

Juvenile Justice Commission
County of Santa Clara
191 N. First Street
San Jose, California 95113
(408) 278-5993
Email: sccjjc@gmail.com



William F. James Ranch

Inspection Report

November 2021

CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....3

Recommendations4

Commendations5

Introduction And Authority..... 6

Overview – Ranch Program..... 7

Youth Population & Completion Rates 7

Administration 9

Incidents, Grievances, Use Of Force..... 11

Programs And Activities 12

Education 15

Health Services 18

Facility..... 21

Safety, Security, Environmental Health 22

Equity And Social Justice 25

Summary Finding 25

Appendix 1 - Summary Of Medical Services..... 27

Appendix 2 - Ranch Facilities 27

Appendix 3 - Youth Survey 30

Appendix 4 - Youth Survey Tabulated Results..... 33

Appendix 5 - Policies & Procedures Manual Review 34

Appendix 6 - Documents Reviewed By The Inspection Team 36

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) conducted its 2021 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).

The Commission found the James Ranch to be a well-supervised and thoughtfully managed facility in substantial compliance with California’s Title 15 standards for juvenile detention facilities and found the Ranch to be faithful to Santa Clara County’s progressive juvenile justice goals and philosophy. Management, staff, and contracted community-based service providers evidenced strong commitment to improving the lives and prospects of Ranch youth.

The pandemic period has been profoundly challenging. JPD, medical services, and Starlight mental health staff have risen to the circumstances, providing more individualized services to a reduced Ranch population. Covid infection rates have been held to a minimum through strict medical protocols. Probation staff have been exemplary in stepping in for myriad outside providers who could no longer appear in person. Nonetheless, youth have suffered privations in many regards, most especially in education, with greatly reduced teacher-student interaction and disproportionate reliance on the online Edgenuity curriculum instead. The toll fell most heavily on those students already struggling with deficits. With new leadership in the Court schools and the return of teachers in person, the Commission expects to see more robust educational and vocational programs at James Ranch. Tenure in the Ranch program presents a unique opportunity to remediate educational deficits and is essential to successful transitions back into home schools and to fulfilling the goal of more stable and productive lives for youth after release from probation.

The Ranch population was reduced by more than half in response to the pandemic, to mitigate the risk of Covid-19 infection spread. Reduced youth incarceration is a goal shared by all system partners, and the pandemic experience provides an opportunity to rethink youth incarceration. Nonetheless, the Ranch program is a structured rehabilitation program, and early release may risk compromising the program’s benefits.

An additional challenge, exacerbated by the pandemic but predating it by decades, is the insufficient availability of alternative placements in Santa Clara County for children with needs that require highly specialized expertise. Without suitable alternatives, some youth may be placed at the Ranch even when they are not in a position to benefit fully from the six-to-eight-month program. This does them a disservice and also diverts staff resources, compromising the effectiveness of the Ranch program for all.

The Commission notes that disproportionality in the Ranch population based on racial, ethnic, and other attributes persists unabated, despite system partners’ determined efforts. This persistence reinforces the JJC’s call to address equity and social justice issues upstream of the justice system, to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline.

The Commission’s recommendations reiterate past calls for more robust outcomes data. Longitudinal data are needed to strengthen the case that progressive juvenile justice practices such as those that guide the Ranch provide commensurate long-term individual and societal benefits. The ultimate yardstick is reduced recidivism and differential gains in education and employment.

Recommendations follow, with links to the supporting sections of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The JJC recommends that:

The County Office of Education ensure that children in the County’s custody schools enjoy parity with children enrolled in their home districts, with respect to quality and modes of instruction, teacher interaction, curriculum, IEP support, equipment, and all other resources. [Education](#); [Ed Justice](#)

The Board of Supervisors:

- Address the need to develop sufficient and appropriate placements in Santa Clara County for youth who require a higher level of behavioral health and developmental services than the Ranch program provides. This need has long been recognized and reflected in past JJC James Ranch and Continuum of Care reports, the statements of JPD and DFCS agency leaders, staff consensus, and most recently the UCCI evaluation. [Placement](#)
- Allocate full funding for the perimeter video surveillance system that has been recommended in JJC reports and by others for many years. [Security](#)

The County Executive’s Office:

- Ensure the prompt installation of the perimeter video surveillance system. [Security](#)
- Ensure implementation of a new jail management system to enable meaningful recidivism and outcomes analysis. [Data](#)

The Facilities and Fleet Department:

- Resolve all remaining equipment issues to make the new Ranch kitchen operational. [Kitchen](#)
- Verify completion of all corrective action items on the Fire Marshal’s inspection report. [Fire](#)

The Juvenile Probation Department:

- Continue its efforts to measure and improve longer-term outcomes through meaningful recidivism data, as well as data on gains in education, employment, and career trajectory after youth leave custody. [Data](#); [Data BH](#)
- Consult with Custody Health and the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to more fully understand and creatively address youth’s persistent perception that they must “go to bed hungry,” despite the food service’s diligent adherence to nutritional standards. [Food](#)

- Provide bi-monthly, for JJC review, information on every use of force incident at the Ranch. [Force; Force IRs](#)
- Expand data collection and analysis of incident reports (IRs) to include race/ethnicity, location, and time of the incident, and other pertinent factors, to reveal patterns to further inform and improve a) Ranch practices and b) staff and teacher coaching and development, with the goal of reducing incidents. [Data](#)
- As an interim measure until alternative high-acuity placements are available (see recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, above), consider the merits and demerits of establishing a specialized Ranch pod to serve youth with challenges that compromise their ability to benefit fully from the Ranch program. [UCCI; Placement](#)

COMMENDATIONS

The JJC commends:

JPD staff and their behavioral health partners, **Starlight staff**, for their exemplary service during the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic period, when only they (and medical services staff) were onsite at the Ranch. Without in-person family visits, teachers, and CBOs, and despite colleagues' absences because of illness or emergency service with the County, they displayed great dedication and caring, providing stability, continuity of services, and extra programming to Ranch youth.

JPD, FLY, and the members of the inaugural Youth Advisory Council for launching the YAC to channel and develop youth voice effectively.

JPD, Custody Health, and the County Public Health Officer for their proactive collaboration on health measures that continues to minimize the incidence of Covid-19 in the Ranch population.

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) in August and September 2021, pursuant to California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 229. The Ranch is a residential rehabilitative program operated by the Santa Clara County Probation Department for youth ages 12 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.

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 inter-agency 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 systematic intervention in thought, values, actions, and positive relationship building.

The inspection team of eleven commissioners conducted onsite inspections and discussions with Probation Department staff, the Blue Ridge School's administrators, Health and Hospitals onsite nurse manager, 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. Commissioners also conducted a Ranch youth survey.

This report summarizes the information gathered and sets forth recommendations based on that information. Unless otherwise noted, statistical data cited are for calendar year 2020.

For emphasis, **notable information is identified by blue font.**

Prior year JJC reports, as well as inspection reports covering other youth facilities, are available at: <http://www.sccsuperiorcourt.org/juvenile/jjc.htm>.

OVERVIEW – RANCH PROGRAM

The Enhanced Ranch Program (ERP) was introduced in 2006 as an evidence-based program (following “the Missouri Model”) that represented a fundamental shift to rehabilitative and restorative justice principles. Activity is organized by Pod, small residential units with continuity in assigned staff. Staff are trained counselors, focusing on group process and cognitive behavioral change. A wide array of services is provided by the Probation Department and its system partners in a multi-disciplinary, team-based approach.

