



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF MONO**

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October 16, 2014

Honorable Judge Stanley Eller  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
100 Thompsons Way  
P.O. Box 1037  
Mammoth Lakes, California 93546

Re: Response to the Mono County 2013-2014 Grand Jury Report

Dear Judge Eller:

Please consider this letter and Attachment A as the official response to the 2013–2014 Mono County Grand Jury Report and place this document on file as the Mono County Board of Supervisors' response to the Grand Jury Report. Attachment A has specific responses to the items identified in the 2013-2014 Report. As an elected department heads, the Sheriff and Assessor have responded separately to the findings and recommendations affecting their departments. The Board appreciates the Sheriff's and the Assessor's responses.

The Board and entire County staff appreciate the critical role the Grand Jury provides to the community and the County organization in ensuring the best use of scarce resources. Openness, transparency and accountability are crucial to our democracy. We thank the members of the Grand Jury for their public service and encourage the Court to ensure the broadest representation from across all communities of Mono County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Larry K. Johnston".

Larry K. Johnston, Chair  
Mono County Board of Supervisors

Enclosure: Attachment A: 2013-2014 Mono County Grand Jury Responses



**Mono County Assessor's Office**

**Mono County Grand Jury 2013-2014**

**Continuity Committee**

**Follow up Report to 2013 follow up (undocumented) of Mono County Assessor's Office**

**Case #11-01**

**Case #1314.04**

As an elected department head, the Assessor has responded separately to this item. The Assessor's response was provided to the Board of Supervisors.

**Department of Social Services**

Mono County Grand Jury 2014

Case #1314.01

Summary: The 2013-2014 Mono County Grand Jury received a complaint, dated May 21, 2013, regarding actions of the Mono County Department of Social Services (Complaint). The Grand Jury accepted the matter for investigation.

The Grand Jury finds that the issues raised in the Complaint did not have merit, because some were unsubstantiated and because others were based on the complainant's erroneous interpretation of applicable laws and regulations. A recommendation was made to improve the Department of Social Services procedure for internal investigations.

**Findings and Recommendations:**

1. **Finding:** Complainant did not provide any credible evidence to substantiate claims of discrimination and harassment by her DSS eligibility workers.

- **Recommendation:** None.

**County Response: the County agrees with the finding.**

2. **Finding:** Complainant did not provide any credible evidence to substantiate claims that Complainant's civil rights were violated.

- **Recommendation:** None.

**County Response: the County agrees with the finding.**

3. **Finding:** Complainant's Medi-Cal benefits were correctly calculated according to applicable laws and regulations.

- **Recommendation:** None.

**County Response: the County agrees with the finding.**

4. **Finding:** No evidence was found to substantiate Complainant's claim that communications by DSS were in Spanish rather than English.



- **Recommendation:** None

**County Response:** *the County agrees with the finding.*

5. **Finding:** Complainant's assertion that information about and documentation for the Medi-Cal program was withheld may have resulted from Complainant's misunderstanding of DSS procedures intended to reduce duplication of materials (multiple languages used in form documents to mention availability of materials in other languages).

**Recommendation:** None

**County Response:** *the County agrees with the finding.*

6. **Finding:** Food stamps were not improperly withheld from Complainant.

**Recommendation:** None

**County Response:** *The County agrees with the finding.*

7. **Finding:** The current Director of DSS began serving in this position recently and was not the director during the time period on which the complaint was based.

**Recommendation:** *After the Director has one or two years' tenure in the position, the Grand Jury should consider an overall review of DSS operations to generally determine how effective DSS is operating and to specifically examine whether the DSS workload continues to be heavily impacted by adverse economic conditions.*

**County Response:** *The County agrees with the finding. (Note: the recommendation appears directed to the grand jury itself, therefore no County response is required.)*

8. **Finding:** Complainant's failure to comply with reasonable DSS procedural requirements substantially contributed to the denial and termination of benefits that Complainant would have otherwise received in a timely manner.

**Recommendation:** None.

**County Response:** *The County agrees with the finding.*

9. **Finding:** DSS procedures failed to correlate documents received from applicants with the deadlines to which those incoming documents were responding. As a result, one of Complainant's responses, because it was overdue, was overlooked by DSS for a period of time since it was not prioritized for handling before other submittals, which were responding to more recent deadlines.

In mitigation, this deficiency in DDS procedures did not cause a problem until a major increase in DSS cases (due to economic conditions) caused eligibility workers at DSS to experience large increases in their workloads. Furthermore, the problem would not have occurred but for Complainant's failure to submit the response at issue in a timely manner.

