

KERN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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DONNY YOUNGBLOOD
Sheriff - Coroner - Public Administrator



PREA Final Report

The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) is federal legislation enacted in 2003 and finalized in 2012. It contains numerous requirements for adult and juvenile custodial facilities across the United States. The Kern County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) recognizes our responsibility to all incarcerated persons detained in our facilities, their families, and the community we serve to embrace the PREA legislation and its safety standards. Finally, KCSO has established and maintained a dedicated PREA compliance team with sufficient management and supervisory authority to ensure compliance with the PREA standards.

In 2013, KCSO committed to achieving agency certification of compliance with the PREA standards. This process began with the development of specific policies and procedures, training for all personnel, and a review of the physical plant of each facility. In addition, agency training, practices, and policies are routinely evaluated to ensure effectiveness and that they meet the current standard. Our goal is to increase the safety of all inmates in our custody by eliminating sexual assault, abuse, and harassment within our facilities.

PREA Training

All staff members (deputy sheriffs, detention deputies, civilian staff, and volunteers) are required to receive ongoing annual training and instruction on PREA requirements related to their specific roles and responsibilities. Training topics include:

- Methods of prevention and detection of sexual assault, abuse, and harassment.
- Investigation of reported abuse.
- Confidentiality requirements.
- Effective communication with targeted groups lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals.
- Roles and responsibilities of first responders.

PREA Investigations

The Kern County Sheriff's Office has a longstanding commitment to addressing and investigating crimes that occur within its facilities. This includes conducting thorough investigations into any reported incidents.

To enhance the effectiveness of these investigations, supervisory staff members receive specialized training specifically designed to handle cases of sexual assault and abuse within the confinement setting. This specialized training equips them with the skills and knowledge necessary to conduct sensitive thorough investigations, ensuring all allegations are addressed appropriately.

All reported PREA-related investigations incidents are thoroughly reviewed, and all allegations are treated seriously with sensitivity and professionalism.

PREA Screening/Education

Screening procedures include a specific series of questions asked during the intake and transfer process to help determine whether an individual is at risk of being sexually abused or who may be abusive toward other incarcerated persons. The responses to these questions assist classification personnel in determining appropriate housing for all individuals in our custody.

Additionally, PREA education on how to report sexual assault and sexual abuse is provided to the inmates in our custody using posters, and a video which is played daily in English and Spanish. These educational materials cover KCSO's zero-tolerance policy toward sexual assault, abuse, and harassment and how such incidents may be reported.

Screening responses are kept confidential and used exclusively to help determine appropriate housing, bed assignments, work details, and programming to maximize the safety of each incarcerated person. Incarcerated persons are re-screened when circumstances change, such as during facility transfers or if new information is received.

Reporting Methods

KCSO provides multiple confidential avenues for incarcerated persons, personnel, or third parties to report sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or retaliation. PREA incidents can be reported in the following:

- Verbally to any staff member.
- In writing through the inmate grievance system.
- Using the dedicated PREA Hotline.
- By third-party reports from family members, attorneys, or advocates.
- Directly to external victim advocacy organizations.

PREA Counseling & Victim Support Services

PREA requires that inmates who have reported being victims of any sexual abuse in their lives be given contact information for a Rape Crisis Center. To further our

agency's commitment to PREA and promote healing for incarcerated victims of sexual abuse, KCSO contracts with a rape crisis counseling service. This service is provided by the Women's Center High Desert (WCHD). These counselors provide in-person counseling at all detentions facilities for incarcerated persons who might be suffering from the trauma of sexual abuse.

PREA Audit History & Compliance

In 2015, KCSO became one of the first California agencies to be certified as a PREA-compliant agency. After spending several years implementing, the PREA standards, KCSO contracted with an auditor certified by the U.S. Department of Justice to conduct the first audit of each facility. PREA audits are conducted on a triennial basis (every three years), with the first audit cycle beginning in 2013 and ending in 2015.

