

Juvenile Justice Commission County of Santa Clara

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Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission William F. James Ranch Inspection Report July 2011

I. INTRODUCTION

The Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) is a state-mandated, court-appointed authority. The broad purpose of the JJC is to inquire into the administration of juvenile law in Santa Clara County. The JJC is dedicated to the promotion of an effective juvenile justice system operated in an environment of credibility, dignity, fairness and respect for the youth of Santa Clara County.

In fulfillment of these responsibilities, the JJC conducted its annual inspection of the William F. James Boys' Ranch pursuant to California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 229 beginning in April 2011. Seven Commissioners inspected the facility and met with the staff, service providers, the youth, and their families. All visits to the Ranch were pre-arranged. This report summarizes the information gathered during visits which took place on April 7th, 25th, and 29th and on May 21st.

Prior year's reports and inspection reports from other facilities are available on the internet at (<http://www.sccsuperiorcourt.org/juvenile/jjc.htm>).

II. POPULATION

The William F. James Ranch (Ranch) is a residential rehabilitative program operated by the Santa Clara County Probation Department for boys ages 15 1/2 to 18 years old. The Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Court commits youth to the program. The goal of the program is to give youth the tools needed to successfully reintegrate into their families and communities. The Ranch is located on Malaguerra Avenue in Morgan Hill, California.

The licensed capacity for the Ranch is 96 youth, but the current working capacity is 84 youth. The adoption of the "Enhanced Ranch Program" (ERP) changed the Ranch from a military, barracks-style program to a "family-style" environment with small-groups and personal oversight. Prior to the addition of two new "pods," the ERP accommodated 72 youth and there was often a list of 30-70 youth in Juvenile Hall waiting for placement at the Ranch. Now, the waiting list is usually no more than 2 to 4 youth. At the time of our first visit on April 7, 2011, one pod was closed for maintenance and there were 71 youth placed at the Ranch.

The tables below show the demographic and other information about the youth at the Ranch:

Age of Ranch Youth 4/5/2011		
Age	Population	Population %
15	3	4%
16	26	37%
17	27	38%
18 and older	15	21%
Total	71	100%

Ethnicity of Ranch Youth 4/7/2011		
Ethnicity	Population	Population %
Hispanic	51	73%
Black	8	11%
White	6	9%
Asian	3	4%
Other	2	3%
Total	70	100%

Offenses of Ranch Youth 4/5/2011		
Offense Category	Population	Population %
Felony Crimes Against People	26	37%
Drugs, Alcohol & Related Offenses	1	1%
Other Crimes Against People	0	0%
Property Crimes	7	10%
Weapon Crimes	2	3%
Other Crimes	7	10%
Return/Courtesy Hold/Other	28	39%
Total	71	100%

III. STAFFING

The Probation Department assigns staff to the Ranch. Ranch staff includes:

- 1 Probation Manager
- 6 Supervising Probation Counselors
- 35 Probation Counselors II (Six are Spanish-speaking)
- 6 Probation Counselors I (One is Spanish-speaking)
- 12 Probation Assistants (One is Spanish-speaking)
- 39 Extra Help Counselors are assigned to the James Ranch – Bi-lingual certification is not required for this position.

Two Supervising Probation Counselors manage the seven pods and treatment programs at the Ranch. One Supervising Probation Counselor is in charge of the Enterprise Program. Six Probation Counselors are assigned to each pod and there are up to twelve youth in each pod. Two Probation Counselors II are assigned to the Aftercare Program.

Staff members receive 96 hours of training in the Enhanced Ranch Program (ERP). All Supervising Probation Counselors and Probation Counselors I and II have received the 96-hour training. A Ranch staff person who is new to the ERP is expected to complete the 96-hour training within his or her first year of hire. Some Probation Assistants and Extra Help Counselors have also completed the 96-hour training. The Ranch Manager has received basic training in the ERP and was involved early in the process of implementing the ERP in Santa Clara County, but has not attended the full 96-hour training.

Aftercare Counselors receive 40 hours of additional training when they are assigned to this position.

The ratio of staff to youth is 1:6 during the day and 1:12 at night.

IV. FACILITY

Facility Overview

The James Ranch was built in 1956 and contains a dormitory which is divided into five 12-bedroom “pods” and two modular 12-bed units. There is also a recreation room, library, kitchen/cafeteria, an administration building, medical and mental health offices, and classrooms.

Overall, the James Ranch appeared neat and clean when Commissioners visited. Many of the buildings are old. In particular, many of the roofs covering the walkways between buildings were sagging and showed signs of water damage. A number of staff members with whom Commissioners spoke complained of a reoccurring noxious odor that impacts several locations at the Ranch. When this problem arises, steps are taken to eliminate the odor, but it returns periodically.

Living Units

Each pod at the Ranch is furnished with wooden bunk beds covered with quilts and wooden armoires for clothing. There are couches and armchairs in a central seating area that also includes a television.

Two new pods were built and opened in 2009 and are more spacious than the original five pods. These new pods have counseling rooms and nice general use areas and are self-contained. The original five pods are much smaller with six bunk beds positioned around a small living area with a couch and television. One of the original pods was closed due to a plumbing problem that has required significant time to repair.

Funding has been designated to build seven new living units with attached counseling rooms and classrooms. The funding is awaiting approval from the Board of Supervisors.

Kitchen and Cafeteria

The Kitchen and Cafeteria appeared neat and clean. Commissioners noted appropriate temperatures on the refrigerator and freezer units and the food storage areas were organized and clean.

