

**IMPERIAL COUNTY
CIVIL GRAND JURY**



**2025-2026
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
April 9, 2026

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 California Penal Code, Section 933(a), and in the name of the 2025-2026 Imperial County Civil Grand Jury, it is my duty to submit our final report.

The Imperial County Civil Grand Jury was initially empaneled with 19 Jurors and 8 alternates. These numbers nevertheless, suddenly decreased. A combination of scheduling conflicts, absenteeism, and other personal issues have affected complete attendance. Persistent attempts to remedy the shortage of jurors were made; however, the essential quorum has not been reached, and a concluding panel of 5 jurors was subsequently upheld. This challenge has noticeably affected our monthly meetings and planning, and significantly delayed and restricted our investigations.

Despite these obstacles, the Grand Jury was able to accomplish its imperative duties as required. It is important to note that the Civil Grand Jury received additional inquiry requests in written form during the 2025-2026 Grand Jury year, which as a result of the staffing issues remain pending. These inquiries will be sealed and provided to the 2026-2027 Civil Grand Jury panel for proper review and handling.

Through hard work and dedication, the Imperial County Civil Grand Jury was able to fulfill the duties and responsibilities assigned by the Court, and have provided 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 comprehensive commitment. They truly are a fine group of compassionate and professional people, and it was a privilege to serve alongside them on this year's Imperial County Civil Grand Jury panel..

Foreperson:

Glenna Barrett
2025-2026 Imperial County Civil Grand Jury



Superior Court of California
County of Imperial

On behalf of our judiciary, and our jury commissioner staff, we would like to thank and congratulate the 2025-2026 Civil Grand Jury of Imperial County for its commitment and contributions in making the grand jury system a relevant and important part of our local government. Each member of the Civil Grand Jury is commended for their exemplary service during this time as well as your demonstrated concern for the sustainability of future grand juries.

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 by 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.

Thank you again for your collaboration, dedication, and commitment to the important role you served in our community in completing the work of the Civil Grand Jury.

Sincerely yours,

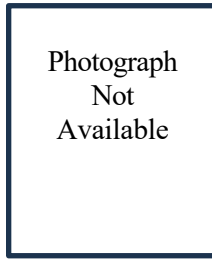
Hon. Monica Lepe-Negrete
Presiding Judge

Maria Rhinehart
Court Executive Officer/Jury
Commissioner

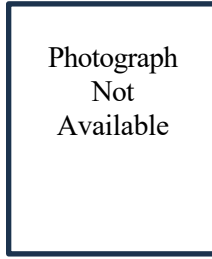
Imperial County 2025-2026 Civil Grand Jurors

Juror Position	Juror	City of Residence
Foreperson:	Glenna Barrett	Imperial
Secretary:	Lynn Brewer	El Centro
Treasurer:	Javier Moreno	Calexico
Sergeant-at-Arms:	Maribel Fuentes	Brawley
Juror	Jacinto Garcia	Imperial

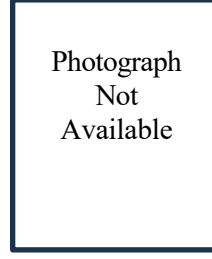
The 2025-2026 Imperial County Civil Grand Jury



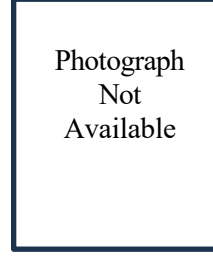
Glenna Barrett



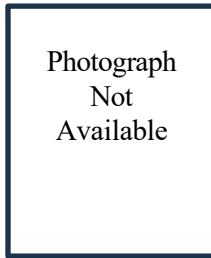
Lynn Brewer



Maribel Fuentes



Jacinto Garcia



Javier Moreno

Presiding Judge

Honorable Judge Monica Lepe-Negrete

Presiding Judge

(April 2026 – December 2027)

No Photograph Available

Honorable Judge Eran M. Bermudez

Presiding Judge

(January 2026 – April 2026)

No Photograph Available

Honorable Judge Marco D. Nunez

Presiding Judge

(January 2024 – December 2025)

No Photograph Available

Geoffrey P. Holbrook

County Counsel

Photograph Not Available

Andrew Briseno

Deputy County Counsel

Photograph Not Available

Jury Commissioner's Office Personnel

Maria Rhinehart
Court Executive Officer / Jury Commissioner

Mona Gieck
Assistant Court Executive Officer

Kiara Contreras
Court Services Assistant I

Clarissa Gallo
Court Services Assistant I

Claudia Vargas
Court Services Assistant III

Photographs Not Available

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, and 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 the office of public officers of every description within the county.