The Ranch program is designed to consist of a commitment period including six to eight months in residence at the Ranch, followed by an intensive 10-week period of Aftercare in the community, and continued case management supervision by the ReEntry Services Unit (RSU) for approximately six months.

The Ranch Program is undergoing review and revision. JPD has engaged the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute (UCCI), to assist with a process to design and implement an evidence-based program model at the Ranch. The first phase of the process, completed in April 2021, consisted of an evaluation, utilizing UCCI’s *Evidence-Based Correctional Program Checklist*. Commissioners reviewed the evaluation report, which includes recommendations for greater program focus on criminogenic factors, ongoing use in individualized programming of the JAIS (Juvenile Assessment Intervention System), enhanced staff training and communication, and better integration of contracted providers, among other recommendations. These recommendations are consistent with those of previous JJC Ranch inspection reports. The UCCI report noted a large proportion of youth with needs requiring highly specialized expertise.

The UCCI technical assistance engagement includes structured training and implementation components, as well as incorporation of continuous quality improvement. Workgroups have formed, and the project is underway, with the goal of purposefully designing a treatment program to reduce recidivism.¹

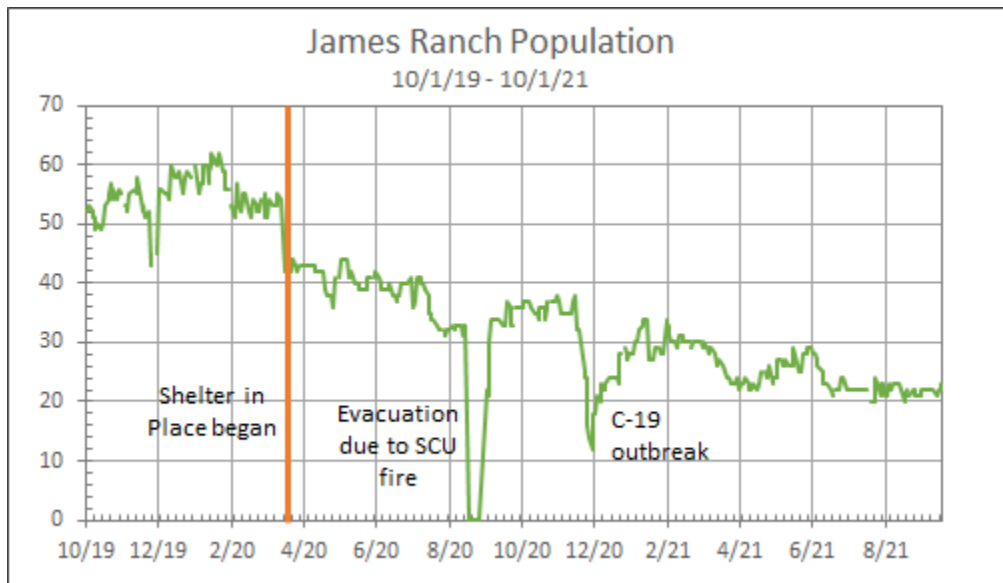
YOUTH POPULATION & COMPLETION RATES

The population of youth in secure detention at the James Ranch at inspection in August 2021 was 23, of whom all were male, four Black, three Caucasian, and 16 Hispanic. Three were under the age of 16, and the youngest Ranch resident was 14 years old. Felony offenses against people (10) accounted for 43% of Ranch commitments, compared to 20% of all juvenile arrests.²

The population of 23 compares with approximately 60 two years earlier, before the Covid-19 pandemic. The following graph shows the Ranch population from October 2019 to October 2021:

¹ For a summary of the project, see County of Santa Clara Probation Department: *Juvenile Justice Annual Report, 2020*, p. 27-29.

² County of Santa Clara Probation Department: *Juvenile Justice Annual Report, 2020*.

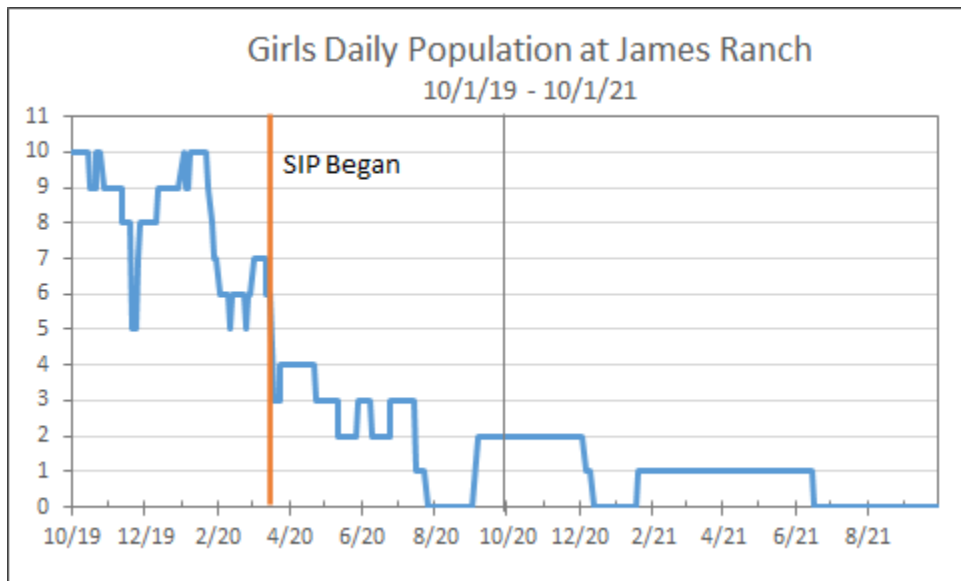


3

The pandemic resulted in diversion and early release, reducing the Ranch population. This change also meant an increase in the offense and criminogenic-needs acuity of those committed to the Ranch, evidenced by higher JAIS scores.

The lower census of girls during the same period is notable, shown below. Since June 21, 2021, no girl has been in custody at the Ranch, reflecting a broad-based effort of system partners to reduce the incarceration of girls, many of whom may be detained primarily for their own safety rather than out of community safety concerns.

³ Ron Hanson, SCC Juvenile Justice Commission, from data provided by JPD.



In 2020, 62 commitments to the Ranch program were ordered.⁵ During the period July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, 54 youth exited the in-custody phase of the Ranch program. Of these, 44 (81%) were successful exits.

Of the 31 minor youth who exited the Aftercare program, 24 (77%) represented successful completions.

ADMINISTRATION

Management and Staffing

The Santa Clara County Probation Department manages the James Ranch and its programs. 150 staff members (full-time, part-time, and relief) were employed at the Ranch in 2020, including four Facility Supervisors and two Treatment Supervisors. The JJC was unable to ascertain racial/ethnic and gender composition of the staff and whether it is representative of the general population and/or the Ranch population.

In addition to JPD, Valley Medical Center (County of Santa Clara Health System) provides custody health services management and staff. Starlight Community Services provides mental health and substance use services under contract with the County’s Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD). The County Office of Education (COE) provides education services.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, JPD staffing has remained stable. While a fewer youth were in custody at the Ranch, demands on Probation staff increased due to pandemic conditions, which precluded most CBOs (community-based organizations) from providing services for health safety reasons, and also halted outside visitation. Teachers did not return to the Ranch in-person on a full-time basis until

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ County of Santa Clara Probation Department: *Juvenile Justice Annual Report, 2020*, p.95.

April 5, 2021. In the year-long interim, Probation staff were called upon for educational support and continuity.