General Health and Safety

The James Ranch had the following inspections in 2010:

- June 14, 2010 – Corrections Standards Authority – Biennial Inspection (under Welfare & Institutions Code sections 209 & 885)
- June 15, 2010 – Office of the Fire Marshal, County of Santa Clara Fire Inspection.
- July 7, 2010 – County of Santa Clara Public Health Department Annual Health Inspection

According to the Ranch Manager, Ranch all recommendations from these inspections have been implemented.

V. OVERVIEW OF THE ENHANCED RANCH PROGRAM (ERP)

The ERP began at the Wright Center and James Ranch sites in August 2006. The ERP is based on an evidenced-based practice also referred to as the “Missouri Model.” Below are the components of the ERP as described in “Aftercare Study, Enhanced Ranch Program,” a report written by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) from April 30, 2010:

- a. Staff Development and Coaching – 96 hours of instruction in a Cognitive Based Treatment model of group counseling. This is supported by on-going mentoring and coaching.
- b. Treatment – all youth are assessed within three weeks of entering the Ranch. A Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), which includes probation counselors, parents, probation school counselors, and mental health and substance abuse counselors, meets to consider all relevant information and to develop a treatment plan.

- c. Family Atmosphere - The smaller treatment groups of 10 to 12 youth and the personalized living space create a more home-like atmosphere. Each pod has a central meeting area that is furnished like a large family room.
- d. Group Process – Small group counseling supports the personal development of each youth. Youth are encouraged to talk out personal problems with the group.
- e. Small Staff-to-Youth Ratios –low ratios allow for the staff to interact and work closely with the youth rather than just monitor them.
- f. Family Participation - Before a youth enters the ERP, he is screened to ensure a significant adult figure (parent, relative or legal guardian) is willing and able to participate in the program with the youth.
- g. Personal Enhancement Opportunities – A variety of activities such as sports, religious activities and workshops are offered to the youth.
- h. Extended Length of Stay – The “in custody” program increased from a six month to an eight month stay with a six month Aftercare program.
- i. Relationship Building – One-on-one relationships between line staff and youth build trust and encourage the youth to participate in group work.
- j. Education – The County Office of Education provides a school day of 300 minutes.
- k. Aftercare Programs – Additional programs and supports are offered to youth for 6 months after they leave the Ranch in order to support the youth’s success when he or she returns home.

While in custody (usually the first 8 months of the program), youth at the Ranch progress through 4 levels. Advancement to each level is earned through good performance on a youth’s goals. Each youth is evaluated on a weekly basis to determine if he is ready to progress to the next level. Below is a schematic of the in-custody levels:

- Level 1 – Orientation - Lasts about 1 month
- Level 2 – Core Program Activities – Lasts 2 to 3 months
- Level 3 – Family Reunification Planning – 2 months (youth begin to spend time at home on weekends.)
- Level 4 – Re-entry and Aftercare Preparation – 1 month

In another study conducted by NCCD in 2009, researchers found that there had been a significant decline in behavioral incidents at the Ranch (fights, gang activity, disruptive conduct or contraband) since the introduction of the ERP. Before the introduction of the ERP, NCCD found a total of 4647 (475 youth) incidents occurred over a 24-month period. After the introduction of the ERP, such incidents declined to 1294 (262 youth) over 18 months. The average number of incidents per youth prior to the introduction of ERP was 9.8 per youth and after ERP was instituted, there was an average of 4.9 incidents per youth.

Aftercare Program

The Aftercare Program (“Aftercare”) has two components. Phase I, called “Pre-release,” takes place during the first 10 weeks that a youth is out of custody. Phase II takes place during the remainder of the 6 months of Aftercare. During Aftercare, minors must comply with all court orders, attend programming, and engage with counselors and a therapist. If a minor does not comply with these and other Aftercare requirements, he may end up with additional weeks of supervision, an additional 30 days in custody at the Ranch, or possibly a return to Juvenile Hall as an Aftercare “failure.”

During Phase I/Pre-release, the minors are under close supervision and receive multiple support services. Six weeks prior to release into Phase I, an MDT meeting is held that is designed to identify issues the minor will face during Aftercare and to develop an exit plan. The goal of Phase I is to reintegrate the minor into the community, but provide enough guidance and structure so that s/he will be successful and will not return to the Ranch or Juvenile Hall. In addition to the MDT, the youth is prepared for his/her reintegration by participating in home visits and weekend furloughs.

During the first 30 days of Phase I, the minor is on “house restriction.” This means that the minor must be at his home except when he is at school, work, court ordered programs, or when he is accompanied by his parent or guardian.

During Phase I, an Aftercare Counselor, an Aftercare Probation Officer and a Community Worker monitor the minor’s reintegration into the community. The youth also receives services from mental health providers, substance abuse providers and other community organizations. The Aftercare Counselor has personal contact with the youth and his family 2 to 3 times per week. The Aftercare Counselor also checks in with the youth nightly, makes impromptu school and home visits, conducts drug and alcohol screenings, helps with enrollment in school, and provides transportation to school, work etc. An Aftercare Probation Officer (PO) also oversees the youth and is an agent of the court, and his or her role is to protect public safety. The PO’s role is to ensure the minor follows court orders. The Aftercare PO is trained in the ERP and supervises the youth unless the youth is assigned to the Probation Department’s Gang or Family Violence unit.

Community Workers provide assistance to the Probation Officers and monitor youth in the community. They are not law enforcement officers, but provide extra support to the Probation Officers by assisting with transportation, drug and alcohol testing, etc.