KCSO's certification process began in January 2015 with audits of the Central Receiving Facility (CRF), Maximum-Medium Facility, and its two substation jails in Mojave and Ridgecrest. In May 2015, the Pre-Trial and Minimum facilities began their audits.

The PREA audit process includes the auditor's review of agency policies, procedures, and practices to determine if they comply with PREA requirements and standards. The purpose of the review is to ensure that our agency's approach in addressing PREA matters further the goal of preventing, detecting, and responding to sexual abuse in custody facilities.

The audit process includes a corrective action period in which the auditor and the PREA team work together to revise policies, procedures, or correct any identified deficiencies if needed. This corrective action period helps ensure that our agency addresses any noted issues and develops a plan for correction, ultimately ensuring that best practices are in place.

KCSO's PREA audits, compliance ratings, and reports for each of its facilities can be viewed at <https://www.kernsheriff.org/Prea>

KCSO maintains compliance certification by contracting with a certified PREA auditor for routine auditing of its facilities. In 2021, the Maximum Medium Facility, Central Receiving Facility, Pre-Trial Facility, Ridgecrest Substation, and Mojave Substation were audited by a certified Department of Justice PREA Auditor. These facilities were 100% compliant with all standards, policies, and investigations.

In 2023, the Central Receiving Facility and Maximum Medium Facility were audited by a certified Department of Justice PREA Auditor. These two facilities were 100% compliant in all 45 standards and exceeded in the following 6 standards:

115.13 - Supervision and monitoring 115.17 – Hiring and promotion decisions

115.33 - Inmate education 115.34 – Specialized training Investigations

115.53 - Inmate access to outside confidential support services

115.71 – Criminal and administrative agency investigations

KCSO looks forward to being a leader among California Sheriff's agencies by remaining compliant with PREA standards to keep inmates safe from sexual assault, abuse, or harassment.

Summary of KCSO 2024 Facility Reports

Upon the completion of a PREA investigation and review, each allegation will be assigned one of the dispositions defined below:

- **Substantiated Allegation** - An allegation that was investigated and determined to have occurred.
- **Unfounded Allegation** - An allegation that was investigated and was determined not to have occurred.
- **Unsubstantiated Allegation** - An allegation that was investigated, and the investigation produced insufficient evidence to determine whether or not the incident occurred

Metro Court Holding Facility

The Metro Court Holding Facility had no reported sexual abuse or sexual harassment incidents in 2024. The Metro Court Holding Facility does not house incarcerated persons. The facility is now only utilized as a court holding facility for incarcerated persons during court hours.

Mojave and Ridgecrest Substations

The Mojave and Ridgecrest Substation did not receive any reports of sexual abuse. The Ridgecrest Facility has not received or housed inmates since June 30, 2016. In addition, the Mojave Substation did not receive any PREA complaints in 2024.

Lerdo Minimum Facility

The Minimum Facility did not house any inmates in 2024. Thus, no reported incidents of sexual assault or abuse were reported. The facility will continue to be audited once during every three-year audit cycle to maintain PREA certification.