Starlight has provided continuous in-person behavioral health services since the inception of the pandemic.

Structure and Guidelines

Commissioners reviewed the Ranch Policies and Procedures Manual and consulted with staff regarding changes in the last year. A detailed annotation of the Manual was prepared and is included as Appendix 5.

All aspects of admission, residence, programming, progression, and release from the Ranch are described in simple and clear language in JPD’s excellent *Youth Guidebook*, distributed to every youth and family on a youth’s admission.⁶ The “Level System” that governs the youth’s progression through Orientation, Change, Growth, and Transition is detailed.⁷ The Commission notes that clarity of expectations not only eases the inevitably traumatic transition into Ranch custody but also likely contributes to the youth’s success benefiting from the program.

A personal orientation for each youth is conducted when the youth is assigned to a pod and introduced to staff and pod mates. Under current pandemic population levels, 4 to 7 youth are assigned to each of 4 pods.

Data Systems and Management Information

The Commissioners found a wealth of information in the many reports issued by JPD’s Research and Development (RaD) unit, which are listed in the Appendix “Documents Reviewed.” The attributes of the JPD youth population have been captured and analyzed in myriad and meaningful ways, providing valuable insights into the characteristics and criminogenic needs of youth in the juvenile justice system. They surely inform practices at the Ranch and, presumably, affect results positively. Harsh light also is cast on the **disproportional representation of youth of color at every level of system penetration, highlighting systemic societal issues of equity and social justice.**

Commissioners also observed a concerted effort by Ranch management to share and communicate data analysis with staff on the frontlines. Although in-person all-staff meetings were paused for a period during the pandemic, staff meetings, trainings, and the bi-annual town hall meetings continued via a virtual platform. **A return to in-person meetings and redoubled efforts to share and apply information for continuous improvement processes are expected and should include contracted and CBO staff as well.**

Outcomes data, especially longitudinal data that measure success in achieving the ultimate outcome – reduced recidivism by our youth – continue to be lacking. The Commission understands the complexity of such measurement, given the fluid composition and acuity of the in-custody population. It is in this context that evidence-based programs are relied upon for guidance and validation. **Nonetheless, short and long-term recidivism data that can be risk-adjusted and compared over time**

⁶ William F. James Ranch Youth Guidebook. n.d.

⁷ Ibid, beginning page 35.

are essential, as are data on gains in education and employment status after release. The continuing problems and delays in the County’s implementation of a new information system (the “Jail Management System”) represent a serious obstacle.

Virtual Court appearances

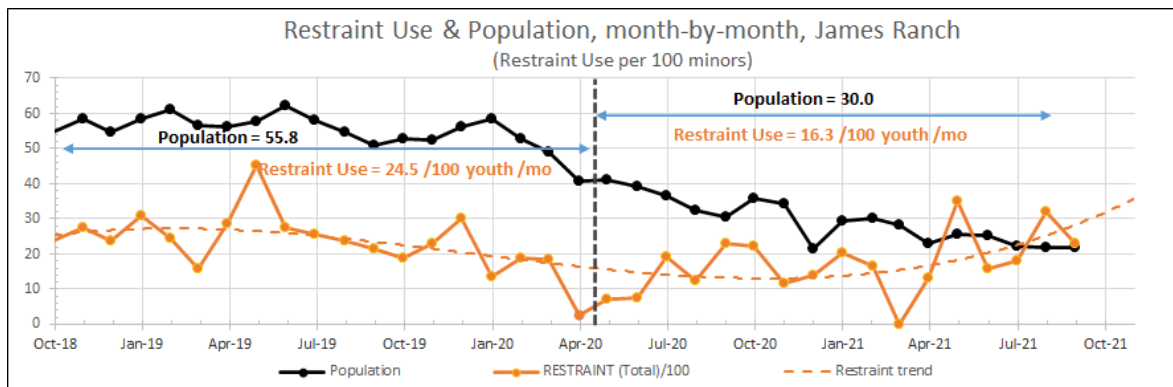
An innovation prompted by necessity during the Covid-19 pandemic has been virtual court appearances by youth. Ranch staff report benefits from the elimination of transporting youth to attend hearings in person, including a reduction in youth’s school-time loss, anxiety, and hunger, and substantial savings of staff time for more productive purposes. They note, however, that physical presence can be required for restitution hearings.

INCIDENTS, GRIEVANCES, USE OF FORCE

Use of Force

Staff at the Ranch use force only to separate combative youth, prevent harm, or prevent escape. All other discipline matters are dealt with by counseling the youth to redirect behavior.

The following chart shows the population and restraint use rate from October 2018 to September 2021.⁸ **To JPD’s credit, despite the increased acuity of youth as the population declined, and the heightened stress of the Covid period, the restraint use rate has remained relatively stable. Nonetheless, the JJC considers any use of force a serious matter with potentially harmful consequences for the youth, the Ranch program, and the Probation Department.**



Reporting of Incidents

Any medical need, injury, assault, or escape attempt at the Ranch generates an Incident Report (IR),

⁸The restraint use rate is the sum of the instances of Manual, Mechanical (i.e., handcuff), and Both use per month divided by the average monthly population, normalized to 100 youth. The restraint data is taken from Probation's monthly.Salient Feature Reports and the population data were taken from Probation's daily Statistics report.

entered into the JAS database, and assigned a unique control number. The reports are filled out electronically before the end of shift by each staff member involved in an incident and must be reviewed and accepted by the supervisor. The Probation Manager and Deputy Chief then review and approve the report, ensuring that all Title 15 provisions were followed during the event. A bi-monthly Use of Force Review Committee meeting is integral to the Ranch quality improvement program.

The Commissioners reviewed IRs, which appeared to have been handled appropriately, both procedurally and substantively.

Appeals and Grievances/Due Process

Youth have the right to file an appeal from disciplinary action including, but not limited to, failure to pass their week (advance in the program) or being returned to JH for ARRs (Administrative Ranch Reviews). No ARRs occurred during the inspection period. Appeals were reviewed by the Commissioners. All appeared to have been handled consistent with due process.

Grievances can be filed based on any failure of the program to meet the youth's needs, apparent staff issues with the youth, or inadequacies (ranging from no hot water to not enough food). Thirty-two (32) grievances were filed between January and October 2021. **Responses appeared to comport with due process but suggested a possible systemic issue with youths' perceived food needs.**

It was unclear to what extent appeals and grievances are entered directly into the system, transcribed after being handwritten, and/or remain on paper. The forms themselves are clear and appear to capture the essential information, but legibility of handwriting can be a challenge. **The extent to which data are captured and used to discern patterns that could inform Ranch practices to reduce incidents remains a question.**

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Commissioners met with Probation staff on August 25, 2021 to review new and existing JR programs. JPD has produced a comprehensive James Ranch Program Resource Guide that thoroughly outlines the elements of the Ranch program.⁹

As noted, the Ranch is in the initial stages of developing and implementing a revision of the program, with the assistance of the University of Cincinnati Correctional Institute (UCCI). Staff have formed committees and are in training. Commissioners were informed that a pilot project in A-Pod to implement the Core Correctional Practices Model is to begin November 1, 2021. The CQI and Programs Committees are reported to be fully engaged in the implementation process. Ranch staff are formally integrating UCCI and PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports)¹⁰ models to enhance program service and will continue to incorporate incentives encouraging positive behaviors, consistent with the PBIS approach.

As part of program implementation, staff have access to a case management system and are able to access the risk assessment tool (JAIS). Institutional Services Plans and Title 4e Case Plans guide advance

⁹ *James Ranch Program Resource Guide*, April 2021.