During Phase II of Aftercare, minors have fewer restrictions and the responsibility for monitoring the youth transfers fully to the Probation Officer. The youth is still required to attend programs, but this phase of Aftercare is more akin to a general probation supervision which involves less contact with the probation staff.

Aftercare “failures” result when a youth absconds or is arrested for a felony. Minors who chronically violate court orders may also be “failed” from the program. Aftercare is considered a progressive process in which minors take incremental steps back into the community and there is an acknowledgement that youth will make mistakes. This means that in most cases, the minor will not necessarily “fail” from the program for misdemeanor arrests or other violations, such as

not complying with the rules of his or her contract. In some cases, a minor who commits a misdemeanor can return to the Ranch for one or more weekends or for up to 30 days. If the youth requires more than thirty days back at the Ranch, then a court hearing will be set.

According to the 2010 NCCD report, there are many challenges that face youth while in Aftercare and that may impede their goal of not returning to the Ranch or Juvenile Hall. These include:

- Home environments that are disorganized and semi-functional
- Poor and inadequate parenting
- Minors with drug and alcohol dependency issues who return to families, friends or neighborhoods where drugs and alcohol are readily available – 70% of those who failed Aftercare had tested positive for drugs or alcohol while in Aftercare.
- Poor connection to and utilization of services
- Gang involvement

While youth do better while staying at the Ranch with the ERP than with previous programs offered at James Ranch, data outcomes for youth returning to the community are mixed. According to the NCCD report, there was an increase in the number of youth who attended the ERP and had a Violation of Probation (VOP) within one year during the study period. VOP's increased from 22% in 2007 and 2008 to 32% in 2009. However, there was a lower percentage of youth with a new arrest within one year of leaving the Ranch in 2009. This number decreased to 23% from 35% and 37% in 2007 and 2008, respectively.

A frustration discussed with Commissioners by the Ranch Manager is the difficulty of making sense of probation violations and new arrests. There are many factors that are not reflected current VOP and recidivism data. For example, data collected on VOP's and new crimes committed does not reflect whether the VOP or new crime is an escalation of criminal behavior or less serious than the original crime that brought the youth into the juvenile justice system. Is the VOP or the commission of a new crime was for a minor or major incident? The Commission believes that a data system that provides a better objective picture of the effectiveness of the Ranch and other programs is important to understanding the effectiveness of the program is needed.

What is clear from the NCCD data is that while the number of incident reports (for fights, insubordination, etc.) has decreased significantly at the Ranch since ERP was implemented (as compared to the program previously offered at the Ranch), there has not been a comparable change for the recidivism of youth participating in the program. This may be due to the difficult circumstances to which many of these youth return. The NCCD report makes many recommendations for preventing youth from re-offending:

1. Revise the minor's case plan as necessary to accommodate the changing needs of minors and families.
2. Provide intensive transitional support.
3. Provide specialized school and job assistance
4. Address issues of culture and environment
5. Increase peer support and positive mentoring
6. Improve gang intervention

7. Provide additional parental support
8. Address substance abuse and lack of programs
9. Improve staff understanding of the ERP

Most of these recommendations are self-explanatory. However, Recommendation #9 does warrant some discussion. The 2010 NCCD report found that “*evidence exists of a disconnect between staff that work at the ranches and probation officers that work in other areas.*” As a result of this disconnect, traditional probation officers may “violate” a minor more quickly based on behavior and not on the dynamics of his situation. This approach is counter to the philosophy and interventions provided at the Ranch and may result in an “Aftercare Failure” that takes the youth deeper into the juvenile justice system instead of successfully addressing the issue that lead to the behavior.

It is the understanding of the JJC that discussions are underway to bring “wrap-around” services in to support the youth as they leave the Ranch. The wrap-around program is a case-management approach to supporting youth. In wrap-around, an agency does a comprehensive evaluation of the needs of a youth and his family and actively links them to appropriate services in the community. Wrap-around or its equivalent has been used in the special treatment courts and in the child welfare system, and has been shown to improve outcomes for the youth receiving these services.

Finally, the JJC noted that neither of the current Aftercare Counselors is fluent in Spanish. At the time of the inspection, 73% of the youth at the Ranch were Latino and in many cases, their parents speak Spanish only. Much of the success of Aftercare depends on the Aftercare Counselor developing a trusting relationship with a youth’s parents. There are often bi-lingual, Spanish-speaking staff at the Ranch who are able to help with the communication between the Aftercare Counselor and the parents, but this situation is less than ideal and doesn’t address how the Aftercare Counselor communicates with the parents during home visits.

Observation: Multidisciplinary Team Meeting (MDT) for Youth Leaving the Ranch

Two members of the JJC observed an MDT meeting for a youth who was to leave the Ranch in a few weeks. The Aftercare Counselor, a staff member from the County Office of Education, representatives from the Mental Health Department and community based organizations, the Ranch Counselor, the youth, and the youth’s father attended the MDT meeting. The youth’s Probation Officer, who was from the Gang Unit, led the meeting.

There were many issues that were not settled at the beginning of the MDT. There was confusion about the youth’s release date. There was also uncertainty about the school the youth would be attending, whether summer school was an option, which substance abuse program the youth would attend and whether or not the youth would be able to receive mental health services upon his release. Finally, the father was a Spanish speaker, and the only person available to translate was a representative from a community-based mental health provider. A preparation checklist for MDT meetings would ensure that all these issues are considered before the MDT meeting takes place.

In spite of these issues, the youth and his father seemed satisfied with the process. Those MDT members present communicated their desire to see the youth succeed. In particular, the

Probation Officer (from the Probation Department's Gang Unit) who ran the meeting emphasized more than once that the youth and his father should call her if there were any concerns. She explained that she recognized that it is very likely that the youth may make mistakes during this transition period, and that it is better for her to learn about the mistake directly from the youth rather than from some other source.

