2024-25 Yolo County Civil Grand Jury

Yolo County Detention Facilities

Correctional Officer staffing challenges are ongoing

No one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens but its lowest ones. - Nelson Mandela

SUMMARY

The 2024-25 Yolo County Civil Grand Jury inspected the Yolo County Monroe Detention Facility (MDF) and the Walter J. Leinberger Detention Center (LDC) on December 9, 2024. The Yolo County Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF) was inspected on December 11, 2024.

The MDF houses adult males and females and the JDF houses juvenile wards. The LDC, while complete, is not open due to staffing shortages, and there is no specific timeline for opening as of the December 2024 tour date. When staffing levels improve, the LDC will house low-risk adults, with an emphasis on providing educational enrichment and life skills programs as well as a focus on the medical needs of incarcerated persons.

BACKGROUND

California Penal Code section 919 (b) indicates that, “The grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons with the county.” To fulfill this statutory obligation, the Grand Jury visited the MDF and the JDF. The MDF is managed by the Yolo County Sheriff’s Office (YCSO), while the Yolo County Probation Department oversees the JDF.

Before the MDF tour, the Grand Jury watched a training video developed by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) to learn about visitor requirements and expectations.

Upon arrival at the MDF, the Grand Jury met with the facility's Correctional Command team. An approximately two-hour discussion commenced covering many topics about jail operations as well as challenges the team faces, primarily staffing of correctional officers, and how that impacts operations.

After the conversation with the Command team, the Grand Jury toured several areas within the MDF, including incarcerated person intake booking and release, the healthcare wing, housing pods, recreation yards, main kitchen, laundry, central control, staff offices/training rooms, and classrooms. The Grand Jury interviewed correctional officers, supervisors, and incarcerated persons.

DISCUSSION

General

During the seven-hour tour of the MDF, the Grand Jury found that the facility was in good order. Conversations with incarcerated persons were mostly positive, with praise given for the staff, medical care, and the quality of food.

On December 9, 2024, there were 271 incarcerated persons at the MDF, 23 of which are female. At our follow-up meeting on May 9, there were 259 incarcerated persons, 24 of which are female.

Staffing Challenges

In conversations with the MDF Command team, staffing levels are not where they should be, and this is an ongoing issue. On December 9, 2024, there were 98 correctional officers employed, and they need 120 for adequate staffing. In a follow-up conversation in May 2025, there were 94 correctional officers employed.

Due to the staffing shortage, there is a lot of forced overtime. On December 9, 2024, according to Command staff, 500-600 hours of overtime per week is required for adequate coverage. In a follow up conversation in May 2025, the number of overtime hours per week was less, at 350 hours.

One of the consequences of understaffing at the MDF is the need to release inmates because the jail has reached capacity. Per the Captain, in 2024, a total of 18 individuals were released under a federal court consent decree that governs jail capacity. The individuals released were in different stages of their court proceedings or serving time when released. The individuals released were determined to be the most suitable for release based on the consent decree criteria: (Re: Yolo County Jail NA (E.D. Cal.) | Civil Rights Litigation Clearinghouse).

In the discussion of staffing levels, the Command team broached the subject of the lower than Statewide average pay rate for Yolo County correctional officers, forcing some applicants to take the same position in adjacent counties (i.e., Napa) where the pay is higher.

The latest information the Grand Jury found is that the starting salary for a correctional officer 1 in Yolo County is between $66,144 and $80,392 a year. This translates to an hourly wage range of $31.80 to $38.65. In Napa County, CA, a starting salary for a correctional officer I/II typically ranges from $82,326.40 to $106,995.20 annually, which translates to $39.58 - $51.44 per hour. Currently, Yolo County is offering a $10,000 signing bonus and Napa County is offering a $15,000 signing bonus.

Correctional Officers Recruitment Challenges

Another challenge discussed with the Command team is the long hiring process for Yolo County correctional officers. It typically takes 4-6 months to hire Correctional Officers. Listed below are the current steps in the correctional officer Recruitment Process, which were recently revised to streamline and speed it up as much as possible:

