

Grand Jury Report SDOB Member Responses

Findings:

F1:

City and County leadership would benefit from first-hand knowledge obtained through inspection of the jail facilities and operations to enable them to better understand how policy changes affecting budget and operations for the Jails impact the operation of the Jails.

Lozano:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Agree

Finding Response Text:

The SDOB members should visit the jails on a regular basis pursuant to the schedule required by the Board. Other leaders should also visit the jails periodically. An Inspector General would be an ideal person to coordinate with the various entities who should be visiting the jails.

Rosboro:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree:

Finding Response Text:

- Oversight is stronger when policymakers see jail operations firsthand.
- Facility visits provide context that reports and budget documents cannot
- Visits should include movement, programming, health services, visitation, classification, and facility conditions
- Hear directly from both frontline staff and people in custody

Dignan:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Agree

Finding Response Text:

Board members lack direct visibility into how budget and staffing decisions play out on the ground. Regular inspections would let SDOB assess conditions independently rather than relying solely on SFSO-provided data.

Soo:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Mostly Agree

Finding Response Text:

During the 2023-24 and 2024-25 terms, then-President Julie D. Soo assigned three Sheriff's Department Oversight Board (SDOB) members at a time to visit the jail facilities at least once every other month and coordinated those visits with the Sheriff's Chief of Staff. The visits included personnel from the Department of Police Accountability (DPA)—the chief attorney and a senior investigator who handles most Sheriff's Office complaints as defined under an MOU between the Sheriff's Office and the DPA.

For calendar year 2024, SDOB had the benefit of Terry Wiley, the inaugural Inspector General, who made regular visits to the jails, spoke with incarcerated individuals, and met with the Sheriff and the Sheriff's command staff. The Inspector General was quite effective and as former prosecutor with over three decades of experience, accomplished more in one year than someone with a lesser background could accomplish in three.

The Inspector General did inspect living conditions at least monthly. However, both the IG and SDOB understood that the facilities and any repairs, particularly at CJ #1 and CJ #2, were very much under a band-aid approach.

The City is in need of a new jail for humane conditions for both the incarcerated and Sheriff's Office staff.

The 2025-26 SDOB leadership has not coordinated any regular jail visits among SDOB members with the Sheriff's Chief of Staff. Five of the seven members are newer and have not yet gone through a minimum of 20 out of 80 hours of training on jail operations. This is to occur within the next two months. Jail visits and inspections should be coordinated with the Sheriff's Chief of Staff and resume by February 1, 2027. Though the Civil Grand Jury recommends at least every two years, SDOB members had visited and inspected the jails at least every other month in the past.

Ortiz:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Agree

Finding Response Text:

Every District Supervisor, Chief of Public Safety, and Mayor should walk through the jails and inspect the conditions. There is a lot of money allocated to public safety and we should be using it to ensure a safe healthy environment where individuals have basic needs met, proper water temperature, access to showers, clean sleeping quarters, and healthy food. Sheriff's Dept should facilitate an environment in which the various educational and rehabilitation programs can accomplish their mission. The environment should support rehabilitation and successful re-entry into the community.

Palmer:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Agree

Finding Response Text:

First-hand inspection is not symbolic. It is a constitutional, fiscal, and moral necessity. A jail budget cannot be responsibly evaluated only from reports, dashboards, overtime summaries, or executive presentations. Decision-makers must see the housing units, medical access points, intake areas, programming spaces, food service, movement restrictions, staffing posts, visitation areas, tablets, phones, spiritual access, and grievance systems that define daily life inside custody.

The Sheriff's Department Oversight Board should establish a regular inspection protocol for Board members, including announced and unannounced visits where legally permitted, structured debriefs, and public reporting that protects confidential information while still identifying operational risks, budget consequences, staffing deficits, and harm to incarcerated people, staff, families, and the public.

The Board further recommends that every major jail budget proposal include a "Custody Impact Statement" explaining how the proposal will affect population capacity, out-of-cell time, programming, medical access, family contact, religious practice, grievance access, disability accommodation, and staff safety.

F3:

The Jails are dangerously close to capacity, and SFSO has not convened the Crowding Committee despite meeting the capacity triggers outlined in the SFSO Custody and Court Operations Manual, Policy 511.2.