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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 offices 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.

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Desirable qualifications for a grand juror include the following:

- Computer and Internet communication skills
- Be in good health
- Be open-minded with concern for the views of others
- Has the ability to work with others
- Has genuine interest in community affairs
- Has 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 2025-2026 Imperial County Civil Grand Jury served a term from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. 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.

COMMITTMENT

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.

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.imperial.courts.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 the 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 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.

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ADDRESS FOR DELIVERY OF RESPONSES

Civil Grand Jury Foreperson

P.O. Box 296

El Centro, California, 92244



Imperial County

2025-2026 Civil Grand Jury Calipatria State Prison ANNUAL INSPECTION

Justification:

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

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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, 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 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

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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. Intake has a new scanning module (low dose) to scan inmates. It helps with identifying contraband as well as other substances.

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.

Main CAL Kitchen and Satellite Kitchens

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

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 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

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significant risk of violence towards inmates and staff.

F2. Calipatria State Prison has a front gate that is not staffed at all. This could be a potential danger, as undesirable visitors might get onto the grounds with weapons and/or other contraband.

F3. The facility is well run, with extensive inmate programs to include a peer support pilot program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

R2. The front gatehouse should be staffed at all times, especially during peak hours of operation.

R3. Recommendations on ice machine in Alpa Unit, as well as Delta Unit.

R4. Recommendation to reopen Charlie Yard.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

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

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

2025-2026 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 visitors 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, optometry, basic dental, Emergency Room, Radiology, physical therapy 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 the Visitor Log Book and be provided with 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.

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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.

FINDINGS

F1. Centinela State Prison is a well-run prison with no major issues discovered. CGJ 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 poses an elevated risk to inmates and staff.

F3. Centinela has a front gate that is not staffed for long periods of time. This could be a potential danger, as undesirable visitors might get onto the grounds with weapons and/or other contraband.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

R2. Have the front gate staffed at all times, especially during peak hours of operations.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

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

DISCLAIMER:

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**Imperial County
2025-2026 Civil Grand Jury
Imperial County Jail
ANNUAL INSPECTION**

Justification:

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

2025-2026 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. Although the jail is able to house a total of 876 inmates, at the time of this inspection there were currently 341 inmates altogether.

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 Imperial County Civil Grand Jury inspected the facility, which included physical examination of the intake areas, housing areas, holding cells, medical unit, kitchens, control rooms, staff break areas, interview rooms, and a walkthrough of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. The inspection also included interviews with correctional officers and management officials. The Grand jury also interviewed staff members, reviewed the Sherriff's Office website, reviewed past Grand Jury investigations, and reviewed external documents aside staff to satisfy the legal requirement to independently verify all information which may be published in the Final Report.

On April 15, 2026, members of the Imperial County Civil Grand Jury conducted its annual inspection of the Imperial County Jail located at 328 Applestill Road, in the city of El Centro, CA., pursuant to ***Penal Code section 919(b) to***

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“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. 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.

REVIEW:

Medical:

Beginning in 2023, following approval by the Imperial County Board of Supervisors, the Imperial County Jail transitioned its medical care and services to *“NaphCare Healthcare Services”*, a private agency delivering medical services to correctional facilities in addition to other agencies and settings throughout the nation. Naphcare provides medical services to the Imperial County Jail on a 24hr basis, which include: intake processing, suicide risk assessments and prevention, proactive and preventive medical care, mental and behavioral health care, mental health stabilization units, dental, pharmaceutical, and other general medical aid. The medical unit regularly consists of 1 Registered Nurse, 3 Licensed Vocational Nurses, and 1 Medical Assistant at any given time. The medical unit also facilitates regular visits from Specialty and General Medicine Doctors, Dentists, Psychiatrists, and other Mental Health professionals associated with Imperial County Behavioral Health Services. Medical unit staff report having sufficient support, an overall pleasant working environment, and report no concerns regarding their safety, ability to perform, or issues with jail systems. The examining jurors were satisfied with this inspection and visually noted the medical staff works within confined spacing, and noted office furniture needing replacement. Medical emergencies during the 2025-2026 fiscal year include 10 overdoses (fentanyl related), and 2 suicide attempts, 1 which was unfortunately carried out.