¹⁰ For a description, see <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/getting-started>

preparation for release and planning for services to support youth in achieving goals. Staff coordinate with the CBOs to see that appropriate services are in place.

During COVID, CBO programs have in many cases offered programs virtually, and virtual services have been successful. After overcoming initial challenges including access and technical issues, program staff reported adjusting to the change in service delivery within the first month of the pandemic. While a virtual platform requires additional administrative work, staff have noted increased participation in programs over the past 18 months. Staff have consistently utilized the TEAMS platform to facilitate communication and are able to increase touchpoints with youth. CBOs and Probation programs (Pro-CSR, Wraparound) provided one-on-one meetings with youth resulting in increased individual support.

The single female committed to JR in the past year received similar programming as her male counterparts, supplemented by gender-responsive programming and a writing workshop.

New Programs Added in the Past Year

In March 2021 staff implemented the Ranch Youth Advisory Council (YAC). The YAC involves a partnership between the County's Juvenile Probation Department and FLY (Fresh Lifelines for Youth). One youth from each pod is chosen to be a YAC representative. Representatives meet weekly with FLY staff. Council members freely express and explore changes they would like to see at the Ranch. For example, the YAC met with the Ranch food supervisor to discuss food options. Youth are paid \$25 an hour to be on the Council, and sign a contract listing expectations and responsibilities for this commitment. YAC provides youth with public speaking opportunities such as presenting to Ranch managers and meeting with other department officials. Staff have noted the growth and development of youth who serve as representatives on the Council.

Ranch staff reported significant work over the past year to create a supportive, creative space during a year marked by increased challenges related to COVID-19. Staff have added a number of new programs including: (1) the History of Hip Hop, an 8-week program on the birth of hip-hop culture and the background of the music industry in the Bay Area conducted by San Jose Digital Arts; (2) Youth Narrative, a creative writing, reading, lyrical inscription, and illustration workshop; (3) Young Women's Freedom Center (YWFC), a voluntary two-part leadership development program for the girl's population at the Ranch. This program offers one-on-one and group sessions focused on personal transformation and healing as well as job-training and internship opportunities; and (4) the International Human Association for Human Values (IAHV), a program that strives to transform the mindset, attitudes, and behaviors of youth to break the cycle of violence and reduce recidivism.

Staff have received positive feedback from youth on these new programs; the History of Hip Hop is particularly popular. The YWCA also began a virtual program in each Pod to guide and support youth in reporting any incident of a sexually inappropriate nature and remind them of the red phone for such incidents. Other Ranch programs have continued virtually during the past year, including Gang Redirect, Xinachtli, El Joven Noble, Victim Awareness, the Beat Within, and Got Choices. In the near future, the Ranch expects to implement the program Unchained which allows youth to train and socialize homeless dogs so they can be adopted into permanent homes, imparting important values and behavioral learning to youth.

While most COVID restrictions from last year are still in place, and youth are restricted to interactions within their own pod, there has been an increase in activities. Youth are involved in sports and recreation with special attention to health protocols. Youth can participate in religious activities and request a meeting with the Chaplain virtually. The Enterprise work program is recently again able to take youth crews out to local parks. Staff have also focused on additional activities and holiday celebrations this year.

Youth may now have up to two visitors at a time on site. An open-air pavilion was built to allow for additional COVID safeguards for youth and visitors. The Ranch also offers family visits via FaceTime which has been important for families that cannot travel in person to the Ranch. Because of the success of virtual visits, Ranch staff expect to continue this practice beyond the COVID period.

Aftercare and ReEntry

When youth are released from the custodial portion of the Ranch program, they begin a 10-week Aftercare program, during which they remain under Ranch supervision. All youth except Dually Involved youth (DIY) begin supervision with a Ranch Aftercare Probation Counselor (PC) and a ReEntry Unit (RSU) Probation Officer (PO). DIY youth retain their DIY PO.

Ranch Probation Counselors and ReEntry Probation Officers work with each youth in concert, through Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings, from the time of the youth's arrival to the Ranch. MDTs are held within 30-days of arrival, then again 60 and 30 days prior to completion of the Ranch program. Since Covid-19, MDTs are held virtually. Staff indicated that conducting meetings virtually allows more people to participate, and this option is likely to continue.

Two Aftercare Probation Counselors (PCs) currently carry caseloads of approximately nine youth each. This staffing ratio is down from the larger caseloads last year of 12 to 13, due to the JR's early releases related to COVID-19. During the worst of COVID, the Aftercare and early release program staff worked primarily virtually. Since June 2021, staff work in-person five days per week. Aftercare staff now make multiple in-person visits, and often visit high-need youth daily. The return to in-person home visits is reported to generate greater trust by parents. Aftercare staff have adopted the recommendation made in last year's JJC inspection report and maintain a spreadsheet of their caseloads to track progress and patterns.

During the pandemic, Aftercare has reached out to organizations for help providing additional services for youth. This includes the PIVOT program that consists of: (1) New Hope (pro-social); (2) Credible Messenger (FLY mentoring); (3) COE (further educational training, jobs, resume training; and (4) Bill Wilson Center, for transitional housing (must be 18 or older for this last option).

ReEntry Service Unit (RSU) staffing consists of 10 Probation Officers (POs), of whom four officers are responsible for a hybrid caseload of ReEntry and future Secure Track (JPD's DJJ alternative program) youth. The current ReEntry caseloads are six to eight, a decrease from the past year when the caseload was as high as 12.

RSU staff currently do not return youth to the Ranch for a short adjustment period for minor violations or issues as they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. The Aftercare PC, in collaboration with the RSU PO, may try to modify the youth's behavior by imposing extensions to the Aftercare portion of the program

for any violation not being petitioned to the Court. Aftercare PCs work with the RSU POs and other team members to determine whether an extension is appropriate based on the severity of the conduct. The most common violation is a failed drug test. Staff note that there is no longer an influx of youth to JR who were on release, so a more individualized case-by-case approach is possible.

During the first half of 2021, the rate of successful youth exits from the Ranch was 62%, down from the 80s during the previous two years and approximately on par with the first half of 2019. Recognizing that the numbers are small, one can speculate that such a trend might be related to factors such as Covid early release and the higher acuity of youth who remained in custody.

The early release program in response to the pandemic reportedly resulted in an increased rate of youth who failed Aftercare, and it has been discontinued. Between August 2020 and August 2021, 54 of 71 youth in Aftercare (76%) exited successfully. Previous years' data were not available.

Currently, Ranch youth again are expected to successfully complete their program and reach levels greater than Level 4.4. Management postulates that having youth at the Ranch for longer periods can help youth learn additional coping skills and form stronger relationships with the Wraparound teams, as well as allowing for a return to OTs ("Out Temporarily" - visits home, to facilitate readjustment and practice new skills). OTs, however, have been suspended by necessity during the pandemic.

Staff note that gains during COVID include a smoother transition/dismissal process.

ReEntry services continue for a period of approximately six months after completion of Aftercare. During this period, the RSU PO supports the youth's success in reintegrating and succeeding in the community. Services coordinated by the PO may include:

- Pro-CSR (Probation Continuum of Services to ReEntry), a capitated program contracted to Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY), to assist with social and emotional learning and community connection.
- Community Solutions, a MediCal funded program contracted through the Department of Behavioral Health Services.
- Pro-GRIP (Probation Gang Resistance and Intervention Program), specialized for gang-involved youth.
- Wraparound services, under contracts with several CBOs.

