

2025 - 2026

Sutter County Grand Jury



Annual Report

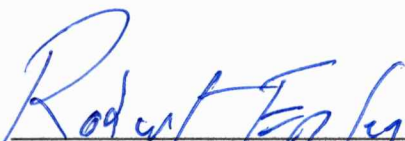
Superior Court of California
County of Sutter

Final Report


of the

2025-2026

Sutter County Grand Jury



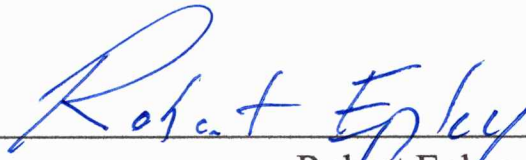
Robert Epley, Foreperson



Honorable David I. Ashby,
Presiding Judge

Report
of the 2025-2026
Sutter County Grand Jury

Curt Aikens, Sean Donovan, Robert Epley, Jenny Jarvis, Susan Korose,
Amanda Lagunas, Heriberto Lagunas, Jennifer Lowden, Alan Malecha,
Dawn McGee, Barry Milligan, Barbara Nolan, Joel Phelps, Christopher
Ramey, Wanda Short



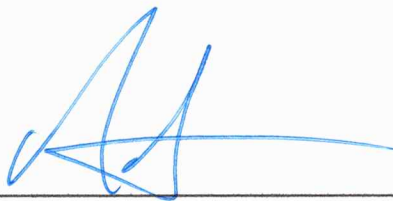
Robert Epley

2025-2026 Sutter County Grand Jury Foreperson

5/19/26

Date

Pursuant to California Penal Code Section 933(a), the Presiding Judge makes
the findings that the foregoing report is in compliance with Title 4, Chapter 3
of the California Penal Code (“Powers and Duties of the Grand Jury”)



Honorable David I. Ashby, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, County of Sutter

5/20/26

Date

April 27, 2026

Honorable David I. Ashby
Presiding Judge
Honorable Fritzgerald A. Javellana

Sutter County Superior Court
1175 Civic Center Blvd.
Yuba City, California 95993

On behalf of the members of the 2025-26 Grand Jury I submit the 2025-26 Grand Jury Report.

What the Report does not spell out is the countless hours of service provided by each of the members of the Grand Jury in investigating the issues contained in the Report as well as other investigations that were undertaken. I watched in amazement during the year at how many hours members of the Jury, some with full time occupations, volunteered without hesitation.

The Report does not also show the support given by the Court, Court Staff as well as the employees of the County of Sutter and Yuba City.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert C. Epley
Foreperson



Curt Aikens

Sean Donovan

Robert Epley - Foreperson

Jenny Jarvis

Susan Korose

Amanda Lagunas

Heriberto Lagunas

Jennifer Lowden - Secretary

Alan Malecha - Pro Tem

Dawn McGee

Barry Milligan

Barbara Nolan

Joel Phelps

Christopher Ramey

Wanda Short

Grand Jury Approval

California Penal Code § 933(a) states:

“Each grand jury shall submit to the presiding judge of the superior court a final report of its findings and recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year...”

In conformance with the aforementioned Penal Code requirement, the 2025-2026 Sutter County Grand Jury approves and respectfully submits the report to the Honorable David I. Ashby, Presiding Judge, Superior Court of California, County of Sutter.

Curt Aikens

Alan Malecha - Pro Tem

Sean Donovan

Dawn McGee

Robert Epley - Foreperson

Barry Milligan

Jenny Jarvis

Barbara Nolan

Susan Korose

Joel Phelps

Amanda Lagunas

Christopher Ramey

Heriberto Lagunas

Wanda Short

Jennifer Lowden - Secretary

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2025-2026 Grand Jury Title Page	i
Final Report Submittal	ii
Letter to Judges	iii
2025-2026 Sutter County Grand Jury	iv
2025-2026 Grand Jury Approval	v

REPORTS

Continuity	1
Agricultural Department	24
Detention Facilities	35
Health and Human Services	37

Sustaining Progress: Continuity Report On Grand Jury Recommendations



Sustaining Progress: Continuity Report On Grand Jury Recommendations

Summary

The 2025-2026 Sutter County Grand Jury reviewed the responses to the investigative reports issued by the 2024-2025 Grand Jury to assess compliance with California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05. The reports and responses of these investigative reports can be accessed at the following website or is available at the Sutter County library.

<https://www.suttercourts.com/general-info/grand-jury/reports>.

Grand Jury investigations have little value unless recommendations are taken seriously by responding entities and are addressed in a manner transparent to the public.

The 2025-2026 Grand Jury reviewed the responses of each agency that were investigated in the 2024-2025 report findings and recommendations.

Glossary

Airport Capital Improvement Plan (ACIP): Document managed by Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) that outlines capital needs of airports in the United States.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP): Includes all active airport projects to be undertaken in the next 5 years and their expected completion date.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Provides federal funding to support community development projects, primarily benefitting low- and medium-income individuals and communities.

Director of Development Services (DDS): Provides permitting services, code enforcement, and public works infrastructure.

Sutter Buttes Regional Aviation Association (SBRAA): Local association for ongoing operation of the Sutter County Airport.

Acronyms

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)	Sutter County Health and Human Services (SCHH)
Board of Supervisors (BOS)	Yuba City Unified School District (YCUSD)
Yuba City Police Department (YCPD)	Systemic Safety Analysis Report (SSAR)
Health and Human Services (HHS)	Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
Friday Night Live (FNL)	Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)
Substance Use Block Grant (SUBG)	Behavioral Health Information Notices (BHIN)
Substance Use Disorders (SUD)	Sutter County Superintendent of Schools (SCSOS)
The Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC)	
California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)	
California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)	
Sutter County Children & Families Commission (SCCFC)	

Background

California Penal Code § 933(a) requires the Grand Jury to “submit to the presiding judge of the superior court a final report of its Findings and Recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year.” Governing bodies are required to respond to the Findings and Recommendations directed to them within 90 days of the release of a Grand Jury’s report. Elected County Officials are required to respond within 60 days. (PC § 933(c)). This Compliance and Continuity Report focuses on the Penal Code requirements for responding to the Recommendations.

Discussion

The 2025-2026 Grand Jury reviewed these six 2024-2025 reports:

- Airport - Federal Funding Flies Elsewhere
- Audit - Audit Results Halt Future Program Funding
- Education - Safer Streets - Safer Kids
- Human Services - Better Community Connections = Better Community Health
- Jail - Toured and Released
- Juvenile Hall - Tri-County Youth Development Center and Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center

The 2025-2026 Grand Jury then evaluated the responses to the 2024-2025 Grand Jury recommendations to ensure compliance with (PC Penal Code § 933.05(b)).

2025-2026 Grand Jury Review of the 2024-2025 Grand Jury Reports.

The recommendations and responses were copied verbatim from the past documents; followed by 2025-2026 Grand Jury evaluation.

Federal Funding Flies Elsewhere

2024-2025 Recommendations

R1. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of Development Services to develop a CIP and ACIP for Sutter County Airport by January 31, 2026.

R2. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors amend the Facilities Management Agreement between Sutter County and SBRAA to allow SBRAA to be partners in developing plans, CIP, and ACIP documentation for Sutter County Airport, including being present for discussions with FAA regarding these documents by March 13, 2026.

R3. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of Development Services to present the CIP and ACIP for the Sutter County Airport to FAA by the next annual ACIP meeting with FAA in April 2026.

R4. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of Development Services to work with County Counsel and the District Attorney to develop a corrective action plan to allow Sutter County Airport to become compliant with grant assurances and eligible to apply for Federal grant funding by December 31, 2026.

