



THE INMATE RECEPTION CENTER

**An Outdated Process Imperils Staff,
and the Justice System**

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SUMMARY

The Los Angeles County (County) Inmate Reception Center (IRC) is the link between the County jails and the Superior Court of California (Court). This is the division of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) that transfers thousands of inmates to and from the Court for trial, and safely holds inmates until they are moved to holding facilities around the County, or released. The IRC is always open, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

All inmates at the IRC are men. Roughly 1,200 to 1,500 inmates arrive at the IRC each day to go to Court. Another 200 to 500 newly arrested men arrive for processing. The work of the IRC is largely a manual, paper-based operation. Due to the overwhelming number of inmates processed each day and the corresponding amount of paperwork, time delays are common. As a result, men wait long hours for the completion of paperwork that determines whether they return to jail, clinic, or are released.

The conditions at the IRC are untenable. Continuing to rely on old technology leads to numerous problems including delays in processing reports, an inability to digitally interface with the Court's system, the creation of too much paperwork, a lack of organized and safe office space, workplace injuries, and staffing issues. It is imperative that the County implement a new information system which would result in faster processing of inmates. This would improve the treatment of inmates and the work environment of the custody staff.

For this reason, the Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) created the Inmate Reception Center Committee (Committee) to investigate and report about the IRC.

BACKGROUND

The Inmate Reception Center has 847 employees which includes 301 sworn deputies, 147 custody assistants, and 399 professional staff. The IRC staff are assigned to sections that manage records, property, document control, and cashiering.



At present 1,200 to 1,500 inmates are processed at the IRC each day and taken by bus to the Court for hearings. Afterwards, inmates are returned to the IRC where they await release, a return to jail, or a transfer to State prison or the Department of Homeland Security.

In addition to processing inmates going to and from court hearings, IRC must evaluate newly arrested inmates admitted to the IRC for mental health and medical conditions, then assign them to housing. Inmates may be housed at any of the forty-three LASD holding facilities throughout the County, but most are housed next door at Men's Central Jail, Twin Towers Correctional Facility (adjacent to the IRC), or the Pitchess Detention Center in Castaic.

The IRC uses a computer information system to manage the records of inmates. The system, AJIS, is the Automated Justice Information System (AJIS), and it has been in use since the early 1980s. AJIS tracks all data on inmates - housing assignments, court appointments, transportation, medical records, and other conditions.

A SPECTACULAR NEW SYSTEM

In the world of computer technology, a computer information system from the 1980s is considered a relic.

A glance at the history of technology systems helps put a program like AJIS in perspective.

In the 1960s a new computer programming language called COBOL (COMmon Business Oriented Language) was developed. COBOL quickly became the primary programming language for the burgeoning growth of applications for government and industry. This was the beginning of the information age. To put this timeline in perspective, consider these major events: COBOL pre-dated the US landing on the moon; the World Wide Web was not even on the horizon; and cell phones were decades in the future.

In the 1970s, federal government researchers experimented with COBOL to develop a computer information system that could share data across departments in a municipal government. It was an ambitious undertaking that required systems analysts and COBOL programmers. However, in the early 1970s, the fields of systems analysis and design were in their infancy, and there was no pool of COBOL programmers for hire. Each programmer-to-be had to be hired and then taught to write



COBOL code. The concept was exciting, but the challenges of building such a system were nearly insurmountable. Such was the state of information systems in the mid-1970s.¹

It was in these very early years of computer information systems that Los Angeles County embarked on what was arguably the biggest, most ambitious project of any state or county government in the country. In 1984, the LASD and the County Internal Services Department (ISD) together developed AJIS, enabling LASD to track inmates' booking information, housing assignments, court dates, and other essential information. With AJIS, LASD staff could access current inmate information and update the information quickly.

The beauty of this 1984 project was that separate modules could be linked together and could be modified. Additional modules could be added later as needed. The ISD had a team of programmers dedicated to AJIS, so changes and additions could be written quickly and exactly to the Sheriff's specifications. This was a groundbreaking development.

The County has the largest jail system in the United States and has unique demands. AJIS grew to host a complex system of modules that met the needs of LASD and enabled the IRC to work efficiently with the Courts.

AJIS now includes thirty-six separate modules and remains the main information system that supports the IRC operations.