Outcomes data on ReEntry were unavailable.

EDUCATION

The National Institute of Justice states that providing education opportunities while in custody is the most effective means to reduce recidivism. The Blue Ridge school, located on James Ranch, is one of four Court and Community Schools operated by the COE Alternative Education Department (AED).

Three commissioners visited the Blue Ridge school on August 17, 2021 for an initial meeting with the principal of the school. On August 27, commissioners returned to view classrooms during an active school session.

The past year saw several transitions within the Blue Ridge Staff.¹¹ Under a new staffing plan, COE divided the position of Principal of the Blue Ridge and Osborne school into two positions. The Principal of the Blue Ridge School and South County community school, now only focuses on the education of these students, thereby reflecting a positive change in county policy to provide more focused education for Ranch youth. Unfortunately, the pandemic also saw a loss of several key staff, including the resignation of the college liaison, a critical component of the Ranch's higher education program. A new college liaison began work at the Blue Ridge school in mid-October 2021. Blue Ridge faculty now meet weekly in all-staff meetings as part of the new Principal's charter for more personalized education services. Staff will meet once a month to discuss the testing data and school progress of individual youth. All education will now be trauma-informed, with an emphasis on restorative justice practices. To achieve this, staff are implementing Socratic seminars into lesson plans, along with restorative justice circles, to create a more welcoming and understanding environment for youth.

With the arrival of Covid-19 and the County Shelter-in-place (SIP) order in mid-March 2020, the education program at Blue Ridge transitioned overnight from in-person teaching to paper worksheets that were distributed and collected by the Probation staff. The COE and Probation both recognized that paper worksheets, designed for occasional, short-term use, were not suitable for longer term use. Within a few weeks, the education program transitioned from paper worksheets to Odyssey-ware, a computer-based individual learning program, again monitored by Probation staff, not teachers. **Many students, especially those with learning difficulties, were not successful. Further, the only teacher interaction available to the students was via text message, a cumbersome and frequently non-real time communication mode.**

At the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, COE-AED apparently assumed that the disruption would be short-lived, and in-person teaching would quickly resume. In contrast, most public schools immediately began to make a plan for remote learning, in some cases having a workable remote system in place before the end of the school term in June. At Blue Ridge and Osborne, planning for remote learning did not begin in earnest until the middle of summer 2020. Reliable remote learning via Zoom did not begin until the end of October 2020. Although some teachers did return to school – but not to the classroom - for two days per week for a brief period in October, when the second Covid-19 surge began in November until the end of February 2021, Blue Ridge students were solely dependent on remote learning. Teachers did not return to the classroom until March 2021. For a year

¹¹ Blue Ridge School staffing consists of:

- 1 Principal (serving Blue Ridge and South County Community)
- 1 Academic Counselor (serving both Osborne and Blue Ridge)
- 1 School Psychologist
- 1 Student Assessment Technician
- 1 School Office Coordinator
- 1 Program Specialist
- 1 College Liaison
- 2 Para educators (SDC)
- 3 Teachers
- 2 CTE teachers

– from March 2020 to March 2021 – Blue Ridge students had sporadic access to teachers and, considering their general educational attainment levels, less than appropriate educational materials and teaching.

After a year of online education, youth transitioned back to in-person lessons in early March. The previously used online education software, Edgenuity, is now solely used for credit recovery. Youth may also use Edgenuity to recover credit while in classes that they have already completed. With this return to in-person instruction, came a change in the method of class scheduling. Prior to COVID-19, youth remained in the assigned classrooms attached to their pods, and teachers rotated between classrooms. Under the new model, students now walk between classes,¹² allowing teachers to create a far more structured and stable learning environment. To that end, teachers are now teaching the subject of their certifications, with no plans in the future of returning to the cross-subject teaching that marked earlier years.

All student schedules are again teacher-led, including PE sessions and music and art classes. Blue Ridge continues to use the legacy classrooms, which have been set up primarily for CTE, music, and art education. Music is taught twice a week, and art once a week. Commissioners listened to an audio track produced by the principal and several students, and were impressed by the quality and content of the music. Commissioners had the opportunity to watch the first ever art lesson offered at Blue Ridge, and were impressed by the art teacher and the use of actual canvases.

Most PE sessions are in the new gym, although students still use the blacktop and pool when the weather allows.

Student proficiency continues to be monitored by Renaissance Learning (RenStar) testing. Consistent with past JJC recommendations, students now begin at a low level so that examinees can “score up” instead of “failing down.” Students are tested every 45 days, with exams of between 25 to 30 minutes duration. The testing is shared with the teachers and discussed at regular faculty meetings.

Commissioners also viewed the CTE classroom and had an opportunity to try the student exercise of the day: learning how to use an electric screwdriver. **In each classroom viewed, PBIS was being utilized.**

After lengthy planning efforts with trade unions, Blue Ridge students at James Ranch completed a 12-week pre-apprentice construction program that produced a 130-foot concrete walkway, and for which industry-recognized certifications were awarded to students.

The library has received a much-needed reorganization, with many books now properly stacked and stored for long-term use. New textbooks were purchased to match current County best practices.

¹² Allowing youth to transition from classroom to classroom, some of which are sited in the old/legacy classroom buildings, mitigates a previous concern of the JJC that after moving into the new facilities the youth would suffer from a decrease in outside participation.

HEALTH SERVICES

Medical Services

Commissioners met with the Medical Clinic Nurse Manager and Assistant Nurse Manager on September 1, 2021, at which time the youth census at the Ranch was 22, compared to 32 last year.

A new Nurse Manager oversees the clinics at Juvenile Hall and James Ranch. The previous Nurse Manager retired earlier in the year. The staffing ratio at the Ranch Clinic remains unchanged from the previous year. The Clinic is staffed from 6:45am until 11pm seven days a week, by two shifts which overlap for 30 minutes (previously two hours). Seven nurses rotate between Juvenile Hall and the Ranch, while two serve primarily at the Ranch. During night-time hours, medical care is provided through a telehealth connection with the Guadalupe Clinic, the Juvenile Hall medical clinic. An adolescent and young adult health subspecialty physician has a recurring clinic at James Ranch. Youth can also be seen by a physician at the Guadalupe Clinic in person or via telehealth and/or referred to Urgent Care or Emergency Department as needed. An on-call physician is available for consultation during the nighttime and non-business hours.¹³

The most frequent requests were for STD testing, acne and skin related requests, and health information. In 2020, most of the youths' medical conditions were within the scope of pediatric practice and could be handled by nurses and/or pediatricians/adolescent health specialists, using Telehealth when needed. Any additional specialty care is continued or provided via referral to subspecialists at Valley Medical Center or another local medical center such as Stanford, Kaiser, PAMF, etc.

The medical policies and procedures are available to staff electronically and are reviewed and updated every two years. The medical policies and procedures are separate from those used by the Probation Department, but there is some overlap. In a move towards a patient/youth-focused approach, the agencies are now using common language for the following areas:

- Suicide prevention
- Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)
- Behavioral Health referral
- Medical clearances when the youth arrive at the Ranch
- Discharge planning
- Covid infection control.

Policies and procedures, developed in coordination with the Public Health Department, remain in effect to protect against the spread of COVID, and are updated based on new scientific evidence and best practices. They specify strict testing, hygiene, and protocols for social distancing. Youth transferring from Juvenile Hall are tested two days before transfer. A nurse meets with each newly transferred youth to explain the protocols.