1. Epic Recruiting (Full-Service Police Officer Recruiting Agency | Epic Recruiting), is the strategic recruiting service that is used for correctional officer recruitment. Epics services include professional production and management of a website and advertising on different platforms. Utilization of the EPIC service has increased applicant traffic significantly. (Correctional Officer - Yolo County SO)
2. Career events are held locally and in the Sacramento region. Sheriff's Office Informational Nights are held every other month at the Sheriff's Office. This provides an opportunity for potential or current applicants to talk with current officers and learn more about the job and career field.
3. Once an application has been completed, Yolo County Human Resources screens for minimum qualifications.
4. If minimum qualifications are met, candidates will be invited for an interview with the Sheriff's Office. County HR will email applicants who are provided a link to self-schedule an interview date and time. Interviews are conducted every two weeks. Candidates who pass the oral interview will continue to the next step which is a proctored written exam. In the email informing the candidate that they've passed the oral interview, they are also scheduled for a written exam. (Limited detention facility tours are offered to applicants to observe the work environment).
5. The written exam is scheduled every six weeks and is held at the Sheriff's Office. County HR proctors the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) test, which is a 2.5 hour multiple choice exam. The BSCC Performance Band shows a T-Score (a T-score is a standardized score used to indicate how far a raw score deviates from the mean of a population or sample, measured in standard deviations) of 52 as high and 45 as low. The Yolo County Sheriff's department considers the passing T-Score as 40. The exam is "Related to the basic knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for a candidate to possess prior to hire. The BSCC Selection Exam was developed based on a comprehensive job analysis conducted in accordance with federal and state employment guidelines.
6. A background investigation and Computer Voice Stress Analysis (CVSA) test are conducted by Sheriff's Office background investigators. The background investigation entails interviews with family, friends, and others in the applicant's circle. It also includes the use of eSoph (eSOPH: Software for Managing Public Safety Background Investigations of Applicants – Miller Mendel), for other aspects of the background investigation, including review of social media, credit history, etc. The Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (CA POST) requires peace officers (deputies) a minimum of 40-hour background check. There is no such time limit for a correctional officer. However, they are held to a similar standard. The only difference is the level of review that a peace officer is required to have, and the hiring can't move on until it is completed. If a correctional officer candidate has sufficient information that is acceptable, they would be able to proceed in the background process.

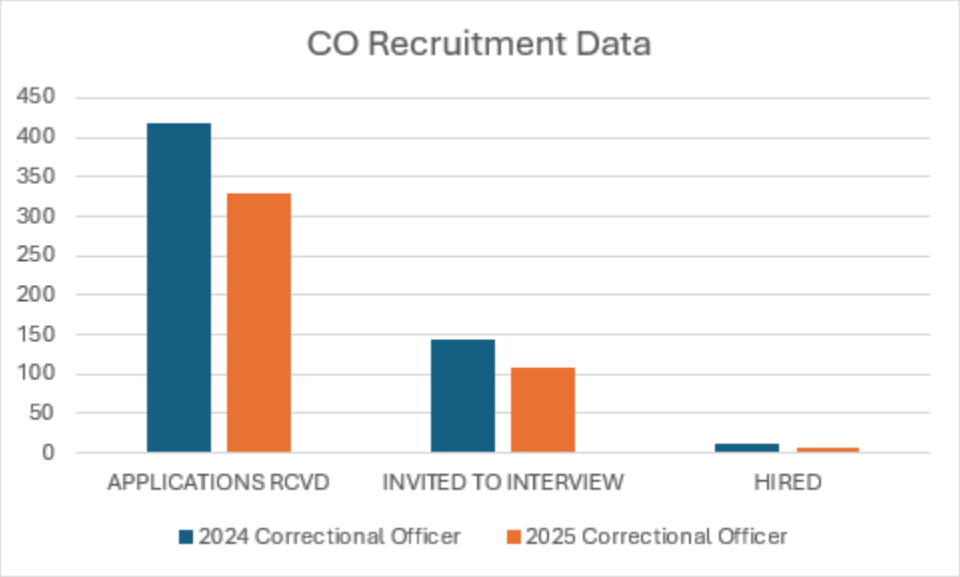
7. The Computer Voice Stress Analyzer (CVSA) test, used for truth verification, involves a subject answering questions while a microphone records their voice. The system analyzes the voice for inaudible changes (microtremors) in frequency, which are believed to correlate with physiological stress, potentially indicating deception. The test utilizes computer software to analyze the vocal patterns. The approximate length of time for the CVSA test for each candidate is 1.5 to 3 hours.
8. If the candidate passes all of the prior steps listed, they are scheduled for a final interview with the Sheriff or Undersheriff. If selected, a conditional offer is extended, pending successful completion of a psychological exam and a medical exam.
9. Once hired, the new correctional officer begins the Jail Training Program (JTO), which begins with an orientation week followed by 10 weeks of training broken down into three phases.
10. As of May 2025, there is one new correctional officer beginning work on May 19. Additionally, there are five candidates awaiting a CVSA, seven candidates in the background check process, and two awaiting the psychological and medical exams.

