



San Francisco Jail Needs Assessment Executive Summary

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The Sheriff's Department was particularly helpful in obtaining data and offering suggestions on potential policy issues. We are especially indebted to Bill James who assisted using the retrieval of large amounts of data from the Sheriff's Department Information System. NCCD convened regular meetings with Sheriff Michael Hennessey to debrief him and to check out our conclusions. We also benefited from the help of Norm Karasick who provided important background material on capital construction issues in San Francisco and assisted NCCD in many ways.

This report was vastly improved because of regular meetings with Patrick Hallinan and the Jail Policy and Planning Committee, who reviewed our preliminary conclusions and offered many of the recommendations contained in this report (see Appendix F). We also appreciate the efforts of Supervisor Nancy Walker and her "right arm" Kate Monoco-Klein who met with us often and facilitated a key meeting involving correctional experts from the East Coast.

A word of commendation must go to Lieutenant Michael LaVigne who supervised this needs assessment for the Sheriff's Department. He was a constant source of sound advice, help and good humor. His patience and sincere professional commitment to improving San Francisco's correctional system are remarkable.

Finally, it should be noted that the contents and recommendations contained herein are those of NCCD alone and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Jail Policy and Planning Committee or the City and County of San Francisco.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The San Francisco County Board of Supervisors and the San Francisco County Sheriff's Department selected the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) to provide the County with a detailed needs assessment of its adult detention system. This study is mandated to satisfy several of the requirements of the California Board of Corrections as set forth in Section 538, Title 15, State Administrative Code to support construction and/or renovation of facilities operated by the Sheriff's Department.

The NCCD study focused primarily on the following goals:

1. Project the need for additional jail space over the next twenty years under current criminal justice policies. This projection will incorporate the need to alleviate overcrowding and to maintain an effective jail classification system.
2. Identify the key criminal justice policies and demographic factors that underpin and drive the 20-year prisoner population forecasts.
3. Examine the extent to which alternatives to incarceration are being fully utilized and to examine the cost/benefits of additional alternatives to incarceration policies and programs.
4. Describe current practices in the handling of inebriated and mentally ill inmates and examine potential alternatives to improve the care of these special population groups.
5. Assess the current medical care system within the jails and recommend needed improvements.

This executive summary contains what NCCD views are the major findings and conclusions as presented in the Final Report.

The reader is encouraged to review that document which contains more detailed information as well as the views of the Jail Policy and Planning Committee members who have voiced opposing positions.

Background of the San Francisco Jails Needs Assessment

San Francisco's adult detention system consists of three main jails with a total design capacity of 1400 beds, a work furlough facility housing 64 inmates and 22 beds reserved at San Francisco General Hospital for acutely ill prisoners. Thus the entire San Francisco Jail system has a current rated bed capacity of 1486. In January, 1989 the Sheriff's Department plans to open a 300-bed facility located at the San Bruno site. In addition, the Sheriff's Alternative Work Program (SWAP) handles an average daily caseload of 65 inmates who perform community service in lieu of incarceration.

San Francisco's jails have been chronically crowded for the last several years. In 1987 the average daily population of all of the jails was 1601 -- which means that the jails were operating at 108% of their design capacity. Since 1982 the County has been operating its jails under the terms of the Consent Decree approved by the in U.S. District Court in Will Stone, et al. vs. the City and County of San Francisco. et al., C-78-2774 WHO. The Consent Decree limits the population of Jail 1 to 426 inmates and sets out a number of specific requirements with respect to health care, recreation and other conditions of confinement. Also

covered in the Consent Decree are expectations for the care of involuntary mental health commitments. The Federal Court has appointed Mr. Allen Breed as a Special Master to oversee the implementation of the Consent Decree. A series of reports by Mr. Breed found that the County was not making sufficient progress towards the goals outlined in the Consent Decree.

In May of 1987 the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed a resolution finding that "an emergency exists on providing new housing units in the county jail system" (Board Resolution 192-87-2). The Board of Supervisors had earlier established a Jail Policy and Planning Advisory Committee, chaired by Patrick Hallinan, to oversee the development of a needs assessment required for the release of \$22.5 million dollars to San Francisco as part of the County Correctional Facility Capital Expenditure Bond Act of 1986.