¹³ Appendix 1 includes a table of data concerning the use of medical services by the Ranch Clinic over the last 4 calendar years.

Currently youth are tested every two weeks for COVID, and staff who have been vaccinated are tested every week. Unvaccinated staff are tested twice a week.

One youth tested positive for COVID. He was placed in quarantine at Juvenile Hall and the rest of the youth from his pod were temporarily moved to a unit at Juvenile Hall. No other youth tested positive, and the youth returned to the Ranch after he was no longer infectious.

During a brief in-person visit to the Medical Clinic on August 18, 2021, the on-duty nurse noted that there were 23 youth at the Ranch. **Ten youth had been vaccinated against Covid-19 and 13 had not.** She indicated that youth are offered the vaccine at Juvenile Hall but can also consent to initiating vaccination after transfer to James Ranch. To receive it they must have parental consent and also provide their own consent. Sometimes it is a challenge finding parents and the clinic must request the help of a probation officer to contact them. Even with parental consent, some youth refuse to receive the vaccination. Clinic staff provide them with educational flyers and make three attempts to offer them vaccination. Four of the unvaccinated youth have parental consent but have refused to receive the shot. The nurses continue to promote receiving the vaccine. Prior to the mass vaccination clinics that were conducted at James Ranch, the Ranch nurse and physician did in-person Q&A sessions with the youth in each of the housing units.

Psychiatric care is provided by two Behavioral Health Service Department (BHSD) psychiatrists, who are on-site weekly to meet with patients and available remotely as needed. They coordinate with medical clinic nurses and Starlight behavioral health staff through weekly emails, and telepsychiatry (from JH).

Optometry services are now available at Juvenile Hall. Youth are prescribed glasses, when needed, and some are provided with over-the-counter reading glasses. When a youth receives new glasses, staff are notified and the youth get to keep them, when they leave.

Dental services are provided with COVID protocols at the Juvenile Hall Dental Clinic.

Quality improvement projects have been implemented every year, as determined in an annual plan. A new plan has recently been developed. The focus will be:

- Emergency transfers
- Youth and parent/guardian grievance tracking
- Medication verification
- Covid19 vaccine
- Covid19 testing

The Ranch clinic uses the same electronic medical record as the JH Guadalupe clinic, through HealthLink, for youth in custody. That system is also used by the psychiatrists. This presents a challenge since the Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD) transitioned to a different system, NetSmart's My Avatar, for its electronic health records, because HealthLink was incompatible with BHSD billing processes. The Starlight behavioral health team does not have access to electronic health records, but communication between Starlight staff, medical staff, and psychiatrists is on-going and open, so that information is shared to meet the needs of youth.

Clinical staff have access through a medical portal to the new Probation data system, which allows them to access youth information to coordinate and reduce conflicts with court dates when scheduling outside medical appointments.

A nursing Medical Outreach Program supports youth who are released from custody. Services include free health screening, sexually transmitted illnesses consultation, contraceptive education, referral for tattoo removal, vision and hearing screening, BMI calculation, nutrition education, mental health screening, dental screening, and referral to low- or no-cost community resources. It should be noted that in 2020 a number of services were limited due to COVID-19. To further support youth who are returning to the community to have continued access to medical services, the **Probation Department and the Social Services Agency have partnered to identify and expedite enrollment of youth who are uninsured but eligible for the State of California's Medi-Cal health insurance program so that youth leave the Ranch with health insurance coverage.**

The most recent BSCC and County Health Department Inspections of medical services at the Ranch found no violations. The JJC commends the medical services team for providing exceptional services to the youth at the Ranch.

Behavioral Health Services

Behavioral Health services at James Ranch are provided under contract by Starlight through their Youth Therapeutic Integrated Program (YTIP). This program integrates mental health and substance use services, which were formerly provided under separate contracts. This approach is in line with best practice in the field, which recognizes that treatment outcomes are improved when co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders are treated concurrently. **Starlight reports that virtually every youth at the Ranch meets diagnostic criteria for co-occurring disorders.** They report that marijuana, alcohol, Xanax, and cocaine are the substances most frequently abused by the youth.

Services are provided using a team approach. When fully staffed the team comprises eleven individuals: A Clinical Supervisor, a Program Coordinator, six clinicians (MFTs or LCSWs), two Mental Health Rehabilitation Specialists, and one Case Manager. The team has three bilingual Spanish-speaking staff and one Vietnamese speaker. It is currently short three clinicians. A new clinician has been hired, but a Rehabilitation Specialist has just announced plans to leave. The original staffing pattern was based on serving a population of 66. The population at James Ranch, at the time of the inspection, was only 24, so the staff shortage has not impacted services. There are challenges to hiring staff due to the very high demand for clinical staff and applicants being reluctant to work on weekends. Coverage is provided seven days a week from 9am until 7pm. The Clinical Supervisor and Program Manager alternate providing on-call coverage outside of regular hours.

Youth are seen within 48 hours of admission into the Ranch. An Assessment, using the American Society of Addiction Medicine. (ASAM)'s integrated tool, occurs within the first 30 days of admission through weekly sessions as well as consultation with Probation and other service providers. A new protocol was introduced in this past year to facilitate the sharing of information by the Behavioral Health Clinic at JH with the Starlight team when youth are transferred to the JR. Both Starlight and Behavioral Health staff

report that the protocol has been working well and Starlight has found it helpful in transitioning youth into their services. Treatment is individualized based on the needs of the youth identified by the information gathered through the integrated ASAM assessment.

Starlight reports that they have a productive relationship with the Medical Clinic at the Ranch. They do not have access to medical records. In order to facilitate the sharing of information, they were participating in joint daily rounds, but in May scaled back to communicating by email. At the time of inspection, they stated they would resume in-person meetings in September. The Starlight team receives weekly emails from the psychiatrists, who are on site one or two days a week. The relationship with the Medical Clinic permits coordination and a holistic view of the youth and somewhat mitigates the contractor's continuing lack of access to the medical record.

Due to the Covid outbreak, Starlight has been unable to provide in-person family therapy. They switched to using Telehealth to do so. They are just beginning to return to providing some limited in-person family therapy. Group sessions are provided in the group rooms, which are large enough to accommodate social distancing.

The youth's case manager attends all MDT meetings (intake, 60-day, and 30-day MDT). At the 60-day pre-release MDT, the case manager meets the incoming referral agency, which will work with the youth upon release. They coordinate and support the youth in engaging with the agencies and remain in contact through release and up to 30 days post-release. Unfortunately, outside providers have not been able to come on site to see youth, due to COVID precautions. Home visits (OTs) have also been suspended. Starlight staff believe that if youth were able to have home visits and to be able to meet with their new service providers at the Ranch, transitions home would be smoother.

The Starlight team uses a number of evidence-based practices and have systems in place through their Quality Assurance department to ensure fidelity. **While model fidelity is an important element in ensuring positive outcomes, outcome measures are the ultimate determinant of the effectiveness of services.** The Starlight team has been using the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strength (CANS) assessment instrument to measure outcomes, also pre-and post-tests. At the time of the inspection, they indicated that they have insufficient data to produce a report.

Starlight's contract for Behavioral Health Services is monitored by the Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD), which reports having a positive working relationship with Starlight.

FACILITY

Two commissioners visited James Ranch on August 18, 2021 to complete the facilities inspection. Ranch Management accompanied them on the tour, which was led ably by two youth from the Ranch's Youth Advisory Council.

