

**IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL  
GRAND JURY**



**2023-2024  
FINAL REPORT**

Superior Court of California, County of Imperial  
<https://www.imperial.courts.ca.gov/>

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## LETTER FROM THE FOREPERSON

Imperial County Civil Grand Jury  
P.O. Box 296  
El Centro, CA, 92244  
May 6, 2024

Presiding Judge of the Civil Grand Jury  
Superior Court of California in the County of Imperial  
El Centro, California, 92243

Citizens of Imperial County and Honorable Judge,

In accordance with the California Penal Code, Section 933 (a), and in the name of the 2023-2024 Imperial Civil Grand Jury, it is my duty to submit our final report.

The Imperial County Civil Grand Jury was empaneled with 19 Jurors and 8 Alternates, but numbers reduced until the final months to a total of twelve (12) members remaining. Needless to say, minimal number of Juror's, along with individual conflicts of schedules or other personal issues, fulfilling the numbers required for a quorum each month was always a challenge. This included COVID and although the world had come out of COVID Pandemic, various members continued to encounter COVID both personally or via family members. It should be noted that the Civil Grand Jury received two (2) inquiry requests in written form, this Civil Grand Jury could not investigate those inquiries. This was due to the very late submission of those requests/complaints late in the Jury's year of responsibility. These items will be sealed and provided to the 2024-25 Civil Grand Jury for proper review and handling.

Despite these obstacles, and minimal meetings, the Grand Jury was able to meet its duties as required. Much of this was completed, as in all Civil Grand Juries, through smaller subgroups performing various visits, inspections and interviews. Through the hard work of a group of dedicated Citizens of Imperial County, the Imperial Civil Grand Jury was able to complete its required duties and completing this final report. I would personally like to take this moment to thank and congratulate each individual member of this year's Grand Jury for their dedication and commitment. They are truly a group of compassionate and professional people and it was my privilege to serve alongside them on this year's Imperial County Civil Grand Jury.

Sincerely,



Thomas Garcia,  
Foreperson  
2023-2024 Imperial County Civil Grand Jury

2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT



Superior Court of California  
County of Imperial

On behalf of our judiciary and jury commissioner staff, we would like to thank you and congratulate the 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury of Imperial County for its service, commitment, and contributions in making the Grand Jury system a relevant and important part of our local government. It is community members, like the grand jurors and regular trial jurors, that help us preserve the principles of democracy in action and public trust in our local government.

The many hours devoted by members of the grand jury have resulted in investigations and recommendations aimed at improving the operations and services of the agencies audited. Each year, the Court engages in community outreach to promote jury service and ensure that community participation in this important civic duty is not simply seen as a burden or inconvenience, but as an opportunity to participate in our democratic governance process and improve our community.

Demographical data required by Rule 10.625 of the California Rules of Court, for the 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury reflects the following representation of our community:

**By Supervisorial District**

District 1 = 3, District 2 = 4, District 3 = 4, District 4 = 6, District 5 = 2

**Gender**

Males = 10, Females = 9

**Age**

(18-25) = 0, (26-34) = 4, (35-44) = 4, (45-54) = 5, (55-64) = 2, (65-74) = 4

Again, many thanks to each member of the 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury for their civic duty and for making a difference.

Sincerely yours,

Marco D. Nuñez  
Presiding Judge

Maria Rhinehart  
Court Executive Officer  
Jury Commissioner

## Imperial County 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jurors

Juror Position	Juror	City of Residence
Foreperson:	Thomas Garcia	Imperial
Secretary:	Teri Sanders	Brawley
Treasurer:	Ruben Anaya	Calexico
Sergeant-at-Arms:	Antonio Garcia	Calexico
Juror	Luciano Hernandez	Brawley
Juror	Mary Green	El Centro
Juror	Elisa Medina	El Centro
Juror	Karen Laughrin	Brawley
Juror	Dolores Granillo	Imperial
Juror	William Medrano	Westmorland
Juror	Robert Wyatt	Imperial
Juror	Becky Thomas	Imperial

**The 2023-2024 Imperial County Civil Grand Jury**



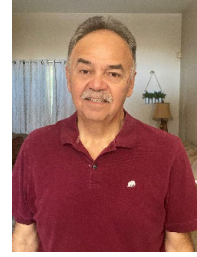
Thomas Garcia



Teri Sanders



Ruben Anaya



Antonio Garcia



Luciano Hernandez



Mary Green



Elisa Medina



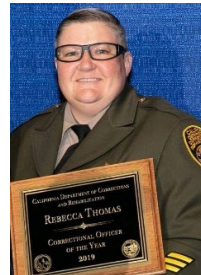
Karen Laughrin



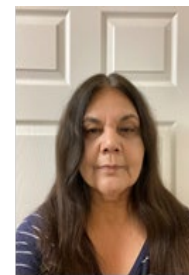
William Medrano



Robert Wyatt



Becky Thomas



Dolores Granillo

## Presiding Judges



**Honorable William Derek Quan  
Presiding Judge (January 2022 - December 2023)**



**Honorable Marco D. Nunez  
Presiding Judge (January 2024 – Present)**

**County Counsel**

**Photograph Not available**





**Jury Commissioner's Office Personnel**

Destiny Ramos  
Court Service Assistant I

Estela Muñoz  
Court Service Assistant III

## INTRODUCTION TO THE CIVIL GRAND JURY

The primary mission of a Civil Grand Jury in the State of California is to examine county and city governments, as well as districts and other offices, in order to ensure that the responsibilities of these entities are conducted lawfully and efficiently. The Civil Grand Jury is also responsible for recommending measures for improving the functioning and accountability of these organizations, which are intended to serve the public interest.

The Civil Grand Jury is part of the county judicial system, as authorized by the California State Constitution. It is advised by the Superior Court but is not accountable to elected officials or government employees. Its findings and recommendations are unbiased and impartial. Grand jurors are sworn to secrecy, and, other than final reports, their work is kept strictly confidential.

## INVESTIGATIONS

The Civil Grand Jury is an investigatory body created for the protection of society and the enforcement of the law. The Civil Grand Jury in California is unusual because its duty includes investigation of local and county governments as provided by statutes passed in 1880.

The primary duty of the Civil Grand Jury is to evaluate local government entities through a systematic fact-finding process. The objective of the investigations is to produce beneficial reports that persuade local officials to run their agencies more effectively and efficiently. The final report is the end result of year-long investigative efforts and is the only public record of that endeavor.

Grand jury investigations are formal, systematic examinations in search of the truth. It is the process of determining Who, What, When, Where, Why ... and maybe Why Not? It is a specific, planned approach to determine the truth of allegations, assumptions, complaints, and speculation.

Anyone may ask the Civil Grand Jury to investigate a civil issue that falls within the Civil Grand Jury's jurisdiction. Whether it chooses to investigate such a complaint is entirely in the jury's discretion and may be affected by workload, resource limitations, or jurisdictional issues.

Each civil grand jury sets its own rules of procedures and creates committees to investigate and create reports. California Penal Code Section 925 states:

The grand jury shall investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, or functions of the county including those operations, accounts, and records of any special legislative district or other district in the county created pursuant to state law for which officers of the county are serving ex-officio capacity as officers of the districts.

Additionally, Section 919 prescribes that:

The grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county, including inquiring into willful or corrupt misconduct in office of public officers of every description within the county.

## 2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

The public may submit directly to the Imperial County Civil Grand Jury complaints, or requests for investigation, into issues of concern regarding public agencies or officials in the Imperial County. The public may request complaint forms by contacting the Superior Court of Imperial County online, by calling (760) 482-2200, or by using the form found in the appendix of this report.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Civil Grand Juries conduct proceedings behind closed doors, as required by law, primarily for the protection of people who file complaints or who testify during investigations. All jury meetings, discussions, decisions, complaints, documents, investigations, and testimonies received are considered to be confidential, and members may not discuss these matters with others prior to publication of reports. All who appear as witnesses or communicate in writing with a grand jury are protected by strict rules of confidentiality, for which violations are subject to legal sanction.

### JURISDICTION

The following summarizes the areas that are within the investigatory jurisdiction of the Imperial County Civil Grand Jury:

- The condition and management of the public jails within the County;
- Willful or corrupt misconduct in office of public officers of every description within the County;
- County government, city government, special districts, school districts, agencies and authorities;

Areas not within Civil Grand Jury jurisdiction include:

- Federal agencies;
- State agencies;
- Superior court system;
- School district personnel records, curriculum, and policy.

### CIVIL GRAND JUROR QUALIFICATIONS

Prospective grand jurors must possess the following qualifications (California Penal Code Section 893):

- Applicant is a citizen of the United States, 18 years or older, who has been a resident of Imperial County for one year immediately before being selected and sworn in;
- Applicant is in possession of their natural faculties, of ordinary intelligence, of sound judgement, and of fair character;
- Applicant is possessed of sufficient knowledge of the English language.

A person is not allowed to serve as a grand juror if the individual:

- Is serving as a trial juror in any California court;
- Has been convicted of a felony;
- Has been discharged as a grand juror in any court of this state within one year;
- Has been convicted of malfeasance in office or any felony or other high crime;
- Is serving as an elected public officer.

## **2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT**

Desirable qualifications for a grand juror include the following:

- Have computer and Internet communication skills;
- Be in good health;
- Be open-minded with concern for the views of others;
- Have the ability to work with others;
- Have genuine interest in community affairs;
- Have investigative skills and an ability to write reports.

### **JURY SELECTION**

Each year, citizens of the county who apply for civil grand jury service are invited to an orientation session for an overview of the process. The court then interviews them, and prospective names are forwarded for inclusion in the annual civil grand jury lottery. During the lottery, 19 panel members are selected, with the remaining to serve as alternates. Those selected are sworn in and instructed to their charge by the presiding judge. Civil grand jurors take an oath of confidentiality regarding any civil grand jury matters for the rest of their lives.

### **ORGANIZATION**

The 2023-2024 Imperial County Civil Grand Jury served a term from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. Its officers included a foreperson, secretary, treasurer, sergeant-at-arms, and a chairperson for each committee. During the course of the term, members were divided into various committees, and may have served on several committees. General meetings were held twice monthly, but sometimes jurors required more frequent meetings for specific committee functions. No less than twelve (12) members of the Civil Grand Jury were required to approve all investigations, inquiries, and reports. All reports are completed, published, and become public information no later than June 30 of the Civil Grand Jury term.

### **COMMITMENT**

Persons selected for Civil Grand Jury service can expect to serve 40 or more hours per month for a period of one year, July 1 through June 30. Jurors may opt to serve a second consecutive year, if approved by the Court.

### **RENUMERATION**

Civil Grand Jurors receive a nominal payment for meetings they attend, and they are reimbursed for mileage to attend meetings, training, and possibly other minor expenses.

### **ORIENTATION**

New jurors are encouraged to attend an orientation program regarding grand jury functions and information about the county, city, and special district governments.

### **WHY BECOME A CIVIL GRAND JUROR?**

Those who volunteer, and are accepted, for grand jury service should feel privileged to be selected. They enter this service with interest and curiosity to learn more about the administration and operation of Imperial County government. Serving as a grand juror requires many hours and serious effort and reflects a generous commitment to public service.

## 2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

### HOW TO CONTACT THE CIVIL GRAND JURY

By Mail: Imperial County Civil Grand Jury  
P.O. Box 296, El Centro, CA, 92244

In Person: Materials can be placed in a drop box located on the first floor the Imperial County Administration Center Building, 940 W. Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243.

By Phone: (760) 482-2200

A copy of the complaint form is also located in the appendix of this report (page 37).

### CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORTS

Section 933(a) of California Penal Code declares:

Each grand jury shall submit...a final report of its findings and recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year.

The civil grand jury summarizes its findings and makes recommendations in a public report, completed at the end of its yearlong term. Each report is presented to the appropriate department or agency.

Section 933(b) declares:

One copy of each final report, together with the responses thereto, found to be in compliance with this title shall be placed on file with the clerk of the court and remain on file in the office of the clerk. The clerk shall immediately forward a true copy of the report and the responses to the State Archivist who shall retain that report and all responses in perpetuity.

Each report is distributed to public officials, libraries, the news media and any entity that is the subject of any of the reports. The public may also view each year's final report through the Superior Court of Imperial website: <https://www.imperialcourts.ca.gov/general-information/grand-jury>

### RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Two working days prior to the release of the Final Report, the Grand Jury will provide a copy of the report to all affected agencies of persons or persons.

No officer, agency, department, or governing body of a public agency shall disclose the contents of the report prior to its public release.

All affected agencies or persons shall respond to their specific portions of the Final Report.

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**Responses are to be in writing or on computer disk to assist with duplication. And are to be submitted in a timely manner.**

Section 933(c) of the Penal code provides two different response times:

- (1) Public Agency: the governing body of any public agency must respond within 90 days. The response must be addressed to the presiding judge of the Superior Court.
- (2) Elective Officer or Agency Head: All elected officers or heads of agencies that are required to respond must do so within 60 days to the presiding Judge of the Superior Court, with an informational copy provided to the Board of Supervisors.

The legal requirements for responding to individual reports in the Civil Grand Jury Final Report, as contained in the California Penal Code, Section 933.05, are summarized as follows:

**The responding entity or person must respond in one of two ways:**

- (1) That you agree with the finding.
- (2) That you disagree wholly or partially with the findings. The response shall specify the part of the findings that are disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons for the disagreement.

**Recommendations by the Civil Grand Jury require action.**

**The reporting entity or person must report action on all recommendations in one of four ways:**

- (1) The recommendation has been implemented with a summary of the implemented action.
- (2) The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented in the near future with a timeframe for implementation.
- (3) The recommendation requires further analysis. If an entity or person reports in this manner, the law requires a detailed explanation of the analysis or study and timeframe not to exceed six months. In this event, the analysis or study must be submitted to the director or head of agency being investigated.
- (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation of the situation.

If either a finding or a recommendation deals with budgetary or personnel matters of a county department headed by an elected officer, both the elected officer and the Board of Supervisors shall respond so if the Civil Grand Jury so requests.

The Board of Supervisors' response may be limited, while the response by the department heads must address all aspects of the findings or recommendations.

**2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT**

**ADDRESS FOR DELIVERY OF RESPONSES**

Civil Grand Jury Foreperson

P.O. Box 296

El Centro, California, 92244



**Imperial County  
2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury  
Imperial County Sure Helpline Crisis  
Center  
INQUIRY**

**Jusification:**

*The Imperial County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) is authorized by state law to investigate complaints made against various agencies and bodies, which include those operated by the county and city administrations, and special districts that operate within the county.*



## **BACKGROUND**

The Sure Helpline Crisis Center is a nonprofit organization that provides a variety of programs to promote mental health, stability and reduction in domestic and sexual abuse. The Center consists of a Board of Directors of five members and the daily operation is overseen by Executive Director Margaret Suarez. The Center services include meeting with clients at hospitals, walk-ins to their office and educating the public about various topics that they help individuals with.

## **COMPLAINT**

The Imperial Civil Grand Jury initiated this inquiry in reference to a complaint letter received, the ICGJ interpreted the two main areas of that letter of complaint were how communications within the Agency is conducted and the process in which funds are received, distributed and utilized.

