

EXECUTIVE OFFICE



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

CELIA ZAVALA
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
EXECUTIVE OFFICE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 383
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012
(213) 974-1411 • www.bos.lacounty.gov

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November 20, 2019

TO: Audit Committee

FROM: Celia Zavala 
Executive Officer

SUBJECT: **SUNSET REVIEW FOR THE SYBIL BRAND COMMISSION ON
INSTITUTIONAL INSPECTIONS**

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR COMMITTEE:

Recommend to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) to repurpose the functions performed by the Sybil Brand Commission on Institutional Inspections (SBC) to include the following:

1. The SBC members will continue to be authorized to inspect Los Angeles County jails, and Sheriff and County maintained adult courthouse lockups;
2. The Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission (COC) through its Executive Director and/or the Office of Inspector General (OIG) may ask as needed, the SBC to assist with inspections for specific outcomes related to the work of the COC and/or the OIG. The SBC will also provide the COC and OIG with copies of any correspondence it provides to the Board, including inspections results and the SBC's annual report. Furthermore, the Executive Director of COC or designee will become an ex-officio member of SBC;
3. The SBC shall no longer conduct inspections of group homes or short-term residential treatment programs, as this is the primary function of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS);

4. In accordance with the May 1, 2018 Board Action to transfer the Probation-facility inspection function from SBC to the Probation Oversight Commission to eliminate redundancy, the SBC will no longer inspect probation camps and juvenile halls. Therefore, the Probation Officer shall be removed from the SBC ordinance as an ex-officio member of the SBC;
5. The SBC may hold two commission meetings monthly and each SBC member may initiate and conduct up to two monthly inspections. The SBC shall accept requests for inspections from the Executive Director of the COC and/or the OIG. These additional requests for inspections will take priority over their regular inspections and be assigned to the SBC members by the Chair of the SBC. The Chair of SBC will provide a status update of the inspection to the Executive Director of COC or the OIG within four weeks of the request;
6. Instruct the Executive Officer of the Board to work with the SBC to revise the SBC bylaws and inspection forms to align with the proposed scope of work and provide copies of the revised bylaws and forms to the Audit Committee.
7. Further, instruct County Counsel to amend language in the County Code and scope of work to reflect the removal of toy-loan facilities. In addition, recommend to the Board to extend the sunset review date of the Los Angeles County Sybil Brand Commission to October 1, 2023; and
8. Instruct County Counsel to return to the Board with a revised ordinance to effectuate these changes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SBC is charged with "inspecting and advising on industrial and educational programs for both juvenile and adult detention inmates in Los Angeles County jail facilities and probations camps".¹ The SBC conducts unannounced inspections to examine the cleanliness and condition of facilities and the discipline and comfort of inmates. Upon completion of an inspection, the SBC notifies the responsible County department of any unsatisfactory inspection results.

While the SBC has continued to satisfy its early mission of inspecting jail or lockup facilities and probation camps, it has also performed inspections of group homes. However, the request that SBC inspect group homes was not codified in the County Code. Throughout the years there has been a growing concern that the SBC's activities overlap with the functions of other County entities.

¹ County Code Section 2.82.070

Based on this review, it is recommended that the SBC focus its inspections to concentrate on County jails, detention centers and County maintained courthouse lockups. In doing so, SBC embraces its history and original purpose of conducting jail and/or courthouse inspections. Also, it is recommended that the SBC be repurposed to assist the COC and the OIG with inspections. The SBC will share inspection reports with the COC and the OIG. The COC and the OIG will be able to request that SBC members perform directed inspections. Therefore, it is recommended that SBC-initiated inspections be capped at two monthly inspections per member and any additional inspections be conducted based on requests by the COC through its Executive Director and/or the OIG. This will help ensure greater coordination between the SBC, the COC and the OIG. Furthermore, it is recommended that the SBC's bylaws and inspection forms be revised to limit overlap with OIG inspections of County jails and detention centers and ensure relevant areas of concern for the COC are significantly captured.

BACKGROUND

In 1942, the Vocational Training Commission was created to conduct inspections and advise on industrial and educational programs for both juvenile and adult detention inmates in County jail facilities and probation camps. After two name changes in the 70's, the Commission was renamed the Sybil Brand Commission for Institutional Inspections in 1993.