This 1984 system was extremely successful. The flexibility of in-house programming and the quality of programming enabled AJIS to serve LASD for four decades. However, the age and inability of AJIS to interface with more modern systems in use by other agencies has left the IRC in a position where it can no longer handle the volume of data and complex operations required to serve the inmates and employees of this important department.

THE SYSTEM FORTY YEARS LATER

The IRC is the point of contact between LASD and the Court. Inmates are processed before going to court appearances and again when coming back for either release or transfer to another facility. Court orders are the trigger for much activity at the IRC.

¹ Interview with IRC Management, October 13, 2022.



Information arrives from the Court and other departments as paper documents that must be typed into AJIS. The volume of paperwork is overwhelming. Paper documents for about 1,500 inmates are shipped to the IRC on a daily basis. While clerks sort papers with court orders, the inmates are held in the *front of house*. This large holding room at the IRC is at the back of the building where inmates are returned from court by bus. For the inmates, this is the front door to the IRC, hence the front of house nomenclature.

Sheriff's deputies supervise this room while the paperwork is being processed. Because the paper processing is slow, most inmates have long waits, sometimes many hours. The crowded conditions present custody management issues, as some inmates are disruptive or have mental challenges such that they require close supervision. The deputies have resorted to restraining some inmates with handcuffs and shackling others to benches. This practice was documented in the Los Angeles Times² on September 8, 2022.

Although the IRC operates twenty-four hours a day, it does not have overnight facilities. The front of house is not designed to hold men for an extended period of time. Inmates must leave within 24 hours. When the necessary paperwork is not completed in time, they are sent to Mens' Central Jail or Twin Towers. They are returned to the IRC the following day to continue waiting for their paperwork to be completed.³

AJIS is at the heart of this unconscionable situation. It is widely recognized by the IRC and ISD that AJIS no longer serves the best interests of employees, inmates, or the needs of the County.⁴

There have been attempts to modernize this system. The latest project was in 2021 when the ISD contracted with Syscon Global Technologies to design and build a modern enterprise system. The IRC system was studied, and a new business model was developed. However, the estimated cost of programming and implementing an updated justice information system was larger than could be covered by LASD's annual budget for technology, and the project was shelved.⁵

² Michael Finnegan. "Barbaric' L.A. County jail conditions alleged as ACLU seeks federal intervention". Los Angeles Times. September 8, 2022. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-09-08/barbaric-l-a-county-jail-conditions-alleged-as-aclu-seeks-federal-intervention>.

³ Interview on October 4, 2022 with IRC staff.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Interview with managers at IRC and ISD on December 5, 2022.



METHODOLOGY

The IRC has never previously been investigated by the CGJ. With little record to inform us, we sought to get a thorough understanding of how this important arm of LASD works and how it serves its employees, inmates, and citizens of the County.

This CGJ conducted numerous interviews with LASD's custody deputies, management staff, and custody clerks. In addition, we interviewed representatives from the ISD Information Technology Services Department, Court, and the County's Chief Information Office.

The Committee visited the IRC numerous times and at various times during the day and night. We sought to understand the operations and the dependency on other agencies, especially the Court. We observed every operation that occurs in the course of processing inmates' cases and associated paper files. We found mounds and mounds of paper piled on tables, in boxes stacked in offices and hallways, and in numerous manila folders. The Committee was astounded to see thousands of file folders representing open court cases. Well over 1,500 files flow through the IRC during each twenty-four hour cycle.

INVESTIGATION

Each year the CGJ conducts an inquiry into the status of the jails and detention facilities of the County. On October 4, 2022, the CGJ toured the IRC and observed an operation severely encumbered by AJIS, a forty year old computer information system. This outdated system manifests itself in mountains of paperwork; it might be called a "**computer assisted manual operation.**" We determined the IRC and its use of AJIS warranted further investigation.

Earlier that same month, the Los Angeles Times published an article, "'Unconscionable' Jail Conditions Spur LA County Supervisors to Explore Building Locked Mental Health Facilities."⁶ The article both verified our initial impression of the conditions at the IRC, and spurred our desire to determine the source of the problems. We also learned of a federal restraining order against the Sheriff and County as a result of inmate processing delays at the IRC.⁷

⁶ Taylor Walker. "Unconscionable Jail Conditions Spur LA County Supervisors To Explore Building Locked Mental Health Facilities". October 3, 2022. <https://witnessla.com/unconscionable-jail-conditions-spur-la-county-supervisors-to-explore-building-locked-mental-health-facilities/>.

