

Juvenile Justice Commission
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William F. James Ranch
Inspection Report
November 2019
Phase 2

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SUMMARY

The Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) is established in [Article 2, commencing with Section 225 of Chapter 2 of Part 1 of Division 2 of the California State Welfare and Institutions \(W&I\) Code](#). The JJC is charged with “inquir[ing] into the administration of justice in a broad sense, including but not limited to, operations of the Juvenile Court, Probation Department, Social Services Agency and any other agencies involved with juvenile justice or dependency.” (Section 1.2(B) of the Bylaws of the Juvenile Justice Commission of Santa Clara County; see also WIC 229).

The Santa Clara County JJC conducted Phase Two of its annual inspection of the William James Ranch (JR) secure detention facility for youth offenders from September 26, 2019 to October 25, 2019. This second phase of the inspection was conducted after the completion of the new dormitory and classrooms but does not include the new the gymnasium, kitchen, and eating area, as these facilities will not be released for use until the new administration building on the site of the old dorm facility has been completed. Completion is anticipated in 2020. Reporting on this will be included in the JJC’s 2020 JR inspection.

Members of the Commission Inspection team conducted interviews with management at JR and a tour of the open facilities.

Note that for ease of comprehension, [new or notably changed information is identified by blue font](#).

Previous years’ Ranch reports and Phase 1 of the 2019 James Ranch Inspection Report are available at:

http://www.scscourt.org/court_divisions/juvenile/jjc/jjc_home.shtml

COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations

1. Santa Clara County Juvenile Probation Staff for a successful transition of the Ranch population into the new dorm.
2. Santa Clara County Probation for integrating new programs to enhance youths' time at the Ranch.
3. Santa Clara County Probation for a reduction of incidents.
4. Santa Clara County COE for repurposing existing facilities for better use.
5. Santa Clara County COE for successfully setting up the classrooms in the new dorm and supplying them with functioning laptops

Recommendations

1. That Facilities and Fleet Department find a way for the occupation of the new gym, kitchen and cafeteria sooner rather than waiting for completion of the new administration building.
2. That Facilities and Fleet Department expedite the finishing of the dorm and school walls so that artwork and literary works can be attached.
3. That the installation of cameras to monitor the new dormitory and key areas around the facility be completed as soon as possible.

I. FACILITIES

The campus of James Ranch is changing. The original buildings date from 1953 and have been modified over time. The old dormitory has been demolished and the new dormitory building has been completed and occupied. A gymnasium and cafeteria are nearly completed but not cleared for occupancy. This leaves still in use an old recreation hall and outdoor blacktop area for sports and a cafeteria that is being prepared for use as a culinary arts classroom..

A. Dormitory

The new dormitory is an attractive building. A control room is situated as one enters, but it is not yet fully functional. It will eventually be connected to an expanded array of cameras that will be placed at key locations around the campus. Interview rooms and a locked medication closet are also located at the front of the building. Seating areas are available along the central corridor and the Pods are situated on either side of a long hallway. The first, on the right of the hallway, is being used as an intake area for newly admitted youth and those returning from furloughs. Skype will be available to facilitate communication with attorneys, the Court, and other services, which reduces the need to transport youth back to the courts in San Jose, thereby reducing time missed from school and programs. There are currently five boys' Pods and one for girls (located last down the hallway). Two Pods are not in use.

Each unit houses up to twelve youth in an open, home-like setting, in line with the “Missouri Model,” which has demonstrated the effectiveness of housing youth in smaller “pods”. Bunk beds are arranged at the back of the rooms, with a living area in the front. The furnishings are fresh, brightly colored and appropriate. A windowed counseling room is attached to each unit to facilitate sessions not appropriate for the shared cluster in the center of each unit, and a classroom is attached and shared with the first four Pods. These classrooms are equipped with new laptop computers. The rooms are well lit, with frosted windows, and privacy areas in the bathrooms.

Walls are somewhat sterile in that the surface left by the contractors is presently vulnerable to permanent damage if something is affixed to them. A new laundry facility is located at the far end of the building and is modern and updated. Each youth’s personal items are cleaned for them in laundry bags.

Water and fruit are available for snacks, and electronic equipment is available for use during time not dedicated to the programing described below.

Since the new dorm was opened, staff report that incidents between youth have decreased significantly, though there is no data on the specific number. There is no option for shouting between Pods to create disruption. The youth are now showing a sense of pride which has resulted in a reduction also in the incidents of tagging and vandalism.

B. Buildings Trade and Enterprise Area

The farthest building on the campus is divided into three sections. These are original construction trade classrooms. One classroom is set up to house program modules for building trades and another is set up for actual practical building projects. The third area is the Enterprise area in which JR youth build picnic tables and fire rings, which are sold to the County Parks Department. The youth have done concrete work on the exterior of the building including a wall and a pad. The youth have also repaired stairs on the campus as part of this construction. These building projects cross over with the educational program at JR.

