

**A Review of Policies, Procedures, and Practices
Focusing on Inmate Safety and
Medical Care at the Yakima County Jail**

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Project Description

This project was performed at the request of the King County Cities Jail Administrative Group (JAG) and with the complete and cordial cooperation of the Yakima County Department of Corrections. The project had two major goals:

1. To assess the levels of inmate safety in the Yakima County Jail; and
2. To review the quality of inmate medical care being delivered to inmates in the Yakima County Jail.

Methodology

The consultants initially examined various Policies and Procedures of the Jail and then conducted an on-site tour which lasted about two days on September 27-29, 2005. During that tour, the consultants interviewed various staff, toured the jail facilities, and talked with several inmates. Additionally, they were provided with a variety of printed documents from jail records.

Executive Summary

1. **Safety:** The consultant team was concerned about the frequency and seriousness of incidents of inmate violence. Current levels of inmate safety demand continued remedial attention from jail officials. Jail staff have a variety of responses to violence levels in various stages of planning, development, and implementation. However, all efforts to improve safety in the context of the Main Jail Complex will be hampered by the architectural design of the buildings that limits staff contact with inmates and leaves inmates in control of the living units during times when staff is not present in the units, i.e., almost all the time. In general, our recommendations are to continue the efforts currently under way, as well as to consider other remedial steps. The most significant step that could be taken would be to open the new Justice Center jail. This recommendation is discussed in greater detail below.
2. **Medical care:** Recent changes in medical staffing should allow timely access to medical providers which should solve what may be the most pressing problem with medical care. However, we recommend that a more comprehensive review of medical care be undertaken.
3. **Recommendations.** The two most important steps that could be taken to increase levels of inmate safety are to begin to use the currently vacant Justice Center to relieve

crowding in the Main Jail Complex and to continue efforts to introduce a modified direct supervision management model in the Annex. We make a number of other recommendations that appear throughout the text. The complete list of recommendations appears at the end of the Report (see p. 21). They also appear in **bold face type** in the body of the Report.

The Consultants

Mr. Coleman is a former jail administrator from King County and is nationally recognized for his abilities as a jail administrator. Mr. Collins has over 30 years experience as an attorney working with correctional agencies.

I. Levels of Violence

The level and nature of violence in the Yakima County Jail is higher than it should be.

A. Inmate violence is increasing

Data provided by Yakima officials shows that the total number of inmate on inmate assaults increased from an average of 15.9/month in 2002 to 27.5/month in 2004. Through eight months of 2005, the average has dropped slightly, to 25.6.

The levels of violence increased more rapidly than the population of the jail during the same time period. County data on "Average Daily Confined," grew from an average of 902/month in 2002 to 964/month in 2003, dropped to 947/month in 2004 and climbed to 963/month in 2005.

Inmate on inmate violence occurs most frequently in the Main Jail and in the Annex, the two buildings that make up the Main Jail Complex.

B. Levels of violence

To say the levels of violence are too high in a facility asks "compared to what?" There is no "fixed," objective standard ("X number of incidents per inmate per month"). Instead, the answer to the "compared to what" question is "compared to like facilities." One must use caution in comparing levels of violence between correctional facilities. Different facilities may categorize incidents differently. One facility may do a better job of identifying and documenting incidents than another. The characteristics of the populations may differ.

A very significant factor that can enhance levels of inmate safety is the "direct supervision" model of jail management that is discussed in greater detail below. Direct supervision combines a particular architectural style of jail and a management philosophy linked to that architectural style. Typically, inmate safety in a direct supervision jail will be greater than in an old style jail. Yakima is no different. The violence levels in the Main Jail Complex (where neither facility is a direct supervision jail) are higher than other large direct supervision facilities.

C. Seriousness of incidents

In evaluating inmate safety, one must consider both the frequency of “inmate assaults” and the seriousness of individual incidents. “Inmate assault” is a generic phrase that typically includes any violence between inmates, ranging from a pushing match between two inmates up to several inmates beating another inmate or worse. Fights between two inmates are typically included under the heading of “inmate assault.” If inmate violence confines itself to pushes, shoves, and the occasional one-punch fight, it is one thing. But when there hospitalizations are needed and when assaults frequently involve several inmates attacking a single inmate, it is quite another. The frequency of serious assaults in Yakima gives rise to concern.

