

Slowly Sunsetting Main Jail Late-Night Releases: Progress Made, but the Midnight Door Remains Open

June 25, 2026

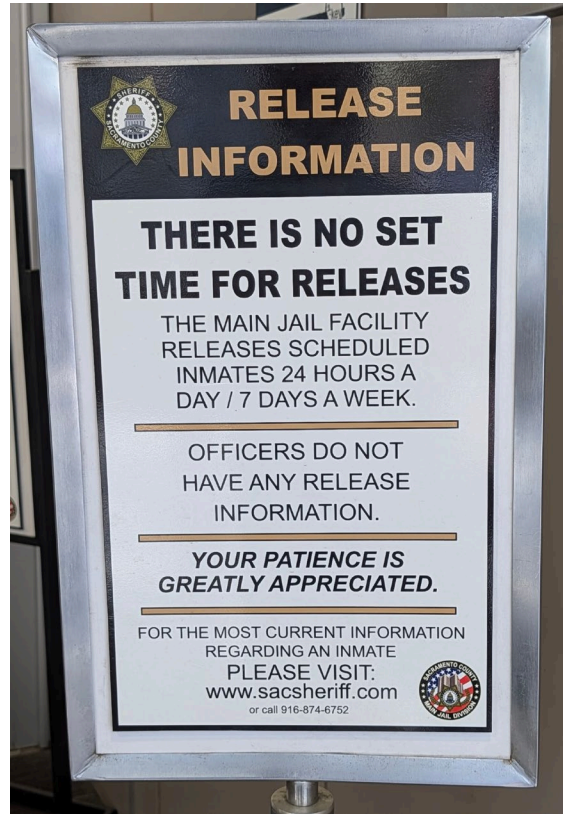


PHOTO OF SIGN INSIDE MAIN JAIL LOBBY

SUMMARY

Late-night/early morning releases from the Sacramento County Main Jail (Jail) pose safety concerns for those released and the community at large. The 2017-2018 Sacramento County Grand Jury issued a report recommending that such releases be minimized along with steps to do so. Although late-night releases are reduced, and for the most part the prior Grand Jury's recommendations have been implemented, there is still room for improvement.

BACKGROUND

Late-night/early morning releases from the Jail occur at the intersection of Seventh and I Streets in downtown Sacramento. The Sacramento County Sheriff's Office (SSO) operates the Jail. This facility processes the majority of individuals arrested in Sacramento County. Arrestees processed through the Jail may come from local locations or the far reaches of the County.

The Jail houses both pretrial and posttrial detainees. Inmates are released for a variety of reasons. Pre-trial detainees are released either on bail or on their own recognizance. Some inmates leave the jail because they are transferred to other facilities. Finally, some post-trial inmates are released after completion of their sentences, or because their cases have been dismissed.

As a result of California Appellate case *Shoyoye v. County of Los Angeles* “over-detention” in California jails is prohibited, meaning local authorities cannot hold individuals longer than permitted by law. The failure to timely release individuals can result in civil liability for cities and counties. Under state law, the process for release depends on the type of release involved and the legality of continued confinement.

California Penal Code § 4024 permits the Sheriff to release individuals from the Jail at any time on the last day of the individual’s confinement if the Sheriff determines such release to be in the best interests of the individual. In addition, Penal Code § 4024 also allows the Sheriff to offer a voluntary program that permits an individual to stay in custody for up to 16 additional hours or until normal business hours, whichever is shorter, so an individual may be released during daytime hours. The inmate can choose to decline the program and, thus, be discharged as soon as possible or practicable. As voluntary stay-overs do not fit into any release category, such uncategorized data may skew Sacramento’s release counts in the 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. category.

The Jail operates and releases inmates 24 hours a day. This report focuses on the late-night releases from 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Within that timeframe a discharged person may confront many challenges. Public or private transportation options may be limited or non-existent. Food and shelter options are limited. Additionally, physical dangers may be present. Late-night releases, therefore, raise a number of concerns for both the safety of the discharged person and the community.

