

2025-2026 Amador County Grand Jury

Health and Human Services: Social Services Department

June 23, 2026



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SUMMARY

The 2025-2026 Amador County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) investigated allegations within the Department of Social Services (DSS) regarding unfair hiring and promotions, hostile work conditions, and inadequate access to policies.

METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury performed the following actions:

- Conducted interviews with complainants
- Reviewed the Department of Social Services Policy and Procedures
- Reviewed Amador Co. Memorandum of Understanding (2024-2026)
- Reviewed County of Amador Policies and Procedures Manuals
- Examined records and documents
- Conducted interviews within the Department of Social Services
- Conducted interview with the Director of Social Services

BACKGROUND

The 2025-2026 Grand Jury received complaints regarding unfair and inconsistent hiring practices and promotions, a hostile work environment, and inadequate availability of policies and procedures for staff within the DSS, Amador County Health and Human Services. The Grand Jury formed a subcommittee to investigate these allegations. The investigation found that, while there had been past claims regarding hostile work conditions, these were appropriately addressed and corrected. The Grand Jury found no evidence of unfair hiring or promotion practices, or of ongoing issues with regard to accessibility of adopted policies or procedures.

DISCUSSION

The Grand Jury conducted a comprehensive investigation in response to complaints regarding hiring and promotion practices, workplace environment issues, and the accessibility of departmental policies and procedures within the Amador County Health and Human Services' DSS.

As part of this inquiry, the Grand Jury conducted interviews with multiple complainants to understand the specific allegations related to unfair hiring practices, perceived bias in promotions, and concerns about a hostile work environment. These interviews focused on gathering firsthand accounts, clarifying timelines, and identifying any patterns or recurring issues. Additional interviews were conducted with DSS staff to obtain a broader understanding of internal processes, workplace expectations, and employee experiences. A separate, in-depth interview was also held with the Director of DSS to review management practices, oversight responsibilities, and any corrective measures implemented in response to internal concerns.

The Grand Jury also conducted a detailed examination of relevant documentation, including the DSS Policy and Procedures Manual, the Amador County Memorandum of Understanding (2024–2026), and County of Amador Policies and Procedures Manuals. These materials were reviewed to evaluate whether guidelines were clear and aligned with county standards. Records and internal documents were examined to identify hiring practices, promotional processes, and workplace incident responses. This procedural review allowed the Grand Jury to verify whether established policies were followed and whether documented actions accurately reflected departmental and county requirements.

By thoroughly examining interview information, relevant documents, and policy and procedural guidelines, the Grand Jury determined that the DSS maintains consistent hiring and promotion policies that were actively in use and properly followed at the time of the investigation. Allegations of improper conduct of hiring practices and promotional bias were not supported by the evidence reviewed.

The investigation confirmed that there were prior instances of hostile work environment conditions. These incidents, however, were addressed appropriately through corrective disciplinary actions and management intervention. The disciplinary actions and related communications were already underway prior to the start of our investigation. This information was confirmed through documentation that was provided to us by the Director of DSS.

The pertinent policies and procedures for DSS currently in place were found to be sufficient, accessible, and supported by the department's ongoing transition to an updated in-house system. The policies and procedures were previously saved online through Google Drive made available to use by the county. The department started migrating from Google to M365 in June of 2025. The complaint was determined to be based on a temporary disruption that occurred when the department was in the process of transferring all policies and procedures to an in-house Microsoft SharePoint system. This transition was nearing completion during this investigation, and policy and procedure files are now fully accessible through this system to all staff.

FINDINGS

F1. Hiring and Promotion Policies Applied.

The DSS's hiring and promotion policies are clearly presented and were consistently followed during the period reviewed. The Grand Jury found no evidence of bias, favoritism, or improper conduct in hiring or promotions.

F2. Compliance With County Requirements.

Hiring practices, promotional processes, and workplace response procedures are being carried out in accordance with applicable county guidelines and adopted policy and procedure manuals.

F3. Hostile Work Environment Issues Addressed.

Previously reported hostile work environment incidents were addressed through corrective disciplinary actions and management intervention already underway prior to this investigation. Documentation provided by department leadership substantiated these actions.

F4. Policies Accessible; System Transition Nearing Completion.

Department policies and procedures are clear, appropriate, and readily accessible. The interruption to access was temporary during the period of documents being transferred to an in-house SharePoint system. This transfer was nearing completion at the time of this investigation and was completed prior to submission of this investigation report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The Grand Jury commends the DSS for its work to ensure that its policies and procedures are clear, accessible, and consistently followed. Thus, the Grand Jury has no recommendations for further action.

REQUIRED RESPONSE

No response is required.

DISCLAIMER

Reports issued by the grand jury do not identify the individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Civil Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury.