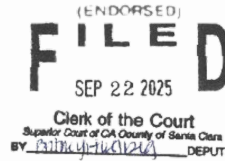


# County of Santa Clara

Office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
County Government Center, East Wing  
70 West Hedding Street  
San Jose, California 95110-1770  
(408) 299-5001



Curtis Boone  
Clerk of the Board

September 22, 2025

Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara  
c/o: Honorable Julie A. Emede, Presiding Judge  
191 North First Street  
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: Grand Jury Report - Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape

Dear Honorable Julie A. Emede,

At its regularly scheduled meeting held September 16, 2025 (Item No. 48), the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors adopted the response from Administration to Final Grand Jury Report relating to Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape.

Enclosed is the adopted response for your records.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Curtis Boone".

Curtis Boone  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Enclosures.

## County of Santa Clara

Probation Department

Juvenile Division  
840 Guadalupe Parkway  
San Jose, California 95110

Administrative Offices  
840 Guadalupe Parkway  
San Jose, California 95110



Nicholas Birchard  
Chief Probation Officer

**DATE:** September 16, 2025

**TO:** Greta S. Hansen, Chief Operating Officer

**FROM:** Nicholas Birchard, Chief Probation Officer 

**SUBJECT:** Response to the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Final Report  
*Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape*

The County of Santa Clara Probation Department respectfully submits its response to the Civil Grand Jury related to the 2024-2025 Final Report, *Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape*. Probation appreciates the effort and time that the Civil Grand Jury put into the development of this report.

The County of Santa Clara has earned a statewide and national reputation for its compassionate, evidence-based, and youth-centered approach to juvenile justice. The County's Probation Department has led the way in developing trauma-informed, culturally responsive practices that prioritize rehabilitation, education, and long-term transformation. This commitment centers on supporting young people and families while maintaining community safety—a delicate balance that is only achievable through a comprehensive system of care that includes both Juvenile Hall and William F. James Ranch Facilities.

### ***Finding 1***

*Probation broke ground on the expansion of James Ranch in 2016 when the data for the County, the State, and the nation had shown a consistent declining population of youth in detention facilities like James Ranch.*

Adopted: 09/16/2025

Memorandum to Chief Operating Officer Greta S. Hansen

Re: Response to the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Final Report *Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape*

September 16, 2025

Page 2 of 10

## **Response to Finding 1**

The County agrees with this finding.

### ***Finding 2***

*Although the number of youth at James Ranch has dropped, the Probation Department has not significantly reduced its operating costs.*

## **Response to Finding 2**

The County partially agrees with this finding. The Probation Department is always looking for ways to reduce costs, including through reducing contracts, staffing, and unused vehicles. It is important to note, however, that a portion of costs relating to staffing, supplies, and services (including contracted services) at James Ranch is offset by various state grants the County receives. For example, during Fiscal Years (FY) 2021-2025, the Department received an annual average of \$6.8 million dollars in various state grants to offset the cost of operating the James Ranch Facility.

### ***Recommendation 2a***

*The County should find ways to reduce the cost of running James Ranch.*

## **Response to Recommendation 2a**

The County will determine ways to reduce the cost of operating James Ranch as part of the FY 2026-2027 Recommended Budget process. The County's Recommended Budget will be published on May 1, 2026.

### ***Recommendation 2b***

*The County should explore whether both James Ranch and Juvenile Hall are needed. Probation should report to the County Board of Supervisors by March 31, 2026, with a plan for reducing the costs of running James Ranch and an analysis of whether both James Ranch and Juvenile Hall are needed.*

Memorandum to Chief Operating Officer Greta S. Hansen

Re: Response to the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Final Report *Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape*

September 16, 2025

Page 3 of 10

## **Response to Recommendation 2b**

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not justified. Based on legal mandates, programmatic distinctions, and the County's long-standing values and outcomes in juvenile justice, the County expects to continue needing to maintain and operate both facilities. Eliminating either would compromise public safety and undermine the County's rehabilitative mission for justice-involved youth. Operating both Juvenile Hall and James Ranch is critical because each facility fulfills distinct housing and programmatic functions in the juvenile justice continuum.