**Recommendation:** *As soon as DSS became aware of this problem, it revised its procedures to ensure that this problem did not occur in the future. For this reason, the Grand Jury finds no need to make any further recommendation.*



***County Response: The County agrees with the finding.***

**10. Finding:** The July 25, 2013 Mono County DSS internal investigation contained a number of factual errors and lacked adequate detail in some findings.

***Recommendation: DSS should consider establishing a procedure to ensure that internal investigations are reviewed for accuracy and completeness.***

***County Response: the County agrees with the finding and has implemented the recommendation.***

**County Administrator/Human Resources:**

**Mono County Grand Jury 2013-2014  
Follow Up Report of Mono County Administrator/Human Resources  
Case #1213.04 follow up to Case #1314.05**

The 2013-2014 Grand Jury established a Continuity Committee to follow up on issues raised and addressed in the 2012-2013 Grand Jury Report. Per the Grand Jury 2013-2014 report:

“The Continuity Committees are standing committees which do follow up of cases from previous years. In the 2013/2014 Grand Jury report, there are two Continuity Committee reports. This follow up report covers selected findings from Case #1213.04, which specifically dealt with the orientation and basic training of County employees, and the documentation of that training.”

Also, the Grand Jury did add as follow up comments:

“**County 2014 Follow Up:** All of the training that is provided or supported by the CAO/Risk Management Department is documented and included in the electronic database. Department specific training documentation stays within the department.”

There are no recommendations from the Grand Jury and therefore no County response.

**Sheriff:**

**Mono County Grand Jury 2013-2014  
Jail and Probation Department Tours**

As an elected department head, the Sheriff has responded separately to these items. The responses requested of the Board of Supervisors are highlighted below.

**Probation:**

**Mono County Grand Jury 2013-2014  
Jail and Probation Department Tours**

**Introduction and Background:** Penal Code Section 919 (b) requires that the Grand Jury annually inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county. To comply with that requirement, six members of the 2013-2014 Grand Jury toured the Bridgeport Jail (the “Jail”) and interviewed the Mono County Sheriff (the “Sheriff”). In addition, the Grand Jurors toured the Probation



Department facility in Bridgeport (the “Probation Department”), and interviewed the Chief Probation Officer.

Prior to enactment of AB109 in October of 2011, non-serious felons sentenced for more than one year would be incarcerated in the State penitentiary system. These inmates are now housed in the Jail as a result of AB 109. The State continues to incarcerate offenders who commit serious, violent, or sexual crimes. Housing long-term non-serious felon inmates has increased the workload for both the Jail and the Probation Department, although both departments receive some funding as a result of the law. An AB 109 grant allowed the Sheriff’s Department to replace its aging dispatch equipment.

**Jail Tour:** The focus of the 2013/14 Grand Jury’s jail and probation department tour was an inquiry and follow-up to last year’s in-depth tour and written report. The Grand Jurors again met with the Sheriff, then toured the jail with the Sheriff and Sergeant. After having lunch with the Sheriff and the Sergeant, they met with two inmates and interviewed each individually. Each inmate had been in a State facility previously. The female inmate had been in Chowchilla State Prison, and was happy to be in the Bridgeport Jail, as her family lives in Bridgeport and she has the opportunity to see them each week. She stated that the Jail was much more “low key” than state prison, the officers try their best to be courteous, but they are “by the rules”. When asked what she would like to see, she stated that she would like more time for counseling. A counselor comes each Friday, but the session is very short, often 15 minutes. She has also taken advantage of AA counselors, who visit on Sunday. When asked how often she got outside work duties, she stated that it was very limited for the women inmates, less than once per several months, and that they also did not usually get their three hours per week in the recreation “cage”. She stated that both were probably due to the lack of female officers. She said that the inmates’ handbook was helpful in understanding the rules.

The male inmate was not from Mono County, and although he is a “trustee” and works in the kitchen, serves food, and also works in the laundry, he is lonely and misses his family and friends in San Diego. He has been on the inmate work program for eight months, and feels that there should be more “straight ground rules” for all, stating that “some work more than others”. He also said that the guards here were better than in San Diego, where “you hated them”. The Bridgeport Jail is much smaller and more monotonous, according to him.

**Follow-ups from 12/13 Grand Jury tour:**

1. **12/13 Finding:** The Grand Jury found that the Jail and Juvenile Hall are clean and well maintained. Both operations have budgetary limitations but are working well within those limitations. Given the physical limitations and understaffing of the Jail, it seems to be very well run. The prisoners seem to be treated humanely. The Sheriff and Sergeant were professional, helpful and were rightfully proud of their operation.