As a general note, MDT meetings are held during the day and the JJC is concerned that daytime meetings may be very difficult for working parents to attend.

Teaching Important Pro-Social Skills (TIPS)

TIPS is a 10-week program designed to address the behavior of aggressive youth, reduce anti-social behaviors and offer the use of "pro-social skills" as an alternative. Utilizing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), TIPS has three components:

- Anger Control – The emotional component teaches what not to do (not reacting with aggression)
- Skill-streaming The behavioral component teaches what to do instead of aggression
- Moral Reasoning – The values component teaches why it is important to use these skills

The goal of the training is to help minors *unlearn* their negative reactions and to learn a new way of reacting in stressful situations. Youth develop interpersonal problem solving skills and moral reasoning abilities and learn to see their world in a different way. The goal is for youth to return to their communities with the tools and knowledge to deal with issues and problems that may come up in their daily lives. The training requires participation in discussions and skills practice such as role-playing.

Two to three hours of TIPS training is offered in each of the pods each week. Youth who have completed the 10-week session will continue to participate in the program until they leave the Ranch.

JJC members attended a TIPS session during a visit to the Ranch. There were 12 youth and 2 staff members present for most of the session. One of the staff members was the facilitator and the other staff member primarily observed the session. The topic of the session was Anger Control. Each youth identified what technique(s) he used as an anger reducer, and discussed internal and external consequences of acting on his anger. Each youth participated in a role play of a "hassle" with which they had recently dealt in real life (recorded in their "Hassle Log"). All minors seemed very engaged in the session and seemed to have a good understanding of the concepts that will help them be successful when they return home.

VI. BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

An MDT meeting is held within the first three weeks a youth is at the Ranch in order to develop an individual treatment (behavior management) plan for the youth. This plan is used to guide and assess the youth's progress through the Ranch program. In addition to receiving individual behavior management treatment, the youth he also receive group treatment with their pods. When a youth violates a rule, he is counseled immediately, usually without punishment. If the misbehavior continues, the entire pod sits with the youth for group discussion of the behavior. If this does not resolve the issue, the Probation Counselor Supervisor and the Ranch Manager

continue counseling with the youth. Whether the youth progresses to the next level of his treatment plan is determined by his behavior for an entire week and is not based on a single incident.

Incident Reports

Staff members at the Ranch complete incident reports for a variety of issues that occur at the Ranch, including behavioral issues, fights, injuries, contraband, Ranch failures, etc.

Commissioners reviewed incident reports from March 2010 through February 2011. During this period there was great variation in the number and types of incidents reported. There were 31 “Ranch Failures” (due to escape, failure at the Ranch, and failures in Aftercare) in the 12-month review period. The number of Ranch Failures during the period ranged from a low of zero in October 2010 to a high of six in May 2010. The number of reports of behavioral issues (for disrespect, insubordination, etc.) ranged from eight in March 2010 to thirty-four in September 2010. Finally, the number of reports of other incidents, including assaults (on other youth or on staff members), fights, and possession of contraband ranged from sixteen in February 2011 to fifty-two in April 2010. These variations in the number and type of incidents reported may be attributable to the backgrounds and behavioral needs of the youth placed in each of the pods (there was also great variation among the pods). There may also be other factors affecting the frequency and types of incident reports, such as staffing patterns, how long the youth have been assigned to the Ranch, and changes in program.

Grievances

Two grievances were filed in 2010. In May 2010, a youth who was struggling to keep his behavior under control filed a grievance, and was provided with counseling and support. In September 2010, a youth complained about the outcome of his week’s evaluation. In that case, staff counseled the youth further and no change was made to the behavioral plan.

Appeals

Appeals are filed by youth when they disagree with an incident report, feel unfairly treated by staff or when the youth has been denied the opportunity to move to the next level in his individual plan. There were four appeals in 2010, all issued between May and July 2010. Two of the appeals involved the same classroom teacher, and all involved minor behavioral problems such as disrespecting staff, use of foul language, and rudeness. None of the appeals directly related to any incident reports. All appeals were denied.

Data Management of Incident Reports, Grievances, and Appeals

Commissioners noted that while the incident reports are kept in a computer database, neither the grievances nor appeals are kept in a database. Commissioners found the incident report data management system slow, cumbersome, and not useful for identifying patterns or emerging issues. Commissioners also felt that it would be useful to include grievances and appeals in the data management system and that these should be linked to the incident reports when appropriate.

VII. MEDICAL SERVICES

A nurse provides coverage of the Medical Services Office on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., and from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. On Tuesday and Thursday, a nurse provides coverage from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. On weekends and holidays, the coverage is from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. A physician and a psychiatrist work at the Ranch every other week for 4 hours each

Commissioners met with the nurse on duty during one of the visits in April. The nurse presented a small but well-organized clinic. The clinic has a small front office adjoining an examination room and an attached bathroom. A locked medicine room stores all over-the-counter and prescription drugs, and the nurse is the only person who has access to this room. The nurse dispenses all necessary medications to youth during her shift hours. She uses a locked drug cart to dispense the medication to youth, either in their pods or classrooms.

When minors are transferred to the Ranch from Juvenile Hall, the nurse receives a hard copy of their medical records. Likewise, when a minor is released from the Ranch, the parent or guardian receives a discharge summary record, which includes information on medications, immunizations records, and other medical information.

