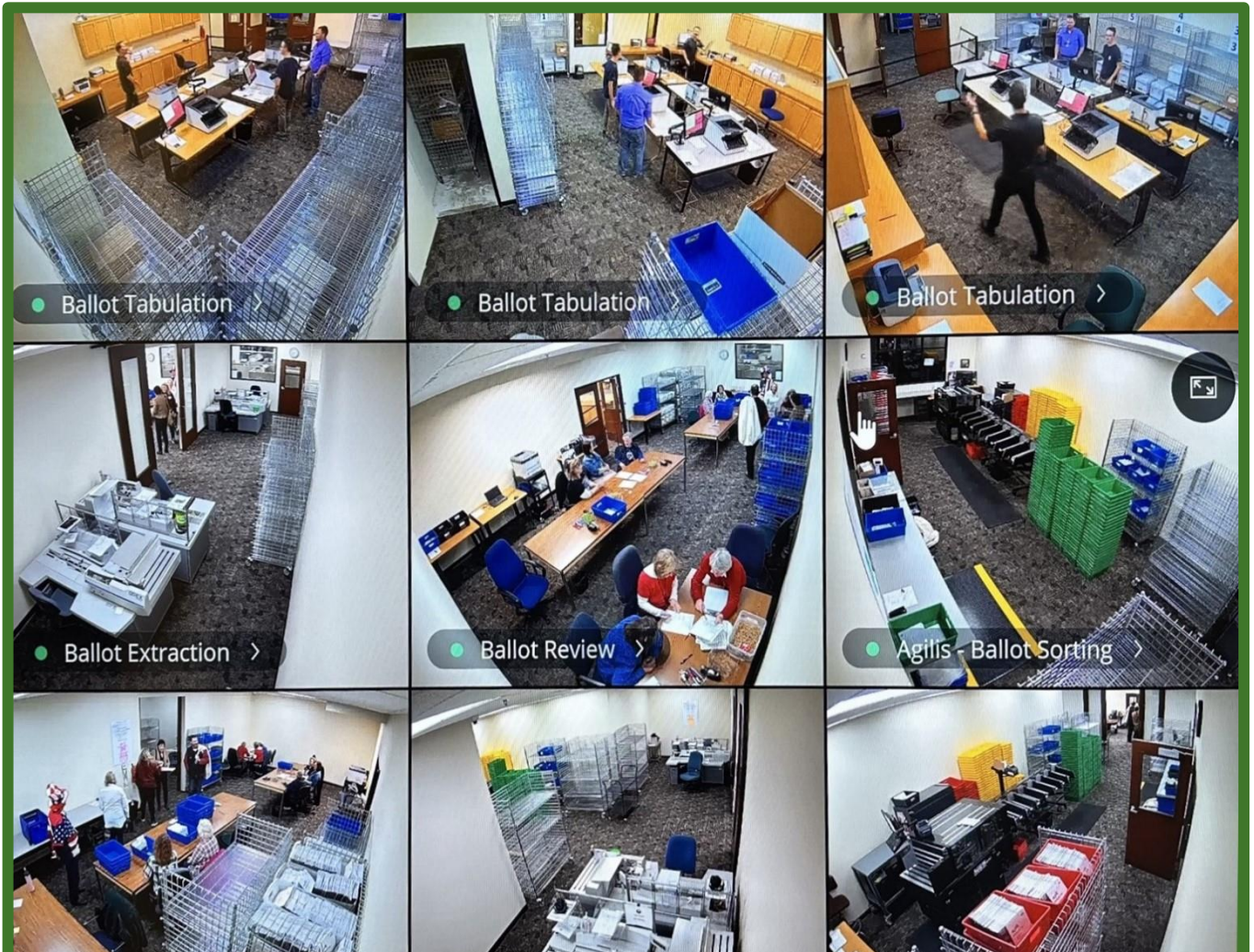
Elected officials or administrators are required to respond within sixty days of the Grand Jury Report's publication; responses by the governing body of any public entity are required within ninety (90) days.

## Penal Code § 933.05

1. *For purposes of subdivision (b) of § 933, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:*
  - a. *The respondent agrees with the finding.*
  - b. *The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.*
2. *For purposes of subdivision (b) of § 933, as to each Grand Jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:*
  - a. *The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action;*
  - b. *The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation;*
  - c. *The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report; or*
  - d. *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.*
3. *However, if a finding or recommendation of the Grand Jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county department headed by an elected officer, both the department head and the Board of Supervisors shall respond if requested by the Grand Jury, but the response of the Board of Supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision-making authority.*

*The response of the elected department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her department.*

- 4. A Grand Jury may request a subject person or entity to come before the Grand Jury for the purpose of reading and discussing the findings of the Grand Jury report that relates to that person or entity in order to verify the accuracy of the findings prior to their release.*
- 5. During an investigation, the Grand Jury shall meet with the subject of that investigation regarding the investigation, unless the court, either on its own determination or upon request of the foreperson of the Grand Jury, determines that such a meeting would be detrimental.*
- 6. A Grand Jury shall provide to the affected agency a copy of the portion of the Grand Jury report relating to that person or entity two working days prior to its public release and after the approval of the presiding judge. No officer, agency, department, or governing body of a public agency shall disclose any contents of the report prior to the public release of the final report.*



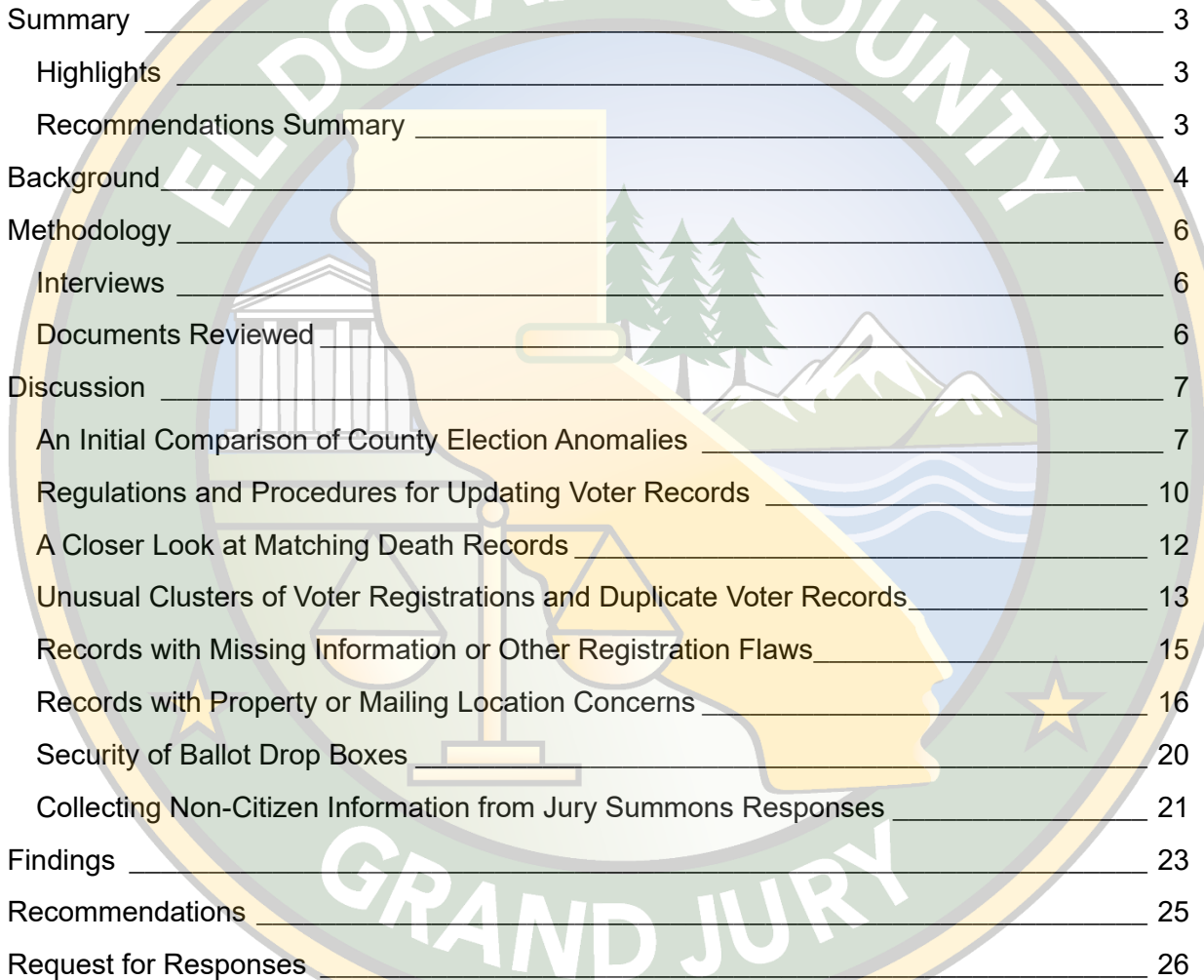
## 2024-25 GRAND JURY REPORT EL DORADO COUNTY JANUARY 7, 2024 – CASE #25-01

### ELECTIONS: A DEEPER DIVE INTO VOTER ROLLS AND DROP BOX SECURITY

*Following up on the last Grand Jury report (#24-09) on Election Procedures, we take a closer look at the maintenance of voter rolls and voter eligibility, one of the bigger challenges the County Elections Department faces.*

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*Cover Caption: Election night monitoring screens available to the public at the County Election Headquarters. Taken March 5, 2024.*

# SUMMARY

## Summary

*“A fair election is the cornerstone of democracy, and the integrity of the process must be upheld to ensure that every citizen's voice is heard.”*

- Thomas Jefferson

## HIGHLIGHTS

Maintaining the El Dorado County (“County”) voter roll is one of the most challenging and tedious tasks for our County Office of Elections (Elections Department). This process includes determining who receives a vote-by-mail ballot and who is eligible to vote in County elections. While voter registration procedures are governed by the State of California, ultimately the County Registrar of Voters is accountable for the accuracy of the voter database. The sheer size of the state and the daily updates that are required for new registrations, address changes and deaths seemingly opens the door for a certain number of errors, outdated information and inconsistencies. Further, to ensure everyone’s right to vote, it is much easier to get on the voter roll than to be removed, so there are bound to be several records that are pending clean-up or updates when dealing with partial or unconfirmed information.

The Grand Jury took a deep dive into the state of our County voter database to see if there were any anomalies, and to better understand the process the County uses to keep the voter roll up to date, accurate and in compliance with State requirements. Suspicious, incomplete or inaccurate records appear to be minimal, although with detailed analysis there could be opportunities for ongoing cleanup of outdated records. We also compared numbers with other counties to gauge the severity of the issues in our County.

## RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Overall, the County is doing an excellent job. Recommendations are minor. An ongoing review of certain records is warranted and there may be opportunities to more easily correlate voter records with outside sources of information to detect anomalies in the future. Our full analysis of the County voter roll follows.

# BACKGROUND

## Background

The Office of Elections consistently reports that one of its biggest challenges is maintaining accuracy and consistency of the County roll of eligible voters. The challenge has only increased in recent years as the State of California (“State”) has moved to a “vote center” model where a large majority of votes are now cast by mail-in ballot and ballot verification and processing is handled in a central location. The County is ultimately accountable for the accuracy of its voter roll and is required to coordinate daily with the State for voter updates on relocations, new registrations, deaths, duplicate registrations, and more. It is impossible to keep an up-to-date and accurate list of all eligible voters and their current location. By design, there are limited opportunities to verify voter identities, and there can be registration errors through paper and online registration procedures.

The accuracy of voter rolls is one of the biggest concerns expressed by the public when discussing election integrity. There is speculation about voter roll maintenance and voter eligibility simply because the process has become much more complicated and automated in recent years. A primary concern is to what extent non-citizen migrants are allowed to register and vote, and the ability to vote without presenting any form of ID. Some of these issues were covered in detail in a 2023-2024 County Grand Jury report (#24-09).

The Grand Jury was informed that the Elections Department has received calls from individuals who received a mail-in ballot but were not citizens and requested that their names be removed from the voter rolls. The Grand Jury does not know how many such calls were received, nor how many individuals in similar situations did not call or report the condition. This provides initial evidence that the voter roll contains issues that need further investigation. In addition, we were made aware of other election integrity investigations throughout the State that had uncovered voter roll anomalies in other counties. By using a database query system, the Grand Jury did a very preliminary analysis of the County voter roll for unusual registrations and found several hundred that warranted further investigation.

## BACKGROUND

We investigated a large number of those records specifically to see if there were any anomalies or concerns that could lead to fraudulent votes in our County. We also wanted to determine if there were any areas that the Elections Department should focus on to improve the accuracy of the list of eligible voters. Our factual analysis of these initial concerns follows.

# METHODOLOGY

## Methodology

The Grand Jury obtained access to the statewide voter roll database from the California Secretary of State as of August 15, 2024. We primarily focused on the El Dorado County voter roll and looked at trends across other larger counties (Placer, Sacramento, and Los Angeles) for comparison purposes. We leveraged a data analytics tool from SoftNetwork Solutions, LLC, to query the voter database for anomalies as well as to inspect individual voter records and details for additional information.

The SoftNetwork Solutions platform combines the voter roll database with other large public data sets, including Social Security death records, social media profiles, consumer databases, Google maps, address information, and more. In some cases, these additional data sets provided the ability to identify duplicate records as being unique individuals, or whether a primary residence provided was legitimate for the number of registered voters listed.

The voter database was provided by the California Secretary of State through SoftNetwork Solutions, LLC, who was authorized to provide the information to the Grand Jury. California Code of Regulations, Title 2, Section 19003(a) provides permissible uses for voter rolls, including subsection (a)(6): *Record Review: For any person to conduct an audit of voter registration lists for election, scholarly, journalistic, political, or governmental purposes. Record review includes, but is not limited to, detecting voter registration fraud, evaluating voter registration information accuracy, and evaluating compliance with applicable Federal and California laws.*

## INTERVIEWS

- Elections Department staff
- Tour of the Elections Office and Public Town Hall

## DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- California Elections Code
- El Dorado County Voter Roll current as of August 15, 2024

# DISCUSSION

## Discussion

The Elections Department is challenged to keep the County voter roll accurate and synched with State data. We analyzed the data to see how current and accurate the voter roll really was.

### AN INITIAL COMPARISON OF COUNTY ELECTION ANOMALIES

The Grand Jury started with a comparison of election anomalies identified in a standard database report across four different counties, including El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, and Los Angeles. This initial report included voter information from the most recent March primary election in California (actual votes cast), as well as the voter roll data from each county as of August 15, 2024.

The initial report summary is designed to identify a wide variety of election anomalies including:

- Incomplete voter registrations and duplicate registrations,
- Number of voters at the same address or with the same contact details,
- Voters with invalid residential information (a mail store or other commercial address),
- Address and age anomalies,
- Matching death records or obituaries for active voters,
- Active voters that should be inactive,
- Voters living outside the County, State and country.

The following table shows a side-by-side comparison of each county relative to a list of possible anomalies to identify areas of interest that would require further analysis in El Dorado County, and which issues might need to be better addressed at the State level across multiple counties.

The results listed in the table of anomalies are not necessarily indicative of any fraudulent activity or unwarranted voter registrations. Further analysis of the individual voter records involved is required to determine voter registrations that should be cleaned from the roll. Additional information not available in the data is likely required to verify any potential issues. After identifying potential areas of concern, we drilled further down in the data to make a final determination of any records or identified anomalies, such as “dead people” voting.

## DISCUSSION

The table below highlights some of these areas which are further discussed in the following sections. Most of the problem areas listed in the left column of the table are self-explanatory. The data platform can correlate voter information with a wide range of other external data sources. These include death records and obituaries, California consumer credit reports, social media profiles where real names are required, etc.

# DISCUSSION

Problem type	El Dorado				Placer				Sacramento				Los Angeles			
	Total Voters	144737	Total Voted	67674	Total Voters	311471	Total Voted	136616	Total Voters	977700	Total Voted	347130	Total Voters	6224977	Total Voted	1638943
	Voters	%	Voted	%	Voters	%	Voted	%	Voters	%	Voted	%	Voters	%	Voted	%
Missing birthplace	24216	17%	7392	11%	41522	13%	9439	3%	134719	14%	23431	7%	1414484	23%	257302	16%
6+ Voters at address	2068	1%	795	1%	5262	2%	1679	1%	24571	3%	6295	2%	403070	6%	70238	4%
Voter Age: 90+	1759	1%	1070	2%	4649	1%	2970	1%	12497	1%	6306	2%	88819	1%	29895	2%
Can not find matching consumer in CA	1398	1%	458	1%	5383	2%	1535	0%	22239	2%	4677	1%	253132	4%	44526	3%
NVRA violation: active after missing two elections	2830	2%	0	0%	9026	3%	0	0%	39354	4%	0	0%	472483	8%	0	0%
Mailing address is outside of state	6742	5%	325	0%	12572	4%	641	0%	30572	3%	1140	0%	22478	0%	1282	0%
Mailing address is outside of USA	414	0%	57	0%	731	0%	100	0%	2330	0%	368	0%	27170	0%	4058	0%
First/Last name not found in census or social media	338	0%	113	0%	906	0%	283	0%	4527	0%	1005	0%	35862	1%	7274	0%
2+ Voters with same name & DOB	163	0%	85	0%	359	0%	158	0%	1431	0%	513	0%	14981	0%	3074	0%
3+ voters with same email	107	0%	62	0%	121	0%	51	0%	1034	0%	338	0%	3416	0%	1078	0%
Matching death record found at Social Security	79	0%	50	0%	138	0%	76	0%	993	0%	201	0%	5446	0%	883	0%
Matching record found in obituary	12	0%	3	0%	39	0%	6	0%	283	0%	30	0%	1867	0%	105	0%
Voter residence at a mail store	28	0%	2	0%	210	0%	44	0%	50	0%	6	0%	1332	0%	225	0%
Matching death record found in vital statistics	1	0%	0	0%	6	0%	3	0%	23	0%	6	0%	282	0%	81	0%
One character last name	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	19	0%	4	0%	302	0%	29	0%
No First Name	2	0%	0	0%	6	0%	3	0%	34	0%	8	0%	81	0%	14	0%
Mail: Mail zip or country is missing	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	3	0%	14	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%
Missing Precinct	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	7	0%	2	0%	0	0%	2	0%	12	0%
DMVCOA - Move out of state	0	0%	3	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Deceased	0	0%	281	0%	0	0%	580	0%	0	0%	1315	0%	0	0%	4715	0%
Failure to Respond to Notice Sent	2560	2%	1	0%	3196	1%	5	0%	31	0%	1	0%	9040	0%	60	0%
Incomplete Information	0	0%	0	0%	5	0%	3	0%	0	0%	0	0%	13	0%	2	0%
Move Out of County	0	0%	40	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Moved Out of State	0	0%	16	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	61	0%	0	0%	0	0%
USPS Notice - Inactive	9443	7%	203	0%	19643	6%	443	0%	104385	11%	1785	1%	479008	8%	5449	0%
NON-Active voter, voted.	1332	1%	546	1%	3083	1%	1007	0%	8824	1%	2717	1%	40353	1%	9016	1%

Table - Comparison of voter roll anomalies across El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, and Los Angeles counties based on voter rolls pulled on August 15, 2024, and voter data from the California primary election on March 5, 2024. Notable anomalies identified include the large number of records missing required birthplace information (See California Elections Code Section 2150 (a)(6)), the number of people with matching death records in the Social Security database that vote, the number of inactive voters that are listed as active, as well as duplicate registrations across counties. Highlighted cells were considered a high priority for further investigation in the following sections.

# DISCUSSION

From the above table, we can see that none of the anomalies checked are significantly different from rates in other counties. In some cases, El Dorado County is markedly better. In most cases, the number of suspect voter records is so small, or they don't result in actual votes, that we can categorically dismiss those anomalies without further inspection.

Before we discuss some of the anomalies in the above table that we investigated in depth, let's lay the groundwork for the voter registration process and some of the relevant elections code that the County must comply with.

## REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR UPDATING VOTER RECORDS

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) sets forth certain voter registration requirements with respect to federal elections. It requires states to offer such registrations opportunities through certain State or County agencies. The NVRA also requires states to implement procedures to maintain accuracy and current voter registration rolls.

California implemented its Motor Voter program (1998) to implement the NVRA and make registering to vote at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) more convenient. Eligible applicants completing a driver license, identification (ID) card, or change of address forms through the DMV will be automatically registered to vote (or have their registration updated) by the California Secretary of State (SOS), unless they choose to opt out of automatic voter registration.

In 2002, Congress passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), which required each state to create a statewide voter registration system. California now has a centralized voter system, VoteCal, which links to county voter registration systems. As a result, overall data about voter registrations is automatically fed into the statewide system.

The SOS website states that to be eligible to vote, the applicant must be:

- A United States citizen and a resident of California,
- 18 years old or older on Election Day,
- Not currently serving a state or federal prison term for the conviction of a felony, and
- Not currently found mentally incompetent to vote by a court,

## DISCUSSION

For DMV customers who have attested to their eligibility to register to vote, the SOS retrieves and analyzes the corresponding records, then excludes records of applicants who opted out of voter registration, duplicate records, and records for which a more recent registration exists. The SOS then processes them directly into the statewide voter registration system.

All other types of applications to register to vote by filing a paper application are processed by the Elections Department.

The voter registration form (<http://RegisterToVote.ca.gov>) initially requires an applicant to confirm if they are a citizen of the U.S. and resident of California by simply checking a box on the form. If confirmed, the form requires the applicant to confirm that they are over 18. Next, the applicant is asked to provide their legal name, date of birth, and place of birth.

The applicant is then asked to provide a California Driver's License or a California Identification card number, and a Social Security Number (SSN), or state that they do not have these forms of identification. If the applicant states that they do not have these forms of identification, their voter registration application is allowed to proceed. They are informed that if a driver's license or SSN was not provided when registering, new voters may have to show a form of identification or proof of residency the first time they vote.

When a voter registers online and does not provide identifying information the registration stays in a pending mode. If they show up in person, they will need to re-register and provide the information. When a voter sends in a printed registration form without providing identification information, they get a status of First Time Federal Voter. The Elections Department then sends

**Finding 1** – The Elections Department is required to accept new voter registrations and voter roll updates provided by the Secretary of State's office even though the Elections Department is aware that some of these County voters may not have the required driver's license or SSN and/or may not be citizens. The Elections Department places the registration in a pending status until identification details are provided whether the registration is online or mailed in, ensuring that an identifying number is recorded for every voter. The County relies on information provided by the voter to determine their citizenship status.

# DISCUSSION

a notice with their ballot requiring them to send back some identifying information before their ballot can be counted. This alleviates the concern that voter registrations are created, and voters are allowed to vote, without providing a corresponding government-issued identification. It is not required to show the ID to vote, however, in the State.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT MATCHING DEATH RECORDS

Although a small percentage of the overall vote, we were initially suspicious of the number of active voters that appeared in the Social Security database as deceased and yet appeared to have voted (50). There appeared to be almost 80 suspect records that required further analysis including voter identities that were found in online obituaries going back decades.

The “Deceased” row in the above table shows 281 presumed dead people voted on March 5, 2024, in the County. This number seems high but perhaps reflects people that died after casting a legitimate vote in March, and were later reported as deceased in the August 15, 2024 voter roll snapshot. We did not investigate the possibility that they died just prior to casting a vote and a family member voted on their behalf, as that would be virtually impossible to detect and not statistically significant to address. It would also likely be detected in the signature match procedure during ballot validation as a safeguard.

The table shows that these deceased voters from March were off the voter roll by August 15, meaning the County is rapidly purging individuals from its voter roll.

We then turned our attention to the matching death records at Social Security and other sources going back many decades that still appear active and/or casting votes. Of these 77 individuals identified, we closely analyzed 45-50 of the matching records before we identified a likely pattern and root cause.

To match a voter registration and a Social Security or obituary death record, the individuals must have both the same first and last names and have the same date of birth (DOB). Based on the limited common information available between the two data sets, this is all that can be consistently compared. Middle initials or names and other identifying data are optional in the

## DISCUSSION

voter roll and cannot provide definitive correlation. But matching birthdates many decades ago is a strong indicator of matching identity and enough to warrant further inspection.

Of the several dozen records we looked at, the consistent pattern was that the individuals had very common names, such as Brown, Anderson, Smith, Jones, Carter, etc. Less familiar surnames had common first names like John, Timothy, Michael, etc. When drilling into specific records, we found mismatched middle names or initials, different party affiliations, and/or places of birth (when listed) that clearly identify the death record as a different individual with the same name and date of birth. With roughly 10,000 live births nationwide each day, it's reasonable that two people or more with common names would be born on the same day, with one person dying decades ago, and one still alive and voting regularly in El Dorado County. Our conclusion, with a few noteworthy exceptions, is that these matching death records are not an issue for the County. They are indeed separate individuals. Overall, the Elections Department is doing an excellent job in staying current with the records of deceased individuals. One noteworthy exception is the case of a woman whose unusual name and DOB matches that of a child born in Southern California in the 1970's who died only two days after birth. The unusual name and matching birthdate make this a bit more suspicious of a coincidence. The early death of the baby likely made it easy to fraudulently use their social security number and identity without setting off other red flags. Further analysis is outside the scope of this investigation but may warrant a referral to the District Attorney.

**Finding 2** – The Elections Department is doing an excellent job staying current with deceased voters and incorporating information from Social Security records and other sources. This is not a significant problem for the County despite initial evidence to the contrary.

### UNUSUAL CLUSTERS OF VOTER REGISTRATIONS AND DUPLICATE VOTER RECORDS

The table above identified 163 duplicate voter records. These are voters in El Dorado County with the same name (first, last) and DOB as another voter registered in CA. When first name, middle name, last name and DOB are used to check for duplicates, this count goes to zero. We conclude there are currently no duplicated voter registrations in El Dorado County with other

# DISCUSSION

registrations throughout the State. It's easy to understand how matching first and last name with an identical DOB decades in the past would be a concern without further research.

Two family members of County Grand Jurors received multiple ballots at the same residence. This is a small sample size (19 Grand Jurors) and two confirmed instances. We were unable to determine how this may happen. The Elections Department confirmed that these are errors that should be researched and remedied.

## **Clusters at the same residence**

There are 2068 voters in El Dorado County where six or more individuals live at the same address. The majority of these appear to be multi-generational families as indicated by a common surname and different birthdates. Note that college age children can elect to vote using their parents' residential address as an out-of-state (or out-of-area) voter. Several clusters of multiple voters at the same address had a different last name. These locations were investigated, and the residential addresses given were usually identified as communal living facilities or long-term residential care facilities, including a monastery, which the Elections Department had previously identified.

## **One email address for multiple voters**

There were 107 instances of three or more voters having the same email address. These voters share either a common surname or residence address with two or more other members of this class. They do not appear to duplicate the identity of a single individual.

## **Updates from the El Dorado Superior Court**

The County responded to a recommendation in the June 2023 Grand Jury report that the Elections Department was receiving updated voter information when the citizen responds to a jury summons that they have moved out-of-state. These individuals should be considered for removal from the voter roll or removed immediately upon confirmation. A County Grand Juror's daughter received a jury summons in early 2024 and replied that she had moved out-of-state yet received a vote by mail ballot in October 2024.

# DISCUSSION

The Elections Department claimed that they should be able to capture this address update from the court and not send the ballot out. They will conduct additional research to manage this process going forward.

## RECORDS WITH MISSING INFORMATION OR OTHER REGISTRATION FLAWS

We investigated several key areas of the voter roll for possible problems with accuracy, validity, and soundness. Our analysis yielded the following conclusions related to these issues.

### **Data Flaw: Missing Birthplace**

There were 24,216 voters with a missing birthplace, 21,595 voters were active and 7,392 of those voted in March 2024. California elections code Section 2150(a)(6) states that a place of birth is required for a valid voter registration: “*The affiant registration shall show: (6) The state or country of the affiant’s birth.*” This is a flaw at the state level since this information is not required in the online registration form. Seventeen percent of El Dorado County registrations were missing this information, while twenty-three percent were missing in Los Angeles County. El Dorado County does not have to act here except to use their influence to encourage the State to conform to or modify the code going forward. The **National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA)**, codified at **52 U.S.C. § 20504-20507**, sets federal standards for voter registration. The law itself does not specifically require applicants to provide a place of birth to register to vote.

Place of birth can be another important piece of data to correlate or resolve possible duplicate registrations with the same name or with death records. Requiring place of birth is also important to determine who may be a non-citizen voter and who is stating they are natural born citizens.

**Finding 3** – The State of California is not compliant with the statutory requirement for a voter registration record to include the affiant’s place of birth. The Secretary of State makes the place of birth optional in the online voter registration form. The County cannot determine this information independently.

# DISCUSSION

## **Name Flaw: One Character First Name**

There were 77 voters with one character first names, 69 of whom were active, and 41 voted. Upon review of these records, it seems that this is an error on the part of the person registering, where they entered an initial instead of the full name. Most appear to have a middle name which may also be the cause of the entry error. Any registration that has a single character first name, and no middle name should be updated, inactivated, or removed. We do not have a recommendation on how to handle registrations for individuals that use their legal middle name as their primary name and choose to provide a first initial.

## **Data Flaw: Registered under 18**

There were two voters with this registration flaw, both of whom were active voters, and neither of which voted. This may be likely due to persons registering before their 18th birthday but who obviously didn't cast a vote illegally (must be 18 on the day of the election). It is legal to pre-register starting at age 16. Other counties are moving to allow voters as young as 16 to vote in local school board elections and other races. This is not done in El Dorado County.

## **RECORDS WITH PROPERTY OR MAILING LOCATION CONCERNS**

We looked at voter records with mailing location anomalies, such as voter records with their residence at a post office, mail store location, and in other states or countries.

Our analysis of the voter roll from August 2024 showed 28 voter records with a property address or primary residence at a post office or mail store location. This is an unusual situation, but not an abnormally high amount compared to the three larger counties we compared: Placer, Sacramento, and L.A.

Each person who registers to vote must provide an address where they live and an address where they receive their mail, if they are different. The address where they live determines which elections they are eligible to vote in, and the Elections Department needs a mailing address or P.O. Box to send the voting materials.

## DISCUSSION

Under California law, voters do not lose their voting residence until they gain a new primary residence. Whether the voter is homeless, living on the road, or if they lost their home for any reason and do not yet have a new fixed residence, they may use their last residence address. Although a business address can be used as a primary residence in California, as of January 2020, if the voter resides there, it is unlikely that actual residence is the post office or mail store location. It raises questions for voters that have a mailing address out-of-state or out of the country and continue to list their primary residence in the County, especially a mail location.

As noted above, we found 28 records that listed a primary residence at a mail location, and of these, four were active. There is very little concern with these anomalies and the County is doing a good job at moving these records to inactive. Further clean-up of the voter roll is needed by requesting an update to the actual primary residence or eventually removing the voters from the roll if there is no response as allowed by law.

Two of the four active records above were at a strip mall that included a mail location and other commercial addresses. These could not be identified as exactly at the mail location. Two active records switched the residence address with the mail address. We would advise requesting updates from these voters with mail location addresses to confirm their actual primary residence but will not make this a formal recommendation due to the small number of registrations involved.

We questioned the Elections Department staff to determine if they could easily detect when voters listed mail locations as a primary residence and if they had procedures in place to verify and/or update voter records. The Elections Department stated that they periodically perform analyses like this, but the checks are sporadic and not automated.

**Finding 4** – The Elections Department regularly checks and identifies voter registrations that incorrectly list a post office box location as an actual residence. These checks are sporadic, and they had not identified all instances at the time of our analysis.

Some additional effort at times is required to verify the address of a new registration. They have

## DISCUSSION

all the county addresses in the election management system. The online registration system does not have a comprehensive list of all county roads, the field is free form, so voters input the information as best they know, we catch most and correct most when processed.

Next, we spot checked the large number of active voters with mailing addresses in other states and other countries. There are 6,742 voters with out-of-state mailing addresses in the latest voter roll snapshot, roughly 5% of eligible voters. This was higher than other counties we compared. There are many legitimate reasons to have a mailing address out-of-state; this does not imply any suspicious behavior. We looked at trends and opportunities for further detailed investigation or clean-up. Notably, of the 6,742 that were registered to vote, only 325 voted in the most recent presidential primary election in March 2024, a lower rate than the general population. [Note that the 325 votes came from a slightly different set of out-of-state voters that existed prior to March 2024, than our set pulled from August 2024.]

We asked Elections Department staff if they were able to track how long individual voters had had the same out-of-state mailing address and if they could question if this was a temporary or permanent change of residence. The Elections Department staff indicated that they did not track out-of-state mailing addresses, even for ones that have been out-of-state for many years, and that there is no statute in the elections code for them to do so. They further indicated that they are open to doing research on out-of-state addresses when time permits.

The voters with mailing addresses outside the country showed some interesting anomalies. There were 414 voter records with mailing addresses outside the country. Fifty-seven people actually voted in the March 2024 presidential primary. This is a much higher percentage than out-of-state voters. Of the 414 total voter records, 397 were active voters, meaning they were receiving vote-by-mail ballots.

The Grand Jury did not investigate all 397 of these active voter records for additional anomalies, but we checked many of them, several of which raised some interesting questions:

- A person with a mailing address in Germany who has never voted but registered back in October 2020. This voter has a German email address (ending in .de), indicating that this may be more than a temporary situation.

## DISCUSSION

- A mailing address in Denmark, also an active voter despite never having voted in the County, and the most recent registration in October 2020.
- A mailing address in the United Kingdom (UK) as well as a .uk email address. They registered in August 2024 and have no record of voting in the County. Such a recent registration is more likely to be indicative of someone who just moved here from the UK. With a .uk email address is there any indication this person is a US citizen eligible to vote?
- A mailing address in the UK and a listed phone number in the UK. They last voted in the County in 2004 but updated their registration in 2022.

These were just a few of many records that showed a lack of voting activity and/or other evidence of longer-term residence outside the U.S. With less than 60 actual votes in the most recent primary, we do not feel there is significant risk to overall election outcomes. We asked the Elections Department staff if it made sense to apply additional scrutiny to some of the foreign voter records. The Elections Department staff noted that U.S. citizens that have lived overseas for decades still have a right to vote in U.S. elections. The current registration process uses that registrant's last U.S. residence location to determine which ballot they receive, and which contests they will be participating in. The Elections Department staff noted that this is frustrating to them at times and is a flaw in our system. While someone who has not lived in the U.S. for many years may rightfully be allowed to vote for president or other key federal races, why would it make sense for them to get a ballot that includes local supervisor and special district board races because of where they lived decades ago? These voters are getting the same ballot as if they are currently living at their last stated U.S. address.

**Finding 5** – The Elections Department cannot update ex-patriated voter registrations even though they have not lived in the U.S. for many years. These voters have the ability to participate in U.S. elections and use their last primary residence as a location to determine their ballot. This may allow voters to participate in local races for which they have no knowledge, interest or involvement.

## DISCUSSION

American citizens living abroad are generally allowed to vote in Federal elections, giving them the ability to vote for the President and Vice President, U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. We can assume that these ex-patriated voters are ignoring these local races, but we recommend the State provide special consideration for these voters with a different ballot that excludes local races if they no longer have ties to the local communities. At present, there is nothing additional we would expect our County Elections Department to do in this regard.