2017-2018 Grand Jury Report

The 2017-2018 Sacramento County Grand Jury released a report titled “Middle of the Night Jail Releases: Balancing Safety and Jail Processing Concerns.” That report criticized the frequency of middle of the night releases, noting that of the approximately 136 daily releases, 50 of those releases, or 36%, occurred between the hours of 10:00 p.m. – 5:00 a.m., potentially leaving releasees unsheltered on the streets of downtown Sacramento. The report recommended the County expedite its data management update to include a new Advanced Technology Information Management System (ATIMS), write updated instructions for jail staff, and develop a written or electronic checklist to inform inmates of their options during late night hours.

Mays Consent Decree and Jail Population Reduction Plan

In 2022, a Memorandum of Agreement connected to a prior consent decree, known as the Mays Consent Decree, required the County and relevant community stakeholders to produce a plan to reduce Sacramento County's jail population. On December 8, 2022, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) approved the plan, entitled the Jail Population Reduction Plan (JPRP). The JPRP includes provisions prioritizing daytime releases and reducing jail time for individuals who do not pose a danger, if released into the community. Pursuant to one of the provisions in the plan, the Sacramento Sheriff issued a directive that, starting in January 2023, inmates would not be released between the hours of midnight and 6:00 a.m. A subsequent October 7, 2025 directive narrowed the recommended window for night time releases to 1:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. Regardless of the adjustments to the release hours in the multiple memoranda, this report focuses on the hours of 11:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. as reported in data provided to the Jail Profile Survey (JPS) for the State of California, discussed below.

Sacramento County Community Review Commission

The Board of Supervisors established the Sacramento County Community Review Commission (CRC) on May 4, 2021 (Resolution No. 2021-0256) to improve public transparency, review SSO policies, and provide oversight, transparency, and accountability for the SSO, in collaboration with the Office of Inspector General. The BOS subsequently renamed the Commission the Sheriff Community Review Commission.

In a May 2023 report, titled "Jail Releases," an Ad Hoc committee of the CRC revealed that in 2022, the County released 27% of Jail inmates between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. This amounted to a total of approximately 565 late night releases per month. Comparisons to other California counties of roughly similar release counts indicated Sacramento's late-night release count was double that of other large counties. The CRC recommended the SSO develop and/or refine policies and procedures to reduce this comparatively large number of late-night releases. This topic remains on the CRC agenda regularly through the use of the Sacramento County Jail Population Dashboard.

Media Reports

The Grand Jury learned through media reports that late night releases persist in Sacramento. These reports also discussed SSO deputy intimidation against citizen groups who sought to aid late night releasees by providing directions, food, and other

necessities. Resources provided to released individuals were a subject of the CRC May 2023 report.

This Report constitutes the culmination of the 2025-2026 Grand Jury's investigation into the current status of late-night releases, including improvements to the data management system utilized by Jail staff, and resources provided to individuals upon release from the jail.

METHODOLOGY

During the course of the investigation, the Grand Jury interviewed personnel from the following organizations:

Management personnel from the Sacramento County Sheriff's Main Jail, and

An Advocate/organizer with the Anti Police-Terror Project.

In addition, the Grand Jury toured the Jail and its booking facilities.

The Grand Jury reviewed the following:

- Various news articles and internet sources related to the issues of late-night releases from detention facilities;
- Articles from the Sacramento Bee and other local outlets;
- Prison Legal News website: www.prisonlegalnews.org;
- Harvard Kennedy School Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy website: www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/wiener;
- Sheriff's operational orders, procedures and inmate release handouts;
- Board of State Community Corrections late night release surveys from 2020 and 2022, www.bssc.ca.gov;
- Board of State and Community Corrections Online JPS Query System, www.bssc.ca.gov .
- [Sacramento County Community Review Commission Ad Hoc Committee Report: Jail Releases, 2023 www.sccob.saccounty.gov](http://www.sccob.saccounty.gov);
- The Sacramento County Criminal Justice Cabinet report, "Justice System Data Trends Annual Update" August 2025.