## **METHODOLOGY**

On February 15, 2024, the Civil Grand Jury met with management, and other employees at the Sure Helpline Crisis Center located at 654 W. Main Street in El Centro. This visit lasted from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. The purpose of the meeting was to gain insight into the operations of Sure Helpline Crisis Center, understand the services they provide, and review their policies and procedures.

### **Operations and Services Provided:**

The Sure Helpline Crisis Center shared detailed information about their operations, highlighting services such as meeting with clients at hospitals who are notified by reporting agencies. In addition, helping potential clients who walk into their office, and educating the public about various topics that they help individuals with. The Grand Jury was provided with the Agency's Employee Handbook and the Policy and Procedures manual, showcasing the Sure Helpline Crisis Center's commitment to transparency and compliance with regulations.

### **Communication and Confidentiality Measures:**

In response to queries about communication tools used for work-related matters, Sure Helpline Crisis Center mentioned utilizing emails, weekly staff meetings, and text. They assured the Grand Jury that confidentiality is upheld in electronic communications by withholding names and other identifying factors when discussing sensitive information.

### **Handling Disputes and Complaints:**

Sure Helpline Crisis Center presented the Grand Jury with a copy of their complaint form and detailed a protocol for resolving disputes with employees or customers. The procedure involves direct communication with the individual, filling out a complaint form, and subsequent actions such as verbal warnings, write-ups, or terminations after a thorough investigation.

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### Documentation and Follow-up Procedures:

Employees at Sure Helpline Crisis Center are required to meticulously document victim information, time, place, possible perpetrators, a summary of the visit, and details of assistance provided. Crisis Center Management outlined a meticulous process for follow-up documentation, ensuring timely processing of information and necessary client follow-ups and assessments. All documentation is locked in a cabinet that is located in a room secured with a locked door. This process is up to state and federal standards.

### Financial Compliance Measures:

Crisis Center Management emphasized Sure Helpline Crisis Center's commitment to financial compliance by having 2 board members and 1 individual approve all spending before issuing checks. Sure Helpline Crisis Center primarily relies on grants for funding and maintains strict financial procedures regardless of the funding source.

### Issues to Resolve:

The Grand Jury identified two critical issues for Sure Helpline Crisis Center to address. Firstly, potential conflicts arising from the dual role of Human Resources individuals working with coworkers could lead to biases and discomfort among employees. Secondly, the absence of a structured procedure to mitigate conflicts of interest within the Agency requires immediate attention to ensure impartial decision-making.

## **FINDINGS**

**F1.** Potential conflicts arising from the dual role of Human Resources individuals working with coworkers could lead to biases and discomfort among employees.

**F2.** Absence of a structured procedure to mitigate conflicts of interest within the Agency.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**R1.** Restructure HR roles to avoid potential biases and conflicts in decision-making processes.

**R2.** Implement a formal procedure to reduce conflicts of interest within the organization.

### **DISCLAIMER:**

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



**Imperial County  
2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury  
Calipatria State Prison  
ANNUAL INSPECTION**

**Jusification:**

*California State Law mandates that the Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) will inspect all prison and jail facilities on a yearly basis.*

## **BACKGROUND**

Calipatria State Prison (CAL) is a minimum-maximum security prison located in Calipatria, California. In May 1989, the City of Calipatria agreed to annex the property as a satellite of its city property and provide city services as a way to increase its revenue through state funding. In September 1990, an agreement between the City of Calipatria and the State of California was made to declare that the annexed land would be owned by the State and exempt from local property taxes (City Resolution 90-16B, 91-14).

CAL opened in January 1992 and is operated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. It covers a total of 1,227.5 acres (with the prison itself on 300 acres). At 184 feet below sea level, Calipatria is at the lowest elevation of any prison in the Western Hemisphere. The prison was originally designed to house 2,208 inmates, but prior to activation, modifications were made to double the number of inmates that could be held. CAL can hold over 4,000 inmates, if needed. Currently on the date of inspection, the inmate population was approximately 2,500. According to CAL staff, the inmate population is expected to rise due to the closing of the Chuckawalla State Prison located in Riverside County, CA. Upon closure of that facility, an undetermined number of inmates will be transferred to CAL.

Inmate security ranges from Level One, the lowest level, to Level Four, the highest. Several Level One inmates are assigned as the institutional firefighters. Approximately 60% of the inmates are serving life sentences, while the remaining 40% will be eventually released.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Imperial County Civil Grand Jury (ICGJ) conducted an inspection of CAL that included a tour of the major areas of the prison facility. They used a checklist developed by the previous Grand Jury members to guide their inspection. The areas of interest to the Grand Jury included the general safety and security of the facility, fire safety, food service, medical service, job training requirements for staff, law library, inmate treatment, investigations, housing units and staff morale. The tour was provided by C.D.C.R. personnel.

As part of the inspection, the ICGJ toured major areas within the prison, including Prison Perimeter, Medical Care Center, Receiving and Release Center, Inmate Housing, Educational Departments, Vocational Training Areas, and Kitchens.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Prison Perimeter**

The Prison Perimeter is the perimeter of the main areas within the prison. The Prison Perimeter includes two layers of thirty-foot-tall chain-linked fencing, topped with concertina razor wire. Between the two fences, there is a third, which is a lethal electric fence. The lethal fence is electronically charged at all times, to prevent prison escape attempts. In addition, each Inmate Housing Yard has its own tall chain-linked concertina topped fence to keep the inmates contained. There are also twelve guard towers along the Prison Perimeter, only two of the twelve towers were in use. Due to the lethal electrical fences not all towers require use, however, should the need arise,

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all towers may be and can be used and armed.

