

Merced County Sheriff's Office Corrections Bureau

Inmate Handbook
Revised 2018



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Sheriff's Administration

700 W. 22nd Street Merced, CA 95340

INTRODUCTION:

While you are incarcerated in a Merced County Sheriff’s Office Corrections Facility, you will need to be aware of what to expect and what is expected of you. This handbook contains important information regarding your time in custody. This information ranges from rules and disciplinary procedures to daily events and time schedules.

While in custody, you are expected to obey the rules, display proper behavior and treat all staff and other inmates with respect. It is the responsibility of all staff to treat you fairly. You will not be treated differently based on your race, religion, national origin, sex, disability, sexual preference or political belief.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO READ AND UNDERSTAND THIS HANDBOOK. Contact a Correctional Officer if you have any questions or do not understand any section of this booklet.

YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO RETURN IT UPON YOUR RELEASE.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction / Table of Contents 1
Inmate Classification and Housing..... 2
Inmate emergency communications 3
Safety and Security 4
Headcount and Inmate Identification 5
Medical, Mental Health, and Dental Services..... 6
Court Information and Legal Services 7
Inmate Property/ Money 8
Inmate Request forms/ Grievances 9
Inmate Visitation 10
Inmate Mail... 11
Inmate Services 12
Facility Operations 13
Inmate Clothing/ Bedding 14
Inmate Conduct/ Discipline 15
Discipline Hearing Process... 16
Prison Rape Elimination Act..... 17
Closing notification 18

INMATE CLASSIFICATION AND HOUSING:

Classification is the process that decides where you will be housed while in custody. In most cases, your classification will be decided within 72 hours of your arrival. The initial classification process shall include an interview with a trained Classification Officer, an evaluation of current and past criminal records, incarceration history, medical and psychiatric needs, and any supplemental information available at the time of booking and identified special needs of the inmate.

Your classification and / or housing can be changed based on, but not limited to, a change in legal status, disruptive behavior, supplemental information or an incident that may require a change in an inmate's classification.

You may request a review of your classification after being in your assigned housing for 30 consecutive days. This is done by submitting an Inmate Request Form to the Classification Unit. Upon request, you may have to attend a review hearing and present information on your behalf.

You may appeal a classification decision by submitting an Inmate Request Form to the Classification Sergeant.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND COMMUNICATION:

If at any time you have a concern for your safety, alert a Correctional Officer immediately. Inmates who have a real and verifiable concern about their safety may be “reclassified.” The classification staff will make the final decision for the “reclassification” of any inmate.

If there is an immediate emergency, there are control call boxes in each housing unit. The box is a facility emergency system and shall only be used in the event of a true emergency. Misuse of any emergency call box can lead to discipline and / or criminal charges against you.

To activate an emergency call box, simply press the button on the speaker box. This will signal an alarm to the facility control room and a Sheriff Representative will speak with you regarding the nature of your emergency.

All housing units have emergency fire systems and are monitored 24 hours a day by emergency staff. Any tampering, damaging, altering, or misuse of emergency systems shall result in criminal and / or disciplinary action taken against you.

In the event of an emergency evacuation, you are to follow the direct orders of uniformed Sheriff Corrections Staff at all times. You will be escorted to a safe location by facility staff in accordance with the facilities emergency action plan.

Any attempt to escape and / or flee a staging area will result in criminal charges being filed against you for felony escape.

SAFETY AND SECURITY:

The safety and security of inmates, staff, and visitors is of the utmost importance. Inmates are strongly encouraged to immediately alert any staff member of any safety and security concerns so they may be addressed as soon as practical.

In the event of an emergency, such as fire or other natural disaster, inmates must follow the directions of the Correctional Officers. This is essential for everyone's safety. Any inmate who fails to respond to an officer's direction will be subject to discipline and / or criminal action.

Should a safety or security incident occur anywhere in a correctional facility, Correctional Officers may order all inmates to the ground. Inmates are to follow any verbal orders and /or direction from Correctional Staff during this time.

SECURITY SEARCHES:

All inmates and living quarters are subject to search at any time. Inmates will cooperate with Correctional Officers conducting the search. If any personal items are seized, you will be notified. If any items of contraband are seized, you may be disciplined and / or criminally charged.