⁷ ACLU.ORG; <https://www.aclu.org/legal-document/rutherford-v-villanueva-plaintiffs-memorandum-support-application-temporary>



The accompanying photograph (Exhibit 1) depicts inmates handcuffed while sitting in chairs and lying on the floor in the front of house. Scenes like this illustrate the unduly long waits and humiliating conditions. LASD could move inmates through the IRC with far fewer delays if the cumbersome manual processing required by AJIS were to be replaced with modern methods and technology.



Exhibit 1. Inmates wait hours for their paperwork. Photo credit: ACLU Los Angeles.

HOW ARE INMATES' RECORDS PROCESSED?

IRC procedures cover many types of cases, from newly booked inmates, incarcerations of mentally ill people, short-term inmates, those transferring to/from state prisons, high profile inmates, violent inmates, and inmates returning from court. Each type of case has its own processing requirements. This Committee found the job to be tremendously complex, requiring careful checks at each step along the way. The consequences of an error that results in an early release require careful processing and a great deal of time.

Through this Committee's interviews with IRC staff and observations of IRC processing procedures, we learned of the arduous and often inefficient processes that IRC staff must comply with on a daily basis.

1. At the end of each weekday, the Court sends a notice to the IRC that lists all the cases that will be heard the following day. It is



the responsibility of the IRC to locate these inmates and transport them to court in the morning. The Court lists these individuals by case number whereas the IRC uses an inmate booking number. This begins the manual handling of volumes of paperwork, as custody clerks reconcile the case number and booking number.



2. Custody clerks create a folder, or jacket, for each case. Jackets are color coded to identify the classification of the inmate. Each jacket is labeled with large colored numbers. (Exhibit 2). This jacket is the primary record for the inmate and is kept on site until his case is closed.



Exhibit 2. A jacket is created for each case. Jackets are numbered and color coded.



3. Ideally the custody clerks would digitize the closed cases for online storage, but for the past several years, there has not been enough staff or time for scanning. Instead, the jackets of closed cases are boxed and sent to offsite storage. (Exhibit 3.) The storage contractor eventually scans the contents into permanent digital files. The paper files are archived.



Exhibit 3. These boxes of jackets are indexed and ready for shipment to off-site storage. This quantity of boxes is shipped out twice a week.



4. Some jackets become overstuffed with papers. In these cases the jacket requires expansion. A clerk slices down the side of the file folder and applies 4-inch wide tape to accommodate the growing number of papers. (Exhibit 4.)



Exhibit 4. A jacket can be expanded by slicing down the side of the folder and adding 4-inch wide tape to hold the two sides together.



5. When inmates are scheduled to appear in court, the IRC arranges for their transportation from housing to the IRC and from the IRC to Court. Most general population inmates are housed at Pitchess Detention Center, the largest housing facility, forty three miles from the IRC. On their court day they are awakened at 3:00 am so they have time to bathe, dress, and have breakfast before boarding the bus. Even inmates at Men's Central Jail and Twin Towers (both adjacent to the IRC) must be processed through the IRC; for security reasons they are transported by bus. Other inmates are bused from jails and holding facilities throughout the County.
6. Inmates who have exhibited mental illness or who have certain medical conditions are not housed with the general jail population; they are housed at Twin Towers.



7. During one of our day-shift visits, the Court sent a case list with 1,168 names of individuals to be transported to court for arraignment the following day. (Exhibit 5.)



Exhibit 5. These are the jackets of active cases.



8. The overnight shift at the IRC files the previous day's paperwork and retrieves the next day's jackets from the shelves of active cases. (Exhibit 6.)



Exhibit 6. Here is a portion of a single clerk's daily caseload.



9. At the end of the court day, the inmates are bused from the court back to the IRC. A deputy on the bus brings all the jackets, court transmittals, personal property, and other loose paperwork. All of this is stuffed into large canvas bags known as *saddlebags*. In fact, the staff call this delivery the "Pony Express." There may be a thousand pages or more in each saddlebag. There are several saddlebags on each bus. (Exhibits 7 and 8.)



Exhibit 7 Saddlebags contain loose records and property of inmates who have appeared in court.



Exhibit 8. All pages from this saddlebag must be manually processed by the custody clerks.



