

County of Santa Clara

Probation Department

Juvenile Division
840 Guadalupe Parkway
San Jose, California 95110

Administrative Offices
840 Guadalupe Parkway
San Jose, California 95110



Sheila E. Mitchell
Chief Probation Officer

October 10, 2013

Penny Blake, Chairperson
Juvenile Justice Commission
840 Guadalupe Pkwy
San Jose, CA 95110

RE: Response to the Juvenile Justice Commission Report on William F. James Ranch

Dear Chairperson Blake:

The following is a response to the Juvenile Justice Commission Inspection Report and Recommendations prepared July 2013 on the Santa Clara County William F. James Ranch.

The Department is truly appreciative of the time and dedication of the Commission in always offering suggestions to improve conditions/outcomes for our youth.

Recommendation One: That Ranch administration immediately addresses the potential health and safety electrical issue in the Computer Classroom.

Response: The Probation Department has submitted a work order to have a dedicated circuit for the window Air Conditioning (A/C) Unit. This will stop the breaker from tripping when the A/C is running. It will also eliminate the need to use an extension cord. The expected completion is the end of September 2013.

Recommendation Two: The signage identifying the Ranch be changed to remove the reference to "Boys" as it now houses girls, as well. This recommendation was also included in the prior year inspection report.

Response: This recommendation has been adopted and completed. The signage has been updated. It now reads William F. James Ranch.

Recommendation Three: Regularly service, clean, and monitor the aging refrigeration units in the kitchen.

Response: This recommendation has been adopted. All reach-in and walk-in refrigerators have been serviced and are now on a quarterly schedule for periodic maintenance.

Recommendation Four: Continue to retrain food service staff on proper food temperatures and to report when a variance is noted.

Response: This recommendation has been adopted and completed. Retraining has been accomplished and is monitored by Supervisor on a regular basis.

Recommendation Five: Clean the light fixtures in the kitchen and cafeteria area regularly.

Response: This recommendation has been adopted and completed. Light fixtures have been cleaned and are now on a cleaning schedule.

Recommendation Six: Increase and expand the offerings of snacks to younger boys and girls throughout the day.

Response: This recommendation has been adopted. The younger boys and girls now receive an additional snack between breakfast and lunch. Older boys will be receiving an additional snack between lunch and dinner. All youth receive a snack after dinner as well.

Recommendation Seven: That two additional TIPS Master Trainers be trained to help keep this very effective program running smoothly, with all personnel fully-trained in the latest methods and best practices.

Response: There are currently a total of five TPS master trainers for the Probation Department. There is three line staff (two at Juvenile Hall and one at the Ranch) one SPC and one Probation Manager. We will be sending staff to the next "train the trainer" for TPS when one becomes available. There is no date available at this time.

Recommendation Eight: The Enterprise Program should continue to work to identify resources to institute a Culinary training program and an Auto Shop program, which, at some point, might generate sufficient revenue to fund the programs, and could lead to the youth leaving the Ranch with skills that will make them highly employable.

Response: The Probation Department has reported back to the JJC last year that the establishment of a culinary program at the James Ranch came with a number of challenges. The primary challenges are finding a space to operate such a program and then staff who can dedicate time to provide the instruction. The existing facility kitchen is configured for the purpose of preparing meals for the population and not for instruction. The second hurdle of staffing a culinary program outside of our current resources will not been fully explored until the primary challenge can be addressed.

The automotive program has been placed on hold until the department and/or the County Office of Education can find a steady stream of resources to employ an ROP instructor. The department will continue to keep an open eye for opportunities to fund both a culinary and or automotive program as the fiscal picture of the county improves or outside resources become available.

Recommendation Nine: Ranch Management should conduct a thorough evaluation of the increase in fights, assaults and the use of restraints on the youth at the Ranch in order to better understand if there are strategies that can be implemented to decrease their such occurrences.

Response: The Probation Department evaluates the ranch program on-going bases. The department has hired a Director of Research who is working closely with the ranch management to establish meaningful measures to assess program fidelity. Data captured since the inception of the enhanced program reflect a steady increase in the seriousness of the clients served. However, the number of incidents per client has been reduced significantly. Moreover, the ranch management is also aware that the past year has shown an increase in incidents from the previous year. As such, a number of strategies have already been implemented. Ranch management is working on proactively coaching staff prior to incidents as well as debriefing with staff about lessons learned. The utilization of department instructors from our defensive tactics training for peer to peer coaching and safety has been implemented and well received by the line staff. Finally, since the above items were employed in April of this year we have seen almost one-third less altercations on the campus from the previous 6 months.

Recommendation Ten: Evaluate and, if needed, take steps to ensure youth understand how to file grievances and appeals and ensure that they feel they can do so without fear of retribution and or consequences.

Response: This recommendation is being implemented. The guidebook that is given out to the youth has been updated. The orientation process that the youth receive both prior to coming to the ranch and the day the youth arrives is being updated.

The updates in the guidebook reflect the three types of grievances (rights, discipline, and conduct of staff). The update of when the youth arrives at the Ranch will be showing the youth where the grievances are kept and where to turn them in.

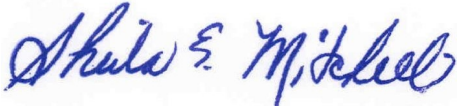
Recommendation Eleven: The Probation Department should put a high level of importance on the educational needs of youth at the Ranch and County Office of Education staff should be included in all MDT meetings.

Response: This recommendation has been adopted and completed. The school counselor will be present at all MDT meetings. When the school counselor cannot attend he will provide educational information to the MDT members in advance of the meeting.

Response to the JJC Inspection Report
William F. James Ranch
Ms. Penny Blake, Chairperson
October 10, 2013
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I'd like to thank the Commission for its sound work on this report and its recommendations. Moreover, the department recognizes the mutual goals shared in the effort to provide healthy conditions and best practices for our youth.

Sincerely,



Sheila E. Mitchell
Chief Probation Officer

c: Jeffrey V. Smith, County Executive
Honorable Patrick Tondreau, Presiding Judge
Nancy Clark, County Counsel
Robert A. DeJesus, Deputy Chief Probation Officer