Responses to 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report from the Board of Supervisors

R1. This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, by January 31, 2026.

R2. This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, since SBRAA members have always been provided with an opportunity to assist in the preparation of the CIP and ACIP documentation for the Sutter County Airport. Prior ACIP submittals to the FAA have been fully endorsed by the SBRAA at their respective monthly meetings. Additionally, SBRAA members have been offered the opportunity to speak at the Board of Supervisors meeting where the ACIP was presented prior to submission to the FAA. Finally, SBRAA members have been offered the opportunity to attend past meetings with the FAA, and they declined. The Facilities Management Agreement does not require amendment.

R3. This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future by, April 2027. Because the ACIP will be prepared by January 2026, and the FAA requires ACIP submittals in the Fall of each year, it will be submitted in November 2026, with an expected meeting with the FAA by April 2027 for review.

R4. This recommendation requires further analysis since the corrective action plan may require an FAA land release to address land use issues at the airport. The FAA guidance documents explain that a land release can take 2-3 years. The Director of Development Services can initiate the discussion with the FAA about the land release process by December 31, 2026.

2025-2026 Grand Jury Evaluation of Responses

The required responses were timely submitted and in accordance with PC § 933(c). The Board of Supervisors response to previous 2024-2025 Grand Jury airport recommendations were generally reasonable although actions were not verified. The most recent ACIP on the SBRAA website was dated 2012-2016. Additional follow up is recommended for R1, R3, and R4.

Audit Results Halt Future Program Funding

2024-2025 Recommendations

R1. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Sutter County BOS directs the DSD Director to engage the Sutter County Treasurer - Tax Collector to determine the feasibility of collecting these outstanding CDBG funds by September 20, 2025.

Regarding the legally collectable funds, county staff shall start implementing the multiple options available to the Sutter County Treasurer - Tax Collector, as noted in Findings #3, to collect the outstanding CDBG monies owed to Sutter County by December 30, 2025. If the DSD' CDBG funds are deemed not collectable by the Sutter County Treasurer - Tax Collector, on or before March 30, 2026, the BOS should declare the outstanding funds uncollectable and direct staff to terminate efforts to collect funds and remove outstanding balances from Sutter County's budget by June 30, 2026.

R2. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct the Sutter County Development Services Department Director to prepare a CDBG Annual Report to the Sutter County Grand Jury and the Board of Supervisors that documents actions being taken to ensure that the 28 loans in CDBG program are in legal compliance. The request shall be completed by October 1, 2025.

Responses to 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report from the Board of Supervisors

R1. The Recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, by September 30, 2025. The Treasurer - Tax Collector's Office can advise the Development Services Department about the legal process to research property ownership and the methods to collect on defaulted loans.

R2. This Recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, by September 30, 2025. In subsequent years, the CDBG Annual Report will be presented to the Board of Supervisors and Sutter County Grand Jury by September 30th.

2025-2026 Grand Jury Evaluation of Responses

The required responses were timely submitted and in accordance with PC § 933(c). The BOS indicated the recommendation would be implemented by September 30, 2025. The DDS mailed multiple collection letters to delinquent borrowers and physically inspected properties collateralizing subject loans. The County also engaged an outside firm to review the legal documentation supporting CDBG loans. The review noted a number of loans lacked sufficient documentation to support liens on loan collateral.

Safer Streets - Safer Kids

2024-2025 Recommendations

R1. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools, the Yuba City Unified School District's Governing Board, and the Franklin School District Board of Directors, adopt a formal and automated traffic incident reporting procedure with reporting automatically sent to and included in Yuba City Police Department's and Sutter County Sheriff's Office's annual traffic incident reports by the start of the 2026 -2027 school year.

R2. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends that the Yuba City Council instruct the Yuba City Police Chief to increase enforcement of traffic and off-street parking violations along Butte House Road and Villa Avenue, bordering Tierra Buena Elementary School to the north and east respectively, that occur during the school's drop-off and pick-up times. A warning may be first issued to parents of the school's students, but traffic and parking violation enforcement should begin by the beginning of the 2025 - 2026 school year.

R3. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools, the Yuba City Unified School District's Governing Board, and Franklin Elementary School District's Board of Directors adopt a policy requiring all crossing guard employees, or volunteer crossing guards, undergo and maintain certified training for road crossings, including use of proper high-visibility vest and hand-signage, by the start of the 2025 - 2026 school year.

R4. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Sutter County Board of Supervisors and Yuba City Council adhere to and update relevant local traffic codes to include standardized traffic signage for all schools, including upgrading low - visibility signs to solar powered flashing warning signs placed for oncoming traffic by January 1, 2026.

R5. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors and the Yuba City Council to direct the Sutter County Development Services and Yuba City Public Works respectively, to update maintenance procedures for solar powered school traffic signs to include regular foliage trimming which blocks solar panels used for solar powered signs by January 1, 2026.

R6. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends that the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools and Yuba City Unified School District's Governing Board apply for "Safe Routes to Schools" grant funds to promote student walking and biking commute to their respective schools.

R7. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors, and the Yuba City Council direct the Sutter County Development Services and Yuba City Public Works' Director respectively, to conduct and complete "Blue Zone" studies for Yuba City Unified and Sutter County schools to improve community health surrounding those schools by January 20207.

Responses to 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report from the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools

R1: While we agree that the student safety is of the utmost important and encourage both the Franklin Elementary School District and Yuba City Unified School District to implement the reporting procedures recommended by the Report, my office has no authority or mechanism by which we can implement of force the individual districts to vote on, implement, or adhere to the policies or procedures recommended by the Report. As the County Superintendent of Schools, we provide fiscal oversight and support services to our districts, but the districts themselves, and their governing boards, are the entities and authorities who would have to draft, vote on, and implement the policy recommended by the Report.

R3: While we agree that the student safety is of the utmost important and encourage both the Franklin Elementary School District and Yuba City Unified School District to implement the employee training and certifications recommended by the Report, my office has no authority or mechanisms by which we can implement or force the individual districts to vote on, implement, or adhere to the policies or procedures recommended by the Report. We employ no crossing guard personnel, nor any volunteers in such a position, and have no authority to require the districts to implement the policies or training recommended by the Report.

R6: While we agree that the Board of Yuba City Unified and Franklin School, and any Sutter County school district for whom the “Safe Routes to Schools” grant fund would benefit, should look into this grant, SCSOS does directly oversee the schools for whom the grant monies would benefit. I, therefore, cannot fully agree or disagree with the implementation of this recommendation. My office will, however, encourage districts to look into the grant opportunities identified by the Report, and encourage the application for any such available funds to improve student safety and alternative methods of getting to school to cut down on traffic congestion.

Responses to 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report from Yuba City Unified School District

R1: As shared in Finding F-TB1, bus-related collisions are defined and governed by the California Vehicle Code-VEH 12517.1, and reported to the California Highway Patrol as required in the California Vehicle Code. Collisions occurring on streets surrounding district schools, not involving district vehicles, are managed by the individual citizens involved in the collision and outside the jurisdiction of the district.

Additionally, the district does not have the resources to create an “automated” traffic incident reporting system that would send reports automatically to YCPD and the Sutter County Sheriff’s office.

R3: YCUSD will implement annual crossing guard training for all crossing guards at the start of the 2025-2026 school year. Additionally, any crossing guards hired throughout the school year will take the training prior to starting in their position.

ALL YCUSD crossing guards are provided with high-visibility vests and hand signage. YCUSD crossing guards will be directed and reminded frequently that their high-visibility vests and hand signage are to be used whenever they are working in their crossing guard positions.