Previous Sacramento County Grand Jury reports:

- 2017-2018 “Middle of the Night Jail Releases: Balancing Safety and Jail Processing Concerns,” www.sacgrandjury.org;
- 2015-2016: “Release of Mentally Ill Inmates from the Main Jail” www.sacgrandjury.org;

In addition, the Grand Jury requested and received various custom release data printouts from the SSO.

DISCUSSION

Corroboration of Release Data by the California Board of State and Community Corrections.

In 2012, California established the California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), an independent statutory agency, to provide among other things, a clearinghouse for data and information about correctional institutions in the state. As a part of the agency’s duties, BSCC sends out the Jail Profile Survey (JPS) which gathers data from county jails to track various categories of jail populations and includes inmate release information. The SSO submits Sacramento County data to the BSCC JPS.

As of July 2021, the monthly JPS also includes the following categories of inmate release data:

- Total number of individuals released during the month between 6:00 a.m. and before 5:00 p.m.;
- Total number of individuals released during the month between 5:00 p.m. and before 11:00 p.m.;
- Total number of individuals released during the month between 11:00 p.m. and before 6:00 a.m.

The late-night release data includes the following information per time period:

- Individuals released from a county jail upon completion of a sentence served;
- Individuals released for reasons other than the completion of a sentence (i.e., on their own recognizance, including book and release; or by court order after

charges are dropped or dismissed; or after acquittal by a jury, when cited for a misdemeanor, or after posting bail).

BSCC Comparative Data

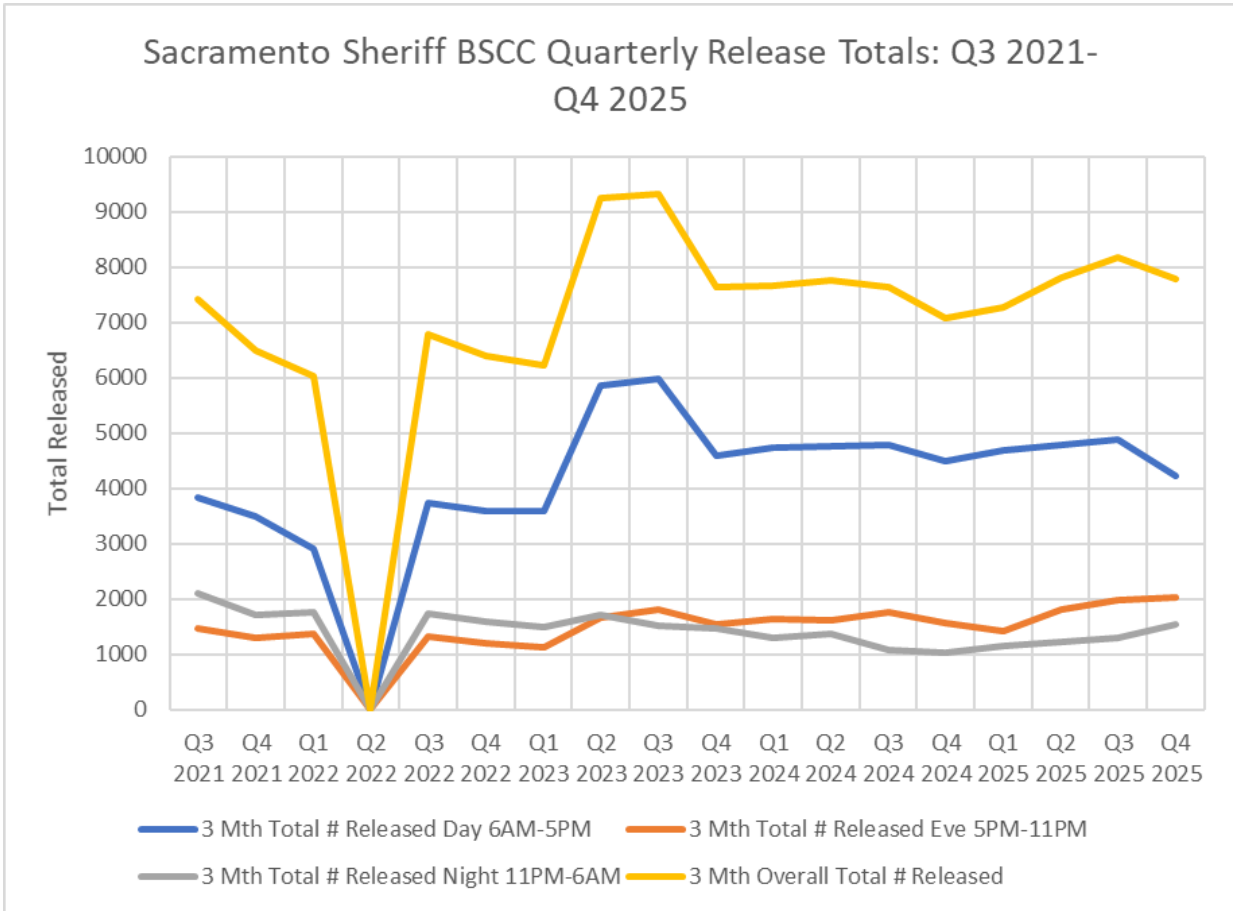
The following table sets forth the number and percentage of releases within each of the time periods, beginning with Quarter Three of 2021, through Quarter Four of 2025. This data shows that since Quarter Three of 2023, there has been a reduction in releases between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. and a corresponding increase in releases between 5:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. as they strive to meet the 11:00 p.m. goal. Despite the increased volume of releases in Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 of 2023, late night releases stayed steady and have improved from the 27% in the May 2023 report from CRC.