We looked at the range of inmate assaults that have occurred in Yakima and found more than our experience would have suggested that required outside medical attention. In at least a few cases, the assaults resulted in broken jaws. We also note that there have been several incidents during 2005 where two or more inmates attacked a single inmate. These suggest some type of gang or group activity and that beatings are planned events.

* * *

II. Factors affecting inmate safety

Levels of violence in a jail are the product of a variety of factors. There are several that we feel contribute to the situation in Yakima's jails, including:

- The design of the Main Jail and Annex
- Population levels and crowding
- Idleness
- Racial, geographic, and gang tension
- Culture in the pods
- Investigations of inmate violence and threatened violence
- "Signing" between inmates
- Video and blind spots in the jail, where staff's ability to observe inmate behavior is limited or non-existent
- Staffing

A. The design of the Main Jail and Annex

Both the Main Jail and the Annex incorporate correctional architectural styles now considered out of date because they require staff to supervise inmates "indirectly," with only limited direct physical contact. In the Main Jail and the large pods in the Annex, there is no constant staff presence in the units. Staff members only enter a unit for specific purposes, such as conducting rounds, but typically do not stay for more than a few minutes. Conversation with inmates is limited. While in theory the "remote podular" design of the Annex allows staff in the central rotunda to see virtually everywhere in the pods, in reality their surveillance is intermittent. The arrangement of the bunks also impedes staff visibility into the units. Normal two high bunks are stacked in pairs, end to end, making it difficult to see what is happening around the rearmost bunk.

Supervision of the housing units in the main jail is even more intermittent. Staff must typically walk to the front of a pod and look through a window to see what is going on. This means staff's discovery of an incident as it is taking place may literally be by accident, as a staff member happens to walk by the door to a unit and glance into it. The more likely scenario is that staff will not see an incident as it occurs, and only find out about it later.

The ultimate shortcoming of the type of indirect supervision models used in the Main Jail and the Annex is that they leave staff almost always in a completely reactive mode. It is harder for staff to learn of impending problems because of their very limited communication with inmates. Staff aren't in the units long enough to get a "feel" for tension. Incidents are harder to see or not seen at all. Because staff are not in the units most of the time, they are not even in a position to hear a scuffle begin or realize that inmates are suddenly behaving differently, as they might be when a fight is about to begin or has begun.

By contrast, "direct supervision" units put an officer in a housing unit with inmates at all times and in a position to be much more proactive with regard to knowing what is going on in the unit, assessing tension levels, learning of inmate problems, etc. While this management approach does not guarantee there will not be fights between inmates, it offers several benefits older style jails cannot, such as:

- The chances than an impending incident can be prevented before it begins are greater;
- Inmates know they are much more likely to be identified when involved in a disturbance, so the presence of the officer can have a substantial deterrent effect; and
- An incident usually can be detected almost as it begins and not go unnoticed or discovered by accident because an officer looks into the unit at the right time.

Modified direct supervision in the Annex. The Yakima DOC administration is trying to develop a modified direct supervision model that should provide improved levels of supervision of inmates in the large, crowded housing units in the Annex. This includes two major factors: (1) assigning an officer to two Annex housing units, where the officer would remain throughout the shift, splitting time between the two housing units, and (2) arming the officers with the knowledge of what they can and should be doing while in the pods. Just increasing time in the pods is not the total answer. Officers must be trained in principles of direct supervision, which the Department plans to do. **We recommend the administration's efforts to introduce direct supervision principles in the Annex continue.**

As the modified direct supervision model begins to be implemented in the Annex (following development of a strategic plan, staff training, etc.) **we recommend phasing implementation by clearing a pod completely and "refilling" it with new inmates.** This may help defeat the prevailing inmate culture and control which currently exists in two ways (see p. 11 for a discussion about inmate culture): (1) Staff will take control of the housing unit and implement the principles of direct supervision; and (2) new inmates will come into the unit who are more amenable to learning a more positive inmate culture and not already

locked into a negative culture. This pod could be the mixed high minimum/low medium group discussed in the Classification section (see p. 10). If successful, the process of “refilling” a pod could be repeated for additional pods.