R6: Yuba City Unified School District has worked collaboratively with the City of Yuba City on Safe Routes to Schools grants in the past to provide the necessary infrastructure around our schools. The District has a current Wellness Policy and Wellness Committee to address the educational components to promote a healthier lifestyle. Additionally, the District has partnered with the Blue Zones Project and has several schools Blue Zones approved. Through this initiative, schools have formed “walking school buses” to promote walking to school as a healthy lifestyle choice.

The district leadership team will consider other opportunities to promote walking and biking to school through educational campaigns, events, and activities, as well as partnering with community agencies.

Responses to 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report from Franklin Elementary School District Board of Trustees

R1: The Franklin School District Board agrees with this recommendation in principle. We recognize the importance of accurate and consistent traffic incident reporting to ensure the safety of students, staff, and the community.

The District will begin researching automated reporting systems and collaborate with the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools, Yuba City Unified School District, the Yuba City Police Department, and the Sutter County Sheriff's Office to identify feasible solutions that align with our technological and fiscal capabilities.

Our goal is to have an implementation plan in place by the end of the 2025-2026 school year, to meet the Grand Jury's recommended timeline for full implementation by the 2026-2027 school year.

R3: The Franklin School District concurs with this recommendation. The District currently employs crossing guards who wear high-visibility vests and use appropriate hand signage to help ensure student safety.

To strengthen this practice, the District will develop and adopt a policy requiring all crossing guard personnel, whether employees or volunteers, to complete and maintain certified training in road crossing and safety, including the proper use of high-visibility apparel and hand-signage.

We will coordinate with local law enforcement to deliver this training. Our goal is to have this policy formally adopted and fully implemented before the start of the 2025-2026 school year, in alignment with the Grand Jury's recommendation.

Responses to 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report from Yuba City Council

R2. This recommendation has been implemented. The Yuba City Police Department communicates well with Yuba City Unified School District as well as independent schools to regularly target traffic related problems as all the schools (14 total, excluding preschools) in our jurisdiction. The Yuba City Police Department has two School Resource Officers assigned to the schools that also assist our Traffic and Patrol Units with this effort. The Police Department has a Student Driver Awareness Program that is run early in the school year, which targets student drivers near the High Schools. If a student is stopped and cited for a violation near the school, they have the option to attend an educational class in lieu of the citation going to the courts.

Since the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year, efforts have been put towards Tierra Buena School and the issues surrounding it, as staff time allows with our limited resources. Villa Ave. to the north and Butte House Rd. on the north side of Tierra Buena School lie in the Sutter County Sheriff's Department jurisdiction. City Municipal Codes do not apply in these areas. California Vehicle Code sections violated in these areas, however, can be enforced.

R4. The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not warranted. The City does not create local traffic codes for standardized school signage or other locations. The City designs improvement projects based on the most current version of the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD). The CA MUTCD is the State's standard for traffic signs, road markings, and traffic signals. It is developed by California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and is based on the national MUTCD but tailored for California's specific needs.

Further, the City cannot commit to upgrading all standard school signs to solar-powered warning signs by January 1, 2026. The cost of materials is nearly \$3,000 per sign (not including design and installation) and the City does not currently have a Capital Improvement Project programmed to fund such improvements. The City can commit to continual pursuit of grants which would provide funding for safety improvements (as warranted) at area schools, and creating upgrades as funding becomes available. Further, the City has multiple grant-funded projects which will create safety improvements in 2025.

The City's "Citywide Sign Audit and Upgrade Project" utilized the City's Systemic Safety Analysis Report (SSAR) to acquire grant funding from the Highway Safety Improvements Program (HSIP) for improvements. This project audited all City-owned signs within City limits in 2024. Through the audit project it was determined that 2,000 signs in City limits are out of

compliance with CA MUTCD. The project will replace the out-of-compliance signs. Construction is anticipated to begin in mid-to-late 2025.

The City's "Pedestrian Safety Crosswalk Upgrades Project" also utilized the City's SSAR to apply for HSIP Funding for improvements. This project will install 1.59 miles of crosswalk striping, 2 miles of traffic striping, and upgrade 42 curb ramps to ADA compliance. Most of these improvements will be in school zones. School areas to receive improvements include April Lane Elementary, King Avenue Elementary, Gray Avenue Middle School, River Valley High School, Park Avenue Elementary, and Yuba City High School.

R5. The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. The City has limited maintenance staff for sign and electrical maintenance. Additionally, some of the locations have foliage from private properties covering the subject panels.

As such, the City will provide maintenance and repairs on an as-needed basis, on signs within City right-of-way when staff are available to perform the work. In the case which foliage from private properties is blocking panels, staff will coordinate with the property owners to have foliage trimmed in a reasonable timeline.

R7. The recommendation has been implemented. The City of Yuba City's Public Works Department has previously developed multiple plans which have goals of improving community safety, accessibility and promoting active transportation. These plans include: 2011 Bicycle Master Plan, 2012 ADA Transition Plan, 2020 Systemic Safety Analysis Report, 2020 Safe Routes to School Plan, and the 2023 Local Roadway Safety Plan. Further, the City is currently working with a consultant to develop an Active Transportation Plan, which will be a holistic plan that recommends safety and connectivity improvements for pedestrians and cyclists. All the aforementioned plans have been adopted by City Council and have been utilized by City staff to pursue eligible grant funds, construct safety improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, which ultimately would promote healthier and safer travel options for pedestrians, cyclists, and other modes of transportation within the City.

With respect to Blue Zones: In pursuit of the aforementioned grant funds, the City will typically request and receive support letters of Support from Blue Zones. The City has met with Blue Zones and will gladly collaborate with them on their future efforts to further improve health and safety in the City.

Responses to 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report from the Board of Supervisors

R4: This Recommendation requires further analysis, since the Sutter County Development Services Department relies upon the guidance outlined in Part 7 Traffic Control for School Areas of the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which is published and maintained by the California Department of Transportation, CalTrans. The department will conduct a survey of schools within the unincorporated County by the specified date of January 1, 2026 to confirm that all existing school signage complies with the guidance included in the MUTCD.

R5: This Recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future by the specified date of January 1, 2026.

R7: This Recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted, since most of the schools within the unincorporated County are rural and remote, requiring bus or parental vehicles for student drop-off and pick-up. The Sutter County Development Services Department has already conducted various traffic safety audits of the neighborhood schools within the County, such as Lincrest Elementary and Brittan Elementary. The other schools are such distance from residents that pedestrian and bicycle traffic has not been observed. The County has made various pedestrian enhancements through grant awards at Lincrest Elementary and Brittan Elementary with the addition of curb, gutter and sidewalk or paved walkway shoulders. The Department will complete the audit of school zone signage by January 2026 to ensure the safety of the students.

2025-2026 Grand Jury Evaluation of Responses

The required responses were timely submitted and in accordance with PC § 933(c). The 2025-2026 Grand Jury attempted to verify that the policy recommended in R3 was adopted and implemented however no response was received. Additional follow up is recommended for R1 and R3 with Franklin Elementary School District. Additional follow up is recommended for R4 and R5 with the BOS.

Better Community Connections = Better Community Health

2024-2025 Recommendations

R1. The Sutter County Grand Jury (SCGJ) recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors direct the Sutter County's Health and Human Services (SCHHS) to begin installation

and adoption of a hardline or mobile telephone system for all managerial staff that incorporates Mailbox and Callback capabilities by January 2026.

R2. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct SCHHS to publish an on-line Personnel Directory with accessible phone numbers and office addresses of all senior management staff to facilitate public access to programs and their respective managers by January 2026.

R3. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct SCHHS to explore the use of GPS tracking systems for its staff that are serving clients outside the office and are community-based, as both a personal security measure and to provide collaboration to their staff's reported direct client service time allocations by January 2026. This is particularly important as many SCHHS staff have not returned to full-time office status in the post-covid working environment.