Crowding conditions continue to plague the San Francisco jails. By the end of 1987 the County agreed to a plan that would release sentenced misdemeanants at the completion of not less than 70% of their sentences. The Federal Court has also ordered that the County improve recreational facilities at Jail 1 and to provide a plan to improve medical care within the jail and to limit the practice of housing acutely mentally ill prisoners in safety cells.

Study Methods and Data

While more detailed descriptions of data collection and analysis methods will be contained in various chapters, what follows is a brief overview of how NCCD approached the needs assessment study.

Data for the prisoner population projections and the study of alternatives to incarceration were collected from the automated data system of the Sheriff's Department. NCCD drew random samples of both sentenced and unsentenced bookings into the San Francisco adult detention system during 1987. We conducted extensive original data collection for over 1500 persons booked into jail. In addition, NCCD examined several one-day profiles of jail inmates. Of particular assistance were data derived from the Jail Classification System.

Other aggregate criminal justice data were collected from the California Bureau of Criminal Statistics, the California Department of Finance and the Board of Corrections. NCCD also examined data available through the Sheriff's Department, the Municipal and Superior Courts, the S.F. Police Department, the District Attorney, the Public Defender, the Probation Department and the OR Project. Information on health care issues was provided by San Francisco General Hospital, the Division of Forensic Services and Jail Psychiatric Services.

NCCD also reviewed all pertinent reports about the San Francisco adult detention system that were completed in the last

ten years. Interviews were conducted with a wide range of county criminal justice and community-based agencies. NCCD staff and consultants spent extensive time at all jails and spoke with many representatives of the Sheriff's Department.

Findings and Major Recommendations

Based upon these data, NCCD reached the following conclusions regarding the jail's operations and offered the following recommendations on how to improve the situation.

The Scope of Incarceration

- o Approximately 53,000 adults are incarcerated each year in the San Francisco jail system.
- o Only 11 percent of these adults eventually receive a jail sentence.
- o Approximately 42,000 San Francisco residents are incarcerated each year. Among the 42,000 San Francisco bookings, 5,420 are transients with no known address.
- o These numbers mean that each year 67 of every 1,000 adults living in San Francisco go to jail. For blacks the rate is three times higher (213 per 1,000 blacks).
- o The vast majority of admissions to jail are for minor non-violent and non-property crime. Specifically, disorderly conduct (16 percent), traffic warrants (14 percent), out-of-county warrants (10 percent), and drugs (17 percent).
- o Approximately 83 percent of these crimes are misdemeanor level crimes. And for felony arrests, well over 60 percent are dismissed or reduced to misdemeanor charges.
- o The average length of stay is quite short with the majority of bookings spending less than three days in jail.

Special Characteristics of the Jail Population

- o Nearly 30 percent of the prisoners are inebriates or addicts.
- o Another 17 percent have identified special medical and mental health problems.
- o Over 90 percent are males and 60 percent are black.
- o Almost 70 percent are pre-sentenced (awaiting trial) with 59 percent charged with felony crimes.
- o Significant proportions have no obvious means of financial assistance (28 percent), are on welfare (51 percent), have no housing (34 percent), are unemployed (59 percent), and do not have a high school degree (49 percent).

Jail Population Projections

- o Unlike other California counties, the adult population is expected not to increase over the next 20 years. Furthermore, the population most likely to be arrested and booked into jail is projected to decline.
- o These demographic trends, plus, improved law enforcement methods for certain crimes and San Francisco's growing affluence explain a 28 percent decline in crimes reported to the police since 1981.
- o Based on these inmate trends, NCCD projects that the current 1,625 population will not increase over the next 20 years. The projection assumes that current criminal justice policies will remain intact over the next two decades.*
- o This no-growth projection could be lowered by several hundred beds if the county adopts NCCD's recommendations for expanding the use of alternatives to incarceration as listed below.

*These projections largely reflected the flow of prisoners through the jail and criminal justice policies which were in effect from November 1, 1986-October 31, 1987. They do not take into account recent law enforcement or court activities affecting admission and lengths of stay.