The SBC has (10) members; two members are appointed from each Supervisorial District and serve at the pleasure of the Board. Each member serves for (4) years, no member may serve more than two consecutive full periods of service. The Board may, by order, extend the length of service or waive this limit for SBC members or Commission as a whole. In addition, the Sheriff and Probation Officer are ex-officio members of the SBC. The SBC members meet twice a month and conduct weekly unannounced inspections.

FISCAL IMPACT

Members of the SBC receive compensation for their service. Each member is paid \$50 for attending a Commission related activity; however, total compensation cannot exceed \$150 per week. The SBC related activities are defined as Commission meetings, inspections, and other activities approved by the SBC. The SBC members are also reimbursed for traveling expenses, such as mileage, when they are required to travel to carry out their duties outlined by the County Code. The Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors (Executive Office) provides staff support, services, and supplies at estimated cost of \$45,646 annually. The elimination of group home inspections, probation camps and juvenile halls and the reduction of the number of monthly jail inspections as recommended is estimated to reduce the SBC member reimbursements by approximately 50%.

ANALYSIS

The sunset review of the SBC was conducted by reviewing the SBC's annual reports, bylaws, attendance records, statement of proceedings, written correspondence, inspections forms and financial records. The SBC members and stakeholders were also surveyed regarding the performance of the Commission. The Executive Office review has determined that the SBC continues to meet its mission. However, while some SBC inspections have yielded positive results, the inspection of facilities beyond those authorized in Los Angeles County Code Chapter 2.82 has led to overlap and lack of coordination with other County Departments and Commissions.

Examples of SBC Inspection Results

The SBC reports findings of inspections performed by Commissioners at their regular monthly meeting. Unsatisfactory findings are reported to the responsible Department for corrective action. All major findings by the SBC are reported to the Board; for example, in 2016, the SBC submitted letters to the Board regarding the Inmate Welfare Fund and issues at Century Regional Detention Facility (CRDF). Following a total of seven inspections conducted at the CRDF, the SBC reported brown water issues which were caused by rust from old galvanized internal piping and an influx of gnats. A corrective action plan was implemented by the Sheriff's Department, resulting in the repair of old damaged pipes. The SBC's findings were instrumental in improving the cleanliness, physical conditions and well-being of the inmates at CRDF. Furthermore, in 2016, the SBC worked with the Watch Commander at Twin Towers to schedule Town Hall meetings for the inmates and their families as a platform to voice concerns.

Overlap in Services

The Executive Office analysis of functions performed by the SBC, found that some SBC functions generally overlap with services provided by other County and State departments. For example, the SBC has often conducted weekly unannounced group home inspections since the late 70's. Group home inspections are also conducted annually by DCFS, Probation, Auditor-Controller and Community Care Licensing, which also review some of the same areas of concern as reviewed by the SBC.

In addition, the SBC's inspections of youth probation camps overlap with the Probation Department and Probation Commission inspections. Also, the SBC's primary duties to conduct unannounced jail inspections oftentimes overlap with the inspections conducted by the OIG. Therefore, the SBC's bylaws and inspection forms should be revised to eliminate or reduce any overlap with other County departments/commissions.

The sunset review also concluded that the SBC could be more effective as a vehicle to assist the COC and OIG in their mission. The COC was established to improve public transparency and accountability with respect to the County Sheriff's Department. Currently, COC utilizes the OIG to conduct inspections of the Sheriff's Department. We recommend that the COC also enlist the SBC to conduct inspections for specific outcomes related to the work of COC. These targeted inspections could also assist the COC and the OIG in gathering information to further COC's policies and goals, while allowing the OIG to continue to focus on other concerns related to the Sheriff's Department.

CONCLUSION

The SBC continues to satisfy its mandated mission to inspect jail facilities for the County of Los Angeles. However, with the recent creation of the COC we recommend that the SBC be repurposed to assist COC and OIG with inspections while also maintaining the ability to initiate inspections in line with its mission. Furthermore, in an effort to reduce the overlap in services and enhance collaboration between County entities, the SBC should better utilize meetings to foster ideas to address emerging issues in the jails. Finally, it is recommended that the SBC revise its bylaws and inspections forms to eliminate the duplication in function performed by other County law enforcement entities to avoid overlap during inspections.

Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Twila P. Kerr at (213) 974-1431.

CZ:tpk

c: Alex Villanueva, Sheriff, Los Angeles County Sheriff
Bobby Cagle, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Terri L. McDonald, Chief Probation Officer, Probation
Brian Williams, Executive Director, Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission
Max Huntsman, Inspector General, Office of Inspector General

