

Continuity Compliance Report



2025-2026 Mendocino County Civil Grand Jury

June 24, 2026

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Summary

The Mendocino County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) may appear to be an institution that exists continuously. However, it is a series of individual grand juries, each of which is empaneled for one year as mandated in the California Constitution and applicable statutes. No grand jury is a continuation of any other and each is independent and separate from all others.

While it is a part of the judicial system, each grand jury is an entirely independent body. Judges of the Superior Court, the District Attorney, the County Counsel, and the State Attorney General may act as its advisers but cannot attend jury deliberations nor control the actions of the Grand Jury.

The Grand Jury evaluates the responses to previous Grand Jury reports to establish continuity between juries and years. Referenced below are the four 2024-2025 Grand Jury Reports and the evaluations of the responses made:

- Continuity Report: The Broken Process at Family and Children's Services;
- Homelessness: A County-Wide Issue;
- Planning & Building—Structural Issues: Exposing the Cracks; and
- Healing the Toxic Culture in the City of Willits Workplace.

According to the California Penal Code (Penal Code), Civil Grand Juries request responses to the findings and recommendations in their reports. The Grand Jury Continuity Committee reviews those responses to ascertain whether they comply with the Penal Code. All required responses met the requirements of the Penal Code sections 916, 933 and 933.05, except for the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors (BOS) response to the Grand Jury Report titled, Planning & Building—Structural Issues: Exposing the Cracks. See the attached summary chart for explanations and details.

Background

The Civil Grand Jury system in California exists to promote effective and efficient local government. The Grand Jury is impaneled by the Mendocino County Superior Court and is composed of volunteers who reside within the County. Grand Jury investigations result in published reports for the residents of Mendocino County. These reports contain facts and findings that lead to recommendations for improvement in county and city government entities and special districts. The goal of each grand jury is to offer a differing perspective that can improve services and working conditions for County employees.

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The Grand Jury represents one example of our democracy whereby citizens volunteer for civic duty on behalf of their community. These citizens organize and share responsibilities to monitor local government entities and oversee their appointed and elected officials. Their work is governed by Penal Code section 933(a), the basis for report responses, findings, and recommendations.

Grand Jury investigations are initiated by identifying an issue(s) that needs to be addressed within Mendocino County. Based on these investigations, the Grand Jury publishes reports which include *Findings* and *Recommendations*.

Each entity that was the subject of the investigation should respond to the findings and recommendations. Pursuant to Penal Codes sections 916, 933 and 933.05, a response must contain specific language and an explanation. The Grand Jury holds the respondents accountable to meet the requirements of the Penal Code pertaining to response time and content:

- Required responses from an elected governing body of an agency or organization are due within 90 days after receiving the report;
- Required responses from elected individuals are due within 60 days after receiving the report; and
- Requested responses are an invitation to respond within 60 days after receiving the report and are not mandatory.

Requests For Responses

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Civil Grand Jury requests each entity or individual named below to respond to the enumerated findings and recommendations within statutory guidelines.

Responses to ***Findings*** and ***Recommendations*** shall be as follows:

“(a) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:

(1) The respondent agrees with the finding.

(2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.

(b) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:

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- (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
- (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.
- (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
- (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.”

Continuity Report: The Broken Process at Family and Children’s Services

This report was based on an investigation of the Grand Jury empaneled 2023-2024 term. While the Grand Jury appears to be one continuous group of jurors, they are only empaneled for one year term, with only ten permitted to have a second consecutive term.

The County of Mendocino Family and Children’s Services (FCS) is an agency that is part of the Mendocino County Department of Social Services. In the 2023-2024 term, the Grand Jury investigated in response to a complaint “regarding reports filed late to the Superior Court and short staffing due, in part, to unfilled positions and a four-day work week which leaves the FCS offices closed to the public on Fridays.” See the original [2023-2024 Grand Jury report](#).

The FCS had been struggling to provide comprehensive services to children and their families for several years. These services include foster care, adoption, care for abused children and support for families struggling with addiction, as well as financial assistance through the Department of Social Services. Upon investigation, it was learned that there have been several other investigations through the years into issues of high caseloads and insufficient staff to handle the work. The Grand Jury determined that despite staff that were devoted to serving the children and their families, systemic issues kept impeding the social workers’ ability to do the work. The 2023-2024 Grand Jury provided the BOS with twenty-three recommendations.