Lozano:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Unsure

Finding Response Text:

We need more data from the SFSO. Without knowing if "book and release" inmates are counted towards the capacity limits, we do not know if capacity has been reached or if the Crowding Committee should be convened. If capacity has been reached or is dangerously close, the Crowding Committee should be convened. An Inspector General would be helpful with this data determination.

Rosboro:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree:

Finding Response Text:

- We need current, facility-level data on population and functional capacity.
- Physical bed capacity is not the same as usable capacity because of classification, medical, behavioral-health, and security needs - How many beds are actually available for the current population given the different housing and safety requirements?

Dignan:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Agree

Finding Response Text:

Policy 511.2 sets an 80%-occupancy-for-a-year trigger that was met in 2025 and is on pace again in 2026, yet no committee has convened. This is a policy compliance failure the Board should press ISFSO to correct.

Soo:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Agree

Finding Response Text:

SFSO should convene the Crowding Committee and include persons specified in Policy 511.2(a)-(g), with invitations directed to representatives of the District Attorney, San Francisco Sheriff's Department Oversight Board, and the Board of Supervisors.

Without accurate data, SFSO and SDOB cannot accurately assess to what degree the jails are close to capacity. SDOB has urged the Board of Supervisors to have earmarked funding for desperately needed technology to capture data. Many of the reports requested of SFSO come from different silos and are often kept on paper or a computer system that is not unified. Pulling together reports can require several deputies and can be time consuming, exacerbating staffing shortages. Not having a unified system or paper systems impact accuracy and uniformity of reporting. Additionally, SFSO should also work to determine if some reporting functions and data analysis could be performed by civilian staff.

Ortiz:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Agree

Finding Response Text:

The manual states that:

Section 511.2 (p. 128) — covers the 10–15% bed vacancy requirement for classification compliance, and also outlines the "Crowding Committee" trigger at 80% occupancy

Section 511.3 — referenced regarding facilities needs assessments

Against practical capacity (rated capacity minus the 10% operating margin SFSO's own manual calls for) of ~1,325 beds:

On Sept 1, 2026 the jail population is at $1,066 \div 1,325 = \sim 80.5\%$

Palmer:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Agree

Finding Response Text:

Crowding is not merely an administrative inconvenience. Crowding is a constitutional warning sign. Incarcerated people retain human dignity, and overcrowding can become the engine that produces medical neglect, mental health deterioration, violence, staff exhaustion, excessive force, unnecessary isolation, suspended programming, and preventable death.

The Sheriff's Office should immediately convene the Crowding Committee required by policy. The City should require written minutes, attendance records, population data, classification data, medical and mental health impact data, program interruption data, and specific action steps. The committee's work should be reported to the Sheriff, the Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff's Department Oversight Board, and the public on a regular schedule.

The Board further recommends a population-reduction strategy that prioritizes lawful alternatives to incarceration for people who can be safely treated, supervised, restored, or stabilized in the community. Jail beds should not be used as a substitute for mental health care, substance use treatment, housing, education, or poverty policy.

F13:

Incidents of below minimum staffing result in facility lockdowns or lesser mobility restrictions, cause suspended programming, reduce out-of-cell time, interrupt access to health services, impede visitation, and have other negative impacts on inmates, yet data on lockdowns is unavailable.

Lozano:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Agree

Finding Response Text:

Data around lockdowns and the specific impacts of the lockdowns should be collected and shared. An Inspector General could assist with this work.

Rosboro:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree:

Finding Response Text:

- Ask for current data on lockdowns: frequency, duration, reason, staff level, facility and services affected.

Dignan:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Agree

Finding Response Text:

Absence of systematic tracking (despite a 2019 Controller recommendation to fix this) makes it impossible for oversight bodies to gauge the real impact of understaffing on inmates' access to care, programming, and visitation.

Soo:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Only Partly Agree

Finding Response Text:

After complaints, SFSO staff more carefully tailored lockdowns even as SFSO is still building up its sworn ranks. This has allowed programs to continue in part of the jail not directly affected by an incident of an exigent nature.

Ortiz:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Agree

Finding Response Text:

We hear this from incarcerated individuals, loved ones, and service providers.

Palmer:

Finding Response Agree/Disagree: Agree

Finding Response Text:

A jail cannot be safely governed where lockdowns, mobility restrictions, program cancellations, missed medical access, interrupted visitation, and reduced out-of-cell time are not tracked, analyzed, and publicly reported. The absence of data prevents accountability and creates a culture where constitutional harm may become invisible.