### **Juvenile Hall: Short- and Long-Term Secure Detention**

Juvenile Hall provides secure, short-term detention for youth awaiting court adjudication or disposition, as permitted by Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) sections 207, 208, and 850. This facility ensures:

- Immediate public and victim safety for youth posing significant risks;
- Stabilization and comprehensive assessments prior to court decisions;
- Due process protections;
- Access to on-site education, mental health, and behavioral health services during detention.

Juvenile Hall is a necessary facility that safeguards legal rights and community protection while allowing time for accurate case planning and rehabilitation alignment.

### **James Ranch: Structured, Long-Term Rehabilitation**

The William F. James Ranch provides longer-term residential treatment for youth post-disposition, pursuant to WIC section 730 and Senate Bill (SB) 823. The mission is to address the root causes of delinquent behavior through:

- Therapeutic behavioral health and substance use treatment;
- Academic instruction, vocational training, and cognitive-behavioral interventions;
- Family reunification and restorative justice practices;

Memorandum to Chief Operating Officer Greta S. Hansen

Re: Response to the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Final Report *Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape*

September 16, 2025

Page 4 of 10

- Reentry preparation in a secure, least-restrictive setting not replicable in the community.

These two facilities are **not interchangeable**. Together, they ensure that each youth receives care, housing, programming, and treatment, based on risk level—from immediate detention to long-term transformation.

### **Legal Compliance and System Integrity**

In 2015, the County entered into a ground lease agreement with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), whereby the State Public Works Board (SPW Board) authorized the County to finance the acquisition, design, and construction of a Youthful Offender Rehabilitative Facility under Senate Bill (SB) 81, Bond Financing Program. The County leased the site to the CDCR and the SPW Board until the bonds are paid in full or retired. The County entered into a Facility Sublease whereby the CDCR sublet the completed facility to the County.

When facility construction was close to completion in 2018, the Probation Department worked with the Board of State and Community Corrections and the CDCR to determine the population to be served by the new facility and identified it as a juvenile minimum-security facility due to the location and minimum-security fencing. As the County is a sublessee of the facility, any changes in use, new construction, additional security enhancements, or closure must be approved by the CDCR and SPW Board. Any modifications to the James Ranch facility, if approved, would not absolve the County from its fiduciary responsibilities under SB 81.

### **Senate Bill 823 – Juvenile Justice Realignment**

Under SB 823 (Juvenile Justice Realignment) and provisions of the WIC, counties must now shoulder full responsibility for both detention and rehabilitative placements for youth, which includes the legal obligation to:

- Provide secure but least-restrictive settings (WIC §§ 875-879);
- Uphold community safety while centering youth rehabilitation (WIC § 202);
- Maintain appropriate facilities for temporary detention (WIC § 850);
- Offer individualized care aligned with risk, treatment needs, and due process.

Memorandum to Chief Operating Officer Greta S. Hansen

Re: Response to the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Final Report *Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape*

September 16, 2025

Page 5 of 10

The elimination of either Juvenile Hall or James Ranch would render the County of Santa Clara non-compliant with these legal obligations and significantly diminish system responsiveness.

### **Cost Efficiency, Long-Term Savings, and Recidivism Reduction**

While the upfront operational costs of both facilities are significant, the long-term financial and societal benefits of this dual investment are well documented. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office:

- Rehabilitative programs yield \$7 to \$13 in public savings per dollar invested, by lowering recidivism, reducing adult system entry, and lessening dependency on welfare and other public resources.

Additionally, many contracted programs and services are shared between both facilities, which enables the Department to optimize use of budgeted funds. Thus, continued investment in both facilities is fiscally responsible, delivering measurable returns while prioritizing youth transformation over incarceration.