Alternatives to Incarceration

- o The system is already using many of the basic alternatives to incarceration. Additional alternatives--many of them involving special supervision components--are recommended for San Francisco.
- o San Francisco's jail population has large numbers of offenders with multiple problems--drug addiction, alcoholism, mental illness, homelessness, etc.
- o San Francisco's criminal justice agencies are, in many respects, working at cross-purposes--a problem compounded by serious lack of reliable and shared information about how the system is working and with what effect.
- o A supervised own-recognizance pretrial release program should be funded and only select persons charged with felony level crimes.
- o The Board of Supervisors and the Mayor request the state legislature to consider legislation amending California Penal Code Section 853.6 to provide for the citation release of persons arrested for certain specified non-violent felony offenses.
- o The District Attorney's Office and the Police Department should adopt new policies to reduce the high level of charge dismissals or reductions.
- o San Francisco should implement a process for reminding released defendants of subsequent court dates via mail or follow-up phone contacts.
- o A pilot alternative sentencing advocacy program for convicted felons who are facing their first convictions should be funded.
- o The Work Furlough Facility should be expanded from 60 to 180 beds.
- o San Francisco should fund a Day Reporting Program in conjunction with the Work Furlough or County Parole program.
- o A separate facility/program should be located in an appropriate community setting in San Francisco for work furlough and other minimum security women prisoners.

- o It is particularly recommended that under specified circumstances, some women at the minimum security facility be allowed to have their preschool children live with them in the facility.

Mentally Ill and Inebriated Inmates

- o San Francisco County Sheriff's Department should develop a 60 bed civil alcohol reception center that is housed in a building other than the jail and complies with current California laws, including the Sundance case laws. The center should be under the auspices of the Sheriff's Department, and staffed by alcohol treatment professionals.
- o The center should have the staff and resources necessary to conduct medical evaluations and screening.
- o The majority of the beds should be available for 4-8 hour sober-up. Six of the female beds and sixteen of the male beds should be used for voluntary 24-hour detox. This new program would handle inebriate populations from police stations and the existing jail population.

Medical/Mental Health Services

- o Expand and modernize the medical clinic areas at all jails to provide the adequate space and facilities.
- o Establish 40 infirmary beds and adjacent 40 bed sheltered living or residential care beds for medical and psychiatric observation and care and centrally located at or near the Hall of Justice. The recommended number of beds is in addition to the 22 beds available at SFGH.

Policy Implications of the Study

The San Francisco adult detention system has been severely overtaxed for the last several years. The County's jails have been operating well over their rated capacities. Poor conditions of confinement and the chronic crowding have led the federal courts to intervene. In efforts to comply with the Consent Decree

in the Stone case, the Sheriff's Department has accelerated releases of sentenced misdemeanants and expanded the eligibility for citation release of pretrial bookings. Despite these steps the San Francisco jails had an average daily population of 1601 during the past year and were operating at 108% of their rated capacity.

NCCD's study of inmate flow in and out of the San Francisco's adult detention system revealed that large numbers of persons are jailed for relatively minor offenses and jailed for brief periods of time. In particular, inmates charged with drug offenses and non-traffic warrants are exerting major pressures on jail population levels. We also observed that many jail inmates are caught in a nexus of repetitive minor law violations, alcohol and drug abuse, mental health problems and homelessness.

Using an offense-specific and demographically-sensitive inmate population forecasting model, NCCD found that average daily jail populations will likely continue to rise slightly over the next three years. However, if current criminal justice policies remain relatively stable the average San Francisco jail population will remain stable after 1990.

The table on the following page presents two policy scenarios for San Francisco, depending upon the implementation of the expanded alternatives and community beds recommended in this study. In the first scenario the inmate population will reach a peak average of 1642. To meet the desirable jail capacity for this population (assuming the jails operate at 90% of their

capacity) San Francisco would need 1,824 beds -- or an additional 338 jail beds. However, when the 300 beds are added to the San Bruno site as is presently being constructed, the bed deficit is reduced to 38.

Policy Scenario 2 uses the same figure for the peak average inmate population as in Policy Scenario 1, but in the second instance we assume that the number of inmates managed in alternative programs will be increased by 120 over current levels and that community-beds will be expanded by 170 beds. This leaves a balance of 1352 inmates remaining in current jail facilities. For this size inmate population the desirable jail capacity (at 90% occupancy) would be 1502. However, the expected design capacity of San Francisco's jails will be 1786 with the expected addition of 300 beds. This would produce a surplus of 284 beds-- but only if these policy recommendations are adopted. It is also important to recall that the San Francisco jails will require additional space to move inmates during the period when substantial renovations are being completed at the Hall of Justice and San Bruno.