The original buildings at James Ranch date from 1953; some have been demolished to make way for the new construction, which is now complete. The old administration building, cafeteria, recreation hall, outdoor blacktop area, classroom for vocational training, previous portables and classrooms remain. The old administration building now accommodates the ReEntry Service Unit (RSU) Probation Officers, who

had been located off-site. Their new location affords them easier access to youth who are still in custody. They also hope to create a resource center on the campus for youth assigned to RSU.

The old cafeteria is intended to be redeployed as a culinary arts classroom, but after more than a year's delay its kitchen is still being used to provide meals for the youth, due to **an unresolved problem with the refrigeration system in the new kitchen**. The County is attempting to remedy the matter with the contractor, so operations can be transferred to the new kitchen. As part of the Ranch's COVID mitigation program, meals are served in both the new and old cafeterias to ensure greater social distancing.

An inventory of all buildings and areas of the facility, together with their status and any concerns, is provided in Appendix 2.

SAFETY, SECURITY, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Fire Inspection

The Deputy Fire Marshal of the Santa Clara County Fire Department conducted a fire safety inspection of the Ranch on May 19, 2021, and identified a number of corrective action items, which were referred to the Facilities and Fleet (FAF) Department. **Documentation of completed corrections or reinspection was not provided**. The Ranch also does an internal monthly safety inspection of all buildings on the property.

Prison Rape Elimination Act

Also explained in the *Youth Guidebook* are applicable provisions of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) and reporting procedures. The Probation Department reported full compliance with federal, state, and county PREA criteria in 2020, and no sustained reports. Within 72 hours of admission, Ranch youth are evaluated using the PREA Vulnerability Assessment Screening tool.¹⁴

Environmental Health (including Clothing, Hygiene)

A representative of the County of Santa Clara Public Health Officer conducted an Environmental Health inspection of the Ranch on November 2, 2020, and found the Ranch in full compliance with Title 15 environmental and hygiene standards, both for the physical facilities and the youth.

¹⁴ See County of Santa Clara Probation Department: *Prison Rape Elimination Act Annual Report 2020*.

Security, Fencing, and Gates

Some sections of the perimeter fence are exposed, which makes the Ranch vulnerable to entry from outsiders or escape by youth. The fence line is inspected manually several times a day and can be patrolled by a four-wheel drive security jeep with a spotlight. The entry gate at Malaguerra Avenue is open from sunrise to sunset. The sally port (the second set of gates) is equipped with video monitoring. The video feed can be monitored 24/7 from a supervisor's office in administration and/or from the security office in the dormitory. However, during the day, staff in administration normally respond to requests to open the sally port gates without access to the video monitor, with only audio communication. Management indicates that if staff have any questions concerning who is requesting access, two staff drive to the gate to determine whether to open the gates. The JJC recommended in last year's report providing video access to staff before they open the sally port. This continued to be a concern at this year's inspection. Management subsequently reported completion.

Since its report of 2015, the JJC has urged installation of a planned perimeter video surveillance system. Partial funding for the system was approved by the Board of Supervisors in February 2021, but funding for cameras was limited to only the dormitory/new construction buildings. Procurement had not yet awarded a contract at the time of this report. The JJC continues to consider installation of a full perimeter video surveillance system an urgent matter.

YOUTH VOICE

The Programs section of this report describes the Youth Advisory Council established earlier this year and the positive effects already evident.

During the James Ranch inspection, and with Probation's support, the JJC distributed an anonymous survey to the Ranch youth, with the goal of better understanding the changes to Ranch's environment under the COVID-19 pandemic. Surveys were distributed to all 23 Ranch youth; 21 were completed and collected. Several questions within the survey reflect this interest and are therefore focused on the impact of COVID-19 on Ranch youth and their education. While offering the survey to Ranch youth, commissioners had an opportunity to speak to the youth about pressing issues. Their findings are reflected within this portion of the report as well.

Unlike previously offered surveys, this year's survey was composed of four Likert-scale and 8 open-ended questions. The addition of the four satisfaction scale questions provided the JJC with a more quantifiable method of measuring youth attitudes towards Ranch activities. Many youth still took advantage of the open-ended portion of the survey. A copy of this survey is Appendix 3. The survey results are in tabular form in Appendix 4.

The four satisfaction scale questions are as follows:

1. *I feel safe at the Ranch.*
2. *Adults at the Ranch are supportive and want me to succeed.*
3. *I feel protected against COVID-19.*
4. *I feel good about the education I receive while at the Ranch.*

Each question could be answered by one of five options: strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree. Each answer corresponded to a numerical value of 1 through 5, respectively.

Of the four questions, youth responded most positively to the statement: *I feel safe at the Ranch*. Most youth agreed with the statement. Question 2 and 4—*adults at the Ranch are supportive and want me to succeed* and *I feel good about the education I receive while at the Ranch*—garnered similar results, with most youth agreeing with the statement. It is important to note that in both cases, one youth strongly disagreed with the statement.

Question 3 responses to the statement *I feel protected against COVID-19*, raise concerns. As previously mentioned within the report, medical staff reported fewer than half of the youth are vaccinated. In response to “I feel protected against Covid-19,” the youth response was 3.52 out of 5, which falls within the undecided range.

The theme of general uneasiness with COVID-19 safety is reflected also within questions of vaccine education. Question 8—*In your time at the Ranch, what have you learned about the COVID-19 vaccine?*—saw a variety of answers, with some youth responding positively, and others with hesitancy. One youth expressed concerns over the speed with which the vaccine was created, with another saying that receiving the vaccine would “kill them.” Another youth summed up their disagreement quite succinctly: “it’s bull****.” A little under 40% of the youth reported learning “nothing” about the vaccine while at the Ranch, and only 19% reported that they learned it was safe. According to some Probation staff, much of this hesitancy stems from a suspicion of government systems.

The inconsistency between the medical staff’s apparently concerted and consistent efforts to educate the youth and promote vaccination, on the one hand, and these youth comments, on the other, is concerning.

Commissioners had an opportunity to speak with Probation staff and Youth Advisory Council (YAC) members about vaccine education. YAC members reportedly were to speak with their peers on the importance of vaccination, but it is unclear whether this plan came to fruition. The JJC notes the importance of coordination between the YAC and the Medical staff on this important peer effort on vaccine education.

Two other concerning themes appeared during the free-response question portion of the survey. **First, most youth reported feeling lonely due in part to a lack of visits and familial presence; and second, almost all youth reported a need for better and larger portions of food (below).**

In Question 6—*What do you hope to accomplish at the Ranch?*—and Question 11—*If you could improve one thing about the Ranch, what would it be?*—38.1% and 47.6% of responses, respectively, reported a lack of visits and phone calls. One youth commented that they just “wanted to give my mom a hug.” Youth are limited to one call a week, along with a short, ten-minute video call. Scarce visits, due in part to COVID-19, illustrate the need for more call and visitation times. 10% of youth indicated that they have had little-to-no contact with their family during COVID.

Youth also mentioned a desire for the return of food visits. While administering the survey, Commissioners noted youth reminiscing over homemade food; Pod A indicated that they would be more motivated to clear their weeks (advance in the program) if they had an opportunity to receive a food visit. The need for food visits is also reflected in youth displeasure over food quality and portions. In Question 6, nearly 20% of youth indicated that the lack of food was a key difficulty of staying at the Ranch. Commissioners administering the survey were informed by youth that there is a severe discrepancy in meal portions between a single and double portion. All youth have the option to request

two trays of food, however, according to pod youth, the second serving of food makes up less than half their first portion. One youth recounted that “if the first tray of food was, say, chicken tenders, you might get six chicken tenders. For a double portion, you might only get two, maybe three, if you’re lucky.” **Youth complained of going to bed hungry. 52% of youth reported that they would want the food to improve in Question 11.** An additional 20% of youth indicated that they want the outside food program to return due to the sizing and quality of the portions. 10% indicated that they would want a commissary system to enable them to buy snacks for later in the evenings.

