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WILLIAM F. JAMES RANCH
INSPECTION REPORT
November 2022



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) conducted its 2022 annual inspection of the William F. James Ranch (“Ranch” or “JR”) secure detention facility for youth offenders, operated by the Juvenile Probation Department, County of Santa Clara (JPD) between May and September 2022. This report covers the period from JJC’s last inspection (September 2021) until June 30, 2022.

As in the 2021 annual inspection, the Commission found the Ranch to be a well-supervised and thoughtfully managed facility in compliance with California Title 15 standards for juvenile detention facilities and additionally found the Ranch to be in faithful compliance with the County’s progressive juvenile justice goals and philosophy. Management, staff and community-based service providers all evidenced a strong commitment to improving the lives and post-custody prospects of the Ranch youth.

The inspection team found the Ranch to be well run with exceptional vocational and post-secondary programs for youth. There are collegial relationships among the partners and a relaxed, positive atmosphere with youth appearing cheerful and to benefit from the many opportunities afforded them.

Does the Ranch Program work? Are youth who participate in the Ranch program more likely to lead productive lives and less likely to reoffend after completing the Ranch Program? All the elements seem to be in place to position youth to successfully reintegrate into the community. However, there are challenges attached to tracking outcomes over time and, as well-prepared as youth may be, obstacles such as housing insecurity, dysfunctional family dynamics and the pressure from gangs may sabotage the gains youth have made while at the Ranch. Tracking and further analysis needs to be undertaken to fully understand how effective the Ranch Program is and the extraneous obstacles that may impede the success of youth in the community.

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COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMENDATIONS

1. The Probation Department and partner agencies for being forward thinking as demonstrated by the implementation of best practices and quality improvement measures to build a supportive and impactful program
2. Probation staff and partner agencies, Starlight, Custody Health, County Office of Education, FLY, and LiUNA for their strong working collaboration.
3. Staff and partners for their energy and their enthusiasm in supporting youth.
4. The Probation Department and FLY for empowering youth and developing youth leadership through the Youth Advisory Council
5. County Office of Education for greatly improving the education program, especially through the expansion of vocational training and developing a mutually beneficial partnership with LiUNA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Longitudinal research to assess and report on the effectiveness of the Ranch Program and to understand the impediments that may prevent some youth from successfully reintegrating into the community.
2. Assess the LiUNA Program to look at employment trends and the interests of youth with a view to introducing new training opportunities, such as coding.

I. INTRODUCTION AND AUTHORITY

The Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) is a state-mandated, court-appointed authority. The JJC's purpose 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 Ranch (Ranch) between May and September 2022, pursuant to California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 229.

The Ranch is a residential rehabilitative program operated by the Santa Clara County Probation Department's Juvenile Division (JPD) for youth ages 13 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 required to comply with Title 15 minimum standards for local juvenile detention facilities (California Office of Administrative Law).

The Vision and Mission statement articulated by JPD for James Ranch serves as an additional standard for the JJC's inspection report.

WILLIAM F. JAMES RANCH

VISION

The Santa Clara County Juvenile Rehabilitation Program envisions a productive life for our youth working with the family, partner agencies and the community to provide our youth the skills and ability to fulfill their needs in a socially responsible manner.

MISSION

The Mission of the Santa Clara County Juvenile Rehabilitation Program is to positively impact our communities by providing appropriate services to the youth and families we serve. The program will be a holistic model relying on interagency and community partnerships for development, delivery, and enhancement of services for our youth and families. We are committed to delivering a balanced and collaborative rehabilitative program with a focus on the development of pro social skills through systemic intervention in thought, values, actions, and positive relationship building.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Organizational Commitment / Diversity / Leadership / Planning and Flexibility / Training / Value of System Partners

The inspection team of eight commissioners conducted onsite inspections and meetings via Zoom with Probation Department staff, the Blue Ridge School's administrators, Custody Health's onsite nurse manager and physician, contracted service providers, county contract monitors, and youth. All visits to the Ranch were scheduled.

Commissioners reviewed internal documents related to Ranch operations and programs, inspection reports by other agencies, and previous JJC Ranch inspection reports. Commissioners examined Ranch administration, discipline, educational and vocational programs, work programs, behavior management and personal development programs, medical and behavioral health services, facilities, services supporting transition back into the community after release, facilities, and security.

This current report focuses on changes since JJC's previous report and on the conclusions of the current inspection. Readers seeking more comprehensive information are referred to JJC's 2021 James Ranch Inspection Report: <https://www.scscourt.org/documents/jjc/2021/JJC%20Ranch%20Report%202021.pdf>

II. ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURES

A new position of Supervisor of Quality Systems has been added to oversee policies and procedures and continuous quality improvement.