The nurse maintains a daily log of medications given to each youth. She also maintains a Monthly Medical Report showing all sick calls made at the clinic. During 2010, there was an average of 130 sick calls made per month. The type of the calls varied from X-Rays, VMC appointments, lab and other blood work, etc. Dental appointments are also recorded in this report.

There is a tele-nursing video camera installed at the clinic to get live triage assistance from the Juvenile Hall Medical Clinic nursing staff when the James Ranch nurse is not on duty. All the Supervising Ranch Counselors are trained to use the video camera in an emergency when the nurse is not on duty.

If a youth develops a fever at the Ranch, and the nurse is not on duty, the nursing staff at Juvenile Hall (JH) is contacted, and a determination is made as to whether the youth should be transported to JH for further evaluation. Generally, Ranch staff transports the youth to JH and the youth remains at JH until cleared by the doctor or nurse to return to the Ranch.

All Ranch counselors receive annual training in CPR (including the use of defibrillators) and defibrillators are installed in the Ranch.

VIII. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Since 2009, Starlight Community Services, a community based organization, has been providing mental health services to youth at the Ranch. Starlight's mission, as stated in its brochure is, "to develop and operate a full continuum of mental health services that reflect clinical excellence and continuous quality improvements, to maintain an unconditional commitment to assisting clients with mental illness to achieve and maintain their optimum level of functioning and quality of life, and to provide effective mental health treatment and cost-efficient services that involve

and respect the diverse resources and talents available within the client, family, staff, and community.”

Commissioners met with one of Starlight’s Mental Health Specialists and discussed the mental health services Starlight provides at the Ranch. There is currently a bilingual Spanish-English speaking Mental Health Specialist working at the Ranch whose caseload is typically 20 to 25 youth. The Mental Health Specialist is at the Ranch Sunday through Thursday, from 9am to 6pm. On Sundays, she stays longer to answer any questions or concerns from parents when parents bring youth back to the Ranch from weekend home visits. She also meets with families at their homes to provide therapeutic services. Her duties include: reviewing mental health assessments and medical files, responding to referrals from the Ranch nurse or counselors, meeting with families to address the transitioning process when youth return home, and teaching youth therapeutic techniques so they can reduce their medication intake when appropriate.

A psychiatrist from Juvenile Hall visits the Ranch twice a month and meets with the Starlight Mental Health Specialist to discuss concerns, medications, and the overall progress of the youth. She also attends the MDT meetings and is instrumental in coordinating multidisciplinary assessments and evaluations, comprehensive service plans, psychiatric evaluations, medication support, therapy, training for Ranch staff in problem solving, anger management counseling, and additional links to community services such as gang intervention.

In order to provide more mental health services to youth at the Ranch, Starlight uses licensed Marriage and Family Therapist interns to help with the case work. These interns are supervised by the Mental Health Specialist.

Commissioners met separately with the Ranch Manager and the Mental Health Specialist. Both expressed satisfaction with the working relationship between the youth, Starlight, and the Probation Department. Commissioners also spoke with a few Probation staff members who expressed satisfaction with the services that Starlight is providing. In her conversation with Commissioners, the Mental Health Specialist mentioned that she thinks the Aftercare services available to youth at the Ranch should be expanded, but Starlight cannot currently expand those services because of the current contract it has with the Probation Department.

The need for additional mental health counseling services and substance abuse services was recently included in a 2010-2011 Grand Jury report titled “Mental Health Support at Youth Ranches.” In addition to the need for more counseling support, the Grand Jury report also includes recommendations for better coordination of the existing mental health services and information-sharing for youth at both the James Boys’ Ranch and the Muriel Wright Ranch (which houses girls and younger boys).

IX. EDUCATION

The education program at the Ranch is managed by Blue Ridge High School, one of the 16 alternative school programs of the Santa Clara County Office of Education (COE). It is designed to provide students with several alternatives when they leave the Ranch: attending community college if they have received graduation certificates at the Ranch; attending their home district’s community school; or attending a comprehensive high school. The classrooms at the school

appear to be between 50 and 60 years old, with some upgrades but with no major remodeling. Student desks are approximately four years old and appear to be in very good condition.

The school serves between 70 and 84 students in grades 9-12. Youth are required to spend 300 minutes per day in the education program, which includes language arts, social studies, math, science, Career Technical Education (CTE), General Education Development testing (GED) preparation, and special education services. Eighteen percent of the students in Blue Ridge High School need special education services. There are six staff members at Blue Ridge High School, including special education and resource teachers.

Students at the Ranch attend classes in the morning or in the afternoon. The two morning classes are self-contained and are taught by instructors who are credentialed to teach all subjects. After lunch, these students attend CTE training until 5:00 p.m. The other students attend CTE training in the morning and class in the afternoon. There are two regular education classes held in the afternoon. One instructor teaches social studies and language arts, and the other instructor teaches math. There is also one Special Day Class (SDC) that serves students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

The school at the Ranch has an "Assessment Lab," and the COE has an "Assessment Team" that helps teachers assess incoming students in reading and math skills using the Renaissance Star Reading and Star Math tests. Students also take the CELDT to determine their English skills. These assessments are used to develop an Individual Success Plan (ISP) for each student. Input from parents, counselors and probation officers is used to develop the plan, which allows teachers and students to focus on goals aimed at helping youth make educational progress. The plan is updated every 90 days.