10. Each court transmittal consists of about six or more pages. A custody clerk unstaples the transmittal and rearranges the order of papers, putting the page containing the judge's instructions on top. Then the sorted bundle is re-stapled, and it moves to the date/time stamping station.
11. Every paper in every bundle that enters the IRC is manually date/time stamped by a custody clerk. The documents are then returned to the proper jackets.
12. Many of the court documents are handwritten, and sometimes the instructions are hard to decipher. In these cases, an IRC "trouble shooter" calls the clerk of the Court to clarify the instructions. This call results in another delay, possibly until the next morning.
13. While the court transmittals are being processed, the inmates are held in the front of house until they are either released or bused back to jail. No inmate may be held at the IRC more than 24 hours, and no inmate may leave the IRC until their paperwork is complete. Therefore, if the paperwork is not complete by the end of the 24-hour period, the inmate is housed at either Men's Central Jail or Twin Towers.

This process results in crowds of inmates and long waits while the paper processing continues. Inmates who are deemed disruptive may be handcuffed and chained to a bench to prevent them from harming themselves or others.

The front of house is not large enough to accommodate the number of inmates who are held there. The length of time needed to process the paperwork from the saddlebags means a long stay for inmates in this area.⁸

14. Inmates who are remanded to detention are admitted to the bus when their paperwork is complete. They are held on the bus until all the men have boarded, which may take several hours.
15. Inmates who are to be released wait in the front of house until their paperwork is found and completed. This may mean spending several additional hours past their technical release time.

⁸ Walker, Taylor. WitnessLA. Oct 3, 2022. <https://witnessla.com/unconscionable-jail-conditions-spur-la-county-supervisors-to-explore-building-locked-mental-health-facilities/>



16. Additional paperwork must be completed when an inmate is to be released. Release documents come to the IRC in the saddlebags from the Court, and once located, go through a five-step signatory review to ensure that no inmate is released by mistake. Five staff members approve the release of an inmate:
 - a. First Release Clerk. This clerk in the custody office verifies the length of stay and corroborates it with the release date as received in the transmittal from the Court.
 - b. Supervisor. This person reviews and signs the jacket, thereby approving the work done in the previous step.
 - c. Head Clerk. This person verifies that steps (a) and (b) were completed correctly and signs off.
 - d. Watch Deputy. This person checks the Justice Data Interface Controller (JDIC), another software system, for additional warrants that would prevent release.
 - e. Second Release Clerk. This clerk, in the release area, makes the final check of all the paperwork and then “opens the door” to release the man.

It takes hours to complete these steps. The sheer volume of cases and the repetitive tasks executed thousands of times each day take a physical toll on the custody clerks.

To address the high level of repetitive stress injuries, the IRC has installed ergonomic furniture at many work stations, but the physical handling of tens of thousands of papers each day continues to be problematic.

WORKERS COMPENSATION BURDEN

The IRC is highly impacted by workers’ compensation claims. There are numerous repetitive stress injuries and subsequently many workers’ compensation claims. A confidential source informed the Committee that in 2022, workers’ compensation claims at the IRC totaled \$3,779,813. Of that amount, clerks and administrators claims totaled \$1,049,745. At any given time, up to a quarter of the custody office staff are absent, and their duties are executed by other staff working



overtime hours. Even the supervisors work many overtime hours to make up for absent staff. The cost of claims combined with the cost of overtime labor add up to a high, unnecessary expense.

OLD OFFICE TECHNOLOGY

During our visits to the IRC we encountered many very old office machines. Young clerks have never seen this kind of equipment before joining the IRC. Picture this:

- Teletype machine. This machine is used to accept input from some state agencies outside the County. In case the teletype should fail, the IRC keeps a second one on hand for parts. There is nobody to call for repairs.
- Dot matrix printers. In one office, the Committee found a clerk whose job is to print out-of-state warrants on a dot matrix printer and periodically cut and bundle the fan folded printouts. The printer is so old that its pins are worn down and barely strike the paper hard enough to leave any marks. The resulting printouts are nearly illegible. Even a brand new ribbon doesn't help. Dot matrix printers have their place, but these illegible printouts are rarely if ever used. They are stored in massive piles that the clerks describe as being the size of a VW bus. A new information system would largely replace this task.