A survey of youth found that many did not remember their orientation into the Ranch program, which has led to improvements being made to the orientation process. A new video has been created to assist new JR admittees with their transition into the program. The video covers topics that include their rights, the level system, opportunities in education and vocational training, and their right to vote. A new supervisor position has been created to help orient new youth, and to supervise entry programs into the JR program including an initial multi-disciplinary (MDT) team meeting which occurs within a youth's first 30 days and the creation of an Individual Service Plan (ISP).

An existing supervisor position is now able to focus on programing while another supervisor is assigned to focus on facilitating the completion of the program and exit MDTs.

JPD has created Committees within James Ranch to redesign programing that will result in implementation of the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute (UCCI) recommendations, which is being piloted in two pods. Other committees, which include line staff and managers, have been formed to look at use of force and Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

An emphasis has been placed on increasing communication with staff. Notes from all management meetings are now circulated to staff. Town Hall meetings are also held with the full team of staff.

COVID restrictions have been eased. Mandatory daily testing for staff and other personnel visiting the facility has been reduced from daily to three times a week, but more frequent voluntary testing is also available. COVID coping strategy meetings are still held weekly. There have been no further early releases, due to the pandemic. All youth are now required to complete their full JR commitment. In-person family visiting has returned to a full two-hour visit on Saturdays or Sundays, but the visits continue to be held in the outdoor visiting space as an added precaution. Indoor space, following Department of Public Health COVID precautions is available in the event of inclement weather. Since virtual visits proved to be so successful, their use has been expanded for families who cannot travel easily to JR for in-person visiting.

PREA classes are taught by the YWCA seven times a year at the facility. This is in addition to the PREA orientation the youth receive when entering custody. The use of

the red phone and other means to report concerns regard inappropriate sexual activity is explained and encouraged. This training is rotated between the Pods during the year.

DUE PROCESS FORMS AND GRIEVANCES.

A review of due process forms found that they were all related to youth being dissatisfied with their failure to achieve an anticipated level in the program. Some of the grievances were resolved in favor of the youth. There were no significant grievances, and no grievance was made because of any incident.

III. FACILITIES

DORMITORY BUILDING

As a result of the COVID pandemic, a room in the dormitory building was set up to allow youth to have virtual visits with family or to participate in court hearings. After COVID restrictions eased, the room has continued to be used for virtual attendance in some court hearings, when youth have not needed to be present in person. This has saved the need to transport youth from the Ranch to San Jose.

OUTDOOR VISITING AREA

The outdoor visiting area created in response to the pandemic has become a permanent feature. Youth have advocated for some improvements to be made. At the time of inspection, a concrete slab had been laid to accommodate the play structure that is being moved from a County hospital site. There are plans for the youth to create a mural for the visiting area.

WELLNESS CENTER

In-line with the County's wellness initiative, a building has been converted into a wellness center for the youth. It is managed by a fulltime wellness coordinator. The Center is comfortable and provides an environment in which youth can engage in various activities such as art and reading. There are currently plans to obtain wellness supplies to provide to youth when they leave the Ranch.



Interior views of the Wellness Center

WORKOUT ROOM



View of the Workout Room

At the time of inspection, the Workout Room was being redecorated to accommodate new equipment, which was expected to be delivered in the new fiscal cycle.

RESOURCE CENTER

A new resource center has been created in an existing building. It has been modelled after the Hub, a center available to youth in the dependency system. The center at James Ranch offers a broad range of resources, which are discussed more fully below in the Programs section.

SOCCER FIELD

Plans have been drawn up for a soccer field, but completion is subject to allocation of funding.

SALLYPORT

The building of a new sallyport is also pending budgetary approval.

IV. PROGRAMS

THE ENTERPRISE PROGRAM



The Enterprise Program is a woodworking program that builds all the picnic tables for the County Parks. The tables are sold to the County's Parks and Recreation department. The proceeds are held in trust and a stipend is given to the youth, when they graduate from the Aftercare Program

YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (YAC)

A group of youths serve as a Youth Advisory Council (YAC). This provides them with the opportunity to advocate for changes. Staff from Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY) help facilitate the meetings and to direct youth to the right person to address concerns that they may identify. For example, youth wanted to propose changes to the menu, so a meeting was set up with the Director of Food Services. The youth indicated that they would like to have yogurt and granola added to the breakfast menu. The The Director of Food Services indicated that he had not thought they would want yogurt and granola and agreed to the change.