As with all Continuity Reports, the Grand Jury examines each response to the specific recommendations. The Grand Jury empaneled in 2024-2025 found that the BOS did not meet the Penal Code section 933 criteria for responses to grand jury recommendations for recommendation #10 by “failing to include a summary of action taken to implement Quality Assurance in FCS.” The BOS was sent a letter asking them to resubmit their response to include a summary of the implemented action. The second response was also non-compliant due to the aforementioned reason. See the [2024-2025 Grand Jury report](#).

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The 2025-2026 Grand Jury Continuity Committee began by reviewing the BOS response dated July 8, 2026. At first, it was not evident that the BOS and FCS took the recommendations seriously. There were staff complaints at the September 9, 2025 BOS meeting, and inconsistency about the how, when, and where of what a Quality Improvement Program should look like. Though there is still much to do, after interviewing the appropriate parties, it became evident that the new leadership has a firm grasp on what needs to be done in improving the services to family and children. For example, there is a commitment to updating policies and procedures so workers, clients and the community know what to expect when interacting with the agency. This fosters a sense of knowing the rules and not doing things the “way they have always been done.” It also provides clear measures of accountability for staff and leadership. In the long run, having a set of policies and procedures that are adhered to ensures that family and children receive the care they need and deserve. In addition, utilizing cross-training to enhance services ensures that no worker is in a silo unable to offer help to other areas, nor receive help. Cross-training provides an opportunity for workers to work as teams to ensure that client services are not delayed due to vacations, vacancies, or emergencies. Professional social workers are educated to work in a variety of areas; cross-training utilizes that education to the benefit of family and children.

Overall, FCS staff incorporating recommendations from the 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury report shows a collaborative effort to work together to provide the best services possible to Mendocino County’s children and families. It is our hope that leadership at the FCS will continue to receive support from BOS as they endeavor to provide quality services to the Mendocino County community.

Recommendation	Response*	Compliance with Penal Code 933.05
R1. The Board of Supervisors ensures that all future responses to Grand Jury recommendations comply with California Penal Code § 933.05.	The Board of Supervisors works to ensure that all responses to Grand Jury Requirements comply with California Penal Code § 933.05.*	Met Requirement

Homelessness: A County-Wide Issue

The 2024-2025 Grand Jury investigated the Care Response Unit (CRU) established in the City of Fort Bragg to address the growing problem of homelessness in Mendocino County. CRU was considered a state-of-the-art program based on the findings of Dr. Robert G. Marbut’s homelessness study commissioned by the BOS in 2019.

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The CRU program involves the integration of police outreach, mental health services, and temporary housing for unhoused individuals as they are located and identified within the Fort Bragg city limits. The CRU is law-enforcement driven and as such is unique in the county.

The Grand Jury's investigation included interviews with Fort Bragg and County officials, police and sheriff personnel and other advocates for the unhoused people in the area. In addition, the Grand Jury reviewed documentation, news reports, and studies on homelessness. See in greater detail the [report and responses](#).

Recommendation	Response*	Penal Code 933.05
Fort Bragg City Council		
R1. The Mendocino County Civil Grand Jury recommends that verified results from the Care Response Unit program, both positive and negative, be reported to the City Council of Fort Bragg by December 2025.	This Recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented in the future with a structure and timeline. *	Met Requirement
R2. The Mendocino County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Community Outreach Response and Engagement program developers continue to collaborate with the County Behavioral Health, Social Services, Sheriff's Office and other County departments and program managers to work with the Care Response Unit.	The Recommendation has been implemented. The City of Fort Bragg's Care Response Unit (CRU) has recently extended its services geographically, and has initiated further collaboration with County law enforcement, behavioral health, and social services. *	Met Requirement
Mendocino County Sheriff		
R2. The Mendocino County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Community Outreach Response and Engagement program developers continue to collaborate with the County Behavioral Health, Social Services, Sheriff's Office and other County departments and program managers to work with the Care Response Unit.	"I agree with this concept with a caveat. The Ft Bragg Police Department CRU has worked to remove homeless people from within the city limits who have caused 'quality-of-life issues.'" *	Met Requirement