We also recommend structuring the inmates into smaller groupings in the large pods in the Annex, as this may help decrease tensions between the inmates over dayroom access, phones, laundry, meal and mail distribution, etc. While this sounds like an artificial step, we think it can help a large unit run more smoothly.

The cost of trying to introduce a modified direct supervision model in the Main Jail would be cost prohibitive because of the small size of the units, none housing more than 24 inmates. However, other steps may be feasible that would enhance the level of supervision in the Main Jail.

We recommend evaluating the feasibility of repositioning/establishing officers’ stations in the Main Jail directly in front of the housing units toward each end of the hallway so as to put officers in a position to look directly into the units. This does not involve adding staff, but simply repositioning existing staff.

Additionally, we recommend assigning officers on each shift in the Main Jail to two specific housing units and charging them with the responsibility of maintaining and improving the safety and security of inmates in those units. Track inmate incidents so as to provide officers with information relative to their success in overseeing the units to which they are assigned. Share this information with the officers on all shifts to encourage team performance and ownership of the management of housing units. Assigning officer responsibility for specific housing units will informally establish correctional officer teams across shift lines, creating vertically and horizontal team alignments for maximum effectiveness of safety and security. Assigning officer responsibility for specific housing units does not negate their responsibility for carrying out floor operations. They are still responsible for making security checks in all housing units on the floor, serving meals, patting down inmates coming and going, etc. However, assigning officers to specific units gives them ownership and responsibility, which directs the officer to spend time managing the inmates on the assigned housing units, as time allows, between other operational demands.

B. Population levels and crowding

The average number of persons confined in the Yakima County Jail increased substantially between 2000 when the average daily confined (ADC) was 758 to 2003 when it reached 964. Since then, the figure has not changed substantially, although month to month

averages fluctuate substantially (a low of 913 in June of 2005 and a high of 1039 in August, 2005).

As described to the consultants, the capacity of the jail has increased in two ways since the Main Jail was opened in 1984: (1) by adding new beds (notably the Annex and the Restitution Center and some remodeling in the Main Jail) and (2) by redefining the capacity of existing facilities by changes in the County's Jail Standards. Thus, for instance, the "maximum capacity" of the jail increased from 778 to 1102 between September, 1998 and 2002, a gain of 324 beds. The Restitution Center accounted for about half of these, but the remaining increase was not the result of adding that much new bed space in the Main Jail Complex.

The current "rated capacity" figures for the jail also overstates its functional capacity by including segregation and special housing beds in the rated capacity.* These units will not be filled with inmates constantly and often inmates in such a unit (such as disciplinary segregation) will be returning to other units within days or weeks. There is currently one eight bed unit in the Main Jail that has housed a single inmate deemed to be an extreme escape risk for over a year as the inmate awaits trial. The end of this situation is not in sight. So while that unit "counts" as eight beds of the jail's rated capacity, its functional capacity for some time has been one.

Crowding tends to compromise a jail's ability to deliver appropriate services (including maintaining adequate safety and surveillance) in various ways. But numbers alone do not tell the whole story. A crowded jail is not *per se* an unsafe jail. But crowding tends to make a jail more and more difficult to manage.

As an example, we refer back to the bunk arrangement in the Annex units where the double rows of bunks impede officers' ability to see throughout the unit. We also note that crowding impairs a jail's classification system (see discussion of Classification, p. 10).

