



# TRINITY COUNTY

Board of Supervisors

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TO: The Honorable Michael B. Harper  
Judge of the Superior Court

FROM: Trinity County Board of Supervisors

CC: Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: Response to 2024 Civil Grand Jury – Deaths at the Trinity County Correctional Facility

DATE:

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The Grand Jury has requested a written response to their final report on the Deaths at the Trinity County Correctional Facility. The response of the Trinity County Board of Supervisors is as follows:

**Finding #1:** Failure to fix identified suicide hazards contributed to the death of Mr. Swain while at the Trinity County Correctional Facility.

**Response:** Due to pending litigation in this matter, we are precluded from commenting on this finding.

**Finding #2:** The correctional officers' lack of medical training and an inability to make medical decisions contributed to the death of Mr. Garbutt while at the Trinity County Correctional Facility.

**Response:** Due to pending litigation in this matter, we are precluded from commenting on this finding.

**Finding #3:** The incorporation of the Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS) for use by correctional officers is a step in the right directions towards improved inmate health tracking.

**Response:** Due to pending litigation in this matter, we are precluded from commenting on this finding.

**Finding #4:** The lack of written guidelines and processes covering the use of the Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS), who is responsible for reviewing the completed forms, and how long the forms are retained is an issue to be addressed.

**Response:** Due to pending litigation in this matter, we are precluded from commenting on this finding.

**Finding #5:** Low staffing and budgetary decisions have driven the use of overtime.

**Response:** Disagree partially. While additional funding would allow the Sheriff's Department to increase staff levels (patrol and jail) and potentially reduce the requirement for overtime, many other factors come into play. Last-minute sick calls, transport requirements, vacation schedules, turnover, and training requirements all factor into the need for overtime.

**Finding #6:** Because the roles of Jail Commander and Medical Officer are two separate, full-time positions, they need to be filled by two separate individuals.

**Response:** Agree.

**Finding #7:** Based on excessive overtime hours, there are not enough correctional officers at the jail.

**Response:** Disagree partially. While additional funding would allow the Sheriff's Department to increase staff levels (patrol and jail) and potentially reduce the requirement for overtime, many other factors come into play. Last-minute sick calls, transport requirements, vacation schedules, turnover, and training requirements all factor into the need for overtime.

**Finding #8:** Retention of correctional officers is key towards managing a reduction in overtime hours.

**Response:** Agree.

**Recommendation #1:** The 2024 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Trinity County Sheriff's Department, in cooperation with the County Administrator's Office and the Board of Supervisors develop a policy by June 1, 2025 that prioritizes the remediation of hazards at the Trinity County Correctional Facility when those issues are identified.

**Response:**

Due to pending litigation in this matter, we are precluded from commenting on this finding.

**Recommendation #2:** The 2024 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS) be included in the correctional officer training manual by June 1, 2025.

**Response:**

**Recommendation has been implemented. See the Trinity County Sheriff's Office Custody Manual, Policy 716, Detoxification and Withdrawal, 716.8, Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS) for additional details.**

**Recommendation #3:** The 2024 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Trinity County Sheriff's Department develop a policy that when the Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS) is used, that vitals (blood pressure, temperature, heart rate, and pulse oxygenation) are also recorded. This new policy is to be completed and implemented by June 1, 2025.

**Response:**

**Recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future as medical personnel are integrated into the detention facility to perform these duties. Policies in place prior to receipt of this report met all State requirements.**

**Recommendation #4:** The 2024 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Trinity County Sheriff's Department develop a written policy detailing when the Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS) is used, the frequency of the scale's use, the process of sharing the completed form with the appropriate parties (i.e. Medical Officer and contracted medical staff), and the retention period for completed scales. This new policy is to be completed and implemented before June 1, 2025.

**Response:**

**Recommendation requires further analysis with discussion and input from County Counsel about collecting and sharing personal medical information and records.**

**Recommendation #5:** The 2024 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Trinity County Sheriff's Department have an active, full-time, dedicated Jail Commander by June 1, 2025.

**Response:**

**Recommendation has been implemented with the promotion of a full-time Jail Sergeant effective January 1, 2025.**

**Recommendation #6:** The 2024 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Trinity County Sheriff's Department have an active, full-time, dedicated, Medical Officer by June 1, 2025.

**Response:**

**Recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future as medical personnel are integrated into the detention facility to perform these duties.**

**Recommendation #7:** The 2024 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Trinity County Sheriff's Department develop a policy of using a certified medical professional (i.e. medical assistant, registered nurse, physician's assistant, medical doctor) to be directly involved in handing out medications during at least one medical pass per 24 hours. This policy is to be completed and implemented by June 1, 2025.

**Response:**

**Recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future as medical personnel are integrated into the detention facility to perform these duties.**

**Recommendation #8:** The 2024 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Trinity County Sheriff's Department develop a policy requiring new correctional officers, as a condition of employment, have a current Red Cross CPR and First Aid certificate or the equivalent. New hires may be reimbursed for the cost of the training, along with mileage. This policy is to be completed and implemented by June 1, 2025.

**Response:**

**Recommendation requires further analysis. This would require changing the Job Bulletin for the classification. Currently, a CPR/First Aid Certificate is not a requirement for hiring in the classification. However, the Sheriff's Office currently provides this training to employees twice per year, and new corrections deputies are scheduled at the first opportunity.**

**Additional conditions of employment could be another roadblock for recruitment to this classification, where we already have difficulty recruiting because of minimum entry-level pay. Some applicants would not be inclined to go through an additional step when they are not guaranteed a job.**

**Recommendation #9:** The 2024 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Trinity County Sheriff's Department look into the feasibility of using more annuitants (i.e. retired law enforcement) to fill open positions. The department is to report on the findings to the Board of Supervisors by June 1, 2025.

**Response:**

**Recommendation has been implemented in past years. The 2024/2025 budget year required a 50 percent reduction in funding specifically for Extra Help. However, funds approved for full-time positions but not utilized due to vacancies may be repurposed for Extra Help (retired annuitants) while recruiting for these vacancies is underway.**

**Retired Annuitants (Reserve Deputies) are an extremely valuable resource to the Sheriff's Office. However, their use to perform the regular duties required for normal, day-to-day operations should not be considered a long-term solution.**

**Recommendation #10:** The 2024 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Trinity County Sheriff's Department, in accordance with California Labor Code, develop a hiring agreement that seeks to recoup some of the training costs associated with sending new correctional officers to Core when those officers leave the Trinity County Sheriff's Department within one year of completing their Trinity County financed Core training. The hiring agreement template is to be created by June 1, 2025.

**Response:**

**Recommendation requires further analysis.**

**Correctional officers are regularly hired in Trinity County with no related experience or training for these specific roles. The Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) requires that new correctional officers successfully complete the Basic Jail Operations Course approved by Standards and Training for Corrections (STC) within 12 months of initial employment. This training consists of over 175 hours of classroom and practical instruction and examinations to give the correctional officers essential knowledge for their duties.**

**These training costs are paid by the Sheriff's Office and then reimbursed by STC upon proof the officer completed the course. The officers are employed by the County while attending the course and are therefore paid wages for their training time.**

**County Counsel should be involved with any further discussions because of the potentially illegal nature of this recommendation.**