**12/13 Recommendations:** None

**13/14 Finding:** The Grand Jurors found no change from 12/13 concerning the condition of the Jail and treatment of the prisoners. The comments from the two inmates who were interviewed, show that no matter how well Mono County operates its jail, not everyone will be happy.

2. **12/13 Finding:** The Grand Jury found that AB 109 has not yet seriously impacted the functions of the Jail. Staff, however, predict that the number of full-time prisoners will increase to 15 by the end of this year. There is a concern about mixing career criminals with those who have merely slipped up and the Grand Jury found that this problem will only become more extreme as the Jail houses more long-term inmates.





**12/13 Recommendation:** The County should be planning ahead to determine a viable solution to housing long-term inmates as a result of AB 109.

**13/14 Finding:** The Grand Jurors found no change from 12/13, other than there are now 4 women, at least two of whom are long-term inmates. The jail's capacity is 48, with occupancy ranging between 33-36, including 8 male long-term inmates.

3. **12/13 Finding:** The Grand Jury found that the Voluntary Work Assignment program is valuable to both inmates and the community, yet the amount of time that inmates can volunteer in this program is limited due to current staffing levels.

**12/13 Recommendation:** The Voluntary Work Assignments program (community service) is excellent and serves a useful purpose to society and gives inmates a sense of purpose. The outdoor work is healthy, both mentally and physically. With additional staff, the program could be expanded to 7 days a week and the Grand Jury recommends that additional staff be hired for this purpose.

**13/14 Finding:** The Grand Jurors found that one additional staff has been hired with AB109 (CCP) funding. Generally, 2 days per week are spent in the North County, and two days per week in the south county. It appears that the women inmates do not have as much opportunity to participate in this program, likely because of the small number of women inmates and lack of women officers.

4. **12/13 Finding:** The Grand Jury found that there are only two cook staff members and when one is sick or on vacation, the other staff person must work additional and/or consecutive days to ensure that the inmates are fed.

**12/13 Recommendation:** A third cook, possibly as a part-time position if feasible, should be hired to allow the 2 current cooks regular time-off and to fill-in during emergencies.

**13/14 Finding:** The Grand Jurors found no change from 12/13.

5. **12/13 Finding:** The Grand Jury found that during non-business hours, the Jail and Dispatch operations have limited staff which could pose a concern for both inmates and Jail employees. The Grand Jury found that minimum Jail staffing of two persons on a shift at one time seems low, especially when one of the staff is the 911 operator and dispatcher.

**12/13 Recommendation:** The Grand Jury recommends that a minimum staffing standard should be established and adhered to as a matter of safety for both inmates and Jail employees. Additional staff should be hired.

**13/14 Finding:** The Grand Jurors found no change from 12/13. During the day other personnel are often present or available, but during evening hours it is rare that anyone else is present other than one dispatcher and one jailer. The dispatcher cannot leave that post to serve as a backup, which presents a very serious safety issue for the jailer. Two recent assault incidents (not during the evening) emphasized the critical importance of having at least one extra person available to assist.

6. **12/13 Finding:** the Grand Jury learned that the 911 Dispatch system and the prison electronic controls systems are reaching the end of their life expectancy. The Board of Supervisors is aware of the need to replace these systems; however, replacement funding has not yet been implemented.



**12/13 Recommendation:** The 911 Dispatch and Computer Control System replacement will have to be addressed soon and will be a significant cost to the County. As a result, the Grand Jury recommends the County should be budgeting now and planning ahead for this eventuality.

**13/14 Finding:** The Grand Jurors found that the dispatch and computer control system have been completely replaced, with funding from AB109 (CCP), and the new equipment is a big improvement.

7. **12/13 Finding:** The Grand Jury found that the lack of physical and mental recreation and classroom learning opportunities for the inmates needs to be mitigated, especially with the recent addition of long-term prisoners. The Jail, as it now stands, does not have available space for classrooms and the exterior exercise yard is small and depressing. The 3-5 hours of outside exercise per week is insufficient.

**12/13 Recommendation:** The Grand Jury therefore recommends funding for a classroom for inmates and outside additional space for outdoor programs, and plus an expansion of the existing Jail (or, ideally, a new facility).

**13/14 Findings:** The Grand Jurors found the following:

- The exercise yard has not changed, and while some inmates have more outside time now due to the expanded work program, those who do not participate in this program have only the State-required minimum 3 hours per week available to them in the exercise yard. The women may not have that much time, according to the female inmate, possibly because of the lack of women officers available to provide oversight.
- A work order is in progress to move the current Emergency Operations Center (EOC) from its current location (dining room) in the old Jail to a facility located nearby. Once this is completed, current planning is to convert the current EOC into a classroom training facility for inmates, with costs as yet unknown to do the remodeling.