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Recommendation	Response*	Penal Code 933.05
Fort Bragg Police Department Captain Response		
R1. The Mendocino County Civil Grand Jury recommends that verified results from the Care Response Unit program, both positive and negative, be reported to the City Council of Fort Bragg by December 2025.	“The Police Department will generate a more comprehensive written report as part of the Grand Jury's recommended report to the Fort Bragg City Council (R1). That report will be published and publicly presented prior to December 31, 2025”. *	Met Requirement

Planning and Building Department Structural Issues: Exposing the Cracks

The 2024-2025 Grand Jury received a complaint regarding a misuse of the Class K permitting process at Planning and Building Services (PBS). This complaint contained allegations of a lack of communication between divisions within PBS, misuse of discretion, failure to perform onsite inspections, overlooked code violations, dumping of trash on Jackson State Forest property, permitting commercial structures as Class K, ignoring toxic waste in Class K structures, finalizing permits prior to compliance with California Public Resource Code (PRC) section 4290 fire safe regulations, and other violations. An onsite visit by Grand Jury members confirmed these allegations.

The Grand Jury received four separate complaints directed at PBS, specifically Code Enforcement Division (CED) and Building Division (BD). The issues identified in the complaints included lack of accountability, inability, and/or unwillingness to enforce State law and local ordinances and a tendency to misuse discretion in interpreting the law. Since 2016, the Grand Jury has reported on PBS and CED in three separate reports.

The Grand Jury reviewed policies, procedures, state, and local statutes. Interviews of members of management, line staff, as well as members of BOS were also conducted, in pursuit of understanding how the agency operates and how the issues in question could have been mitigated. After extensive study of the evidence gathered the 2024-2025 Grand Jury issued a report listing 15 findings and made 11 recommendations which can be found in the table below along with the BOS response. The 2025-2026 Grand Jury found that all the responses, except for Recommendation # 7, did not meet the standard of Penal Code section 933.05. See the entire [2025-2026 Grand Jury report](#). See the [BOS response to the Grand Jury Report](#) here.

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Mendocino County Board of Supervisors		
Recommendation	Response*	Penal Code 933.05
R1. The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors give direction to the Mendocino County Chief Executive Officer to instruct Planning and Building Services to immediately enforce Public Resource Code 4290 for all new permits pertaining to preexisting and habitable structures, commercial and industrial buildings, by July 1, 2025.	The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not warranted. PBS complies with its responsibilities as it pertains to PRC section 4290 and follows the established CALFIRE procedure as provided in Attachments A and B.*	Did not meet requirements
R2. The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors give direction to the Chief Executive Officer to create an oversight committee to ensure that Planning and Building Services adheres to requirements outlined in Public Resource Code 4290 in the State Response Area, by January 1, 2026.	The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not warranted. PBS complies with its responsibilities as it pertains to PRC section 4290 and follows the established CALFIRE procedure as provided in Attachments A and B and as summarized in response to Findings herein and Recommendation 1. *	Did not meet requirements
R3. The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors give direction to the Chief Executive Officer to implement a plan to cease issuance of Class K permits that are not solely intended for habitable living space as prescribed by law, by July 1, 2025.	This recommendation will not be implemented as it is not warranted. As explained in response to Finding 1 herein. *	Did not meet requirements
R4. The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors give direction to the Chief Executive Officer to create an oversight committee by January 1, 2026, to ensure that Planning and Building Services adheres to requirements outlined specifically in: • California Code of Regulations, Title 25, Chapter 1, Subchapter 1, Article 8	The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not warranted. PBS complies with its responsibilities.*	Did not meet requirements