SSO BSCC Quarterly Release Counts and Percentages by Shift

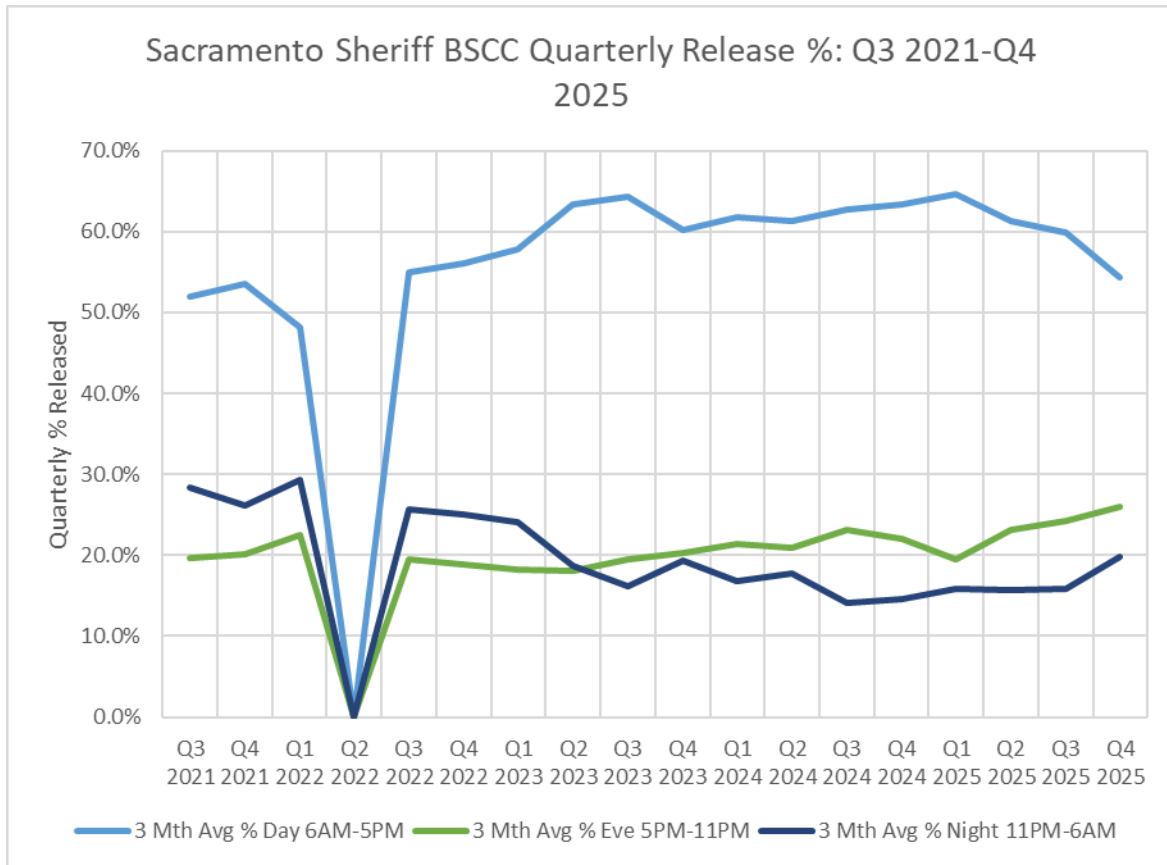
Entity	BSCC Reporting Period	3 Mth Total # Released Day 6AM-5PM	3 Mth Total # Released Eve 5PM-11PM	Total # Released Night 11PM-6AM	3 Mth Overall Total # Released	3 Mth Avg % Day 6AM-5PM	3 Mth Avg % Eve 5PM-11PM	3 Mth Avg % Night 11PM-6AM
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q3 2021	3850	1462	2104	7416	51.9%	19.7%	28.4%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q4 2021	3486	1312	1706	6504	53.6%	20.2%	26.2%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q1 2022	2908	1364	1770	6042	48.2%	22.6%	29.2%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q2 2022	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q3 2022	3730	1322	1739	6791	54.9%	19.5%	25.6%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q4 2022	3585	1205	1599	6389	56.1%	18.9%	25.0%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q1 2023	3597	1125	1504	6226	57.8%	18.2%	24.0%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q2 2023	5861	1676	1723	9260	63.3%	18.0%	18.6%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q3 2023	5994	1815	1517	9326	64.4%	19.4%	16.2%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q4 2023	4598	1555	1483	7636	60.2%	20.4%	19.4%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q1 2024	4729	1646	1291	7666	61.7%	21.4%	16.9%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q2 2024	4757	1621	1379	7757	61.3%	20.9%	17.8%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q3 