The two policy scenarios illustrated above are not exhaustive. As we have stressed earlier in this report, the future inmate population will be heavily driven by criminal justice system policy choices. However, these examples suggest how the prudent expansion of existing alternative programs and of community-based beds could avert the need for expensive additional jail construction. The costs of expanding and operating new

POLICY SCENARIOS: WITH OR WITHOUT
EXPANDED ALTERNATIVES TO JAIL

I. Current Jail Policy Scenario

A. Projected Peak Average Inmate Population	1642
B. Desirable Jail Capacity (Assumes 90% occupancy)	1824
C. Current Jail Capacity	1486
D. Jail Bed <Deficit>	<338>
E. Construction of 300 beds at San Bruno <Deficit>	<38>

II. Revised Jail Policy Scenario: Expansion of Alternatives

A. Projected Peak Average Inmate Population	1642
B. Inmates Supervised in Expanded Alternatives	<120>
C. Inmates Housed Expanded Community-based beds	<170>
D. Remaining Inmates in Jail	1352
E. Desirable Jail Capacity (Assumes 90% occupancy)	1502
F. Current Jail Capacity	1486
G. Jail Beds Deficit	<16>
H. Construction of 300 beds at San Bruno	+284

alternative programs and providing new low security community-based housing options for selected inmates are less than for traditional jail construction. This policy consideration should loom large because of San Francisco's severe fiscal crisis.

Suggested Next Steps

The NCCD study did not examine the needs of the San Francisco jails in terms of security, compliance with building codes and structural problems. These issues should be studied as part of the San Francisco application for Proposition 52 monies.

Based on the NCCD "scope of work" the implications for future jail construction and renovation are as follows:

1. That a low priority be placed on expanding the number of high security jail beds.
2. That a high priority be placed on construction or acquisition of beds to support the alternative housing proposals outlined in this report such as expansion of Work Furlough or the civil detox program.
3. That a high priority be placed on establishing an 80-bed medical and psychiatric infirmary and sheltered care unit at or near the Hall of Justice.
4. That a high priority be placed on renovation and redesign of the booking area at Jail 1.

Planning for Alternatives to Incarceration

Prudent and cost-effective alternatives to jail will not spontaneously emerge. County officials must initiate a careful process of program development, budgeting and procurement of alternatives to incarceration. This reality applies both to community supervision options as well as to alternative resi-

dential programs. This task demands a high degree of interagency cooperation and joint planning. Although the Sheriff's Department and other community agencies have a longstanding tradition of well-managed alternatives to incarceration, recent County responses to jail crowding are mostly emergency stopgap measures motivated by the threat of federal court sanctions.

The on-going jail overcrowding crisis has often led to ill-feelings and poor communications within the criminal justice system and between the criminal justice system and the larger community. San Francisco must end the "crisis management" approach to its adult detention system or risk further alienation of public support. If the County does not rapidly commence the design and implementation of needed alternatives to incarceration, San Franciscans will face increasingly austere fiscal choices. Without a genuine commitment to expanding non-jail options for sentenced and pretrial inmates, even the 300 beds to be added at San Bruno will not be sufficient.

This study has urged the creation of a powerful, effective and well-informed criminal justice policy management group. This group must be adequately staffed and its membership should include top level managers from all concerned public agencies as well as representatives of the private sector. San Francisco must also move quickly to resolve the horrendous state of its criminal justice data. Improved criminal justice information is no longer a luxury. Without accurate and comprehensive data, future policy decisions will be dominated by ideological,

political and public relations considerations rather than by solid information and critical judgments. The Mayor and the Board of Supervisors should demand a comprehensive and coordinated system-wide approach to crime control, including the utilization of existing correctional resources.

If San Francisco's criminal justice leadership remains largely reactive to the pressures of the federal courts, the results are predictable. Criminal justice policies that are fashioned in a climate of perpetual "damage control" are extremely costly and have rarely advanced public safety.