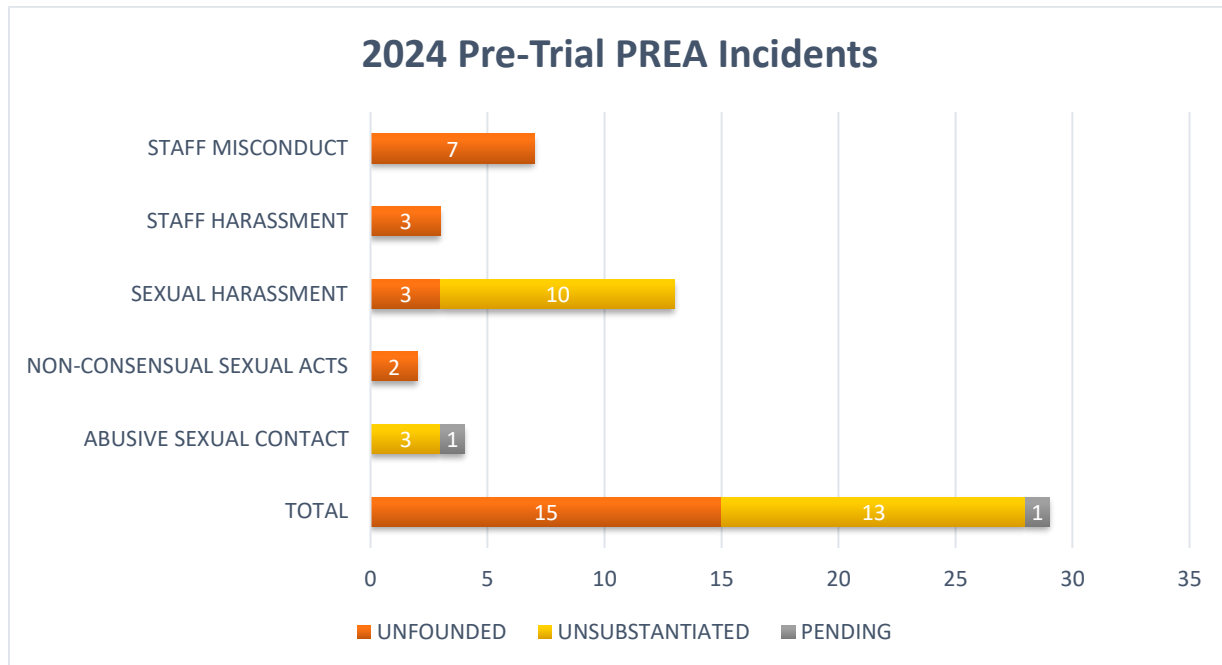
Lerdo Maximum-Medium Facility

The Maximum-Medium Facility had no reported incidents of sexual abuse or harassment incidents in 2024. The Maximum-Medium currently does not house incarcerated persons; however, the facility is used as a booking facility for federal contract incarcerated persons and for virtual federal court appointments Monday through Friday.

Lerdo Pre-Trial Facility

KCSO's Pre-Trial Facility showed an overall increase in reported sexual abuse and harassment allegations from the previous year. In 2023, there were ten (10) reported incidents, and in 2024 there were twenty-nine (29). As KCSO's largest detentions facility, Pre-Trial contains male and female housing units and a full infirmary.

The Pre-Trial facility currently houses General Population, Protective Custody, and Administratively Separated inmates. In addition, the Pre-Trial Facility also houses the Admission, Evaluation, and Stabilization (AES) Center. The AES center is a state-contracted program to evaluate and restore individuals who have been determined to be incompetent to stand trial. The graph below presents statistical data for the twenty-nine (29) incidents reported at the Pre-Trial Facility in 2024.

