

2024 PREA Annual Report Bay County Sheriff's Office

The Bay County Sheriff's Office has a zero tolerance for any incidence of rape, sexual assault or sexual misconduct and complies with all applicable components of the PREA Act. Implementation of these standards to combat sexual abuse in confinement facilities will be contingent upon effective agency and facility leadership, and the development of an agency's principles prioritizing efforts to combat sexual abuse.

Bay County Sheriff's Office Approach

The Sheriff's Office Jail Division will continue conducting an aggressive annual training program specific to the prevention, identification, reporting, and handling of inmate sexual misconduct/sexual assault, including common indicators of misconduct to all staff. Other efforts include, but are not limited to: continued Staff education concerning sexual misconduct throughout the facility, continue to revise and update BCSO policy and procedures as it relates to sexual misconduct, and continued inmate training through updated brochures and posters throughout facility.

Since the passing of the PREA standards, the BCSO designated a PREA Coordinator within the Jail Division. A substantial responsibility of the position is to ensure compliance with PREA standards by continual development of policies, implementation, training and constant review of the PREA policies and procedures. The BCSO entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Gulf Coast Sexual Assault Program which maintains a 24 hour hot line, and also provides incarcerated victims of sexual abuse appropriate victim advocate support.

Sexual Abuse Report Activity

Inmates may confidentially disclose incidents of sexual abuse and sexual harassment to any Sheriff's Office employee, either verbally or in writing. This process allows for confidential reporting by inmates 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. The administrative investigation shall be completed not later than 90 days of the initial filing of the complaint or grievance.

Following are the Bay County Jail PREA reports for 2023:

Inmate-on-Inmate Non-Consensual Sexual Acts / Harassment	
Number Reported	<u>29</u>
Substantiated	4
Unsubstantiated	12
Unfounded	9
Cases Still Open for Investigation	4
Staff Sexual Misconduct / Harassment	
Number Reported	<u>3</u>
Substantiated	0
Unsubstantiated	2
Unfounded	1

Note: 4 cases are still open pending final investigative report and critical incident review.

The Bay County Jail went through a PREA Audit in early October with the final report being received on 10/25/22. The Audit was conducted by an independent audit agency Nakamoto Group with auditor Mr. Robert Manville. Two standards were identified as needing improvement:

Standard 115.41:

Every inmate will be screened within 30 days to reassess the inmate's risk of victimization or abusiveness based on additional information received by the facility since the intake process.

A review of the inmates risk for victimization will be re-accessed during the 14 day time period that the inmate reports to medical for their physical screening. At that time, Screening personnel will conduct an interview with the inmate accessing mental health, disciplinary history, or allegations of relevant threats or victimization. (screening form attached).

Standard 115.17:

Hiring, promotion, and appraisals of employees require documentation of PREA considerations.

For hiring, a self disclosure form will be used, to access criminal background investigations, for promotions a hiring checklist form will be used, and for annual appraisals, training will be accessed through the Power DMS program (forms attached).

This year showed an increase in allegations against Officers. It has been known that during audit years there has always been an increase in PREA complaints because inmates see this as an opportunity to file false claims, and once these claims have been investigated show that the allegations are unfounded.

The Bay County Jail continues to look for ways of improving the PREA program through education for inmates, identifying blind spots and installing cameras, and continued training for all staff members.

The Bay County Jail also participated in the annual Survey of Sexual victimization for 2022 by providing the Department of Justice with data in support of the PREA program.