2024	4787	1774	1081	7642	62.7%	23.2%	14.2%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q4 2024	4495	1564	1032	7091	63.4%	22.0%	14.6%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q1 2025	4699	1421	1153	7273	64.6%	19.6%	15.9%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept	Q2 2025	4793	1809	1224	7826	61.2%	23.1%	15.6%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept.	Q3 2025	4889	1987	1303	8179	59.8%	24.3%	15.9%
Sacramento Sheriff's Dept.	Q4 2025	4228	2024	1538	7790	54.3%	26.0%	19.8%

Note: Q2 2022 data was not available in BSCC.

The following graphs indicate the change in release counts and percentages over the same period.



Note: Q2 2022 data was not available in BSCC.



Note: Q2 2022 data was not available in BSCC

The CRC reviewed other jurisdictions in its May 2023 report. The current Grand Jury also reviewed the BSCC data from other jurisdictions with roughly similar release counts over the Q3 2021 – Q4 2025 time periods, including Alameda, Fresno, Los Angeles and San Diego Counties. Alameda and Fresno processed slightly fewer releases over this same reporting period, while Los Angeles and San Diego’s release counts are higher than Sacramento’s. The data also reveals that Alameda and Los Angeles have significantly lower night release percentages as compared to Sacramento.

The next table compares Sacramento’s quarterly release counts and night release percentages to the same data from Alameda, Fresno, Los Angeles, and San Diego.