Commissioners met with the Blue Ridge High School Principal and teaching staff. In 2010, Commissioners were concerned that English Language Learners (ELLs) were not receiving enough instructional help to function effectively in English. During this visit, Commissioners learned that students were getting help from a bilingual instructional assistant. Also, the teachers attend English Language Arts Development classes once a month. These professional development courses help the teachers support their ELL students. Additionally, teachers began using "Edge," an English Language Development program developed by Hampton Brown to support students, especially ELLs, in reading and writing English. According to the Principal, 27% of the students at the Ranch are designated ELLs by the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), which is administered once a year. When Commissioners asked staff members if students receive more 1-on1 tutoring this year than last year, they stated that four tutors currently serve students at the Ranch. The tutors provide help with, among other things, passage of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), a test students must pass to graduate from high school.

The Principal, he shared information about the Edge program as well as a new math computer program, Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) that teachers at the Ranch have started using. The school's computer teacher is now full-time and she is able to work with all students. According to the Principal, students at the Ranch take the California Standards Tests (CSTs), just as students who attend comprehensive high schools do. Most students at the Ranch are two or more years behind academically and have not achieved federal standards in

Math and Language arts. Therefore, the school is in “Program Improvement” (a federally-designated term for a probation-like status.)

The Principal stated that staff members are involved in staff development activities on Wednesdays. On the first and fourth Wednesdays of each month, teachers collaborate on developing common assessments for the curricula they teach. On the third Wednesday of each month, teachers work on English Language Development by sharing lessons and assessments. There is an all staff meeting on the second Wednesday of each month. He said that the school would be going through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation process so it could be a fully accredited educational institution.

Commissioners visited four classrooms at the school. One was a self-contained morning class. Students were doing different tasks—some students were using instructional programs on the computer, one was making up a language test, and others were working on a math worksheet. The second visit was to a math class in the afternoon. The third visit was to a social studies class where students were focused on completing worksheets about an article they had read. In the final class visited by Commissioners, students were taking a reading test. In all of the classes Commissioners visited, students were well-behaved, and most were focused on the assigned work.

The Principal stated that a major goal for students at the Ranch was to receive a graduation certificate or to earn a GED. The school also helps students accrue units toward high school graduation through Cyber High, a computer-based credit recovery program. According to the principal, last year, 25 students at the Ranch received graduation certificates (July 2010 – April 2011). Eighty-eight youth were placed in local schools and community colleges by the County Office of Education high school counselor and Probation Department counselors working collaboratively. Of those, 31 were enrolled in college or attended community college.

The following table shows what happened to each youth who left Blue Ridge High School from July 2010 to April 2011:

Education or Career Placement	Number
District School and Special Education	15
District Community School	14
Classes offered through the Santa Clara County Office of Education	17
Community College	16
Enrolled in College	15
Seeking Employment	11
TOTAL	88

XI. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Enterprise Program

The Enterprise program teaches entry-level job training skills to the youth. The training is more extensive than what is provided through many of the local public high schools' Career Technical Education (CTE), and the youth learn about construction, carpentry, welding, tile, heating and air conditioning systems, drywall, roofing, electrical, plumbing, painting, and computer skills. At the time of Commissioners' visits, the auto shop program was not operating and the proposed culinary program was on hold due to budget issues.

The goal of the Enterprise program is for students to operate a business and make a profit. Besides teaching youth basic construction skills, this approach has encouraged the youth to take more of an interest in their skills training because they also share in some of the profits. Some of the money earned through the program is reinvested into the program to buy supplies. For this reason, the Enterprise program has relied very little on County funds and has actually generated income. The youth are paid approximately \$50 per month and can use some of their earnings can be used to pay restitution fees.

Youth in the Enterprise Program learn skills that will serve them later in life. According to the Manager of the Enterprise program, youth are expected to work as if they were in a real world work situation. The youth are expected to be respectful of each other and must work together as a team regardless of their differences.

The Enterprise program has established working relationships with many of the local unions including the Welders', Pipefitters', Construction, and Auto Mechanics' unions. When a youth has acquired enough experience from the Enterprise program and has a high school diploma or a G.E.D., he is at an entry-level "Pre-Apprentice Qualified" level and can contact a union to receive more training and rise to an Apprentice or Journeyman position. All of the youth at the Ranch participate in each of the trade areas and are taken to trade fairs by the staff of the Enterprise program so they can be exposed to real life situations and speak with potential employers to learn more about the employment process.

In the past, Ranch youth have participated in the basic construction of a 1,600 square foot County garage and have also installed new flooring for another County facility. The youth, under supervision, have also done numerous repairs at the Ranch including electrical, sheetrock, and painting work. These projects train the youth in a wide variety of skills and provide them with real life job experience; the youth learn how to manage time effectively, maintain schedules, and work productively. When Commissioners visited the Ranch, heavy rains from the previous week had caused several of the local water channels to overflow, and many of the Enterprise work crews were instrumental in the clean-up of the facility. In addition, the youth construct and repair County park tables and benches at no cost to the County, and are very active in a horticulture program where they grow native plant seedlings in a Ranch greenhouse and then replant them in County parks or creeks to replenish the native plant life. Youth in the Enterprise Program also manufacture several products that are sold or leased to local ranchers, including metal cage traps for wild pigs, metal fire pits, custom storage sheds, and patio tables.

Some of the youth in the Enterprise Program are allowed to travel off-site to work. Youth have worked with the Santa Clara Water District, County Parks Department, State Fish and Game, and the City of Morgan Hill on various projects including creek and trail maintenance, firebreaks, construction of fire pits, and concrete work.

