
VI. Conditions, Services and Programs within the Jail

The Tompkins County jail was built as part of a larger public safety building in the mid-1980s. In addition to the primary space allocated to the jail, the building also provides office space for the County Sheriff and the Sheriff's road patrol, among other functions.

Age, Layout and Condition of the Jail

CGR was not asked to comment on the specific condition and layout of the jail. However, it is important to provide some brief summary comments as context to what follows, especially as it relates to available space within the facility.

As a jail which has been in constant use for just over 30 years, it appears from our tour of the facility and from conversations with many knowledgeable stakeholders to have aged relatively well, with normal deterioration and maintenance issues that need constant attention, but it generally appears to be in relatively good condition for a facility of its age. (The County has set aside funds for the possibility of engaging a consultant with expertise in jail design and facility oversight to address any issues related to changes needed in the facility and/or any expansion or new construction issues that may arise from this study.)

Like most county jails built in the 1980s and earlier, the Tompkins jail was constructed under a linear design model in vogue at the time of its construction, but now considered outmoded. Jails built today favor a direct supervision configuration which emphasizes more efficient, direct interaction with inmates and what is generally considered to be a more humane, livable environment for both inmates and staff, including more efficient use of space.

That said, with the exception of space issues discussed in more detail below, the current layout of the facility seems to work relatively well, with relatively few serious formal complaints or disciplinary actions over the years, even with the introduction of 18 additional double-celled beds via variance in 2009.

The jail's rated capacity since early last year has been 82 beds. Prior to that, it was 75, but seven additional beds were created in 2016 as a result of reconfiguration of previous indoor recreation space. In addition to these 82 beds, since 2009 the jail has contained the additional 18 double-celled beds, via temporary variance granted by the State Commission of Correction (one of eight such county variances in the state). The current configuration of the jail includes nine blocks (each containing from three to six

permanent beds and six of which also contain the 18 additional variance beds), five dorm areas (each containing between seven and nine beds), and one holding cell with one bed for intake or temporary housing.

Though not built in accord with current building specifications and preferences promulgated by the Commission of Correction, the current jail configuration and conditions, and its basic staffing and space arrangements – though not considered ideal – meet the basic standards of the CoC. Therefore, although the Commission is not likely to renew the current temporary variance for the additional 18 beds, there is no indication that there will be any concomitant required jail expansion or new construction, unless there are demonstrated projections of probable significant increases in the number of inmates likely in the future.

Jail Budget and Staffing

According to the 2017 County budget, the jail currently costs taxpayers \$4.9 million a year to operate, with almost 80 percent of those costs allocated to salary, overtime and fringe benefits. Based on recent trends in reduced amounts of boarded-out inmates, the budget allocated about \$142,000 to the inmate boarding line for 2017, the lowest amount in several years.

The basic staffing in the jail currently includes a Captain, six Sergeants, and 35 Correction Officers, for a total of 42 corrections staff spread across the three shifts of the jail on a 24/7 basis. This total represents one position more than the most recent minimal requirements established for the facility by the State CoC. Although there has been considerable turnover among the staff over the past two years, all positions are currently filled, based on the most recent quarterly submissions to CoC.

In addition, the jail hires one full-time nurse, who works 40 hours a week. A physician and nurse practitioner are also on contract for part-time on-site and backup coverage. In addition, under the County's Mental Health department, mental health forensics staff have for some time been assigned to the jail for an average of about six hours a week – with a recent increase to an average of 20 hours a week beginning in late May. (See discussion of services below for more detail on the jail's medical and mental health services).

Space

Although the jail meets CoC minimal square footage space requirements, from a practical standpoint space issues create major problems in operating the jail and enabling the efficient and sufficient provision of needed services. Virtually every discussion we had during the study concerning the jail and its services quickly generated often-unsolicited comments and concerns about space limitations and

their implications for service delivery. Already-limited space was further reduced when space previously available for indoor recreation (and occasional other temporary uses) was reconfigured with the addition of the seven new beds added in 2016.