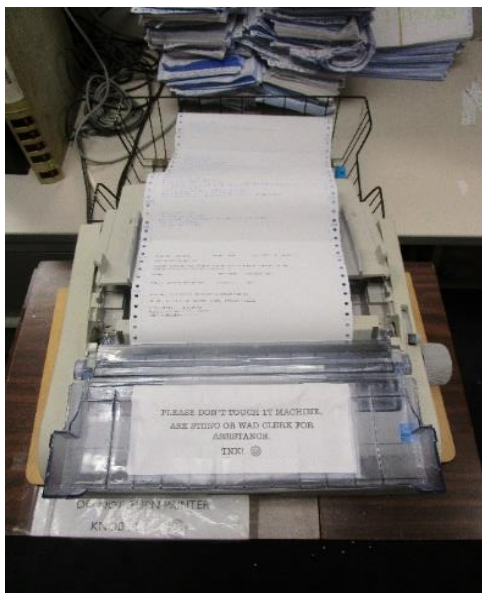


Exhibit 9. Teletype.



Exhibit 10. Dot matrix printer.



Exhibit 11 Stacks of dot matrix printouts are stored on and under tables.

We saw similar examples of machines so old and obsolete that the clerks have become their own service technicians to keep the machines operational.

At the IRC there are additional examples of old office technology that have fallen out of use.

- Pneumatic tube. This system uses vacuum suction to transport containers of papers through chutes to a remote location. In this manner, paper documents can be moved from one office to another. At one time release papers were sent by pneumatic tube from the IRC custody side to the release clerk.
- Sorting wheel. This round dining table size unit includes hinged flaps spaced every inch around the perimeter. One can put manila folders in order and rotate the table to access any folder without moving from one's chair.



- File sorters. The IRC has several sorters in various sizes. These units are about 18-24 inches long, two to three inches wide, with hinged flaps used to hold sorted papers. The flaps may be numbered or lettered.

OFFICE SPACE

Most available wall space and floor space is taken up by paper storage. Stacks of paper and boxes of files are stored atop tables, under tables, in alcoves and corners, and on shelves. Hallways are blocked, creating a hazardous workspace. A new information system would allow data to be stored digitally, instead.



Exhibit 12 Hallways are frequently used for storage.



THE STRESS OF THE JOB

During our interviews we found that the staff, whose main job is to handle high volumes of paperwork, are well aware that this cumbersome manual system could be modernized. They recognize that a system less reliant on paper handling would enable them to process jackets much more quickly so the inmates' stays at the IRC could be radically shortened. There is a level of stress that comes with running an operation in such a clearly antiquated way.

STAFFING ISSUES

There are serious concerns about maintaining the current AJIS system. The ISD project manager is nearing retirement age, and there is nobody who can provide anything close to the same level of expertise on AJIS.

Forty years ago, the ISD had a staff of COBOL programmers; today there is just one. The institutional knowledge and the ability to support AJIS are disappearing.

A system this old cannot be maintained or upgraded. All but a couple of people who can work on the system have already retired. Only one COBOL programmer is still on staff. Young technology workers are not learning COBOL, so it is not possible to hire new COBOL programmers.

The entry level clerk positions at the IRC are permanently open, meaning the IRC is continuously hiring new clerks. During our interviews with IRC managers, we learned there are reasons for the high turnover among the junior level staff:

- Being hired by the IRC is one of the easiest routes into the County Civil Service. The job is always open, and the qualifications minimal. There is always a shortage of clerks.
- The job is not a desirable one. The pay is low, and the ambience is not appealing. Clerks with one year's experience can transfer to better jobs within the County Civil Service.
- Clerks fill three shifts to cover each 24-hour day. New clerks usually are assigned the least popular hours, like overnight, further motivating them to transfer to other departments where they can enjoy normal office hours.



- There is little room for internal advancement for a Clerk within the IRC. The skills learned in this office are not transferrable to other jobs. This combination makes for a bleak outlook with little job growth.

GROWING LEGAL CHALLENGES

The long holding time for inmates under harsh conditions led to a request by the ACLU to U.S. District Judge Dean D. Pregerson for an emergency order to force LASD and the Board of Supervisors to remedy the “medieval” conditions of the IRC. The motion, filed on September 8, 2022, sought to limit custody at the IRC to 24 hours at most and to improve conditions so they meet minimum legal standards. (*Rutherford v. Villanueva*⁹). The Los Angeles Times reported on the case.¹⁰

The situation gained federal attention when U.S. Senators Alex Padilla and Dianne Feinstein (California), Cory Booker (New Jersey), and Kirsten Gillibrand (New York) wrote to Attorney General Merrick Garland, describing the conditions at the IRC as a “humanitarian crisis.” They cited the earlier ACLU request.