Contraband is any item not issued, not purchased through commissary or has been modified from its intended use. The contraband found will subject to destruction or evidence. Failure to cooperate with searches or possession of contraband may result in disciplinary and /or criminal actions taken against you.

HOUSING UNIT INSPECTION:

Housing unit inspections will be conducted at any time without notice.

Inspection rules are as follows:

- All inmate property must be kept in the provided storage bag/box under the bunk
- No items will hang from the bars, vents, walls, etc
- No pictures or writing will be displayed on the walls
- The housing unit floors will be swept clean and mopped regularly and free from trash
- No storing of excessive commissary items or issued items

HEADCOUNTS:

Several scheduled and unscheduled headcount may be conducted by staff at any time. Inmate cooperation with all headcounts is mandatory. You shall have your inmate identification readily available for Officers to see upon request.

A headcount can be initiated at any time and at any location by Correctional Facility staff. You are required to follow all directions given by Correctional staff during a head count procedure. Failure to comply can result in criminal and / or disciplinary actions against you.

INMATE IDENTIFICATION:

When you are booked into a Merced County Sheriff's Office Corrections Facility, you will be given an identification (I.D.) card. You are required to have this I.D. card with you at all times. You may be required to show your I.D. card to receive mail, medication, medical care, special programs or commissary etc. It must also be shown for headcounts, visitation, and court appearances or at the request of any correctional staff member. Your I.D. card must be turned in at the time of your release to prove your identity. If you cannot produce your I.D. card, your release will be delayed, pending verification of your identity. If the I.D. card becomes worn out, torn or lost, notify a Correctional Officer immediately so it can be replaced. Tampering with your I.D. card will result in disciplinary action against you. If you lose, tamper, or alter your I.D. card, you will be charged \$3.00 for a replacement and could face disciplinary action.

You are required to show your inmate identification card upon request from any Correctional Staff member. No exceptions.

MEDICAL / DENTAL SERVICES:

Trained personnel will complete a medical questionnaire during the booking process to screen for medical and mental health issues.

Inmate's who develop a medical condition while in custody will need to complete a Sick Call Request Form. The Sick Call Request Form can be given to any medical staff member during their routine medication pass. Correctional Officers will not accept Sick Call Requests Forms.

Sick call is processed by trained medical staff and held daily.

If an inmate initiates a sick call visit, they will be charged a co-pay of \$3.00 per visit. The \$3.00 will be deducted from the money on their inmate account. No inmate will be refused sick call visits because of an inability to pay.

To receive medication you must:

- Show your I.D. card to the medical staff.
- Take your medication in the presence of the medical staff.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES:

If you need Mental Health Services, fill out a Sick Call Request Form and ask to see Mental Health.

If you are suicidal or have thoughts of suicide, harming yourself or others, please notify any correctional staff and / or medical staff immediately.

Mental Health Services are free of charge.

If at the time of your release from jail you are receiving medication and/or have a dressing change, corrections staff will take you to medical so the nurse can evaluate your condition prior to release.

COURT INFORMATION:

Your first appearance, known as an “arraignment”, will usually take place on the second or third court day after your arrest.

You must be fully dressed, in jail issued clothing, including court shirt and pants. You will be advised of your designated court time via intercom and must be ready for court 30 minutes before being transported.

You are not allowed to take any items to court with you except your court papers and I.D. card.

To write a letter to the specific court involved in your case, be sure to include the name of the person (Judge or Clerk) you are sending the letter to and the courtroom number.

The following addresses are for courts located in Merced County at which your will most likely appear:

Merced County Superior Court (Merced, CA)
2260 N Street
Merced, CA 95340

Robert M. Falasco Justice Center (Los Banos, CA)
1159 G Street
Los Banos, CA 93635

ATTORNEY / CLIENT CONFERENCE

Every inmate has a right to legal counsel. The attorney of choice may be contacted by phone, an Attorney Inmate Communication form (ask a Correctional Officer for one) or in court. Any inmate’s attorney may contact them at a time conducive to normal operation of the facilities.