### SECURITY OF BALLOT DROP BOXES

California elections code Section 20133 requires county election officials to determine the number and locations of ballot drop boxes. To continue to make it easier for the public to vote, the County has 14 drop boxes in convenient locations such as libraries and grocery stores. Most are available 24x7 throughout the election period, although the requirement is for them to be available at least 12 hours per day.

The June 2024 Grand Jury report on elections investigated the security of ballot drop boxes and made recommendations regarding additional monitoring which were evaluated by the County and several of which were encouragingly adopted. In October 2024, incidents in Oregon and Washington where incendiary devices were thrown in ballot drop boxes destroyed a large number of ballots. These events further raised the issue of how the County can keep ballot drop boxes safe and secure and avoid these types of issues. One of the affected drop boxes included fire extinguishers that allowed the recovery of most of the ballots, although drop boxes that didn't have these fire prevention mechanisms resulted in the near total loss of the ballot box contents. We asked the Elections Department staff how the County should prevent similar losses here.

They shared several potential approaches to improve ballot box security in response to these events. They are very supportive of fire retardants in the boxes that would be automatically triggered by heat in a confined space. Oregon had such a device in place, and it worked well, while Washington also used a similar system that did not work. Both of those systems were deployed outside of the box, which could allow tampering. An external fire retardant is not an ideal system from our County's perspective.

## DISCUSSION

Another potential solution is to move the outside drop boxes indoors, which also raises a number of concerns. It is important to drop ballots at all hours for the convenience of voters. Moving them indoors would limit the hours the ballot boxes are available. The Elections Department has been working with the Sheriff's Office to increase patrol of the outdoor drop boxes, but that can only provide partial coverage. A feasibility study to provide around the clock monitoring of video surveillance cameras on every drop box by the Sheriff's Office will be evaluated, but it will require significant additional funding. If the County could allocate election-specific funding, the Sheriff's Office could be reimbursed for their work and potentially add a dedicated person to monitor the cameras at night.

**Finding 6** – Outdoor ballot drop boxes are vulnerable to physical attacks such as inserting an incendiary device that would cause a large loss of ballots. Fire retardants and increased patrols and video surveillance could alleviate concerns but would require additional funding and may not completely eliminate potential problems.

Some counties are experimenting with crowd-sourced camera monitoring as the Grand Jury suggested in the June 2024 report. The County response to that recommendation was to not implement the crowd-source monitoring because it may infringe on the privacy of the public during the voting process when dropping off ballots. The Grand Jury disagrees with this legal interpretation. The fact that other counties are looking into crowd-sourcing continuous drop box monitoring leads us to believe that this recommendation should be revisited. The Grand Jury acknowledges that this would still leave some gaps in continuous 7x24 coverage of live video streams.

### COLLECTING NON-CITIZEN INFORMATION FROM JURY SUMMONS RESPONSES

The Grand Jury investigated last year's Grand Jury report recommending responses to jury summons from the El Dorado County Superior Court that indicated the individual was declining jury duty because they were non-citizens were processed correctly and used to remove any non-citizens from the voter roll. Elections staff confirmed with us that the Superior Court sends a list of jury summons responses quarterly and they are processed accordingly. Because these

## DISCUSSION

instances are very rare they could not provide us with an example that we could confirm had been removed from the roll before we issued this report. We conclude that this issue is handled well and not a cause for concern going forward.

## Findings

**F1** – The Elections Department is required to accept new voter registrations and voter roll updates provided by the Secretary of State’s office even though the Elections Department is aware that some of these County voters may not have the required driver’s license or SSN and/or may not be citizens. The Elections Department places the registration in a pending status until identification details are provided whether the registration is online or mailed in, ensuring that an identifying number is recorded for every voter. The County relies on information provided by the voter to determine their citizenship status.

**F2** – The Elections Department is doing an excellent job staying current with deceased voters and incorporating information from Social Security records and other sources. This is not a significant problem for the County despite initial evidence to the contrary.

**F3** – There is inconsistency between Federal and State election codes regarding requirement for stating place of birth on a registration. State of California is not compliant with its own statutory requirement for a voter registration record to include the affiant’s place of birth, by making the place of birth optional in the online voter registration form. The County cannot determine this information independently, and it is left blank in a significant number of voter records. This conforms with Federal election mandates and requires no new action by the County.

**F4** - The Elections Department regularly checks and identifies voter registrations that incorrectly list a post office box location as an actual residence. These checks are sporadic, and they had not identified all instances at the time of our analysis.

**F5** – The Elections Department cannot update ex-patriated voter registrations even though they have not lived in the U.S. for many years. These voters have the right to participate in U.S. elections and use their last primary residence as a location to determine their ballot. This may allow voters to participate in local races for which they have no knowledge, interest or involvement.

## FINDINGS

**F6** – Outdoor ballot drop boxes are vulnerable to physical attacks such as inserting an incendiary device that would cause a large loss of ballots. Fire retardants and increased patrols and video surveillance could alleviate concerns but would require additional funding and may not completely eliminate potential problems.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations

### **The Grand Jury recommends:**

**R1** – Within 180 days of the release of this report, the Board of Supervisors direct the Elections Department to license and use a more powerful voter registration database query and analytics software that will facilitate their ability to identify, research, and address any voter registration anomalies with reduced effort. Fiscal impact: approximately \$20,000 per year.

**R2** – Within 180 days of the release of this report, the Board of Supervisors direct the Elections Department to confirm whether place of birth is a required data field in a valid registration and request the State to either update Elections Code Section 2150(a)(6), or make the field required in online registration forms and resolve the inconsistency with Federal code.

**R3** – Within 180 days of the release of this report, the Board of Supervisors direct and enable the County Elections Department to implement a plan for increased drop box security and surveillance against physical attacks, including reimbursing the Sheriff's Office for any required support they need to provide. Fiscal impact: approximately \$80,000 per year.

**R4** – Within 180 days of the release of this report, the Board of Supervisors direct the County Elections Department to address the small number of voter registrations with a single character first name and no middle name by requesting an update to their information or moving to remove them from the voter roll.

**R4** – Within 180 days of the release of this report, the Board of Supervisors direct the Elections Department to periodically review out-of-state voter registrations as time allows to determine if any are eligible to be revised or removed from the voter roll.

# REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

## Request for Responses

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

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

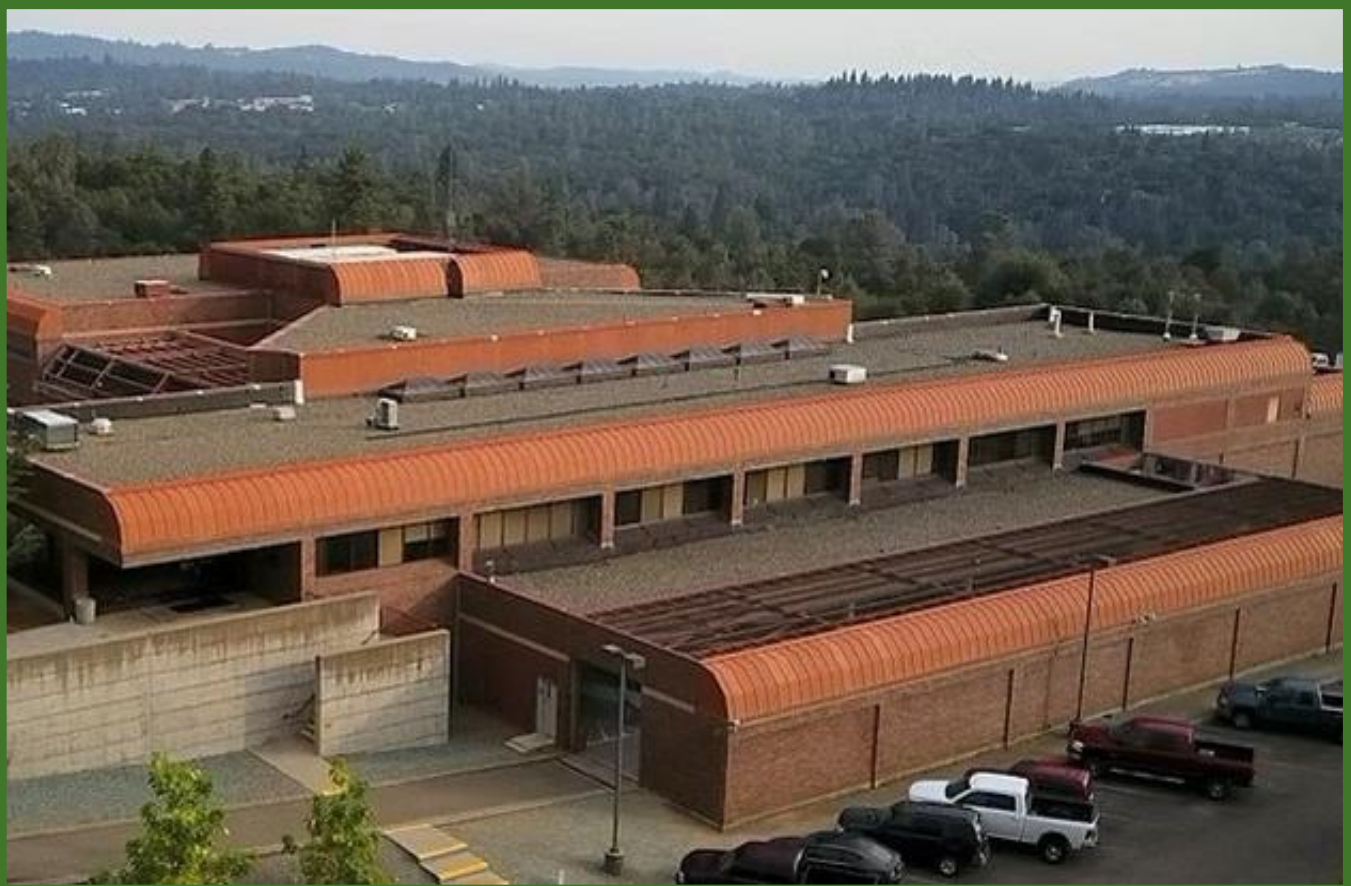
- PUBLIC AGENCIES. The governing body of any public agency (also referring to a department) must respond within 90 days from the release of the report to the public.
- ELECTIVE OFFICERS OR AGENCY HEADS. All elected officers or heads of agencies/departments are required to respond within 60 days of the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

- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
  - All Findings and Recommendations

For more information refer to [How to Respond to an El Dorado County Grand Jury Report](#) available on the El Dorado County Grand Jury webpage.



2024-25 GRAND JURY REPORT  
EL DORADO COUNTY  
FEBRUARY 11, 2025 – CASE #25-02

## PLACERVILLE AND SOUTH LAKE TAHOE JAIL INSPECTIONS

*2024-2025 Grand Jury results of annual inspections for the Placerville and South Lake Tahoe detention centers.*

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*Cover Photo: Placerville Jail. Courtesy El Dorado County Sheriff's Office.*

# SUMMARY

## Summary

*“Correctional officers are the backbone of our justice system. They protect the public and help inmates become productive citizens.”*

- John Walsh

## HIGHLIGHTS

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) conducted its annual inspections of the El Dorado County (County) jails in South Lake Tahoe (SLT) and Placerville (PV). The inspections included physical examination of the facilities and interviews with staff and inmates.

The Grand Jury found the following:

South Lake Tahoe Jail was exceptionally clean and well-maintained. There were no issues with the physical facilities. Inspections for Fire, Mental Health Environment, Nutrition, and Corrections Standards were current within the past 2 years. No fire/emergency drills have been held since 2021.

Placerville Jail was well-maintained. The facility was graffiti-free except in pods where they write on the walls with the pencils that staff is required to provide to inmates. Everything appeared to be in working order and organized. Inspections for Fire, Mental Health, Environment, Nutrition, and Corrections Standards were current.

## RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

The Grand Jury Found that both detention facilities had not performed required fire safety drills in several years and should schedule them as soon as practicable.

Our full observations of the two detention facilities follows.

# BACKGROUND

## Background

Penal Code (PC) Section 919(b) mandates that, annually, the 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.

### EVOLUTION OF COUNTY JAILS

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.

The Grand Jury inspected both jails including:

- Intake areas
- Housing
- Holding cells
- Medical units
- Kitchens
- Indoor and outdoor recreation facilities
- Control rooms

Inmates are classified into the following categories:

- Minimum Security (workers)

# BACKGROUND

- Medium Security
- Maximum security
- Administrative Separation
- Disciplinary Separation
- Civil Inmates (including those mentally incompetent to stand trial)

The classification determines which housing unit inmates are assigned along with their ability to associate with others. Inmates may be housed in isolation due to criminal charges, combativeness, gang affiliation, mental state, and other issues that could make them a danger to others. Inmates with mental health issues are not segregated unless there is a safety issue.

Each jail has a main control room where Correctional Officers (CO) monitor the entire facility including adjacent grounds 24 hours a day. Separate control rooms monitor the housing units. From the control room, officers can remotely lock/unlock individual cells and provide inmates instructions through intercom.

## ORIENTATION

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 topics including:

- Inmate rights
- Expected behavior
- Cell inspections
- Inmate classification
- Legal/standard mail
- Visitation
- Health/mental health services
- Jail schools
- Exercise and recreation

## BACKGROUND

- Library
- Religious services
- Modified release programs
- Grievance procedures
- Disciplinary process
- Penalties

Inmates are assigned a computer tablet which is collected for charging at night. The tablet lets them review the rules and procedures when needed. It is also used for communicating to people outside of the jail and to watch movies for exhibiting good behavior. The jails monitor all electronic communications within 24 hours of receipt before sending them to recipients, which causes some delay. Inmates may also use phones available in the communal areas.

# METHODOLOGY

## Methodology

### SITE VISITS

- El Dorado County Placerville Jail on October 2, 2024
- El Dorado County South Lake Tahoe Jail on October 9, 2024

### DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- Prior El Dorado County (EDC) Grand Jury Reports [Reports and Responses - El Dorado County](#)
- Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) 2023/2024 Biennial Inspection Report (Dated February 4, 2024) [Local Detention Facility Inspection Reports – BSCC 2023-2024 - Google Drive](#)
- BSCC Jails Inspection Handbook for Grand Jury [Sample Documents - Civil Grand Jurors' Association](#)
- California Grand Jury Association Detention Facility Inspection Form [Sample Documents - Civil Grand Jurors' Association](#)
- Penal Code Section 4000-4003 [Codes Display Text](#)
- Penal Code 919(b) [California Code, PEN 919.](#)
- Assembly Bill 109 [Bill Text - AB-109 Criminal justice alignment.](#)

### INTERVIEWS

- El Dorado County Sheriff's Department staff
- County Correctional Officers
- Select Inmates in Placerville

# DISCUSSION

## Discussion

### SOUTH LAKE TAHOE JAIL

The Grand Jury inspected the jail on October 9, 2024. The El Dorado County South Lake Tahoe (SLT) jail was built in 1973 and was modified in the 1980s.

ALL INSPECTIONS ARE CURRENT:

Fire Inspection Conducted	Yes	07/12/2024
Medical/Mental Health	Yes	10/19/2023
Environmental Health	Yes	10/19/2023
Nutritional Health	Yes	06/25/2023
Board of State and Community Corrections	Yes	08/19/2024
US Marshall	Yes	09/27/2024

There were no fire/emergency drills held from 2021 to present. In the state of California, jails are required to have fire drills. The California Code of Regulations mandates the implementation of multi-hazard practice drills, including fire drills. These requirements apply to both adult and juvenile facilities. State law requires districts to implement multi-hazard practice drills (e.g., fire, lockdown, active shooter, or evacuation drills) without requiring inter-agency coordination.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The maximum capacity of the facility is 158 inmates. On the date of inspection, it housed 96 inmates, 95 males and one female. The last suicide was approximately two years ago. There have been no escapes.

### STAFFING

Daily staffing includes one Commander, five Sergeants, and 27 officers on the floor. Allocated staff positions are about 50% filled. Existing staff work significant overtime to meet schedule

# DISCUSSION

demands. Correctional Officers stated the primary reason for the staffing shortage is because jails in surrounding counties pay higher wages. We found as shown below that El Dorado County is between Placer and Amador County wages.

County	Correctional Officer	Low	High
El Dorado	Level 1	\$ 28.80	\$ 35.00
	Level 2	\$ 31.65	\$ 38.47
Placer	Level 1	\$ 33.31	\$ 40.51
	Level 2	\$ 36.74	\$ 44.66
Amador	Level 1	\$ 27.56	\$ 33.50
	Level 2	\$ 30.58	\$ 37.17

*Table - Review of wages in El Dorado County compared to Placer County and Amador County.*

There is always a requirement for same-sex supervision of inmates. SLT has the capability of monitoring male inmates with the predominantly male staff. 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, frequently requiring females to be transferred to the Placerville jail.

## MEDICAL CARE, HYGIENE, AND NUTRITION

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. SLT has a physician on site two days per week and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) available 20 hours per week. There is a Registered Nurse (RN) on staff daily and a Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) in the evening and night. Medications are kept in a locked space and are dispensed by the RN/LVN. Psychiatric care is available through tele-health.

Inmates needing medical care can see the appropriate medical professional the same day for an urgent problem and within three days for a chronic problem.

Meals are served in a common area and in a cell if needed. Each inmate is given 30 minutes for a meal.

# DISCUSSION

Showers are available daily to each inmate.

Exercise is done outside if the weather permits. There is an indoor gym where inmates can exercise. SLT is the only California Correctional Institution with an indoor recreational area available year-round.

## DISCIPLINE

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

## GENERAL IMPRESSION

Although the facility is showing signs of aging, it was clean and well maintained. It was graffiti-free the day of our inspection, although pencils are available to inmates, and we understand there are times when graffiti is evident. Everything appeared to be in working order and well organized.

## PLACERVILLE JAIL

The Grand Jury inspected the jail on October 2, 2024. The Placerville (PV) jail was built in 1988.

ALL INSPECTIONS ARE CURRENT:

Fire Inspection Conducted	Yes	08/29/2024
Medical/Mental Health	Yes	07/26/2024
Environmental Health	Yes	04/16/2024
Nutritional Health	Yes	04/09/2024
Board of State and Community Corrections	Yes	8/19/2024
US Marshall	Yes	9/27/2024

# DISCUSSION

There were no fire/emergency drills held in 2024 as of the date of our inspection.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The maximum capacity of the facility is 303 inmates. At the time of inspection, it housed 196 inmates, 157 males and 42 females.

In the past year, there were no suicides; however, there were four attempts. There have been no escapes. There was one death that occurred after the date of our inspection and is still under investigation.

## STAFFING

There are a total of 85 staff positions, with 64 filled. This situation requires substantial overtime for the current staff. Again, the main reason given is lower pay than in surrounding counties. One key area with staffing challenges is in-house health and mental health services.

## MEDICAL CARE, HYGIENE, AND NUTRITION

All Inmates are medically cleared before they are accepted into custody. Once they are accepted into custody a more thorough evaluation is done before they are housed. The jail has a physician on site a few days per week and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) or a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) present 20 hours per week. There is one Registered Nurse (RN) on staff daily and a Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) in the evening and night. Medications are kept in a locked space and are dispensed by the RN/LVN. Psychiatry care is available through tele-health.

Inmates needing medical care can see the appropriate medical professional depending on the problem within five days or more. The jail utilizes Moral Recognition Therapy (MRT) with its inmates to redirect inmates' behavior.

In 2023, six staff members were assaulted, two of which had to take time off for injuries. Staff and inmate interactions appear to be very professional. The staff is not housed with inmates as is the case with other jails.

# DISCUSSION

Inmates are offered private showers daily.

Exercise is done in an outdoor area, walled-in, and with a security mesh above to prevent contraband from being thrown from the outside.

## INMATE INTERVIEWS

The Grand Jury members attending this inspection interviewed a total of four inmates. One was a male inmate working in the kitchen. He stated he was happy working there and did not have any major complaints, other than wanting contact visitations. Another three male inmates were interviewed in their pod. One inmate was the most talkative and candid and said he was treated well and felt safe in the jail. All stated that they have access to services, including law library, electronic tablets, MRT, and GED-completion programs. They also stated that they understood the grievance procedures. The three inmates' only request was that they be allowed to have a ball of some sort when in the yard. Staff explained why no balls are allowed in the facility; it has to do with previous attempts by outsiders to throw balls with contraband into the yard from outside the facility. Staff also indicated that games with balls, like basketballs, caused too many recurring injuries and were thus banned. Improvised "balls" are often made with towels and/or tape.

The facility appeared clean, graffiti-free except in pods. Staff is obligated to provide inmates with pencils resulting in a small amount of easily cleaned graffiti. Everything appeared to be in working order, organized and well-maintained.

Placerville Jail appears to be a well-run facility, with dedicated and competent staff and leadership. The buildings show their age but are kept clean and in decent working conditions.

A \$25 million grant provided under California Senate Bill 844 has allocated funds for the jail's expansion. The expansion includes a separate housing unit for female inmates, a new medical wing increasing bed capacity and providing more mental health services, construction of several ADA-compliant cells, and a computer lab. There will not be an increase in the number of inmates the facility will be able to house. The site is adjacent to the current facility, and the land has been cleared. The construction project is pending various approvals.

# FINDINGS

## Findings

**F1** – The California Code of Regulations mandates the implementation of annual multi-hazard practice drills, including fire drills. These requirements apply to both adult and juvenile facilities. State law requires districts to implement multi-hazard practice drills (e.g., fire, lockdown, active shooter, or evacuation drills) without requiring inter-agency coordination. Drills have not been completed at either jail per these requirements.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations

**R1** – Develop and implement a plan to resume annual multi-hazard practice drills, including fire drills at each jail by September 1, 2025.

# REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

## Request for Responses

A Civil Grand Jury report details a single investigation. Each report lists FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS. The responsible organization 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.

**ELECTIVE 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, as required to a Jury report, violates California Penal Code Section 933.05 and is subject to further action that may include additional investigation on 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 government bodies:

- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors  
All Findings and Recommendations

For more information refer to [How to Respond to an El Dorado County Grand Jury Report](#) available on the El Dorado County Grand Jury webpage.

# APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

## Appendix and Related Information

### JAIL INSPECTION FORMS AND NOTES

#### Detention Facility Inspection Form South Lake Tahoe Jail

<b>Facility Name:</b> El Dorado County Jail South Lake Tahoe	<b>Inspection Date:</b> October 9, 2024 10:00 AM
<b>Facility Capacity:</b> 158	<b>Last Inspection Date:</b>
<b>Address:</b> 1051 Al Tahoe Blvd, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150	<b>Telephone Number:</b> 530-573-3030 <b>FAX Number:</b>
<b>Facility Administrator:</b> Lieutenant	<b>Staff Interviewed:</b>
Type of Facility: Jail <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lockup/Temporary Holding <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Court Holding <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Hall <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Camp <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Committee Inspection Team Members:</b> William Blaylock, Renae Bugge, Susanne Colby, Debera Jackson, Gary Kinghorn	
<b>Findings and Recommendations:</b>	

AREA INSPECTED/REVIEWED (Please Check)		
<u>Quality of Life</u>	<u>Programs</u>	<u>Persons Interviewed</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Physical Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Inmates1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meals/Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vocational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Facility Manager
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental Health	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Services	• Medical
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Physical/Dental Health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence	• School Staff
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Victim/Gang Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Staff
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Line Staff
<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Involvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Food Services Staff
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> addressed or inspected		

# APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

## LOCAL INSPECTIONS

Fire Inspection Conducted: **YES/NO – Date: 07/12/2024**  
 Medical/Mental Health: **YES/NO – Date: 10/19/2023**  
 Environmental Health: **YES/NO – Date: 10/19/2023**  
 Nutritional Health: **YES/NO – Date: 06/25/2023**  
 Corrections Standards Authority: **YES/NO – Date: 08/19/2024**  
 Other (US Marshall): **YES/NO – Date: 09/27/2024**

## INDIVIDUAL CELLS/ROOMS

Condition of walls	<b>Walls were clean in both common areas and individual cells</b>
Personal possessions allowed in cell/room (Art, Books, etc.)?	<b>Inmates are given computer tablets by the jail to use for specific programs and communication and returned at night for recharging.</b>
Graffiti present?	<b>No graffiti was visible in the facility</b>
Ample bedding?	<b>Yes. Not all beds were being used</b>

## CONDITION OF GROUNDS

Lawns	<b>N/A</b>
Recreation Area	<b>Indoor primarily. Weather is an issue</b>
Blacktop	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Asphalt	<b>No Issues observed</b>

## EXTERIOR OF BUILDING(S)

General condition	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Paint	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Roof	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Drains/gutters	<b>No Issues observed</b>

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

INTERIOR OF BUILDING(S)	
Walls	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Paint	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Floors	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Drains	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Plumbing fixtures working	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Air vents	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Windows	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Are cleaning fluids and chemicals labeled and safely stored?	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Weapons locker present?	<b>Yes</b>
Are the hallways clear, are doors propped open or closed?	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Holding areas (cells/rooms) – [if present], is there access to drinking water and toilet?	<b>Yes</b>
Are there individual cells/rooms, or dormitories?	<b>There are both cells and dormitories.</b>
Adequate lighting?	<b>No Issues observed</b>
Temperature? Emergency Exit Path?	<b>No Issues observed</b>

MEALS/NUTRITION	
The kitchen area – Is it clean?	<b>Yes</b>
Are knives and chemicals locked?	<b>Yes</b>

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

### PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF INMATES

Appearance of inmates (dirty, unkempt, well groomed, etc.)?	<b>Inmates were in uniform as defined by the policies of the jail</b>
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### GENERAL INFORMATION

What is the capacity of the facility?	<b>158</b>
Has the facility exceeded capacity since the last inspection?	<b>no</b>
<b>Is the inmate classification the same as Placerville?</b>	<b>Yes Civil High Risk</b>
Since the last inspection, indicate the following:	
Number of suicides	<b>1 age 30s</b>
Number of attempted suicides	<b>2</b>
Number of deaths from other causes	<b>1 ETOH liver Died at Barton</b>
Number of escapes	<b>0</b>
Date of last fire/emergency drill	<b>2021- This should be done annually</b>

### STAFFING

Are there enough staff to monitor inmates?	
Does staff communicate in language that an inmate can understand?	<b>Yes. There is a translation service that they can use. English and Spanish are the predominate languages and there is staff who can speak both.</b>
Diversity of staff:	<b>Caucasian and Hispanic</b>
Impression of staff/inmate interactions:	<b>Per the Commander the interactions are good</b>

### ORIENTATION OF INMATES

<b>Are there any rules or procedures at SLT that are different than PV?</b>	<b>Both jails have the same rules and procedures</b>
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## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

Are rules and grievance procedures posted?	<b>Yes</b>
Are rules and grievance procedures understood by inmates?	<b>Yes</b>
Inmates interviewed?	<b>no</b>

### MEALS/NUTRITION

Have the inmates working in the kitchen been trained?	<b>Yes</b>
Have the inmates had a medical clearance/review before assignment?	<b>Yes</b> <b>Staff have a medical clearance before accepted into custody then have a more thorough evaluation before housed.</b>
<b>Are meals served in the cell, dayroom or at a central cafeteria?</b>	<b>Meals are served in a common area and in a cell if needed</b>
<b>Are inmates permitted to converse during meals?</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Length of time allowed for eating.</b>	<b>Up to 30 minutes</b>

### PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF INMATES

<b>Showers:</b>	
Frequency:	<b>Can be daily if they want</b>
Privacy:	<b>Private</b>
Properly Maintained?	<b>Yes</b>
Supervised by staff?	<b>Not in the shower however the shower doors show there is someone in the shower</b>
Any reported assaults by inmates on inmates?	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Condition of clothing</b> <i>Does the clothing fit?</i> <i>Is it appropriate for the weather?</i>	<b>Yes</b>

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

PROGRAMS	
Exercise: is it inside or out? (dayroom or outside)	Both, weather permitting.
How frequently is it offered?	Depends upon classification, or disciplinary restrictions.
How much time is each inmate offered?	30 minutes or more.
Do men get more exercise time than the women?	Each get the same
Are there clergy available to inmates upon request?	Yes
Is there access to religious services?	Yes
Are anger management and other applicable programs available?	In Placerville
Are medical services available? Meds: stored and dispensed	Yes Medications are in a locked space and dispensed by the RN/LVN
How frequently is medical staff onsite?	Yes, A physician comes in twice per week, however, spends more time at the jail doing other medical work. There is 1 RN daily on staff, an LVN in the evening and night, and a LCSW 20 hours per week.
How long do inmates wait to be seen?	Can be seen same day for an urgent issue and within a few days for chronic issues
Is a physician available by phone or onsite?	Both
Are mental health services available?	Yes
How frequently is mental health staff onsite?	Tele psych care
How long do inmates wait to be seen?	It depends on the issue. Tele psych available
Are vocational classes available?	Yes
If so, what types, cooking, gardening, painting, computers, etc.?	No Culinary or gardening
Is there a program to involve community volunteers?	

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

Is there a work program?	Yes
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DISCIPLINE OF INMATES	
How often/levels discipline enacted?	daily
What is the range of discipline options?	Verbal- warning Verbal twice inmate loses benefits Major offense can be on lockdown

GRIEVANCES	
Can we have the report? Resolution	There were three grievances, 1 medication and 2 for meals

TELEPHONE	
Do inmates have access to telephones?	Tablets can be used for communications

CORRESPONDENCE	
Incoming/outgoing – are inmates aware that mail can be read?	Rules are posted and inmates are oriented to jail procedures

VISITING	
What are the provisions for special visits with attorneys/clergy?	Attorneys come to jail. There are confidential rooms where they can communicate, each in separate windowed space divided by cement walls.
Do all inmates have access to visiting? <i>If not give reasons:</i>	no

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM	
College level/high school level/other:	GED and some online education from Junior College
Name of school district providing educational services:	The Rising Scholars Program at Lake Tahoe Community College (LTCC) provides access to education for current and former incarcerated individuals, helping them earn degrees and certifications <sup>1</sup> .

# APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

## Detention Facility Inspection Form Placerville Jail

<b>Facility Name: Placerville Jail</b>	<b>Inspection Date: October 2, 2024 at 10:00 AM</b>
<b>Facility Capacity:</b>	<b>Last Inspection Date:</b>
<b>Address:</b> 300 Forni Rd. Placerville, CA 95667	<b>Telephone Number: 530-621-6030</b>  <b>FAX Number:</b>
<b>Facility Administrator:</b> Lieutenant Jon Eslick	<b>Staff Interviewed:</b>
Type of Facility: Jail <input type="checkbox"/> Lockup/Temporary Holding <input type="checkbox"/> Court Holding <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Hall <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Camp <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Committee Inspection Team Members:</b>  Robert Biton William Blaylock Renaë Bugge Susanne Colby Curtis Darnell Debera Jackson Gary Kinghorn	

AREA INSPECTED/REVIEWED (Please Check)		
<u>Quality of Life</u>	<u>Programs</u>	<u>Persons Interviewed</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Physical Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inmates <sup>1</sup>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meals/Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vocational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Facility Manager
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental Health	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Services	• Medical
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Physical/Dental Health	<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence	• School Staff
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Victim/Gang Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Staff

# APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

<input type="radio"/> Visiting	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Substance Abuse	<input type="radio"/> Line Staff
<input type="radio"/> Volunteer Involvement	<input type="radio"/> Other	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Food Services Staff
		<input type="radio"/> Other

## 1.Walk Through

### LOCAL INSPECTIONS

**Fire Inspection Conducted:** YES– Date: 8/29/2024  
**Medical/Mental Health:** YES– Date: 7/26/2024  
**Environmental Health:** YES– Date: 4/16/2024  
**Nutritional Health:** YES– Date: 4/9/2024  
**Corrections Standards Authority** YES– Date: 08/19/2024  
**US Marshall** YES– Date: 09/27/2024

### INDIVIDUAL CELLS/ROOMS

<b>Condition of walls</b>	<b>Walls were intact</b>
<b>Personal possessions allowed in cell/room (Art, Books, etc.)</b>	<b>Each inmate has access to a tablet</b>
<b>Graffiti present</b>	<b>Yes, throughout the facility the walls were marked with graffiti</b>
<b>Ample bedding</b>	<b>Yes</b>

### CONDITION OF GROUNDS

<b>Recreation Area</b>	<b>Indoor</b>
<b>Blacktop</b>	<b>No issues</b>
<b>Asphalt</b>	<b>No issues</b>

### EXTERIOR OF BUILDING(S)

<b>General condition</b>	<b>In good condition</b>
<b>Paint</b>	<b>In good condition</b>

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

Roof	In good condition
Drains/gutters	In good condition

### INTERIOR OF BUILDING(S)

Walls	intact
Floors	Floors maintenance needed
Are cleaning fluids and chemicals labeled and safely stored?	yes
Weapons locker present?	Yes multiple
Recreation/sports equipment:	No balls
Are the hallways clear, are doors propped open or closed?	No
Holding areas (cells/rooms) – [if present], is there access to drinking water and toilet?	Yes
Are there individual cells/rooms, or dormitories?	Yes, there are individual cells as well as a dormitory. Inmates that are in work programs are in a dormitory
Beds – Type of bed and is it off the floor?	Mattress on cement platform
Adequate lighting?	yes
Temperature?	No issues

### MEALS/NUTRITION

The kitchen area – Is it clean?	Kitchen area is clean
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# APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

Are knives and chemicals locked?	Yes
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## PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF INMATES

Appearance of inmates (dirty, unkempt, well groomed, etc.)?	Uniformed in different color depending on the the level of the convict
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## 2. Interview Questions

### GENERAL INFORMATION

What is the capacity of the facility?	303
Has the facility exceeded capacity since the last inspection?	no
What is the inmate classification system? <i>Describe</i>	Minimum- inmates can be in work program Medium- general population Maximum- in one unit There is administrative separation, disciplinary separation and civil separation (incompetent to stand trial)
Since the last inspection, indicate the following:	
<i>Number of suicides</i>	0
<i>Number of attempted suicides</i>	4
<i>Number of deaths from other causes</i>	0
<i>Number of escapes</i>	0
Date of last fire/emergency drill	Not done this calendar year. Will be resuming

### STAFFING

Are there enough staff to monitor inmates?	No
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## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

	There are 2 issues- hired way below allocation of 85. Currently 55-59. There is higher pay in other counties
Does staff communicate in language that an inmate can understand?	Mostly. There is a translation service for those that need it.
Impression of staff/inmate interactions:	Staff is professional when interacting with inmates

### ORIENTATION OF INMATES

Are inmates oriented to rules and procedures?	There is a rule books and programs Each inmate has a tablet that has the information Inmates are oriented on how to earn credits to watch movies etc.
Are rules and grievance procedures posted?	Yes, it is posted and in the rule book
Are rules and grievance procedures understood by inmates?	Yes
Inmates interviewed?	Yes
Number interviewed?	Four
Comments:	

### MEALS/NUTRITION

Have the inmates working in the kitchen been trained?	Yes
Have the inmates had a medical clearance/review before assignment?	Medical clearance is done before being brought into custody then more thoroughly before housing

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

Are meals served in the cell, dayroom or at a central cafeteria?	Both In the day room it is done by pod
Are inmates permitted to converse during meals?	Yes
Length of time allowed for eating.	15 minutes
<b>PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF INMATES</b>	
Showers:	Can be done daily. Generally done every other day and are private. No supervision inside the shower
Any reported assaults by inmates on inmates?	The inmates fight daily
Condition of clothing	Clothing fits and is appropriate for the weather

### PROGRAMS

Exercise: is it inside or out?	Inside
How frequently is it offered?	Inmates who are dangerous or have an issue getting along with others are scheduled in the exercise room by themselves
Do men get more exercise time than the women?	Equal time
Are there clergy available to inmates upon request?	Yes, upon request
Is there access to religious services?	8-9 different services, Catholic, Christian, Jehovah Witness, Mormon
Are anger management and other applicable programs available?	MRT- Moral Recognition Therapy
Are medical services available?	Yes, RN and LVN There is a locked pharmacy

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

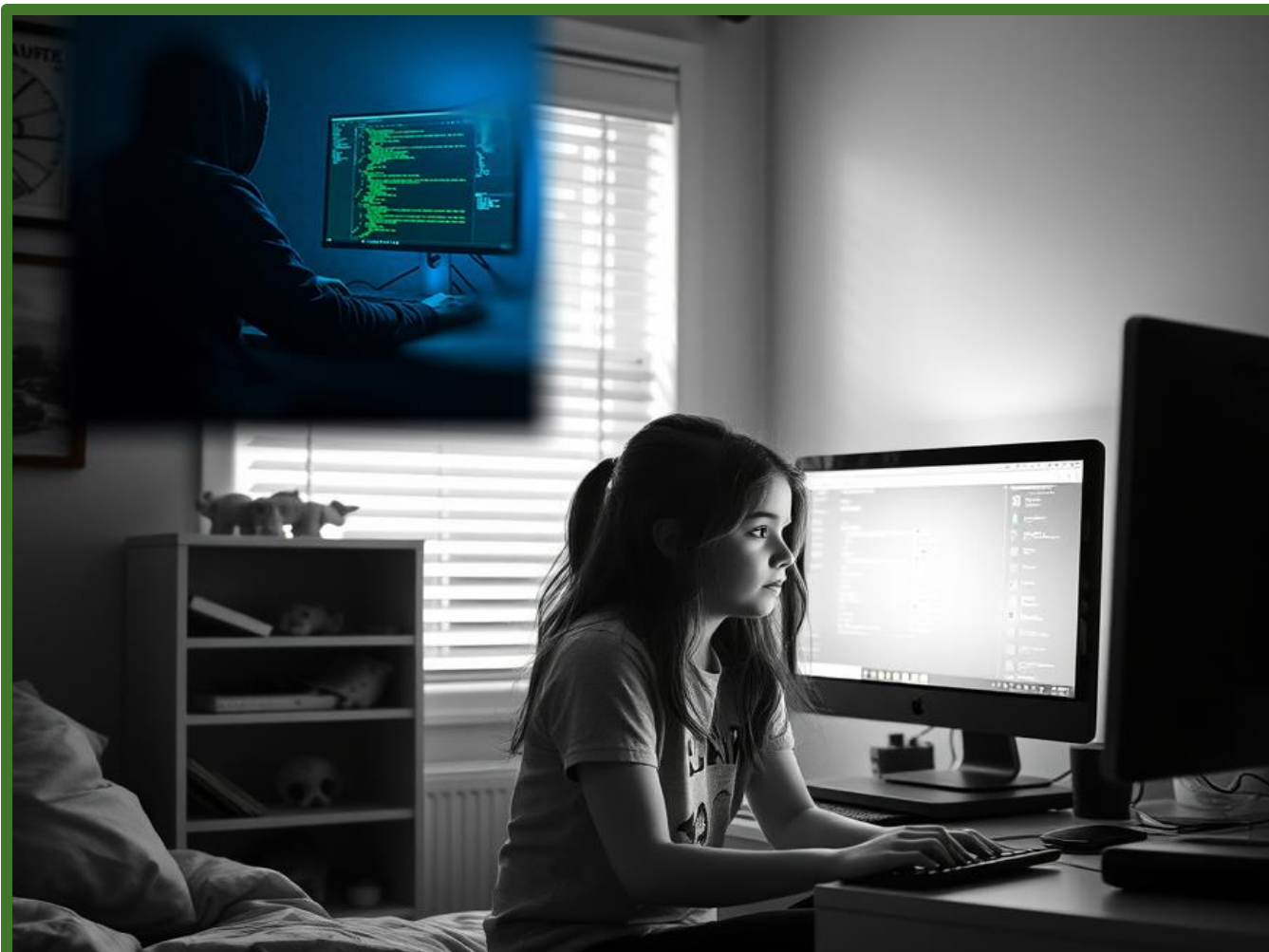
How frequently is medical staff onsite?	MD onsite few days per week ad available by phone -Wellpath
How long do inmates wait to be seen?	5 days to weeks depending on the situation
Is a physician available by phone or onsite?	Yes, the MD is available by phone. There is an MD on site a few days per week. Wellpath
Are mental health services available?	20 Hours per week. LCSW, LCFT
How frequently is mental health staff onsite?	20 hour per week
How long do inmates wait to be seen?	Variable due to shortages
Are vocational classes available?	Yes. The inmates use tablets to take classes.
If so, what types, cooking, gardening,	Inmates use tablets
Is there a program to involve community volunteers?	
Is there a work program?	Programming is voluntary Self-Reliance Program Inmate worker program. Inmates earn points to reduce time from their sentence.

### DISCIPLINE OF INMATES

How often is discipline enacted?	Low level is enacted every day. Formal requires a hearing to deter future issue
What is the range of discipline options?	Cleaning duties, loss of tablets and cell isolation

### TELEPHONE

Access to telephones?	tablets
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2024-25 GRAND JURY REPORT  
EL DORADO COUNTY  
FEBRUARY 11, 2025 - CASE #25-03

## EDSO: PREVENTING INTERNET CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

*The Grand Jury investigated the capabilities and resources of this critically important Sheriff unit focused on the increasing number of high-tech crimes.*

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*Cover Caption: Google Gemini AI-generated image of a girl and hacker. Created 2/5/25 by G. Kinghorn*

# SUMMARY

## Summary

*“Amateurs hack systems; Professionals hack people.”*

- Bruce Schneier, Cybersecurity researcher and author

### HIGHLIGHTS

The El Dorado County Sheriff's Office (EDSO) has a well-equipped High Tech Crimes Unit (HTCU) that supports a wide range of investigations that involve the recovery of digital forensic evidence, such as data from cell phones, hard drives, and cloud storage. The underlying criminal activity can range from financial fraud, narcotics, and industrial espionage. The unit is primarily responsible for coordination with regional and federal task forces that investigate crimes against children, including creating and consuming child pornography, as well as child trafficking.

Human trafficking is the fastest-growing organized crime activity in the United States, estimating that 250,000 children per year are victims of trafficking for sex and forced labor. HTCU receives approximately 200 leads per year from the International Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force and from online service providers such as Google, Discord, and Reddit. It has a backlog of about 250 leads within the County that need to be followed up currently, more than a year's worth. The unit has state-of-the-art technology and highly skilled resources to apply to these classes of investigations, but the problem is quickly outpacing the County's ability to fully address.

The Grand Jury learned that there is a shocking amount of child trafficking occurring in the County. Highway 50 is a common corridor for moving children between Nevada and Sacramento, a known hub for child trafficking activity and a gateway to other regions.

### RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

The Grand Jury was deeply impressed with HTCU capabilities and resources, but more can be done, including ensuring additional training time for dedicated detectives to stay abreast of current technologies and trends, and leveraging ICAC resources more fully.

# BACKGROUND

## Background

The Grand Jury learned about the El Dorado Sheriff's Office (EDSO) High Tech Crimes Unit (HTCU) from our members' participation in the EDSO Citizen's Academy. With the proliferation of technology-related crimes and the need to discover digital evidence from a wide variety of devices, we wanted to learn more. This is a critical aspect of EDSO activities that the public is generally not aware of, and we wanted to research and document the current resources and capabilities of this unit.

A large part of the HTCU case load is dedicated to crimes against children, including child pornography and child trafficking. The Grand Jury learned during interviews from high-level law enforcement that there is a shocking amount of child trafficking occurring in the County. Sacramento is a known hub for child trafficking activity and a gateway to other regions for moving children. Highway 50 is a common corridor for moving children between Nevada and Sacramento. The County may also have a reputation as having more places to hide out for nefarious actors than denser urban counties.

There is an urgent need across the nation to address and eliminate these crimes against humanity and El Dorado County (County) and HTCU is a primary resource to that end. It's important to raise awareness of the problem and understand what the County is currently doing about it.

# METHODOLOGY

## Methodology

### INTERVIEWS

- HTCUC staff
- County Sheriff
- Tour of the EDSO data center

### DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- EDSO web site
- ICAC and other agency partner websites
- Digital forensic tool vendor websites
- HTCUC prepared PowerPoint presentation

## Discussion

The Sheriff's Office High-Tech Crimes Unit (HTCU) is a two-person team of sworn officers (both detectives) that investigate computer or technology-related criminal activity within the County. This includes conducting the relevant computer forensic analysis and evidence collection needed to support crime investigation. While there are many exclusively high-tech crime categories, criminal activity can have a high-tech component with the use of electronic communication and cellular phones that can hold incriminating evidence. HTCU is frequently involved in sexual assault and rape investigations, narcotics investigations, violent crimes, and domestic terrorism.

High-tech crimes can include identity theft, financial fraud, cyber-bullying, cryptocurrency scams, digital information theft, industrial espionage, network and computer system intrusion, as well as various hacking, phishing, malware, and ransomware attacks. Currently the most heinous and rapidly increasing crimes are crimes against children, which includes child abuse, child pornography, and child trafficking. HTCU has a strong relationship with the regional Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force program in Sacramento that coordinates cross-county and agency efforts in Northern California and the Central Valley. In addition to ICAC, HTCU partners with regional, statewide and federal agencies such as the Sacramento Valley High-Tech Crimes Taskforce, the U.S. Secret Service, and the FBI.

As we learned more about HTCU capabilities, we grouped their activity into two main categories: the digital forensic investigations that they perform on a wide variety of criminal activity, and the work they do in conjunction with ICAC investigating crimes against children, including child pornography and trafficking. Each of these areas is discussed further below.

### A GROWING NEED FOR DIGITAL FORENSIC RESEARCH

Digital forensic research is often a critical component of many crime investigations. With the proliferation of technology, particularly cell phone use, HTCU is asked to support a wide range of investigations. Digital forensics is defined as, "*the application of forensically sound investigation and analysis techniques to gather and preserve evidence from a particular computing device in a way that is suitable for presentation in a court of law*" (source: [TechTarget](#)). Digital forensics

## DISCUSSION

can cover computer devices, cloud computing assets, hard drives, mobile devices, and network infrastructure.

With the proper tools (and skills), digital information that has been hidden or deleted can be recovered from many systems, particularly hard drives and cell phones. Criminal activity can also be identified and traced over the internet and cloud service providers using cloud-based forensic tools and techniques. Internet service providers and social media companies coordinate with local law enforcement teams to identify and refer suspected crimes for further investigation. Forensic investigations can now be conducted across wide geographic areas involving multiple agencies, including across states or even countries.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) reports that financial losses nationwide have been increasing by roughly 30-50% per year with the number of reported complaints holding steady at about 800,000 per year since 2020. The largest number of complaints continues to be “phishing,” a technique for attempting to acquire sensitive data, such as bank account numbers, through a fraudulent solicitation in email or on a web site, in which the perpetrator masquerades as a legitimate business or reputable person (source: [NIST Computer Security Research Center](#)).

The technology used by hackers and other criminals is easily available on the Internet, along with YouTube videos and open-source tools, that make high-tech crimes easy, profitable and challenging to trace. Hackers can effectively obscure their location, internet address, and identity through commercially available network services like the [TOR network](#), a secure, encrypted protocol that can ensure privacy for data and communications on the web, or several virtual private network (VPN) providers and products. These technologies help make up the Dark Web, a part of the World Wide Web that is only accessible by means of a special layered VPN, allowing users to remain anonymous and untraceable. Over 50% of Dark Web content has been found to be illegal or illicit content, which includes virtually all of the online pornography, drug, and child trafficking sites. The TOR network alone hosts roughly 30,000 hidden sites today.

The HTCU’s job is further complicated by the vast amounts of data that a single investigation can entail. Finding relevant evidence on a single hard-drive or cell phone, let alone across a

## DISCUSSION

large cloud network, can be a tedious, time-consuming effort, even using state-of-the-art forensic tools. HTCUC is a modern, high-tech approach to law enforcement that can support even the most challenging cases. HTCUC is the digital equivalent to the physical evidence gathering and analysis capabilities of the Sheriff's Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) unit.

HTCUC has its own digital crime lab (shown below) with two full-time detectives and state-of-the-art digital forensic capabilities. The lab has five forensic computer workstations, a physical evidence storage locker, a stainless steel hardware workspace, a soldering station, a mobile device imaging workstation, one Petabyte of digital evidence storage (that's  $10^6$  or one million Gigabytes), with offsite backup, all running on a 10GB/sec high-speed network.



*Figure – The EDSO HTCUC crime lab. Photo courtesy of EDSO.*

The lab uses leading digital forensic software tools. Cellebrite is an Israeli company that sells the most widely used mobile phone forensic tool, including the ability to recover deleted data and decipher encrypted and password protected contents. Cellebrite UFED (Universal Forensic Extraction Device) has become the standard in lawful mobile device extraction and forensics. It has now expanded to cover digital cameras, drones, SIM cards, and other mobile/removable media.

## DISCUSSION



*Figure – An early model of Cellebrite UFED used by HTC. Details of later models and current capabilities are confidential and only available under non-disclosure agreements (NDA). Photo courtesy of EDSO.*

For computers and mass storage devices, HTC uses Magnet Axiom, a similar tool to Cellebrite, but which excels at hard drive images. Magnet Axiom processes the file evidence into a searchable case file, allowing law enforcement to retrieve browser histories, deleted files, chat dialogs, and cloud-based data. It has the ability to bypass some passwords and encrypted data to retrieve raw evidence.

The other main custom tool used by HTC is Sumuri Forensics, a Delaware-based leading provider of unique and relevant digital forensic solutions in both hardware and software. Sumuri PALADIN Forensic is a modified “live” Linux distribution that simplifies various forensics tasks in a forensically sound manner. The Sumuri TALINO KA workstation is custom built on the most reliable and stable platform designed by Certified Forensic Computer Examiners for use in specialized forensic applications. The TALINO workstation runs Magnet Axiom and other forensic tools with specialized hardware that is needed for forensic extraction, password cracking, and other forensic processes. Sumuri has made it their mission to help law enforcement organizations to fight human slavery, child exploitation, and terrorism. They

## DISCUSSION

annually donate workstations to small law enforcement organizations and agencies in the U.S. and internationally.

HTCU detectives provided us with statistics of the number of forensic investigations they have performed and case types they have supported since their lab was fully established in October 2020. Using the above tools, with stats collected through October 2024, they were able to successfully forensically image over 80% of the device images they attempted, processing nearly 85 Terabytes of information in 368 cases and nearly 650 individual devices. About 70% of the device images were cell phones. None of the other device types (internal hard disk drives, SIM cards, thumb drives, and tablets) accounted for more than 5 or 6% of the total devices forensically analyzed.

One-third of the cases HTCUC supported primarily involved narcotics. 25% of all cases were related to child exploitation. Burglary, assault (including sexual assault and assault with a deadly weapon), grand theft, and homicide cases together accounted for about half of HTCUC cases.

**Finding 1** – The EDSO HTCUC is a well-resourced unit that assists in a wide-variety of criminal investigations and coordinates with several regional and federal agencies on high-tech crimes. The small staff have the required industry expertise in IT and forensics technology, coupled with a law enforcement background to ensure the County has the skills and tools required to support the growing number of investigations and case requirements.

### INVESTIGATING CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

HTCU is part of a nationwide integrated program, the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force. ICAC consists of 61 coordinated local task forces representing over 5,400 federal, state, and law enforcement agencies dedicated to investigating, prosecuting, and developing effective responses to online child exploitation. ICAC training providers are essential in providing the federal, state, and local agencies that make up the ICAC Task Force Program the tools and techniques necessary to develop an effective response to technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and internet crimes against children.

## DISCUSSION

The ICAC Program was developed in response to the increasing number of children and teenagers using the Internet and other technology, the proliferation of child sexual abuse images available electronically, and the heightened online activity by predators seeking unsupervised contact with potential underage victims. The ICAC Task Force agencies are engaged in both proactive and reactive investigations, forensic examinations, and criminal prosecutions. By helping state and local agencies develop effective, sustainable responses to online child victimization, including responses to child sexual abuse images, the ICAC Program has increased law enforcement's capacity to combat technology-facilitated crimes against children at every level.

EDSO is an active member of the Sacramento Valley ICAC Task Force. Overall, EDSO has five detectives dedicated to investigating sex crimes including those involving children, including the two detectives in HTCUC that take the lead in ICAC case referrals. From June 2023, until November 2024 (17 months), ICAC referred 222 cases to EDSO and HTCUC. Of those, 88 were closed or referred to other agencies and 134 are currently under investigation.

Those 222 cases were given a standard prioritization, based on urgency and imminent danger to a child. Twenty of the cases involved a child in danger, with two of them in imminent or ongoing danger. The remaining 202 cases involved child sexual abuse material (CSAM). ICAC referrals are initially generated by online service providers and social media communities where offending material is shared or stored. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) is also a referral source to ICAC and may come across child exploitation material in the absence of a designated online service provider.

Roughly half of the ICAC referrals come from either Synchronoss or Discord. Synchronoss is a very large cloud provider used by telecom organizations and other communication and service providers to build personalized cloud environments that are in turn used by individuals. It provides enough flexibility and privacy of content that makes it an ideal platform to host, share, and sell illicit content. Unlike the Dark Web, Synchronoss makes every attempt to police its platform, identify this illicit content, and refer it to ICAC and local law enforcement agencies. Discord is an instant messaging, content sharing and community building platform primarily used by gamers, but has many other communities of interest, including apparently child

## DISCUSSION

exploitation activities. Other messaging and community building platforms, such as Reddit, Snapchat, and Google account for less than 10% of ICAC referrals each.



*Figure – Outcome of successful case arrest initiated through ICAC and processed by HTCUC. Photo courtesy of EDSO.*

The referral process starts when one of these messaging platforms identifies CSAM and flags it for review. NCMEC receives a report on the material who may perform an initial investigation, including background checks on users and other available open-source information. An attempt is made to localize the illicit user and refer it to the appropriate regional ICAC task force. The regional task force will likely do additional research before involving the local law enforcement agency, in our case EDSO and HTCUC.

HTCUC conducts its investigation further collecting information on the location of the user, including computer IP address and the illicit nature of the content. Once the address of the potential offender is confirmed, law enforcement must request a warrant from a judge after

## DISCUSSION

establishing probable cause for the search. Then a court order can be issued authorizing a search of the target residence and all electronic devices found within. A team of EDSO deputies and detectives will conduct the search, conduct interviews, and initiate appropriate legal action.

The Grand Jury learned that HTCUC is an “Affiliate Member” of the Sacramento ICAC Task Force, but not “Full Members.” As Affiliates, HTCUC has a strong relationship with the team and can request resources (bodies) for their own investigations as needed or voluntarily participate in their investigations when possible. The requirement is that full members contribute a minimum of two days per week directly to the Task Force to work cases potentially out of their local jurisdiction. In return, full members receive direct benefit from ICAC grants and funding opportunities (paid training and equipment for their own office) as well as direct access to all equipment and tools available in the Sacramento office. At present, HTCUC does not have the staff resources to contribute two days per week to ICAC activities, although they could benefit from the additional funding and resources available to full members.

At present, ICAC refers approximately 200 cases per year to HTCUC. HTCUC has a backlog of 250 cases pending review or action, more than a year’s worth. They close out about 100 ICAC tips a year, with about half of those resulting in an arrest or field case. If HTCUC could investigate the current backlog of ICAC tips, at the corresponding rate of arrests or field cases, EDSO could take approximately 100 more child predators or conveyers and consumers of CSAM off the streets that are otherwise going to remain at large.

Both detectives in HTCUC also have skills in other areas that reduce their ability to focus exclusively on high-tech and ICAC investigations. One detective is a member of the Explosive Ordinance Division (EOD) bomb squad, including being trained and able to respond to any chemical, biological or radioactive attacks within the County. The second detective is a skilled drone pilot and also serves on the Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) team in EDSO. It’s great that EDSO can leverage broad technical skills in multiple areas, and that we have so much expertise within the County without hiring specialized talent, but it does mean that we are slower to work through the ICAC backlog.

Even if you can legitimately say that an impending chemical or radiological terrorist attack, for example, should take precedence above an ICAC lead, each of these workloads requires

## DISCUSSION

additional annual training, education, and coordination with state and federal agencies on an ongoing basis in the absence of an active incident that take time. The Grand Jury did not learn what percentage of time the detectives split between their secondary units on an annual basis.

There are no plans to increase the number of detectives in HTCUC in the foreseeable future despite the ICAC backlog and the need to prioritize investigations. The Grand Jury cannot speculate on overall staffing priorities across all EDSO, and we assume the staffing resources in HTCUC are appropriate. There is, however, more work that can be done, and there are important leads to CSAM investigations that are not being addressed.

**Finding 2** – Current staffing levels in HTCUC do not allow EDSO to be a “full” member of ICAC, limiting the County’s ability to receive additional grants and leverage ICAC resources. HTCUC also has a significant backlog of leads from ICAC that could lead to as many as 100 consumers of CSAM or other crimes against children. While two detectives are currently assigned to HTCUC, their commitment to other units means they are less than full time on HTCUC investigations.

The Grand Jury is aware that the rare skills of the HTCUC detectives are in high demand in industry where salaries are considerably higher than EDC. The County is fortunate that HTCUC staff appear satisfied and are fully committed to their work of focusing on the growing problems of child abuse and trafficking. They would be very difficult to replace and a loss of even one person would be devastating to EDSO efforts in this area.

The HTCUC crime lab and available desk space have been designed for future expansion and the possibility of adding one or two more detectives. Evidence storage was recently migrated to the EDSO data center from the lab to make more space available and to reduce equipment noise.

### A CHILD RECOVERY AND TREATMENT EFFORT IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

While not specifically addressed to EDSO or County activity, to complete the picture of the scope of child abuse activity and the need for attention in this area, the Grand Jury learned

## DISCUSSION

about a project in Live Oak, California (Sutter County) called [Peace of Heaven](#). The Church of Glad Tidings in nearby Yuba City was approached in early 2024 by a task force that asked for help in finding safe housing for over 800(!) trafficked children that had been recently rescued in the Bay Area. The church had no solution but have since embarked on acquiring a ten-acre property that was once a low-security woman's prison and is converting it into a healing center for rescued and traumatized youth. They are partnering with [Mission Safe Harbour](#), the most aggressive child rescue operation in the world, on the conversion of the facility and future treatment programs.

The County should be aware of child rescue programs like this and continue to coordinate efforts with regional organizations to end this scourge of child exploitation and trafficking.

# FINDINGS

## Findings

**Finding 1** – The EDSO HTCUC is a well-resourced unit that assists in a wide variety of criminal investigations and coordinates with several regional and federal agencies on high-tech crimes. The small staff have the required industry expertise in IT and forensics technology, coupled with a law enforcement background to ensure the County has the skills and tools required to support the growing number of investigations and case requirements.

**Finding 2** – Current staffing levels in HTCUC do not allow EDSO to be a “full” member of ICAC, limiting the County’s ability to receive additional grants and leverage ICAC resources. HTCUC also has a significant backlog of leads from ICAC that could lead to as many as 100 consumers of CSAM or other crimes against children. While two detectives are currently assigned to HTCUC, their commitment to other units means they are less than full time on HTCUC investigations.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends to the Sheriff of El Dorado County that:

**Recommendation 1** – By the start of the 2025-2026 budget year, the HTCUC should take advantage of additional training and industry conferences to stay abreast of the latest technologies and cybersecurity trends, including attending the Black Hat conference, and technology vendor user group meetings, such as the Cellebrite user summit.

**Recommendation 2** – By the start of the 2025-2026 budget year, identify an EDSO resource that can coordinate with the Sacramento regional ICAC task force roughly two days per week and allow HTCUC to become a “full member” of ICAC in order to leverage available grant money and additional regional resources.

# REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

## Request for Responses

A Civil Grand Jury report details a single investigation. Each report lists FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS. The responsible organization 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 on 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 elected officer:

- Sheriff of El Dorado County
  - All Findings and Recommendations

For more information refer to [How to Respond to an El Dorado County Grand Jury Report](#) available on the El Dorado County Grand Jury webpage.



2024-25 GRAND JURY REPORT  
EL DORADO COUNTY  
FEBRUARY 4, 2025 – CASE #25-04

## DOT MAINTENANCE – WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

*Assessing the public complaint process of the Department of Transportation's Road Maintenance Division for efficiency and transparency.*

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*Cover photo: Salmon Falls Bridge, Salmon Falls Rd. Courtesy: G. Kinghorn.*

# SUMMARY

## Summary

*"It is a rough road that leads to heights of greatness."*

*- Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Roman philosopher*

### HIGHLIGHTS

Road conditions are a common topic of discussion throughout El Dorado County (County). There have been concerns raised by El Dorado County residents on Nextdoor, Facebook, and in letters to the *Mountain Democrat*. Grand Jury members have also observed poor conditions at various locations on County roads.

Depressions, asphalt alligator cracking, pavement delamination, crumbling, and potholes have been noted throughout the County. The Board of Supervisors (BOS), responding to community input, has identified road maintenance as a necessary priority in 2024-2025. The BOS has yet to establish performance metrics or objectives. In addition, the County Department of Transportation (DOT) Road Maintenance / Projects Division (Maintenance) does not track or update any aspect of public-generated road complaints, including the number received, mean time for resolution, identified deferments, and repair costs. They cannot report these details to the BOS or any other public agency, which is shocking for a previously identified priority.

The County relies heavily on the public to identify immediate road hazards (primarily potholes). Residents can submit their complaints to DOT via webpage complaint form, email, phone calls, or in-person reporting at the DOT office. However, upon receiving public complaints, the department lacks clear, written procedures for guiding staff in the complaint handling process.

The software used by DOT for managing repair projects has not consistently worked since a July 2024 software update. As a result, the records must be printed and physically delivered to the employee responsible for investigating issues. Additionally, an auto-generated complaint resolution email feature has not always worked. This resulted in staff having to manually send emails to complainants with updates or a final disposition.

## SUMMARY



*Alligator cracking on Wentworth Springs Rd. at Chipmunk Trail,  
Georgetown, July 2024*

DOT Maintenance relies heavily on citizen input to identify road hazards but has made minimal efforts to engage the public. There are no DOT vehicle placards, no signage, and no County mail flyers encouraging pothole reporting. Many residents are unaware of how or where to report issues, leading to an underreporting of hazards. Resulting delays in addressing road safety concerns increase accident risks and road deterioration.

The Grand Jury reviewed the processes, procedures, and practices DOT Maintenance employs to maintain its roads and address public concerns.

### RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

The Grand Jury recommends DOT correct the issues with the software for processing of road complaints. We also recommend DOT implement a formal written procedure for receiving, processing, and responding to public requests for road repairs. Additionally, we recommend a formal process for reporting to the BOS metrics regarding public complaints. Finally, DOT Maintenance should raise public awareness about how to submit concerns about road issues.

## Background

Road conditions in El Dorado County are a common topic of concern. Grand Jury members use County roads daily and have observed declining conditions. One of our members emailed a pothole complaint to DOT and did not receive an acknowledgement email or any subsequent email stating a completed repair or deferment of the repair. A review of social media complaints found that a Nextdoor user complained about potholes on County-maintained Mosquito Road. A writer to the *Mountain Democrat* complained about potholes in a letter to the editor dated January 18, 2023, which stated, "...Smith Flat Road at Broadway currently has potholes the size of the Grand Canyon." While this specific area is within the City of Placerville, all the above piqued our interest on how DOT is made aware of potholes and how quickly they are repaired.

The BOS has identified road maintenance as a priority issue for 2024-2025, but did not appear to have established key performance metrics, or even demand progress updates from DOT. Without an effective means of tracking and reporting road repairs, the Grand Jury was concerned that priority repairs could be delayed, there could be cost inefficiencies, and an unacceptable level of liability risk.

We investigated how DOT maintains and manages the roads under its authority. We also examined how the BOS, DOT, and the residents of the County rely on each other to identify road problems, infrastructure maintenance, and repairs.

# METHODOLOGY

## Methodology

### INTERVIEWS

During the investigation, the Grand Jury interviewed administrators, managers, and employees of the El Dorado County Department of Transportation, Information Technologies, and the City of Placerville.

### DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- NCE Report: *California Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment Final Report April 2023* <https://savecaliforniastreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Statewide-Needs-2022-FINAL.pdf>
- *El Dorado County 2024 Strategic Plan* <https://www.eldoradocounty.ca.gov/files/assets/county/v/1/documents/government/cao/strategic-plan/2024-edc-strategic-plan.pdf>
- *El Dorado County Capital Improvement Project – 2024 CIP* <https://www.eldoradocounty.ca.gov/files/assets/county/v/1/documents/land-use/transportation/cip/2024/adopted-2024-cip-book.pdf>
- City of Placerville Public Works Department: *Pothole Report to City Council July 14, 2020* [https://www.cityofplacerville.org/media/City%20Council%20Staff%20Reports/2020/07%2014%202020/15.3 SR%20Pothole-Asphalt%20Maintenance%20%20SR%20\(NS\).pdf](https://www.cityofplacerville.org/media/City%20Council%20Staff%20Reports/2020/07%2014%202020/15.3%20SR%20Pothole-Asphalt%20Maintenance%20%20SR%20(NS).pdf)

# DISCUSSION

## Discussion

### THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION – MAINTENANCE DIVISION

The County's Department of Transportation (DOT) employs 156 full-time and two part-time positions. DOT is responsible for maintaining approximately 1,100 miles of road on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and in the unincorporated areas of South Lake Tahoe. There are several divisions and units in the DOT, including Maintenance.

The primary concerns of DOT Maintenance are public safety on County-maintained roads and the preservation of road infrastructure. DOT Maintenance responsibilities cover a wide and complex range of tasks ensuring the safety and functionality of the transportation infrastructure, including:

- Roadway maintenance,
- Bridge maintenance,
- Guardrail maintenance,
- Drainage,
- Roadside ditching,
- Snow removal and ice control,
- Roadside spraying and vegetation control,
- Roadway emergency response,
- Erosion control and stormwater management,
- Traffic engineering,
- Traffic signals,
- Roadway striping,
- Signs and pavement marking,
- Brushing,
- Pavement,
- Curb, gutter, and sidewalk repair, and
- Dead animal removal.

# DISCUSSION

## THE CONDITION OF COUNTY MAINTAINED ROADS

Maintaining the County's roads requires a constant effort of monitoring pavement conditions, prioritizing limited resources, anticipating weather, and responding to public concerns. Insufficient maintenance results in poor road conditions, which in turn can lead to vehicle damage, accidents, and injuries. Deferred maintenance can result in increased road repair costs, adverse environmental impact, and reduced property values. Preservation of road infrastructure is vital for public safety and asset protection. Public perception is the County is not adequately maintaining its roads.

A 2023 [study](#) commissioned by the California Association of Cities of 2022 road conditions, using a scale of zero (failed) to 100 (excellent), described the statewide average pavement condition index (PCI) at 65 which is considered "at risk." El Dorado County roads, including the cities of Placerville and South Lake Tahoe, held an average weighted PCI of 63, also considered "at risk". The report from the California Association of Cities does not appear to use the standard PCI ratings from The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), which designates a PCI of 63 as "fair".

DOT logged 437 public-submitted complaints in 2023 and 314 in 2024. The complaints are classified under vegetation control, road signs and road hazards, including drainage and pothole complaints. The Grand Jury determined that actual complaints would be much higher if the majority of the public knew how to log complaints or that their input is required to determine DOT Maintenance priorities.

While the public may view a road issue as requiring urgent repair, DOT might classify it as a problem that can be deferred. When a complaint is submitted, a superintendent or supervisor evaluates, verifies, and prioritizes the issue. Potholes are considered safety issues and are typically repaired within 48 hours. If there are no perceived immediate threats to public safety and the road is stable, the repair may be postponed as part of a larger road improvement project well into the future.

# DISCUSSION

## OBSERVATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MAINTENANCE CREWS AND PUBLIC

DOT learns of urgent road hazards, including potholes, by two methods: observation by road maintenance crews and notifications from the public. Crews traveling to or from assigned jobs are responsible for documenting or promptly repairing any potholes they encounter. Most road maintenance trucks carry materials needed for immediate repairs. Less urgent issues are addressed at a later date. While this approach is effective on roads frequently used by maintenance crews, it leaves less-traveled roads largely unaddressed.

The less-traveled roads may not be inspected by DOT for 2-3 years as part of a regular condition assessment survey. If not reported to DOT by the public, many potholes go unaddressed for weeks, months or longer. The repair delay is a safety hazard and could result in vehicle damage or accidents, subjecting the County to liability claims, and even more damage to roads. DOT relies heavily on the driving public as the primary source for identifying urgent problems on many County roads although it is not clear to everyone how to file such complaints.

DOT receives public complaints of poor road conditions through several channels. It has a webpage which includes an online form for reporting problems. DOT requests the user's email address so that a complaint acknowledgement can be generated along with a subsequent update on problem resolution. The public can also report issues by email, phone, or in person at the DOT office.

## COMPLAINT PROCESSING

When DOT receives a complaint, DOT staff acknowledges the complaint via email and manually creates a work order in the department's tracking system. The tracking system has capabilities to automatically email the work order and assign an employee to investigate the complaint, as well as update the complainant upon final resolution, but has not consistently functioned since a software update in July 2024. Staff work around these problems by printing work order records and handing them to the appropriate employee and upon complaint resolution by manually emailing complainants. This is time-consuming and inefficient and allows room for errors.

# DISCUSSION

**Finding 1:** After a public complaint is received and logged by Department of Transportation staff, the software used to forward a work order to maintenance staff or to update the complainant has not worked consistently since mid-2024.

## THE LACK OF PROCEDURES FOR PROCESSING COMPLAINTS

There are no formal written procedures for handling road complaints or repair requests. Although staff may informally share knowledge about processing these matters, management has not established official, written procedures that outline departmental expectations. As a result, there is no documented process for responding to complaints, no set timelines for replies, and no requirements for sending final resolution emails.

**Finding 2:** There are no documented Department of Transportation procedures for processing public-generated roadway complaints.

## REPORTS ARE VITAL

The Grand Jury sought information on how the County responds to road maintenance concerns. We determined that the term “road maintenance” covers different transportation infrastructure assets including the planning of future projects and the response to road concerns.

