

Safety a concern at SLT jail, juvi center

By Kathryn Reed

The lack of bullet proof glass in the lobby of the South Lake Tahoe jail as well as in the administrative office of the juvenile treatment center are a concern.

The adult facility had a full body scanner that was inoperable for more than a year. The youth facility doesn't have one.

The lack of bullet proof glass separating visitors and inmates was another red flag.



The culinary program at the South Lake Tahoe jail received praise. Photos/LTN file

These were some of the findings in the El Dorado County Grand Jury report that was recently released.

The civil grand jury each year looks into a variety of issues that are usually driven by citizen complaints. The jails, though, are always on the inspection list. The grand jury

operates July 1-June 30.

While there have been no deaths at either South Lake Tahoe facility since the last inspection, two adult inmates tried to commit suicide and one juvenile.

“Ninety percent of inmates currently incarcerated at the SLT Jail are housed on felony charges. Twenty-five percent are there as a result of Assembly Bill 109 which is the Public Safety Realignment Bill. This resulted in some inmates who had been incarcerated within California’s State Prison system serving their time in county jails throughout the state,” the report says. “Inmates received under AB109 pose a hardship for the general population of the jail. These inmates are often hardened offenders, gang members, and/or more violent, and are housed in county jail for longer than the 12-month maximum prior to AB109. Many inmates contained within the jail system have mental health problems but they are not segregated unless a safety and/or behavioral issue arises.”

The jail continues to have a difficult time retaining people, with 10 open positions.

Another safety concern is that the cameras in the gym area don’t work. The South Tahoe jail only has an indoor gym because of weather. Inmates may exercise for one hour at a time, two to three times week.

At the juvenile center there is an indoor exercise room, but because it doesn’t have heat or insulation it cannot be used year-round. An outdoor facility is also available.

The adult facility is aging and looks like it even though the maintenance log doesn’t capture all the needs, according to the grand jury.

While the culinary program received high praise, that is the lone vocational offering.

“Lack of vocational programs does not serve the rehabilitation needs of the inmates. Availability of additional vocational training programs could lessen the chances that an inmate will re-offend upon release,” the report says.

The sheriff and county as a whole have until Aug. 15 to respond in writing.

It was noted by this grand jury that Sheriff John D’Agostini never responded to the 2015-16 grand jury report.