This document is an extract of a larger publication.

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San Benito County Sheriff Department

SUMMARY

Department

The San Benito County Sheriff's Department (Sheriff) is separated into two divisions, Corrections and Patrol.

Corrections

The San Benito County Civil Grand Jury (Civil Grand Jury) conducted inspections of the correctional facilities in San Benito County (County). During these visits, the Civil Grand Jury observed that the facilities are understaffed. Inmate transportation to and from the courthouse is commonly conducted by a single Correctional Officer. Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations identifies that officers transport inmates with sufficient numbers of personnel to ensure officer and inmate safety. The current staffing level presents a safety and liability concern. While Title 15 provides a standard, the specific number of personnel required are identified by County policy. The County does not have an adopted policy.

Deputy Patrol

Civil Grand Jury members participated in ride-alongs with the Sheriff during both day and night shifts. While deputies were observed patrolling the community and responding to calls, it is evident that our correctional officers and patrol deputies are stretched thin.

Issues were observed regarding equipment. Radio communications have a limited range and are inadequate. In many situations, officers use personal cell phones for communication. The Civil Grand Jury understands that the radios have been purchased, however, they have not been issued to officers. There is a software issue that must be resolved prior to deployment. Further, patrol vehicles have high mileage that may impact reliability during emergency responses.

BACKGROUND

The San Benito County Jail (SBCJ) is a 28,000 square foot facility that opened on November 17, 1992, with a construction cost of approximately $7 million. The jail has capacity for 108 male and 16 female inmates. The males are housed within four detention “pods”. Two of these pods are identified as “maximum security” and house up to 35 inmates each. The male pods are laid out as sections of a circle that allow officer observation from a control station.

The two female pods are rectangular in design that house up to eight inmates each. While they can be observed from the control station, video coverage is required to fully view the entire detention area. The female pods do not have direct access to the outdoor yard.

In 2021, the Curtis J. Hill Rehabilitation Center (CJHRC) was opened. It is a two-story, 22,000 square foot building with a capacity of 72 inmates. The County utilized grant funds to help offset the approximately $25 million construction cost. There is no reception center for intake and release of inmates at this facility. The CJHRC is not currently in use due to the lack of correctional personnel.

The San Benito County Youth Service Center (YSC) is a 24-hour facility with a maximum capacity of 24 juveniles. The facility has a waiting area, visiting room, classroom, day room, outdoor recreation and garden. The juvenile facility does not have a medical bay. MEDIKO, a contracted on-call medical firm, serves the health needs of the youth facility and the SBCJ.

There are currently 31 correctional officers employed; however, four are currently on medical/administrative leave. Facilities are staffed 24 hours with duties split into two 12-hour shifts.

In addition, the department has 29 patrol deputy sheriffs, which includes two K-9 officers. These officers are tasked with patrolling 1,238 square miles of San Benito County. They do not directly patrol within the Hollister City limits, but they do assist City Police when necessary. Patrol shifts are 12 hours. Currently, there are three officers on medical/ administrative leave.

METHODOLOGY

Inspection of the Correctional Facilities in San Benito County

- San Benito County Jail, 710 Flynn Road, Hollister CA 95023
- Curtis J. Hill Rehabilitation Center, 710 Flynn Road, Hollister CA 95023
- Youth Services Center, 708 Flynn Road, Hollister CA 95023

The Civil Grand Jury conducted ride-alongs with the Sheriff.

Review of the report issued by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) dated February 26, 2026. The date of the facility inspection was January 27, 2026. The report identified that incarcerated persons were held in sobering cells longer than 12 hours without hourly safety checks.

Interviews were also conducted with the Sheriff, senior leadership, the Probation Program Coordinator and the Head of Administrative Staff.

Additionally, Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations, which governs crime prevention and corrections, including minimum standards for local detention facilities and jail operations and Section 1056 - Use of Sobering Cells, were reviewed.

DISCUSSION

On December 22, 2025, the Civil Grand Jury conducted an inspection of the main jail and CJHRC facilities. The Civil Grand Jury made the following observations during its inspection:

- Viewed all detention pods and entered Pod D.
- The shower facilities in the SBCJ have limited lighting and uneven floors which pose a potential tripping hazard.
- The laundry facilities are managed by inmates.
- The kitchen area was clean and well-maintained.
- The medical facility in the CJHRC was modern and well equipped.
- The shower within the intake center at CJHRC is non-compliant with existing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

The Civil Grand Jury interviewed both male and female inmates to discuss the resources and opportunities available to them. Inmates acknowledged having a general understanding of their responsibilities and the resources provided by the jail.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

F1. Staffing shortages exist within the Sheriff's Department. The Department is unable to attract and maintain adequate staffing.

R1. The Civil Grand Jury recommends that the County invest in retention incentives or other programs for existing officers within the next nine months.

F2. A new radio communication system has been purchased but has yet to be implemented.
R2. The Civil Grand Jury recommends that the County take appropriate steps to implement the new radio system within the next three months.

F3. The intake reception area of the Curtis J. Hill Rehabilitation Center is non-ADA compliant.
R3. The Civil Grand Jury recommends that the facility be brought into ADA compliance within six months.

F4. The Sheriff's department requires additional staffing when transferring inmates and detainees.
R4. The Civil Grand Jury recommends that the County develop a policy so that all inmates and detainees are transported by a minimum of two officers/deputies. This recommendation must be implemented within the next nine months.

F5. The BSCC report Non-Compliance (1056 - The use of Sobering Cells)- Incarcerated persons were held in sobering cells longer than 12 hours without hourly safety checks.
R5. The Civil Grand Jury recommends that the facility incorporate the recommendations that the Sheriff submitted to the BSCC within 6 months.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

The following responses are required, pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, from the following governing boards within 90 days:

County of San Benito Board of Supervisors
San Benito County Office of the Sheriff

INVITED RESPONSES

Board of State and Community Corrections