### **Why Both Facilities Must Remain Operational**

The operation of both Juvenile Hall and James Ranch is essential for:

- **Youth and public safety, through risk-based placement decisions;**
- **Equity and individualized case planning, across a broad range of needs;**
- **Flexibility and system responsiveness, ensuring readiness for fluctuating caseloads and high-needs cases;**
- **Specialized programming, especially for youth whose complex needs exceed what community-based alternatives can safely manage.**

The County's juvenile justice system has been built on the core values of accountability, hope, and healing. The dual operation of Juvenile Hall and James Ranch is not only aligned with these values—it is the very structure that allows the County to realize them. As responsibilities shift further to local jurisdictions under SB 823, dismantling this infrastructure would result in increased legal risk, reduced public safety, and missed opportunities to positively redirect young lives.



Memorandum to Chief Operating Officer Greta S. Hansen

Re: Response to the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Final Report *Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape*

September 16, 2025

Page 6 of 10

Maintaining both facilities is a necessity and a strategic investment in the County's juvenile justice continuum. The County remains committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure that youth receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time, and continuing to identify significant fiscal efficiencies in the operation of both facilities.

### ***Finding 3***

*Except for recidivism, Probation has not captured or reported on any other success measures while youth are on probation.*

### **Response to Finding 3**

The County agrees with this finding.

### ***Recommendation 3a***

*Immediately expand what is tracked during probation and offer incentives for youth and their caregivers to participate in post-probation check-ins.*

### **Response to Recommendation 3a**

The data categories listed below will be included in a new annual evaluation report beginning with the Ranch completion cohort from FY 2023-2024. The Department anticipates that this report will be published by the end of Calendar Year 2025 and will include information regarding the Ranch annually thereafter as part of the Juvenile Justice Data Book or other annual evaluation reports, as appropriate.

- Population cohorts:
  - Primary: Youth who started Ranch commitment on or between July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024
  - Comparison: Pre-Ranch Redesign, pre-COVID population of youth who entered between July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019
- Demographics: Age, race, gender for primary and comparison cohort
- Risk and needs assessments data for primary and comparison cohort (risk level, needs, and supervision strategy).

Memorandum to Chief Operating Officer Greta S. Hansen

Re: Response to the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Final Report *Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape*

September 16, 2025

Page 7 of 10

- Most serious offense for primary and comparison cohort
- Recidivism (i.e., sustained petitions and adult convictions) for primary and comparison cohort—at three- and six-month intervals post release as part of the annual report, at 12- month and 24-month intervals.
- Primary population only:
  - Treatment and programming snapshot (i.e., overview of Cognitive Behavioral Intervention—Core Youth)
  - Outcomes: completion of Aftercare and completion of Reentry; housing, education and employment status leading to probation dismissal.

### ***Recommendation 3b***

*Explore hiring a third party to collect data for youth post probation on measures of success and determine what would be meaningful incentives. Probation should implement these recommendations by December 31, 2025.*

### **Response to Recommendation 3b**

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The Probation Department has a robust Research and Development Unit that supports the James Ranch Facility in collecting, tracking, and reporting data outcome measures. Staff have internal understanding of the James Ranch programs and services and currently have access to all data that is accessible in the Probation Department and partnering agencies.

Following the enactment of California Assembly Bill 403 in 2015, the County of Santa Clara Department of Family and Children's Services, in collaboration with the Probation Department Juvenile Services Division, led the effort to collect post-placement child-level outcomes via a contracted agency reaching out to youth post-placement with a monetary incentive offered for participation. The low response rate—fewer than 3% successfully contacted—was insufficient to draw any meaningful conclusions regarding this service population, post-placement. A subsequent effort in 2017 had a similar result: of 60 in-placement youth, only a small handful were located and even fewer agreed to participate.