WELLNESS PROGRAM

The wellness coordinator is on-call to the school, so if a student, appears to need extra help or support, the coordinator can be called in to work with the student in the classroom, in contrast to the previous practice of removing a student from the classroom. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the coordinator meets individually with youth.

RESOURCE CENTER

The Resource Center is under the direction of a newly created Events Coordinator. The Center offers a range of services to youth and their families. The services are available both to youth in custody and those, who have released to the community from James Ranch. Services include assistance to help families apply for Cal Fresh, housing assistance, medical assistance and even providing clothing appropriate for job interviews.

V. HEALTH SERVICES

MEDICAL SERVICES

The Medical Clinic continues to run two nursing shifts, 6:45am-3:15pm and 2:45pm-11:15pm. A new telenursing system provides the opportunity for continuous, and more specifically, after-hours access to medical staff at the Ranch to the medical staff at Juvenile Hall for consultation regarding patient care needs. The Clinic is currently located in an isolated building away from the main dormitory, but there are plans to convert a staff break room in the Dormitory into a satellite clinic, this will provide easier access to youth, especially in the evening and in the event of an emergency.

The Medical Clinic has implemented a new initiative that focuses on the transition of youth back into the community. Prior to a youth leaving the Ranch, clinic staff will work with probation staff to assist youth and families in identifying the youth's insurance status. The goal is to identify community medical resources, specifically a primary care provider (medical home) and facilitate a continuum of care from detention to community transition. The primary goal is to work with youth and families during scheduled Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings to educate on health needs and to identify a medical home. The long-term goal is to create a workflow with sufficient staffing support to set up a remote visit with the youth's provider while they are still at the Ranch. The family and youth are currently advised to schedule an appointment with the youth's primary care provider to occur within 30 days of their return to the community. They hope to hire a medical social worker to help facilitate a more comprehensive transition process.

The medical team is now participating in the MDT meetings to better educate youth and families on health needs as well as facilitate transitions of care. They believe now that the Department of Behavioral Health Services has taken over the provision of behavioral health services from Starlight will facilitate the continuity of services as youth transition from Juvenile Hall, especially if they are able to remain with the same clinician. It will also improve coordination between medical and behavioral health services. Currently the departments are using two different systems and medical staff have "read only" access to behavioral health records. They hope that it will be possible eventually to share electronic health records.

Another new initiative, which will be launching soon, is a partnership with Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY) to work with the YAC to train youth leaders as peer health educators. They will address four key areas:

- 1) Contraception and sexual health
- 2) Substance Use
- 3) General health with a focus on weight and body positivity
- 4) COVID

As far as they are aware this has been untried in a youth program, but the use of health educators has been successful in adult programs. Measures have shown that participants have retained information and the peer educators have been able to use their experience to help find employment after release from custody.

The medical team has expressed high praise for the collaboration that exists between their department and probation staff, especially with management. It has been very helpful, especially in coordinating a response to COVID. They also appreciate the relationship they have established with the County's Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD).

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

During the period covered by this report, Behavioral Health Services were provided by Starlight Services through a contract with the Department of Behavioral Health Services. Starlight decided not to renew the contract after it expired on June 30, 2022.

The Department of Behavioral Health Services has stepped in with an interim plan to take over the services previously provided by Starlight. This arrangement is temporary and will be replaced by a permanent plan, which will result in the creation of three teams of clinicians who will serve Juvenile Hall and James Ranch. One team will provide day-to-day services at Juvenile Hall including the screening of new admits, daily check-ins and crisis response. A second team will serve a similar function at James Ranch, while a third team will carry a caseload of youth both at Juvenile Hall and at James Ranch. This will eventually result in youth, assigned to a clinician at Juvenile Hall, being able to continue to see the clinician, if they are transferred to James Ranch, thus avoiding transitioning from one clinician to another. A further advantage of this change is that medical and behavioral health staff will have easier access to electronic health records, which had been an impediment for Starlight.

The clinicians will participate in MDT meetings and play a role in referring youth to services in community, as they transition back into the community, including a "warm" hand-off to the new provider. The clinicians will be trained in evidence-based practices including multi-disciplinary family therapy (MDFT), Seeking Safety, and the Seven Challenges. Outcomes will be tracked using interview responses, a youth satisfaction survey and Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) data. Kidsnet, a computer-based program, will also track outcomes.

This reorganization includes the reallocation of the funding from the contract with Starlight with the addition of some funds from the Probation Department to create new positions for a Program Manager and additional clinical staff. The plan was presented to and approved by the Board of Supervisors on August 16, 2022.