The nurse currently operates in a small converted cell space, and there are no medical cells and no infirmary. There are no cells set aside for detoxification or observation, other than sometimes the holding cell, as inmates needing detox are typically simply integrated into the general jail population, as is the case with individuals needing medical attention which would ideally result in isolation from the rest of the inmate population.

Space available for services and classes, as well as for one-on-one meetings with attorneys or others, is typically limited to three interview rooms, an educational room available for various group activities, and one visitation room. Even the interview rooms, available for meetings with attorneys or other confidential discussions, offer limited privacy, given the ability at times to hear through walls and see through windows. Space limitations place restrictions on the types of individual discussions and group programming that can be offered, as well as helping to limit the amount and nature of effective monitored medical and behavioral health treatment and counseling which can be provided.

Jail officials work hard to juggle space and time, thereby making the available space go as far as possible. But there are limits to what can be shoe-horned into small, restricted space, especially when the jail census is high, and this has clear consequences for the types and amounts of services that can be comfortably offered to inmates of the jail.

Services and Programs within the Jail

Regardless of the County's efforts to provide a wide range of programs and services designed to minimize the numbers of people who enter the local jail, the reality remains that many individuals are not affected by those initiatives and for a variety of reasons wind up admitted to the facility. Jail officials are responsible for serving these individuals as humanely as possible, and for providing a variety of services which, at least in theory, will help prepare the inmate for his/her transition back to the community upon release from the jail.

In response, subject to a variety of space- and provider-driven limitations, the jail offers an array of services and programs to inmates, mostly through contracts or agreements with outside community-based agencies or via voluntary offerings by concerned individuals or groups in the community. Most of the services, except for GED and medical services, are not mandated.

Mandated Services

The jail is mandated to make basic educational services available to inmates, particularly those under 21. This mandate is covered via GED classes which are offered five days a week through a contract negotiated via BOCES.

Also mandated are medical services, although the local jail has a great deal of flexibility in the level of services it chooses to make available to inmates. The County has chosen to provide one full-time, 40-hour-per-week nurse who is responsible for meeting the medical needs of all inmates on a day-to-day basis, backed up by about six hours a week of services provided by a physician and nurse practitioner. The physician as well as per-diem nurses are available as backup for the full-time nurse or on call if emergencies arise during uncovered hours. As a rule, two days a week and all evening and night hours are not covered by the nurse, who by all accounts does a remarkable job of juggling medical needs, though her available hours represent only about a quarter of the 168 hours in a week.

Within the available hours, the following types of medical services are most prominent among those provided: initial medical screenings as part of the intake process, physical exams, management of all medical records for all inmates, coordination as needed with physicians, medication management and disbursement, discharge planning and medical referrals for inmates as they transition back to the community, individual medical education to the extent possible, and routine examinations and provision of medical advice for inmates with routine, acute or chronic medical needs.

The limits on the numbers of available nursing hours often mean that chronic health needs of inmates go unmet or receive limited attention, while more acute needs get addressed. Inmates going through various stages of detox may not receive the attention and monitoring that would be ideal. Correction officers who are not trained to distribute medications are often called upon to do so (with medications distributed twice a day to typically between half and two-thirds of all inmates each day). And yet, limitations notwithstanding, it is likely that many inmates leave the jail in better health than when they entered and having received more medical attention (as well as nutrition and housing) than they had received in the community. Nonetheless, most of those interviewed who commented on nursing services recommended that the County should at least add a second full-time nurse to enable 7-day regular coverage plus additional support for the existing nurse, while others suggested the need for 24/7 comprehensive nursing coverage.

Non-Mandated Services

A variety of non-mandated services are provided, but these are limited, often by space restrictions, with key services unavailable in the jail or underprovided. We heard multiple complaints about the preponderance of “down time” among inmates, with

too few opportunities for recreation, activities, counseling and treatment, self-improvement and preparation for return to the community. Insufficient services in the community were often mentioned as a contributing factor to gaps in services available to jail inmates, but the most common reason cited for the service gaps was the lack of sufficient space to be able to accommodate existing services, and services that could be developed or expanded, were sufficient space available to incentivize the providers to make the additional services available.