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Mendocino County Board of Supervisors		
Recommendation	Response*	Penal Code 933.05
• California Code of Regulations, Title 25, Chapter 1, Subchapter 1, Article 8 • Health and Safety Code 17958.2 • Health and Safety Code 17958.2 • Mendocino County Code Chapter 18.23 • Mendocino County Code Chapter 18.23 • Public Resource Code 4290.		
R5. The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors give direction to the Chief Executive Officer to have a working draft of Policies and Procedures for all divisions within Planning and Building Services. The guidelines should be comprehensive, standardized, and easily accessible to all staff members to ensure that the processes are consistently followed and comply with regulatory requirements, by January 1, 2026.	These recommendations will not be implemented as they are not warranted. As noted in the response to Finding 5, PBS has clear policies and procedures that relate to the handling of permits, inspections, and fees. *	Did not meet requirements
R6. The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors give direction to the Chief Executive Officer to instruct Planning and Building Services to have a final version of Policy and Procedures for all divisions, by April 1, 2026.	These recommendations will not be implemented as they are not warranted. As noted in the response to Finding 5, PBS has clear policies and procedures that relate to the handling of permits, inspections, and fees. *	Did not meet requirements
R7. The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors instruct the Chief Executive Officer to implement new software applications for tracking all processes in Planning and Building Services, including but not limited to permits, inspections, fees, and Code Enforcement complaints, by April 1, 2026.	“This recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future.” “However, implementation may take up until November 1, 2027.” *	Met requirements
R8. The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Officer to	This recommendation will not be implemented as it is not warranted because it duplicates	Did not meet requirements

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Mendocino County Board of Supervisors		
Recommendation	Response*	Penal Code 933.05
implement a monitoring process for Planning and Building Services that includes supervisory checks and audits to ensure adherence to the established policies and procedures, and to identify areas for improvement, by April 1, 2026.	a prior and ongoing Board of Supervisors-approved Executive Office initiative from 2023.*	
R9. The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors give direction to the Chief Executive Officer to develop a structured training program within Planning and Building Services based on all laws, codes, ordinances and any new policies and procedures. This program should include both initial training for new hires and ongoing refresher courses for existing staff, by April 1, 2026.	The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not warranted because it is already sufficiently addressed through the current thorough PBS training program.*	Did not meet requirements
R10. The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors give direction to the Chief Executive Officer to establish and document clear roles and responsibilities for all Planning and Building Services staff involved in the permitting, inspection, and fee collection processes, by April 1, 2026.	“This recommendation will not be implemented as it is not warranted because it duplicates a prior and ongoing Board of Supervisors-approved Executive Office initiative from 2023.” *	Did not meet requirements
R11. The Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors give direction to the Chief Executive Officer to create a communication framework that establishes regular meetings, addresses challenges, and shares best practices to ensure all staff are aligned with the policies and procedures within Planning and Building Services, by July 1, 2025.	The recommendation will not be implemented because it is already sufficiently addressed by the Department in their operations. *	Did not meet requirements

Healing the Toxic Culture in the City of Willits Workplace

The 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury received a complaint detailing multiple irregularities including an intimidation and toxic workplace culture for the employees of the City of Willits. See the entire [2024-2025 Grand Jury report](#).

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The Grand Jury interviewed the parties in question as well as other witnesses. They also reviewed countless documents, including the written City of Willits' Policy and Procedures Manual and the Willits City Council Manual of Procedures and Protocols currently in use.

The Grand Jury made four recommendations to the City Council to improve the work environment for the employees and thus improve efficacy of the work they are empowered to perform. The Willits City Council met the response requirements of all four recommendations of the 2024-2025 Grand Jury. The response from the Willits City Council is summarized in the following table:

Recommendation	Response*	Compliance with Penal Code 933.05
R1 The Grand Jury recommends the Willits City Council direct its City Manager to demonstrate compliance with the existing written Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual for the City of Willits, by July 31, 2025.	The recommendation has not been implemented but will in the future. The City Manager in question and the Willits City Council agreed to a Separation Agreement in March 2025. *	Met requirement
R2. The Grand Jury recommends the Willits City Council create a mechanism for compliance and oversight to ensure all personnel policies are being followed, by January 1, 2026.	"The recommendation has not been implemented but will be in the future. A review of the existing role of our HR Department and of our Personnel Policies and Procedures." *	Met requirement
R3. The Grand Jury recommends the Willits City Council direct the Willits City Manager to restore and fill the position of Human Resources Director by January 1, 2026.	"The recommendation requires further analysis. We are currently fiscally unable to hire additional HR staff, and so additional options are needed." *	Met requirement
R4. The Grand Jury recommends the Willits City Council conduct annual performance reviews of the Willits City Manager by April 30 of each year.	"The recommendation has been implemented. The Willits City Manager received performance evaluations annually from the Willits City Council before April 30th in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025." *	Met requirement

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