To the extent that some crowding is short-term, consider whether it may be better to crowd one Annex unit temporarily with enhanced supervision instead of spreading the crowding throughout all units, thus negatively impacting staff's ability to supervise, observe, influence and control inmate behaviors throughout all housing units. **We recommend the jail consider this means of dealing with short-term crowding.**

*"Rated capacity" is a commonly used term that describes a jail's capacity. The American Correctional Association defines the term as "the original design capacity, plus or minus capacity changes resulting from building additions, reductions, or revisions." Comment to Standard 4-4129, Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions, 4th Ed., American Correctional Association, 2003. In this Report, we are using the Yakima County's determination of "rated capacity."

Classification and crowding. Crowding also tends to compromise a jail's ability to classify inmates properly around risk factors of safety and security, and to compromise inmates' ability to maintain expected behaviors with one another. In a crowded facility, the availability of a vacant bed is apt to be the primary factor in deciding where an inmate *must* be placed, instead of safety and security concerns dictating where the inmate *should* be placed.

Classification of inmates in the Annex does not follow Yakima's standards of classification in that minimum and medium custody inmates are housed in the units. The higher the classification, the greater the risk.

We recommend that minimum and medium classified inmates be housed separately on the Annex housing units. If it is necessary to mix the classifications of one of the housing units due to insufficient numbers of minimum or medium classified inmates, the housing unit should be mixed with high minimum and low medium classified inmates to maintain the principles of classification as closely as possible. As the Annex moves into the modified direct supervision model, the jail could consider establishing a minimum custody pod in the Annex, if there are enough minimum and perhaps low medium custody inmates to do so. This could be the "refilled" pod referred to above in the discussion about modified direct supervision in the Annex.

As noted elsewhere in these pages, additional staff are necessary to carry out classification properly.

C. Idleness

Idleness is a common byproduct of a crowded jail that can be a serious contributor to levels of tension and violence in a jail. Typically young inmates, with little or nothing to do, often with chips on their shoulders, and with few ways of burning off energy, simply get on one another's nerves. Slightings that might pass scarcely noticed in other settings or with other activities to occupy an inmate's time and mind can take on larger proportions. Aside from the Restitution Center, the God Pod, and the inmate-staffed maintenance and operations tasks in the downtown compound, there are very few activities available to inmates in the jail. Cards, table games, some television, and limited exercise opportunities are all that most of the inmates have.

In sharp contrast to most of the Annex housing units, the "God Pod" unit provides positive programming, structure and expectations. It also has volunteer staff on the unit

providing the programming and a positive influence for the inmates. This housing unit exhibits a satisfactory level of inmate/officer safety and security.*

Delivering programming in the Main Jail or Annex will always be difficult because of the lack of dedicated program space. However, particularly if the modified direct supervision model can be introduced into the Annex, **we recommend efforts should be made to introduce some sort of programming activity into the facility.**

D. Racial, geographic, gang tension

There is an undercurrent of racial tension in the jail that is perhaps exacerbated by geography. There is a large group of Hispanic inmates from Yakima County and another group of black inmates from King County.

While there may not be active racial animus between groups of inmates, in confrontation situations, it is predictable that inmates will align with inmates of the same race or same geographic area.

There is also some level of gang presence in the jail, although we could not tell how much.

We recommend:

- Jail staff continue to monitor and respond to gang activity in the jail;
- An orientation program for the KCC inmates that might help defuse some of the tension between King County and Yakima inmates;
- Tracking incidents of violence or threatened violence around race, gangs, and geography to determine if there are trends of concern; and
- Monitoring and addressing gang issues quickly and decisively and exploring possibilities of obtaining additional gang intelligence from local law enforcement agencies and King County agencies.

E. Culture in the pods

At least in large part because of the very limited staff presence in the living unit pods, the prevailing inmate culture is able to grow with very little influence or control by staff. The sense we received from talking with inmates and reviewing incident reports is that the inmate

* As an aside, we note that this type of unit must be run very carefully lest serious First Amendment issues be created regarding the improper establishment of religion.

culture readily embraces violence. It will be difficult to change this culture until staff are able to have much more direct inmate contact.

In interviewing inmates from the Annex, we heard descriptions of how an unpopular inmate will be “rolled out” of a pod. To paraphrase one inmate’s description of this practice, if a dominant group in the pod were feeling generous, they might simply tell the inmate to get out or else he would be beaten. If the group were not feeling generous, they might beat the inmate and then order him out.