**13/14 Recommendation:**

- Explore additional ways of adding books to the library
- Explore ways of adding training opportunities, using prisoners' skills whenever possible.

**Additional 13/14 findings and recommendations by the Grand Jurors:**

1. Counseling

One of the prisoners interviewed said that prisoners get very little counseling (approximately 15 minutes per week) to help them learn how to properly deal with life and avoid the mistakes that landed them in prison, once they are released.

**Recommendation:** Increase the amount of time for counseling for inmates who request it.

2. Changes in State law

The Sheriff spends considerable time in a conference call every week, learning about changes in state law that require compliance by the Jail. This is an additional burden placed upon the Sheriff by AB109.

**Recommendation:** None

3. Mono County Supervisors



Currently all departments are experiencing budget cuts. Understanding issues involving the effects AB109 on the Jail is important so that the Board can work more collaboratively with the Sheriff.

**Recommendation:** The new Board of Supervisors should receive a tour of the Jail, similar to the one given to the Grand Jury, focusing on the impacts of AB109.

**County Response:** *The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented by the end of 2015.*

**Probation Department Tour:** After the interviews, the Grand Jurors met with the Chief Probation Officer in the Probation Department facility. That facility is also used as a temporary holding facility (maximum 96 hours hold) for juveniles. Six Probation Officers, including two “lead officers in-training” work out of the Mammoth Lakes office. The Chief Probation Officer had previously been a warden in a state prison in a “death row” facility, and stated that the “poster child for the Mono County jail” is a young male, 25’ish, white drug user. Because of split sentences, many of these come over to probation after serving some of their time in the Jail.

**Follow-ups from 12/13 Grand Jury tour:**

8. **12/13 Finding:** The Grand Jury found that the CASA program is highly effective in Inyo County in working with juveniles, and that building upon this program in Mono County could be beneficial.

**12/13 Recommendation:** The Grand Jury recommends the establishment of a County wide Juvenile Services Advisory Board. The Grand Jury also recommends funding and encouraging the CASA program by offering training and volunteer recruitment.

**13/14 Finding:** The Grand Jurors found that the CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) program is now established, under contract with Wild Iris. Two juveniles are now in the program, and two others have been placed in foster homes.

9. **12/13 Finding:** The Grand Jury found that there is no statewide database for probationers or juveniles, which means that there is no inter-county exchange of information. In fact, this prevents the Department from communicating with the Court itself.

**12/13 Recommendation:** None

**13/14 Finding:** The Grand Jurors found that while the statewide database is still not in place, Mono County now has an inter-county system between the Court, Sheriff’s Department, and Mammoth Lakes Police Department. The District Attorney’s office is not yet automated.

**Recommendation:** Continue to improve the system of data exchange, including the District Attorney’s office and the Probation Department, if it is not already a part.

**County Response:** *The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, by the end of fiscal year 2015-16.*

10. **12/13 Finding:** The Grand Jury found that there are approximately 130 drug offenders on probation, yet there are no resources such as half-way houses available in Mono County. The Grand Jury found that the Probation Department was under-staffed which limits the amount of contact dedicated to each probationer.





**12/13 Recommendation:** The Grand Jury recommends hiring two to three additional Probation Officers as each Probation Officer currently has a large caseload (80-130 cases). Additional staff would insure that more home visitations occur.

**12/13 Recommendation:** The Grand Jury recommends that the County seek funding for a halfway house, similar to the one once located in Mammoth Lakes.

**13/14 Findings of the Grand Jurors:**

- The Probation Department now has six officers, and two are “lead officers” in training.
- The sale of the old halfway house in Mammoth Lakes has been held up due to a breach of contract issue, and therefore no progress has been made recently.

11. **12/13 Finding:** The Grand Jury found that the front door to the Juvenile Hall/Probation facility is not sufficiently secured. The Grand Jury also found that the facility lobby is open and there is no physical barrier to prevent irate individuals from accessing staff and/or the facility.

**12/13 Recommendation:** The Grand Jury recommends providing security in the existing Juvenile Hall/Probation building by constructing a counter/partition in the lobby area and strengthening the exterior door locking mechanism.

**13/14 Findings by the Grand Jurors:**

- The Grand Jurors found that security is somewhat improved, in that the front door is permanently locked, with a peephole and a doorbell.
- There is still no physical barrier to prevent irate individuals from accessing staff and/or the rest of the facility.

**13/14 Recommendation:** The Grand Jury recommends that a physical, locking barrier be installed in the lobby, and an electronic release mechanism for the front door so that the employee does not have to go to the door to open it.

***County Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, by the end of fiscal year 2015-16.***