

**Montgomery County Correctional Facilities:  
Conditions, Maintenance and Inmate Treatment**

**Grand Jury Report & Recommendations**

**Prepared for  
The Montgomery County Circuit Court  
Rockville, Maryland**

**Submitted by the Grand Jury  
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## **Findings and Recommendations**

### **Montgomery County Detention Center**

#### **Overview**

The Montgomery County Detention Center (MCDC) is the central processing unit (CPU) for all arrests made within the county. It is centrally located within the county and is in an ideal location for the CPU. This facility is capable of processing incoming arrestees with low risk of congestion. There is a thorough screening process for visitors entering the facility. Arrestees may bond out after being processed, or they may be detained at this facility for up to three days. This facility is not purpose-built, resulting in repetitive back-and-forth flow during processing.

#### **Findings**

##### *Condition of Facility*

The MCDC facility is old and deteriorating. Many walls are in need of repair and/or paint. There is a musty smell in much of the facility due to poor or non-functional air-conditioning units. The narrow hallways of the facility, coupled with the lacking air circulation lead to stifling hot conditions in some areas in the summer months. The gates for pods are antiquated and the facilities are designed with many blind spots. One entire housing pod is currently unusable due to a roof leak, for which there is no definite date of evaluation or repair. During our visit, a central (and primary) gate required for unhindered movement through the public part of the facility was not working, causing us to have to detour through an administration section of the facility. This would not be an acceptable solution for processing inmates. The external areas of the facility have undergone improvements. The entry area for officers bringing in new arrestees is now securely gated. The officer entry area also has a coded-access gate and external lock-boxes for officers to secure their service weapons before entering the facility.

The perimeter of the facility is secured with chain link fences lined with razor wire. Some lengths of fence had new razor wire, while others had wire that was quite aged and rusty.

#### *Maintenance of Facility*

The MCDC facility is clean and organized, despite its overall condition. It is clear that unspecialized maintenance and cleaning are performed on a regular basis.

#### *Treatment of the Inmates*

The MCDC correctional staff seem well trained, courteous and professional to both inmates and visitors. Many officers display a pleasant demeanor and calming affect, which serves as an example to both fellow officers and inmates. Work program inmates are allowed to travel freely with minimal supervision. There exists a certain level of trust between officers and inmates. Inmates have access to medical care any time of day, and are screened through medical upon being admitted to the facility. MCDC is staffed with 8 registered nurses, capable of handling potential high acuity levels and assessment needs of incoming inmates. A physician is available 5 days per week, for approximately 10 hours per week.

### **Recommendations**

Though the staff at MCDC seem to be doing quite well at making due with what they have, it is highly recommended that a new, purpose-built facility be built at this location as soon as possible. In the meantime, it would be helpful to officers to add security features such as cameras and mirrors. Also, given the age of the facility and the frequency with which it has problems, there should be on-site maintenance staff.

# Montgomery County Correctional Facility

## Overview

The Montgomery County Correctional Facility (MCCF) is the longer-term facility for inmates serving more than three days but no more than eighteen months. It is an impressive facility that should serve as model for others. MCCF has a very comfortable atmosphere, resembling a hospital or school. The correctional staff seem well trained, courteous and professional to both inmates and visitors. There do seem to be lacking security standards for non-officer staff entering through the lobby area. While we were filing in, at least a dozen non-uniformed employees simply walked right through metal detectors and were not screened in any way.

## Findings

### *Condition of Facility*

The MCCF is recently built and still in excellent condition. Individual cells are in good shape. The size of the facility is appropriate and sufficient for its purpose.

### *Maintenance of Facility*

MCCF is in excellent condition and remains well cleaned and maintained.

### *Treatment of the Inmates*

Inmates are housed within pods, each pod containing a sizeable lounge area with comfortable and adequate seating. Meals are served in the lounge area of each pod, reducing inmate traffic through the facility. The lounge areas contain televisions that are silenced to reduce noise and can be heard individually through headsets distributed upon admittance. An adequate recreation area is provided for

each pod. Inmates may request books from the on-site library, which is part of the Montgomery County Library system. Inmates are also provided with extensive opportunities to reduce their sentences by participating in any of numerous programs offered, including (but not limited to) on-site trade skill training and educational opportunities through GED classes and credits through Montgomery College. MCCF contains an on-site employment center (One-Stop). The One-Stop is fully staffed 3 days a week. Two trained volunteers cover 2 additional days, providing inmates with 5 day a week service. MCCF is staffed by 5 licensed practical nurses (LPN) and 10 registered nurses (RN). At least 1 registered nurse is on shift at all times. A physician is on-site for approximately 27 hours per week, as well as a full-time certified nurse practitioner present 40 hours per week to complete advanced clinical issues along with the physician.