### **Medical Care**

The Outpatient Housing Unit is located at the center of the prison and is designed to meet all immediate medical needs of the inmates. It has a short-term housing for inmates who need medical attention not currently available in the housing areas. The ICGJ observed a complete pharmacy, dental room, complete X-ray unit, and rooms for examining inmates. Some situations require transfer of patients to Pioneer Memorial Hospital via AMR ground ambulance service or REACH Helicopter air ambulance service.

### **Receiving and Release**

The Receiving and Release area is located next to the Outpatient Housing Unit and where the process takes place for new arrivals as well as inmates being released. CAL R&R has a low dose X-ray machine, which speeds up the receiving process. The X-ray has aided the Staff in detecting attempted smuggling of contraband, drugs and make shift weapons have been discovered with new arrival inmates.

### **Inmate Housing**

At CAL, each of the four housing facilities contain five housing units, each with a capacity of two hundred inmates. The ICGJ visited Housing areas, each having educational classrooms, a satellite kitchen, small medical area and vocational training area.

ICGJ noted the shower areas were ADA compliant and inmates are afforded shower time daily. One ICGJ member ran hot water and noticed after several minutes the water did not warm up.

### **Educational Departments**

The State of California mandates that every inmate has the opportunity to earn their diploma in General Educational Development (GED) while incarcerated. Inmates at CAL have access to in house classes that help them with their GED. There is also a path to a High School diploma, college courses for undergraduate up to Associate Degree. In addition, there is a general and Legal Library for inmates as well as correspondence courses to achieve a bachelor's degree.

### **Vocational Training**

Each facility at CAL has a vocational training area for inmates. Skills taught include GREEN employment skills (e.g., Solar, Geothermal, Smart Energy), welding, auto body and paint, auto repair, heating ventilation, and air conditioning. The Grand Jury was able to observe a roofing project being performed by Inmates who were being paid for their work while receiving training in the construction field.

### **Main CAL Kitchen and Satellite Kitchens**

All food for the CAL inmates is prepared in the central main kitchen, after being baked or cooked,

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it is quick chilled to 32 degrees and stored for up to 72 hours before reheated at one of the housing satellite kitchens. A state nutritionist/dietician determines what food is prepared and served. This is on a 13 week revolving schedule. Varied meals are provided for inmates on medical diets, such as inmates with diabetes, plus those on a religious diet and or vegetarian diets. All food from outside vendors is received at the central kitchen. The central kitchen maintains a 14 day (Two Weeks) supply of food to feed inmates properly prepared meals. For each meal a random meal is stored known as the “Deadman’s meal” for up to 72 hours for a testing/examining purposes, in the event of a possible food poisoning.

The ICGJ also inspected the dining facility, reportedly a location that presents a significant opportunity for violence as it is staffed with only two (2) Officers on the floor and one in the tower.

### **FINDINGS**

**F1.** During the inspection it was noted the dining area is understaffed by officers and can present a significant risk of violence towards inmates and staff.

**F2.** During an inspection of the housing area, it was observed that the showers showed difficulty warming shower water.

**F3.** The ICGJ also noted an inconsistency in the entry process for all visitors at the facility. Staff indicated that approved form of identification required for entry did not include foreign identification to include identification issued by the Mexican Consulate. However, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations indicates these forms of identification are acceptable.

**F4.** The facility is well run, with extensive inmate programs to include a peer support pilot program.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**R1.** Increase staffing of dining area during meal periods.

**R2.** Have maintenance inspect water system.

**R3.** Clarify the policy and training to staff so the procedure for entry to the facility is consistent with information posted on the State’s website.

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

No response is required, as CAL is part of a California State Agency.

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**DISCLAIMER:**

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**Imperial County  
2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury  
Centinela State Prison  
ANNUAL INSPECTION**

***Jusification:***

*California State Law mandates that the Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) will inspect all prison and jail facilities on a yearly basis.*



## **BACKGROUND**

Centinela Prison (CEN) is operated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The prison was opened in October 1993 and began receiving inmates immediately thereafter. The prison was originally designed to house 2,208 inmates, but soon after modified to accommodate higher numbers. At the time of the Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) inspection, the prison reported that the current population steadily averages just under 3,000 inmates.

The CEN mission statement is as follows:

The mission of the Centinela State Prison is to provide long-term confinement to men who have been convicted of felonious crimes and remanded to the State of California for incarceration. Inmate productivity and self-improvement are considered integral components to Centinela's overall objective to reduce recidivism among those inmates incarcerated at our institute.

Prior Civil Grand Jury Reports advised CEN was associated with the American Correctional Association (ACA) for auditing purposes. They are no longer associated with ACA and all audits and reviews are conducted directly through the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Grand Jury conducted an inspection of CEN that included a tour of major areas of the prison. The Grand Jury was provided a tour of various areas of the facility by C.D.C.R. personnel. We were encouraged to visit or inspect any department or area so desired.