C. Supply Building

Commissioners inspected the storage area where reserve items are kept. This was neat, organized, and compartmentalized. Items were boxed for protection.

D. Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Services Building

This building houses the Starlight staff who provide services to JR youth. There are offices and a group session room. Other group sessions are held in other facilities including the conference room in the secondary administration building. This building is older and shows sign of wear.

E. Cafeteria

The cafeteria is old and has no functioning dishwasher. The logs were up to date on keeping the refrigerators at the appropriate temperatures. This building is to be repurposed as a culinary arts classroom, but that use has been postponed until the new kitchen and cafeteria are cleared for occupation.

F. Recreation Hall

The Rec Hall houses a room for large muscle exercise equipment and a large room divided in two by temporary walls, to allow youth from two different Pods to have family visitation at the same time. It also houses what was a library, which is not in use but is being reorganized by the new librarian/resource specialist hired by the school. It now contains piles and boxes of books.

G. Old Classrooms

During the second phase of the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the classroom use in the old education wing, with an eye toward how the Blue Ridge school plans to utilize them after the opening of classrooms in the new dorm. The welding building remains the same, with areas to practice the craft. The newly added culinary arts program took over one of the old rooms and acts as both an elective and remedial course. The classroom uses the traditional schoolroom layout in order to use PowerPoint to focus on the biological and chemical reactions that take place while cooking. Through this program students are able to explore a trade and make up academic credits in science classes.

Most of the remaining classes are still being used to teach core classes, however, one classroom was entirely empty, acting more as storage closet filled with old textbooks while Blue Ridge works to update their catalogs.

The portable classrooms are under renovation with the addition of the new music department, which will be fitted with a state-of-the-art recording studio, in the hope of inspiring the students to express themselves through song. The studio is expected to be complete by December.

H. Administration Buildings

The administration buildings house offices for supervising counselors and administrative staff. The original portion continues to be dark, tight and unappealing but will be replaced with the completion of the next round of building. A newer structure contains additional offices and a conference room that is also used for some programing at JR.

II. PROGRAMS

The programing available at JR has evolved since the adoption of The Missouri Model, incorporating reportedly evidence-based programing. Staff presenting these programs rotate in order to offer different perspectives reflecting the strengths of the various staff.

Programing is organized as follows:

A. Teaching Pro-social Skills (TPS)

The TPS curriculum duration is 20 weeks, with a different focus each day of the week. For example, on Monday the youth participate in skill streaming, which may involve learning how to avoid getting into fights. On Tuesday they work on anger control, recognizing their triggers and developing coping strategies. On Fridays they alternate moral reasoning or group building whereby they decrease inter-gang incidents. *The counselors are now keeping records to track each youth's progress.*

B. BITS (Brief Intervention Tools) and Guides

Worksheets are used by some of the counselors to help a youth deal with certain specific problems. Some youth with reading deficits find the worksheets difficult. The worksheets are utilized in conjunction with one-on-one counseling, which is more important than the worksheet tool.

C. Restorative Justice

Victim Awareness Program is used to help the youth develop empathy, so that they can address the impact of their offenses on the community and experience how they would feel if they, or someone with whom they are close, had been similarly victimized. This program lasts six weeks for two hours each meeting and includes speakers from the community, including some actual victims. It is presented to one Pod at a time and then rotates to another upon completion. Its effectiveness is tracked by "pre" and "post" surveys to see how each youth's attitude has changed and whether it has assisted him or her in successfully completing aftercare.

Victim Offender Mediation has also been added to the services available to the youth at JR. Cases that could benefit from mediation are identified at the disposition of the case. Victims have the right to refuse this service, and a youth also may not be ready for mediation upon the disposition of their case to JR. During the time while a youth is housed at JR, victims may be more willing to meet with their offender and a youth may become ready to engage in this potentially challenging meeting. Mental health services are also engaged in this process.

D. Gang Intervention

Two nonprofits, Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY) and New Hope for Youth, conduct gang intervention programs at JR.

FLY

- a. Gang Redirect: FLY holds 90-minute weekly sessions for a 12-week period of one-on-one counseling. The youth receives coaching on developing self-awareness, anger management, and conflict resolution skills and insight concerning choices and consequences. FLY staff focus on building a positive, trusting relationship with the youth to help in getting to the root causes of the need to join a gang.
- b. Legal Program: FLY continues to conduct this program that provides youth with information about the legal system and the possible impact on them of violating the law. Staff assist the youth in acquiring problem-solving and decision-making skills.
- c. Mentorship Program: This is another on-going program where youth are matched with an adult volunteer mentor, who can stay connected to the youth through the Aftercare period. Currently six to eight Ranch youth have mentors. Youth usually are assigned a mentor early in the court process, and this connection continues while they are at JR. However, a youth may be assigned a mentor while at JR if the Multi-Disciplinary Team identifies the need for a mentor. These mentors spend time visiting with the youth to provide social contact.