Non-mandated mental/behavioral health services have been provided in the jail for about six hours a week by clinical staff in the Mental Health department. These services have primarily involved screenings and assessments, as well as suicide prevention supports as needed, with limited direct provision of clinical or treatment services to individuals or groups. However, effective in late May, those in-house services available from Mental Health staff are being increased to about 20 hours per week, split at least initially among three clinical staff. Those hours are expected to enable more detailed screenings for mental health (and to some extent substance abuse) issues in need of follow-up attention. Some of the focus of these additional hours is also expected to be devoted to the introduction of individual and group sessions offering psycho-educational supports and help in developing techniques for self-relaxation and calming to help reduce stress and behavioral problems in the jail and subsequently upon transition back to the community upon leaving the jail.

The intent of these expanded mental health initiatives is to provide screenings for everyone admitted to the jail, whether for only a day or two or for a more extended stay, and to provide other supports as needed while in the jail – with the intent of making initial connections with inmates, beginning to educate them about options available to them, and priming the pump for referrals to post-jail mental health or related supportive services designed to help reduce the revolving-door jail admissions of people needing access to services in the community. There is also the potential, depending on how the 20-hour pilot period evolves and whether County funding would be allocated, to expand to a full-time Mental Health presence in the jail, consistent with what many other counties provide.

In addition to what is offered via the County's Mental Health Department, the nonprofit Mental Health Association (MHA) of Tompkins County also provides one day a week separate 90-minute Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) sessions for men and women. These weekly sessions are designed to help inmates develop self-help tools and better coping skills to manage their mental/behavioral health and develop individual recovery plans while in the jail and upon returning to the community. MHA also offers similar weekly TALK sessions for men and women in the jail. These group discussions provide opportunities for inmates to "vent" and express concerns to other inmates and sympathetic voices outside the structure of the jail staff, thereby helping reduce stress within the facility.

Other than substance abuse assessments provided upon formal requests (discussed in more detail in the following chapter), few direct services are currently available for those with substance abuse or addiction issues. Weekly one-hour AA sessions are offered separately for men and women (two for men and one for women). A similar one-hour Narcotics Anonymous session is offered for men, but there is no equivalent program for women. Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services (CARS) is in the process of developing plans to offer a few hours a week of direct services within the jail, including a treatment readiness model designed to help orient individuals to service opportunities to address substance abuse issues once they are back in the community.

Although various mental health and substance abuse services are available in the jail, and they appear to be gradually increasing, many stakeholders expressed concerns about the absence of many direct clinical/treatment or counseling programs for inmates while they are in the jail, and that might help them connect with services upon release. This is a particular concern given the significant proportion of individuals in the jail at any given time with either substance abuse or mental health issues, including those with dual diagnoses.

Beyond the GED program, other educational offerings are provided, including a college initiative program offered once a week, individualized tutoring programs, and a BOCES-sponsored life skills program. Other recent offerings have included a program resulting in eight inmates obtaining an OSHA 10 certificate, and a program resulting in first aid and CPR certificates. A parenting program is in development.

Combinations of staff representing Cooperative Extension, Ultimate Recovery Opportunity (URO) and Opportunities, Alternatives and Resources (OAR) offer various re-entry and community outreach services to inmates. These efforts are described in more detail in the following chapter.

Other ongoing programs include male and female conflict resolution classes, and a wide range of spiritual/religious/faith development offerings are available several days a week, as well as individual clergy visits.

In addition to these services and programs offered on an ongoing basis, inmate visitations are offered two days a week, and attorneys visit inmates as needed. Occasional supervised child visits are provided via DSS.

There appears to be a growing awareness of the need to provide a greater array of services to inmates in the jail, both to help them productively fill their time while in the jail, as well as to begin to help the process of linking with potentially helpful services and treatment upon release from jail to the community. But this growing awareness is only likely to lead to expanded in-house services if more space can be created within the existing facility, or in a new or expanded jail, to accommodate the services.

Options for creating such space are addressed later in the report, including the potential reconfiguration of non-jail space within the existing County public safety building.