

PRISONS IN MONTEREY COUNTY: 2025 UPDATE



Google Earth Image: Correctional Training Facility, June 30, 2023

SUMMARY

Each California Civil Grand Jury is required by law to inquire into the condition and management of public prisons within its jurisdiction under Penal Code § 919(b). This means that a county's Civil Grand Jury must inspect all detention facilities, including state prisons, county jails, and holding cells where adults are held for more than 24 hours. Civil Grand Juries may report on conditions, management, and any concerns regarding treatment or operations.

While Civil Grand Juries must inquire into state-run correctional facilities, such as prisons operated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), they lack jurisdiction over these facilities. State prisons fall under the oversight of state agencies, including the Office of the Inspector General, the Board of State and Community Corrections, and the California Legislature.

When Civil Grand Juries visit state prisons and report their observations, they cannot enforce changes or make direct recommendations to the CDCR. Consequently, these observations are generally informative rather than actionable within the county's jurisdiction.

The 2024-2025 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) visited two CDCR facilities: the Salinas Valley State Prison (SVSP) and the Correctional Training Facility (CTF), both located in Soledad, in partial fulfillment of Penal Code § 919(b).

The CGJ did not formally investigate the CTF or the SVSP. The primary objective of this report is to provide information to the citizens of Monterey County based on the grand jurors' observations during visits to both prisons. Notably, a report on CTF and SVSP visits has not been published by the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury in almost ten years.



Google Earth Image: SVSP, June 30, 2023

BACKGROUND

In 1946 the State selected and purchased 936 acres four miles north of Soledad for a new prison. The prison opened as a minimum-to-medium security facility housing 600 incarcerated persons (IPs) as a farming camp attached to San Quentin State Prison. From that beginning, new construction provided a permanent second housing facility in 1951 and then a third housing facility in 1958. By 1968, the combined three-facility complex housed 3,400 IPs and was renamed from Soledad State Prison to Correctional Training Facility due to the shift in focus towards education and vocational training that was developed at the complex.

By 1996, a 300-acre portion of the original property became the site of a newly constructed second prison, which is now operated as a separate CDCR facility known as the Salinas Valley State Prison.

The CDCR assigns IPs to prisons using a classification system that includes a Housing Security Level Score to determine the appropriate security level. This score is calculated based on factors such as the incarcerated person's criminal history, sentence length, behavior in custody, and history of escape attempts. The score ranges from low to high, with IPs assigned to facilities that match their risk level, Level I (minimum security) through Level IV (maximum security).

In addition to security classification, the CDCR evaluates IPs for Sensitive Needs Status. IPs who may be at risk in the general population, such as those targeted by gangs, informants, or IPs with high-profile cases, can be placed in separate housing to ensure their safety.

The CDCR also considers medical and mental health needs, gang affiliations, and rehabilitation program availability. IPs requiring specialized care may be placed in medical or mental health facilities. The CDCR reviews enemy concerns to minimize violence and may transfer IPs based on changes in behavior, security risks, or rehabilitation progress.

Correctional Training Facility (CTF)

CTF is a Level II medium-security prison for adult males consisting of three separate facilities. (See Appendix for explanation of CDCR security levels.)

Two of the facilities are Non-Designated Programming Facilities (NDPF). NDPF houses incarcerated persons who demonstrate positive behavior and a willingness to participate in rehabilitative programs, free from gang influence and behavior, and conform to departmental policies. These facilities are integrated housing facilities including IPs from General Population as well as those with Sensitive Needs Status.

The third facility is strictly a General Population facility and does not include any IPs with Sensitive Needs Status.

Salinas Valley State Prison (SVSP)

SVSP has been designated a Level III (medium-to-maximum security facility) and Level IV (highest security) prison for adult males. Facility A and Facility B are Level III while Facility C and Facility D are Level IV. A separate standalone facility is a Restricted Housing Unit. SVSP is an Americans with Disabilities Act compliant facility equipped to house IPs with higher levels of medical and mental health conditions. SVSP includes a Correctional Treatment Center where IPs receive professionally supervised health care, with an Enhanced Outpatient Program and Mental Health Crisis Bed unit for those IPs requiring mental health services.

SVSP provides both outpatient and inpatient mental health services for patients with serious mental disorders. The licensed Psychiatric Inpatient Program at this facility is designed to provide more intensive treatment for patients who cannot function adequately or stabilize in an outpatient program. The SVSP (as of 2024) housed 2,590 IPs, with a capacity intended not to exceed 2,452. The number of housed IPs fluctuates monthly.

Each block in both facilities includes an independent dining room, clothing distribution center, canteen, medical/dental/mental health services, education complex, library, chapel, and visiting rooms.