R4. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors acknowledge that the successful First 5 program and, with the consent of the Sutter County Children's and Families Commission, instruct the Zero-to-Five program to move back into a community-accessible brick-and-mortar office space by June 2026.

R5. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct SCHHS to create a community health report in "dashboard" format that uses annual standardized reporting metrics on health and well-being indicators that is easily accessible to Sutter County residents by June 2026.

R6. Friday Night Live has proven to be a youth-energizing and community-inclusive program that should be expanded to other Sutter County Schools. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct SCHHS to dedicate more staffing time and program resources to expand this program beyond the two rural schools currently hosting it by the start of the 2025-2026 school year.

R7. SCHHS is underspending on its State Health Care Services/Substance Abuse Disorder Division's block grant allocation for community-based alcohol and drug prevention services. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct SCHHS to increase its budget to underwrite more Friday Night Live programs and verified community-based alcohol and drug prevention programs by October 2026.

R8. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct the Director of SCHHS to review community-based alcohol and drug prevention services budget to ensure it is adhering to State Substance Use Disorder Division's budget allocation requirements.

R9. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct the Director of SCHHS to identify additional staff, currently used in direct client treatment services, that can be trained in community-based prevention services, planning and delivery by January 2026. At present, no SCHHS staff appear to have any competency in this area of community-based alcohol and drug prevention services planning and delivery.

Responses to 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report from the Board of Supervisors

R1. This recommendation has been implemented. HHS currently has 88 desk phones in use by managers and supervisors and 93 cell phones. All phones have callback and voicemail capabilities.

R2. This recommendation has been implemented. To access the public directory at the Sutter County website, click on the link below, and then under "Contact" |Health and Human Services (HHS) Sutter County, CA.

R3. This recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Sutter County HHS will work with Sutter County Human Resources, County Counsel, General Services and affiliated employee unions to consider implementation of GPS tracking for County Cars used by HHS personnel in the course of their work. This will include analysis of funding required in the HHS budget to complete this activity, and if not cost prohibitive, will be implemented in Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

R4. This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or not reasonable. On August 7, 2025, the Sutter County Children & Families Commission (SCCFC) held a publicly noticed special meeting to review the Grand Jury's Recommendation R4. After a thorough evaluation of the recommendation and extensive discussion regarding operational, fiscal, and service delivery implications, the Commission respectfully disagrees with the recommendation and offers the following rationale to support its position.

Since March 2020, SCCFC has operated under a permanent, Commission-approved field-based service model designed to enhance access, equity, and efficiency. In August 2020, the Commission formally authorized remote work as a standard operational approach. In January

2021, SCCFC subleased its central office space to another County department following a strategic reassessment of service delivery needs and infrastructure usage.

This model, reaffirmed in 2021 following input from families, community partners, and staff, has significantly expanded the Commission’s reach and impact. By eliminating reliance on a fixed office location, SCCFC has been able to deliver services directly in the community, meeting families where they are: in schools, libraries, parks, health clinics, museums, and other trusted settings.

Demonstrated Impact:

Since the implementation of this model, SCCFC has more than doubled the number of children and caregivers served annually:

Fiscal Year	Individuals Served
2020-21	12,621
2021-22	15,413
2020-23	34,109
2023-24	33,548

This growth illustrates how community-based service delivery has enhanced accessibility, trust, and relevance, particularly for rural, system-involved, and underserved families.

Governance and Accountability Framework:

The field-based model is governed by policies developed in collaboration with Sutter County Counsel and Human Resources. Key components include:

- Formal Remote Work Policy and signed Telework Agreements
- Commission-insured home-based workstations with secure equipment
- Weekly check-ins, shared calendaring, and activity tracking
- Safety monitoring protocols and clear performance expectations

These measures ensure staff accountability, service continuity, and operational transparency.

Fiscal Responsibility and Sustainability:

With declining Proposition 10 revenue, projected to comprise less than 39% of SCCFC's FY 2025-26 budget, and a statutory 20% administrative cost cap, the Commission must prioritize investments in direct services. Reinstating a central office would divert essential funds towards:

- Rent or lease fees
- Utilities, janitorial, and pest control
- Building maintenance and A-87 overhead
- Security and administrative facility support

Such expenses would not be reimbursable under most public or grant funding sources and would reduce the Commission's ability to meet the needs of young children and their families.

Continued Community Leadership:

SCCFC remains an active leader in early childhood systems transformation, delivering high-quality, evidence-based programs such as:

- Home visiting and parenting education (e.g., Incredible Years)
- Community Health Worker outreach, development screenings, and navigation
- Perinatal and maternal mental health programs
- Child safety initiatives, including car seats, bike helmets, and life jackets
- Basic needs support (e.g., diaper distribution)
- Multi-disciplinary team coordination and trauma-informed care
- Community referral systems, including the FindHelp platform
- Provider education, policy engagement, and systems-building efforts

These initiatives are only possible due to the Commission's ability to remain lean, responsive, and focused on what matters most: impactful, equitable service delivery.

We respectfully request that the Board of Supervisors support the Commission's decision to maintain its current field-based model and formally disagree with Recommendation R4. A detailed letter to the Board, summarizing the Commission's August 7, 2025, special meeting and rationale, is attached as Attachment P.

R5. This recommendation has been implemented. HHS's community dashboard accessible to the public and inclusive of health and wellbeing metrics is accessible via Public Health's website here:

<https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/health-and-human-services/public-health/data-and-reports>.

R6. This recommendation has been implemented. HHS has made efforts to and will continue to strive to expand FNL to additional schools in Sutter County. This includes pursuing the establishment of FNL programs on school campuses, researching a community-based FNL chapter and providing stipends to school advocates. Significant staffing and program resources have been and will continue to be expended in an effort to expand FNL and serve more students.

R7. This recommendation has been implemented. As noted in the response to item F6, HHS has expended virtually all the prevention and FNL funds received in compliance with DHCS standards and requirements.

R8. This recommendation has been implemented. The SUBG Prevention allocation is established by DHCS and communicated to counties through formal approval letters and BHINs. Per BHIN 22-057, "U.S.C. Title 42, Section 300x-22(a) requires the State to spend a minimum of 20 percent of its total SABG Award on primary prevention services. For SFY 2022-23 and 2023-24, California continues to prioritize prevention, which is defined as strategies, programs and services directed at individuals who have not been determined to require treatment for SUD.

As a result, DHCS continues to allocate each county's Primary Prevention Set-Aside amount to equal 25 percent of their total allocation for each SFY. The increase in county Primary Prevention Set-Aside from 20 percent to 25 percent is part of an effort to ensure that California meets federal requirements, particularly those concerning prevention spending. HHS develops its Prevention and FNL budgets in alignment with the approved allocations provided by DHCS.

For Prevention, SCHHS receives an annual allocation of \$304,790, which meets the 25% Prevention Set-Aside requirement established by DHCS. This amount is calculated and determined by DHCS. For FY 22-23 and FY 23-24, HHS has spent approximately 99% of the total Prevention Set-Aside allocation, totaling nearly \$605,900 in claims.

HHS remains committed to the effective, compliant, and strategic use of SUBG funds to support and enhance substance use prevention services within our community.

R9. This recommendation has been implemented. HHS employs a team of prevention staff who regularly participate in available training opportunities provided by DHCS. As an example, in February 2025, staff attended the Advanced Behavioral Health: Action Lab Regional Training Conference, which focused on expanding and sustaining the SUD prevention workforce, sharing prevention success stories and narratives, strengthening the emphasis on health equity in prevention services, and advocating for the critical role of SUD prevention within the broader behavioral health system.