The Sheriff's Office should immediately create and publish a lockdown and mobility-restriction dashboard. At minimum, the data should include date, facility, housing unit, duration, cause, staffing level, number of people affected, programs cancelled, medical appointments missed or delayed, visits cancelled, meals delayed, religious services interrupted, and remedial steps taken.

The Board further recommends that below-minimum staffing events trigger automatic review by command staff, the Office of Inspector General once fully operational, the Sheriff's Department Oversight Board, and the appropriate City budget authorities. The solution cannot be overtime alone. The solution must include retention, training, culture change, wellness support, civilianization where appropriate, technology access, decarceration where legally justified, and strong independent oversight.

Recommendations:

R1-B:

All members of the Sheriff's Department Oversight Board should inspect the San Francisco and San Bruno Jails by February 1, 2027 and at least once every two years thereafter. Any inspections involving one or more members of the Sheriff's Department Oversight Board should be conducted so as not to conflict with the Brown Act or Sunshine Ordinance.

Lozano:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Schedule will be implemented

Recommendation Response Text:

The SDOB is implementing a training schedule and a visitation policy/schedule around the visitations in compliance with the Brown Act and Sunshine laws.

Rosboro:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Support

Recommendation Response Text:

Regular inspections would strengthen direct oversight of jail operations and provide the Oversight Board with first-hand information regarding facility conditions and the delivery of services.

Dignan:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Will implement

Recommendation Response Text:

SDOB will coordinate a schedule for all members to complete inspections of SF and San Bruno facilities by the deadline, consistent with Brown Act/Sunshine Ordinance requirements.

Soo:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Mostly Agree

Recommendation Response Text:

Answer combined with F1

Ortiz:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Agree

Recommendation Response Text:

Every District Supervisor, Human Rights Commission and Mayor should walk through the jails and inspect the conditions.

R3-A:

By November 1, 2026, SFSO should convene the Crowding Committee. In addition to the persons specified in Policy 511.2 (a)-(g), representatives of the District Attorney, San Francisco Sheriff's Department Oversight Board, and the BOS should also be invited.

Lozano:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Information from SFSO by 10.1.26

Recommendation Response Text:

This cannot be done until we have accurate data. The SDOB will need to meet with the SFSO to make this determination, no later than the October SDOB board meeting.

Rosboro:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Support

Recommendation Response Text:

Convening the Crowding Committee with the additional stakeholders identified in the recommendation would provide a coordinated forum to monitor population, capacity, and operational pressures and develop responses before conditions become a crisis.

Dignan:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Will support/monitor

Recommendation Response Text:

SDOB will request SFSO provide committee formation status and will confirm a Board representative is designated to participate once convened.

Soo:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Agree

Recommendation Response Text:

Answer combined with F3

Ortiz:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Agree

Recommendation Response Text:

We should have someone from the public defender's office there too.

Section 511.2 (p. 128) — covers the 10–15% bed vacancy requirement for classification compliance, and also outlines the "Crowding Committee" trigger at 80% occupancy

Section 511.3 — referenced regarding facilities needs assessments

Against practical capacity (rated capacity minus the 10% operating margin SFSO's own manual calls for) of ~1,325 beds:

On Sept 1, 2026 the jail population is at $1,066 \div 1,325 = \sim 80.5\%$

R13-A:

By March 1, 2027, the SFSO should implement a standardized tracking and reporting system that captures data: (1) for each lockdown or service reduction related to reasons other than subminimum staffing and, (2) for each lockdown or service reduction attributed to below minimum staffing. This system should include data on the affected facility, unit, date and duration of lockdown or service reduction, reason for lockdown, lockdown level and the staffing level at time of lockdown or service reduction, as well as the activities and services that were reduced, delayed, canceled, or suspended.

Lozano:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): The ability to provide this data and the cost of such should be provide to SDOB no later than 12.1.26

Recommendation Response Text:

A review of existing SFSO data collection systems must occur first. If the existing system cannot provide this data, then a cost analysis needs to occur. Funding and staffing must exist for this before the SDOB can make such a requirement or recommendation.

Rosboro:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Support

Recommendation Response Text:

A standardized system for tracking lockdowns and service reductions is necessary to establish reliable data regarding their causes, frequency, duration, staffing levels, and impact on programs and services.

Dignan:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Will support/monitor

Recommendation Response Text:

SDOB will request quarterly progress updates from SFSO on system design and implementation status ahead of the deadline.