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) from DOT includes future plans for road construction and maintenance. The primary purpose of a CIP includes assessing infrastructure needs, budget planning, and enhancing public accountability. The CIP is published on the County’s website.

Through interviews and research, we learned that there is no report specifically regarding DOT Maintenance’s response to public road concerns. By comparison, a Department of Public Works (DPW) “pothole” report from the city of Placerville summarizes street maintenance performed, including pothole repairs, and the method used for repairs. The Placerville report also summarizes the number of potholes fixed due to employee observations and, separately, by

## DISCUSSION

phone calls and emails. Conversely, DOT does not provide the BOS with any performance metric reports involving maintenance issues either observed by staff or received from the public.

**Finding 3:** The Board of Supervisors does not request, and Department of Transportation does not provide to the Board of Supervisors, data on public-generated complaints, actions taken to address them, progress metrics, or the status of complaint-driven road maintenance repairs.

Despite its heavy reliance on citizen input for identifying immediate road hazards, DOT has made minimal efforts to solicit the public's help. Unless members of the public seek out DOT's Facebook page or website, they are unlikely to be aware their input is important. Moreover, our informal surveys suggest that, while most local residents are aware of significant problems with roads in their neighborhoods, few ever report them to DOT or understand how they would do so. This results in road hazards in many communities being underreported, which in turn leads to delays in addressing safety issues, increasing the risk of accidents, and further deterioration of roads.

**Finding 4:** The Department of Transportation relies heavily on public input to identify specific road hazards on the County's extensive road network. However, only a small portion of the public is aware that its input is important or even welcomed, and where to provide it.

# FINDINGS

## Findings

- F1.** After a public complaint is received and logged by Department of Transportation staff, the software used to forward a work order to maintenance staff or to update the complainant has not worked consistently since mid-2024.
  
- F2.** There are no documented Department of Transportation procedures for processing public-generated roadway complaints.
  
- F3.** The Board of Supervisors does not request, and Department of Transportation does not provide to the Board of Supervisors, data on public-generated complaints, actions taken to address them, progress metrics, or the status of complaint-driven road maintenance repairs.
  
- F4.** The Department of Transportation relies heavily on public input to identify specific road hazards on the County's extensive road network. However, only a small portion of the public is aware that its input is important or even welcomed, and where to provide it.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations

The El Dorado County Civil Grand Jury recommends The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors to direct the Department of Transportation to:

- R1:** Adopt and deploy a software package that will assist staff in fully electronic processing of roadway complaints by January 1, 2026.
- R2:** Adopt a formal, written procedure to receive, track and respond to residents' requests for road repairs by July 31, 2025.
- R3:** Establish goals and performance metrics which measure the efforts of the Department of Transportation and report them to the Board of Supervisors quarterly to track the effectiveness of complaint-driven road repairs by July 31, 2025.
- R4:** Submit a quarterly report on key metrics of County-wide road maintenance and repair requirements/efforts to the Board of Supervisors and to the public beginning by July 31, 2025.
- R5:** Increase efforts to encourage and facilitate public input by various means (such as truck signage, flyers and social media) by July 31, 2025.

# REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

## Request for Responses

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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.
- ELECTIVE 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, as required to a Jury report, violates California Penal Code Section 933.05 and is subject to further action that may include additional investigation on 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 government bodies:

- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
  - All Findings and Recommendations

For more information refer to [How to Respond to an El Dorado County Grand Jury Report](#) available on the El Dorado County Grand Jury webpage.

# APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

## Appendix and Related Information

### GLOSSARY

**Alligator Cracking** - A type of pavement distress characterized by interconnected cracks that form a pattern resembling an alligator's skin.



Marble Valley Rd

**Capital Improvement Program (CIP)** - Identifies and prioritizes future transportation investments required to meet the County's existing and future transportation needs for the next 20 years. The CIP is updated every year with a major update approximately every five years.

**Delamination/ crumbling** - the separation or detachment of layers within a roadway structure, typically in asphalt or concrete pavements.



Marble Valley Rd

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

**Depressions** - Localized low spots or sunken areas in a roadway surface.



Marble Valley Rd

**PCI** - Pavement Condition Index - a numerical rating system used to evaluate the overall condition of a pavement section based on the type, severity, and extent of visible surface distresses.

**Pothole**— Localized distress in an asphalt-surfaced pavement resulting from the breakup of the asphalt surface and possibly the asphalt base course. Under Department of Transportation's definition, a pothole must be bowl-shaped and have a dimension of at least six inches.



Old Bass Lake Rd



2024-25 GRAND JURY REPORT  
EL DORADO COUNTY  
MARCH 25, 2025 - CASE #25-05

## TIME TO REBOOT COUNTY TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP WITH A CHIEF INFO OFFICER

*The County is suffering from a long history of failed IT leadership and IT projects.  
Fearing more of the same, we recommend a CIO leader like a majority of counties.*

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*Cover Caption: "Old Ways Die Hard." AI-generated photo of a gold miner in a modern cloud data center, looking confused. The County can't continue to do things the way it always has. Generated 3/3/25 by Grok AI.*

# SUMMARY

## Summary

*“We are stuck with technology when what we really want is just stuff that works.”*

- Douglas Adams, author, “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy”

## HIGHLIGHTS

EI Dorado County (EDC or County) faces significant challenges in managing Information Technology (IT) and overall County operations. In the absence of strategic vision, industry best practices, project management, and performance monitoring across the County, the role of a more visionary IT leader is needed. While the investigation primarily focused on IT procedures, the findings reveal systemic problems that extend to broader aspects of County operations enabled by technology.

We concluded that County leaders:

- Must leverage modern technology to handle the complexity and scale of EDCs operations
- Should improve project management procedures to avoid cost overruns and project delays
- Need to embrace training and cultural changes needed for successful implementations
- Should introduce Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure and create accountability for performance, leading to fiscal responsibility and improved efficiencies
- Should limit redundant efforts in IT across the County, reducing costs for taxpayers
- Should provide better fiscal oversight, including more frequent budget reviews and project tracking.

## RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

With the departure of another IT Director, there is an opportunity to improve the County approach to a more strategic IT leader. It is long overdue for a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to lead the organization and enable effective strategic planning and engagement with all stakeholders. Additionally, the Director of IT, Assistant Director of IT, and Chief Information Security Officer roles should be reimaged as part of this transformation. The current IT

## SUMMARY

Steering Committee should be reconfigured to drive engagement and IT strategic vision across all departments.

Separate sub-committees should be established to review data center strategies to leverage and consolidate key commodity infrastructure and services like desktop support. Finally, there should be metrics developed for the effectiveness of IT services and deployments across departments that are reviewed regularly by the Board of Supervisors (BOS).

## Background

The Grand Jury reviewed a prior year's investigation regarding the delays and increasing costs of the TRAKiT system and expanded the investigation into a broader view of IT and project management across the County. Several examples were raised that showed systemic problems affecting technological innovation and adoption. Grand Jury reports from the previous three years revealed a pattern of technology-related programs experiencing significant deployment issues, budgetary overages, and failures to deliver the anticipated services and savings. The Grand Jury identified at least three distinct Information Technology (IT) departments within the County. Leveraging over 200 years of combined IT leadership experience on the 2024/2025 Grand Jury, we undertook an in-depth investigation into the organizational, technical, management, and financial aspects of these distinct IT departments.

Most County services require some form of technology, making a reliable IT service partner essential for all County departments. There are substantial inefficiencies in the operation and deployment of technology across the County, characterized by insufficient communication and collaboration between IT departments and department leaders, inadequate training, and inability to impose cultural shifts required for success. The question is why.

Key concerns the Grand Jury investigated:

- The high turnover rate in County IT leadership.
- A history of deploying technology without thoroughly considering the transformation of departmental processes/culture.
- The lack of strategic vision or long-term planning across County departments.
- Low overall development and effectiveness (IT Maturity level) and alignment to business needs.
- The cost of IT across the County.
- The inability to meet key departmental business requirements, resulting in:
  - Separate IT departments with overlapping functions, not leveraging common purchasing contracts.

## BACKGROUND

- Three distinct data centers.
- Isolation of systems and information, complicating interdepartmental information sharing.

From: <https://www.govciooutlook.com/news/transforming-local-government-through-emerging-technologies--nid-2323.html>

*Emerging technologies are changing how local governments operate, offering new opportunities to enhance public services, improve efficiency, and foster greater community engagement. Local governments are increasingly adopting innovative solutions to streamline operations, improve transparency, and respond more effectively to their communities' needs. This shift towards technology-driven governance promises a future where local governments are more agile, data-driven, and responsive to the challenges of a rapidly changing world...*

At a time when County revenue appears to be declining and budgets are being scrutinized, it is imperative that the inefficiency in IT and technology adoption across the County be addressed immediately.

# METHODOLOGY

## Methodology

### INTERVIEWS

- Department Heads and Staff
- Board of Supervisors
- Tour of three data centers

### DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- Budgets
- Project Documents
- Job Descriptions
- IT Documentation
- Previous Grand Jury Reports
- Organization charts
- Customer interviews
- Poll of other California counties
- [Washoe County CIO Job Description](#)

### SELECTED CIO ARTICLES FROM OTHER CITIES AND COUNTIES

- “Time to Redefine Local Government Technology Leadership,” Gov CIO Outlook, Jack Belcher, Chief Innovation Technology Officer, Arlington County  
<https://smart-city.govciooutlook.com/cioviewpoint/time-to-redefine-local-government-technology-leadership-nid-1861.html> (See Appendix)
- “Technology is All About Driving Value and End-User Experience,” Gov CIO Outlook, Lynn Fyhrlund, CIO, Milwaukee County  
<https://startups.govciooutlook.com/cioviewpoint/technology-is-all-about-driving-value-and-enduser-experience--nid-1720.html> (See Appendix)

## METHODOLOGY

- “Executing Seamless Transformation Strategies to Drive Value,” Gov CIO Outlook, Rebecca Hascall, Chief Innovation and Information Officer, Jefferson County, CO  
<https://startups.govciooutlook.com/cioviewpoint/executing-seamless-transformation-strategies-to-drive-value-nid-1719.html>
- “Transforming Local Government Through Technology”, Gov CIO Outlook, 4/4/24  
<https://www.govciooutlook.com/news/transforming-local-government-through-emerging-technologies--nid-2323.html>

## Discussion

### THE HISTORY OF IT LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE COUNTY

Since 2010, El Dorado County has had six IT Directors. The most recent one served five years, the longest to date. Most lacked the time or authority to develop a strategic plan, instead focusing on tactical issues and support requests. The IT Director job description places no emphasis on strategy – meaning they are expected to react to immediate needs rather than proactively shape long-term goals, drive innovation, or align initiatives with broader organizational objectives.

In contrast, the District Attorney's (DA) office has been driving technology strategy for years as one of the first DA offices in the state to go paperless in 2008/09. They are a small department but have had only one IT leader since 2007 and have demonstrated a tremendous focus on improving departmental efficiencies through technology.

The El Dorado Sheriff's Office (EDSO) also has limited IT leadership staff and minimal turnover. They have a large workforce that fully leverages technology with an impressive lab and data center operation. While IT staff turnover is lower with the DA and EDSO, they do have challenges. These are much smaller IT departments with their leadership wearing multiple hats, some of which are not IT related. They are stretched thin, have very limited strategic focus, and in some cases are not even involved in the IT decision making process. There has been limited collaboration with County IT in recent years.

For a short time, up until 2019, the DAs office led County IT. A decision was made to change the organizational structure and drive an improved culture with a County IT department, with the DA and EDSO retaining limited IT staff, their own data centers, and control of their applications. At least that was the goal. Today we have operational siloes with less collaboration and reduced efficiency.

# DISCUSSION

## DEPARTMENTAL ISOLATION AND DUPLICATE SPENDING

The DA and EDSO, like many departments, have some very specific IT requirements that warrant some dedicated and specialized IT services. Unfortunately, the opportunity to create a more collaborative and strategic IT organization was lost.

For example, the DA staff frequently works within the Superior Court system relying heavily on their laptops in a near paperless environment. A laptop failure during court proceedings is something that requires immediate resolution that County IT was unable or unwilling to deliver.

Another County department requires a dedicated software platform to support business in their office space, outside of a data center environment. The software is no longer supported and has the potential for security issues. County IT demanded the department's application move off the system. This authoritarian approach led to conflict with the department's leadership, resulting in no change and an ongoing security risk. The department chose to rely on its own IT staff, which it is now seeking to grow.

Although each department may use governmental pricing contracts, there is no unified strategy for managing procurement or taking advantage of larger economies of scale. Each department manages their own IT projects and submits their spending to the BOS independently. Most of these expense requests will appear as consent items on the BOS agenda and lack any discussion of opportunities to leverage existing infrastructure or contracts.

These three IT departments operate their own data centers with limited coordination or shared resources, and at different levels of maturity. In some cases, efforts are being made to further isolate systems, which increases the lack of synergy. For example, EDSO will be installing their own dedicated internet service provider into their data center to separate from the existing County internet connection. The need for both political and operational control has driven this decision, as opposed to a technical strategy that could provide benefits to all departments as opposed to just one.

**Finding 1 – Lack of Expertise in Technology Application:** The County currently lacks expertise in leveraging technology to optimize processes, reduce costs, and deliver services more efficiently.

# DISCUSSION

County budget documents outline spending across the various IT departments. The table below summarizes previous years' actual spending and the 2024-25 adopted budget. The adopted budgets are all significantly higher than previous years' actuals. All three departments submit significant budgets then underspend and underdeliver, further highlighting poor execution to plans.

	FY 2020-21 Actuals	FY 2021-22 Actuals	FY 2022-23 Actuals	FY 2023-24 Actuals	FY 2024-25 Adopted Budget
County IT	\$ 2,545,326	\$ 3,609,311	\$ 2,999,078	\$ 3,650,864	\$ 4,865,590
District Attorney IT	\$ 142,407	\$ 160,771	\$ 332,113	\$ 272,555	\$ 443,656
Sheriff IT	\$ 1,414,307	\$ 2,237,021	\$ 1,972,283	\$ 1,818,251	\$ 3,017,500
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 4,102,040</b>	<b>\$ 6,007,103</b>	<b>\$ 5,303,474</b>	<b>\$ 5,741,671</b>	<b>\$ 8,326,746</b>

Figure - Data from County 5-year historical IT budget file

<https://www.eldoradocounty.ca.gov/files/assets/county/v/1/documents/government/cao/2024-2025-budget/fy-2024-25-budget-5-year-historical-budget-actuals.xlsx>

## OPPORTUNITY FOR STORAGE OPTIMIZATION

The County requires a large amount of storage to retain files, videos, emails, etc. Storage is spread across County data centers and in the public cloud (at internet service providers). In many mature IT organizations, storage solutions have become commodity services that can be shared by multiple departments while providing strong security, keeping departmental data private. This is an area of IT business that can deliver substantial cost savings to a county if looked at strategically.

**Finding 2 – Wasteful IT Spending Across Departments:** The County fails to optimize IT resources, such as data storage, or leverage shared contracts for volume purchasing, leading to increased costs.

Currently, each of the IT departments use their own mix of on-premises hardware and cloud services, complicating data management and increasing costs. A unified County-wide storage

## DISCUSSION

platform could simplify operations, cut expenses, and enhance data availability, disaster recovery, and scalability. During our investigation we learned that EDSO was approved to spend over \$800k through the consent calendar to purchase additional storage for their projects. There was no discussion with either of the other IT departments to see if they could add on to an existing storage platform or help to build out a more robust storage platform for all IT departments.

### STRATEGIC PROGRAMS AND DELAYED RETURNS

The County has a track record of poorly implemented strategic programs, resulting in cost overruns, schedule delays, and poor/negative return on investment. Examples reviewed by the Grand Jury include FENIX, an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) financial solutions software, and the more recent TRAKiT project in the Planning and Building Department. TRAKiT is a permit application and process tracking software. It is used by internal County staff, coordinating agencies (e.g., Fire Districts), as well as residential homeowners and contractors.

The FENIX implementation began in 2013 with a budget of \$2.6 million for the software and \$3 million for the staff and implementation. They overran the 2-year schedule by approximately 4 years. The vendor overran its budget by 35%, while the County overran its deployment costs by approximately 100%. The 2015-2016 Grand Jury report on this topic noted the County demonstrated poor project planning, and poor fiscal tracking, resulting in a grave concern regarding the County's ongoing failures to manage budgets by expense category and in real time.

TRAKiT demonstrates the County's failure to learn from their mistakes. TRAKiT's initial 18-month implementation schedule was approximately 6 years late and the project budget was overrun, by one estimate, as much as 650%. We were unable to get precise numbers regarding the cost of implementation because the County does not do a good job of tracking projects or managing costs. We have seen a lot of finger-pointing across teams and organizations regarding TRAKiT. That lack of accountability and an overarching project management for a program as large as TRAKiT, something that a CIO-level leader would provide, may have been the root cause of the project mishaps. For example:

## DISCUSSION

- The County failed to utilize industry proven processes and techniques to successfully manage complex systems implementation
- The County failed to appoint/hire a single, knowledgeable, accountable project leader with broad authority to lead cross-department efforts
- Implementation schedules were poorly communicated, not enforced, and not regularly updated
- Cost and schedule variances were not tracked or reported to the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) or the BOS
- No identifiable, effective, corrective actions were determined or taken until much later
- No sustainable cultural change was required, including encouraging new procedures by staff and adoption by technology-adverse users
- BOS canceled some much needed training
- No apparent consequence or accountability for failures

TRAKiT is a very visible example of a technology solution that did not map to the business needs and processes of the Planning and Building Department. A CIO's primary role is to bridge that gap from technology to efficiency and ensure successful outcomes. That leader was missing from this project. IT deployed the software as designed but could not ensure process improvements. The vendor was not in a position to modify the software to match what Permitting staff were actually doing in the field. Planning and Building staff were not consulted as to their needs, nor saw the improvements with TRAKiT for their day-to-day tasks. Requirements were not adequately gathered up-front. Everyone may have done their job as expected, but the County lacked the discipline and end-to-end perspective to ensure project success.

Similarly, management issues and lack of strategic vision and leadership led to the prolonged migration from Google Suite to Microsoft 365 which highlights the County's siloed IT approach and cost inefficiency. The licensing agreement enabling the migration to Microsoft 365 was approved by the BOS in September 2018. It wasn't until February 2021 that the Director of IT presented a migration strategy to the BOS, which was approved.

# DISCUSSION

The DAs Office had pressing needs for Microsoft 365 in their business environment that County IT was unable to meet with their delayed and slow deployment. This resulted in the DA establishing and deploying their own separate Microsoft 365 environment well before County IT.

The BOS has yet to receive a formal presentation on the outcomes of this prolonged and poorly administered transition. In contrast, the DAs office achieved efficiencies with a smaller, more mature Microsoft 365 deployment. An additional \$250,000 was spent by the County on Google renewals in the FY2022–2023 budget, delaying any savings from Microsoft 365 deployment.

**Finding 3 – Delayed Rollout of Strategic Initiatives:** Strategic IT programs, including migration from Google Suite to Microsoft 365, FENIX, and TRAKiT, have experienced prolonged implementation delays and cost overruns. This has resulted in continued use of legacy systems, delayed returns on investment, and significantly increased County costs.

## ATTEMPTS AT COHESION ACROSS IT DEPARTMENTS

An IT Steering Committee is typically a forum for collaboration across departments on strategic and operational topics. The County’s IT Steering Committee, historically led by the IT Director, was primarily focused on pushing policies from County IT to the other departments, rather than listening to their unique requirements. The Steering Committee didn’t foster collaboration which diminished value and participation.

The Steering Committee can be repositioned for meaningful cooperation by involving the right stakeholders and focusing on collective decision making and strategic planning. This could eliminate departmental silos and optimize opportunities for savings, efficiency, and improved County services. The IT steering committee should be rechartered by the BOS and provide a monthly report of activity against the plans and KPIs.

## HIGH-LEVEL PERCEIVED MATURITY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

County citizens deserve to have County-wide services that are easy to use and efficient. The current focus seems to be keeping old systems maintained with little strategic execution which highlights a lack of IT maturity. Most other counties are looking to leverage modern technologies

# DISCUSSION

to increase access, efficiency, and reduce overhead costs. The intention to automate the permit tracking process is a perfect example that was not rolled out effectively and overran projected costs. The inability to map technology deployments to user needs and business requirements is a sign of low IT maturity.

IT maturity refers to the level of development and effectiveness of an organization's information technology processes, capabilities, and infrastructure. It measures how well an IT department can support and drive business objectives using technology. Figure 1 illustrates a sample model of IT maturity stages.

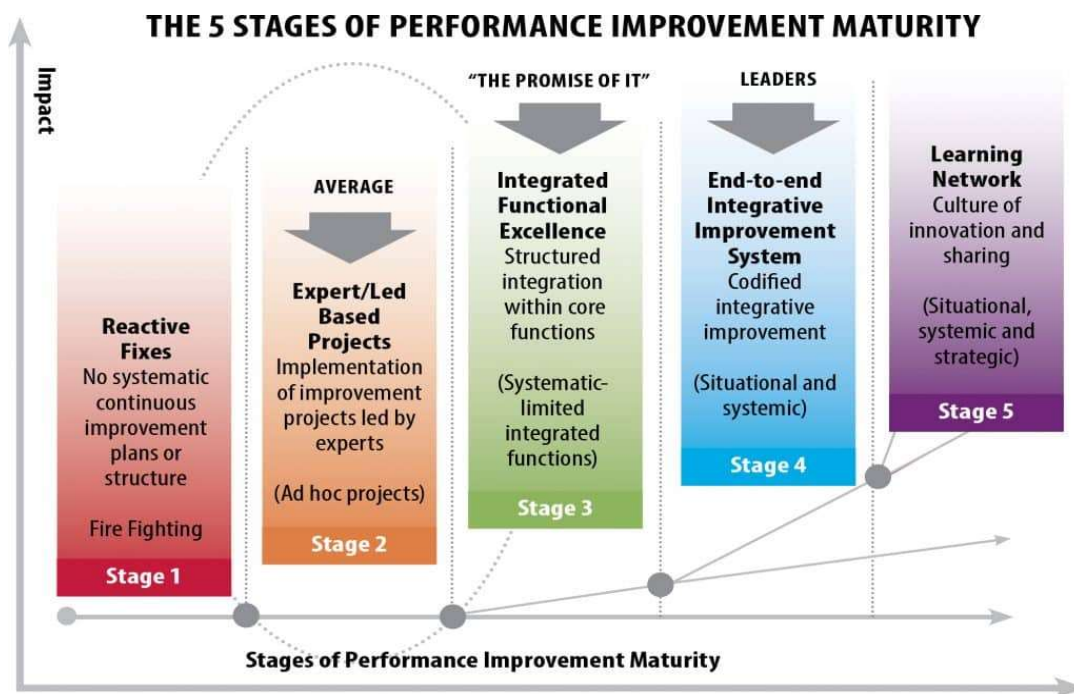


Figure – The different stages of an IT Maturity Model

Based on the extensive information and technology experience of the current Grand Jury, we conclude that none of the technology departments we met exhibit the characteristics of an efficient, mature, value-adding organization.

The contributing factors include:

- A history of sub-optimal project delivery.

# DISCUSSION

- Duplication of effort across departments.
- Duplication of human resources.
- Duplication of purchase contracts.
- Duplication of Data Centers and hardware.
- Higher costs.

Signs of insufficient IT maturity at EDC include a lack of strategic focus, resistance to change, and inefficient work practices, stemming from a lack of strategic IT leadership. The current IT job description (for an IT Director, as of March 2025) is inadequate to attract the required level of leadership. Notably, “establishing a strategy,” a cornerstone for effective use of technology, is not mentioned in the job description.

**Finding 4 – IT Maturity in El Dorado County:** The IT maturity level in El Dorado County is subpar due to the absence of appropriate IT leadership. The County remains one of only about a dozen in the state without a defined CIO-level role to drive technology strategy and align with varying department needs.

## A MODERN APPROACH TO IT USED BY A MAJORITY OF OTHER COUNTIES

Due to its lack of IT maturity, the County has not adopted new technologies or planned for future needs. The table below shows government ITs responsibilities under an old, outdated IT support model and what’s required today in a modern IT-led organization. The following table was created by another county’s CIO describing the evolution of their role and responsibilities to their county. (Source: <https://smart-city.govciooutlook.com/cioviewpoint/time-to-redefine-local-government-technology-leadership-nid-1861.html> - See Appendix)

Area Of Responsibility	Yesterday	Today
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Anonymous, not visible or known to the community	Customer/Citizen focus
<b>Application Development</b>	Centralized, IT drives development	Collaborative
<b>Hosting and Server Management</b>	Own and manage all that is hosted	Partner / Outsource

# DISCUSSION

<b>Network Management</b>	Own and manage everything within the firewalls. All secure access takes place within the 'walled garden' of the local network	Realization that remote access is here to stay, Secure anywhere, anytime access outside the perimeter
<b>Jurisdiction Specific Services</b>	Entrepreneurial and competitive	Collaborative shared services
<b>Procurement Practices</b>	Emphasis on safe unchallengeable purchases	Recognition that new ideas can come from unlikely sources
<b>Talent Recruitment</b>	Continue current HR classifications with traditional refreshment	Rationalize all new hires in terms of tomorrows needs
<b>Embracing New Disruptive Technology</b>	Too advanced for local government	Innovate for tomorrow with new technologies that offer better service for the County.
<b>IT Leadership</b>	Continuing traditional IT Recruitment	IT leadership that is focused on the future to improve customer/citizen services.

*Table – The evolution of the IT Leader function in one county.*

**Finding 5 – Frequent Turnover in the IT Director Role:** Frequent changes in the IT Director position have hindered the establishment of a consistent long-term strategic vision, contributing to subpar IT maturity. Several IT directors did not have sufficient tenure or experience to develop or implement a cohesive strategy.

## DIRECTOR OF IT VERSUS A CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Prior to 10-15 years ago, IT departments functioned primarily as service organizations, offering technology support and services to broader business units. Business functions would request IT to install and manage applications (such as server farms and data centers) and support end-user systems like laptops. IT policies were typically limited to global security policies or centralized technology purchasing roles.

As technology advanced, the focus of applications and networking shifted toward process automation and delivering value to businesses through optimizing complex tasks, enabling more efficient information, and service delivery to users. This transition paralleled the increase in high-speed internet access and the proliferation of mobile devices as platforms for legitimate

## DISCUSSION

business applications. Technology became integral to business, as process efficiency became a competitive advantage.

Consequently, technology leaders could no longer be excluded from strategic conversations fundamental to the business. Technology leadership now requires a sophisticated understanding of business needs, competitive differentiation, and process improvements. Technology has transformed into a strategic asset for every organization. The role of tech leadership evolved from an IT Director to a Chief Information Officer (CIO). The CIO role involves driving the strategic vision for technology several years ahead, aiming to enhance the competitiveness, efficiency, and improvement of all business functions. The CIO has become a strategic business leader, influencer, and visionary, comparable to the CEO, CFO, or Chief Technologists/Product Officers. The CIO is often more of a project manager than an IT engineer and may be less technical than their immediate staff.

The benefit of this evolution is that complex technology deployments have a much higher success rate. Off-the-shelf technology products can be customized to meet the specific needs of business users, providing the right services to users. The CIO ensures broad organizational buy-in for technology shifts and is accountable for successful deployments and associated process improvements, extending beyond traditional IT job descriptions. The CIO serves as a valued partner to County departments, ensuring success rather than obstructing progress with security requirements and delays, which was a common issue with traditional IT Directors.

Although more seasoned and experienced than an IT Director, the CIO generates significant savings through efficient and timely technological deployments that drive business value and efficiency with a forward-looking perspective, at reduced costs. With current advancements in cloud computing, quantum computing, and AI, having a technology strategist who understands how to apply rapidly emerging technologies to enhance business and process efficiency and

**Finding 6 – Potential Cost Savings:** The County could save a significant amount of money with a more strategic view of IT under the leadership of the CIO. Implementation of the recommendations of this report could be expected to result in an estimated annual savings of between \$1,000,000 and \$3,000,000 annually for the County.

# DISCUSSION

ultimately deliver better services and products for end users is indispensable. The County cannot afford to delay funding this crucial role going forward.

## THE GRAND JURY TRIES TO INTERVENE

The Grand Jury met with several stakeholders prior to the release of the report to discuss changes in the IT Director hiring process and budget allocations. We felt this unprecedented intervention was necessary due to the timing of the IT Director departure and the importance of change needed in this area.



The Grand Jury began with a meeting with County staff involved in the hiring process. Findings were presented, and the need for a CIO to provide a more efficient and cost-effective IT department for the County was discussed. The County staff left the meeting to consider their options. A few days later, they informed the Grand Jury that they would continue with hiring an IT Director but appreciated the input. The Grand Jury provided the County interview questions with expected responses a qualified CIO would give.

The Grand Jury also met with two Board of Supervisors members to discuss the findings of our investigation. It was noted that most counties (42 out of 58) in California have a CIO as the top-level technology leader. Concerns from the Supervisors included

cooperation among some departments, the independence of elected officials to set their own priorities, and the additional costs associated with hiring a CIO.

## DISCUSSION

The Grand Jury suggested the option to continue with the hiring of an IT Director but also hire a CIO contractor who could serve for roughly 12–18 months. During their tenure, the CIO would be responsible for the strategy of IT services across County departments and provide training to the IT Director to assume the role in the future. There is some risk that the new IT Director will not have sufficient skills to ever become a CIO which would require another hire in the future.

The Grand Jury also held a brief meeting with EDSO and provided the same materials shared with the County Supervisors. Preliminary support for a CIO was given by the Sheriff's Office, who believed a CIO could enhance the County's current IT, overcome prior communication challenges, and help reduce overall costs.

Similarly, the DAs Office, with their own IT staff, responded favorably to the idea of a County-wide CIO role. They appreciate the economies of scale that can be leveraged, a reduction in the duplication of efforts and costs, and the ability to collaborate on common objectives like security policies and the adoption of new technology. It was important to note that a CIO is a service role to elected leaders' offices like the DA and EDSO, rather than imposing requirements on them and hampering their needs to leverage technology, as was exhibited in the past from County IT. The Grand Jury felt that once the BOS members understood this key point, the idea was much more palatable.

**Finding 7 – Inability to Take a More Strategic View of IT Today:** Despite recurring failures in IT leadership, the County proceeded to replace the most recent IT Director with a person of similar job description and skill set, making it unlikely to attract candidates with sufficient skills to succeed in the role.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Appendix of this report includes a sample of recent articles from CIOs in other counties and how they view technology adoption to benefit their constituents. One article talks about the imperative to change the role of County technology leadership as we have described herein. The Grand Jury was greatly encouraged that leaders across the County appreciate this, and that the County can't continue business as usual.

## DISCUSSION

We have provided enough examples of the high costs of project failures and costly delays in the absence of a more mature technology model and leadership. Counties across the country are evolving, and so must we. We can't afford to be ineffective or inefficient any longer. Continuing to do the same thing expecting different results is the definition of insanity.

It won't be an overnight adjustment, and there will need to be a recognized transition period and perhaps missteps along the way. But the conviction to improve, with a collective eye on a more strategic IT vision, is the right place to start.

# FINDINGS

## Findings

**F1 – Lack of Expertise in Technology Application:** The County currently lacks expertise in leveraging technology to optimize processes, reduce costs, and deliver services more efficiently.

**F2 – Wasteful IT Spending Across Departments:** The County fails to optimize IT resources, such as data storage, or leverage shared contracts for volume purchasing, leading to increased costs.

**F3 – Delayed Rollout of Strategic Initiatives:** Strategic IT programs, including migration from Google Suite to Microsoft 365, FENIX, and TRAKiT, have experienced prolonged implementation delays and cost overruns. This has resulted in continued use of legacy systems, delayed returns on investment, and significantly increased County costs.

**F4 – IT Maturity in El Dorado County:** The IT maturity level in El Dorado County is subpar due to the absence of appropriate IT leadership. The County remains one of only about a dozen in the state without a defined CIO-level role to drive technology strategy and align with varying department needs.

**F5 – Frequent Turnover in the IT Director Role:** Frequent changes in the IT Director position have hindered the establishment of a consistent long-term strategic vision, contributing to subpar IT maturity. Several IT directors did not have sufficient tenure or experience to develop or implement a cohesive strategy.

**F6 – Potential Cost Savings:** The County could save a significant amount of money with a more strategic view of IT under the leadership of the CIO. Implementation of the recommendations of this report could be expected to result in an estimated annual savings of between \$1,000,000 and \$3,000,000 annually for the County.

**F7 – Inability to Take a More Strategic View of IT Today:** Despite recurring failures in IT leadership, the County proceeded to replace the most recent IT Director with a person of similar job description and skill set, making it unlikely to attract candidates with sufficient skills to succeed in the role.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations

The El Dorado County Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors:

**R1** – Instruct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to deliver a Chief Information Officer (CIO) job description by September 1, 2025, ensure the job description includes measurable strategic responsibilities and specific authority for county-wide technology alignment. (Sample Job Description provided in appendix.)

**R2** – Direct the CAO to hire a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to lead Information Technology (IT) by January 1, 2026.

**R3** – Direct the future CIO to develop and present comprehensive storage and data center consolidation strategies by May 1, 2026.

**R4** – Instruct the future CIO and CAO to reconfigure the IT Steering Committee into a collaborative body to evaluate projects, consolidate infrastructure needs, coordinate County-wide IT purchases and report results regularly by May 1, 2026.

**R5** – Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure IT effectiveness and efficiency across county departments by July 1, 2026, and provide quarterly reports to the BOS.

# REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

## Request for Responses

A Civil Grand Jury report details a single investigation. Each report lists FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS. The responsible organization 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 on 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 board:

- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
  - All Findings and Recommendations

The following responses are invited from the following elected officials and their staff:

- El Dorado County Sheriff's Office
  - Recommendations 1-4
- El Dorado County District Attorney's Office
  - Recommendations 1-4

For more information refer to [How to Respond to an El Dorado County Grand Jury Report](#) available on the El Dorado County Grand Jury webpage.

## Appendix

### SELECTED ARTICLES FROM OTHER COUNTY CIOS

#### Time to Redefine Local Government Technology Leadership

Jack Belcher, FMR Chief Innovation Technology Officer, Arlington County Government



**Jack Belcher, FMR Chief Innovation Technology Officer, Arlington County Government**

#### Problem Statement

Today, we are at an inflection point for local government technology leadership. Ancritical moment, if not addressed, that will have a dramatic impact on us all who depend on safety, maintenance, emergency support, health care, and housing from the local jurisdictions where we reside.

The era of government as usual, where we can accommodate new digital advances is over. It does not work for we who entrust our well-being to local public servants.

For as long as we can remember technology organizations in local government are for the most part back office, unassuming, and anonymous. That has worked, but it will shortly be realized that that is not sufficient to meet community needs.