BSCC Comparison Release Counts and Late-Night Release Percentages

BSCC Report Period	3 Mth Overall Total # Released	3 Mth Avg % Night 11PM-6AM	3 Mth Overall Total # Released	3 Mth Avg % Night 11PM-6AM	3 Mth Overall Total # Released	3 Mth Avg % Night 11PM-6AM	3 Mth Overall Total # Released	3 Mth Avg % Night 11PM-6AM	3 Mth Overall Total # Released	3 Mth Avg % Night 11PM-6AM
Q3 2021	7416	28.4%	6561	13.7%	6238	29.1%	9544	8.6%	12120	22.1%
Q4 2021	6504	26.2%	2227	16.5%	5418	29.8%	8503	8.7%	10769	22.1%
Q1 2022	6042	29.2%	0	0	5485	32.5%	7950	7.3%	10877	21.3%
Q2 2022	0	0.0%	0	0	6094	29.3%	8921	7.7%	11321	20.1%
Q3 2022	6791	25.6%	7007	11.8%	6055	29.9%	10194	6.3%	11768	19.4%
Q4 2022	6389	25.0%	6870	11.9%	5738	24.8%	9842	6.4%	10628	18.1%
Q1 2023	6226	24.0%	6442	10.1%	6017	26.3%	9304	5.8%	10384	18.4%
Q2 2023	9260	18.6%	6612	9.3%	6590	23.7%	9378	5.7%	11144	21.6%
Q3 2023	9326	16.2%	6691	9.6%	6886	24.8%	8542	5.8%	11575	21.0%
Q4 2023	7636	19.4%	6370	10.1%	6149	24.2%	8420	5.8%	10976	22.2%
Q1 2024	7666	16.9%	6309	9.6%	6371	22.9%	8605	6.9%	10973	19.6%
Q2 2024	7757	17.8%	6464	9.4%	6611	23.8%	8868	6.3%	11539	19.3%
Q3 2024	7642	14.2%	6734	10.3%	6808	24.0%	9262	5.8%	11984	19.5%
Q4 2024	7091	14.6%	6250	10.5%	6678	23.6%	9310	6.0%	11407	19.5%
Q1 2025	7273	15.9%	5957	9.6%	6282	25.2%	8906	6.1%	11580	21.6%
Q2 2025	7826	15.6%	6542	9.6%	6876	25.5%	9122	5.5%	12198	20.9%
Q3 2025	8179	15.9%	6457	10.5%	7334	27.0%	9175	6.6%	12716	21.8%
Q4 2025	7790	19.8%	6397	9.5%	6562	26.5%	8857	6.4%	11894	19.3%

Note: A Zero indicates data was not available in BSCC.

Sacramento’s night court releases also could impact the evening and late-night release data as it extends processing time for releases into late-night hours. However, Sacramento’s night court operations ceased effective April 27, 2026. Sheriff’s Office staff informed the Grand Jury that this closure will reduce the number of late-night releases. Alameda and Los Angeles do not have criminal night court. A review of Alameda and Los Angeles Counties’ release protocols and procedures could provide valuable information to assist in the reduction of late-night releases in Sacramento County.