Soo:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation):

Recommendation Response Text:

By March 1, 2027, SFSO should be able to at least outline a standard tracking and reporting system that captures data: (1) for each lockdown or service reduction related to reasons other than subminimum staffing and, (2) for each lockdown or service reduction attributed to below minimum staffing. And, agreed that the data should include the affected facility, unit, date, and duration of lockdown or service reduction, reason for lockdown, lockdown level and the staffing level at time of lockdown or service reduction, as well as the activities and services that were reduced, delayed, canceled, or suspended.

To have a "reporting system" that should be through technology hinges on earmarked funding for technology. Since SDOB convened in 2021 / 22, SDOB has advocated to the Board of Supervisors for an upgrade to SFSO's antiquated technology to no avail.

Ortiz:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Agree

Recommendation Response Text:

and the incarcerated individual should be able to report via a survey on the amount of lockdowns that occur.

R13-B:

This data generated by the system described in R13-A should be captured in dashboards and reported quarterly to the BOS and the Sheriff's Department Oversight Board, and published monthly on the Sheriff's website and on Data SF | OpenData Portal at data.sfgov.org.

Lozano:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Same as above for R13-A

Recommendation Response Text:

Same as above for R13-A

Rosboro:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Support

Recommendation Response Text:

A standardized system for tracking lockdowns and service reductions is necessary to establish reliable data regarding their causes, frequency, duration, staffing levels, and impact on programs and services.

Dignan:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation): Will implement

Recommendation Response Text:

SDOB will add this dashboard as a standing quarterly agenda item once R13-A data collection begins, and will verify monthly publication on the Sheriff's website and DataSF.

Soo:

Recommendation on Response (Implementation):

Recommendation Response Text:

Having data described in R-13 captured in dashboards and quarterly reports for the Board of Supervisors and SDOB, and published month on the Sheriff's website and on Data SF | OpenData Portal at data.sfgov.org would be ideal. Again, SFSO needs the necessary technology.

The Department of Police Accountability on a shoestring did create a functional data infrastructure for the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) that included the following:

- Website to inform the public, report data, and centralize available online resources;
- Case Management System (CMS) by replicating DPA's CMS architecture and drawing upon DPA's technical experience and expertise to develop a secure, versatile, and customized OIG CMS on a Salesforce platform and migrating historic data from DPA's investigations about SFSO misconduct and improper conduct into the new CMS that serves to manage and track OIG's work, analyzed and report on OIG's data, and capable of interfacing with other systems through application programming interfaces;
- Online Complaint System that is user-friendly dedicated to complaints against SFSO members with multilingual support and data integration with CMS;
- Complaint Portal to provide complainants with a portal to track individual case progress through the investigatory phases. Accessible using a system-generated unique number; and,

Paperless Operations through transition to a cloud-based file system for enhanced security and accessibility.

President Palmer's Operational and Budget Recommendations

The criminal justice system operates in three connected tiers: first, police substations and points

of arrest; second, county jails and detention facilities; and third, state prisons and correctional systems. These agencies function together to identify, arrest, detain, classify, discipline, punish, treat, release, or continue to control people deemed public safety risks. Because the tiers are connected, reform must also be connected.

The rules already exist. The United States Constitution prohibits cruel and unusual punishment and protects due process. Pretrial detainees may not be punished before conviction. Prison officials may not act with deliberate indifference to serious medical needs or substantial risks of serious harm. International standards, including the Nelson Mandela Rules, the Bangkok Rules, the Beijing Rules, and the Tokyo Rules, recognize human dignity, non-discrimination, health care, independent inspection, family contact, legal access, education, rehabilitation, and non-custodial measures.

The crisis is not that no rules exist. The crisis is that rules are often violated, ignored, underfunded, hidden, or neutralized by institutional culture. Oversight must therefore be independent, public, data-driven, legally empowered, and protected from capture by the same agencies it is charged with reviewing.