In February 2023, the ACLU asked the judge to hold the Sheriff and Supervisors in contempt over jail conditions, which allegedly have not improved during the time in which the restraining orders were in effect.¹¹

The federal attention poses a serious challenge to the County, with substantial legal and financial implications. The gravity of the situation is such that the County must give the highest priority to resolving the problems at the IRC.

GROWING FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

There is a financial burden as well. By continuing to use the current paper-based system, the IRC cannot process cases quickly enough to meet the federal restraining order, nor can it surmount the monumental backlog of paperwork.

⁹ [Rutherford v. Villanueva, No. 75-CV-04111-DDP | Casetext Search + Citator](#)

¹⁰ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-09-08/barbaric-l-a-county-jail-conditions-alleged-as-aclu-seeks-federal-intervention>.

¹¹ Keri Blakingerstaff. ACLU asks judge to hold sheriff and supervisors in contempt over jail conditions. Los Angeles Times. February 27, 2023. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-02-27/aclu-asks-judge-to-hold-sheriff-supervisors-in-contempt-over-jail-conditions>.



There are hidden costs to maintaining the status quo, including substantial costs of workers' compensation claims. Typically, claims involve repetitive action injuries associated with processing tens of thousands of pieces of paper each day.

High employee turnover at the entry level leaves the department continually understaffed. There is concurrent risk of losing long time senior employees to retirement. Currently at least three clerks each have about forty years of experience at the IRC. If any of them retire, they will take their irreplaceable knowledge of the department and its systems, which could easily lead to higher error rate in processing inmates and even longer waits in the IRC front of house.

These are two related expenses: the cost to constantly train new employees, as well as the cost associated with paying overtime hours to make up for the shortage of personnel.

A COMPUTER SYSTEM AT THE END OF ITS LIFE CYCLE

AJIS was a spectacular success, and it has served the County well. It is used by all LASD and police departments in the County, by prosecuting attorneys, and others who need to access inmate information. AJIS has been the standard in the County for four decades. It will be a monumental job to replace it, but it cannot be made to integrate with systems from all the other agencies that send/receive data to the IRC. To continue relying on it is to expose the County to increasing risks.

The overloaded system is becoming more prone to error. The volume of work requires staffing twenty-four hours per day. Clerks already are processing as many records as they can. There have been several high-profile cases where an inmate was released in error, and it must be assumed that other less publicized errors occur.¹² More importantly, AJIS cannot interface with modern systems such as that used by the Court. AJIS has become a significant contributing factor to the unconscionable delays in the processing of inmates.

A system this old cannot be maintained or upgraded. All but a couple of people who can work on this system have already retired. **Within a very short time, it will be impossible to make even modest changes to AJIS.**

¹² Interview, December 9, 2022 with IRC staff.



A MODERN INFORMATION SYSTEM IS NEEDED

Moving people through the IRC in a timely manner would help alleviate the crowding currently experienced when cases pile up in this paperwork purgatory. The IRC would be able to streamline its operations by developing a modern computer system. For example, by eliminating much of the paperwork, the IRC could begin processing inmates returning from court hearings as soon as the Court enters the data. Ideally, by the time an inmate returns from court to the IRC, his data already would be recorded. Release orders and housing assignments could be carried out expeditiously and inmates would spend the least possible time at the IRC.

A new information system that incorporates the ability to share data in real time with other agencies that serve the IRC should replace the current forty year old legacy system.

This is not a small upgrade. When an organization undertakes a project of this scope, all the business practices must be documented, and new ones designed. Programs must be developed so that data is secure yet shareable with related agencies. This is a major undertaking.

TWO POSSIBLE WAYS TO PROCEED

A software project of this size can be designed by the ISD (in-house), as the current system was built. Or, it can be contracted out to a technology consulting organization. There are pluses and minuses for either path.

IN-HOUSE SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

A new system designed in-house has the advantage of using personnel already on the County payroll. The finished product will be thoroughly understood by the technology personnel who will design and build it. Later modifications will be less expensive because they can be built in-house as needed, and the turnaround time of modifications will be shorter.

On the other hand, the expense and the risk of developing a new system is borne entirely by the County. There is scant opportunity to share the development expense with another agency.



CONTRACTING OUT SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Contracting with a technology company to build a new system has some advantages. The system can be built to the County's specifications and guidance, but the expense of hiring personnel is borne by the consultant. This option provides the County a more reliable estimate of upfront and ongoing costs.