Additionally, assigned SYBH staff attend the annual Friday Night Live Leadership Institute which is designed to equip FNL coordinators, staff, advocates and supporters with effective strategies and best practices for strengthening FNL youth leadership programs and utilizing prevention strategies for both youth underage drinking and cannabis use.

Finally, the Prevention Program Supervisor, who is a certified substance use disorder counselor, regularly stays updated on changes and developments in SUD prevention services by attending the monthly Statewide SUBG Prevention Service Coordinators meeting sponsored by the California Behavioral Health Director's Association and attended by representatives from DHCS. The SUD Prevention Program Supervisor uses the information and insights gained from these meetings to train, support and guide the SUD prevention team.

2025-2026 Grand Jury Evaluations of Responses

Required responses were received timely and were in accordance with PC § 933(c). There are no recommendations.

Toured and Released Jail Report

R1. The SCGJ recommends the Sutter County Sheriff's office work with Sutter County Facilities and Development Services as well as Board of Supervisors to begin phasing in the repairs of the outdated cooling system inside the jail this fiscal year or the beginning of Fiscal Year 2026.

R2. The SCGJ recommends the Sutter County Sheriff's office address the remaining ligature points (pipe enclosures) within the jail addressed by the BSCC. The SCGJ also recommends the Sutter County Sheriff's office seek funding for the retrofitting of the grill gates through the Board of Supervisors this fiscal year or the beginning of Fiscal Year 2026.

R3. The SCGJ recommends the Sutter County Sheriff develop a plan to address a more permanent solution and work with the Sutter County Board of Supervisors to obtain funding to support the maintenance of the roof project. The SCGJ recommends this plan be in place by the beginning of Fiscal Year 2027.

R4. The SCGJ recommends completing the multi-phased lighting project by the end of this Fiscal Year 2026.

R5. The SCGJ recommends completing the Jail Flooring Project to assist in mitigating slip and fall accidents by the end of Fiscal Year 2025. If additional funding is needed to complete this project, the Grand Jury recommends requesting funds through the Board of Supervisors by the end of this Fiscal Year 2025.

R6. No Recommendations.

R7. The Grand Jury recommends continuing routine maintenance to keep the shower areas in working order.

Responses to 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report from Sutter County Sheriff's Office

R1: Sutter County contracted with Kitchell CEM for an assessment of the HVAC project. This contract was approved by the Board of Supervisors on March 26th, 2024. On September 4th, 2024, Kitchell conducted a visual assessment of the mechanical, plumbing, and electrical equipment to obtain deficiency evaluations, propose corrective and maintenance recommendations, recommend energy saving improvements, and prepare budget estimates for the corrective work for the facility. The Sheriff's Office received the Kitchell CEM's assessment report from Development Services in January of 2025. The assessment report cost summary provided an estimated cost of approx. \$14,774,131. This estimate has been provided to the County Administrator's Office for review.

Since January 2025 the Sheriff's Office, Sutter County Facilities, and Development Services have held several meetings to develop strategies to split the project into 3 phases, to access better funding opportunities and a development project plan. At this point, we are in the final stages of concluding the plans to reach out and secure potential funding sources. This project will be ongoing over multiple years.

R2: The Sutter County Sheriff's Office has allocated \$185,000 for a grill gate retrofit project during FY 25/26. This initiative will involve the installation of durable polycarbonate/Lexan material, incorporating ventilation holes and corrections-grade fasteners to ensure security and functionality. The work on this project is set to commence in the first quarter of FY25/26.

Additionally, pipe enclosures for sinks and toilets have been ordered, received, and are partially installed, with final completion dependent on maintenance scheduling. To enhance safety, potential ligature points - such as shelves and hooks - have been replaced with ligature -resistant shelving and towel holders. Furthermore, wiring throughout the facility has been securely covered to minimize ligature risks, contributing to a safer environment overall.

R3: The Sheriff's Office has partnered with county maintenance staff and outside vendors over the past few months to complete the roof repair over the maximum-security hallways. This work successfully sealed the gaps between the stem walls where the concrete roof meets the concrete walls. This was done at a cost of \$6000.

However, additional repairs are still needed to ensure long-term stability and prevent leaks in the roof. The estimated cost for completing these remaining repairs is \$24,000. The Sheriff's Office will be working with the County Administration and the Board of Supervisors to locate potential funding sources to complete the necessary repairs.

R4: The Sutter County Sheriff's Office has utilized funds from previous budget cycles to procure 112 dimmable lighting fixtures from a national correctional lighting distributor. As the final phase of facility-wide lighting upgrades, this project will specifically address issues with the Max tank, I-Block, holding cells, hallways and female holding cells, which will address all deficient areas within the jail. These enhancements are designed to improve both morale and safety throughout the facility. Installation is scheduled for the first quarter of the FY 25/26.

R5: The facility's flooring project has been successfully completed. Epoxy coating has been applied throughout previously painted floor areas, including block housing and showers, holding cells, female holding cells, and all hallways. To enhance safety, a non-slip coating was used in areas prone to frequent moisture, such as cells and shower spaces. Additionally, ventilation has been improved through vent cleaning, the use of fans, and enhanced cleaning measures.

R6: There is no response required as there was no recommendation requested by the Grand Jury.

R7: The shower areas have been incorporated into a regular maintenance schedule to ensure consistent upkeep and functionality. As part of this initiative, showerheads have been carefully adjusted to optimize water flow, ensuring sufficient and evenly distributed water streams. This adjustment enhances user experience while promoting water efficiency. Additionally, routine inspections will be conducted to identify and address any potential issues, such as clogs, leaks, or pressure inconsistencies, ensuring the long-term reliability of the facility's shower system.

Responses to 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report from the Board of Supervisors

R1: This recommendation has been partially implemented. The Board of Supervisors authorized a contract in March 2024 with a consultant, Kitchell CEM, which is experienced in California jail and prison construction and remodels to assess the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems of the Main Jail and the Medium Jail. The consultant has prepared a series of cost estimates for the projects to replace and upgrade the various building systems for the two jail structures. The Sheriff's Office is seeking available funding from sources other than Sutter County to begin the projects and it is expected that at least one update project will be underway Fiscal Year 2025-26.

R2: This recommendation has been partially implemented and should be completed during Fiscal Year 2025-26. The Board of Supervisors approved \$185,000 to the Sheriff's Office for a grill gate retrofit project. This initiative will involve the installation of durable polycarbonate/Lexan material, incorporating ventilation holes and corrections-grade fasteners to ensure security and functionality. This work is scheduled to begin the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2025-26.

Additionally, pipe enclosures for sinks and toilets have been ordered, received and are partially installed, with final completion dependent on maintenance scheduling. To enhance safety, potential ligature points have been replaced with ligature-resistant shelving and towel holders. Wiring throughout the facility has been securely covered to minimize ligature risks, contributing to a safer environment overall.

R3: This recommendation has not been implemented but a plan to identify the necessary funding for the phased replacement of the roof will be prepared by September 2026. The plan will include long-term funding sources for the roof's replacement as a capital project, and may incorporate development impact fees, grants, and potential sales tax measure.

R4: The Board of Supervisors is not required or invited to respond to the Recommendation.

R5: The Board of Supervisors is not required or invited to respond to the Recommendation.

R6: The Board of Supervisors is not required or invited to respond to the Recommendation.

R7: The Board of Supervisors is not required or invited to respond to the Recommendation.

2025-2026 Grand Jury Evaluations of Responses

Required responses were received timely and in accordance with PC § 933(c).

**Tri-County Youth Development Center and Maxine Singer Youth
Guidance Center**

The 2024-2025 SCGJ report had no negative findings and no recommendations relating to Tri-County Youth Development Center and Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center, therefore no response was required from the Sutter County Board of Supervisors.