Corroboration of Release Data-ATIMS

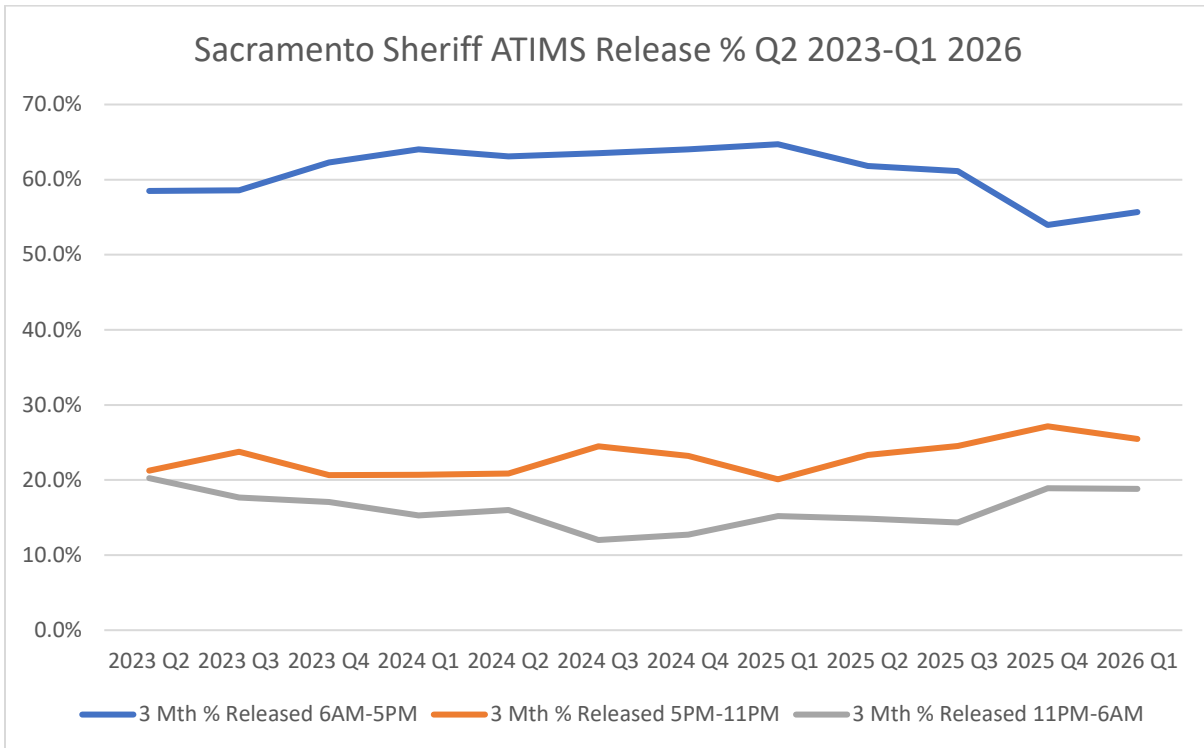
The 2017-2018 Grand Jury recommended the Sheriff expedite the implementation of ATIMS to improve release processing. The SSO expected ATIMS to modernize and integrate jail and court administrative functions with an end goal of quicker and more efficient release processing. While the SSO anticipated ATIMS implementation in 2019, its implementation occurred several years later, and now serves as the backbone of the processing sequence.

The Grand Jury requested complete ATIMS data from its inception in April 2024 to the present. BSCC compiles releases in three blocks of time from the ATIMS data submitted to it. The SSO directed limits on late-night releases from 1:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m., a change that went into effect in October 2025. However, the memorandum change did not affect the submission of data released to BSCC. ATIMS data confirmed a shift similar to the BSCC data, with a decrease in late-night releases, and an increase in evening releases over time.

SSO ATIMS Quarterly Release Percentages by Shift

ATIMS Reporting Period	3 Mth % Released 6AM-5PM	3 Mth % Released 5PM-11PM	3 Mth % Released 11PM-6AM
2023 Q2	58.50%	21.25%	20.3%
2023 Q3	58.56%	23.76%	17.7%
2023 Q4	62.26%	20.67%	17.1%
2024 Q1	64.03%	20.70%	15.3%
2024 Q2	63.10%	20.87%	16.0%
2024 Q3	63.52%	24.47%	12.0%
2024 Q4	64.04%	23.22%	12.7%
2025 Q1	64.71%	20.09%	15.2%
2025 Q2	61.82%	23.33%	14.8%
2025 Q3	61.13%	24.53%	14.3%
2025 Q4	53.96%	27.15%	18.9%
2026 Q1	55.69%	25.48%	18.8%

The following graph demonstrates a similar reduction in late-night releases and a corresponding increase in evening releases.