In the classic rollout situation, an inmate comes to the door of a unit, belongings in hand, and tells the officer “I can’t live in here.” The staff will typically then move the inmate. The inmate forced out will be reluctant to provide any more details of why he was run out or by whom other than saying “I can’t live in here.” To give more information will label him a snitch and make him the target of violence elsewhere.

The practice of “signing” between units makes it easy for inmates in one unit to communicate with inmates in other pods, even though they have no direct physical contact. In the Annex, all pods see one another, so information about an inmate can move quickly throughout all Annex housing units (see discussion of signing, p. 13.)

The result is that inmates have the de facto power to remove other inmates from housing areas whom they find unacceptable for various reasons. This compromises the overall classification system because an inmate now cannot remain in the unit where he is best classified.

Discussions with inmates and staff, plus review of a number of incident reports suggest roll-outs are common. It appears that anytime an inmate is rolled out of a housing unit, regardless of whether any violence accompanies the incident, it is safe to assume that there was at least a threat of violence.

The roll-out process indicates that inmates, not staff, control the pods except for the few minutes every hour or so that staff make rounds or are in the unit for other reasons.

We recommend that the jail treat roll-outs as involving the threat of violence and investigate them accordingly.

Management indicated that little follow-up occurs regarding these incidents, even when requested by the officer who initially addresses the situation and writes the incident report. No overall data is being collected to determine the cause of roll out incidents, such as gang affiliation, race, Yakima vs. King County inmates, debts, etc., or to identify the specific

housing units where this is occurring with greater frequency, in order to reduce or end the practice.

F. Investigations of inmate violence and threatened violence

For purposes of this section, we are talking about both incidents of actual violence and housing unit roll-outs unaccompanied by violence but which carry an implicit threat of violence.

In all of these situations, **we recommend the jail increase its efforts to determine the reasons for the incident and the inmates who were involved. This will require more detailed investigations of at least some incidents.**

We further recommend that all incidents of violence or threatened violence, e.g., roll-outs, be carefully evaluated around such things as gang affiliation, race, Yakima vs. King County inmates, etc. and that data be examined to see if there are trends related to specific housing units where violence and threatened violence takes place with greater frequency.

Investigations should include interviewing not only the victim, but also other inmates in the unit. This can be done in such a way as to make it possible for an inmate to reveal information about an incident that will not label him/her as a snitch. The goal of investigations of both violence incidents and roll-out incidents should be not only to find out immediately what happened, but also to try to push beyond evasive inmate explanations (“I slipped in the shower,” “I don’t know who hit me,” etc.) to learn as much about the incident as is reasonably possible. The more jail staff know about underlying causes of incidents, the more they can do to address those causes.

G. Signing

Working against the institution’s ability to move inmates between units in the jail as a means of addressing inmate safety needs is the general ability of inmates in the Annex to communicate with one another by “signing” between living units. This is particularly easy in the Annex, where all the units face one another.

The administration is considering treating the glass in the units to make signing more difficult. **We recommend this be done.**

H. Video and blind spots

Video. Most of the living areas are under video surveillance. Even without the problem of blind spots, video surveillance is generally recognized as having major limitations when compared to more direct, in-person forms of surveillance. Any officer whose responsibilities include monitoring videos has other duties and does not watch screens constantly. Screens flick from one camera to another every few seconds. While some incidents may be seen in progress, it is more likely that the officer sitting in front of video screens will not see an incident in progress.

In addition to an officer having the capability to view pod activity in real time, the jail apparently has the technological capacity to *videotape* activity in the living units,. We were informed that a decision was made some time ago not to videotape unit activity. Officers will seldom see a beating take place in a real time video. However, a tape of the unit may allow staff to review an incident after it has taken place and identify participants. While there are privacy concerns about taping showers, toilet usage, and the like, we have not found that taping activities in pod common areas presents significant legal concerns regarding improper intrusions into inmate privacy. **We recommend videotaping be reinstated in order to allow review of incidents.**

Blind Spots. There are blind spots in some or all housing units that cannot be seen either by officers (at least from normal work stations) or by surveillance cameras. **We recommend that all blind spots should be identified and measures taken to reduce or eliminate them**, such as adding additional means of observation, i.e., direct supervision of the housing unit, convex mirrors, cameras, and/or limiting inmate access to areas with limited observation to specific times by designated groupings of inmates on the housing unit.