Correctional Training Facility and Salinas Valley State Prison at a Glance

	Correctional Training Facility	Salinas Valley State Prison
Year Founded	1946	1996
Size of Facility (Approx. Acres)	600	300
Regulatory Body	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
Security Level(s)	Level II (medium security)	Level III and Level IV (medium-to-maximum security)
Incarcerated Person Capacity (as of 2024)	5,487	2,452
Current IP Population (as of 2024)	4,146 (fluctuates)	2,520 (fluctuates)
Special Designations	IP Training Programs (See below.)	Mental Health Crisis Bed Unit; Enhanced Outpatient Unit; Psychiatric Inpatient Program
Facility Size	Three housing units (Facility A, B, C) and a Restricted Housing Unit	Four housing units (Facility A, B, C, D), and an Administration Segregation Unit
Staff (Authorized Positions)	1,103	1,506
Annual Budget (Fiscal 2024)	\$217.2 million	\$291.3 million

Sources: Correctional Training Facility and Salinas Valley State Prison communications to CGJ and CDCR website (<http://cdcr.ca.gov>)

METHODOLOGY

The CGJ inquiry consisted of site visits, discussions with staff, and a review of written documentation. Although not required, the CGJ decided to prepare this report highlighting the findings.

Each tour, lasting for several hours, consisted of a detailed walk-through of each of the sections of the two prisons. The CGJ was accompanied by prison administrative staff and had the opportunity to ask questions and, in some cases, speak with the IPs of each facility. Details about each tour are provided in the Discussion section of this report.

DISCUSSION

The CGJ toured each facility. During the walking tours, the jurors observed IPs in housing units, medical facilities, kitchens, laundry areas, and exercising and relaxing in recreation yards.

Medication distribution at the CTF and SVSP is managed through clinic service windows and in-housing unit delivery to ensure efficiency, accuracy, and security. IPs receive medications at designated locations in the yards and housing units with direct observation for controlled substances. Some IPs receive “keep-on-person” medications for self-administration of approved drugs. Medical staff oversee all distributions to maintain order, prevent diversion, and ensure adherence.

SVSP staff reported the roofs of many of the buildings had significant leaks impacting operations in each building. For example, the dining room has been out of service for two years because its repair has a lower priority than other buildings, including the housing units.

During the walking tours, the “California Prison Model,” now in place in both facilities, was described to the CGJ. The “California Prison Model” refers to prison reforms aimed at improving rehabilitation, security, and management within the state's correctional system. The California Prison Model focuses on balancing security, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Key aspects of the model include:

- Security & Gang Management – Controlled housing units and specialized programs help reduce gang influence and violence within prisons.
- Rehabilitation Programs – Education, vocational training, and substance abuse treatment aim to prepare IPs for reentry into society.
- Mental Health & Medical Services – Expanded mental health care addresses the needs of IPs with psychological disorders.
- Alternative Sentencing & Parole Reform – Efforts to reduce overcrowding include early release programs, alternative sentencing, and expanded parole opportunities.

- Restorative Justice & Community Reintegration – Programs encourage personal accountability and offer support for successful reintegration after incarceration.
- Use of Technology & Data-Driven Policies – Surveillance, risk assessment tools, and data analytics improve prison management and reduce recidivism.

These initiatives aim to make the system more effective, humane, and rehabilitative while maintaining public safety.

The following is additional information provided to the CGJ during the walking tours of the CTF and SVSP.

Correctional Training Facility (CTF)

Vocational Training & Career Preparation

- The CTF offers a highly developed vocational training program that equips IPs with valuable skills to help them secure employment upon release.
- Training programs include carpentry, plumbing, electrical, general construction, welding, barbering, auto body repair, and auto mechanics, each providing practical, hands-on experience.
- The CJG observed that instruction is led by highly skilled professionals, including State-licensed contractors, ensuring that training aligns with industry standards and codes.
- Quality of instruction was particularly noted, with instructors demonstrating both technical expertise and a commitment to mentoring IPs in their craft.
- The facilities and equipment for these programs are well-maintained and up to industry standards, giving IPs access to tools and machinery similar to those they would use in real-world jobs.
- The vocational areas provide ample space for training, allowing for large-scale projects that mirror real-world job sites.
- The CJG was impressed with the progress and engagement of IPs in their training and the strong emphasis on workplace professionalism, collaboration, and discipline to prepare them for reintegration into society.

Educational Opportunities

- The CTF offers a comprehensive academic program that supports education from first grade through the second year of college, ensuring that IPs have access to a wide range of learning opportunities.
- IPs can earn high school diplomas and associate degrees, helping to improve their prospects for employment upon release.
- The CGJ observed an engaging college-level class with more than 30 attendees, taught by a Hartnell College instructor (a retired former president of Gabilan College).
- The presence of dedicated educational staff and partnerships with local colleges provide IPs with structured learning and accredited coursework.
- The facility includes a lending library, allowing IPs to access books for personal and academic growth.
- Computer resources are available, providing access to educational materials, research, and skill-building programs.
- The jury observed a significant number of computers that need repair so they can be readily available to the incarcerated population. A staff member explained that all such repairs must be made in Sacramento, a requirement that significantly complicates and delays the process.