The problem begins with the chief administrative officers of every jurisdiction. Their persona can be generalized as competent administrators who quietly believe that they are capable of handling any problem they meet, especially technology. But in truth they are to be surprised

**"I propose the solution is to create the position of an Chief Enablement Officer who is charged with setting the vision for the future. This position is a major upgrade of the current definitions of current technology leadership."**

They seek out IT Directors and Managers who can run the technology shop, make sure constituents receive the necessary technical support to pay their taxes, request service from the government, and engage, but not influence policy. In truth, they have done little more than to check the box to assure constituents and residents that these technologists have their ear and are at the table when important policy decisions affecting the jurisdiction are being considered.

Rarely is the technology leadership of the jurisdiction at the table when important decisions are being made. Why? Because, by definition, they are a distraction. In truth the technology leadership frequently does not have a sense of the pulse of the community and its recommendations commonly equate to cost and time to implement. The Administrative Officers simply do not have the time to deal with this unnecessary discussion.

#### How to Begin?

It begins with an awareness of what the roots of the problem are.

There is a 'ground shift' in how we approach technology enablement and resiliency. In the table below, I have laid out some of the significant changes that have taken place that require a reassessment of where local government is.

# APPENDIX

Area of Responsibility	Yesterday	Today
Community Engagement	<b>Back office</b> , anonymous, not visible or known to the community	<b>Front Office</b>
Application Development	<b>Centralized</b> , IT drives development	Democratized
Hosting and Server Management	<b>Own and manage</b> all that is hosted	<b>Partner / Outsource</b>
Network Management	<b>Own and manage everything within the firewalls</b> All secure access takes place within the 'walled garden' of the local network	<b>Realization that Remote Access is here to stay, Secure Anywhere, Anytime Access</b> outside the perimeter.
Jurisdiction Specific Services	<b>Entrepreneurial and Competitive</b>	<b>Collaborative Shared Services</b>
Procurement Practices	<b>Emphasis on safe unchallengeable purchases</b>	<b>Recognition that new ideas can come from unlikely sources.</b>
Talent Recruitment	<b>Continue current HR Classifications</b> with traditional refreshment	<b>Rationalize All New Hires in terms of Tomorrow's Needs</b>
Embracing New Disruptive Technologies	<b>Too advanced for local government</b>	<b>Understand and accommodate</b>
IT Leadership	<b>Continue Traditional IT Leadership Recruitment.</b>	<b>Redefine the position that recognizes to drive organizational transformation.</b>

What this table defines is that like it or not there has to be a 'rethinking by local government IT leadership as to their goals and priorities. That 'rethinking' needs to begin today.

## Leadership Conundrum

The most important assessment has to do with Leadership.

Today and tomorrow's local leadership must begin with a reassessment and restatement of the IT Leader. The pace of technology introduction has grown at an exponential rate. Estimates are that what had taken a decade to realize will be compressed into the next 18 to 24 months. This begins with defining a new persona for the IT Leader. Yes, the persona.

First and foremost, the new technology leader must understand and know the community they serve. To do so, these following criteria must be sought after.

- The role is no longer back office, but the front office.
- Involvement in all community engagement activities to continue to gain that necessary understanding of the community
- Access to the Chief Executive Officer of the Jurisdiction
- Ability to envision what might be.
- Emotional IQ to complement their Digital IQ
- They must be willing to 'get dirty', simply dive into the most detail and seemingly inconsequential details of any event affecting the community, from insufficient restrooms at a new community park, underserved k through 12 remote educational support, unprecedented storm water overflow, unexpected power outages, resident complaints as to residential parking preferences, to inefficient technology support for public safety response.

# APPENDIX

- On duty and ready to respond to any and all events where technology plays a role. Since Covid, I call these IT leaders our Digital First Responders.

## Where do you find such Digital First Responders?

It be a significant challenge. The traditional sources of such talent from the federal, business or higher education disciplines are not appropriate. There needs to be a reformation of will who should assume this role. How to find the right fit and define the position appropriately. That will be the challenge.

I propose the solution is to create the position of an Chief Enablement Officer who is charged with setting the vision for the future. This position is a major upgrade of the current definitions of current technology leadership

It starts with senior leadership who must understand that there isa senseof urgency, the position is meaningless and left to the various department leads to consider and prioritize the importance.

In the absence of strong leadership by the County or City Executive it is difficult if not impossible for the Enablement Officer to succeed.

We have to recognize that Organizational Transformation will be driven by Technology, but to lead with this is fruitless. Organizational Transformation comes from a sense of urgency that what we are doing today may not work tomorrow.

The Enablement Officer must have a foundational knowledge of technology, its capabilities, and its potential, but they must also possess a sense of the needs of their community with untethered, unrestricted access to those bureaucratic administrators who manage the local government.

What will create that awareness in those jurisdictions where complacency predominates, which I fear is the majority of local jurisdictions today.

- It will happen
- as the result of the exponential growth of disruptive technologies that will affect each and every one of us. Local Government leadership must be prepared to respond
- When your privacy is compromised without your knowledge.
- When policy decisions are made without necessary data to validate the policy recommendations
- When you are subject to unexpected natural environmental events that could have been avoided with predictive analysis
- When the community you are living in, is not where you prefer to live, work, learn, and play in a safe, secure environment.

That is why this discussion matters. Now let's go forward and recognize the urgent need to recruit and empower the Enablement Officer classification category in local government!



GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY

## Technology is all About Driving Value and End-user Experience

Lynn Fyhrlund, CIO, Milwaukee County



**Lynn Fyhrlund, CIO, Milwaukee County**

As the CIO of Milwaukee County, Lynn Fyhrlund provides strategic technology direction, planning, and execution of IT solutions and systems. He oversees the entire information management services division, including IT governance, project/portfolio management, finances, vendor negotiations, and operational improvements as well as the IT disaster recovery and continuity plans.

Fyhrlund started his career as a computer programmer and analyst. During his more than 27 years of experience in the industry, he took up different roles and leadership positions, including full stack developer and IT Director across manufacturing, logistics, and government sector.

Following is the conversation that we had with Fyhrlund.

**What trends and technological advancements have you observed in the government sector, and how does it impact the field?**

The government sector has changed dramatically over the last five years. The main reason behind this has been the adoption of current technologies such as cloud computing, data analytics, and cybersecurity for better service delivery. Especially after COVID, we are pushing ourselves to adopt technologies that ensure we serve citizens effectively.

We are ensuring that communities have broadband access and people are well trained to utilize devices. For example, ensuring whether people are able to easily leverage telehealth, banking, education and other facilities. CIOs, earlier, focused on keeping the infrastructure together and moving the business forward.

On the contrary, today, we engage with public leaders to ensure citizens have access to the services that government delivers. Our goal is to ensure nobody is left behind in technology and everybody has access to a high level of services online, even the population in remote areas.

**What are the current demands that have propelled these changes?**

People today proactively focus on data security and privacy and demand transparency in government processes. We need to ensure security posture and keep up with current cybersecurity. We have to keep the public's data safe from bad actors while guaranteeing access to data. To ensure transparency in the government sector, we are focusing on understanding the data better to augment our decision-making.

**"To ensure transparency in the government sector, we are focusing on understanding the data better to augment our decision-making"**

# APPENDIX

Moreover, these days, counties are focusing on bringing racial equity and uplifting communities. In our county, we have declared racism a public health crisis. Ensuring internet access and the ability to use devices is all about equity from a technology standpoint.

## **What are the leadership strategies that you have in place to lead your team forward?**

When I took the role of the CIO at Milwaukee County, I built and deployed an IT strategy in order to support the county's mission and vision. We didn't ask businesses what they need but identify the technologies that they actually require to support and meet their objectives. The examination of the gaps using data analysis provides us with a clear direction to formulate an IT strategy for the next three years.

I always encourage my team to focus on end-user experience, be it employees or constituents. If employees have a great experience with technology while using computers, mobiles, or tablets, they can effectively deliver high-level services to citizens. Similarly, when constituents have a great experience with technology, they're more apt to come back for services. However, if any of them struggle with technology, it could hinder both the intake of services and the delivery of services. We partner with businesses to understand where we need to invest in terms of technology.

## **What is a piece of advice to your fellow colleague?**

End-users experience is value-driven, and that's why we need to ensure we deliver value for people through the right technology implementation. This has been my mantra for years. When we implement technology, we must be cognizant of the people who won't be able to use that technology. We need to take significant steps to ensure that these people are engaged.

I would like my fellow professionals to understand that today, we don't implement technology for the sake of technology deployment but to improve processes and deliver efficient services. We need to remember that a portion of our population is not technically enabled. Therefore, we have to figure out how to make that population technologically literate, ensuring no one is left behind.



DATA SECURITY

CLOUD COMPUTING

LOGISTICS

DISASTER RECOVERY

# APPENDIX

## SAMPLE CIO JOB DESCRIPTION EXCERPTS

### Chief Information Officer – Montgomery County, MD

#### **Summary:**

Montgomery County, Maryland, seeks a visionary Chief Information Officer (CIO) to lead the Office of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions. This strategic leadership role involves driving digital transformation, enhancing cybersecurity, and improving service delivery to a diverse population of over 1 million residents. The CIO will report to the County Executive and oversee a team of 150 IT professionals, managing an annual IT budget of approximately \$100 million.

#### **Key Responsibilities:**

- Develop and implement a county-wide IT strategic plan to modernize infrastructure, enhance digital services (e.g., online permitting, e-government portals), and support smart county initiatives using technologies like AI and IoT.
- Lead cybersecurity efforts to protect critical infrastructure, including election systems, public safety networks, and health data, ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations.
- Foster innovation by partnering with external stakeholders, such as technology vendors and regional governments, to implement scalable, cost-effective solutions.
- Champion data analytics and open data initiatives to improve transparency and decision making across county departments.

#### **Strategic Focus:**

This posting emphasizes innovation and digital transformation, aligning with the first strategic description from my previous response. It highlights the CIO's role in leveraging emerging technologies to improve resident services, making it ideal for a candidate focused on cutting-edge IT solutions.

#### **Application Details:**

- Salary Range: \$180,000 – \$250,000 annually, depending on experience.

# APPENDIX

- Application Deadline: April 15, 2025 (verify on the official site).
- Requirements: Bachelor's degree in IT, business administration, or related field; 10+ years of IT leadership experience, with at least 5 years in a senior management role, preferably in government.

## Chief Information Officer – Orange County, CA

### Summary:

Orange County, California, is recruiting a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to oversee enterprise IT governance and ensure alignment between technology investments and county priorities. This role involves managing IT operations across 25 county departments, serving a population of over 3 million residents, and reporting to the County Administrator. The CIO will lead a team of 200 IT staff and manage a \$120 million IT budget, focusing on risk management, compliance, and interdepartmental collaboration.

### Key Responsibilities:

- Develop and implement an enterprise IT governance framework to prioritize IT projects, manage risks, and ensure compliance with regulations such as HIPAA, CJIS, and California data privacy laws.
- Collaborate with department heads to streamline processes and integrate systems, enhancing service delivery in areas like public safety, health services, and social services.
- Oversee the county's cybersecurity program, including risk assessments, incident response planning, and staff training to mitigate cyber threats.
- Manage IT workforce development, including training programs to build a future-ready IT team capable of supporting digital transformation.
- Provide strategic guidance to the County Administrator and Board of Supervisors on technology trends and their impact on county operations.

### Strategic Focus:

# APPENDIX

This posting aligns with the second strategic description from my previous response, emphasizing enterprise governance and collaboration. It is suited for a candidate with strong skills in IT governance, risk management, and stakeholder engagement.

## **Application Details:**

- Salary Range: \$200,000 – \$275,000 annually, plus benefits.
- Application Deadline: March 31, 2025 (verify on the official site).
- Requirements: Master’s degree in IT, public administration, or related field preferred; 12+ years of IT experience, with at least 7 years in a leadership role, ideally in a large government organization.

## **Chief Information Officer – King County, WA**

### **Summary:**

King County, Washington, is seeking a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to lead technology initiatives that enhance community engagement, improve public services, and promote digital equity. This role involves working with county leadership, community stakeholders, and technology partners to address the needs of a diverse population of over 2 million residents, with a focus on underserved communities. The CIO will report to the County Executive and manage a team of 180 IT professionals, overseeing a \$150 million IT budget.

### **Key Responsibilities:**

- Develop a technology vision that prioritizes resident-centric services, such as online portals, mobile apps, and digital equity programs to bridge the digital divide.
- Lead the adoption of smart county technologies (e.g., GIS, IoT, data analytics) to improve public safety, infrastructure management, and environmental sustainability.
- Collaborate with community organizations, schools, and libraries to expand broadband access and digital literacy programs for underserved populations.
- Oversee secure, scalable IT systems to support critical functions, including elections, public health, and emergency management.
- Develop KPIs to assess the impact of IT initiatives on community outcomes and operational efficiency.

# APPENDIX

- Advocate for funding and resources to support county IT priorities at regional and state levels.

## **Strategic Focus:**

This posting aligns with the third strategic description from my previous response, emphasizing community impact and digital equity. It is ideal for a candidate passionate about using technology to address social and economic challenges while enhancing public trust.

## **Application Details:**

- Salary Range: \$190,000 – \$260,000 annually, plus comprehensive benefits.
- Application Deadline: April 10, 2025 (verify on the official site).
- Requirements: Bachelor’s degree in IT, public policy, or related field; 10+ years of IT leadership experience, with a demonstrated focus on community engagement and equity initiatives, preferably in government.

## **How to Find More Postings**

To find additional specific, real-world job postings, consider the following steps:

- **Government Job Boards:** Visit [GovernmentJobs.com](https://www.GovernmentJobs.com), [USAJobs.gov](https://www.USAJobs.gov) (for federal insights that may inform county roles), or county-specific career portals (e.g., [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/jobs](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/jobs), [www.ocgov.com](https://www.ocgov.com), [www.kingcounty.gov/jobs](https://www.kingcounty.gov/jobs)). Search for “Chief Information Officer” or “CIO” in the job title field.
- **Professional Networks:** Use LinkedIn to search for “County Government CIO” jobs and set up job alerts. Join groups like the National Association of Counties (NACo) Career Center or follow @NACoTweets on X for updates on county government opportunities.
- **General Job Boards:** Check Indeed.com and SimplyHired.com, filtering for “Chief Information Officer” in the public sector or government category. Use location filters to narrow down to specific counties or regions.
- **Direct County Websites:** Many counties post CIO roles directly on their websites, especially for senior leadership positions. Identify counties of interest and check their “Careers” or “Employment” sections.



2024-2025 GRAND JURY REPORT  
EL DORADO COUNTY  
FEBRUARY 25, 2025 – CASE #25-06

9-1-1 CENTRAL DISPATCH –  
PERFORMANCE UNDER FIRE

*The 9-1-1 Central Dispatch services in El Dorado County Sheriff's Office suffers from critically low staffing due in part to non-competitive wages and incentives.*

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*Cover Caption: El Dorado 9-1-1 Dispatcher. Courtesy El Dorado Sheriff's Office.*

# SUMMARY

## Summary

*"There is no such thing as an accident,  
only a failure to recognize the hand of fate."*

- Napoleon Bonaparte

## HIGHLIGHTS

The El Dorado County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) investigated the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office (EDSO) 9-1-1 Central Dispatch (Central Dispatch) agency, which handles public safety needs. Central Dispatch is the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for all 9-1-1 calls occurring in unincorporated El Dorado County (County). Central Dispatch answers both emergency and non-emergency lines. They provide radio dispatch to EDSO deputies for emergency and non-emergency service calls and forward calls to other agencies, such as fire and emergency medical.

Central Dispatch suffers from critically low staffing and non-competitive pay, which is made worse by a lack of awareness from County administration of the department's operations. There are currently twelve full-time employees (FTEs): eight dispatchers and four supervisors, although they are funded for 18 dispatchers. This shortfall (less than 50% of needed dispatchers) creates a dangerous and unsustainable workload. Short staffing produces high stress, mandatory overtime, and additional risk to public safety.

## RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

The County urgently needs to evaluate and increase 9-1-1 dispatcher pay and benefits to compete with similar dispatch agencies which regularly hire staff away. Our recommendations will aid in retaining dispatchers and will provide incentives for newly hired and experienced dispatchers.

Our full analysis of the issues with 9-1-1 Dispatch service in the County follows.

## Background

Any 9-1-1 call in the United States is routed to the nearest Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). A trained dispatcher answers and asks for details about the emergency, such as location, the nature of the emergency, and if there are any immediate dangers. Based on the information provided, the dispatcher coordinates with the appropriate emergency services, such as police, fire, or medical responders, to send help to the location. They may also provide instructions on what to do until help arrives.

9-1-1 dispatching is a challenging and stressful career choice. Nationwide, there are staffing shortages and difficulties with hiring and retaining dispatchers. The pay scale is frequently considered low for the critical tasks dispatchers provide. A report generated by the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) and Carbyne, "[2024 Pulse of 9-1-1](#)," surveyed thousands of respondents to produce a detailed assessment of the 9-1-1 industry:

*"The 9-1-1 profession has some of the most motivated employees in any industry, with 87% of respondents stating that they love or like their job! Yet, despite their motivation, nearly one in three staffers feel stressed about coming to work each day, and almost a quarter acknowledge that the job has adversely affected their marital status..."*

*There is an undeniable strain on the people who are the backbone of emergency services, the voice at the end of the line. Staffing challenges continue to grow, from difficulties in hiring new personnel to problems with employee retention and an aging workforce that shows clear signs of stress and burnout."*

El Dorado County has four emergency dispatch centers to manage law enforcement, fire, and medical emergencies:

- **Central Dispatch (Law Enforcement):** Located at the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office (EDSO), handles all 9-1-1 calls from unincorporated areas of the County. Calls may be rerouted to other dispatch centers for regional or specialized services.

## BACKGROUND

- **Placerville Police Department Dispatch (Law Enforcement):** This dispatch center serves the City of Placerville; handling emergency and non-emergency calls for police services.
- **CAL FIRE Dispatch in Camino (Fire/Medical):** Responsible for dispatching fire and medical emergency services on the Western Slope. It also receives rerouted medical emergency calls from Central Dispatch.
- **South Lake Tahoe Dispatch (Law/Fire/Medical):** Handles 9-1-1 calls and dispatches law enforcement, fire, and medical services in the South Lake Tahoe area.



*Figure – A 9-1-1 Dispatcher at a County Dispatch station. An overload of critical information.*

Considering the challenges facing the dispatch industry and the importance of 9-1-1 services to the public, the Grand Jury decided to evaluate the County's Central Dispatch services. Staffing shortages have increased in only the last few years and it's important to understand why.

# BACKGROUND

Attracting candidates to this stressful career path is known to be challenging. Central Dispatch hires entry level candidates with qualifications as follows:

*“Equivalent to a high school diploma and one year of public contact and/or non-emergency dispatching experience.”*

*“Must be willing to work nights, weekends, and holidays. Must be willing to be called back, held over, or called-in to maintain minimum staffing levels. Shifts can be stressful and routinely 12 hours long. Must be able to pass a thorough background investigation.”*

Source: [Class Specifications | SHERIFF'S PUBLIC SAFETY DISPATCHER I/II | Class Spec Details](#)

Applicants hired in a probationary status as a Public Safety Dispatcher I (PSD I) are trained in both an academic setting and one-on-one with a trainer in the dispatch environment. Training can take from 8 to 12 months to achieve independent proficiency. After training, Dispatcher I's are expected to immediately move into the Dispatcher II classification to handle the full range of call taking and radio dispatching with an additional 6-month probationary period.

Applicants that have prior dispatching experience are hired as a Public Safety Dispatcher II (PSD II). PSD II's have a shorter training period where they become familiar with agency specific needs and achieve full proficiency to become a permanent employee.

Work shifts are as follows (84 hours every two weeks, includes scheduled mandatory overtime):

- Team 1: 0700-1900 Tue-Wed-Thu + every other Friday
- Team 2: 0700-1900 Sat-Sun-Mon + every other Friday
- Team 3: 1900-0700 Tue-Wed-Thu + every other Friday
- Team 4: 1900-0700 Sat-Sun-Mon + every other Friday

Overtime needs are met initially by voluntary sign up, then by mandatory assignment, if required. Our initial inquiry into Central Dispatch operations found that there was a significant staffing shortage and employee attrition.

# BACKGROUND

Our investigation centered around three key questions:

1. What are the challenges for 9-1-1 dispatch agencies in the U.S. overall in successfully hiring, training, and retaining dispatchers?
2. How well is EDSO Central Dispatch doing in hiring, training, and retaining dispatchers? What is their work culture like amidst such a challenging mission?
3. Are other County stakeholders (Sheriff's Office, Board of Supervisors, Human Resources) aware of their support roles, especially in addressing competitive pay and benefits?

Our full analysis and recommendations follow.

# METHODOLOGY

## Methodology

### INTERVIEWS

- EDSO Central Dispatch staff
- EDSO Command staff
- County Human Resources staff
- Multiple sit-along sessions (observation of working dispatch staff) by multiple Grand Jurors

### DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- Public Safety Dispatch (PSD) Manager Report to the Grand Jury September 25, 2024
- 2024 Pulse of 9-1-1, NENA and Carbyne State of the Industry Survey (<https://the-pulse-of-9-1-1.carbyne.com/the-pulse-of-9-1-1-survey-results-2024>)
- 2017 El Dorado County Total Compensation Study-Final Report by Koff and Associates
- September 2024 Emergency Call Tracking System (ECaTS) Report with Analysis for Central Dispatch

# DISCUSSION

## Discussion

### A CRITICAL DECLINE IN STAFFING LEVELS

The Grand Jury initiated an investigation of the EDSO 9-1-1 Central Dispatch Center (Central Dispatch) to assess local public safety and quality of dispatch services. The agency is funded for 18 Full-Time Employee (FTE) Dispatcher Is and IIs and four Dispatch Supervisors (a total of 22). At the time of report publication, there were only nine dispatchers and four supervisors. There are also six probationary trainees in various phases of training.

Dispatch provided data on staffing fluctuations from 2014 through 2024. The data showed 20 total dispatchers and supervisors in 2018-2019, falling to the current level of 12, soon to be 10 (detailed turnover data for 2014-2018 was not available):

Year	Dispatchers	Supervisors	Total Staff	Turnover
2024	8	4	12	6
2023	8	4	12	11
2022	8	4	12	6
2021	10	4	14	11
2020	13	4	17	5
2019	16	4	20	7
2018	16	4	20	NA
2017	14	4	18	NA
2016	13	4	17	NA
2015	12	4	16	NA
2014	13	4	17	NA

*Table – Staffing and turnover has gotten more critical (shown in red) in recent years. Additional details on staffing numbers can be found in the Appendix.*

# DISCUSSION

Central Dispatch explained that even though they regularly hired, trained and tried their best to retain qualified candidates, the failure rate varied from 50%-75%. When trainees became regular employees and then left, exit interviews cited better pay, pay differentials, and benefits compared to other regional city and county dispatch centers. Central Dispatch staffing is now so low that EDSO needs four deputies to assist in the Dispatch Center answering calls. The deputies do not handle the full scope of Dispatch Center needs, notably radio dispatching, yet get much higher pay.

**Finding 1** – EDC Central Dispatch is critically short staffed. The department is funded for 22 staff (18 dispatchers and four supervisors). They currently have 19 staff (nine dispatchers, four supervisors, and six trainees). Several dispatchers (six) and supervisors (two) have left Central Dispatch to work for higher paying agencies in the past five years.

## 9-1-1 CHALLENGES NATIONWIDE

The [\*2024 Pulse of 9-1-1, NENA and Carbyne State of the Industry Survey\*](#) describes staffing trends and challenges nationwide as well as how stakeholders view the difficulties. The following data refer to Emergency Communications Centers (ECCs) with 21-30 employees:

- 82% of ECCs struggle with vacant/unfilled positions
- 77% of ECCs face short staffing
- 74% of ECCs struggle to hire new employees
- Nearly 22% of dispatchers work mandatory overtime daily and 50% at least once a week
- Nearly 38% of dispatchers work voluntary overtime daily and more than 75% at least once a week

Combined with the usual stressful nature of the role, the prevalence of overtime places a crippling burden on staff well-being.

## INVESTIGATION OF CENTRAL DISPATCH

Members of the Grand Jury completed a two-hour “sit-along” with the working dispatchers, supervisors, and EDSO deputies. Central Dispatch is located within the new \$68 million County

# DISCUSSION

Sheriff's Office complex at 200 Industrial Drive in Placerville. The dispatch center has a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, called Record Incident Management System (RIMS), that was installed three years ago. RIMS is the most widely used CAD system in California with over 220 installations and has been a mainstay of public safety dispatching for 40 years.

Grand Jurors observed dispatchers, supervisors, and deputies working and were able to interact freely with them. When they were available to answer, we asked each person four questions:

1. What factors are important to you for wanting to have dispatching as a career?

Answers:

- *Being able to send help immediately, very rewarding job.*
- *Work/life balance.*
- *CALPERS retirement plan of 2% @ 62.*
- *Love the variety, great to work in the County I live in and am familiar with.*
- *Every day is exciting and get to be proactive.*

2. What factors would cause you to possibly or eventually decide to leave dispatching as a career?

Answers:

- *I would leave dispatching if I felt I wasn't able to effectively do the job.*
- *It requires a high skill level.*
- *I might eventually leave because of shift work; 14-16 hour days.*
- *I would leave dispatching if the pay wasn't enough.*
- *Burnout. Mandatory overtime.*
- *High stress, even on days off when I am trying to decompress.*

3. What factors and conditions contribute to you wanting to continue working at Central Dispatch?

Answers:

- *I recently looked at Folsom but didn't like the commute. I live close by. I love my co-workers and the agency. I have seniority, so I get favorable shifts and days off. We all get along well; it's a great work environment.*

## DISCUSSION

- *This is my home, and I am familiar; I live 15 minutes away. I work Dayshift, which I like.*
  - *I like the people I work with and work for. I love the community, the agency and morale here is high.*
4. What factors and conditions would cause you to consider leaving Central Dispatch to work at another dispatch agency?

Answers:

- *Up to a 10% differential for education at other agencies.*
- *Not having holiday in lieu of pay, which adds into retirement.*
- *Having medical coverage when I retire (our PERS plan doesn't have that).*
- *Staffing getting worse. Mandatory overtime. Getting burned out. (One staffer worked 24 hours of overtime per 2-week pay period).*
- *No POST (Peace Officer Safety Training) education pay. Other agencies pay 5% or more for that.*
- *Night shift differential: We pay \$1 per hour more; Placer gets 7% per hour.*

Our overall impressions were that the dispatchers were proficient multi-taskers engaged in their work duties. Despite the seriousness of the job and its demands, they were confident, conversational, and at ease with each other. There were no outside complaints about performance of Central Dispatch and they were meeting key evaluation metrics.

**Finding 2** – Despite staffing shortfalls, the Central Dispatch Department has a collaborative and engaged work culture. To date they have achieved key performance metrics at the expense of potential liability risk, job attrition, and higher costs.

### PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS AND TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS

Central Dispatch is always looking to hire new staff. Being short staffed creates a training problem. Trainers need to actively perform dispatch tasks as well as monitor the trainee. Supervisors must supervise, actively perform dispatch tasks, and provide instruction to the

## DISCUSSION

trainee. Ideally, there would be four dispatchers working, but currently they operate with only two dispatchers and an extra-help sheriff's deputy.

We were provided with a report from Emergency Call Tracking System (ECaTS). ECaTS is a third-party company that measures call answering performance from over 2600 PSAPs in 40 states and Canada.

ECaTS reported that through September 2024, EDSO Central Dispatch answered 99.26% of 9-1-1 calls in 10 seconds or less. By this metric, they are performing well. We attribute this to back-filling staff shortages with more expensive sheriff deputies pulled into the call center. Sheriff's deputies have a significantly higher pay rate and only take incoming calls, they do not perform dispatching services.

NENA standards for 9-1-1 call answering times specify that 90% of all 9-1-1 calls should be answered within 15 seconds. Central Dispatch meets these national standards according to reports we reviewed. They achieve this call answering metric at the expense of fully focusing on other tasks.

The dispatchers have the responsibility of working the West Slope and Lake Tahoe radios, which means two of the dispatchers are occupied working radios and ensuring calls are dispatched to Patrol. When they are staffed with only three to four dispatchers, including deputies, radio dispatchers are also answering phones while working a radio. Multi-tasking is a requirement, but their main radio is often too busy to have our dispatchers pulled away to answer phones.

This may be a potential liability for the County. Answering the phone in the middle of radio traffic, or vice versa, has the potential of information being copied incorrectly or not heard correctly. The demands placed on dispatchers are causing mental fatigue which could lead to burnout and errors.

Training a new dispatcher takes 8-12 months so there can be extensive extra duties for experienced dispatchers. Because of the required multi-tasking, training, at times, can suffer. If a trainer needs to correct a trainee, they are frequently unable to take a moment to discuss the correction when the trainer is busy answering other calls or working the radio.

## DISCUSSION

Training evaluations aren't often as detailed as they should be. The trainers are working the floor (answering calls and working the radio), training their trainee, and completing the trainee's evaluation simultaneously. Both trainers and trainees may feel rushed trying to gather information with ongoing multiple tasks. This is imperative during life-or-death emergencies, but they are feeling this on non-emergency calls as well.

When Central Dispatch receives a priority emergency call, training is often placed on hold. The trainer becomes the primary dispatcher; they need to work the radio and/or phones. Monitoring a trainee becomes a secondary priority if it can be done at all. The information processing demands on trainers can be overwhelming, especially over the duration of a busy twelve-hour shift. They have a headset on one ear, and a handset (phone) on another; they need to listen to the room, and the trainee.

The ECaTS report forecasts the call-taker staffing needs for Central Dispatch using the last 12 months of call data. The report recommends 2-5 call-takers be on shift at all times. Current staffing levels only allow 1-2 call-takers at a time.

The Grand Jury was impressed that Central Dispatch is doing as well as they are while training new hires and maintaining a reasonably high level of performance. The situation, however, is not sustainable and will eventually lead to declining performance, more job attrition, and burnout.

The Grand Jury recalled that the air traffic controllers were operating short staffed in Washington, D.C., during the mid-air collision on January 31, 2025. Problems can be difficult to see and appreciate until a disaster happens.

**Finding 3** – Central Dispatch staff are mandated to work extensive overtime hours resulting in stress and further job attrition. EDSO deputies are required to cover shortfalls at considerable extra expense.

## COUNTY STAKEHOLDERS

In addition to the Sheriff, the County Board of Supervisors, and the County Human Resources Department (HR) have an important, if not deciding, role to play in setting salary ranges and

## DISCUSSION

compensation for EDSO employees. The County, not the Sheriff, is primarily responsible for union negotiations and contracts for EDSO employees who do not carry weapons or have arrest powers; this includes Central Dispatch staff.

The County's labor contract with its employees lapsed on June 30, 2024. The Grand Jury could not investigate ongoing contract negotiations between the County and Local 3 representing the dispatchers due to confidentiality. Yet, it was not clear to us that the County fully appreciated the challenges Central Dispatch was facing from salary discrepancies or the role that it would play in any new contract. We asked multiple HR staff if they knew of the critically low staffing at Central Dispatch. Not one of them was aware. They mentioned that they knew dispatching was a difficult job and thought that many new hires quit because of having to work nights or weekends.

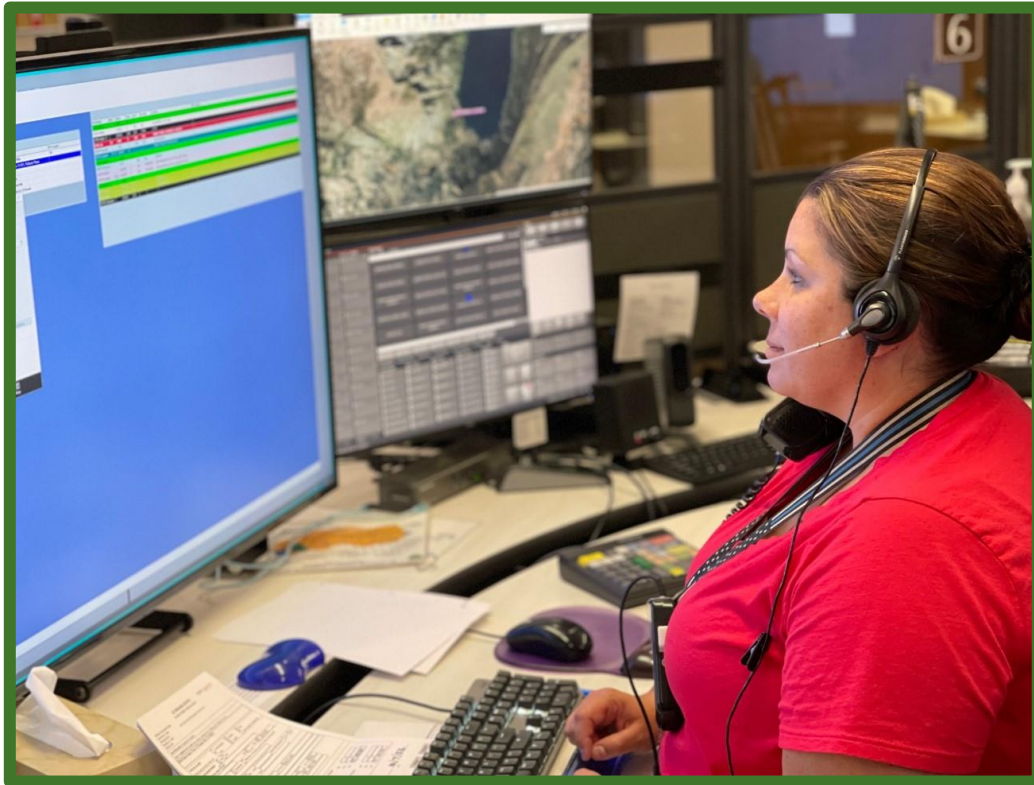
County HR and the Board of Supervisors (BOS) were aware of the vital role they had in meeting the County's public safety mission and were invested in making a difference by advocating for higher pay and better incentives to attract and retain employees. The Grand Jury would expect a workforce of 22 employees with such critical and unique responsibilities should merit more priority than they have received.

**Finding 4** – County leadership outside EDSO, which determine Central Dispatch compensation levels and benefits, appear unaware of the serious staffing shortfalls and the stress on Central Dispatch, largely because Central Dispatch has managed to maintain their key performance metrics.

We investigated the methodologies the County uses to determine suitable pay overall and for EDC Central Dispatch in particular. During interviews with HR staff, they explained that the current set of comparators for studying wages and benefits are five counties: Placer, Sacramento, Yolo, Napa, and Amador, which either border us or are similar demographically. The County looks at the salary and total benefit package. The last study the County did was two years ago. The County was behind the median in some areas at the time, so two years ago employees were brought up to the median. The County has fallen behind Sacramento and

## DISCUSSION

Placer counties at the top of the scale, as well as the city of Folsom dispatch. The evaluation is not clear because the County does not compare to other city dispatch centers.



*Figure – EDSO 9-1-1 Dispatcher. Courtesy of EDSO.*

In a prior Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with union negotiators the County agreed to allow Sheriff's Office deputies to work as extra-help by answering phones, but not to do radio dispatching. In 2024, deputies worked 9,596 hours in Central Dispatch. A deputy is paid \$42.24 - \$53.81 per hour, plus better differentials and education pay. Dispatchers are paid \$27.43 - \$37.05 per hour, roughly two-thirds of deputy pay. At average regular pay rates, the County spent roughly \$150,000 extra for deputies to answer phones rather than full-time dispatchers. EDSO Command staff indicated that they were well aware of the staffing challenges in Central Dispatch and were willing to use their available resources to help with the problem despite the additional costs.