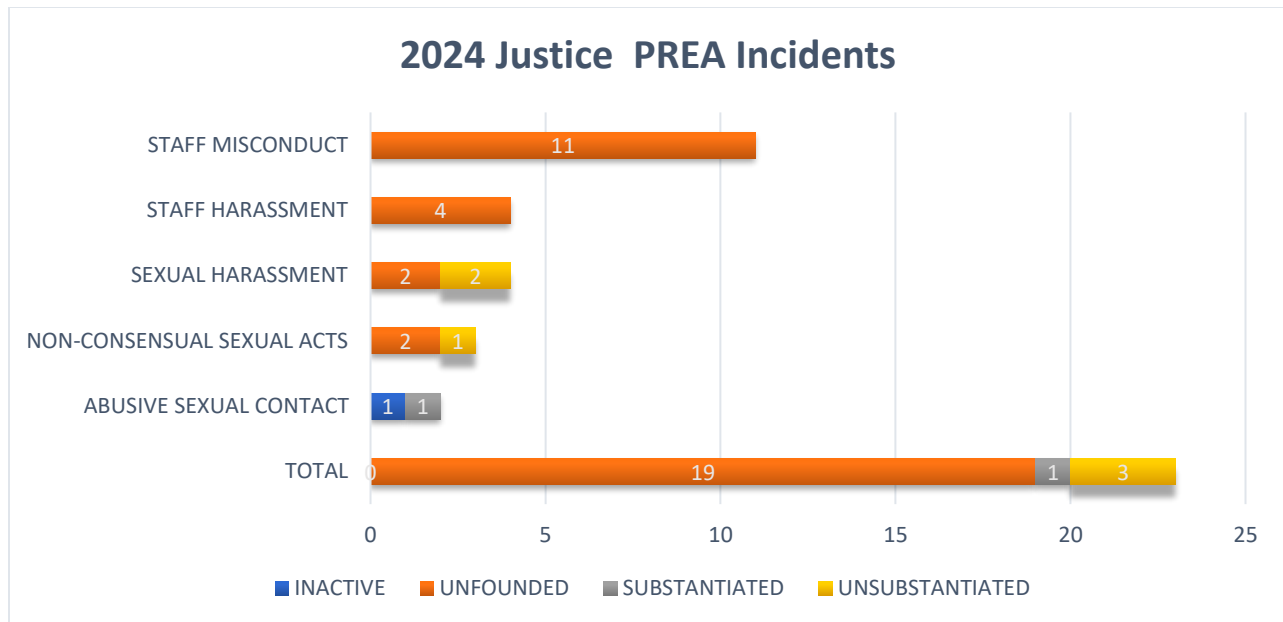


Lerdo Justice Facility

The Kern County Justice Facility has the second largest population and houses:

- General population
- Protective Custody
- Administrative Separation

The Kern County Sheriff's Office Justice Facility reported an overall increase in sexual abuse, and harassment allegations from the previous year. In 2023, there were eight (8) reported incidents, whereas in 2024 the number of reported incidents increased to twenty-four (24). The increase is largely attributed to the Justice Facility assuming the role of the intake and release center (IRC), serving as the county's primary booking and receiving facility. The Justice Facility only houses male incarcerated persons and includes a full infirmary and a clinic station. The graph below presents statistical data for the twenty-four (24) incidents reported at the Justice Facility in 2024.



Conclusion

In 2024, the Kern County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) investigated a total of fifty-six (56) PREA-related incidents, an increase from twenty-eight (28) reported incidents in 2023. The video surveillance systems in place at all detentions facilities have proven to be an invaluable tool for investigators, offering clear evidence to substantiate or disprove allegations and acting as a deterrent to potential incidents.

While the number of reports has increased, investigators have observed a recurring trend of incarcerated persons making false allegations in an attempt to be moved from specific housing units. These motivations often stem from a desire to be housed with acquaintances or to escape debts or conflicts with other incarcerated individuals. Despite this, every allegation, regardless of perceived motive, is thoroughly investigated in accordance with KCSO's commitment to prevention, detection, and response to sexual abuse and harassment in all of its detentions facilities.

KCSO remains firmly dedicated to its **zero-tolerance policy** for all forms of sexual abuse and harassment. The PREA Compliance Team continues to evaluate and improve the PREA program through regular policy reviews, analysis of incident data, on site sexual victim advocates, and feedback from auditors. These efforts help identify contributing factors and highlight areas for procedural improvement.

Looking ahead, we remain optimistic that the ongoing enforcement of PREA standards, in combination with continued incarcerated person education efforts, will help reduce and ultimately eliminate all forms of non-consensual sexual acts, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment within our facilities.

Sincerely,

Donny Youngblood, Sheriff-Coroner

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. Swanson', written in a cursive style.

By: Joel Swanson, Chief Deputy

Detentions Bureau