The Grand Jury inspected the following areas of CEN: Administration Building, Staff Entrance, Central Health Treatment Center, Complex-1 Control, Visitation, Inmate Housing, Dining/Culinary, Satellite Medical Unit, Gymnasium, Vocational Education, Recreation Yard, Restricted Housing Unit (RHU), and Family Visitation.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Staff Entrance**

Every person entering the fenced perimeter must present a valid Centinela Prison ID. Approved visitor are issued a visitor pass and must register in/out.

### **Central Health**

Central Health Treatment Center is centrally located in the prison grounds and has an ambulance for emergencies. Correctional personnel provide escorts, security, and transportation of inmate patients to and from the Health Center. The Health Center maintains an Infirmary, on-duty physician, Registered Nurses, Pharmacy and Nutritionists.

### **Inmate Vocational Programs**

The ICGJ visited the Vocational and Educational area. Inmate students can receive training in the fields of Maintenance, Small Engine Repair, Auto Body, Electronics, Roofing, and Welding. Additionally, CEN Inmates can obtain training in basic firefighting and at times serve as Volunteer Firefighters assisting CEN Facility FIREFIGHTERS. These trades will be useful for the inmate population to integrate, be employed, and remain successful in their perspective communities.

### **Academic Programs**

Inmate Students can also earn GED, AA, AS and BA degrees through GED, Voluntary Education Program (VEP), Independent Study, and Literacy Lab.

### **Other**

Service Crews, Religious Programs for all faiths, Alternative to Violence Programs, Alcoholic/Narcotics Anonymous, Creative Conflict Resolution Workshops, Life Without a Crutch, Cage your Rage.

### **Inmate Housing Unit**

The ICGJ visited a housing unit that was running in safe order. There were two Correctional Officers supervising the floor and a third Correctional Officer operating the elevated control booth with a full view of the dayroom program. The Control Booth Officer operates all building doors. The officers were in total control of their building.

### **Dining/Culinary**

CEN has two dining rooms available. A single dining room has a capacity to serve 200 inmates in one setting. During a typical meal, two officers supervise in the dining room, with a first line supervisor and coverage officers outside to supervise the inmates returning to their housing units. It appeared to the Grand Jury that if trouble occurred in this area, it would be problematic as the area is minimally staffed.

### **Restricted Housing Unit**

The CGJ visited the Restricted Housing Administrative Unit (RHU). Before entering every person is required to produce proper identification. It is required to sign in the Visitor Log Book and provided protective stab vests for safety. Inmates placed in the RHU require more restricted control, due to the safety concerns of other inmates if they were placed within the general population. There are up to two inmates per cell. Inmates in RHU are placed in restraints any time they leave their cell. The RHU has a capacity of 200 inmates. They are allowed the same rights to the law library, religious meetings with the clergy, or meetings with their lawyers for legal purposes or mail correspondence. A medical clinic is adjacent to the RHU with full medical access and treatment. The cells, shower, and corridors were cleaned and sanitized. The recreation yards are fenced to provide safety and the inmate population receives up to 10 hours of recreation each per week.

## 2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

ICGJ observed that this housing area needed painting for a more professional appearance.

### **Satellite Medical Unit**

The ICGJ visited one of the Satellite Clinics and observed the medical staff administering services. Inmates are provided pill-line services and daily diabetic insulin injections with complete medical examinations for sick call purposes.

### **Family Visitation**

The ICGJ was allowed to visit the family visitation units which contain a full kitchen, bedroom, family area, and restroom. Children are also allowed to visit and families can prepare their own food during their 48 hours visit period. All food consumed by the inmate and family is purchased by the inmate. Any inmate may apply and fill out a family visitation packet which is received and processed by the Family Visiting Coordinator. There are family visiting guidelines that need to be followed. There is a criterion for both the eligible and ineligible inmates depending on their current status or commitment offense. It is the responsibility of the inmate to convey the Family Visiting information, rules, and regulations to the visitors.

### **FINDINGS**

**F1.** Centinela State Prison is a well-run prison with no major issues discovered. ICGJ members were able to inspect the prison with no restrictions and the staff were professional and extremely knowledgeable.

**F2.** The dining area, much like the Calipatria Facility, is understaffed and pose elevated risk to inmates and staff.

**F3.** The family visitation units are poorly suited in appearance for family visits with children.

**F4.** ICGJ observed a maintenance list posted in A yard with items dating back to 2023, was unclear if these issues have been addressed but consisted of items of both plumbing and electrical nature.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**R1.** Increase staffing levels of dining areas during feeding.

**R2.** It is recommended that a more pleasant ambiance of the family visiting area be improved by placing pictures or positive murals painted by detainees.

**R3.** Review policy on maintenance list to ensure items pending are addressed and/or remove from pending list when completed.

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

No response is required as Centinela State Prison is a State Agency.

## 2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

**DISCLAIMER:**

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**Imperial County  
2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury  
Imperial County Jail  
ANNUAL INSPECTION**

**Jusification:**

*California State Law mandates that the Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) will inspect all prison and jail facilities on a yearly basis.*

## 2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

### **BACKGROUND**

The Imperial County Jail is operated by the Corrections Division of the Imperial County Sheriff's Office (ICSO). The Imperial County Jail is made up of three main facilities to include Herbert Hughes Correction Center (HHCC), built in the 1960s and currently has 314 beds, full kitchen, the Regional Adult Detention Facility (RADF), built in the 1970s, currently has 288 beds and the Oren Fox Detention Center (OFDF), which became operational in 2018 and it has 274 beds.