# DISCUSSION

There are many job classifications for HR to consider for better pay, differentials, and benefits. Central Dispatch has only three pay classifications, while the County must grapple with more than 500 overall. HR may need to apply different metrics and considerations for the three specialized job classifications in Central Dispatch than they do for the other 500 classifications. Unique factors play into job satisfaction besides compensation that need to be considered. Even with increased salary, there may continue to be employee attrition.

**Finding 5** – There is no single source of information that shows how much extra is spent covering staffing shortfalls in Central Dispatch, including overtime pay and the higher pay rate for EDSO sheriff deputies. The lack of visibility to additional Central Dispatch coverage costs impairs the BOS and HR from making effective staffing decisions and prioritizations.

Current compensation rates and call loads for neighboring dispatch centers:

## **Dispatcher I/II Hourly Rates:**

- Central Dispatch: \$27.43 - \$37.05
- El Dorado Sheriff Deputy as dispatcher: \$42.24 - \$53.81
- Placer Sheriff: \$31.61 - \$43.52
- Roseville Police: \$31.49 - \$48.74 (the County lost 1 dispatcher to Roseville)
- Elk Grove Police: \$32.33 - \$43.32 (the County lost 1 supervisor Elk Grove)
- Citrus Heights Police: \$33.05 - \$45.42
- Folsom Police: \$36.13 - \$48.88 (the County lost 5 dispatchers to Folsom)

## **Selected Additional Skills Pay and Shift Differentials:**

- Communication Training Officer (CTO) Pay: 5% (all), 7.5% (Elk Grove)
- Shift Differential: \$0.75 - \$1.00 (El Dorado), 7.5% (Placer), 2.5-5% (Roseville)
- Bilingual Pay: \$1.00 (El Dorado), 5% (Placer), \$100/month (Roseville, Citrus Heights)

## DISCUSSION

- Education Pay (Having AA/AS, BA/BS or MA/MS degrees): \$100-\$125 (Placer), 2.5% (Roseville), 5% (Elk Grove, Citrus Heights), up to 10% combined (Folsom). Central Dispatch does not offer education pay.
- Peace Officer Safety Training (POST-Dispatcher specific) Certification Pay: 2.5% (Elk Grove, Citrus Heights) up to 10% combined (Folsom)

We evaluated call volumes across multiple agencies to see if that was a justification for pay differential. It turned out to be irrelevant as call volumes per EDSO Central Dispatcher were at least as high.

### Call Volume (2023):

- El Dorado Sheriff: 185,518 phone calls, 93,712 calls created
- Placer Sheriff: 181,077 phone calls (law & medical), unknown # of calls created
- Roseville Police: 204,339 phone calls (fire & medical), 126,853 calls created
- Elk Grove Police: 169,049 phone calls, 43,493 calls created
- Citrus Heights Police: 138,169 phone calls, 82,016 calls created
- Folsom Police: 93,128 phone calls, 44,050 calls created

The current five-county comparator model does not serve the County's staffing needs since local cities form a unique competitive market for dispatchers, as well as wide disparity among counties. Being truly competitive in retaining dispatchers means being closer to Placer County pay and differentials, as well as considering Folsom and other city comparables, rather than just the median of the neighboring five counties (which includes lower paying Amador County).

**Finding 6** – El Dorado County Dispatcher wages, differentials, and benefits are not competitive in the regional public dispatch market. The County's five-comparator pay modeling doesn't take local city agencies that Central Dispatch employees have moved to into account.

# DISCUSSION

## CONCLUSION

Hiring and retaining a dispatcher through the training and probation period is a challenging task. Central Dispatch performs well with adept multi-tasking from motivated employees, despite the challenges of low staffing. The County now needs to support Central Dispatch with improvements in pay and shift differentials to ensure full staffing, dispatcher retention and effective public safety. The County needs a sensible fiscal approach to attract and keep qualified dispatchers to fully staff and reduce the stress of mandatory overtime.

# FINDINGS

## Findings

**F1** – EDC Central Dispatch is critically short staffed. The department is funded for 22 staff (18 dispatchers and four supervisors). They currently have 19 staff (nine dispatchers, four supervisors, and six trainees). Several dispatchers (six) and supervisors (two) have left Central Dispatch to work for higher paying agencies in the past five years.

**F2** – Despite staffing shortfalls, the Central Dispatch Department has a collaborative and engaged work culture. To date they have achieved key performance metrics at the expense of potential liability risk, job attrition, and higher costs.

**F3** – Central Dispatch staff are mandated to work extensive overtime hours resulting in stress and further job attrition. EDSO deputies are required to cover shortfalls at considerable extra expense.

**F4** – County leadership outside EDSO, which determine Central Dispatch compensation levels and benefits, appear unaware of the serious staffing shortfalls and the stress on Central Dispatch, largely because Central Dispatch has managed to maintain their key performance metrics.

**F5** – There is no single source of information that shows how much extra is spent covering staffing shortfalls in Central Dispatch, including overtime pay and the higher pay rate for EDSO sheriff deputies. The lack of visibility to additional Central Dispatch coverage costs impairs the BOS and HR from making effective staffing decisions and prioritizations.

**F6** – El Dorado County Dispatcher wages, differentials, and benefits are not competitive in the regional public dispatch market. The County's five-comparator pay modeling doesn't take local city agencies that Central Dispatch employees have moved to into account.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

**R1** – EDSO direct Central Dispatch to develop and implement a strategy and action plan by July 16, 2025, to retain dispatchers, focusing on employees with less than seven years in the position.

**R2** – The Board of Supervisors direct Human Resources to assess the wage disparities, pay differentials, and benefits from a wider range of local cities and counties, primarily Folsom, Roseville, and Placer County, to make an interim adjustment to Central Dispatch wages by October 1, 2025.

**R3** – The Board of Supervisors direct Human Resources to include training incentives, including salary increases for Peace Officer Safety Training (POST) education and degrees by July 1, 2026.

**R4** – EDSO direct Central Dispatch and their payroll department to produce an annual report by January 1, 2026 including the amount of overtime salary paid, as well as EDSO deputy pay differential for Central Dispatch staffing to determine the additional cost of keeping Central Dispatch 9-1-1 lines answered.

# REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

## Request for Responses

A Civil Grand Jury report details a single investigation. Each report lists FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS. The responsible organization 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.

**ELECTIVE 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, as required, to a Jury report, violates California Penal Code Section 933.05 and is subject to further action that may include additional investigation on 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 government bodies:

- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors  
Findings 4-6 and Recommendations 2-3
- El Dorado Sheriff's Office  
Findings 1-3 and 6, and Recommendations 1 and 4

For more information refer to [How to Respond to an El Dorado County Grand Jury Report](#) available on the El Dorado County Grand Jury webpage.

# APPENDIX AND GLOSSARY

## Appendix and Glossary

### EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND TURNOVER DATA

- Grey: PSD II or supervisors that left (resigned, relocated or moved to other agency).
- White: PSD I that left or weren't promoted.
- Green: still employed.
- Yellow: current trainees.

Position	Hire Date	Term Date	Reason for Leaving
PSD Supervisor	2007		still employed
PSD Supervisor	2018		still employed
PSD Supervisor	2020		still employed
PSD Supervisor	2023		still employed
PSD II	2015		still employed
PSD II	2015		still employed
PSD II	2016		still employed
PSD II	2016	2019	Folsom PD
PSD II	2017	2019	Folsom PD
PSD II	2007	2019	moved out of state
PSD II	2017	2019	Personal
PSD I	2019	2019	resigned – personal
PSD I	2019	2019	Released
PSD I	2019	2019	Released
PSD Supervisor	2000	2020	retired
PSD II	2014	2020	Folsom PD
PSD II	2004	2020	retired
PSD I	2020	2021	transferred out
PSD I	2020	2021	resigned – CHPD
PSD I	2020	2020	Personal
PSD I	2019	2020	Roseville PD
PSD Supervisor	2006	2021	moved out of state
PSD II	2018	2021	Folsom PD
PSD II	1994	2021	Retired
PSD II	2012	2021	moved out of state

## APPENDIX AND GLOSSARY

PSD II	2002	2021	Retired
PSD I	2021	2021	resigned – childcare
PSD I	2021	2022	released from prob
PSD I	2021	2021	transferred out
PSD I	2021	2021	Resigned
PSD I	2021	2021	released from prob
PSD I	2022	2022	resigned – schedule
PSD I	2022	2023	resigned – personal
PSD I	2022	2022	resigned – personal
PSD I	2022	2022	resigned – personal
PSD I	2022	2022	resigned – personal
PSD I	2021	2022	moved out of state
PSD II	2021	2023	Roseville PD
PSD II	2021	2023	Fremont PD
PSD II	2012	2023	moved out of state
PSD II	1999	2023	moved out of state
PSD II	2010	2023	retired / new job \$
PSD I	2023	2023	released from prob
PSD I	2023	2023	transferred out
PSD I	2022	2023	Resigned
PSD II	2022		still employed
PSD II	2023		still employed
PSD II	2023		still employed
PSD Supervisor	2023	2024	Stockton PD
PSD Supervisor	2023	2024	Elk Grove PD
PSD I	2023	2023	released from prob
PSD I	2023	2023	resigned - home life
PSD I	2024	2024	transferred out
PSD I	2024	2024	transferred out
PSD I	2024		in training
PSD II	2024		still employed
PSD I	2024		still employed
PSD I	2023	2024	Resigned
PSD Supervisor	2012	2024	retired

# APPENDIX AND GLOSSARY

PSD I	2024		in training
PSD I	2024		in training
PSD I	2025		in training
PSD I	2025		in training

## GLOSSARY

- CAD – Computer Aided Dispatch
- ECaTS – Emergency Call Tracking System
- ECC – Emergency Communications Centers
- FTE – Full-Time Employee
- NENA – National Emergency Number Association
- PSAP – Public Safety Answering Point
- PSD – Public Safety Dispatch
- POST – Peace Officer Safety Training
- RIMS – Record Incident Management System



2024-25 GRAND JURY REPORT

EL DORADO COUNTY

MARCH 11, 2025 – CASE #25-07

## HHSA STAFFING CHALLENGES IMPACT MEDI-CAL CLIENTS

*Difficulty in staffing HHSA Medi-Cal support positions has led to delays in processing disenrollments and frustrations among clients seeking other plans.*

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*Cover Caption: Placerville HHSA Office entrance. Taken February 26, 2025. Courtesy K. Pauley*

# SUMMARY

## Summary

*"Managing eligibility, benefits, and claims in public health programs like Medicaid requires a delicate balance of accuracy, efficiency, and empathy—finding staff who can do all of this under constant pressure is a significant challenge."*

— John O'Brien, Former Director of the Medicaid Innovation Accelerator Program

## HIGHLIGHTS

In El Dorado County, Medi-Cal is administered by the Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) through the Self Sufficiency Community Services division. The Grand Jury discovered staffing issues with Medi-Cal Eligibility Specialists that led to challenges for clients, including delays in service and inability to move to other health plans.

Key issues identified include:

- The Continuous Enrollment clause (2020-2023) in a state-mandated policy during Covid overwhelmed staff with enrollment updates after the policy ended.
- Salary inequities compared to neighboring counties.
- Lack of metrics for staffing and productivity.
- A 6-month training program with a low completion rate.

## RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

The County urgently needs to evaluate and increase HHS Eligibility Specialists pay and benefits to compete with similar county agencies which regularly hire staff away. We also recommend that the County develop and deploy metrics and tools for evaluating staff, productivity, and turnover rates.

Our full analysis of the issues and recommendations follow.

# BACKGROUND

## Background

Medicaid is a federal and state program that funds and provides healthcare and supportive services to low-income individuals and families, referred to as Medi-Cal in California. In California the applicant begins their application on the state's website. Once approved, their enrollment is managed by each county. El Dorado County (County) manages this program through the Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) by the Self Sufficiency Community Services division. In 2020, California implemented the Continuous Enrollment clause (no disenrollment), part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), preventing individuals enrolled in Medi-Cal from being disenrolled. In 2023 the policy ended, and enrollment adjustments were restarted. This resulted in a month-to-month increase in individual enrollment re-evaluations, which overwhelmed staff.

HHS is made up of the following divisions which concentrate on the needs of the citizens: Behavioral Health Services, Public Health Services, Community Services, and Social Services. HHS is required to manage the program for the enrolled citizens of the County. HHS has three Medi-Cal support locations in South Lake Tahoe, Placerville and Shingle Springs. There are many Medi-Cal support locations in neighboring counties, including six locations in Sacramento County, that attract experienced employees from our West Slope locations.

The Grand Jury received a complaint which stated that clients could not disenroll from the program and that repeated inquiries to the County were unanswered. The complaint warranted a deeper investigation into the County's ability to process Medi-Cal clients effectively.

# METHODOLOGY

## Methodology

### INTERVIEWS

- Complainant
- HHSa management
- HR management

### DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- HHSa website
- Federal legislation
- State Medi-Cal website
- State legislation

## Discussion

Each county is responsible for processing Medi-Cal enrollments and case management for the state of California. The positions responsible for processing Medi-Cal applications are described as hard to fill positions. It is a demanding, high-need job that requires a significant amount of training. Staff need to understand the intricacies of the Medi-Cal system and be able to counsel potential enrollees on the plan and eligibility. Long hours of customer service are required.

Training to become a Medi-Cal eligibility specialist in California can be challenging due to several factors:

- **Complexity of the Medi-Cal System:** The system is complex, with various eligibility criteria, benefits, and regulations that frequently change. Support personnel need to understand intricate policies related to eligibility, medical services, enrollment, and renewals.
- **Volume of Work and High Expectations:** Medi-Cal eligibility specialists are typically responsible for high volumes of cases, requiring accuracy and efficiency. Caseworkers or support personnel must process applications, conduct interviews, verify eligibility, and assist clients.
- **Client Interaction and Emotional Demands:** Many Medi-Cal clients face significant challenges, such as poverty, health issues, and language barriers. Support personnel must be patient, empathetic, and skilled in dealing with difficult or emotionally charged situations. Handling difficult conversations about eligibility denials, delays, or misunderstood requirements adds to the emotional weight of the job.
- **Compliance and Legal Regulations:** Medi-Cal programs are highly regulated, requiring strict adherence to federal and state guidelines. Medi-Cal eligibility specialists must ensure that every action complies with these laws and regulations, adding another layer of difficulty to their work.
- **Training and Certification Requirements:** Training typically includes extensive instruction on federal and state regulations, as well as software systems used to process Medi-Cal

# DISCUSSION

applications and track cases. Staff are tested regularly to ensure that they are proficient in understanding regulations and using tools for case management.

Success rates for individuals completing training can vary depending on the county and specific program, but it is generally reported that the failure rate in such training programs is higher than average, primarily because of the complexity of the material and the fast-paced environment. Retention rates also tend to be lower than in less demanding government positions. Many people find the emotional and intellectual demands of the job to be a struggle over time.

## 2020 LEGISLATION

In 2020 California implemented a no disenrollment policy as directed by The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), signed into law in March 2020. This meant that those already on Medi-Cal did not have to go through any kind of renewal process. States, including California, prohibited disenrolling anyone from Medi-Cal unless the person died, moved out of state, or requested disenrollment.

The federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 declared an official end to Medicaid's (California's Medi-Cal) "continuous enrollment provision," and assigned a sunset date of March 31, 2023. California began its re-evaluation of Medi-Cal clients' eligibilities the following month. Re-evaluations are processed based on the client's anniversary month. Those who no longer qualify for coverage will be disenrolled from Medi-Cal. Federal and state regulations required states complete these re-evaluations by May 2024. El Dorado County was unable to meet this mandate.

## CURRENT STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

During the investigation we discovered that the El Dorado County Medi-Cal program is severely understaffed. There are currently 19 staff positions which includes one management position unfilled. Being short-staffed has caused delays in getting clients signed up for services or removed from the program once the client no longer qualifies or requested to be removed. Phone calls to the department have gone unanswered and follow-up to emails are not returned

# DISCUSSION

in a reasonable timeframe. The department hired 15 staff members in January 2025, who are currently in the training program.

**Finding 1**– The current staffing of the HHS Medi-Cal division is inadequate, unable to keep up with the workload from post-Covid disenrollment requests, and many employees are leaving because of the lower pay.

Average of Base Pay				
	Eligibility Specialist - I		Eligibility Specialist - II	
Colusa County			\$	44,307.84
El Dorado County	\$	43,822.29	\$	49,843.24
Mendocino County			\$	53,196.11
Calaveras County			\$	55,962.37
Humboldt County	\$	56,597.00	\$	56,547.13
Monterey County	\$	50,088.36	\$	60,136.14
Placer County	\$	46,978.20	\$	61,808.26
Sonoma County	\$	54,353.33	\$	67,135.82
Napa County	\$	56,608.34	\$	71,106.52

Table – Comparable average salaries for eligibility specialists across California counties. Source: Transparent California, 2023 data.

The table above shows comparable average salaries in other counties in 2023. Noteworthy is the average salary at nearby Placer County, nearly \$12,000, or roughly 25%, higher. Data was not readily available for Sacramento County, an important comparable to measure.

Even with all the new hires, relief will not be immediate. Once hired, the employee begins a six-month County provided training program. Historically only 50% of the trainees complete the program and can begin providing case management for Medi-Cal clients. It's plausible that the 15 new people will only result in about eight people filling the 19 open positions.

## DISCUSSION

**Finding 2** – The Medi-Cal eligibility specialist is a challenging position and difficult to identify and hire candidates. Onboarded employees require six months of training, with roughly 50% of those completing the process. HHSA doesn't track exact numbers.

### STAFFING METRICS

HHSA staff attended a conference where they learned of a software program to track employee productivity. They have placed a budget request for this software, Exemplar, and have reduced other program expenses to offset the cost.

**Finding 3** – HHSA does not currently have a system for tracking Medi-Cal eligibility specialist staff productivity.

Neither the HR department nor HHSA management were able to provide the turnover rate for these positions. Without detailed documentation, we relied on information available that most of the employees are leaving due to low pay. As noted in a previous salary survey for other positions, the County pays less than surrounding counties for this job classification. Once the employee is trained, they can seek employment elsewhere. Tahoe basin HHS staff has a turnover rate which is notably lower than the West Slope location in Placerville because the proximity does not provide any easy transition to another county. Several staff members across other departments have described the County as the "training ground for adjacent counties."

**Finding 4** – The HR system does not track turnover rates, which should include documentation for reason for leaving, and which would provide greater insight to staff shortages and how to improve hiring and retention rates.

# DISCUSSION

## A CALL CENTER OPTION

HHSA attempted to create a call center in their Shingle Springs location, but it was a failure. The call center was not set up correctly by not having any tracking mechanisms for the employees taking the calls. At the time employees could just not answer the phone and it would route to the next employee. A new manager was able to ensure phones were being answered and voicemails were being returned, however a proper call center software system would improve the process. There are several counties that are using call centers: Humboldt, Santa Cruz, and San Joaquin counties.

**Finding 5** – Several counties have implemented the use of lower cost call centers to address basic inquiries for greater efficiency and referring enrollment steps to eligibility specialists. Currently El Dorado County relies on eligibility specialists to manage all tasks associated with inquiries to the department and calls from clients to their case workers, increasing their workload.

## CONCLUSION

HHSA has fallen behind in processing Medi-Cal disenrollments since Covid due to understaffing. Staffing has been challenging due to the specific training and requirements for the position, as well as lower pay than surrounding counties. HHSA had to follow the state-mandated practice of not removing any subscribers during Covid (the California Families First Corona Virus Response Act, FFCRA). Citizens are now challenged when trying to move to other healthcare plans due to the inability to disenroll efficiently from Medi-Cal.

# FINDINGS

## Findings

**F1**– The current staffing of the HHS Medi-Cal division is inadequate, unable to keep up with the workload from post-Covid disenrollment requests, and many employees are leaving because of the lower pay.

**F2** – The Medi-Cal eligibility specialist is a challenging position and difficult to identify and hire candidates. Onboarded employees require six months of training, with roughly 50% of those completing the process. HHS doesn't track the exact numbers.

**F3** – HHS does not currently have a system for tracking Medi-Cal eligibility specialist staff productivity.

**F4** – The HR system does not track turnover rates, which should include documentation for reason for leaving, and which would provide greater insight to staff shortages and how to improve hiring and retention rates.

**F5**– Several counties have implemented the use of lower cost call centers to address basic inquiries for greater efficiency and referring enrollment steps to eligibility specialists. Currently El Dorado County relies on eligibility specialists to manage all tasks associated with inquiries to the department and calls from clients to their case workers, increasing their workload.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors...

**R1** – Direct Human Resources to conduct a compensation study for the Eligibility Specialist classification and ensure that total compensation is competitive with neighboring counties by August 30, 2025.

**R2** – Direct HHSA to implement a process, such as utilizing a software system, to track and evaluate eligibility specialist staff performance and productivity by end of 2025.

**R3** – Direct Human Resources to investigate software systems that can track employee turnover and reasons for resignations/terminations by end of 2025. This information should be employed to determine future efforts to address staffing issues and shared periodically with the Board of Supervisors.

**R4** – Direct HHSA to develop a plan by end of 2025 to review the costs and benefits of a call center approach to complement eligibility specialty staff.

# REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

## Request for Responses

A Civil Grand Jury report details a single investigation. Each report lists FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS. The responsible organization 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.
- ELECTIVE 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, as required, to a Jury report, violates California Penal Code Section 933.05 and is subject to further action that may include additional investigation on 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 government bodies:

- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
  - All Findings and Recommendations

For more information refer to [How to Respond to an El Dorado County Grand Jury Report](#) available on the El Dorado County Grand Jury webpage.



2024-25 GRAND JURY REPORT  
EL DORADO COUNTY  
APRIL 11, 2025 – CASE #25-08

## JUVENILE TREATMENT CENTER INSPECTION

*The results of the Grand Jury's annual inspection of the Juvenile Treatment Center.*

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*Cover Caption: Entrance to the Juvenile Detention Center in South Lake Tahoe.*

# SUMMARY

## Summary

*“Juvenile justice is not about locking kids up and throwing away the key. It’s about understanding their backgrounds, addressing their needs, and providing them with the tools to become successful adults.”*

*Marian Wright Edelman, Children’s Defense Funds Founder*

## HIGHLIGHTS

The California Penal Code requires Grand Juries to annually inspect all jails, prisons, and juvenile detention facilities within their respective counties. The inspection includes interviews with staff and a physical walk-through of the facility. The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury conducted its inspection of the El Dorado County Juvenile Treatment Center (JTC) on October 9, 2024. The facility was clean, organized and well managed.

From the Board of State Community Corrections (BSCC) [web site](#):

*The mission of juvenile treatment centers in California is to promote trauma-responsive, culturally informed services for youth involved in the juvenile justice system, helping them transition successfully into adulthood and become responsible, thriving, and engaged members of their communities. The Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) provides education and trauma-informed treatment to California's youthful offenders up to the age of 25 with serious criminal backgrounds and intense treatment needs.*

The El Dorado County Juvenile Treatment Center (JTC) is located at the El Dorado County Government Center in South Lake Tahoe. The JTC houses youth who have been arrested for committing a crime. Offenses range from misdemeanors to felonies, including murder.

The JTC provides secure detention for up to 40 youth and houses both male and female juveniles. The JTC is part of the Probation Department. It serves the Superior Court, law enforcement agencies, families, and neighboring contract counties.

# SUMMARY

## RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

The Grand Jury found that the Juvenile Treatment center was well managed. Support staff were dedicated to rehabilitation of the youth rather than punishment. We want to commend the leadership and the entire facility team for their professionalism and commitment to the youth they serve. The facility was being remodeled to provide an environment that supports rehabilitation of the youth. The Grand Jury encourages continued focus on rehabilitation and improvement of the environment.

Our full analysis of the Juvenile Treatment Center follows.



Artwork in this document is courtesy of El Dorado County Juvenile Treatment Center Youth

# BACKGROUND

## Background

### THE JUVENILE TREATMENT CENTER MISSION

The primary function of the JTC is to provide treatment and services within a safe and secure environment for youth. The mission is to facilitate individualized care that supports the emotional, educational, and physical development of the youth. The JTC supports services for youth, their families, and the community to promote public safety and reduce the likelihood of re-offending.

Youth who are detained in a juvenile treatment facility are pending court hearings, serving commitment time, or awaiting out-of-home placement in a foster/group home, camp or a county treatment facility. Youth can be placed in a treatment facility, by the courts, with the intent to rehabilitate and educate the youth prior to re-entering the community. Most youth are released to their parent(s)/legal guardian(s).

Staff working in the Probation Department's Juvenile Facilities recognize that they serve as role models who uphold high professional and ethical standards of behavior. Mutual respect and professionalism are projected through staff appearance, attitude, and approach to the youth and the community they serve. Staff strives to instill in the youth that they can make positive changes.

The JTC provides activities and guidance to contribute to each youth's social and personal development to enhance their ability to function acceptably in the community. Behavioral health services are provided to the youth during detention to assist them in initiating the process of rehabilitation and developing positive life goals.

# METHODOLOGY

## Methodology

### INTERVIEWS

- Probation Officers
- Department staff
- Tour of the site

### DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- [Roles and Responsibilities of the OYCR and the BSCC in Juvenile Justice – BSCC](#)
- [Final-Regulation-Text-2023.04.01-Clean-Copy-for-Web.pdf](#)
- [Division of Juvenile Justice - Inside CDCR](#)
- [California Code, PEN 925](#)
- [California Code, PEN 919.](#)
- [Risk-Need-Responsivity Model](#)



# DISCUSSION

## Discussion

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The El Dorado County JTC is clean and spacious. It is currently being remodeled to provide a more “homelike” environment for the youth. The facility has 40 beds. The day of the inspection JTC had an occupancy of 14 youths.

The JTC Mission Statement describes the philosophy regarding the treatment of juvenile offenders within the justice system. The goal is to provide a learning environment that offers various programs to assist the juvenile offenders in re-evaluating their place in society and ability to cope with life’s issues and concerns. Rehabilitation is the primary target.

### INTERVENTIONS AND PROGRAMS OFFERED AT THE JTC

All youth offenders are assessed, classified, and provided services based on Risk-Need-Responsivity principles. Youth are screened for appropriate detention criteria and assessed for services along with court and commitment recommendations.

The Positive Achievement Change Tool ([PACT](#)) is utilized to determine the youth's areas of need. Interventions and programs are for each youth and are designed to address the identified need. Available interventions and programs:

- Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) – Cognitive treatment program for substance abuse and offender populations. [The Official Website of Moral Reconciliation Therapy—MRT®](#)
- Matrix Model Intensive Adolescent Alcohol and Drug Treatment Program – An integrated form of substance use treatment that combines different evidence-based therapeutic interventions to treat people who struggle with stimulant use disorder. [The Matrix Model of Addiction Treatment: A Guide](#)
  - Interactive Journaling
  - Gender-specific programming
  - Educational services

# DISCUSSION

- Family therapy
- Utilization of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) – A risk-need assessment tool for juveniles. [Positive Achievement Change Tool - Search](#)
- Utilization of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) – Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) is a structured program of psychotherapy with a strong educational component designed to provide skills for managing intense emotions and negotiating social relationships. [Dialectical Behavior Therapy | Psychology Today](#)
- Challenge Program – The Challenge program includes rehabilitation for alcohol and drugs, anger management, thinking skills, life skills, and work success goals. The Challenge Program has a point system with loss of privileges for disciplinary issues and additional points for participating in work programs and other good deeds. The points can be used for additional privileges, including decreasing time sentenced. Challenge is a structured learning environment that the juvenile offenders must complete. The program helps prepare the juvenile offenders for reunifications with their families upon release in anger management, personal and social skills. Art programs, yoga, church and bible study are optional. Uniforms reflect the current level of achievement in the Challenge Program.
- Changes Program – The Changes Program is for youth who are at moderate to high risk of reoffending and may need intensive interventions and services. The program is up to 180-days, allowing youth and their families, service providers, and the probation department to address specific needs of the youth. This program requires the youth to complete a project on a topic related to their life.
- Choices Program – The Choices Program is for youth who are at a moderate to high risk of reoffending and may need intensive interventions and services. The program lasts up to 90-days and allows youth and their families, service providers, and the probation department to address specific needs of the youth. Interventions and services are available to address acute needs and provide referrals to community-based providers.
- Chances Program – The Chances Program is for youth who are a moderate risk of reoffending or may have relapsed and need acute needs addressed and referrals to community-based providers. This program is a 30-day commitment allowing youth and their

## DISCUSSION

families, service providers, and the probation department to address the acute needs of the youth with a focus on transitioning back to the community for services. Transition and aftercare plans are developed to assist in the transition back to the community and residence.



### RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

Clergy is available to the juvenile offenders by request and during religious study. Reasonable accommodations are made to support diverse religious requirements of the youth.

### COMMUNICATION

Juvenile offenders have access to telephones; they are allowed a minimum of two calls per week up to unlimited calls, based upon their status in the Challenge Program. They also have access to electronic tablets for digital communication.

# DISCUSSION

Youth are encouraged to write letters to family and friends. The juvenile offenders' mail is not read by staff. All juvenile offenders have access to visitors. Staff goes out of their way to arrange convenient times to accommodate family work schedules.

## EDUCATION

Behavioral and educational counseling is provided. The JTC offers programs to the juvenile offenders to complete their educational requirements. Classes through grade 12 are offered 365 days per year.

## EXERCISE

Exercise is available indoors and out. The juvenile offenders exercise one hour per weekday and two hours per day on weekends. The outdoor exercise area cannot be used in winter months.

## MEALS

The kitchen was immaculate with all knives and chemicals properly secured. The kitchen manager is responsible for assessing and selecting the juvenile offenders exhibiting interest and the ability to be trained to work in the kitchen. Kitchen staff did a great job in presenting their role.

The meals are served in the dayroom where the juvenile offenders are allowed to converse with one another. Probational Officers can join the youth for lunch and are committed to making this happen.

## MEDICAL CARE

Medical care is available on site and via telemedicine. Nursing staff are on site from 7:30AM to 12:30PM daily. Physicians are on site at least once per week and on call 24 hours per day. A Clinical Health Educator is available for substance abuse education at the JTC as needed. Two mental health staff are available five days a week.

# DISCUSSION

## RULES AND PROCEDURES

The rules and grievance procedures are posted and reviewed with all juvenile offenders. Records of grievances are logged and kept on record. The grievance records were verified by the Grand Jury.

## CONCLUSION

The facility was extremely clean. There were no signs of graffiti within the facility. There were no noticeable cracks in the ceiling, walls or floors. The facility is being remodeled to improve the environment from a detention center to a center of rehabilitation. The walls were freshly painted and there was new flooring.

The JTC staff are a committed team who are proud to be working in the environment and really live the mission of the program.

The programs at the JTC are focused on rehabilitation of the youth rather than punishment. One Probation Officer shared with us that he was approached by a young adult at the El Dorado County Fair who thanked him for making a difference in his life when he needed it most.



\*Inspection checklist included in appendix.

# FINDINGS

## Findings

**F1** – The JTC staff are a committed team who are proud to be working in the environment and really live the mission of the program.

**F2** – The units were clean and graffiti free.

**F3** – The facility offers an impressive array of programs and interventions to the youth.

**F4** – The artwork in this report was done by the youth and was quite impressive.

**F5** – The JTC is being remodeled to create a more supportive environment for the youth.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct the Probation Department...

**R1** – Continue to create an environment that supports rehabilitation.



# REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

## Request for Responses

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# APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

## Appendix and Related Information

### JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION ANNUAL INSPECTION JUVENILE HALLS, SPECIAL PURPOSE JUVENILE HALLS CAMPS AND SECURE YOUTH TREATMENT FACILITIES

<b>FACILITY NAME:</b> South Lake Tahoe Juvenile Treatment Center
<b>FACILITY TYPE AND CAPACITY:</b> Juvenile
<b>FACILITY ADDRESS:</b> 1041 Al Tahoe Blvd, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150
<b>FACILITY PHONE NUMBER:</b> 530-573-7980
<b>FACILITY MANAGER INTERVIEWED:</b> Casey
<b>STAFF INTERVIEWED:</b> <a href="#">Click or tap here to enter text.</a>
<b>INSPECTION DATE:</b> October 9, 2024
<b>LAST INSPECTION DATE:</b> <a href="#">Click or tap here to enter text.</a>

### INSPECTION RESULTS

AREA REVIEWED	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>				
Facility Perimeter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Facility perimeter was clean. The building was surrounded by trees
Cleanliness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The jail was clean
Facility Paint, Gutters, Windows,	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Everything appeared maintained.
Comments:	The facility appeared clean and well kept			
<b>LOCAL COUNTY INSPECTIONS</b>				
County Building Inspection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6/10/2024

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

AREA REVIEWED	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
Fire Authority	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10/30/2024
Public Health- Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3/27/2024
Public Health- Medical/Mental	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3/27/2024
Public Health- Environmental	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10/12/2023
Educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Juveniles attend classes during the day. Classes are offered through grade 12.
Juvenile Court	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scheduled
Comments:	All inspections are current			
Recommendations:				
<b>ANCILLARY SERVICES</b>				
Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth receive at least 24 hours of instruction each week. The California Core standards-based curriculum is delivered to all youth through a direct and individual instructional model
Mental Health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Available as needed. The focus is on rehabilitation. There are mental health coordinators and youth are sentenced to specific programs depending on the reason for being in the treatment center.
Medical Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wellpath. MD is present 1 day per week and on call 24/7. RN presence Monday through Friday Licensed Clinical Social Worker and an Educator
Dental Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	As needed
Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Food is cooked onsite. Special Diets if needed

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

AREA REVIEWED	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
<b>STAFFING</b>				
Does facility maintain mandated awake ratios?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ratio is 1:10
Does facility maintain mandated sleeping ratios?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ratio is 1:30
Staff/Youth interactions/	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interactions are professional. Staff focus is on rehabilitation and support of juveniles
Are there enough supervisors to supervise staff?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, the facility has 4 supervisors.
Are there staff who speak other languages?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spanish. A translation service is used if needed.
Is there a diverse staff workforce?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
Does facility have enough staff to ensure that all programs, activities are provided as required?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes. The staff is extremely dedicated to the youth and providing for the needs of individuals.