I. Staffing concerns

Staff shortages make it difficult to maintain minimum staffing levels on shifts and frequently mandatory staff overtime must be imposed to maintain an adequate complement of staff.

Staff shortages are due in part to the administrative decision to change from 12 hour shifts to 8 hour shifts. Staff absences due to such things as FMLA, military leave, training, etc. also contribute to the overtime burden. The administration is attempting to address this issue, in part by the addition of 16 new corrections officer positions which the administration believes will reduce mandatory overtime by March of 2006. However, this still leaves the jail

16 officers short of being able to meet the necessary 1:7 staffing relief factor, so some level of continued overtime will still be needed.*

The staff is also relatively inexperienced. A large number, 40 of 94 correction officers, have less than 2 years correctional experience. Turnover averages 2.2 per month. Six of the 13 corporals have occupied their supervisory position for less than 2 years. One of the six security sergeants has been in the position for less than two years. Two more sergeant positions are expected to be filled by promotion from corporal in the coming months, creating two new sergeants and two new corporals. The numbers of new sergeants and corporals can help the administration introduce the direct supervision model discussed earlier as new supervisors may buy into a new management model more readily than long-time veterans. But inexperienced supervisors also can make operations more difficult. This is a tightrope for management to walk.

There is a prolonged delay between the time a staff position becomes vacant and the time a new officer can be hired, trained, and ready to fill the vacant post. During the vacancy, the position either goes unfilled or is filled through use of overtime. The jail has a fairly good idea of its turnover rate (2.2 per month) and the number to new staff it will need over a year to replace those staff who leave for various reasons. **We recommend the County explore ways of speeding up the hiring and training process so that there are some new staff in the hiring/training pipeline at all times, thereby shortening the length of time a position remains vacant.**

The jail has developed what appears to be an exemplary training model of coaching and development of new corrections officer. **We recommend this model be continued and expanded to allow additional supervisory/management coaching, development and training for corporals and sergeants, especially in the principles of implementing and maintaining direct supervision on the housing units in the Annex and at the restitution center.**

Classification requires additional staff to comply with standards of classification and with Yakima County Jail classification policy and procedures. Yakima County currently cannot effectively carry out its stated classification mission: "Provide staff, inmates, the community, and the Criminal Justice System a safe and secure environment for the incarceration of suspected and convicted adult offenders." As noted above, serious violence is an ongoing reality. Follow-up requests by security corrections officers, noted in incident reports relating violent acts, are not addressed. Classifications of prisoners are being mixed on housing units in the Annex on a continuous basis, versus maintaining housing separation

* The relief factor refers to the number of staff actually necessary to fill a post, given the absences for such things as vacations, training, military and other types of authorized leave, etc.

by inmate classification. Three classification staff and one technician for a population that exceeds 1000 inmates at times are unquestionably not enough to be able to carry out classification responsibilities in a timely manner and provide adequately for the institutional safety and security of inmates and staff. Only two of the three classification officers are assigned to the population of the Main Jail and Annex, around 800 inmates.