New Hope for Youth

The New Hope for Youth organization is culturally responsive and dedicated to serving and reaching out to all gang impacted as well as at-risk youth, their families, and communities. The New Hope staff understand street culture and act as credible messengers to build rapport and provide opportunities to talk about concerns and issues and assist youth who wish to leave the gang lifestyle.

- a. Crisis Intervention: JR has asked New Hope staff to provide emergency assistance, crisis response, and conflict mediation services to reduce escalation of gang-related tensions at JR.
- b. Structured Programs: New Hope runs two gender responsive 12-week youth development and leadership enhancement programs.
 - a. El Joven Noble: This program is directed to male youth and stresses rites of passage and healing to prepare the youth for adulthood. Youth work on harm reduction, teen pregnancy, drugs and violence in the community.
 - b. Xinatchli: This is a female specific program, which focuses on health, a connection with family and community, self-esteem support and personal responsibility.

E. Starlight Youth Therapeutic Integrated Program (YTIP)

The mental health and substance use programs have been integrated under a single contract with Starlight Community Services. Starlight provides individual and group therapy, family therapy, and couples counseling for JR youth who are parents. In addition, the Seeking Safety

Program, which was previously only offered to the girls' pod, is now rotated between the girls' and boys' pods.

F. Services for Female Custody Youth

The Girls Scouts continue their programming to promote positive self-image, teamwork, anger management and leadership skills. The Female Intervention Team (FIT) has been added. FIT is organized through the San Jose Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force and is available as a Community Based Organization (CBO) program to all girls at JR, whether from San Jose or elsewhere. FIT provides mentorship, substance abuse counseling, violence risk avoidance, Criminal Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) avoidance, positive self-worth counseling and continues their services to these youth after they have left JR.

F. The Beat Within

"The Beat Within" is a publication that has long been a part of the Juvenile Hall program. It is a monthly newsletter that allows the youths' artistic voices to be heard. It is a compilation of not only Santa Clara County's custody youth's writings but articles and poems from other counties as well. The ability to participate and publish complements Blue Ridge High School's increased artistic emphasis.

G. ProSocial Activities

JR participates in two organized sports activities:

- a. Ranch Sports League: The youth at JR have the option to participate in an inter-custodial sports league to compete in a variety of athletic endeavors.
- b. ProCom Sports: The program affords the opportunity to participate in cross country track, basketball, soccer, flag football, and other sports to JR Level 3 and level 4 youth, youth on aftercare, Ranch graduates, other youth in the County Office of Education Community Schools, and several other alternative high schools.

H. The Enterprise Program

The Enterprise Program formerly was limited to the youth in C Pod (males), who had graduated from high school or were near graduation and had earned the right to leave JR temporarily (OTs). Now eligibility is expanded to females and other youth OT-eligible and at Level 3.5 or higher, permitting them to not only participate in building the fire rings and picnic tables, but to go off site to work at the parks. Money earned from the sale of these products and employment is applied to restitution, and also can be accumulated and received by the youth upon completion of the Ranch program.

I. Field Trips

Youth who are at least level 3.5, OT-eligible, in their last three months, and have earned enough to have passed their week and therefore advanced toward release from the program, are now eligible to go on field trips. Field trips have included visits to the zoo, visits to educational programs, and participation as volunteers in the Gilroy/Morgan Hill 29th Annual Role Model Program, which serves to empower underserved elementary and middle school youth to dream for a better future and to motivate them to pursue higher education. JR youth also participated in the Fatherhood Conference, the Love Me Some female youth empowerment program, and the Male Latino Role Model Conference.

J. Religious Program

The Probation Department's Chaplain ensures that all youth have the opportunity to participate in Bible study. Catholic services are managed through the Diocese. Individual or group religious counseling is provided upon request.

K. Special Programs.

JR youth now participate in special themed programs for certain months. They participated in National Hispanic Heritage Month, in a collaborative effort of the school and the kitchen. Each Pod worked on different regions, and games were played to reinforce the theme. For Black History Month, the youth participated in a Martin Luther King Luncheon and wrote and presented Challenges to The Dream essays. Earth Day was celebrated by working on garden boxes, and Día de Los Muertos had group sessions dealing with grief and loss.

SUMMARY FINDING

The JJC has completed Phase 2 of the 2019 annual inspection of the James Ranch and finds that the Facilities and Programs are safe and that many improvements have been made. The staff is exemplary, committed, and strives for continuous improvement.

Approved by the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission on December 3, 2019.



Ron Hansen, Commission Chair



Victoria BurtonBurke, Ranch Inspection Vice-Chair