Below are the percentages of correctional officers hired versus applications. It is important to note that most of the applicants did not make it to the interview stage, which in 2024 and some of 2025, occurred after the written exam. The new, improved recruitment process began in March 2025 and the Yolo County Sheriff's Office hopes that the new process will increase the percentage in hiring. *(The data and CO Recruitment screenshot, below, was provided by the Yolo County Sheriff's Office.*)

2024
Applicants: 3.12%
Interviewed: 9.09%

2025 to date (May 14, 2025)
Applicants: 2.2%
Interviewed: 6.48%

YEAR	POSITION TYPE	APPLICATIONS RCVD	INVITED TO INTERVIEW	HIRED
2024	Correctional Officer	417	143	13
2025	Correctional Officer	330	108	7



Nighttime and Early Morning Release of Incarcerated Persons

The Grand Jury is interested in the topic of nighttime release of incarcerated persons based on public concern for the safety of the releasees, especially females, without access to public transportation. MDF Command team noted that they do not offer rides to releasees who lack access to transportation. Currently, there are no community volunteer programs to assist in transportation for released persons after hours. According to MDF leadership, this has been brought up during meetings with Health and Human Services (HHSA) and other community organizations as an issue to address.

Housing Pods

The Grand Jury was able to inspect an unoccupied cell and noted the bed, the toilet, and the sink area were functional and adequate.

Tablets are issued to incarcerated persons, which allow them to schedule and conduct virtual visits as well as to file grievances, order items from the commissary, and even purchase approved movies and books.

Programs

The MDF programming is run by a passionate and caring staff member. The classrooms looked professional and clean. The educational and support curriculum includes literacy classes for high school graduation equivalency, food handling training for work in the kitchen, a pre-release Medi-Cal - Application Program, an In-custody Reentry Program, and others.

Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF)

The Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF) housed 17 people on the day of the tour (December 11, 2024). Conversations with several juveniles, indicated that the care they receive in the facility is very good. Several of the juveniles noted that the educational opportunities afforded there are excellent and that they are pursuing not only high school graduation equivalency but also college level coursework.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings:

F-1 Correctional officer hiring and staffing is a serious challenge for MDF.

F-2 The MDF should have 120 officers; at the time of inspection, they had 98. At a follow-up meeting in May 2025, they had 94 Correctional Officers due to a handful of recent retirements.

F-3 Due to the staffing shortage, there is a lot of forced overtime.

F-4 Understaffing at the MDF is creating the need to release inmates because the jail has reached capacity. Per MDF leadership, in 2024, a total of 18 individuals were released under the consent decree. The individuals released were in different stages of their court proceedings or serving time when released. The individuals released were determined to be the most suitable for release based on the consent decree criteria. (Re: Yolo County Jail NA (E.D. Cal.) | Civil Rights Litigation Clearinghouse)

F-5 Applying for the correctional officer position is a long process. Some applicants have accepted a job elsewhere due to the length of time it takes to get through the application process, and if in corrections, they may take a similar job with higher pay in neighboring counties.

F-6 The pay scale for the Yolo County correctional officer is lower compared to other adjacent counties.

F-8 According to MDF Command staff, approximately 10% of applicants pass the background check.

F-9 The 2024-25 Yolo County Grand Jury received two complaints about female inmates being released in the middle of the night, or early hours of the morning, when public transportation is not available.

Recommendations:

R-1

- While the Yolo County application process for correctional officers has recently been updated and streamlined, the 2024-25 Grand Jury suggests finding more ways to speed up the process, including but not limited to, offering the written exam more frequently than every six weeks.
- Utilizing eSoph for more background searches and tasks could be another potential way to speed up the hiring process.
- If candidates apply for a correctional officer position at other California agencies that use eSoph, consider sharing the background data to avoid replicating the search for the same data.

R-2

- The Grand Jury recommends that there are some safeguards put in place for releases that occur during the middle of the night or early morning when no public transportation is available, such as establishing a network of community volunteers who are willing to be on call to assist the individual with transportation to their destination.
- Additionally, the Grand Jury suggests establishing a safe place for releasees to wait inside or outside the MDF, especially when the release occurs in the middle of the night or early morning and when public transportation is not available.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses for the following Findings and Recommendations within 90 days:

- Yolo County Board of Supervisors F-1 through F-9 and R-1 and R-2
- Yolo County Sheriff's Office F-1 through F-9 and R-1 and R-2

COMMENDATIONS

Monroe Detention Facility:

The facility is clean and orderly, and the care of the incarcerated persons appears humane and thoughtful. MDF staff is doing a good job despite the staffing challenges. The Grand Jury found that the programs director is passionate about his role and works tirelessly to provide incarcerated persons access to education and enrichment.

The food the Grand Jury sampled was great. This is also the opinion of the incarcerated persons the Grand Jury talked to.

The Yolo County recruitment website for correctional officers - https://joinycso.com/correctional-officer/ - is vibrant and informative.

Updates made to the recruitment and hiring process of MDF correctional officers since the initial December 9, 2024, jail tour are commendable and will hopefully result in a quicker turnaround of qualified correctional officers going forward.

Juvenile Detention Center:

A commendation for the excellent educational opportunities that are provided – both high school and college curriculum. Grand Jury members learned that some of the wards are graduating from high school and college.

The JDC staffing levels are good, especially with the low number of wards.