#### **Herbert Hughes Correctional Center (HHCC)**

The HHCC contains two dormitories and a multipurpose room, which were added to the facility in 1989. The dormitories are divided into six separate dormitories and have a total capacity to incarcerate up to 314 inmates. In the multipurpose room is a low power x-ray machine that has aided the Staff in detecting attempted smuggling of contraband, drugs and make shift weapons which have been discovered with new arrival inmates. There is also located in the HHCC a Chapel and Classrooms. The kitchen for the entire jail is also housed here in the HHCC.

#### **Regional Adult Detention Facility (RADF)**

Incarceration admissions occur at the RADF. The process is as follows: First, individuals are booked and given a brief medical screening; then, they are put into a temporary holding cell; next, they are sent to a dressing room and issued clothing. Then, if needed, inmates are sent to the medical treatment center; finally, the inmates are placed in an incarceration cell.

At the RADF, there are twelve separate cell modules, each consisting of ten to twenty separate cells. These modules are known as pods. The RADF has a total capacity of 288 inmates, both male and female. The general population is made up of those who are un-sentenced. There are also a group of sentenced inmates, including those under administrative segregation, those with special needs and those who are high risk.

#### **Oren Fox Detention Facility (OFDF)**

The OFDF is an 8,000 square foot medium security facility named after late Imperial County Sheriff Oren R. Fox, who served as Sheriff for 23 years and who dedicated his life in protecting this community for over 40 years in Law enforcement. He also rose to the rank of Brigadier General in the National Guard, serving his Country. OFDF features six housing pods, which can house 45 inmates. There are also four additional medical beds designed for treating inmates. The OFDF has a total capacity of 274 inmates. The OFDF can provide healthcare, rehabilitative programs, educational programs, intake and release and is the site of administrative and support service offices

### **METHODOLOGY**

The Grand Jury conducted an inspection of the Imperial County Jail that included a tour of all the major areas of the facilities. Prior to the inspection, the Grand Jury was given a presentation outlining the history, the present and the future goals of the Imperial County Jail. The ICSO staff encouraged questions and answered them fully, providing statistics and a power point brief of the facility.

## 2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

The ICGJ used a checklist, developed by the previous grand jury to guide the 2022 inspection. The checklist included, but was not limited to, the general safety and security of the facility, food services, medical services, as well as key and tool control. The ICGJ inspected various areas of all three facilities.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Medical Care**

Physical health – The Imperial County Jail medical staff is on duty twenty-four hours daily for inmate injuries and illnesses. Imperial County contracts with outside medical care services to evaluate the physical health needs of the inmates. Medical services are part of the admission process, where a pre-medical questionnaire is filled out during the booking process. If the questionnaire indicates possible medical problems, after receiving their clothing, new inmates are sent to the medical treatment center for evaluation and screening.

Mental health – The Imperial County Jail contracts with an outside mental health service to help aid the evaluation of the mental health needs of its inmates. The Imperial County Behavioral Health Department, in partnership with the County Sheriff, staff a Behavioral Health Technician at the County Jail working closely with Jail Staff to provide county mental health services.

#### **Safety and Security**

In each part of the jail, cameras have been installed so staff can monitor the incarcerated inmates. The OFDF being the newer of the three facilities has a state-of-the-art system fully operational. The RADF and HHCC both have outdated antiquated surveillance systems in need of immediate upgrade. During the visit, ICGJ members observed work was in progress to update these systems.

#### **Transportation Department**

The Transportation Department of the County Jail is responsible for transport of prisoners to other correctional facilities to include state prison, mental health and medical appointments, California State Hospitals, and Court appearances.

#### **Recidivism**

As stated earlier the ICGJ was given a brief presentation outlining the current and future goals of the Imperial County Jail. As reported in previous ICGJ reports, the County Jail continues to target reduction of recidivism as a key focus.

#### **Main Kitchen – Food Preparation/Service**

The Imperial County Jail serves approximately Fifty-Seven thousand meals per year. Correctional staff serve the meals in the pods directly, where the inmates are housed. The ICGJ observed the food preparation area which were in all appearances clean and sanitary. The meals have a balanced calorie count and meal temperatures are recorded before serving.

## 2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

### **FINDINGS**

**F1.** The Imperial County Jail is well-run, clean facility. Corrections Staff appear were knowledgeable and appear well trained.

**F2.** Video Surveillance systems of the RADF and HHCC are in need of immediate improvements.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**R1.** Continue work to upgrade and/or replace outdated video surveillance systems.