District Attorney:

550 W. Main Street
Merced, CA 95340
(209) 385-7381 (Criminal Division)
(209) 355-7382 (Misdemeanor Division)

Merced County Probation:

2150 M Street
Merced, CA 95340
Phone: (209) 385-7494
Fax: (209) 725-3999

Public Defender:

2150 M Street
Merced, CA 95340
Phone: (209) 385-769

PERSONAL PROPERTY AND CLOTHING:

While you are in custody, your personal property and clothing will be sealed and stored at the facility you are housed at. You will be given a receipt for your property at the time of your booking. When released; your property will be returned to you.

Once your property is sealed and stored, you will not be able to access your property until you are released from custody.

If you wish to release your personal property and / or money to a third party, you may do so on a one-time basis. You must fill out an Inmate Property Release Pre- authorization Form and turn it in to a Correctional Officer. Property can be picked up by the designated person listed on the form. Contact a Correctional Officer for scheduled property pick up dates and times.

Persons picking up inmate property must have picture identification and present it at the time of the property being released. Failure to do so will result in the denial of the property being released and returned to your inmate property.

For inmates sentenced to state prison, their property may be released at any time. All property not released will accompany the inmate when transferred to CDCR. No exceptions.

INMATE MONEY:

When you are booked in with money, your money will be placed in an account that you will have access to make purchases from the jail commissary. You may have family or friends place additional funds electronically in your account by depositing such funds in the automated funds repository in the lobby at either;

Merced County Sheriff's Office
700 W. 22nd Street, Merced, CA95340

or

John Latorraca Correctional Center
2584 W. Sandy Mush Road, El Nido, CA 9531

Lobby hours at both locations will be Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm, except holidays and any unforeseen closures. If you have any questions regarding this process please speak with Lobby staff that can assist with instructions. Upon release, any outstanding balance will be returned to you via a money card.

INMATE REQUEST FORMS:

Inmate Request Forms are available for inmates and can be provided by Correctional Officers. They are used to ask for various types of information. They may be used to request information concerning jail programs, alternative sentencing, sick call, release dates or services etc. **Request slips will not be accepted for “early release consideration”.**

To use the Inmate Request Form, complete the form and give it to a Correctional Officer and It will be forwarded to the proper authority for review.

INMATE GRIEVANCES

While in custody of the Merced County Sheriff’s Office, you have the right to file a grievance relating to any conditions of confinement, including but not limited to: medical care, classification actions, disciplinary procedures, food, clothing and bedding, Correctional Officer conduct, housing sanitation or conditions, etc.

Grievances will not be accepted regarding court proceedings, complaints against other law enforcement agencies, or any issue not pertaining to care, custody, and confinement of inmates.

Once an inmate completes the grievance form, the form must be submitted to a Correctional Officer for proper tracking and response. A response to the grievance will be given to the complaining inmate within 15 days of its submission.

Should the grievance require any form of employee discipline or investigation, the inmate will not be able to obtain information regarding the actions taken regarding the employee. The inmate will receive only a response advising of the date the grievance was submitted to the administration for review and any remedy to the grievance, if applicable.

Inmates may appeal the sanctions resulting from the disciplinary hearing process through this procedure.

INMATE VISITATION:

Visiting days and times are subject to change based on facility needs. For visiting days and times, family and friends can contact the following number: Main Jail 209-385-7419 or JLCC 209-385-7575.

It is recommended that families call prior to visitation to ensure there have been no changes.

Visitors shall only bring their identification, vehicle keys and a baby bottle, if accompanied by an infant, inside the facility.

All visitors are subject to being searched.

There is no limit to the amount of visitors you may have on your approved visiting list, however, only two visitors may visit you at a time. The first two visitors who sign in at visiting sign up time will be allowed to visit.

Visitor(s) must have a valid government issued I.D. card (U.S. Driver's License, U.S. Identification Card, Passport, Military I.D., Consulate I.D.).

Persons who have been in custody in Merced County within the last 60 days will be denied.

Persons "pending" violent or drug related misdemeanor or felony charges (non-conviction and currently under prosecution), will be denied.

Persons with violent or drug felony conviction within one year will be denied. No restriction on other felonies.

Persons currently on "Felony" Probation, Parole or AB109 Supervision will be reviewed by the Facility Lieutenant or appointed person. Misdemeanor probation shall be allowed regardless of charges.

Persons with an active warrant will be denied.