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

AREA REVIEWED	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
<b>PHYSICAL PLANT</b>				
<b>EXTERIOR (General)</b>				
Grass Areas and Lawns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Concrete/Asphalt Walkways	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintained
Exercise/Recreation Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Both indoor and outdoor exercise and recreation areas
Facility Paint and Windows	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintained
Gutters, Roof, Drains	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintained
Security and Lighting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintained
<b>INTERIOR (General)</b>				
Living Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Living areas are being redone to create a “boutique” experience
Cleanliness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The housing units were clean
Upkeep	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The facility was maintained and clean
Sleeping Space	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual rooms
Beds	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No issues
Mattresses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No issues
Classrooms	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Classroom onsite
Showers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Available on Pods

# APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

AREA REVIEWED	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
<b>INTAKE/ADMISSION</b>				
<b>ORIENTATION OF YOUTH</b>				
Are All Youth Orientated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth are oriented
Do youth Understand Rules and Expectations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes. All youth get an intake pamphlet which include the rules and expectations
Are Rules and Grievance Procedures Posted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, the Grievance Procedure is posted all over the facility
<b>ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS</b>				
Correspondence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	tablets
Visiting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Recreation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inside and outside areas are available for youth to play organized sports or to exercise.
Exercise	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exercise is done daily.
Special Programs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	School 365 days per year

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

AREA REVIEWED	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
Programs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Each youth is sentenced to a specific program that is specific to their needs. The facility strives to create a safe environment to focus on rehabilitation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)</li> <li>Matrix Model Intensive Adolescent Alcohol and Drug Treatment Program</li> <li>Interactive Journaling</li> <li>Gender-specific programming</li> <li>Educational services</li> <li>Family therapy</li> <li>Utilization of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)</li> <li>Utilization of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)</li> </ul>
Counseling and Casework	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Case workers handle different programs
Family Reunification and Counseling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If youth is identified as safe to return to family counseling is done
Substance Abuse	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Counseling is available for substance abuse
Cognitive Behavioral	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	16 step cognitive based model.
Victim Awareness/ Restorative Justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Vocational Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Post-Secondary Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Work Programs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Morning cleanup, kitchen, laundry room
Community Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Parenting Classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Sexual Harassment Classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

AREA REVIEWED	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
Religious Activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
<b>USE OF FORCE</b>				
Comments:	Click or tap here to enter text.			
Recommendations:	Click or tap here to enter text.			
<b>ROOM CONFINEMENT</b>				
Comments:	Click or tap here to enter text.			
Recommendations:	Click or tap here to enter text.			
<b>DUE PROCESS</b>				
Discipline	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discipline is administered as needed. There is a point system in the treatment center and points are deducted for disciplinary reasons
Grievances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
<b>MEALS/NUTRITION</b>				
Servings Ample, Nutritious and Appetizing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	On-site kitchen provides three meals and a snack daily. There is a registered dietician who approves all menus and ensures all special medical dietary needs and restrictions are met.
Staff Supervise Meal Service and are Present during service and Consumption	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff eat meals and interact with the youth
Cafeteria Style Service or Direct Serve	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cafeteria style, Direct serve if needed
Youth Allowed to Converse During Meals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes

## APPENDIX AND RELATED INFORMATION

AREA REVIEWED	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
Length of Time allotted to Eat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	30 minutes
<b>PERSONAL HYGIENE/APPEARANCE</b>				
Appearance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth wear facility uniforms
Showers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Showers are available in the pod and youth is assigned to specific times
<b>BEHAVIOR HEALTH</b>				
Caseload Ratio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Youth Experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The center is focused on redesigning the center into a more "home" environment.
Comments:	Click or tap here to enter text.			
Recommendations:	Click or tap here to enter text.			
<b>COMMENDATIONS</b>				
Comments:	Click or tap here to enter text.			



2024-25 GRAND JURY REPORT  
EL DORADO COUNTY  
APRIL 30, 2025 - CASE #25-09

EL DORADO IRRIGATION DISTRICT:  
BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER

*Accounting irregularities and certain financial decisions lead to questions about the financial oversight provided by the EID Board of Directors.*

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*Cover Caption: Drone photo of EID wastewater treatment facilities near Blackstone in El Dorado Hills.*

*Taken February 26, 2025, by G. Kinghorn*

# SUMMARY

## Summary

*“Thousands have lived without love. Not one without water.”*

- W. H. Auden

## HIGHLIGHTS

El Dorado Irrigation District (EID or District) is the largest water district and one of the largest commercial entities in El Dorado County. A number of financial concerns have surfaced in recent years that warranted a Grand Jury investigation. Recent significant rate increases have raised questions. There was significant turnover in the finance department which delayed and complicated the 2022 and 2023 audits. The auditor in those years identified what it termed as “significant deficiencies” in internal controls.

Review of the Basic Financial Statements in the 2023 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) revealed unusual amounts of dollars moving between enterprise accounts, unlike those seen over the previous 5-year period. These include payments between water and wastewater lines of business, as well as an inexplicable period where payments to wastewater employees were a net positive to EID. Questions were also raised about the management of pension obligations and decisions to defer maintenance, which played a factor in the recent rate increases.

The Grand Jury found no malfeasance, but did see a troubling trend of questionable accounting practices that serve to reduce trust and transparency and could ultimately conceal more overt problems. Furthermore, very little oversight was provided by the EID Board of Directors to ensure clear and transparent financial reporting by staff and engage fully on key financial decisions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

The Grand Jury recommendations include: (1) forming a finance committee to take a more active role overseeing accounting policies and decisions, (2) creating a separate Facilities Capital Charges report, and (3) ensuring that “significant deficiencies” noted by the auditor are addressed. We leave it to the County Board of Supervisors to determine whether the Grand Jury should receive additional funding to oversee a forensic audit in light of the concerns highlighted.

# BACKGROUND

## Background

El Dorado Irrigation District (EID or District) was organized in October 1925 under the California Irrigation District Law (California Water Code §20500 et seq.). It provides water for over 130,000 people for industrial, municipal, and irrigation needs, as well as wastewater treatment and recycled water services. It operates a small hydroelectric facility (licensed by the Federal Energy Commission) and recreational facilities which are open to the public. Assets and Deferred Outflows of Resources totaled just under \$1 billion each year in 2022 and 2023, and the District maintains over half a billion dollars of infrastructure.

EID operates under a five-person board of directors (Board), which has ultimate fiduciary responsibility over all operations. The General Manager, appointed by the Board, manages operations and implements the policies of the Board. The Finance Director reports to the General Manager.

According to the EID annual financial report, the Board's intention is to operate EID as a business, ensuring revenues align with the costs of providing services. The District operates on an accrual basis of accounting and uses a system of internal controls to protect assets and ensure transactions are recorded according to District policies and sound accounting principles.

In December 2023, the Board adopted the results of a Proposition 218 Cost-of-Service Analysis (COSA) rate study update, which included a 12% maximum annual increase in water rates from 2024-2028. Recycled and wastewater rates were to increase 3% annually over the same period.

Concerns were raised to the Grand Jury about recent significant rate increase proposals, as well as the need for pension obligation bonds that were issued in 2022. Other related complaints to the Grand Jury caused us to initiate an investigation into the financial health and financial policies at EID. Our initial analysis identified several areas that warranted further clarification. We noted entries that lacked sufficient explanation or appeared inconsistent, making it challenging to fully understand the underlying financial activity. Our subsequent investigation focused on a lack of transparency to the public and the limited oversight of the EID Board into financial decisions and policies.

Our complete analysis and recommendations follow.

# METHODOLOGY

## Methodology

### INTERVIEWS

- EID staff
- EID Board members
- Outside financial experts

### DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

#### Financial Reports, Plans and Policies

- [Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports \(ACFRs\) | El Dorado Irrigation District](#) 2015-2023
- [EID Board policies and administrative regulations](#) (last updated September 15, 2024)
- Supplement to Preliminary Official Statement, El Dorado Irrigation District, Revenue Certificates of Participation, Series 2024a
- Memorandum on Internal Control, Maze and Associates, August 14, 2024
- [EID's Senior Deputy General Counsel Elizabeth Leeper report, Fox40, Oct 3, 2023](#)
- [2023 Cost of Services Analysis and Proposition 218 Notice](#)
- [Proposition 218 and Cost-of-Service Study Results and Proposed 2024-2028 Rate Changes](#)
- [EID Board Approves 2024–2028 Capital Improvement Plan, Authorizes Issuance of Proposition 218 Notice Regarding Rates, El Dorado Irrigation District ID \(Website\) News](#)
- [2024 FCCs Adopted November 12, 2024](#)
- [Capital Improvement Plans, 2017-2024](#)
- Moody's latest financial rating report for EID:  
<https://digital.fidelity.com/ftgw/digital/firesearch/api/issuerreport?cusip=283062CE5>
- Investopedia, definition of Debt Service Coverage Ratio:  
<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/dscr.asp>
- Seeking Alpha, definition of Debt Service Coverage Ratio:  
<https://seekingalpha.com/article/4450369-debt-service-coverage-ratio-dscr>

# METHODOLOGY

## Bond Prospectuses

- 2020 Bonds (Certificate of Participation, Refunding Revenue):  
<https://emma.msrb.org/SS1387127-SS1079617-SS1487314.pdf>
- 2022 Pension Obligation Bond:  
<https://emma.msrb.org/P11594849-P11230573-P11652772.pdf>
- 2024 Bond Prospectus: <https://emma.msrb.org/FileHandler.ashx?issueId=P1429643>

## Facilities Capacity Charges

- California Government Code Section 66013:  
[https://california.public.law/codes/ca\\_gov%27t\\_code\\_section\\_66013](https://california.public.law/codes/ca_gov%27t_code_section_66013)
- Monterey One Water:  
<https://www.montereyonewater.org/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/210>
- Napa Sanitation District:  
<https://www.napasand.com/DocumentCenter/View/1250/FY-22-23-Capacity-Charges-Report-PDF>
- Placer County Water District:  
<https://docs.pcwa.net/wcc-annual-report-2023-lower-zone-6.pdf>

## Pension Obligation Bonds

- Wulff Hansen & Co., white paper on Pension Obligation Bonds  
([https://www.wulffhansen.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/POB\\_whitepaper.pdf](https://www.wulffhansen.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/POB_whitepaper.pdf))
- Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) website on Pension Obligation Bonds  
(<https://www.gfoa.org/materials/pension-obligation-bonds>)
- CalPERS UAL Annual Valuation Reports for EID, 2021-2023  
<https://www.calpers.ca.gov/sites/default/files/spf/docs/actuarial-reports/2021/el-dorado-irrigation-district-miscellaneous-2021.pdf>  
<https://www.calpers.ca.gov/sites/default/files/spf/docs/actuarial-reports/2022/el-dorado-irrigation-district-miscellaneous-2022.pdf>  
<https://www.calpers.ca.gov/sites/default/files/spf/docs/actuarial-reports/2023/el-dorado-irrigation-district-miscellaneous-2023.pdf>

# DISCUSSION

## Discussion

EID experienced high turnover among accounting staff during 2021-2023 which included retirement and involuntary departures. An independent auditor's internal control review for both the 2022 and 2023 financial audits raised this concern. The auditor also identified the late preparation and missed delivery of financial documents and missing bank reconciliations that had to be reconciled later. Although these issues were not deemed material in the auditor's report, the Grand Jury believes they created risks to the financial integrity and operational efficiency of the organization. The most senior financial staff members lacked the experience to identify the problems or put policies in place to avoid such issues due to the staff turnover.

**Finding:** Significant turnover in the EID finance department from 2022-2023 contributed to staff's inability to maintain financial policies and transparency.

A detailed inspection of EID financial documents showed frequent and inappropriate movement of funds between various enterprises (particularly between water and wastewater), as well as instances where funds were placed in the wrong account. The auditor noted the forced reversal of some previous accounting entries. EID staff were advised to take other actions to correct and properly reflect financial information and statements since some of the unusual fund transactions were not documented.

These issues point to systemic weaknesses in internal financial controls along with a lack of training among staff, highlighting the necessity for more detailed accounting procedures and documented processes. Although reduced staff turnover could potentially improve financial reporting in the future, the Grand Jury found no evidence that staff had fully implemented the recommended accounting controls and policies recommended by the auditor. Similarly, it was troubling that the Board did not show more interest and urgency during this period or provide the necessary oversight of some other questionable transactions. During our discussions with one Board member, there were several instances where they could not articulate the strategy or reasoning behind some financial decisions. Another Board member did not know when the District's fiscal year started.

## DISCUSSION

The auditor, MAZE & Associates, issued a “Memorandum of Internal Control” to the Board in August 2024. They noted three “Significant Deficiencies” in internal controls “which would not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing assigned functions, to prevent, detect and correct misstatements on a timely basis.” The missing internal controls contributed to problems we outline in more detail in the following sections. The audit summarized the following conditions to the Board regarding the 2023 financials:

- A substantial number of post-closing entries were made after the audit had started. The audit team and staff suggested several significant post-closing journal entries to rectify issues.
- Staff issued the September 2023 Treasurer’s report to the Board late and outside legal parameters, it was missing required verbiage, and there was no investment policy reported to the Board.
- There were no signoffs for the preparer or reviewer of the December 2023 bank reconciliations and a reconciliation was not performed within 30-45 days of month end.

The following sections detail the accounting anomalies that were identified in the audit report as well as others uncovered by the Grand Jury in EID’s ACFR.

### ACCOUNTING IRREGULARITIES BETWEEN ENTERPRISES

#### Insurance Reimbursements

The 2021 Caldor Fire had a significant impact on the District’s infrastructure. Preliminary repairs and losses were estimated at \$32.9 million and lost revenue of \$4.59 million from hydroelectric power generation. As of December 31, 2023, the District had recovered approximately \$17.6 million through insurance claims for damages and \$4.5 million to recover business income interruption loss from hydroelectric power generation sales.

In an example of reporting inconsistency, EID indicated that it initiated cost reimbursement through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the 2023 ACFR. EID staff stated in an interview with KCRA in October 2023 that payments totaling \$655,000 were received before the end of the fiscal year, as was reported in a September 25, 2023, Board meeting. This was inconsistent with comments in the audited ACFR.

## DISCUSSION

Multiple insurance reimbursements were received by the District. Some of these were improperly held as restricted funds in a Facility Capacity Charge (FCC) account and had to later be reclassified as unrestricted funds and moved to other accounts. Given the seriousness of the Caldor Fire and impact to District infrastructure and revenue, more Board-level oversight would have been expected regarding the handling of insurance reimbursements and funds from FEMA.

### Cash Movement Between Water and Wastewater Enterprises

EID only began separating basic financial statements for water and wastewater in 2017. Financials for 2016 were restated with this separation in the 2017 ACFR. The District defines these two major enterprise funds in the 2023 ACFR, page 36:

- *The Water Fund accounts for all revenues collected by the District for the purpose of financing the construction, operation and maintenance of the District's water storage and distribution systems. Revenues are derived from water service charges, water sales, hydroelectric sales and various installation charges.*
- *The Wastewater Fund accounts for all revenues collected by the District for the purpose of financing the construction, operation and maintenance of the District's wastewater treatment, disposal and reclamation system. Revenues include, but are not limited to, wastewater service charges and fees.*

Testimony from staff and the Board confirmed this policy to maintain separate enterprises and not commingle funds. This separation is intended to ensure transparency and accountability in how funds are managed and allocated. There may also be legal obligations when soliciting public investment (more on that later). EID has the capability to manage revenues and expenses specific to each service, assuring that funds collected for water services are used for water-related expenses and similarly for wastewater services, without cross-subsidizing of one with the other. Supporting evidence for the widely accepted best practice of separation of water service accounts include:

- Proposition 218 (1996) Article XIII D, Section 6 requires that property-related fees and charges like water or wastewater service fees must not be used for any purpose other than

## DISCUSSION

that for which the fee was imposed. This essentially mandates fund segregation to ensure wastewater revenue is not used to subsidize drinking water services, or vice versa.

- The California State Controller’s Office and the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) require enterprise fund-based accounting for activities for which a fee is charged to external users for goods or services. In practice, this means water districts must maintain separate enterprise funds for different services.

Following these policies helps ensure that the funds are managed responsibly and in the best interest of the community. The following examples indicate these policies were not followed.

The amount of cash flow between these two main enterprises grew significantly over the past three years. The table below shows “Cash Receipts (Payments) to Other Funds” in the Statements of Cash Flows [ACFR, pages 30 and 32, for 2023 and 2022, respectively]. Tens of millions of dollars have shifted back and forth between the water and wastewater enterprises in recent years.

Year	Water	Wastewater
2023	\$46,816,169	\$(46,816,169)
2022	\$(21,820,801)	\$21,820,801
2021	\$2,448,191	\$(2,448,191)
2020	\$70,104	\$(70,104)
2019	\$336,811	\$(336,811)
2018	\$119,092	\$(119,092)
2017	\$(642,786)	\$642,786

Table 1: Cash Receipts Moving Between Water and Wastewater by Year

These transactions between the what-should-be-separate accounts are inexplicable. No attempt was made in the ACFR to explain the reasons for the transactions that appear to violate a fundamental policy. These transfers of funds make it virtually impossible to understand the financial health of the individual enterprise operations, or to understand any justification for future rate increases or future bond offerings.

A look at the values of the water and wastewater cash and cash equivalents accounts show other anomalies in recent years. Year-end account balances are reported for water and

## DISCUSSION

wastewater as \$26.6 million and \$0 for water in 2023, and \$0 for water and \$15.3 million for wastewater in 2022 [ACFR 2023, pages 24; 26 and shown below in Table 2]. Zero dollars for both enterprises in alternating years has not been seen in any previous years since EID began reporting water and wastewater separately. Why did these accounts need to be drained to exactly \$0? It appears that funds are just taken from either account as needed rather than treating them as separate businesses.

	2023		
	Water	Wastewater	Total
<b>ASSETS</b>			
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 26,620,369	\$ -	\$ 26,620,369
	2022		
	Water	Wastewater	Total
<b>ASSETS</b>			
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ -	\$ 15,265,301	\$ 15,265,301
	2021		
	Water	Wastewater	Total
<b>ASSETS</b>			
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 45,386,567	\$ 2,177,663	\$ 47,564,230

Table 2: Year-ending account balances for water and wastewater 2021-2023 from yearly ACFRs

In 2022, the same year the District reported \$0 Cash and Cash Equivalents for water, it recorded an \$18.68 million cash overdraft in Current Liabilities [ACFR 2023, page 27]. In 2021, Cash and Cash Equivalents for water were \$45.4 million [ACFR 2022, page 22]. Rather than the cash account really being \$0, there was a significant overdraft in that account that necessitated the creation of another account, at the auditor's suggestion. EID moved the overdraft to a new liability account, called "Cash overdraft" (see Table 3, next page), making it more difficult to see the true financial status of the business.

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	2022		
	Water	Wastewater	Total
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts payable	\$ 5,413,105	\$ 1,716,320	\$ 7,129,425
Cash overdraft	18,680,032	-	18,680,032

*Table 3: New cash overdraft account created as a liability in 2022 to represent a negative asset balance*

EID’s explanation to the Grand Jury, when questioned, suggested that the insurance compensation and other large expenses required unusual fund movements. This explanation was essentially presented in a November 7, 2024, supplement to the Preliminary Official Statement to bondholders:

*In Fiscal Year 2022, the District accounted for certain costs to reconstruct assets damaged by the Caldor Fire from unrestricted funds in the Water Fund. However, certain amounts received as reimbursements for such costs, including insurance proceeds, were accounted for as restricted cash and cash equivalents. Since such costs and other amounts accounted for from unrestricted funds exceeded the balance thereof, the District’s statement of net position for Fiscal Year 2022 showed a zero balance of unrestricted cash and cash equivalents and a “cash overdraft” as a current liability in the amount of \$18,680,032. The District’s total Water Enterprise balance as of December 31, 2022 was \$11,923,232, consisting of \$14,969,920 of restricted cash and cash equivalents and \$15,633,344 in unrestricted invested funds, less \$18,680,032 of the cash overdraft.*

*In the District’s Fiscal Year 2023 audited financial statements, with respect to the Water Enterprise, the District reclassified \$33,517,283 from restricted cash and cash equivalents to unrestricted funds. The reclassification had no impact to the ending net position of the District for FY 2022 and had no impact on the debt service coverage calculations for FY 2022 and 2023 as set forth in the Official Statement. The District’s total Water Enterprise balance as of December 31, 2023, was \$24,574,099, consisting of \$26,620,369 of unrestricted cash and cash equivalents, \$10,715,789 in unrestricted invested funds, less \$12,762,059 of negative balance of restricted cash and cash*

## DISCUSSION

*equivalents. The amount of \$12,762,059 is shown in the District's statement of net position in the Fiscal Year 2023 audited financial statements as a negative balance as a result of the District having committed such amount to capital projects...*

Our conclusion is that EID was able to rationalize some of these transactions when required with a significant bond offering at stake but underscores the problems with accounting procedures and policies that did not disclose the situation clearly. Without the bond supplement, many of these fund movements would have never been explained. More importantly, accounting practices like this open the possibility for misconduct with an inability to accurately track and understand fund flows and balances, as the auditor stated.

**Finding:** EID lacked or ignored accounting policies regarding commingling funds and transfers between water and wastewater enterprises. Even very large transactions of this type were not discussed or approved at the Board level.

Another questionable anomaly arose in the cash paid to employees for services in 2023. The following excerpt showed \$44.3 million in cash paid to employees for the water enterprise, but a net positive flow to EID from employees of \$9.2 million (shown below, highlighted, in Table 4). It's very unusual and unexpected to receive cash from employees without explanation or an offsetting adjustment.

	2023		
	Water	Wastewater	Total
<b>Cash Flows from Operating Activities:</b>			
Cash receipts from customers	\$ 46,677,045	\$ 25,844,367	\$ 72,521,412
Cash paid to suppliers for goods and services	(16,217,889)	(8,204,479)	(24,422,368)
Cash paid to employees for services	(44,314,653)	9,209,941	(35,104,712)

*Table 4: Uncharacteristically, cash paid to employees was net positive for wastewater business in 2023*

Shortly before we published this report, EID provided an explanation for the unusual net positive payments from employees, which we incorporate below:

## DISCUSSION

*The \$9.2 million in net positive cash flow reported for wastewater employees in 2023 (shown on page 30 of the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR)) was the **result of incorrectly allocating** (emphasis added) the District's net pension liability between water and wastewater. The total pension liability of \$9,167,188 (shown on page 25 of the ACFR) should have been allocated 60% to water and 40% to wastewater.*

This explanation highlights another troubling misallocation of funds to the wrong enterprise account that had to be corrected in a subsequent year. Moreover, no attempt was made to footnote or explain the completely nonsensical entry shown in Table 4 from the District's official ACFR. A credible accounting organization would be expected to provide more clarity for the sake of transparency and to the benefit of those providing oversight.

### The Audit Requires Significant Post-Closing Journal Entries

Based on the Memorandum of Internal Control from the auditor, after the 2023 audit began, both EID staff and the audit staff proposed a significant number of post-closing journal entries to address material inconsistencies in the financial statements. One example was the creation of the "cash overdraft" account as a liability to offset a roughly \$18 million overdraft in the water enterprise account. It is not customary for an auditor to propose a significant number of such accounting entries to balance financial statements, or to improve the appearance of individual funds. The role of an audit is to present the state of the financials as presented, not to "clean up" inconsistencies they identify in order to release a qualified audit. The audit report should have included findings presented as "deficiencies" rather than approving the audit.

The need for post-closing journal entries was identified as a finding in the 2022 audit as well. Journal entries detail how transactions affect accounts and balances. In short, in multiple years, all accounts weren't sufficiently analyzed before an audit began and closing entries were not complete for the general ledger prior to the audit.

The District acknowledged several issues brought forward by the auditor in the Schedule of Significant Deficiency (as noted in the first bullet on page 8) and concurred with the auditor's observations and recommendations. Management's response to the auditor's Memorandum of Internal Controls was:

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*The department has filled vacated positions and cross-trained other staff. The new hires have brought about a change in the department's structure, creating an open and collaborative environment that encourages communication, knowledge sharing, and mutual support through informal and formal cross training of responsibilities. In the event of staff transitions, the current backup support would enable continuous operations until positions are filled. The staff has implemented monthly and quarterly processes that replicate year-end closing processes. These processes facilitate early identification and resolution of discrepancies, provide current financial information, streamline information compilation at year-end, and organize financial data for easier identification and isolation during audits.*

### Bank Reconciliations

Reconciliations are one of the most important internal controls. Bank reconciliation is not complete until it is reviewed and approved. This is typically completed within 30-45 days of each month's end. Review of EID's December 2023 bank reconciliations found there were no signoffs for preparer or reviewer as required, and they were not completed within the 30–45-day period. Lack of timely completion and review of bank reconciliations can result in accounting errors, misstatements, or unauthorized activities that may not be identified or corrected. The lack of signoffs also demonstrates a lack of oversight and internal control.

In an indication of other financial issues flagged by the auditor (and as we noted in the bullets on page 8), the Treasurer's Report must be presented within 45 days of the end date of the quarter according to the California Government Code §53646. The September 2023 report took 70 days to present, and the December report was not presented until May 2024.

Management further responded to these concerns in the auditor's Memorandum of Internal Controls:

*We have established specific procedures and task checklists to guarantee that bank reconciliations are prepared and reviewed in a timely manner throughout the fiscal year. Any discrepancies that arise will be promptly addressed and we will ensure that the completion of the reconciliation is formally documented. During the 2023 audit process, the finance department staff had a unique opportunity to meticulously examine and*

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*identify gaps, tasks, and operational needs within the organization's financial workflows. In response, the staff diligently documented comprehensive processes and procedures, strategically utilizing the reporting and functional capabilities inherent in the financial software to effectively address the identified areas for improvement.*

Response from EID to the second condition regarding timing of release of Treasurer Reports:

*We have added language to the investment reports to ensure compliance with the California Government Code. Moving forward, investment reports will be presented to the Board within 30 days of the end date of the quarter. Additionally, staff will annually present the investment policy to the Board for review as part of the regular budget approval process.*

These concerns and more point to the need for greater oversight that the Board does not appear interested in or qualified to provide, as one would expect. In such cases, other governing boards have opted to create a Finance Committee to help oversee and manage the financial strategy, policies, and activities of the organization. More on this topic later.

### TRANSPARENCY AROUND FACILITIES CAPACITY CHARGES

EID maintains accounts for Facilities Capacity Charges (FCC) for water and wastewater. Water and sanitation districts are required to maintain these separate accounts specifically for fees associated with expanding an agency's capacity for new or existing customers, usually new connections and infrastructure for new developments. These are restricted funds that can only be used for capacity expansion, rather than maintenance or other operational costs.

All water districts are required to report to the public related capacity expenses and charges. As outlined in [California Government Code §66013](#) and summarized below, the public reporting must be done within 180 days after the last day of each fiscal year and must include the following information:

- **Deposit Information:** A description of the capacity charges deposited into the fund.
- **Fund Activity:** The beginning/ending balance of the fund and the interest from investment of monies in the fund.

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- **Collections:** The amount of capacity charges collected in that fiscal year.
- **How Funds Were Used:** An identification of the following:
  - Each public improvement on which charges were expended and the amount of the expenditures for each improvement, including the percentage of the total cost of the public improvement that was funded with those capacity charges if more than one source of funding was used.
  - Each public improvement on which charges were expended which was completed during that fiscal year.
  - Each public improvement that is anticipated to be undertaken in the following fiscal year.

Government Code Section §66013.5(e) states that: *The information required pursuant to subdivision (d) [i.e., the items summarized above] may be included in the local agency's annual financial report.*

While many water districts choose to issue a separate annual capacity charge report, EID does not. Rather it follows the minimal requirement to include the required information in the District's ACFR. EID staff told the Grand Jury that not producing a separate report for FCC did make it harder to track those funds from developers and the direct expenses from capacity charges. The Grand Jury believes a dedicated FCC report would increase transparency to the public and reduce accounting efforts to ensure compliance.

Examples of separate FCC reports from other counties:

- Monterey One Water:  
<https://www.montereyonewater.org/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/210>
- Napa Sanitation District:  
<https://www.napasan.com/DocumentCenter/View/1250/FY-22-23-Capacity-Charges-Report-PDF>
- Placer County Water District:  
<https://docs.pcwa.net/wcc-annual-report-2023-lower-zone-6.pdf>

Note that FCC funds are collected from developers similar to developer impact fees for road improvements, parks, and fire districts. Roads, parks and fire districts, separate from water and

## DISCUSSION

sanitation infrastructure, are covered under a separate reporting requirement governed by California [Government Code Section 66000](#), et. seq. (the Mitigation Fee Act or MFA). The lack of meeting the five-year reporting requirement in the MFA for developer impact fees led to a pending litigation against the County, as well as El Dorado Hills Community Services District (EDH CSD) and El Dorado Hills Fire for refund of the fees (Austin litigation). There is no such liability for EID missing the MFA reporting requirements under Government Code Section §66013. The recommendation for preparing a separate report for FCC funds is purely for transparency purposes and compliance tracking.

Transparency reporting is important because EID made a significant error in handling FCC funds recently, as noted above. The Caldor Fire in 2021 had a significant impact on EID, causing extensive damage to the District's infrastructure. Repairs and losses were estimated at ~\$32.9 million with additional lost revenue of \$4.59 million from hydroelectric power generation. EID received \$22.1 million in insurance payments and \$655,000 from FEMA.

Proceeds from insurance were received as several payments and incorrectly placed in the FCC account. Although the insurance funds were primarily earmarked for regaining necessary capacity and redeveloping infrastructure, they are not related to new users and development. Insurance funds should properly be placed in the unrestricted general fund. This mistake was attributed to the turnover in the EID finance department and some confusion about fund policies by staff at the time. Reallocation of the insurance proceeds to unrestricted funds appears to be legitimate but was a source of confusion to the Grand Jury initially. Transactions from the FCC account were not properly documented.

**Finding** – Statutory requirements for reporting Facility Capacity Charges (FCC) are being met primarily through the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR). The lack of a dedicated compliance report reduces transparency and traceability, making it challenging for the EID Board and public to provide effective oversight.

# DISCUSSION

## THE QUESTION OF A PENSION OBLIGATION BOND

A key EID financial decision was the issuance of a Pension Obligation Bond (POB) in May 2022 in the amount of \$71.5 million. The proceeds were deposited with the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) to reduce an unfunded pension liability. Our interviews with some of the board members at that time led the Grand Jury to conclude that the Board provided virtually no oversight or analysis of this decision that involved considerable financial trade-offs to the organization.

For a balanced look at POBs, we relied on a description from a [white paper](#) by Wulff, Hansen & Company, a California public finance and investment management firm, which we provide here as education for the public, as well as the current and future EID boards:

*Issuance of a Pension Obligation Bond (POB) can be a powerful tool for managing an employer's unfunded pension liabilities when the POB is properly understood and correctly deployed. At the same time, as with many other tools, using a POB inappropriately or in the wrong situation can create more problems than it solves...*

*In California, public agencies have the option to participate in a large and sophisticated pooled retirement system, the California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS) which ranks as the largest public retirement system in the United States. As with any financial or investment program, CalPERS participation carries risks as well as benefits. There can be many advantages to participating in a large retirement pool such as CalPERS...*

*When a local agency funds its employee retirement benefits through the consolidated investment pool managed by CalPERS, the present value of the agency's future obligation is calculated by looking at the future dollar outflows and discounting those outflows by the percentage rate of return that CalPERS assumes its investments will generate each year into the future...*

*When CalPERS' investment performance does not meet the realized and assumed rate of return needed for an employer to fund its long-term actuarial requirements to pay retirees in its program, or if the employer does not make sufficient contributions to its CalPERS fund,*

## DISCUSSION

*that shortfall is calculated and allocated to the employer in the form of its Unfunded Accrued Liability (Unfunded Liability or UAL). Over time, the UAL of many employer participants has grown to significant levels and, with increasing benefits to be funded in the future... The UAL is, in effect, an obligation of a local agency and accrues an annual charge on the unfunded balance in the amount of the CalPERS expected rate of return...*

*CalPERS gives each participating employer an amortization schedule to pay down its UAL obligation to CalPERS over a period of years... This system means that an agency's current UAL is an obligation like any other long-term liability on its balance sheet. It is effectively a debt, with the annual cost calculated at CalPERS's assumed rate of return on the unpaid balance plus the amount necessary to amortize the principal over time.*

*Pension obligation bonds (POBs) are taxable bonds that some public employers have used as part of an overall strategy to fund the unfunded accrued liability associated with their pension obligations.*

*In California, many local agencies have funded their CalPERS UAL by issuing pension obligation bonds to pay down or pay off their current UAL obligation. Such an issuance is simply substituting one debt (the POB) for another (the existing UAL). These agencies have recognized that replacing an obligation to CalPERS which is incurring an annualized cost of 7% or more with a lower cost obligation (the POB) often makes economic sense. This substitution of one debt for another does not create an increased liability for the agency or impact its debt capacity and can reduce its annual budgetary burden with lower debt service payments...*

On June 30, 2021, EID faced a pension liability UAL of \$58,424,786 according to CalPERS Actuarial Valuation Reports (note: the UAL amount is shown slightly differently in the EID ACFR based on the different fiscal year ends between CalPERS and EID). EID was sitting at a 70% funding level, with nearly \$138 million of accrued assets of a \$200 million then-current liability. This was an improved situation from the year before when they were at a 61% funding level and UAL of nearly \$73 million. Above average market returns, and normal contributions improved their outlook. Yet, EID issued a \$71 million POB in early 2022 to raise their funding level to 95.5%, reducing their UAL to \$9,337,520. Due to below expected market returns during the

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Covid pandemic and other factors, despite the issuance of a \$71 million bond, EID only reduced their UAL from \$58.4 million to \$9.3 million (a difference of \$49.1 million) between June 30, 2021 and 2022.

EID staff recounted that the decision to issue the POB was a “no-brainer,” that they were exchanging larger future UAL catch-up payments with a lower bond interest rate repayment with limited additional liability. Nobody on the EID Board we spoke with recalled any details of the POB decision, and they relied completely on the GM and the District’s financial advisors, including the firm generating significant fees from the issuance of the bond.

The Grand Jury, in its further research, found that issuing a POB was not an obvious decision and should have warranted much more scrutiny. We found the [Government Finance Officers Association \(GFOA\)](#) to be a credible source of information on POB risks because they don’t make money when their government clients issue a POB. GFOA, founded in 1906, represents public finance officials throughout the United States and Canada. The association’s more than 20,000 members are federal, state, and local finance officials involved in planning, financing, and implementing thousands of government operations.

GFOA’s analysis of POBs, presented below, differs markedly from EID’s and the Wulff Hansen white paper:

*The use of POBs rests on the assumption that the bond proceeds, when invested with pension assets in higher-yielding asset classes, will be able to achieve a rate of return that is greater than the interest rate owed over the term of the bonds. However, POBs involve **considerable investment risk** (emphasis added), making this goal very speculative. Failing to achieve the targeted rate of return burdens the issuer with both the debt service requirements of the taxable bonds and the unfunded pension liabilities that remain unmet because the investment portfolio did not perform as anticipated. In recent years, local jurisdictions across the country have faced increased financial stress as a result of their reliance on POBs, demonstrating the significant risks associated with these instruments for both small and large governments.*

## DISCUSSION

*The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommends that state and local governments **do not issue POBs** (emphasis added) for the following reasons:*

- 1. The invested POB proceeds might fail to earn more than the interest rate owed over the term of the bonds, leading to increased overall liabilities for the government.*
- 2. POBs are complex instruments that carry considerable risk. POB structures may incorporate the use of guaranteed investment contracts, swaps, or derivatives, which must be intensively scrutinized as these embedded products can introduce counterparty risk, credit risk, and interest rate risk.*
- 3. Issuing taxable debt to fund the pension liability increases the jurisdiction's bonded debt burden and potentially uses up debt capacity that could be used for other purposes. In addition, taxable debt is typically issued without call options or with "make-whole" calls, which can make it more difficult and costly to refund or restructure than traditional tax-exempt debt.*
- 4. POBs are frequently structured in a manner that defers the principal payments or extends repayment over a period longer than the actuarial amortization period, thereby increasing the sponsor's overall costs.*
- 5. Rating agencies may not view the proposed issuance of POBs as credit positive, particularly if the issuance is not part of a more comprehensive plan to address pension funding shortfalls.*

**Finding** – The issuance of a Pension Obligation Bond in 2022 carried financial risk that was not adequately communicated. The Board provided only minimal oversight of the decision, deferring completely to the General Manager and financial advisors, rather than providing sound governance.