Safety and Security:

In each part of the jail, cameras have been installed so staff can monitor the incarcerated inmates. The inspecting jurors noted during previous reports that an upgrade of surveillance systems were requested. At the time of this inspection, management staff reported receiving a new 1.8-million-dollar surveillance system upgrade which staff is satisfied with. In addition to surveillance as means to protect safety, training officers reported jail staff exceed the minimum training of 24 hours as per mandate with supplementary training consisting of drills, such as disaster drills, medical emergency drills, suicide and injury related emergency drills, and most recently bee sting drills. The facility is also regularly inspected for fire safety by the Fire Marshal. Last fire inspection occurred in February of 2026, maintaining the facility to standard.

Transportation Department:

The Transportation Fleet consists of 2 Buses and 7 Vans, and works in a collaborative effort with numerous agencies to transport incarcerated persons to various destinations such as court, other jails or prison, medical appointments, and other locations based on specific needs and/or as instructed by the court. The transportation staff also provides additional court security for custody prisoners, and is assigned to pick up incarcerated persons who have warrants within the State of California who are housed in separate areas. The Imperial County Sheriff’s Office Transportation Unit is staffed with Correctional Officers and Correctional Supervisors to oversee the daily activities. The transportation fleet is equipped with dividers to accommodate the different incarcerated person classifications.

Educational Services/Programs:

The Imperial County jail offers inmates a variety of professional programs and educational services. These services

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include support in finishing High School or G.E.D., other services include E.S.L. for inmates with language barriers, Volunteers of America, Second Chance, Anger Management, Parental education for inmates requiring prudent parenting education, AA/NA, and Family Literary Events. Incarcerated workers who successfully complete and graduate from educational courses take part in graduation ceremonies accompanied by family members. This creates motivation and a feeling of being part of the community. *The Inside/Out College Program* offers additional education provided by the Imperial Valley College. These college courses can be attended in person on main campus, or in the Villalobos Classroom, located in the Sheriff's Services Center. The Inside/Out College Program is designed to provide higher educational opportunities for "inside" (incarcerated) and "outside" (campus) students which explore critical sociological issues through individual and group activities, assignments, and projects. Other programs include general training and familiarization with safety programs related to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and also a welding course.

Visitation:

The inmates are assigned a computer tablet which allows them to review jail systems material, transfer and monitor credits and commissary entitlements, as well as communicating with their family. The tablets are usually in operation from 2-10pm. Inmates receive a minimum of 2 weekly visits via electronic device; however, they are able to obtain more. Jail staff reported having an easter egg hunt for families and inmates, which alleviates tension, and reduces separation anxiety.

Recidivism:

In addition to the educational programs offered, the Imperial County jail also offers inmates a variety of work programs with collaboration with outside agencies such as Imperial County Public Works, to assist in reducing recidivism. Worker programs include general grounds clean-up, roadside clean-up, culinary arts, commissary training, housekeeping, laundry Services, car wash, and an upcoming and highly anticipated Barista program which is scheduled to commence in the summer of 2026.

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 inspecting jurors observed the food preparation area which were in all appearances clean and sanitary, and meal time had recently concluded.

FINDINGS:

- F1. During the inspection, it is noted that the Imperial County Jail was originally intended to house inmates for no more than one year; however, jail management team have reported that inmates serve up to ten consecutive years due to State changes.
- F2. The Imperial County Jail is a well-run, clean facility. Corrections Staff appear to be knowledgeable and well trained.
- F3. The inspecting jurors observed a notable staffing deficiency, which jail management team confirmed.
- F4. There has been a rise in fentanyl overdoses; Imperial County jail management reported to having Narcan available in all units to help alleviate this growing national problem.
- F5. The medical unit needs office furniture replacements, as current furniture items are damaged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. Continue to offer educational programs, and continue expanding these services to reduce recidivism.

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R2. Replace existing damaged furniture in the medical unit.

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: R2

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

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

2025-2026 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.

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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 and furniture that needs to be updated/equipped with a 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. In the Intake department it needs a wall to protect the juvenile's identity.

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.

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

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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. It needs a shade and water mist.

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. It is awesome.

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 is that the State of California has dissolved California Youth Authority, and now Imperial County has to house youth offenders for longer periods of time. One suggestion from this Grand Jury panel is to update or build a new facility for Juvenile offenders, and have more educational programs for these young people, in the hope to decrease recidivism.

F3. Needs to update the new bylaws they are out of date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1.** It is recommended that county officials upgrade facilities for youth facility
- R2.** Officers need more training on suicide prevention and positive cognitive training.
- R3.** Phoenix Project is excellently upgraded, Juvenile Facility needs upgrading.
- R4.** Vents are dirty and it is a health issue. Vents need monthly cleaning

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: Imperial County Civil Grand Jury
PO 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