By using a technology development firm to build the new system, the consultant can use skilled personnel already on its staff or hire new talent for specialized projects. The technology consultant can spread the development costs over several client organizations (i.e., other counties using the same software). The technology firm accepts the risk and responsibility for the project.

It is a challenge to find the right software contractor. The standard advice for companies purchasing software is to use the "off the shelf" version of the product with no customization, other than perhaps for the colors on the computer screen. Any requested modifications carry substantial upfront and ongoing costs. A client is charged for customizing the program, and for every patch or upgrade of the software. Any requested modification of a module or creation of a new function is likely to be very costly and require a lengthy development time.

There may not be an existing software product that will meet all the needs of the IRC. However, there is a financial incentive for a consultant to work with the County to develop a robust product that could become a package of modules for use by other law enforcement agencies.

COST OF A NEW SYSTEM

How much would a new system cost? The Committee has neither sufficient time nor expertise to estimate a dollar figure – that will be left to those whose job it is to direct the project. We *can* make some statements about the scope of the job and its relative cost.

The most recent attempt to develop a new system was in 2021, when ISD hired consulting firm Gartner to conduct a study of the IRC operations.¹³ Syscon Global Systems joined and completed the first phase of development of a new system. At that point, the cost estimates

¹³ Interview with ISD representative, December 5, 2022.



of continuing the project were too high for LASD to build into its annual budget. The project was put on hiatus.

What we know from this experience is that the cost for design, development, and implementation of a new system for the IRC will be higher than LASD can afford without earmarked funding from the Board of Supervisors.

While a project of this size and complexity will be very expensive, its cost pales in comparison to the expenses the County will incur by not moving forward with a replacement for AJIS.

For this reason, approval and support will have to come from the highest organizational level in the County, the Board of Supervisors.

FINDINGS

1. The outdated AJIS system creates long delays for inmates at the IRC, as well as difficult and inefficient working conditions for IRC staff.
2. The Court and the IRC are unable to share digital information on their respective information systems.
3. Excessive reliance on overtime hours results from high staff turnover and high levels of absenteeism due to, among other things, work related injuries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The entire AJIS system must be replaced with a modern information system that utilizes data integration techniques. This will provide SECURE, fast, accurate, and complete information for the staff and managers, and provide fair and timely treatment for the inmates. Until the information system is modernized, the IRC will not be able to improve its performance significantly. All other improvements are dependent on putting in place a system that can interact with the similar systems of other relevant agencies, especially the Court.
- 6.2 The County should develop an information system capable of receiving data and communications from the Court. It is imperative that these two systems communicate because a real



time, interactive system will significantly decrease the time that inmates are held at the IRC.

- 6.3 Whether a new system is built in-house or contracted out, staff must be included in every step of the design, development, testing, and implementation. If staff needs are shortchanged, the project will suffer ongoing deficiencies, and the IRC will not see maximum improvement.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05 require a written response to all recommendations contained in this report. Responses by elected County officials and agency heads shall be made no later than sixty (60) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses by the governing body of public agencies shall be made ninety (90) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses shall be made in accord with Penal Code Sections 933.05(a) and (b).

All responses to the recommendations of the 2022-2023 Los Angeles CGJ must be submitted to:

Presiding Judge
Los Angeles County Superior Court
Clara Shortridge Foltz Criminal Justice Center
Los Angeles County Grand Jury
210 W. Temple Street, Thirteenth Floor, Room 13-303
Los Angeles, CA 90012



Responses to the recommendations above are required from the following:

| REQUIRED AGENCIES | RECOMMENDATIONS |
|---|------------------------|
| Chief Information Office | 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 |
| Internal Services Department | 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 |
| Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors | 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 |
| Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department | 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 |

ACRONYMS

| | |
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| ACLU | American Civil Liberties Union |
| AJIS | Automated Justice Information System |
| CGJ | Civil Grand Jury |
| COBOL | Common Business Oriented Language |
| IRC | Inmate Reception Center |
| ISD | (LA County) Internal Services Department |
| JDIC | Justice Data Interface Controller |
| LASD | Los Angeles Sheriff's Department |

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Victor H. Lesley | Chairperson |
| Carina Lester | Co-Chairperson |
| Margaret Chapman | Secretary |
| Leslie Flores | |
| LeRoy Titus | |