Rehabilitation & Support Programs

Mentoring Programs

- CTF offers structured mentoring programs whereby experienced IPs and outside volunteers provide guidance, support, and personal development coaching.
- These programs help IPs develop self-discipline, emotional resilience, and conflict-resolution skills that aid in their rehabilitation.

Veterans Service Program

- A veterans' service initiative, managed by IPs in concert with the Veterans Administration, offers support to incarcerated military veterans.

- The program fosters a sense of community, shared experiences, and responsibility, helping veterans address their unique challenges.
- Services include peer support, resource guidance, and outreach programs tailored to veterans' needs.

Dog Training Program: TAILS K9

- CTF operates a dog training program in concert with the SPCA, through which IPs work with rescue dogs, training them for adoption.
- The program provides therapeutic benefits for IPs, teaching them responsibility, patience, and empathy.
- Many participants develop emotional bonds with the dogs and a sense of contributing to the community.

Volunteer & Faith-Based Services

- The facility benefits from a diverse range of volunteers, including faith-based organizations, community activists, and educational mentors.
- Volunteers provide spiritual support, mentorship, and skill-building opportunities that contribute to IP rehabilitation.
- Faith-based programs include religious services, counseling, and life-skills workshops, helping IPs find a sense of purpose and direction.
- Community activists and reentry specialists assist in preparing IPs for life after incarceration, focusing on employment, housing, and reintegration.

Facility Conditions & Infrastructure

- A significant portion of the facility is more than 70 years old, posing operational challenges.
- The CJG noted that some areas are difficult to patrol, increasing security concerns for both staff and IPs.
- Many parts of the prison need refurbishment or full replacement to improve safety, efficiency, and IPs' living conditions.
- Infrastructure upgrades are necessary to modernize the facility, enhance security measures, and provide updated spaces for educational and vocational programs.

- The medical facilities at the CTF are significantly more modern than the overall facility. Extensive use of telehealth services increases the incarcerated population's access to medical specialties without their having to leave the facility.

Salinas Valley State Prison (SVSP)

Incarcerated Person Rights & Support Services

- Efforts are made to ensure that IPs are informed about their rights, with staff providing guidance on legal procedures, grievance processes, and institutional policies.
- Faith-based programs are available, allowing IPs access to religious services, spiritual counseling, and support from external faith organizations.
- Veterans within the IP population are acknowledged and provided tailored support services, recognizing their unique needs and experiences.

Specialized Rehabilitation & Treatment Programs

Mental Health Treatment & Staffing Challenges

- A mental treatment facility was viewed, where IPs with violent personality conditions receive specialized individual therapy.
- Mental health care remains a staffing challenge, as hiring and retaining qualified professionals is difficult.
- Despite the staffing shortage, efforts are being made to provide adequate care for IPs needing mental health services. The correctional and medical staff are clearly very proud of their work and look forward to training staff from other California prisons on the California Prison Model.

Dog Training Program: Ruff Start

- SVSP operates a dog training program in concert with South County Rescue where IPs work with rescue dogs, training them for adoption.
- The program provides therapeutic benefits for IPs, teaching them responsibility, patience, and empathy.

- Again, as in the Tails K9 Program, many participants develop emotional bonds with the dogs and a sense of community contribution.

Healthcare Facilities Maintenance Program

- IPs were observed receiving training in medical cleaning and sanitation work, equipping them with valuable skills that could be used for employment upon release. The CGJ observed a training session during which an IP practiced the skills needed to lead a team after a critical failure during a cleaning procedure.
- Those who have finished their training are given practical experience working in the prison's medical facilities.

Facility Conditions & Infrastructure

Medical & Hospital Facilities

- The hospital wing was observed to be modern, clean, and well-equipped, providing necessary medical care for IPs.
- Medical facilities, including walls, floors, ceilings, furniture, and equipment, were well-maintained and up-to-date, ensuring a safe and sanitary environment for healthcare services.
- Staff told the CGJ the number of IPs seeking medical attention has increased over the past few years, leading to a greatly increased workload for the medical professionals working in the on-site clinic.

Aging Infrastructure & Maintenance Issues

- The dining hall in one of the Level III housing blocks was observed to be in a state of disrepair, with the ceiling severely water-stained and falling from the suspended ceiling-support grid.
- This area has been closed off for more than two years, underscoring the need for urgent repairs and facility maintenance.
- The CGJ observed active roof repairs on several buildings including the one with the damaged dining hall.