### **Recommendations**

Considering the range and number of programs and support services offered at this facility, additional support staff would be beneficial to both current staff and inmates. Budget cuts have also lead to reduced options for trade skill training. We recommend an increase in such training or at least no further reductions, as it represents a valuable method of positive behavior reform and personal development for inmates.

# Pre-Release and Re-entry Services

## Overview

The Pre-Release and Re-entry Services (PRRS) facility has a noble goal – to help soon to be released inmates (or residents) transition back into society. It is located in an area with many potential employers within walking distance. Facility staff selects suitable residents who are nearing the date of their release. Residents who are unable to find work within 28 days of arrival at PRRS are penalized (by having good behavior credits removed, adding days back onto sentences) or are sent back to MCCF. Residents who do find work are required to pay ten percent of salary to the county. The administration seems opposed to criticism, has an existing culture of “we know what we are doing”, and is not eager to publicize program statistics, raw data or acquire current data. Any data that was provided was from 5 or more years ago and provided limited to no insight regarding the success rate of the program or its value to the community, county or participants.

## Findings

### *Condition of Facility*

The PRRS facility as a whole is in a state of near disrepair. Air conditioning is spotty at best, some walls are missing paint, and carpets are old and worn. Some resident rooms are essentially uninhabitable, as they are exceedingly hot and unventilated. The outbuildings have steps and roofs with extensive water damage. The communal areas of the facility seem to be in relatively decent condition.

### *Maintenance of Facility*

The PRRS facility is kept clean and organized. Available funding cannot cover the costs of necessary maintenance, so administrators must prioritize repairs.

### *Treatment of the Inmates*

Residents are housed within adequate facilities similar to dormitories, affording some extent of personal privacy including individual bathrooms and showers for each room. PRRS offers on-site training in usage of Internet and computers, interviewing skills, creating a resume, self-presentation and advising employers of criminal background. Residents are allowed Internet access to search for employment. The PRRS is staffed with 1 RN, and a physician is on-site for approximately 3 hours per week. Additional or emergency care is available if needed through MCCF or Shady Grove Hospital.

### **Recommendations**

The PRRS facility as a whole needs increased transparency. It needs to develop metrics and tracking in order to obtain accurate, *current* data regarding recidivism rates and program success relative to cost. There needs to be some concrete measurement of success for placement.

PRRS should analyze and produce data to support why 28 days is or is not a suitable timeframe to expect residents to acquire employment. The administration needs to be open to this analysis and its findings, as they were defensive when questioned about this deadline and its appropriateness. Given the current state of the economy, it is unreasonable to expect that residents can find gainful employment within such a short amount of time.

The types of jobs available to residents (in such a short window and with a criminal background) do not provide them with enough money to afford adequate housing upon release. We recommend that current or additional staff be allocated to housing assistance for residents (or alternatively that PRRS make arrangements with an organization capable of assisting residents in this regard). Residents lacking adequate employment and affordable housing are likely to cycle back into the correctional system.



Future Grand Jury visits should include interactions with “seasoned” residents to gain a more complete perspective of the facility and its practices. We only spoke with new arrivals, of which only 2 of 6 had found a job.

Attempts should be made to alter the existing “we know what we are doing” culture. Many of the employees have worked at that facility or in corrections for years, decades in some cases. This has resulted in a lack of fresh perspective.


We recommend a yearly independent audit of allocation of funds for this facility.

## Conclusion

Prisoners in this county serving a sentence of less than 18 months are lucky to be incarcerated here, where they have opportunities to better themselves while incarcerated and be offered support as they prepare to reenter the community. Prisoners have fantastic access to medical care – on-site nurses at each facility which can be seen in no more than 24 hours, a doctor and dentist that can be seen within 7 days or less, and emergency access to Shady Grove Hospital. All facilities are staffed with professional nurses who are licensed to practice in the State of Maryland.

Montgomery County correctional facilities employ positive behavior reforms rather than relying primarily on negative reinforcement. Inmates are offered opportunities to better themselves while incarcerated and to reduce their sentences through participation in these programs. The PRRS allows inmates more freedom and responsibility as a way of easing back into regular society.

All facilities have mandatory standards for officers and staff to complete professional development and regular training. The passion of the officers and staff is visible in their words and manner. The demeanor of the officers and staff produces a much less tense environment for both the officers and the inmates.



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Grand Jury, Summer 2013