Yakima officials recently had an independent classification study conducted that included recommendations for the numbers and types of staff that should be added to allow the jail to carry out its classification responsibilities in a timely manner. **We recommend that classification staffing levels be increased in compliance with the study's recommendations.**

* * *

III. The Justice Center

While operational changes in the Main Jail and Annex can reduce levels of violence and enhance the level of inmate safety, virtually anything done in those two facilities will be something of a stopgap measure. The facilities are going to remain crowded, idleness is likely to continue, and other compromises of strong correctional practice will continue to be necessary. **Our recommendation for a more permanent solution is to open the new Justice Center.**

The Justice Center provides between 250–300 beds in a new, very well equipped, state-of-the-art direct supervision jail. We recognize issues about the cost of opening the facility but the Justice Center provides a unique opportunity to immediately address the safety and security problems discussed in this report. The Justice Center has advantages that the current facilities will never have. It is designed as a direct supervision jail. It has program space that does not exist in the Main Jail/Annex complex. The kitchen could provide meals for the entire jail system, resulting in a more cost effective food contract. Additionally, meals could be provided to other non-jail customers, generating jail revenue or reducing the county's costs for feeding other populations for which it is responsible.

Recognizing that opening the Justice Center will increase the County's cost of jail operations, we recommend Yakima officials open the facility because of the advantages it offers.* Not to do so leaves the jail with the much more challenging task of trying to improve the quality of operations in facilities that inherently resist such efforts.

One immediate alternative that could provide some immediate relief of crowding and the safety and security concerns we have discussed in the Main Jail Complex would be to move the entire Restitution Center operation to the Justice Center. With about 160 inmates, it would occupy more than two of the units and perhaps could be expanded to fully occupy a third unit. The fourth unit could take an additional 65-70 inmates out of the main complex. The result would be that well over 100 inmates could be moved out of the Main Jail Complex, with a comparatively small total increase in the numbers of staff.

* * *

* As described to us, it appears that income from rental beds pays nearly 2/3 of the total jail budget. The net result for Yakima County taxpayers is that they are probably paying less to house Yakima County inmates in the jail than they would if there were no rental beds. Even with extra costs associated with opening the Justice Center, it is very possible that Yakima would still be running a very cost-efficient jail system insofar as county taxpayers are concerned.

IV. Medical

The consultant team was able to interview the medical and non-medical staff regarding medical services, as well as to discuss medical services with inmates. We did not examine the medical services delivery system in detail. A list of grievances broken down by category of complaint showed that nearly one of every four grievances filed from January through September of this year related to medical care.

A major complaint we heard from inmates was that it could take several weeks for medical staff to be able to respond to a request for service (a medical “kite”). Staff generally agreed this amount of delay was common. This level of delay is a major concern.

However, we noted the jail recently implemented a revised medical services contract that increases physician time in the jail to 30 hours per week from only six. The administrator of medical contract services indicated this increase in physician hours should allow the doctor to see inmates requesting medical services within 24 to 48 hours. We note that the initial contact with the inmate does not necessarily have to be with an M.D., but there should at least be a triage service that sees and evaluates inmates requesting medical attention within 24 hours or so.

We recommend the jail monitor the medical system around such factors as:

- The promptness with which the system responds to a medical request to assure that a one day response becomes the rule and not the exception;
- Whether inmates diagnosed with a medical problem receive generally appropriate treatment for that problem within a medically appropriate time;
- Whether a generally appropriate system of medical records is maintained; and
- As part of the contract for medical service, jail administration should require an ongoing medical report indicating performance in the medical areas as noted above, in keeping with the jail administrators’ adoption of an ongoing continuous improvement model.

We recommend the County retain consultants to do a more thorough audit of medical services. It may be possible to obtain such services through the National Institute of Corrections, in which case they would come at no cost to Yakima County.

V. Miscellaneous

A. Facility maintenance

We noted several examples of delayed maintenance in the jail. Delayed maintenance and repair of facility conditions adds to the effects of overcrowding, inmate tensions and staff's ability to carry out their duties.

Maintenance and repair is not in the control of the Department of Corrections, but is the responsibility of another county agency. The maintenance of the jail should be the responsibility of Jail Administration. Placing it in the responsibility of another department to determine priorities of maintenance, timeliness of repairs, etc. limits the ability of the jail to provide for the operation of the facility and the safety and security of the inmate population and staff.

On a related matter, we were given to understand that the master set of keys for the facility are not under the direct control of the jail administration, but are in the possession of the county agency responsible for jail maintenance.