Security & Technological Challenges

- The prison perimeter is secured by an electric fence, which allows the facility to operate with only two guard towers controlling the sally ports for vehicles and pedestrians.
- Staff discussed the challenges of keeping up with evolving technology and new threats, particularly in preventing contraband from entering the facility.
- Drones were identified by staff as an emerging concern, as they are being used to smuggle cell phones, drugs, and other contraband into the prison.



Manned guard tower at SVSP. Source: Photo by Civil Grand Juror.

Incarcerated Person Privileges & Family Connection

Digital Tablet Program for Communication & Education

- IPs are provided digital tablets, which enable controlled access to streaming music, educational materials, institutional information, and text messaging and video calls with family.
- This program is a privilege for IPs, requiring compliance with facility regulations.
- The introduction of tablets added to the workload of correctional staff, who are responsible for monitoring digital communications in addition to traditional phone calls and letters.

Conjugal & Family Visitation Units

- Conjugal units are available, allowing qualified IPs to spend time with their wives and children in a controlled environment.
- These visits help maintain family bonds and provide emotional support to IPs during their incarceration.

Correctional Staff & Facility Operations

- The correctional staff were observed to be relatively young and exhibited high morale, working well as a cohesive team.
- Their professionalism and teamwork contribute to a stable and secure environment within the facility.

Support for Incarcerated Persons with Disabilities

- IPs with disabilities were identifiable by their wearing distinctive vests, allowing staff and other IPs to recognize their needs and provide necessary accommodations.
- Hearing-impaired IPs receive assistance in responding to alarms, ensuring their safety in emergency situations.

CONCLUSION

The 2024-2025 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) visited the Correctional Training Facility (CTF) and Salinas Valley State Prison (SVSP) to fulfill its statutory duty under California Penal Code § 919(b). The purpose of this report is to provide an informative overview of conditions, management, and programs at these facilities, discussions with staff, and reviews of relevant documentation.

Civil Grand Jury observations revealed that both institutions are grappling with significant challenges, including aging infrastructure, staffing shortages, and evolving security threats. Some buildings require urgent repairs, with roof leaks and structural deterioration impeding operational efficiency. Additionally, the growing use of technology, such as tablets for IPs, has introduced new management challenges for correctional staff.

Despite these obstacles, both facilities demonstrated a strong commitment to rehabilitation and vocational training. CTF's robust vocational programs equip IPs with valuable skills in trades such as carpentry, auto mechanics, and welding, enhancing their chances of successful reintegration into society. Similarly, SVSP's mental health services and educational initiatives are tailored to support IPs with specialized needs. The presence of volunteer programs, faith-based services, and structured mentoring further contributes to rehabilitation efforts at both institutions.

Overall, while infrastructure and operational challenges persist, the programs and services offered at CTF and SVSP play a critical role in rehabilitation and public safety. This report aims to inform the community about current conditions and encourage ongoing efforts to address identified issues while building upon successful rehabilitation initiatives. The CGJ appreciates the cooperation of prison staff and administrators during this inquiry and hopes that this report will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers and the public.

FINDINGS

- F1.** The aging infrastructure, design limitations, and deferred maintenance of the facilities contribute to safety concerns for both correctional staff and incarcerated persons (IPs).
- F2.** The training programs provided to IPs at both facilities are of high quality. These programs equip IPs with essential technical skills and leadership training, enhancing their employment opportunities upon release.
- F3.** Advancements in technology present both benefits and challenges for the facilities. Security procedures must continually evolve to address emerging threats, such as using drones to bypass perimeter security.
- F4.** Digital communication offers IPs valuable connections with their families; however, the increased monitoring responsibilities place an additional burden on correctional staff, potentially impacting their ability to oversee housing unit operations effectively.

INVITED RESPONSES

From the following persons:

- Warden, Correctional Training Facility
 - F1-F4
- Warden, Salinas Valley State Prison
 - F1-F4

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.

GLOSSARY & ACRONYMS

CDCR	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
CGJ	Civil Grand Jury
CTF	Correctional Training Facility

IPs Incarcerated Persons
SVSP Salinas Valley State Prison

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APPENDIX

Security Levels at California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Prisons

Security Level	Definition/Prison Description	California Training Facility	Salinas Valley State Prison
Level I	MINIMUM SECURITY Facilities and Camps consist primarily of open dormitories with a low security perimeter.	X	X
Level II	MEDIUM SECURITY Facilities consist primarily of open dormitories with a secure perimeter, which may include armed coverage.	X	
Level III	MEDIUM-to-HIGH SECURITY Facilities have a secure perimeter with internal and external armed coverage and housing units or cell block housing with cells non-adjacent to exterior walls.		X
Level IV	MAXIMUM SECURITY Facilities have a secure perimeter with internal and external armed coverage and housing units or cell block housing with cells non-adjacent to exterior walls.		X

Source: <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/ombuds/ombuds/entering-a-prison-faqs/>