Persons who have an active restraining order protecting either the inmate or the visitor from one another will be denied.

If your visitor is under the age of 18, they must be accompanied by their parent or legal guardian. The parent or legal guardian must be on your approved visiting list. The minor must have a valid government issued I.D. card. A copy of the minor's birth certificate or legal documentation showing proof of guardianship must also be provided before the visiting request form can be processed.

OUTGOING MAIL:

Merced County Sheriff Corrections Bureau will follow BSCC section 1063, regarding inmate correspondence.

- (a) there is no limitation on the volume of mail that an inmate may send or receive;
- (b) inmate correspondence may be read when there is a valid security reason and the facility manager or his/her designee approves;
- (c) jail staff shall not review inmate correspondence to or from state and federal courts, any member of the State Bar or holder of public office, and the State Board of State and Community Corrections; however, jail authorities may open and inspect such mail only to search for contraband, cash, checks, or money orders and in the presence of the inmate;
- (d) inmates may correspond, confidentially, with the facility manager or the facility administrator; and,
- (e) Those inmates who are without funds shall be permitted two postage paid envelopes and two sheets of paper each week to permit correspondence with family members and friends but without limitation on the number of postage paid envelopes and sheets of paper to his or her attorney and to the courts.

The following return address must be included on the top left-hand corner of the envelope:

Main Jail
Inmate Name
P.O. Box 2267
Merced, CA 95344

JLCC
Inmate Name
2584 W. Sandy Mush Road
Merced, CA 95341

INCOMING MAIL:

Images of nude or partially nude persons may not be received. The receipt of postage stamps or packages is not permitted. All prohibited mail will be returned to the sender when practical and rejected packages will be returned to the sender unopened when practical.

Magazines will not be accepted unless sent directly from the publisher. Further, staff has the discretion of rejecting a magazine should it be determined the contents of the magazine do not conform to the policies of the correctional facilities.

Legal mail from federal, state and local courts, attorneys, officials of public office, and State Board of Corrections will not be opened except in the presence of the inmate.

Inter-Facility Mail: The correctional facilities do not have inter-facility mail. If an inmate wishes to contact another inmate in a Merced County Sheriff's Corrections Facility, the inmate must send the correspondence through the United States Postal system.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:

Inmates may request a Legal Information Request Form by either submitting an Inmate Request Form or by asking a Correctional Officer.

Correctional Officers will pick up the Legal Information Request Forms during their security checks. The Correctional Officer will forward the Legal Information Request Form to Inmate Services staff to be processed with the legal research services provider.

The legal research provider will give priority to requests submitted by Pro-Per inmates, and to requests that have immediate impending court dates.

Mail sent to the facility from the legal research provider will be forwarded to Inmate Services for processing. Inmate Services staff will then forward the mail to the Corrections Staff for delivery to the inmate.

VOTING:

Inmates are allowed to vote by absentee ballots in city, county, state, and federal elections while incarcerated subject to certain eligibility requirements (i.e., not serving a state prison sentence or not having a felony sentence under California Penal Code 1170(h)). Requests for absentee ballots must be received at least 60 days prior to an election and the absentee ballot must be submitted no later than 10 days prior to the election. Requests for absentee ballots must be submitted in writing to any officer who will forward the written request to the Voter Registrar's Office.

CHAPLAIN SERVICES PROGRAM

The county Chaplain schedules religious services. Inmates must fill out an Inmate Request Form and submit it to the chaplain for requested services.

The Merced County Sheriff's Officer Corrections Division offers an in-house GED program. If an inmate is interested in the program, the inmate may submit an Inmate Request Form to the Classification Unit for review and approval. Upon approval, the inmate will be required to attend classes. Note: dates and times are subject to change.

COMMISSARY:

The inmate commissary provides a variety of items for sale: hygiene items, writing materials, food, snacks, etc.

Commissary operation dates and times are subject to change based on staffing, facility needs, emergency situations, etc.

Sufficient funds must be deposited in an inmate's account when an order is submitted to purchase products. All sales are final and no exchanges or refunds will be made. Inmates must present their issued I.D. card for every commissary transaction.

RECREATION:

The correctional facilities have designated recreational areas, including yards, available for inmate use. Inmates on disciplinary restriction may be subject to limited use of such recreational facilities. The Merced County Sheriff Corrections Bureau follows Title 15 section 1065, regarding inmate recreation standards.