Cultivating Compliance: A Review of Sutter County's Agricultural Operations



SUMMARY

The Sutter County Grand Jury investigated the Sutter County Agricultural Department to learn how it operates and to answer community concerns. One of these concerns was a complaint filed regarding Industrial Hemp and the way it was handled during a Board of Supervisors meeting.

The Sutter County Agricultural Department meets its mission to support local farming, protect the environment, and ensure fair prices for shoppers. The staff members we interviewed care a lot about their work and provide a great public service to the county. The department works well with other government groups and does a good job of answering complaints from citizens. They also provided strong support to the county when the County Board of Supervisors banned Industrial Hemp during the December 16, 2025 meeting.

While the department is doing well overall, the Grand Jury found two areas where it can improve its internal operations. First, the Grand Jury finds the department needs to create a clear, written guide to show clearly how it calculates fines for violating pesticide rules. Second, department leaders need to create a standard communication plan to tell staff when their daily work tasks change. Making these two changes will help the department run smoother and build trust with the public.

GLOSSARY

Agricultural Commissioner: Head of Sutter County Agricultural Department, the leader of the county department who enforces farming laws, environmental safety, and fair pricing.

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA): The state agency that supports farming and makes sure food and crops are safe.

California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR): The state agency that writes the rules for using substances to prevent, destroy or repel pests.

Notice of Proposed Action (NOPA): A formal letter sent by the county to a person or business that has violated a pesticide law or regulation. The NOPA explains which rule was violated and identifies the fine for the violation.

Pesticide violations: State law requires the County Agricultural Commissioner to group every pesticide violation into one of three classes. The class is chosen based on how much danger the mistake caused to people, property, or the environment. Class A violations occur when an action causes actual harm, involves a safety risk by someone with a history of violations, or ignores a direct legal order from the commissioner. Class B violations involve breaking a safety rule meant to prevent harm, but where no actual injury occurred and no aggravating factors were present. Class C violations cover minor administrative violations, like late paperwork, that do not directly impact the health of people, property or the environment.

Crop Report: Yearly summary provided by the Agricultural Commissioner.

Industrial Hemp: A crop used to make products like rope, cloth, and oil.

Pesticide: A general term for any substance used to control, destroy, or repel "pests." This includes insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, rodenticides, and even strong disinfectants.

Weights and Measures: This division is responsible for local enforcement of California Weights & Measures laws and regulations. Staff test equipment like grocery store scales and gas station pumps for accuracy.

BACKGROUND

The Sutter County Agricultural Department plays a vital role in supporting the local economy.

The department is led by the Agricultural Commissioner, who is appointed by the County Board of Supervisors to serve a four-year term. The department's mission is to promote local agriculture, protect the environment, safeguard public health and safety, and ensure a fair marketplace for consumers.

To achieve their mission, the department's staff work on multiple programs that affect the county:

- **Pest Exclusion and Management:** Department staff members work to prevent invasive insects, weeds, and plant diseases from entering or spreading through the county.
- **Pesticide Use Enforcement:** Department staff monitor how farmers and businesses use pesticides. This ensures the chemicals are used legally and safely without harming people, animals, or the environment.
- **Quality Control:** Department staff inspect crops, eggs, seeds, and plant nurseries to make sure they meet health and quality standards. These standards are set by several jurisdictions.
- **Weights and Measures:** Department staff test commercial scales and meters; like the scales at grocery checkout lines or the pumps at gas stations for accuracy.

The production of Industrial Hemp was a major topic of discussion in the community. At the time of the investigation, growing Industrial Hemp was still legally allowed by a county ordinance. It was decided that the Grand Jury would investigate Industrial Hemp production in the county. The Grand Jury received a complaint regarding local Industrial Hemp production, and the Agricultural Commissioner's statement that regulating the crop was a major concern of the Agricultural Department.

The Sutter County Agricultural Department is responsible for enforcing laws and regulations from the state and federal governments. This ensures that Sutter County meets the same high standards as the rest of the country. The department works closely with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). They follow the California Food and Agricultural Code to inspect seeds and crops. For things like pesticides, they follow federal laws like the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) and regulations from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR). These laws enforce the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations and DPR requirements to keep the air, water, and soil safe. When the Agricultural Department checks commercial scales, they use the standards set by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. This ensures that a pound of food in California weighs the exact same as a pound in any other state.

METHODOLOGY

The Sutter County Grand Jury investigated the Sutter County Agricultural Department to learn how it operates and to answer community concerns. The committee looked closely at three main areas: Industrial Hemp, weights and measures, and pesticide rules and pest exclusion programs.

These areas were chosen because they take up the most staff time and involve the most public contact.

Penal Code § 925 obligates Grand Juries to investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, or functions of the county. To meet our legal requirement the committee collected data and spoke with several officials. The following resources were accessed, meetings attended, interviews performed, and documents reviewed to develop this report:

- Meetings Attended
 - Sutter County Planning Commission meeting: November 19, 2025
 - Sutter County Board of Supervisors meeting: December 16, 2025
- Interviews
 - Staff of the Sutter County Agricultural Department
 - Staff of the Sutter County Sheriff's Department
- Documents Reviewed
 - Records of citizen pesticide complaints
 - Records of citizen weights and measures complaints
 - Reports showing the overall costs of managing hemp production in the county
 - Department organizational duties and charts
 - 2024-2025 Sutter County Crop and Livestock Report
 - Agricultural Department budget documents
 - Sutter County ordinances concerning Industrial Hemp

DISCUSSION

The Agricultural Department supports local agriculture and protects the environment. In 2024, Sutter County farms grew crops worth \$683,508,000. The top three crops were rice, walnuts, and tomatoes used for processing. The department also helped local farmers sell their crops all over the world. The county sent farm goods to eighty different countries. (CROP REPORT pg 3,16)

The staff run programs to keep the environment safe. They have had a free recycling program for empty pesticide containers since 2007. In 2024, they recycled 87,758 pounds of plastic. Since the program started, they have recycled 1,598,353 pounds of plastic. The department also supports organic farming. Sutter County now has twenty-three organic farms that cover 19,119 acres of land. (CROP REPORT pg 8-9)

The department tests scales and checks prices to make sure people are not overcharged and that the scales are accurate. Recently, they tested that equipment was operating correctly at 130 locations. They found that 96 percent of the stores were following the rules correctly. This shows that the department is working to protect both farmers and buyers.(CROP REPORT pg 8)

Industrial Hemp

In December 2025, the Sutter County Board of Supervisors voted to ban growing Industrial Hemp within Sutter County. This decision is supported by the Grand Jury's investigation. The Agricultural Department staff provided evidence to support this ban. Staff provided documentation of the money spent to enforce the new rules. Agricultural Department staff provided evidence of farmers who broke the rules and the additional costs incurred to destroy non-compliant crops or clean areas previously used for hemp production. Staff also described

additional concerns associated with their safety and costs associated with obtaining law enforcement security. The County's experience with Industrial Hemp has included additional costs with site cleanup and crop destruction.

Pesticide Regulation

When there is a DPR violation, the Agricultural Commissioner places the violation into one of three classes depending on the severity. The class is chosen based on how much danger the mistake caused to people, property, or the environment. Class A, with fines from \$700 to \$15,000, are violations that occur when an action causes actual harm, involves a safety risk by someone with a history of violations, or ignores a direct legal order from the commissioner. Class B, with fines from \$250 to \$3,000, are violations of a safety rule meant to prevent harm, but where no actual injury occurred and no aggravating factors were present. Class C, with fines from \$50 to \$400, are violations that cover minor administrative violations, like late paperwork, that do not directly impact the health of people or the environment.