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the grand jury requests responses from the following governing bodies within 90 days:

- Imperial County Jail: R1

Please submit an official response to the Civil Grand Jury Foreperson, P.O. Box 2011, El Centro, CA, 92244

### **DISCLAIMER:**

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**Imperial County  
2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury  
Imperial County Juvenile Hall  
ANNUAL INSPECTION**

**Jusification:**

*California State Law mandates that the Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) will inspect all prison and jail facilities on a yearly basis.*

## 2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

### **BACKGROUND**

The Civil Grand Jury is required by the Penal Code section 919(b) to “inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county.” The California Attorney General issued an opinion (No. 18-103, dated March 10, 2022) stating that the term “public prisons” includes “local detention facilities,” defined as facilities that confine people for more than 24 hours. Regardless of this recent clarification, the Civil Grand Jury has historically conducted site inspections as part of their investigations on local detention facilities, including the County Jail and Juvenile Hall.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The Imperial County Civil Grand Jury toured and inspected the facility, interviewed various staff members, reviewed the Probation Department website, reviewed past Grand Jury investigations, and reviewed external documents by other government agencies to satisfy the legal requirement to independently verify all information which may be published in the Final Report.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **FACILITY ADMINISTRATION**

The ICGJ members were greeted by and met with High level Juvenile Hall Probation Office personnel, at the front office of the Juvenile Hall, and where we were joined by other County Probation Personnel. The County Juvenile Hall is overseen by the Imperial County Probation Department, Chief Probation Officer (department head and facility administrator). We were able to see the administrative offices in passing and they appeared adequate and orderly. County Probation Department personnel were attentive to the ICGJ group’s needs and allowed access to all areas requested and encouraged questions. The administrative staff seemed to be highly competent administrators and compassionate about the wards under their charge.

#### **INTAKE**

We inspected the intake room, which consists of a padded chair at a desk equipped with desktop computer and a live-scan fingerprint scanner. There, new ward arrivals undergo screening and classification depending on their risk and background, including their past victimization, potential to victimize other youth in custody, and any prior offenses, among other considerations. It was pointed out that due to changes in juvenile justice disfavoring institutionalization, only wards accused of committing felonies are generally kept in custody. Misdemeanor offenders are usually released to their homes to await juvenile proceedings and other interventions.

#### **SECURITY**

The group observed the central reception area, where a guard is stationed and where they can view monitors displaying various camera feeds. Generally, one supervisor, one roving patrol, and one guard for each of the three dormitories in use—for a total of five guards—ensure security and the safety of the wards and staff. This facility’s staffing ratio exceeds the minimum standards of one staff member per ten confined youth required by Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations. The facility has secure, locked doors as well as perimeter fencing with concertina wire. Guards must visually confirm each youth is okay periodically, even if some dorms have alert buttons.

## 2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

### **FOOD SERVICE / MULTIPURPOSE ROOM DINING**

Food is prepared for the Wards in a kitchen outside the facility at the Sheriff's Office Jail facility and transported to the JH cafeteria. The meals are kept in food-warming stations until served in a multipurpose room. The room, which appeared in good condition, is also used for family visitation as well as religious services due to its ample seating. The JH food facilities and dining areas pass regular inspections by State and County Departments responsible for such inspections.

### **GARDEN**

ICGJ was shown an outside garden area called the "Garden of Dreams." The Garden of Dreams is a program for the youth wards who are taught gardening and nutrition skills. The garden consists of an outdoor secure area with dirt plots for flowers and vegetables. Through this program, the wards can experience planting, caring for, and eventually harvesting and eating their own crops. This program serves to teach them useful hands-on life skills, promotes good nutrition habits, and often acts as a relaxing outlet for stress relief.

### **EDUCATION**

ICGJ inspected the facility classroom for education programs. Youth receive instruction from certified instructors, provided school materials for each youth at their respective age group and education level. Laptop computers were also available for each student to assist in their studies. Additionally, the group observed a lodge area where the youth (under staff supervision) are able to gather after their daily routine for viewing television, playing games and using computers to access the internet.

### **GENERAL OPERATION**

The ICGJ felt that the staff at Imperial County Juvenile Hall are doing great work to ensure the youth wards understand what is expected of them while they are in the facility. Youths at juvenile hall are provided with several beneficial programs to make their stay positive, including high school and elementary classes taught by credentialed teachers and support through a foster grandparent's program that helps them with their studies. Most youths are here temporarily, and receive all the medical, mental and emotional support while they spend their time at this facility. The staff also appears to be highly committed to enhancing public safety through the reduction of repeat offenders.

### **FINDINGS**

**F1.** Overall the group felt that all areas of the facility were clean and well maintained.

**F2.** One area of concern identified was the front lobby area with an old style "popcorn" ceiling. The concern in the appearance of the age of the ceiling raises concerns for respiratory issues to include potential asbestos exposures.

## 2023-2024 IMPERIAL COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**R1.** Conduct a maintenance evaluation of the ceiling in the front lobby area implement recommendations.

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the grand jury requests responses from the following governing bodies within 90 days:

Imperial Valley Juvenile Hall: R1

Please submit an official response to the Civil Grand Jury Foreperson, P.O. Box 296, El Centro, CA, 92244

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# IMPERIAL COUNTY GRAND JURY

## GRAND JURY CITIZEN COMPLAINT FORM

To: Civil Grand Jury  
P. O. Box 296  
El Centro, CA 92244

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### THIS COMPLAINT IS AGAINST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME/TITLE

\_\_\_\_\_  
ORGANIZATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
CITY

\_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE

### MY COMPLAINT AGAINST THE ABOVE IS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY)

**COMPLAINANT**

(FOR GRAND JURY USE ONLY)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

**ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE GRAND JURY ARE CONFIDENTIAL**