I recommend the following:

1. Establish an Independent Custody Budget and Operations Review Framework covering police holding areas, county jails, and state prisons, with authority to review staffing, classification, use of force, lockdowns, medical access, food quality, programming, grievances, technology access, parole preparation, disciplinary practices, and release planning.
2. Require meaningful representation of formerly incarcerated people, legal scholars, social scientists, mental health experts, public health experts, restorative justice practitioners, family members, victims' rights advocates independent of law enforcement funding, and civil rights attorneys on oversight and advisory bodies.
3. Protect oversight from political capture by limiting the influence of law enforcement and correctional officer unions over oversight design, operational review, jail budget priorities, disciplinary policy, and conditions-of-confinement standards, while preserving lawful collective bargaining over wages, health care, retirement, and workplace safety.
4. Create enforceable rights to modern communication technology for incarcerated people, including phones, tablets, legal research tools, family communication, court access, education, reentry planning, and lawful business or financial interests.
5. Guarantee access to family, spiritual leaders, community-based mentors, legal counsel, educational providers, approved media access, and reentry organizations, subject only to individualized and documented security restrictions.
6. Require independent review of all lockdowns, mobility restrictions, program cancellations, medical delays, uses of force, in-custody deaths, suicide attempts, sexual abuse allegations, staff misconduct allegations, and retaliation complaints.
7. Strengthen whistleblower protections for incarcerated people, staff, contractors,

- medical workers, volunteers, and Board or oversight personnel who disclose abuse, corruption, falsified data, unsafe conditions, or retaliation.
8. Require fit-for-duty evaluations, trauma-informed training, anti-racism training, deescalation training, disability-rights training, gender-responsive training, religious accommodation training, and cultural humility training for all personnel directly involved in custody, classification, discipline, parole, release decisions, and force.
 9. Create maximum administrative and criminal accountability for crimes committed against incarcerated people, including sexual abuse, assault, retaliation, evidence falsification, deliberate medical neglect, and coordinated coverups.
 10. Build a uniform appeal system for jail and prison disciplinary decisions, classification decisions, program exclusions, parole-preparation barriers, and denials of education, vocational training, religious access, family access, and medical accommodations.
 11. Provide holistic healthy meals, including medically appropriate, religiously appropriate, culturally appropriate, and plant-based options. Food is not merely a cost item; it is medical care, mental health care, religious practice, and human dignity.
 12. Treat youth and young adults as developmentally distinct. Children and young people should be separated from adult carceral populations and placed in healing-centered, education-centered, family-connected environments. California should expand young adult justice models through at least age 25 where legally appropriate, and should prohibit the prolonged confinement of children in environments designed for adult punishment.
 13. Reserve long-term prison custody for the most serious violence, including homicide, felony sexual violence, and great bodily injury causing life-altering harm. For other offenses, courts should be required to consider treatment, restitution, restorative justice, education, employment, housing, family repair, community supervision, and victim-centered healing before imposing incarceration.
 14. Shift public spending away from avoidable incarceration and toward public health, literacy, housing, trauma treatment, youth development, substance use treatment, vocational education, restorative justice, and reentry. A fiscally responsible system prevents harm before it becomes a jail cost.
 15. Fully fund and staff the Office of Inspector General so that the Sheriff's Department Oversight Board is not forced to "make do" without the investigative, audit, policy, and data capacity needed to perform Charter-mandated oversight.

Addendum for Further Review: Transformation Beyond the Immediate Findings

The Civil Grand Jury's report concerns San Francisco jails, but the jail crisis cannot be separated from the larger architecture of criminalization. Police substations, jails, prisons, parole, probation, court debt, disciplinary hearings, gang validation, classification,

solitary confinement, and reentry barriers are part of one continuum. When one part fails, the harm travels.

As a formerly incarcerated juvenile youth offender, I know that confinement is not merely a place. It is a culture. At its worst, it uses fear, silence, humiliation, racial hierarchy, emotional illiteracy, and bureaucratic delay to dominate the human spirit. At its best, custody should be rare, lawful, transparent, temporary when possible, medically safe, spiritually open, educationally rich, and designed for return to community. This country must also be honest about history. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude except as punishment for crime. After the Civil War, that exception helped form legal, economic, and political pathways through which Black people and poor people were criminalized, controlled, leased, exploited, segregated, and stripped of family and wealth. Modern jail and prison policy must be evaluated with that history in mind. Oversight without historical truth becomes management of harm instead of transformation.

This addendum is therefore submitted as guidance for a complete review of prison and officer distinction, structural racism, discrimination, social engineering, political influence, and the economic incentives that expand custody while weakening community health. The City and County of San Francisco should lead California by demonstrating that public safety does not require cruelty, secrecy, or permanent human disposal. Public safety requires lawful accountability, healed people, restored families, protected victims, disciplined public servants, and transparent public budgets.