Inmates are provided facility approved sports equipment for recreational use. It is your responsibility to use the provided equipment appropriately. Any deliberately damaged equipment may result in loss of equipment and /or disciplinary action against you.

If you received damaged equipment, contact a Correctional Officer to receive a new one.

INMATE MEALS:

The meals provided to inmates are set to current Board of State and County Corrections (BSCC) dietary standards. If a special diet is required for medical reasons, Medical Staff must prescribe the meals. If a certain “religious diet” is required, an Inmate Request slip must be submitted to the facility Chaplain for review and approval. Final approval of the request will be at the chaplain’s discretion.

Meals will be passed out by Correctional staff and searched prior to being distributed. If you receive a meal that is missing items or has any issues, it is your responsibility to inform the Correctional Officer immediately.

SHOWERS:

Health and personal hygiene in a correctional facility is important. Inmates shall be permitted to shower / bathe upon assignment to a housing unit and at least every other day or more often if possible.

HAIR CLIPPERS:

Inmates will have access to hair clippers. The Facility Managers will schedule the use of hair clippers. Inmates, except those who may not shave for reasons of identification in court, shall be able to shave daily and receive hair care services at least once a month. The facility administrator or designee may suspend this requirement in relation to inmates who are considered to be a danger to themselves or others.

STANDARD INSTITUTIONAL CLOTHING.

The standard issue of climatically suitable clothing to inmates held after arraignment in all but Court Holding, Temporary Holding and Type IV facilities shall include, but not be limited to:

- (a) clean socks and footwear;
- (b) clean outer garments; and,
- (c) clean undergarments;
- (1) for males - shorts and undershirt, and
- (2) for females - bra and two pairs of panties.

CLOTHING EXCHANGE.

Outer garments, except footwear, shall be exchanged at least once each week. Undergarments and socks shall be exchanged twice each week.

STANDARD BEDDING AND LINEN ISSUE.

The standard issue of clean suitable bedding and linens, for each inmate entering a living area who is expected to remain overnight, shall include, but not be limited to:

- (a) one serviceable mattress which meets the requirements of Section 1272 of these regulations;
- (b) one mattress cover or one sheet;
- (c) one towel; and,
- (d) one blanket or more depending upon climatic conditions.

Two blankets or sleep bag may be issued in place of one mattress cover or one sheet. Temporary Holding facilities which hold persons longer than 12 hours shall meet the requirements of (a), (b) and (d) above.

BEDDING AND LINEN EXCHANGE.

Washable items such as sheets, mattress covers, and towels shall be exchanged for clean replacement at least once each week. If a top sheet is not issued, blankets or sleep bags shall be laundered or dry cleaned at least once a month or more often if necessary. If a top sheet is issued, blankets shall be laundered or dry cleaned at least every three months.

Any damaged or defective items should be returned to a Correctional Officer immediately for replacement. Not only is this for the inmate's proper needs, but also protects the inmate from being accused of damaging county property. If the inmate is determined to have damaged any issued items, the inmate will be disciplined and criminal action may be taken.

Inmates responsible for damaging county property are subject to having funds deducted from their account to recover the loss of damaged issued property.

RULES OF CONDUCT

GENERAL CONDUCT:

It is expected that you will act responsibly and display proper behavior at all times. If you display behavior, which does not conform to the rules of the facility, you will be subject to disciplinary actions, including criminal charges depending on the nature of the incident.

Conduct that poses a risk to facility safety and / or security causes facility disruption, or potential criminal activity, may result in discipline and / or criminal charges against the offender.

INMATE DISCIPLINE

RULES AND DISCIPLINE:

The rules of the correctional facility are important for the staff, inmates, and visitors and exist for the efficiency, security and safety of the occupants of the facilities. It is important each inmate be familiar with the rules of the facilities. It is the inmate's responsibility to follow these rules. Prohibited acts are categorized by three levels: Infractions, Minor violations and Major violations.

An inmate may be charged criminally and administratively on the same charges.

Inmates must comply with any order given by a Correctional Officer. Disobedience of any order may subject the inmate to disciplinary action.

