



# PRESS RELEASE

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## 2022-2023 SAN JOAQUIN CIVIL GRAND JURY RELEASES REPORT ON AT-RISK YOUTH IN SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

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**Stockton, CA** — Today, the 2022-2023 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury released its report investigating the policies, procedures, and standards applicable to the care of At-Risk Youth in San Joaquin County. At-Risk Youth are defined as children who do not have the opportunities, experiences, or resources necessary to succeed in life. These children have significant obstacles they need to overcome, including but not limited to parental neglect, abandonment, and medical or psychological needs that their families cannot or will not deal with on their own. In some cases, the children are victims of abuse or criminal activity.

The Grand Jury cited a citizen's complaint as the basis for its investigation, which alleged the At-Risk Youth being housed at the Mary Graham Children's Shelter (MGCS) were either engaging in or were victims of dangerous behaviors during their stay. Specific attention was concentrated on MGCS and interactions with the County Sheriff's Office; however, during the early stages of the investigation, it became clear that the complaints the Grand Jury received were not solely due to failures of these agencies' policies and procedures. Multiple agencies, including the County's CPS, Sheriff's Office, Probation Department, and Courts, are ineffective in managing At-Risk Youth and their families. The focus of the Grand Jury investigation shifted to assess the quality of care At-Risk Youth receive from various social welfare and law enforcement entities in San Joaquin County.

In its investigation the Grand Jury toured MGCS, the Juvenile Detention Center, and Children's Home of Stockton, conducted twelve interviews, participated in four agency presentations, and reviewed numerous documents, statutes, and regulations. The Grand Jury determined there are several reasons At-Risk Youth are in harm's way, including:

- an increase in the population of At-Risk Youth who are more challenging to manage;
- staffing issues, including insufficient number of available floor personnel, and lack of leadership;
- lack of sufficient training for administrators, onsite management, and staff necessary to deal with the challenges presented by the enactment of new laws and regulations;
- lack of interagency cooperation within the County; and
- lack of foresight and preparedness to deal with Criminal Justice Reform as it pertains to youthful offenders.

The Grand Jury found the issues above bring into question the overall effectiveness of the County's current commitment to caring for At-Risk Youth. The collective findings of this investigation indicate that the County can be its own worst enemy when it comes to developing solutions to the ongoing problem of providing a safe environment for these At-Risk Youth, while also providing the services necessary to foster an ideal and secure environment where they can grow into productive citizens. Unfortunately, no magical solutions exist to solve the problems affecting these youth. The Grand Jury recommends all County agencies involved in the care of this very vulnerable segment of the County's population must come together to create, implement, monitor, and advocate for better programs, care, and treatment of At-Risk Youth.

The public is encouraged to read the complete report by visiting the [Grand Jury's website](#).

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