The exact fine is determined by the Agricultural Commissioner on a case by case basis. When the county decides to fine someone, they send a formal letter called a Notice of Proposed Action (NOPA). The NOPA identifies the violation and the dollar amount of the fine. The Grand Jury reviewed several past NOPA documents to see how the department operates. When looking at the paperwork, it was not clear why certain fine amounts were chosen or how the final numbers were calculated. To understand the process better, the committee conducted interviews with department leadership. During these interviews, management stated that the department does not have a set guide, or rubric, for deciding these fine amounts.

Without a clear guide, the process can be confusing for the public. It also makes it hard to prove that the fines are uniformly applied. Creating a clear, written procedure would help citizens understand exactly how fines are calculated. Right now, the county's website does not have a clear guide to show how the fines are assessed.

Staff Communications

Staff communications could be improved regarding work assignments. The Agricultural Department handles many different areas requiring expertise and various certifications. During interviews, staff expressed concern that changes in work duties were not always communicated through their supervisors. Additional management communication of department missions and objectives might strengthen this area. Overall staff we interviewed communicated strong satisfaction with their positions.

FINDINGS

F1. There is no set clear standard for deciding pesticide fine amounts. When the committee reviewed past NOPA documents, it was not clear why specific fines were given or how the final dollar amounts were chosen.

F2. The Agricultural Department does not always follow its own written policies or duty statements when giving out work assignments. During interviews, some staff members reported being asked to perform tasks other than their typical job duties. This change in assignment did not come from the supervisor but rather from other department staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The Grand Jury recommends that the Agricultural Department create a clear standard for assessing pesticide fines. The Grand Jury also recommends that the Department include a procedure for how they chose the final dollar amount on every new NOPA document. This should be completed by January 31, 2027.

R2. The Grand Jury recommends that department leaders follow existing office policies and written duty statements when assigning work. This should be completed by October 31, 2026.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

The following responses are required, pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05:

From the following governing boards within 90 days:

Sutter County Board of Supervisors: Respond to Recommendations R1 and R2.

Invited responses

Responses are invited from the following within 90 days:

Sutter County Agricultural Commissioner: Respond to Recommendations R1 and R2.

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Detention Facility Inquires Statement



DETENTION FACILITY INQUIRIES STATEMENT

Overview

Penal Code section 919(b) obligates the grand jury to “inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county.” In 2022, the California Attorney General issued an opinion (No. 18-103) stating the term “public prisons” includes “local detention facilities,” and that a county or city jail is a typical example of such a local detention facility.

The purpose of this document is to provide information about how the Sutter County Grand Jury fulfilled this duty by conducting physical inspections of the facilities. The Grand Jury found no issues to report or to investigate.

While Penal Code Section 919(b) requires this inquiry, it does not require the grand jury to conduct an investigation or to write a report about local detention facilities. In fact, a report cannot be written based solely upon an inquiry. To write a report, a full investigation is required and all the facts in the report must be verified. (See Penal Code section 939.9)

LOCAL DETENTION FACILITIES WITHIN AND MANAGED BY SUTTER COUNTY

There are two local detention facilities within Sutter County managed by the county: A holding unit in a medical ward and the county jail. Additionally, there is one detention facility jointly-funded and managed by the counties of Yuba, Sutter and Colusa: A juvenile detention facility plus a connected rehabilitation program center. The Grand Jury fulfilled its duty to inquire into these facilities through a variety of methods.

- Tri-County Youth Development Center. On September 10, 2025, Grand Jurors were given an overview and tour of the facility by Yuba County Probation Department staff.
- Sutter County Jail. On September 17, 2025, Grand Jurors received an overview and tour from Sheriff’s Department staff.
- Sutter Yuba Behavioral Health Psychiatric Health Facility. On September 24, 2025, Grand Jurors received an overview and tour from Sutter Yuba Behavioral Health staff.
- Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center. On September 10, 2025 and November 10, 2025, Grand Jurors received an overview and tour provided by Yuba County Probation Department staff.

Sutter County Health and Human Services: Unity Through Adversity



SUTTER COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES: UNITY THROUGH ADVERSITY

Summary

Sutter County Health and Human Services (SCHHS), Sutter County's largest department, accounts for about 40 percent of the County's proposed 2025/2026 budget, operating in approximately 39 percent of all Sutter County's buildings, with approximately 53 percent of the county's employees. Due to the size and complexity of SCHHS, and the Sutter County Grand Jury's limited resources and expertise, we chose to perform a high level review of SCHHS management, and to review audits and documents to determine if there were any significant issues. We reviewed the following areas:

- The overall management of SCHHS including results of state, federal and internal audits
- The Sutter County Board of Supervisors responses to the 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 Sutter County Grand Jury Final Reports
- The management of Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) and the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) as it relates to the findings for February, 2023, and October, 2024
- The Policy and Procedures for the Compliance Program and Concurrent Review & Authorization of Psychiatric Inpatient and Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF)
- The Sutter Yuba Behavioral Health (SYBH) Quality Assurance & Performance Improvement Plan

The review included interviews with SCHHS senior leadership and personnel, tours of three SCHHS facilities, and review of state, federal, county and internal SCHHS audits and documents.

The tours of three facilities included:

- 463 2nd Street second floor that is currently uninhabited to consolidate Child Welfare Services currently located at 446 2nd Street into one building
- 545 Garden Highway that houses SCHHS Administration
- 190 Garden Highway that houses County Welfare/Employment and Eligibility

Tour participants included leadership and staff from SCHHS, General Services and Developmental Services.

Sutter County Health and Human Services' challenges include the poor building space conditions, limited budget and support from other county departments owing primarily to the County's limited financial resources.

The size and complexity of the SCHHS makes it difficult for the Grand Jury to perform a comprehensive review. In the areas we did review, we found that SCHHS has strong leadership, that all observed and reviewed operations are well managed, that staff provide compassionate and collaborative service to their clients and that leadership works to maintain and improve employee communications and morale. In the area of medical reporting, the Grand Jury has expertise in medical records review that was put to use reviewing specific areas of the PHF unit. While there are some areas where minor improvements could be made, we did not find any significant issues or areas that would justify a negative finding in this report.

Glossary

Sutter County Health and Human Services (SCHHS) - The County Department that implements California's Medicaid and Medi-Cal programs and other services for county residents.

California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) - The federally designated single state agency responsible for financing and administering the state's Medicaid program, Medi-Cal, which provides health care services to low-income persons and families who meet defined eligibility requirements. DHCS regulates and audits Sutter County's HHS.

Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) - A 24-hour facility licensed by DHCS that provides inpatient care for people with mental health disorders or severe substance use disorders.

Sutter Yuba Behavioral Health (SYBH) - An outpatient facility that provides services to individuals and families who are experiencing serious or ongoing mental health and/or substance use disorders in Yuba or Sutter county.

Plan of Correction (POC) - A response to DHCS inspections that describes actions to correct audit findings.

Background

Sutter County's website defines the vision, mission and values of SCHHS:

- Vision: Healthy people in thriving communities
- Mission: The Sutter County Health and Human Services Department promotes health, safety, economic stability, and quality of life for our community.
- Values: Collaboration, Leadership, Compassion, Service, Perseverance, Inclusion

Sutter County's website states SCHHS consists of five service branches and one administrative branch that work in concert to meet the needs of area residents. The five service branches include:

- Adult Services
- Child Services
- Acute Psychiatric Services
- Public Health
- Employment and Eligibility Services (welfare)

The SCHHS strategic plan dated September 18, 2025, which can be found on the Sutter County Website, lists four priorities: Community Leadership, Integrated Community Services, Fiscal & Administrative Performance and Workforce.