Other financial experts within the County corroborated these concerns when asked about the risks associated with the issuance of a POB. The Grand Jury is explicitly not weighing in on whether this will, in hindsight, prove to be a financially good decision or lead to further long-term costs. At this point, the risks and outcomes are unknown. The key point is that there are

## DISCUSSION

significant long-term risks that were not presented to the EID Board, and the EID Board chose to provide minimal financial oversight or sound governance for this decision. This was a dereliction of duty on the part of the EID Board.

### FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT NEEDED

In identifying the lack of proper financial oversight and accountability by the Board, it became apparent to the Grand Jury that additional financial expertise is vital to the effective oversight of EID. As noted earlier, a treasury/financial subcommittee or outside advisory committee could help provide this necessary expertise and additional oversight. For example, a water board elsewhere within the County, the Georgetown Divide Public Utilities District (GDPUD), which provides water service to parts of the Northern County, identified the importance of assistance with overseeing financial operations. Their desire to enhance transparency and improve reporting processes led them to develop policies that allow for a financial oversight committee. Their policies provide for an independent body when the board of directors lacks the financial experience to manage the organization's finances effectively by being solely focused on financial matters.

**Finding** – The EID Board collectively has lacked sufficient financial expertise and engagement in recent years to provide adequate oversight in the absence of a financially focused subcommittee or neutral outside expertise.

### DECISIONS AROUND WATER RATE INCREASES

#### Variations in the Capital Improvement Plan

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a strategic planning and fiscal management tool that statutes require EID to use to determine both the projected annual expenditures for funded and planned projects, as well as a comprehensive five-year financial forecast for these initiatives. Large projects often include constructing new facilities, upgrading systems, and replacing aging infrastructure. It identifies the scope, timeline, and estimated costs of each project while also detailing potential funding sources, such as bonds, grants, or user fees and rates. It is updated annually by EID staff to reflect changing priorities, community needs, and financial conditions.

# DISCUSSION

One of the key elements of a CIP is the identification of projects to be funded within the ensuing five years. The Board of Directors reviews and approves the plan annually, providing a clear overview of the organization's short-term and medium-term capital investment strategy and costs. It is critical that the CIP contains the best projected cost estimates possible because dollar totals for future projects (within five years) are vital to an accurate Cost of Service Analysis (COSA) report, which impacts rate requirements.

The CIP and COSA studies, and subsequent reports, are components used by the Board to develop an ongoing five-year financial plan. EID Board Policy AR 3012 sets guidelines and rules for the Board regarding the financial plan and how it serves as a comprehensive roadmap for the District's fiscal management. Its primary purpose is to determine the funding requirements for operational and maintenance activities, capital expenditures, and debt servicing. This plan aligns financial strategies with the District's core mission of delivering high-quality water, wastewater treatment, recycled water services, hydropower generation, and recreational facilities in an environmentally and fiscally responsible manner. A primary goal of policy AR 3012 is to maintain adequate CIP funding levels, prioritizing the replacement of high-priority capital assets before they reach the end of their life cycle.

A CIP includes an annual breakdown of the total dollar estimate allocated for projects that are either currently funded or slated for funding and a cumulative five-year total for these projects. The chart below (Table 5) shows EID cumulative totals for five-year periods starting with the 2018-2022 CIP to the current 2025-2029 CIP.

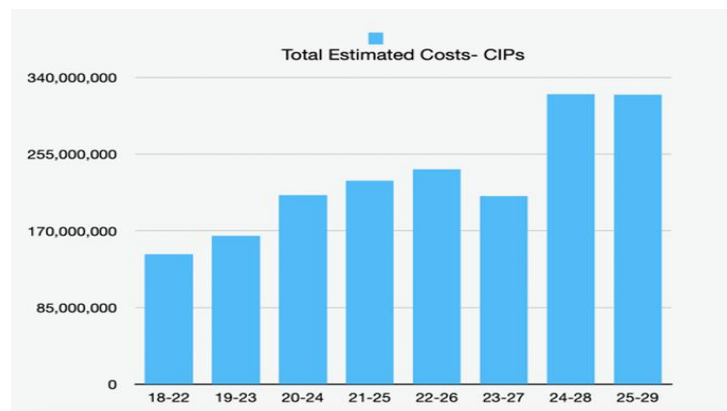


Table 5: EID Capital Improvement Plans – Projected Five-Year Costs (2018 – 2022 to 2025-2029)

## DISCUSSION

There is a steady increase in cumulative totals until the 2023-2027 CIP which shows a significant drop and then a large increase with the subsequent CIPs. The reduced CIP totals in 2023 were addressed in the 2023–2024 Operating Budget and 2023–2027 Financial Plan packet of the December 12, 2022, board meeting:

*Projections for CIP expenditures originally reflected the proposed spending presented during the October 12, 2022 CIP workshop. However, staff faced a number of challenges in preparing the financial plan with the above-described assumptions, which resulted in a projection of low debt service coverage and low cash reserves beginning in 2025. **Based on these assumptions and the adopted rate increases, forecasted rate revenue is not high enough to fund the CIP and maintain adequate cash reserves compounded further with lower projections of FCC revenue. In an effort to collectively combat this issue, staff made cuts and deferrals to the operating budget, and reduced planned CIP expenditures by \$23 million over the five years (emphasis added).***

EID staff forecasted their anticipated revenue did not meet operating expenses and debt ratio requirements, so there was need to defer maintenance projects into the future, among other cost cutting measures. This came at a time when District finances would be scrutinized in anticipation of a bond offering and a desire by the Board to keep rates low. During the following year rates were increased, a bond was issued, and anticipated expenses in the CIP were raised significantly.

Also indicated in the packet were the District's Debt Service Coverage Ratio requirements:

*The installment purchase agreements associated with the District's debt issuances require the District, to the fullest extent permitted by law, to fix, prescribe, and collect rates and charges so that **the ratio of revenues to operating expenditures, including debt payments** (emphasis added), is at least 1.25. The District may make adjustments from time to time in its rates and charges but cannot reduce those rates and charges unless the District's net revenues from reduced rates and charges will at all times be sufficient to meet the debt service coverage ratio of 1.25.*

# DISCUSSION

Note that this description of the debt service coverage policy is confusing. According to [Investopedia](#), and [Seeking Alpha](#), the definition of a debt service coverage ratio is the net operating income (revenue *minus* operating expenditures, not including debt payments, taxes and interest) divided by the total cost of debt service. This means that you have significant extra revenue to completely cover what you owe in debt, in this case a 25% margin. It is not a “ratio of revenues to operating expenditures, including debt payments,” as defined in the packet. The District, fortunately, correctly calculated the debt service ratio in its ACFR reports and only misstated the calculation formula in the board packet.

## CIP Individual Project Estimates are Initially Misleading

Within each CIP report are individual project pages that provide funding detail for each project. A particular project typically remains in a CIP for a minimum five-year period. While certain funding details, such as study, planning and design costs, are included in each year of the five-year CIP project lifespan, estimated construction costs are not shown initially and added later. This will give the public and other interested parties a completely incorrect view of even near-term projected expenses and costs.

Project Financial Summary:						
Funded to Date:	\$	125,648	Expenditures through end of year:	\$	32,517	
Spent to Date:	\$	17,517	2022 - 2026 Planned Expenditures:	\$	2,150,000	
Cash flow through end of year:	\$	15,000	Total Project Estimate:	\$	2,182,517	
Project Balance	\$	93,131	Additional Funding Required	\$	2,056,869	

Description of Work	Estimated Annual Expenditures					
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Study/Planning	\$50,000	\$100,000	\$300,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$550,000
Design	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$400,000	\$1,600,000
Construction						\$-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$350,000</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$600,000</b>	<b>\$350,000</b>	<b>\$450,000</b>	<b>\$2,150,000</b>

Estimated Funding Sources	Percentage	2022	Amount
Water FCCs	100%		\$256,869
			\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>\$256,869</b>

<b>Funding Comments</b>	Preliminary construction cost estimate not included in 5 year planning horizon. Construction is assumed to take place beyond 5-years due to design, environmental and regulatory approval processes.
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Table 6: Project Sheet Details for Project (#19031) – Silver Lake Dam Replacement Project

# DISCUSSION

For example, the CIP project projection for Silver Lake Dam Replacement is shown as roughly \$2.2 million (Table 6, previous page), when a conservative project estimate turned out to be over \$50 million within that five-year period (Table 7 below). This allowed EID to keep rates lower for a couple more years, but effectively pushed the rate increases out into the future. As a means of clarifying that construction costs are not added to the total project estimate during specific years, “Funding Comments” are included in CIP project pages (Table 6, previous page).

The Silver Lake Dam Replacement Project (#19031) is a major project listed in each of the CIPs from 2020-2024 to 2025-2029. Atypically, this particular project has a six-year CIP lifespan. The project’s total estimates jump precipitously when the construction costs are added in years five and six. The project description page (Total Project Estimate) in each of the last five CIP years from 2021-2025 are shown in Table 7.

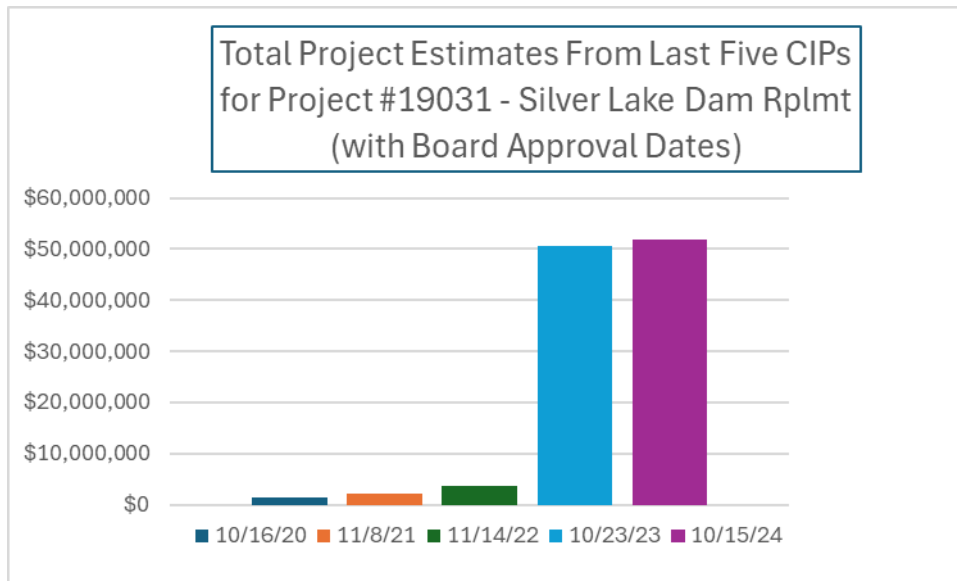


Table 7: Five Year CIP 2022-2026 Project #19031 Silver Lake Dam Replacement project page (pg. 139)

The project’s construction costs are not reflected in the 2020-2024, 2021-2025, 2022-2026, or 2023-2027 CIPs. The funding comment from the 2020-2024 CIP was:

*Preliminary construction cost estimate not included in the 5 year planning horizon.  
Construction is assumed to take place beyond 5-years but may be accelerated on further analysis and regulatory feedback.*

## DISCUSSION

Subsequent years had funding comments as well when the project page of the CIPs for the project did not include construction costs. The estimated costs associated with construction were added for the first time in the 2024-2028 CIP causing a large increase in the overall cost estimate as is shown in Table 7. The additional cost estimates for construction in the Silver Lake Dam Replacement project and the Sly Park Intertie project, are largely responsible for the overall dollar increase shown in the earlier Table 5.

For major projects, EID uses a phased approach, initially presenting lower total project cost estimates which focus on planning and design in the early stages of project CIP cycles. As the five-year cycle progresses, a more accurate total project cost estimate is reflected. While not unethical or dishonest, the phraseology "total project cost" in this phased context is misleading and inaccurate in as much as the word "total" is used. Adding "funding comments" are not a fix to these issues.

**Finding:** Leaving construction cost projections out of Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) reports for several years gives a misleading picture of financial requirements and may serve to delay rate increases but may make future rate increases even higher.

By listing a major project in a CIP with lower initial estimates, ratepayers may experience short-term rate stability, but this approach can result in larger, more abrupt rate increases later when the full cost is revealed. While major projects are generally bond funded, providing a more accurate, full-cost estimate from the outset—while maintaining transparency in phased spending—ensures gradual, predictable rate adjustments, minimizing financial shocks and fostering public trust.

### The Cost of Service Analysis and Rate Increases

Cost of Service Analysis (COSA) studies, required by Proposition 218, evaluate the financial landscape of water districts, assessing potential impacts on future revenues and costs. These comprehensive reports, which can be conducted by either independent consulting firms or district staff, scrutinize rate structures, projected operational expenses, and capital improvement plans. The COSA report is a determination of the legally permissible maximum annual rate increases for the upcoming five-year period to cover projected costs offering a reliable

## DISCUSSION

benchmark for the rate changes necessary to align anticipated expenses with rate revenue. The accuracy of these recommendations stems from the district-provided data used in the analysis.

While there are no legal restrictions limiting COSA studies to specialist companies, engaging an independent consulting firm for studies and reports presents several advantages over using internal staff. Consultants bring an impartial, external perspective, minimizing the influence of internal biases or oversight. They also offer specialized expertise, often utilizing proprietary tools and methodologies, along with extensive experience that may not be available in-house. The involvement of an external firm enhances the credibility of the study, as their findings are generally perceived as unbiased and professional.

Since 2010, staff has completed many of the COSA studies and recommended rates for water, wastewater, and recycled water with the expectations that revenues will exceed expenses (an outside specialty firm was consulted during the 2020 study) to meet the debt service coverage ratio. During the Board meeting on December 12, 2022, staff informed the Board of plans to conduct another COSA study in 2023 because higher than anticipated rate increases were necessary to meet higher than anticipated expenses. This subsequent study was approved by the Board. The COSA study contract was awarded to and completed by NBS Government Finance Group (dba NBS) in 2023.

### Rate Increases and How They Are Determined

During annual budget deliberations, which include discussions on rate adjustments, the Board reviews the most recent COSA report, other financial documents, and staff recommendations for rate increases, capital expenditure funding, and other budget concerns. On an annual basis, the Board ultimately decides on the actual rate adjustment to be implemented for the upcoming fiscal year.

If the Board opts for rate increases that are lower than those proposed by staff based upon the COSA study, several consequences may arise. Most notably, there is a significant risk that the resulting revenue may be insufficient to fully cover the financial needs of the District. This shortfall could potentially impact the water district's ability to sustain long-term financial health.

## DISCUSSION

In the Board meeting packets from November 12th and December 19th, 2019, staff lamented that the Board accepted the COSA studies, but did not accept the corresponding rate increases. Staff comments within the December packet included the following:

*Unfortunately, **the Board, through the years, has reduced or entirely eliminated planned rate increases via the budget process** (emphasis added). The results of not implementing planned rate increases combined with an increased need for capital replacement to maintain our infrastructure have created increased pressure on cash positions in future years.*

The 2023 COSA study by NBS identified the need for and recommended 12% annual revenue increases for drinking water through each year of the five-year period from 2024-2028 (cumulatively >75%), and 3% increases each year for wastewater and recycled water. Based on the data and calculation methodology provided by EID, the proposed rate increases would enable the organization's revenue to align with its operational expenses which include project funding as identified in the CIP.

In the Board packet for December 11, 2023, EID staff recommended adherence to the COSA study recommendations with the following warning:

***Delaying or reducing the implementation of these rate changes will delay major necessary capital replacement projects by several years** (emphasis added). Most of these projects are required for public health, safety, and reliability and should not be delayed or postponed. Postponement of these projects can risk the safe, reliable delivery of quality water and services to our customers. **Staff does not recommend any delay or postponement of the proposed projects** (emphasis added).*

*Based on feedback from the Board and members of the public during the November workshops and meetings, staff requested our consultant to model 9% annual increases versus the 12% currently included in the Proposition 218 Notice and how such a change would affect the District's finances, including CIP funding within the five-year financial plan. The consequences of only implementing a 9% increase in water rates while maintaining similar debt service coverage would require an additional 50% deferral in the*

## DISCUSSION

*expected water CIP expenditures, decreasing available funding from \$233 million to \$115 million for 2024-2028 – an amount significantly inadequate to meet the District’s health and safety obligation to its customers.*

In summary, the Board directed staff to explore a 9% increase in water rates scenario even though 12% was recommended. A warning was issued that reducing the proposed increase would likely result in inadequate funds to fulfill financial commitments, adhere to established policies, and support essential infrastructure projects.

With the information and justifications presented by staff for accepting the COSA-recommended increases in rates a motion was made during the December 2023 Board meeting to adopt a resolution approving the recommended rate increases of 12% in water and 3% in wastewater. There was opposition among the Board, but the motion passed on a divided 3-2 vote.

It is the policy of the EID Board (Board Policy AR 3012) to “Avoid ‘rate shock’ – small annual rate adjustments are better than years of zero.” In water rate adjustments for the recent past, we found no years in which rate adjustments were zero.

**Finding:** Boards in the past decided to implement smaller rate increases than what was recommended by staff, but recent history has shown that larger rate increases, including double-digit increases, are being considered and have been accepted. The double-digit rate increases are partially due to deferring maintenance projects to keep rates low in the short term.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

EID has faced challenges over the last several years, including accounting staff turnover and overseeing recovery from the Caldor fire. Our complete findings and recommendations which follow focus on a seemingly systemic lack of oversight by the Board through these challenges. The Board’s very limited involvement in key financial decisions along with limited ability and understanding to set long-term financial strategy, arguably their most important role, is a key underlying concern that could erode public trust in the long-term.

# FINDINGS

## Findings

**Finding 1:** Significant turnover in the EID finance department from 2022-2023 contributed to staff's inability to maintain financial policies and transparency.

**Finding 2:** EID lacked or ignored accounting policies regarding commingling funds and transfers between water and wastewater enterprises. Even very large transactions of this type were not discussed or approved at the Board level.

**Finding 3:** Statutory requirements for reporting Facility Capacity Charges (FCC) are being met primarily through the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR). The lack of a dedicated compliance report reduces transparency and traceability, making it challenging for the EID Board and public to provide effective oversight.

**Finding 4:** The issuance of a Pension Obligation Bond in 2022 carried financial risk that was not adequately communicated. The Board provided only minimal oversight of the decision, deferring completely to the General Manager and financial advisors, rather than providing sound governance.

**Finding 5:** The EID Board collectively has lacked sufficient financial expertise and engagement in recent years to provide adequate oversight in the absence of a financially focused subcommittee or neutral outside expertise.

**Finding 6:** Leaving construction cost projections out of Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) reports for several years gives a misleading picture of financial requirements and may serve to delay rate increases but may make future rate increases even higher.

**Finding 7:** Boards in the past decided to implement smaller rate increases than what was recommended by staff, but recent history has shown that larger rate increases, including double-digit increases, are being considered and have been accepted. The double-digit rate increases are partially due to deferring maintenance projects to keep rates low in the short term.

# RESPONSES

## Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends the El Dorado Irrigation District Board of Directors:

**Recommendation 1** – Direct the Auditor of the 2024 ACFR to verify by September 30, 2025, and publicly report that all significant deficiencies noted in the 2023 Auditor’s Memorandum of Internal Control have been rectified and not repeated through actions documented and taken in Management’s Response to the Auditor’s Recommendations.

**Recommendation 2** – Direct staff to create and make publicly available a separate report on the District’s Facility Capacity Charge (FCC) account within 180 days of each fiscal year end, which includes all the information in California Government Code Section 66013(d), and as generally shown in the example reports provided from other water districts herein.

**Recommendation 3** – Direct staff to create policies by September 30, 2025, that establish a finance committee with the responsibility to act as a crucial resource to the Board, providing analyses and recommendations critical to the organization’s financial decision-making process.

**Recommendation 4** – Direct staff to implement a revised Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) project tracking page that offers a more realistic total cost estimate, including construction cost estimates, for each project throughout its duration in the CIP by August 31, 2025.

**Recommendation 5** – Direct staff to extend its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) from a 5-year to a 10-year planning horizon by September 30, 2025, which will provide more flexibility in managing budgets and allow for more stable rate adjustments over time.

# RESPONSES

## Request for Responses

A Civil Grand Jury report details a single investigation. Each report lists FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS. The responsible organization 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 on 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 board:

- EID Board of Directors
  - All Findings and Recommendations 1 - 5

For more information refer to [How to Respond to an El Dorado County Grand Jury Report](#) available on the El Dorado County Grand Jury webpage



2024-25 GRAND JURY REPORT  
EL DORADO COUNTY  
JUNE 1, 2025 - CASE #25-10

## COMPLIANCE AND CONTINUITY REPORT

*The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury reviewed responses to the 2023-2024 reports and the progress made on recommendations, while informing the public of the continuous nature of Grand Jury work across multiple terms.*

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*Cover Caption: Grand Jury room, Placerville.*

# SUMMARY

## Summary

*“All I want is compliance with my wishes, after reasonable discussion.”*

- Winston Churchill

The El Dorado County (County) Civil Grand Jury may appear to be an institution that exists continuously, however, it is a series of individual Grand Juries, each of which is impaneled for one year (July 1 – June 30), as mandated in the California Constitution and statutes. No jury is a continuance of any other and is independent and separate from all others. A Grand Jury may forward citizen complaints or research from incomplete investigations, but each subsequent Grand Jury must make its own decisions on whether and how to pursue those investigations. They do not have access to any work product generated by the previous Grand Jury that is not published for the public and must begin any forwarded investigations from the beginning.

The purpose of this report is to report on the responses to the prior year’s Grand Jury reports to determine if the required entities met their statutory requirements and to provide updates on accepted recommendations that were to be completed during this Grand Jury term. While responses and follow-throughs were generally excellent throughout the County, some noteworthy exceptions require mentioning in this report.

## Background

Each County Civil Grand Jury investigates County government during its one-year term. It may also investigate city governments, agencies, schools, and special districts within the County. Each investigation may generate a report containing evidence, with findings of facts derived from that evidence, and may recommend actions based on those findings. Each report may require responses to identified findings and recommendations from the officials responsible for the subject of the report.

Grand Jury reports may be published and released any time during the Grand Jury term. The time involved in conducting investigations, evaluating information gathered, and writing reports results in reports being published between the middle and the end of the term.

Responses must be submitted within a timeframe of 60 or 90 days from the date the report is published, depending on the respondent. Based on the report release date responses may be received after the issuing Grand Jury's term has ended. The current Grand Jury receives report responses rather than the issuing Grand Jury. It is then incumbent upon the current Grand Jury to evaluate the responses for statutory compliance and completion.

## Discussion

The 2024-2025 Grand Jury reviewed responses to the reports issued by the 2023/2024 Grand Jury. In most cases, responses were timely and complied with provisions of the California Penal Code. Follow-up actions specified in the responses had either been implemented, were in the process of being implemented, were not being implemented, or required further analysis.

The Grand Jury commends those local agencies and districts that provided timely and compliant responses to the reports of prior Grand Juries, as well as their commitment to implementing recommendations for improving programs and services.

Responses to reports published by the 2023/2024 Grand Jury were reviewed to determine:

### **1. Did they comply with the provisions of the California Penal Code?**

Penal Code #933.05, subdivision (b), states that, as to each Grand Jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:

- a) If the recommendation has been implemented, a summary of the implementation must be given.
- b) If the recommendation will be implemented in the future, a time frame must be specified for completion.
- c) Should an agency respond that further study is required to accomplish a recommendation, the study must be completed within six months.
- d) When a response claims the recommendation is not warranted or is not reasonable, an explanation must be provided.

### **2. Have the actions promised in a response been completed?**

The current Grand Jury completed a review of all responses to the 2023/2024 Grand Jury report and found most to be complete and in compliance. All responses were received within the required 60 or 90-day timeframe except for two as noted below.

# DISCUSSION

## COMPLIANCE: LATE OR NO RESPONSE

### **Case 24-07: County Office of Education: Are Our Schools Doing Enough to Address Sexual Harassment?**

**Recommendation 8** - EDCOE and County school districts should bring their Title IX website requirements up to date by December 31, 2024.

#### **Response by Gold Trail Union School District (GTUSD)**

GTUSD did not respond by the required due date of August 13, 2024. A follow-up letter was sent to the school district August 20, 2024. Their response was received September 10, 2024.

#### **Response by Pioneer Unified School District (PUSD)**

PUSD did not respond by their required due date of August 13, 2024. A follow-up letter was sent to the school district on August 20, 2024. As of the writing of this report their response has not been received.

Refer to the [Grand Jury website, Reports and Responses](#) for all reports and responses.

## CONTINUITY: REPORT RESPONSES REQUIRING FOLLOW-UP

### **Case 24-01: Georgetown Airport: A Disaster Waiting to Happen**

The 2023/2024 Grand Jury became aware of a serious safety issue at the Georgetown Airport. Grave concern was expressed regarding tall pine trees surrounding the airport. The issue was serious enough that Caltrans shut the airport down for night operations.

**Recommendation 1:** The County needs to have a funded plan to address all tree hazards at the Georgetown Airport by the end of March 2024, completing removal of the tree and pole hazards by September 2024, to the satisfaction of Caltrans and meeting FAA regulations.

**Response by El Dorado County Board of Supervisors:** *The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented in the future. The County has executed a contract with a licensed timber operator to remove the three acres of trees that pose the most imminent threat. This work is estimated to be completed by June 30, 2024. Relocation of the obstruction pole is estimated to take place in early 2025.*

# DISCUSSION

The County removed the trees by August 2024.

The County, per the recommendation in the 2023-2024 report, also moved the oversight of the airports from the Planning and Building Department to the Office of the CAO effective July 1, 2024. As of September 2024, the Georgetown airport resumed full activities including nighttime takeoffs and landings.

## **Case 24-05: El Dorado Hills CSD: Controversy and Concerns Demand Change**

**Recommendation 4:** By December 31, 2024, the County District Attorney's office should complete the investigation of any potential ethics or conflicts of interest violations, including required FPPC Form 700 disclosures, raised by the former GM's consulting arrangement with DTA.

**Response by El Dorado County District Attorney:** *Agree. This investigation is ongoing.*

As of May 2025, the investigation is still ongoing, and no public action has been taken by the District Attorney's Office. Further tracking of this item is warranted until closure.

**Recommendation 9:** By September 30, 2024, CSD should review, revise, and publicize its Master Plan from 2021 with realistic timelines for all new park development, as well as accurate and realistic cost estimates that can be funded and executed within a 10-year planning period.

**Response by El Dorado Hills CSD:** *This Recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented in the future: The District has planned and budgeted for a complete review and revision of the 2021 Master Plan beginning in FY25, which starts on July 01, 2024, in accordance to our policy for a five (5) year review. The outcome of the EDHCSD Response El Dorado County Grand Jury Report #24-05 Page 14 of 16 revised Master Plan will have an influence on the District's ten-year Capital Improvement Plan. This is a very comprehensive review process and plan revision that includes community input on several occasions, which cannot be completed in the timeframe recommended.*

As of May 2025, El Dorado Hills CSD ("CSD" or "the District") has not updated its Master Plan. They have received bids from contractors to develop the plan for significantly higher costs than they budgeted for in the 2025 Fiscal Year, but neither bid was accepted, and no work has begun. Additional follow-up will be required to track this commitment by the 2025-2026 Grand

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Jury. Related to Recommendation 11 in the report, El Dorado Hills CSD has not solicited public input on the Master Plan and how Park Impact Fees should be allocated.

**Recommendation 10:** Within 90 days, CSD should employ or retain a full-time licensed CPA professional to be Treasurer/CFO-equivalent.

**Response by El Dorado Hills CSD:** *This Recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented in the future: As stated in the Findings, the concerns of the Grand Jury are a function of District Policy and not due to the lack of having a CPA on staff or retainer. However, the District recognizes that government accounting is unique and complicated; and reporting is always changing with Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) regulations having new requirements that the District must adhere to each year. District staff understand that education is a priority and will work towards having at least one member of the finance department receive a certification in government accounting through a reputable government entity, including GFOA and/or California Society of Municipal Officers (CSFMO). The goal will be to have this completed by December 2025. Additionally, the District will look at incorporating an appropriate accounting certification requirement for future recruitments.*

As of May 2025, El Dorado Hills CSD has not retained a CPA.

**Recommendation 12:** Within 90 days, CSD should document its plans for Bass Lake Park and justify why CSD took on the obligation to build a turnkey park in Village J7, and how development of Bass Lake Park will now proceed up through park completion proposed by CSD in FY 31.

**Response by El Dorado Hills CSD:** *This Recommendation requires further analysis: With the District's acquisition of 55 acres of the old executive golf course and the option to acquire the remaining 41.5 acres, the Bass Lake Park design may be subject to change depending on the community input for the Central EDH Park and what amenities that park will have. The community outreach project for Central EDH Park will run through summer at which time the District will be in a better position to define and document its plans for Bass Lake park. With regard to the turnkey park in Village J, the District participated in a settlement which was negotiated between Parker Development, the District, and El Dorado County that provided the 12.5 acres and \$3.5M in funding identified from the County's Serrano CFD 1992-1 that had been*

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*slated for the development of the parkland. Given the years of delay in the construction of the turnkey park, and that the District had recently acquired acreage from Rescue Unified School District that was adjacent to the Village J lot, it was envisioned that the Village J lot could be incorporated into a larger park project. With that newer vision, the District elected to accept the land and funding and construct the park itself. To assist the community in understanding the history of this decision, the District will be seeking to create a public review of the information and series of events that led up to the settlement agreement between the three parties whereby the District accepted the 12.5 acres and \$3.5M in funding in order to incorporate the J Lot H parkland into the larger Bass Lake Park project.*

As of May 2025, the District has not updated its plans for Bass Lake Park, which would be incorporated into the Master Plan update it has not yet developed. The District has yet to exercise its option on the additional 41.5 acres of the Old Executive Golf Course property, making it difficult to determine plans for any development at Bass Lake. The District did not create a public review of the information and series of events that led to the settlement agreement as intended. In a preliminary budget review meeting in April 2025, the District CFO stated that they had not received the \$3.5 million available from the Mello-Roos account, as it was still being held by the County pending completion of the park. The agreement with the County and Serrano Associates that obligated EDH CSD to take over construction of the park did not include pre-construction access to the Mello-Roos funds. Follow-up is warranted on this item by the next Grand Jury, should they elect to do so.

### **Case 24-07: County Office of Education: Are Our Schools Doing Enough to Address Sexual Harassment?**

**Recommendation 3:** EDCOE should work with the employee unions to revise their bargaining agreements to permit schools to automate tracking on all buses and monitor bus drivers' locations during transportation of students. This should be completed by March 31, 2025.

**Response by El Dorado County Office of Education:** *This recommendation is already underway. EDCOE buses are equipped with radios with GPS tracking for EDCOE employees. EDCOE will further address this issue with the applicable bargaining units during the 2024-2025 school year.*

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**Recommendation 4:** EDCOE should work with the employee unions to revise their bargaining agreements to permit schools to install cameras that have monitoring capability on all buses. A designated staff person or automation should monitor the locations of buses during transportation of students.

**Response by El Dorado County Office of Education:** *We have implemented and plan to further implement this recommendation. After collective bargaining negotiations, in February 2023, EDCOE installed cameras on some vehicles as part of a pilot program. Currently all vehicles transporting Special Services students, home-to-school and school-to-home, are equipped with video cameras. EDCOE will further address this issue with the applicable bargaining units during the 2024-2025 school year.*

**Recommendation 5:** EDCOE should develop and implement policies and procedures that require supervisors and managers to closely monitor classified staff while working around students. If necessary, they should hire additional staff to achieve this goal. This should be done by March 31, 2025.

**Response by El Dorado County Office of Education:** *We require further analysis of this recommendation. EDCOE will further address this issue with the applicable bargaining units during the 2024-2025 school year.*

**Recommendation 6:** EDCOE should implement sexual harassment prevention training for all students, including how to recognize and report it. This training should begin in kindergarten. EDCOE should offer parents the option to opt out. This should begin by March 31, 2025.

**Response by El Dorado County Office of Education:** *We require further analysis of this recommendation. Generally, a student in grades K-3 cannot be suspended or expelled for sexual harassment. (See Cal. Educ. Code § 48900.2). Students in grades 7-12 receive instruction regarding “sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual abuse, and human trafficking.” (See Cal. Educ. Code 51934.) EDCOE Superintendent Policy 5145.7 provides that all EDCOE students receive age-appropriate information on sexual harassment.*

### **Case 24-09: Election Integrity: Separating Fact from Fiction**

**Recommendation 5:** By November 2024, the Registrar of Voters should begin publishing a periodic newsletter (e.g., online blog or social media) designed to acknowledge and address

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public concerns. Questions should be solicited and screened to avoid the social media free-for-alls of the past.

**Response by El Dorado County Board of Supervisors:** *The recommendation will be implemented. The Elections Department has a Voter Integrity page which addresses public concerns regarding the mis/dis information. The Department will add a quarterly newsletter in 2025.*

The County Elections Office issued its first quarterly newsletter “Election Insight” in April 2025.

**Recommendation 6:** The Elections Department should conduct a public poll of election integrity concerns by the end of 2024 and 2025 to measure any improvements in public perception and the success of the public outreach.

**Response to R6: Respondent: El Dorado County Board of Supervisors:** *The recommendation will be implemented in part. The Elections Department will poll the voters after the 2024 General Election; however, the next poll will not occur until after the next major election cycle in 2026.*

The Elections Department conducted a poll of election integrity concerns and published the results before the November election, and then conducted an open house to share the results. There is no reason to not conduct such a poll before the next major election cycle rather than after.

**Recommendation 7:** By January 1, 2025, the Registrar of Voters should establish a volunteer public advisory board to help monitor election processes, make improvements, and coordinate public outreach/communication.

**Response by El Dorado County Board of Supervisors:** *The recommendation requires further analysis. The Elections Department tried to establish a Voter Advisory Committee in 2022 and reached out to the Republican and Democratic Central Committees as well as members of the public. None of the groups or the public responded with any interest. In accordance with the Grand Jury’s recommendation, the Elections Department will try again to establish a Voter Advisory Committee by December 31, 2025.*

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There appears to be a great deal of public interest in such an advisory committee still and the Grand Jury awaits the further analysis to see if this can be implemented by the end of 2025.