

AD HOC COMMITTEES

2016-2017 KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY

1. Kern County Elections Office:
Closed
2. Brown Act, Kern County Board of Supervisors
Closed
3. Security upgrades, Kern County Board of Supervisors
Closed
4. Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office
Closed
5. Agendas, Kern County Board of Supervisors
Closed
6. Camp Erwin Owen, Kern County Probation
Department
See Below

CAMP ERWIN OWEN

“Camp of Hope”

SUMMARY:

Camp Erwin Owen (Camp) was founded in 1938. The Camp was named in honor of Judge Erwin Owen, Kern County’s first Juvenile Court judge.

A land swap in December 2009, between the U.S. Forest Service and Kern County (County), allowed the County to acquire an additional 56 acres for the Camp.

The Camp houses juveniles, sentenced by the Juvenile Court, to a term not to exceed 12 months. This is a non-secure juvenile detention forestry camp.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

The 2016-2017 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) investigated the management and operation of the Camp, pursuant to California Penal Code §919(b). The last Grand Jury report on the Camp was written in 2012.

PROCESS:

The Grand Jury met with the Camp Director and the Assistant Director, and also inspected the Camp grounds on April 4, 2017. Prior Grand Jury reports and information from the Kern County Probation Department’s website were accessed.

FACTS:

A. The Camp can house up to 125 juveniles, between the ages of 14 and 18. The Camp is for males only, who are a Ward of the Court (Ward).

- The program is designed for up to one year, but the average stay is five months
- The actual length of stay is determined by behavior, prior history of criminal activity, type of offense, drug/gang history, and academic background

During fiscal year 2015-2016:

- Average daily population 79 Wards
- Average length of commitment 20 weeks
- Program community service 1,076 hours
- Risk to reoffend percentages:
 - High Risk 78%
 - Moderate Risk 17%
 - Low Risk 4%

- B. Family visits are allowed on Sundays only.
- C. The Kern County Superintendent of Schools provides education to the Wards. They attend school half day and work half day.
- D. Juvenile Corrections Officers maintain daily records on work, school, behavior, and interaction between Wards.
- E. Rehabilitation focuses on:
 - Discipline
 - Education
 - Counseling
 - Guidance
 - Work experience
 - Vocational training
 - Athletics
 - Group living experience
 - Evidence Based Treatment Programs
- F. The main focus of the Camp is to balance a strong work program with a strong academic program.
- G. The Staff supervises Wards working in crews assigned to the Camp:
 - Building maintenance
 - Care of grounds
 - Meal preparation
 - Plant production
 - Animal husbandry
 - Laundry
 - Auto shop
 - Metal shop
- H. On-site mental health professionals provide substance abuse counseling, anger management counseling, and psychiatric services.
- I. Non-emergency medical services are available on-site.
- J. Volunteers from the community provide mentoring, religious services, and academic tutoring.
- K. Camp Owen is funded through the Kern County Probation Department.

FINDINGS:

- F1. Evidence Based Programming for drug abuse, is a program for rehabilitation, developed by the University of Cincinnati.
- F2. Additional funding is received from:
- Camps & Ranches Funding
 - Juvenile Offender Block Grant
- F3. The cost per day to house each Ward is \$263. Reimbursements to the Camp are adjusted based on the income of the parents.
- F4. Emergency medical services are provided by Kern Valley Hospital in Lake Isabella or Kern Medical in Bakersfield.
- F5. An Aggression Replacement Program is taught in a group setting. The Program includes:
- Social Skills Training – Teaches Wards what to do, helping them replace antisocial behaviors with positive alternatives
 - Anger Control – Teaches Wards what not to do, helping them respond to anger in a nonaggressive manner and rethink anger-provoking situations
 - Moral Reasoning – Helps raise Wards' level of fairness, justice, and concern for the needs and rights of others
- F6. Camp Erwin Owen is working with the Kern County Superintendent of Schools to make the NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research) Certification in Welding available.
- F7. An automotive shop is available to the Wards, who can earn an ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) certification.
- F8. Cerro Coso College provides on-line classes; one Ward is currently enrolled.
- F9. A Tattoo Removal Program is provided by PACK (Probation Auxiliary County of Kern).
- F10. If a Ward is AWOL (absent without official leave), he will fail the program.
- F11. The 2014 report, Recidivism for Releases, indicates:
- Escapes 3
 - Failed the program 19
- F12. The Camp Director stated that in 2016 there were:
- Escapes 8
 - Failed the program 15