The following table shows that SSO's change in late-night release restriction to 1:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. has had little impact on the percentage of total releases throughout the day and night as the night release percentages are in the single digits.

SSO Quarterly Release Counts and Percentages Between 1 a.m. to 5 a.m.

ATIMS Reporting Period	3 Mth Overall Total # Released	3 Mth Total # Released 1AM-5AM	% of Total
Q1 2023	1,177	116	9.9%
Q2 2023	5,868	329	5.6%
Q3 2023	5,837	258	4.4%
Q4 2023	5,326	302	5.7%
Q1 2024	5,521	300	5.4%
Q2 2024	5,735	310	5.4%
Q3 2024	5,647	228	4.0%
Q4 2024	5,108	232	4.5%
Q1 2025	5,406	309	5.7%
Q2 2025	6,313	338	5.4%
Q3 2025	6,821	359	5.3%
Q4 2025	6,401	392	6.1%
Q1 2026	6,471	422	6.5%

Establishment of Policies Governing Releases

The Grand Jury confirmed the SSO implemented all formal policies recommended by the prior Grand Jury. For example, the Custody Procedure Manual Procedure 519 details the process requirements for End of Term Releases. The most recent revision date for this provision is December 2, 2025. In addition, the current Grand Jury verified the SSO created an internal release process checklist to establish consistency in the release process.

Resources for Exiting Individuals

The Grand Jury confirmed the SSO’s Custody Policy Manual Policy 1010 establishes the process for providing community resource information to departing individuals to assist with the transition back into the community as recommended in the prior report. Although the policy indicates the information is to be provided upon request instead of automatically, the Grand Jury verified a multi-sheet information flyer with community resources exists and is available to departing individuals. Information includes: community health centers; employment centers; registry office to obtain an identification

card; substance abuse and mental health providers; housing agencies; hot meals/food banks; disability services, counseling centers, and domestic violence, sexual assault and crisis telephone numbers.

FINDINGS

- F1. The SSO has reduced late-night releases as a percentage of overall releases since 2023 and the cessation of night court should further reduce late-night releases.
- F2. The SSO has directed Jail staff to limit late-night releases through inter-departmental correspondence, but mandatory late-night releases continue to occur to avoid “over-detention.”
- F3. The SSO established a limited exit information resource handout that is available upon request, but should be provided automatically with exit paperwork.
- F4. BSCC comparative data reveals other comparable California counties release individuals at a lower rate during late-night hours than does the County of Sacramento.
- F5. As recently as November 25, 2025, the Sheriff Community Review Commission placed a Jail Release Procedures discussion item on its agenda to highlight its continued importance to the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The SSO should continue coordination with the court and Jail staff to further reduce late-night releases, making necessary and appropriate adjustments due to the cessation of night court, by December 31, 2026.
- R2. The SSO should continue to regularly monitor and enforce the efficient and timely release of individuals at all times of the day to avoid late-night releases to the extent possible and report on their progress by December 31, 2026.
- R3. The SSO should ensure that all released individuals receive the exit information resource handout automatically by December 31, 2026.
- R4. The SSO should look to Alameda County and Los Angeles County’s release protocols and procedures to identify processes and strategies for more efficient and timely release, thereby further reducing SSO late-night releases, by June 30, 2027.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses from the following “elected official” within 60 days:

Sheriff Jim Cooper
Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office
4500 Orange Grove Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95841
(F1-4, R1-4)

Mail or deliver a hard copy response to:

The Honorable Lawrence G. Brown
500 G Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Email the response to:

TapiaE@saccourt.ca.gov
Erendira Tapia-Bouthillier
Sacramento County Grand Jury Coordinator

RECUSAL STATEMENT: When there is a perception of a conflict of interest involving a member of the Grand Jury, that member is required to recuse themselves from any aspect of the investigation involving such a conflict and from voting on the acceptance or rejection of that report. Two members of the Grand Jury recused from this report.