In the 2010 James Ranch Inspection Report, Commissioners recommended that a culinary arts program be offered as part of the Enterprise Program. The neighboring Holden Ranch facility is a training site for the Sheriff and Probation Departments, and is also a staging site for firefighters for major fires in the area. In the last 5 years, there have been two major fires in Morgan Hill and Watsonville that involved thousands of firefighters and took about 2 to 3 weeks to contain and extinguish. According to the program manager, the possibility of contracting with and providing meals to law enforcement and fire personnel has been explored by the Enterprise program. However, because of regulatory bureaucracy, a separate kitchen would have to be constructed at the cost of several hundred thousand dollars. If it were possible to use the current James Ranch kitchen for this activity, this would allow for the development of a culinary arts program benefiting the youth. Such a program could also generate additional income since the Ranch would be able to bill the State and other entities utilizing the Holden Ranch for these meals.

Community-Based Organizations: Pathways Society, CYO

Pathways Society (Pathways), a community-based organization, provides drug and alcohol counseling to youth at the Ranch. Current staffing for the Pathway Program is 1.5 full-time employees with an average caseload between 10 and 20 youth. The length of the Pathways program is 3 to 6 months. The program consists of both group and individual counseling. In addition to providing counseling services to minors, Pathways also provides counseling to families of the youth at the Ranch. Pathways counselors focus on helping youth realize the seriousness of their drug and/or alcohol usage and examine how their drug usage affects school, friends, employment, and family. They also discuss the negative consequences of continued use of alcohol and drugs with the youth, by explaining that long-term use can cause, for example: health issues, continued violations of probation, stealing to support the habit, etc. Techniques and resources for staying clean and sober are emphasized during counseling sessions.

Due to budgetary constraints, Pathways counselors only see youth who have a court order mandating their treatment. The number of court-ordered cases far exceeds the capacity of the 1.5 employees to provide counseling services. Consequently, there is a list of 15 to 25 court-ordered youth for substance abuse counseling. Most youth at the Ranch have substance abuse issues and need services, even if those services have not been court-ordered. The 2010-2011 Grand Jury Report, discussed above, identifies the need for more substance abuse services at the County's youth ranches.

California Youth Outreach (CYO), another community-based organization, provides a ten-week gang intervention curriculum to youth at the Ranch. This curriculum includes the following components: awareness/intervention, anger management/conflict resolution, choices and consequences, problem solving/decision making/responsibilities, critical thinking skills, correlation between gang involvement and drugs. CYO staff members also respond to gang issues that arise at the Ranch.

CYO uses a cognitive behavioral model in the gang intervention curriculum. CYO staff members have youth examine their thinking about the behaviors that resulted in their placement at a detention facility.

Commissioners attended a “Gang Diversion” class provided by CYO. The session covered the topic of “communication,” and was taught by a dynamic instructor who had once been engaged in the justice system. The class was somewhat lecture-oriented, but the instructor checked in with the youth a number of times during the session to ensure they followed and understood the curriculum, and the youth responded with nods or laughs at appropriate times.

Sports and Physical Education

The youth at James Ranch participate in the Central Coast Ranch Athletics League. James Ranch youth play basketball, volleyball, softball and kickball as part of this league. The goal of the sports program is to teach youth how to be team players and leaders. The program is open to all youth at the Ranch. Counselors from each pod select youth to be members of the traveling team, and these youth represent the James Ranch in tournaments throughout the Bay Area. On the day the Commissioners visited, youth on the traveling team were returning from an off-site basketball tournament and appeared very enthusiastic about the day’s activities.

All youth at the Ranch participate in daily physical education. There are also other opportunities for youth to exercise during their free time, including weight lifting, games and other sports activities.

XII. YOUTH AND THEIR PARENTS

Commissioners had an opportunity to speak with youth during lunchtime and during one of the academic classes. Most of the youth reported that the Ranch program was helping them. Many expressed appreciation for the work skills they were able to learn at the Ranch. Several youth with whom Commissioners spoke discussed their plans for when they leave the Ranch, and these youth had career and college goals. Three youth did express skepticism about whether the Ranch program was helping them.

Commissioners also spoke with you in a classroom during the school day. Two youth stated that they were grateful the teacher was helping them attain their educational goals. When we asked students what their concerns were, they stated that they wanted hats because the Ranch is very cold during the winter months. They also wanted more computers and books for non-school reading.

Parents and younger siblings (up to age 14) can visit youth at the Ranch on Sunday mornings or Sunday afternoons. During these visits, parents are allowed to bring “special foods” to their sons. Arrangements may also be made for other significant adults to visit the youth. Parents visit with their children in the cafeteria or in one of the Ranch meeting rooms. Parents with transportation issues that make it difficult to visit the Ranch can take a bus to a nearby shopping center where Ranch staff can pick them up to bring them to the Ranch.

Commissioners spoke with parents during a Sunday morning visitors’ session. Commissioners witnessed one counselor introducing himself to the parents and explaining the Ranch program.

One of the parents and her son expressed high praises for the Ranch program. The mother said, “My son has changed more in two months at the Ranch than he did in two years in and out of Juvenile Hall.” The youth said that when he was in Juvenile Hall, he did not want to come to the Ranch, because he thought it would be bad for him. Another family expressed similar satisfaction with the Ranch program. One mother stated that she did not feel oriented to the Ranch Program yet and felt uncertain about how her son was doing.

Commissioners noted that parents do not have a common check-in location and there is not a “health check” station where parents can read about preventing transmission of infections and have access to hand sanitizer or masks.