The Department collects client services feedback on a rolling basis via the Client Experience Survey, administered to all clients across the Department's adult, juvenile, and



Memorandum to Chief Operating Officer Greta S. Hansen

Re: Response to the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Final Report *Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape*

September 16, 2025

Page 8 of 10

institutions divisions. Beginning in January 2024, the Research and Development Unit added an item to its surveys, where clients were asked, specifically, whether they would consider participating in a follow-up survey post-release. Clients who responded “yes” to the item were provided space on the survey to include one or more email addresses and telephone numbers. To date, no youth have responded that they would consider participating once their probation commitment has ended (only four adult clients have agreed to date).

Challenges to locating and contacting clients post-exit are most often cited as the primary barrier to reporting outcomes; clients move residences and change phone numbers frequently. The Probation Department's efforts have led to another theory that once youth have exited probation, they are inclined to want to leave that experience in the past. Ethical concerns also accompany any efforts to track down probation clients post-exit. Once youth are no longer wards of the court, the Department has no right to reengage them nor to have access to their personal or professional status. Therefore, it remains that the most conclusive evidence of long-term rehabilitation of youthful offenders is the absence of those individuals returning to the justice system as juveniles or as adults.

Furthermore, in following this recommendation, the Probation Department would be required to contract with an outside research agency, using valuable time opening a Request for Proposals and spending additional funding to contract out services that have previously been unsuccessful. It would be imprudent to use County resources to attempt to collect data for youth post-probation given both the dismal record of previous efforts and the County's ongoing budget constraints.

### ***Finding 4a***

*The County does not account for the full cost to run James Ranch, i.e., the County does not accumulate the cost of all the departments that provide services to James Ranch.*

### **Response to Finding 4a**

The County partially agrees with this finding, as described in the response to Recommendation 4.

Memorandum to Chief Operating Officer Greta S. Hansen

Re: Response to the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Final Report *Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape*

September 16, 2025

Page 9 of 10

#### ***Finding 4b***

*Complete recidivism data is difficult to obtain for James Ranch.*

#### **Response to Finding 4b**

The County agrees with this finding.

#### ***Finding 4c***

*Despite repeated requests from JJC and the Management Audit in 2022, the County does not have measurable outcomes demonstrating the success of James Ranch beyond some recidivism data.*

#### **Response to Finding 4c**

The County partially agrees with this finding, as described in the response to Recommendation 4.

#### ***Recommendation 4***

*The County, working with SCCOE as needed, should produce an annual report that shows the full cost accounting of James Ranch, including the average cost per youth and the measures of success for the youth for a period of two years following release from James Ranch. In addition to recidivism, measures of success should include educational outcomes, successful employment, and stable housing. The County should publish its first annual report by September 30, 2026.*

#### **Response to Recommendation 4**

The Department plans to produce an annual report by December 31, 2026. This report will include information on costs and youth outcomes. The Department does not believe that direct collaboration with SCCOE is required to produce this report as it relates to youth outcomes.

Memorandum to Chief Operating Officer Greta S. Hansen

Re: Response to the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Final Report *Right Facility, Wrong Time: The Role of James Ranch in Today's Juvenile Justice Landscape*

September 16, 2025

Page 10 of 10

The County has not compiled County-wide costs associated with all services utilized by youth at the James Ranch because doing so would require collecting detailed and highly confidential behavioral health, healthcare, and juvenile justice records for individual youth served by many County departments and contracted service providers; such an analysis would be extremely time and labor intensive. However, the County will explore incorporating some financial analysis into one of its existing annual reports rather than creating a new standalone report.

Regarding the tracking of recidivism and outcome measures across multiple years, Probation has begun tracking housing, education, and employment post-release while youth are on Aftercare and reentry. The Department also plans to implement recidivism tracking for at the 12- month and 24-month intervals beyond release starting with youth who exited the James Ranch program in FY 2023-2024, and annually thereafter. For more information, refer to the Department's response to Recommendation 3a.