The proposed 2025/26 SCHHS budget is \$206,370,813; the state and federal governments fund approximately 97 percent of the budget while Sutter County funds about 3 percent. SCHHS is highly regulated by the state and federal government since they provide the bulk of funding. The \$206,370,813 accounts for approximately 40 percent of Sutter County's total budget. According to the 2024/25 proposed budget SCHHS has 590 positions out of 1,113 total county positions. Roughly 15 percent of these positions were unfilled as of November 25, 2025. Sutter County has departments scattered throughout the county in at least thirty-six different buildings and SCHHS operates in 13 of them, comprising 120,000 square feet according to the Sutter County 2023 Facilities Space Plan Summary.

The Sutter County 2023 Facilities Space Plan Summary contains a rating of each building based on the Building Owners and Managers Association definitions shown below.

- Class A: The highest-quality buildings in premier locations, featuring modern, state-of-the-art systems, exceptional accessibility, and professional management.
- Class B: Solid, functional properties, often 10-20 years old, with average to good finishes, which can often be renovated into Class A or are aimed at middle-market tenants.
- Class C: Older, lower tier buildings that are generally in less desirable locations and in need of renovation.
- Class D/Distressed: Very old, severely deteriorated properties needing completed redevelopment.

Overall, the buildings occupied by SCHHS are overwhelmingly in very poor condition. The Sutter County 2023 Facilities Space Plan shows SCHHS occupies six county owned facilities which are all poorly rated (five have a building rating D and one a C). The summary also shows that SCHHS occupies eight leased buildings; the majority are also rated poorly (six buildings are in the D range, one in the C range) and one in the A range. SCHHS has drafted a facilities site consolidation and improvement plan to improve efficiency and facility conditions. The county is slowly consolidating SCHHS building space and improving facility conditions when the budget is available. A current example of this is where Child Services, located in both 446 2nd Street, is being consolidated into the vacant second floor of the 463 2nd Street building.

SCHHS is the largest department of our county's local government, holding the largest number of worker positions and the largest number of buildings in Sutter County's local governmental infrastructure. Thus the Grand Jury saw a present demand to inquire and investigate into the operations of the department.

Methodology

The Grand Jury conducted interviews with leadership SCHHS and General Services, another county department SCHHS works closely with. We toured three SCHHS facilities with SCHHS leadership and staff and we interacted with SCHHS staff on the tours. The facilities toured include the future location of Child Services, administration and Employment and Eligibility Services (welfare).

A significant part of the Grand Jury effort was spent reviewing over 120 documents containing more than 1,400 pages. These documents included state and federal audits of SCHHS programs, the Strategic Plan, SCHHS budgets, facility plans, employee surveys, the SCHHS website, organization charts, building plans and other supporting documents.

The Grand Jury reviewed medical care documents for the PHF. These included survey findings for the DHCS, POC responding to the DHCS surveys, Policies and Procedures for Compliance Program and Concurrent Review & Authorization of Psychiatric Inpatient and PHF, reviewed the Sutter-Yuba Behavioral Health (SYBH) Quality Assurance & Performance Improvement Plan.

Discussion

I. SCHHS Management

SCHHS is a complex organization operating with substantial regulatory requirements, with uncertainty in state and federal budgets and sometimes with conflicting requirements. The Grand Jury found that SCHHS leadership, often without referring to documents, demonstrated extensive subject matter expertise, has a good understanding of current and future challenges and a strong vision for addressing the challenges. They demonstrated in-depth knowledge of the department and the budgets and issues. They have also shown to be skilled in working collaboratively with other department heads, flexibility in planning, working to improve communications with employees, office conditions and employee morale, as well as educating employees about the department and its issues and creating a culture of caring for employees while fostering care and compassion for community clients.

The Grand Jury noted care was shown for staff members by SCHHS leadership. The staff we met and talked with had very positive comments about SCHHS leadership, their jobs and the clients they served. Additionally, we noted SCHHS leadership was taking the time to foster good

relationships with their staff, treating them with respect and as people, rather than through the dynamic of boss and worker.

One of the more significant issues for SCHHS is that the department is spread out in too many building spaces and in buildings in poor condition. The Sutter County 2023 Facilities Space Plan Summary shows SCHHS occupies six county owned facilities of which five have a building rating in the D range and one in the C range, the Summary also shows that SCHHS occupies eight leased buildings where six buildings are in the D range, one in the C range and one in the A range.

During the Grand Jury's tours through SCHHS facilities and a future facility, we were joined by many members of county department leadership, both from within SCHHS and General/Development services.

Talking with and observing these leaders throughout our tours, we concluded that our overall county department leadership works very well with each other.

SCHHS worked with other departments and drafted a Facilities Site Consolidation and Improvement Plan to improve efficiency and facility conditions. The county's limited financial resources have severely impacted the amount and timing of facility improvements. This is complicated by the state and federal expectations that facility expenses are largely the County's responsibility. The County is slowly consolidating SCHHS building space and improving facility conditions subject to County approval and resources. A good example of this is the current rehabilitation of 463 2nd Street where Child Services is being consolidated.

Overall, the Grand Jury found that the SCHHS has worked with the County's General Services, Development Services and the Chief Administrative Officer's office to improve building conditions. Through this collaboration SCHHS created a Facilities Improvement Plan as a guide for facilities improvement. Reasonable progress has been made given tight budgets and the lack of state and federal funding for building improvements. The Grand Jury reviewed this plan and found no significant room for improvement.

II. SCHHS Audit Review

A substantial amount of the documents that we reviewed pertained to state, federal and internal audits. The goal was to identify any substantial issues requiring further investigation. One focus of this review was the PHF.

The SCHHS website states that the Sutter-Yuba County PHF is a 16-bed, 24-hour inpatient facility that provides short-term hospitalization for adults 18 years of age and older with emergency psychiatric needs. Services offered within the PHF are at a more intensive level of care than what is available in an outpatient or urgent/crisis clinic setting. The PHF provides client-centered care in a structured, secure environment. Care is provided by a multidisciplinary

team of psychiatrists, mental health therapists, nurses, mental health workers, and other supportive providers, and is inclusive of client input into care planning.

The Sutter-Yuba Psychiatric Health Facility is surveyed and reviewed for license renewal a minimum of every 2 years, but not to exceed 3 years. This review is mandated by the Health & Safety Code. DHCS is required to do the site visit. If deficiencies are found during the survey, the PHF must submit a Plan of Correction (POC) to DHCS. The POC is to include:

- Specific actions taken to correct each deficiency
- Title of the position responsible for the correction (administrator, director, etc.)
- Description of how the area will be monitored to ensure correction and prevent reoccurrences which also includes who will be monitoring and frequency of monitor
- The date of implementation and/or completion of each action identified

On October 28-29, 2024, DHCS conducted an on-site survey of the Sutter-Yuba PHF. Review of the survey results found no major deficiencies. There were findings in the survey that were minor deficiencies typical of DHCS reviews of PHF units. These findings included telephone/verbal physician orders not signed timely, missing nurse initials on drug count sheets, and an informed consent not signed timely by physician. Review of personnel records showed late annual evaluations and missing documentation on continuing in-service, TB screening, and fire/disaster drills. No major procedural or care issues were noted. The Plan of Correction submitted by the PHF was accepted by the DHCS and the license was renewed. Ultimately, there were no deficiencies that impact patient care.

Finding

F1: On the Health and Human Services department's website, the following are listed as the department's core values: Collaboration, Leadership, Compassion, Service, Perseverance and Inclusion. Through our time spent with the department, we found them to be achieving these goals very well. The notable challenges the department faces are mainly from conflicting state and federal regulations, which SCHHS leadership is navigating with great finesse.

Recommendation

R1: None