COMMENDATIONS:

1. All personnel at the Ranch (Probation Department Staff, County Office of Education Staff, CBO staff, etc.) should be commended for the support given to the JJC inspection team. Everyone Commissioners encountered in the process of generating this report was cooperative, and approached the inspection in the spirit of collaboration.
2. Ranch and Blue Ridge High School staff demonstrated professionalism, caring and a strengths-based approach to the youth at the Ranch. All staff members with whom the JJC spoke were focused on doing everything possible to help the youth at the Ranch succeed.
3. The Enterprise staff is to be commended on their excellent work in providing important life and work skills to the Ranch youth. Commissioners witnessed genuine relationships between the youth and the Enterprise staff. The Enterprise program appears to be a very organized and creative program that teaches the Ranch youth important life skills.
4. The SCCOE is to be commended for helping 25 youth graduate and for having 31 youth attend college upon leaving the Ranch.
5. The Probation Department is recognized for its efforts to provide “wrap-around” services to youth when they leave the Ranch. The JJC believes this approach will be crucial in improving outcomes for youth as they leave the Ranch.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Identify the cause of and a permanent solution to the “sewage” smell that permeates much of the Ranch periodically.
2. Adopt a data tracking system that is able to provide quality and understandable data about success and recidivism when youth leave the Ranch. Investigate the systems in place in Missouri and other states and counties in order to identify data tools that will allow the County to collect and analyze data in a timely manner in order to measure the effectiveness of interventions and to incorporate “program corrections” to improve outcomes.
3. At least one of the Aftercare Counselors should have a bi-lingual certification in Spanish in order to enhance relationship-building between the Aftercare Counselor and mono-lingual

Spanish-speaking parents. The parents and counselor need to be able to work effectively together in order to improve outcomes when youth leave the Ranch and return home.

4. Adopt a data tracking system for incident reports that will allow for better identification of patterns. This system should allow linking “Appeals” and “Grievances” to “Incident Reports” in the computer system so these can all be easily analyzed by Ranch Management and JJC members.
5. Analyze how the time of day of the MDT meeting may impact parents’ ability to participate in their children’s introductory and exit MDT meetings. If it is found that the scheduling of these meetings is an issue, change the time of the meetings to facilitate parents’ participation.
6. Investigate ways for youth to be able to remain at the Ranch when they have a fever and not require a transfer to Juvenile Hall. The Muriel Wright Center has an “isolation room” in which youth can stay when ill and such a solution may be appropriate at the James Ranch.
7. To help insure the success of the youth at the Ranch, every effort should be made to expand and better coordinate the available substance abuse and mental health services . All youth who would benefit from these services, not just youth with a court order mandating them, should be able to receive them, both during their stay at the Ranch and after they leave. Youth who have left the Ranch should not need to rely on having private health insurance or Medi-Cal to receive needed mental health and substance abuse services.
8. The Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors investigate whether a waiver can be obtained to allow use of the Ranch kitchen for youth to cook and provide meals to firefighters and Holden Ranch trainees. This expansion of the Enterprise program would benefit the youth by providing a Culinary Arts program (as recommended in the 2010 inspection report), and has the potential to generate revenue for the County.
9. Provide hats to the youth during the colder winter months.
10. Provide reading materials and computer access to youth during non-school hours.
11. Provide a “Health” station for parents to pass through when they visit their sons at the James Ranch. This station should have information about infection control, access to hand sanitizer, masks and gloves.
12. Institutionalize a process of meeting with parents early in a youth’s placement at the Ranch (and earlier than the MDT meeting that occurs after a youth has been at the Ranch for three to six weeks) so parents understand the goals of the ERP and feel comfortable seeking guidance and information from Ranch counselors.

Response to Recommendations in the 2010 James Ranch Inspection Report

There were six recommendations to the Probation Department and three recommendations to the County Office of Education made in the May 2010 inspection report. The Probation Department’s response (dated Oct. 19, 2010) stated that most of the Commission’s recommendation would be explored.

Several of the recommendations that appear in this 2011 report are repeated or expanded upon from the 2010 James Ranch Inspection report. For example, the 2010 report contained recommendations that the Ranch provide reading materials, increase mental health and substance abuse services, provide better orientation to the ERP for parents, and develop a better data system.

The JJC is concerned that not enough attention has been given to the recommendations made in the 2010 report. The JJC requests that the Probation Department provide specific timelines for implementation of the JJC's recommendations, or a detailed explanation of why the recommendations are not feasible in its response to this report.

Documents Reviewed for this Inspection:

State of California

- 1.) Corrections Standards Authority Biennial Inspection - June 14, 2010.

County of Santa Clara

- 2.) Office of the Fire Marshall, Inspection Report - June 15, 2010.
- 3.) Public Health Department Inspection Report - July 7, 2010

Other Documents:

- 4.) Santa Clara County Office of Education, Staff Handbook, -August 19, 2009
- 5.) "Aftercare Study, Enhanced Ranch Program," National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) - April 30, 2010.
- 6.) "An Assessment of the Enhanced Ranch Program" National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) -July 24, 2009.
- 7.) 2010-2011 Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Report, "Mental Health Support at Youth Ranches."
- 8.) Juvenile Justice Commission James Ranch Inspection Report - May 2010.
- 9.) Probation Department Response to the Juvenile Justice Commission Report on the James Ranch (from Chief Sheila Mitchell) - October 19, 2010

Summary

The Juvenile Justice Commission has completed its annual inspection of the William F. James Boys' Ranch. Based on this inspection, the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission believes that the James Ranch meets the requirements for assuring the safety, well-being, and rehabilitation of youths in a juvenile detention facility. In addition, we believe implementation of the proposed recommendations will lead to better outcomes for youth confined to this facility.

Approved by the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission on:

Ray Blockie, JJC Chairperson

Date

Dana Bunnett, James Ranch Inspection Chair

Date