VI. EDUCATION

Youth at James Ranch attend Blue Ridge School, which is run on the James Ranch campus by the County Office of Education. Youth are now being provided with a set of clothes specifically to wear to school to emphasize that education is a separate component of the Ranch program, so that the experience of attending school is more in line with that of attending school from home, when they are living in the community.

Blue Ridge School has a strong partnership with the Probation Department. They meet weekly with one of the outcomes being the development of interdisciplinary units, based on cultural and social emotional themes.

Many youths trail their peers academically. Blue Ridge now offers a “0” period before the start of the school day, which provides a recovery period for those who are behind in their schoolwork.

Students are now tested every 45 days. This helps teachers better track academic achievement and enables them to identify areas where a student may be struggling. They can then adjust instruction for students who need extra support

During the school year that ended in June 2022, 14 students took on-line courses and 15 students graduated from Blue Ridge.

THE LIUNA PROGRAM

Blue Ridge School has developed a partnership with the Laborers’ International Union of North America (LiUNA). The program enables youth to try various vocational skills and to earn certificates. Besides developing new skills, youth learn about what jobs pay, what the benefits are and what requirements there are for the job. The partnership with unions provides the youth with an opportunity to engage in a pre-apprenticeship program, where youth gain experience and earn certificates. This gives them an advantage when they apply for a union job, since most other applicants typically have no experience and lack any certification. LiUNA is expanding into two more buildings.

The youth engage in project-based learning to develop new skills. This work is overseen by skilled instructors. Projects have included the laying of walkways and concrete slabs and painting some of the areas in the old kitchen. A new project that they will be working on is the remodeling of the old Superintendent’s House, which is adjacent to the campus, so it can be used as a County meeting and training facility.

NEW HORTICULTURE PROGRAM

The youth are installing a new irrigation system for the orchard and greenhouse. A vision of the horticulture program is to create a “farm to table,” program that will supply the kitchen with fresh fruits and vegetables.

WELDING WORKSHOP

The Welding Workshop has been supplied with new, state-of-the art welding equipment and safety equipment.

AUTO SHOP

The Auto shop is currently being used for storage, but there are plans to bring it back into use. A new auto shop teacher is being sought.

CULINARY PROGRAM

At the time of inspection, the Culinary Program was being temporarily housed in another building, while the old kitchen was being remodeled to accommodate the program. In addition to providing hands-on experience, the Culinary Program provides academic training in related skills, such as food safety. Commissioners can attest firsthand to excellence of the program, since, on one of their visits, they were treated to an outstanding array of food items prepared by the youth.

MULTI-CRAFT CURRICULUM

The Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) is a comprehensive pre-apprenticeship training program. The total time of the training is 12 weeks with 10 weeks of safety and certificate acquisition and 2 weeks of hands-on skills training. Courses that were added include OSHA-10, First Aid/CPR, CDC/OSHA Hazardous Waste, and Garden Checking. The Multi-Craft Curriculum has a full time construction and trades instructor. This program is responsible for the new concrete walkways and slabs and teaches youth skills in how to pour and mold concrete.

VII. AFTERCARE AND RE-ENTRY

Planning for a youth’s return to the community commences immediately upon a youth’s arrival at the Ranch. Two Probation Counselors are assigned to the Aftercare Program. They report to the Ranch Treatment Supervisors. Eight and a half Probation Officers work in the Re-entry Program. Staff from each program work with youth from the outset and participate in all MDT meetings.

When a youth successfully completes the residential portion of the ranch, they are promoted to the Aftercare program. The youth receives ten weeks of community-based aftercare services. Aftercare is considered an extension of the Ranch program. MDT meetings are held 60 days and 30 days prior to release from the in-custody program. The MDTs include the youth, family members and other key players. One aim is to identify and schedule services that the youth will need while in the community. Services may include assistance with educational and employment needs, behavioral health services, and others offered by the Juvenile Probation Department, such as Pro-CSR¹, PRO-Rise² and PIVOT³. The Office of Re-entry Services has a coaching program for parents, but only a very small number of parents of youth leaving the Ranch qualify.

A youth's Aftercare Counselor will usually make phone contact with the youth on the date of release and will meet in-person with the youth within forty-eight hours. The Counselor typically contacts the youth several times a week by phone and in person. After successfully completing the ten-week aftercare cycle, the youth continue under the supervision of a Re-entry Probation Officer, who has weekly contact with the youth in-person, virtually or by phone. Probation Officers engage in "thoughtful conversations," to help identify what the youths need to support their success in the community. Services cease at a date six months from release from custody.

VIII. EQUITY AND JUSTICE

The JJC strives to view every aspect of its work through an equity and justice lens, and this perspective is reflected throughout this year's report.