- F13. In the 2014 Releases to Placement report, there were 14 placements. This refers to group or foster home placements in the community, where Wards can continue to receive treatment for drugs and anger management. No statistics were available for years 2015 or 2016.
- F14. There are video cameras in the Honor Room, Mental Health Trailer, and the Holding Room. The cost to upgrade the Camp to full coverage, with adequate video storage, is approximately \$400,000.
- F15. On the date of this visit, there were 75 Wards at Camp.
- F16. The Staff-to-Ward ratio is 1 to 15 during the day; 1 to 30 at night.
- F17. All meals are prepared by the Wards on-site; some products are from animals raised and crops grown at the Camp. The Wards rotate through the kitchen, performing chores such as cooking and cleaning.
- F18. According to staff, the six solitary cells now being used for storage, were a component of the original Camp program.
- F19. On the date of the visit, one of two washing machines in the Laundry Room was broken. The Director indicated it is scheduled to be repaired. Wards are assigned to laundry duty on a rotational basis.
- F20. The Wards wear different colored t-shirts:
- Blue, maroon, yellow, and white indicate program level
 - Green indicates a loss of privileges due to poor behavior
 - Orange indicates Wards are in the Owen Re-Entry Program, which is more restrictive. This program is designed to redirect Wards who are in danger of failing.

COMMENTS:

The Grand Jury thanks the Camp Director and Staff for the informative tour. The Camp appeared to be well run, stressing education and job skills, to better prepare Wards for a productive future, and to reduce recidivism.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. More surveillance cameras and increased video storage capacity should be added to the facility, as a budget priority. (Finding 14)
- R2. Repair of the washing machine should be completed immediately. (Finding 19)
- R3. Statistical reports should be kept up to date. (Findings 11 and 12)

NOTES:

- The Kern County Probation Department and Camp Erwin Owen should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury.
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury.

RESPONSE REQUIRED WITH 90 DAYS:

**PRESIDING JUDGE
KERN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

**CC: FOREPERSON
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301**

Kern County Board of Supervisors
Response to Grand Jury Final Report
Camp Erwin Owen

Response to Findings:

The Board of Supervisors notes that the Grand Jury's findings are substantially correct with the exception of Finding F11, F12 and F13. These findings reference the Recidivism Reports instead of Juvenile Justice Commission Reports and relate to Recommendation R3.

Response to Recommendation:

R1: *More surveillance cameras and increased video storage capacity should be added to the facility, as a budget priority.*

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation to increase security. A Capital Project request was filed to address this need. The Probation Department has requested an updated assessment of current technology and an estimate to complete the project.

R2: *Repair of the washing machine should be completed immediately.*

We concur with the Grand Jury's recommendation to repair the washing machine; however, the machine is approximately twenty-seven years old and some replacement parts are obsolete. Therefore, the Probation Department plans to include the cost of replacing the machine into their FY 17-18 budget.

R3: *Statistical reports should be kept up to date.*

The Juvenile Justice Commission statistics are updated monthly, quarterly and annually. Recidivism statistics are updated over a two year period. The purpose of recidivism reporting is to determine the recidivism rate of minors released from Camp Erwin Owen. The minor's violations of probation, furlough violations and new commitments are tracked for two years after release; therefore the most current completed recidivism statistics would cover minors released two years earlier.