Key control is fundamental to jail safety and security, is the sole responsibility of jail administration, and should never be relinquished to others. **We recommend that key control and maintenance of the facility be the direct responsibility of jail administration.**

* * *

VI. Recommendations

Recommendations appear throughout the body of the Report. Here is a list of those recommendations, sometimes slightly edited or paraphrased to save space. There is no intention to change the meaning of the recommendations from their initial appearance in this report.

1. Begin to use the Justice Center facility to relieve crowding in the Main Jail Complex (p. 17).
2. Continue efforts to introduce a modified direct supervision management philosophy into the Annex housing units (p. 7).
3. As the modified direct supervision model is introduced into the Annex, consider completely emptying a pod and “refilling” it with inmates as a means of better introducing a new, more positive inmate culture into the unit. Then repeat the process with other pods (p. 7).
4. Break inmates in the Annex housing units into smaller groups for such things as dayroom use, phones, laundry, meals, and mail distribution to help decrease tensions associated with a large group (p. 8).
5. Examine the feasibility of relocating officer posts in the Main Jail so that officers’ work stations allow them to look directly into at least some of the housing units (p. 8).
6. Restructure officer assignments and responsibilities in the Main Jail to increase officer responsibility for performance of individual housing units (p. 8).
7. Consider if the effects of *short-term* crowding can be mitigated by concentrating more inmates temporarily in a single housing unit, with enhanced supervision rather than distributing the crowding throughout several units (p. 10).
8. Reduce mixing minimum and medium custody inmates in the same housing units (p. 10).
9. Look for ways to introduce more programming activities in the Main Jail Complex as a means of reducing inmate idleness (p. 11).
10. Continue to closely monitor and respond to gang activity in the jail (p. 11).
11. Evaluate the possibility of beginning some type of orientation program for the inmates from King County that might help defuse some of the tension between King County and Yakima inmates (p. 11).

12. Track incidents of violence or threatened violence (e.g., roll-outs) around such factors as race, gangs, and geography to determine if there are trends of concern (p. 11).
13. Monitor and address gang issues quickly and decisively and explore avenues of obtaining additional gang intelligence from local law enforcement agencies and King County agencies (p. 11).
14. Treat “roll-outs” as situations involving the threat of violence and investigate them accordingly (p. 12).
15. Increase efforts to determine the reasons for an incident and the inmates who were involved. This will require more detailed investigations of at least some incidents (p. 13).
16. Carefully evaluate all incidents of violence or threatened violence, e.g., roll-outs, around such things as gang affiliation, race, Yakima vs. King County inmates, etc. and examine that cumulative data to see if there are trends about specific housing units where violence and threatened violence takes place with greater frequency (p. 13).
17. Alter the glazing in the Annex, if not the Main Jail, to reduce inmates' ability to “sign” between housing units (p. 13).
18. Re-examine whether video-taping of activity in housing unit common areas is feasible (p. 14).
19. Identify facility blind spots and try to eliminate them (p. 14).
20. Accelerate the hiring and training process so that new staff can be brought on almost immediately as other staff leave, thereby reducing the time a post must either be left vacant or filled through the use of overtime (p. 14).
21. Expand the new training and coaching model developed for new correctional officers to make it available for supervisory staff (p. 15).
22. Increase the number of staff devoted to inmate classification (p. 15).
23. Implement more monitoring of the medical system in key areas (p. 18).
24. Require reports from the medical contractor regarding performance (p. 18).
25. Consider a complete audit/review of the current medical system (p. 18).
26. Move responsibility for jail maintenance under the ambit of the Department of Corrections (p. 19).

Final Comments

We want to acknowledge the complete and candid cooperation of officials of the Yakima County Department of Corrections, from the Director to officers working in the units. While it is clear that there are problems around violence that should be corrected, it is also clear that the administration is trying to pursue a variety of means to address those concerns. While the efforts of the administration can bring some improvement, the most important recommendation in this report – opening the Justice Center – requires a decision above the level of the Department of Corrections.

We urge close cooperation and contact between the JAG and Yakima County. The two groups have strong common interests in assuring the Yakima jails operate in the best possible fashion.

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