While there certainly is more work to be done within the juvenile justice system to address disproportionality, the JJC continues to emphasize the need to address fundamental inequities upstream of the justice system.

The JPD cites "School Inadequacy" as one of the top criminogenic needs of youth served, ranking in frequency behind only "Peer Relationships" and "Family History" as factors in system engagement. This strengthens the JJC's conviction that healthy and supportive school environments, as well as strong educational programs at the Ranch,

¹ Pro-CSR provides 6 hours of services per month for 6+ months: case management and linkage to community-based services for employment, education, and vocational support, as well as support with Juvenile Justice System navigation and advocacy.

² Pro-RISE provides 8 hours of services per month for 6+ months: case management for Juvenile Justice involved youth relating to mental health and medication support services, community mobilization and street outreach activities. PIVOT provides support services geared towards High Risk - Violent Offenders. 28-120 hours per month of mentoring and 6-20 hours of pro-social activities, also linkage to transitional housing, education and employment resources.

³ PIVOT provides support services geared towards High Risk - Violent Offenders. 28-120 hours per month of mentoring and 6-20 hours of pro-social activities, also linkage to transitional housing, education and employment resources.

are essential to disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline and returning in-custody youth to brighter futures.

IX. MEASURING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Many youths come from chaotic home environments. The Ranch provides stability, safety, and predictability. Some youth become anxious as they approach leaving the Ranch, which may lead them to engage in self-sabotaging behavior. The Ranch team tries to identify youth who may engage in such behavior and may check-in with them more frequently as they transition back into the Community.

Some youths do well in the Ranch Program but lack resources and support after they leave. Staff try to identify youth who are struggling in the program to provide them with extra support. Others appear to sail through the program without any stumbles along the way. This can be a red flag, which may indicate that they are simply doing what they need to do to complete the program without really addressing underlying issues that may lead to rearrest and a return to custody. Some leave only to come back a second or third time but return with more willingness to make the most of the program.

James Ranch has a robust program supported by engaged, supportive staff. Youths are able to advance in their education and to learn marketable skills. Underlying behavioral health needs are addressed by a professional team. The program is monitored by a rigorous quality improvement process. The elements are in place for this to be a successful program, but there are significant challenges to measuring how effective the Ranch program really is.

First, there is the impact of COVID. To lessen the risk of COVID spreading among the population, many youths were released early, and home visits were curtailed for those who remained. This has meant that those youth, who were released early, did not get the full benefit of the program and any outcome measures for those youth would not reflect the benefit of the full program.

Another challenge is defining what to measure. The purpose of the program is to prepare youth to return to the community with skills that will enable them to lead productive lives and to avoid reoffending. An obvious measure is to track recidivism rates, but this presents problems. For example, the Probation Department's Research and Development team report that they only have access to data for Santa Clara County, so if a youth is arrested in another jurisdiction, they are unable to capture that information. Maintaining contact with youth, beyond their time in Re-entry, also presents challenges, since youth may switch phone numbers or move frequently. Probation staff report that they are most likely to hear from the youth who are doing well and to have contact with those who reoffend and are brought into custody.

Other data can be helpful in tracking the success of the program, measures such as: stable housing, school enrollment and employment.

Ostensibly youth leave the Ranch well-prepared for the challenges of returning to the community. They also have the benefit of Aftercare and Re-entry Services to help them with the transition. However, there are multiple factors that may negatively affect youth as they return to their home community. These include pressure from gangs, substance use, unstable housing and educational systems that can be unwelcoming.

While it is possible to track youth while they are still under supervision in the aftercare and re-entry programs, there is little data to show the trajectory of youth once they have been released from supervision.

Even with the challenges listed above, to fully test the effectiveness of the Ranch program, youth need to be tracked beyond the six-month aftercare/re-entry period and data need to be collected to identify the impediments to successful reintegration into the community, so that they can be better anticipated.

X. CONCLUSION

There have been some significant and positive changes at James Ranch during the past year. Examples include the hiring of a Supervisor of Quality Systems, new orientation protocols, the opening of a resource center, the opening of a wellness center and the hiring of a wellness coordinator, and the expansion of vocational training in partnership with LiUNA.

The program appears to be outstanding in all respects. It provides youth with skills and resources for their successful return into the community. To really understand just how well youth are benefiting from the Ranch program, however, data needs to be tracked beyond the aftercare and re-entry period to measure long-term success and to identify challenges that may hinder continued success in order that they might be better anticipated for others in the future.

Approved by the Juvenile Justice Commission, Santa Clara County, on November 1, 2022.



Victoria BurtonBurke, Chair



Stephen Betts, Ranch Inspection Chair