INFORMAL DISCIPLINE:

Minor acts of non-compliance or minor violations of facility rules may be handled informally by any staff member by counseling or advising the inmate of expected conduct, assignment to an extra work detail, or removal from a work assignment without loss of work time credit. In addition, temporary loss of privileges include, but is not limited to, access to audio/visual entertainment, telephones, commissary, or lockdown for up to 24 hours.

FORMAL DISCIPLINE:

Investigative findings regarding major violations or repetitive minor violations or repetitive minor actions of non-compliance (infractions) of facility rules which may lead to disciplinary action will be submitted in writing to the disciplinary officer and to the inmate.

DISCIPLINARY HEARING:

To determine the imposition of discipline, a non-judicial administrative hearing will be conducted to determine if substantial evidence exists to find an inmate responsible of violating the applicable facility rule(s).

FORMS OF DISCIPLINE:

The degree of disciplinary actions imposed by the disciplinary officer shall be directly related to the severity of the rule(s) violation. Discipline may consist of, but not be limited to, the following:

- Documented verbal reprimand
- Written reprimand
- Restriction/Loss of commissary privileges
- Restriction of audio/visual entertainment
- Assignment of extra work detail for either sentenced or non-sentenced inmates
- Removal from inmate worker status
- Loss of good/work time credits (part or all)
- Disciplinary isolation
- Disciplinary isolation diet
- Loss of visitation
- Loss of recreation and/or yard time
- Loss of telephone privileges
- Removal from a work program or work furlough inmate program

Note: You may receive both disciplinary action and criminal charges based on the severity of the incident. This is in accordance with BSCC regulations and California Law.

PRISON RAPE ELIMINATION ACT (P.R.E.A)

P.R.E.A. is The Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (42 U.S.C. § 15601 et seq.) enacted by Congress to address the problem of sexual abuse of persons in the custody of U.S. correctional agencies. The Act applies to all public and private institutions that house adult or juvenile offenders and is also relevant to community based agencies.

It is the policy of the Merced County Sheriff's Office to maintain a zero-tolerance for inmate-on-inmate sexual assault and staff sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment toward inmates as defined by The Prison Rape Elimination Act.

It is the policy of the Merced County Sheriff's Office to thoroughly investigate every allegation of sexual abuse, and where warranted by evidence, proportional sanctions, up to and including criminal prosecution, is implemented. This policy provides both an educational resource for inmates and a response plan universal for all instances of sexual abuse, sexual assault and sexual misconduct. Inmates are encouraged to report allegations of abuse or misconduct using any of the following methods.

There is no time limit for reporting allegations:

- Inmates may privately report sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment, retaliation by other inmates or staff for reporting sexual abuse and sexual harassment, and staff neglect or violation of responsibilities that may have contributed to an incident of sexual abuse by any employee, volunteer or contractor.
- Anonymously: Inmates may report any concerns for himself, herself, or others anonymously by dialing "#7732" from any facility telephone that they are permitted to use.
- Completion of the Inmate Grievance Form
- Write a letter, phone or email to this or another law enforcement agency.
- Report the allegation to an officer, shift supervisor, medical staff, mental health worker or Chaplain.
- Call the National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673
- Additionally, inmates may report abuse, retaliation, or harassment by writing to the Sheriff of Merced County or by contacting the California Attorney General's Public Inquiry Unit at 1-800-952-5225. Members of the public may report allegations of misconduct by any of the following:
 - letter, phone, or e-mail to this or any law enforcement agency:

- Merced County Sheriff's Office contact information:
Merced County Sheriff's Office
700 W. 22nd Street, Merced CA, 95340.
- Rape Crisis Services: 1-866-UR-SAFE or 1-866-487-7233
- A.A.R.D.V.A.R.C. - Victim/Witness Assistance Center: 209-725-3515
- Valley Crisis Center: 209-725-7900

CHANGES:

The Inmate Orientation Handbook and rules herein may be changed at any time by the County of Merced. If you have any questions regarding any section listed in this handbook, please contact any on duty Correction Officer.

NO RIGHTS CREATED:

Nothing herein shall be construed to create any mandatory duty on the part of the County of Merced, its agent or employees to any inmate or other person, not create the basis of any cause of action or claim or in favor of any inmate or other person.