Youth also reported a lack of activities, reflecting a lack of physical activity opportunities due to COVID-19. One youth indicated issues with hygiene in the pods; another reported a need for warmer and more comfortable bedding.

EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

While an Equity and Social Justice statement is included in each of its reports, 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.

Like all system partners, the JJC continues to be dismayed by the intractability of racial and ethnic disproportionality at every level of the justice system. In the face of great accomplishments over many years in reducing the absolute numbers of in-custody youth, the disproportionality gap has only grown.¹⁵ Disproportionality also increases in proportion to the degree of system penetration. While there certainly is more work to be done within the juvenile justice system to address disproportionality, the JJC again emphasizes 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.¹⁶ This strengthens the JJC’s conviction that healthy and supportive school environments, as well as strong educational programs at the Ranch, are essential to disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline and returning in-custody youth to brighter futures.

SUMMARY FINDING

The JJC has completed its 2021 annual inspection of the James Ranch. Based on its own observations during inspection, its analysis of facility data, and the BSCC’s recent report, it is the JJC’s considered view that Ranch residents are in a well-supervised and thoughtfully managed environment that meets Title 15 standards for a safe juvenile facility.

¹⁵ See SCC JPD 2020 Annual Report, p. 70.

¹⁶ County of Santa Clara Probation Department: 2020 Annual Evaluation, Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) and Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG) Funded Programs, p. 12.

Also: County of Santa Clara Probation Department: *James Ranch Evaluation, 2017-2019*.


The JJC also finds that County management and staff, supported by contracted providers, demonstrate strong commitment to the Vision and Mission articulated for the Ranch.

The JJC Commendations and Recommendations in this Report, made pursuant to its inspection, note successes and opportunities for specific improvement. The Commission asks for responses to its recommendations by December 31, 2021.

Approved by the Juvenile Justice Commission, Santa Clara County, on November 2, 2021.



Victoria BurtonBurke, Chair



Carol M. Rhoads, Ranch Inspection Chair

APPENDIX 1 - SUMMARY OF MEDICAL SERVICES

<i>Activity</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
Clinic Visits	269	339	502	522
RN Sick Call Visits	1,262	2,387	2,575	1,295
VMC Appointment	46	58	25	45

17

APPENDIX 2 - RANCH FACILITIES

Dormitory

The dormitory comprises self-contained living pods, encompassing a central sleeping and common area, a shared bathroom/shower, and counseling room. Four of the pods share classrooms.

The new dormitory is an attractive building. A control room is situated near the entrance. It has space for display monitors connected to cameras that cover key locations around the campus. At this point only a few cameras are operational. Twenty-one additional cameras are to be installed throughout the dormitories. Perimeter video surveillance has been an urgent recommendation since the JJC’s 2015 JR Report and is again the subject of a recommendation this year.¹⁸

Each pod can house up to twelve youth in an open, home-like setting, in line with the Missouri Model which has demonstrated the effectiveness of housing youth in smaller family-like "pods." To accommodate social distancing during the Covid outbreak, the pod size was reduced to eight or fewer.

Bunk beds are arranged around the perimeter of the back of the rooms, with a living area in the front. The furnishings are fresh and appropriate. A windowed counseling room is attached to each unit to allow for confidential sessions. The rooms are well lit, with frosted windows. The youth clean their unit three times a day and clean the shared classroom as they leave. The finish of the walls of the pods is easily damaged, thus there is little artwork on display. There are plans to install protective coverings, which will allow for the mounting of artwork to increase the homelike feel of the units.

A laundry facility is located at the far end of the building. Youth are provided clothes, which are cleaned for them in laundry bags twice a week.

¹⁷ Probation Dept. (2020). *2019 Annual Report Juvenile Justice*.

¹⁸ Please also see the Security section of this report.

Building/Trades and Enterprise Building

This building is configured for construction trades education. Modules are set up to allow training in areas from plumbing to electrical. Another portion of this building is part of the Enterprise Program run by a Probation Counselor. Youth in the program build picnic tables, park benches and fire rings which are sold to County Parks and for Recreation for use by the public. Profits go to the youth as part of the Enterprise program and are issued at successful completion of the Aftercare program.

Supply Building

Commissioners were shown "the barn" where reserve items are kept. It was neat and well organized. Cleaning and hygiene supplies are stored here. Items were boxed for protection. A separate supply building stores the chemicals for use at the JR pool.

Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Services Buildings, Starlight

Two buildings are used by Starlight staff who provide mental health and substance use services to JR youth. The buildings house offices, a conference area and family/individual session room.

Legacy Cafeteria/Classroom

The original cafeteria is ready to be used as a culinary arts classroom with new equipment but has not yet been decommissioned as the JR kitchen and cafeteria. Issues with the new kitchen have prevented the transfer of food services to that facility.

New Kitchen and Cafeteria

The new cafeteria kitchen is smart, clean, appears to be highly functional, and food service employees have been trained to operate the new equipment. The kitchen has been complete for well over a year, but due to lingering refrigeration issues, has still not been approved for use.

New Gym

The new gym is divided into two by a movable partition. This allows two activities to occur simultaneously.

Legacy Recreation Hall

The Rec Hall houses a room for large muscle exercise equipment. The equipment is old and there are hopes to invest in new workout equipment. The library has been organized and is functional.

Legacy Classrooms

The inspection team viewed the old education wing. Classrooms are back in use following the return to in-person learning. They include a welding classroom.

The New Administration and Visiting Building

The new Administration and Visiting Building has been completed. It is located where the old dorm used to be. It is an open, inviting building that contains several offices, a conference room and a programs area that can be used for family visits. There is also a play area, including a toy kitchen, set aside for younger visitors.

Outdoor Visiting Area

An outdoor visiting area was constructed to support the return of in-person visits. It is a large, shaded area with picnic tables arranged to allow for social distancing. There are plans to add an outside playground area for younger visitors. Surplus equipment will be transferred from a County hospital campus for the project.

Orchard and Greenhouse

An area has been designated as an orchard and garden to grow produce. Next to it is a large, existing greenhouse which will be used as part of an anticipated horticultural program.

Utility Corridor

A “Utility Bridge” is located in the center of the campus. It comprises pipes, shut-off points, electrical boxes, and other utility equipment. It detracts from the overall appearance of the campus. Plans to relocate the equipment underground have had to be put on hold due to a lack of funding.

Open Grass Area and Landscaping

There is a large expanse of grass near the perimeter fence by the entrance. There are hopes to build a soccer field surrounded by a running track. Extensive landscaping was added following the completion of the new construction. At the time of the inspection some of it was dying. This was the result of damage caused to the irrigation system by some construction equipment. The County is currently working to remedy the problem.

Access to James Ranch

The primary entry to James Ranch is through a single sallyport. Staff report that there have been times when it has broken, which causes great disruption. Traffic has to be diverted to another entrance with a single gate that has to be supervised by staff for security purposes. Conversion of that second entrance to a sallyport would relieve the considerable inconvenience caused by the breakdown of the main entry point.

Animal Activity

There is much wildlife in and around James Ranch. While much of it enhances the rural atmosphere of the Ranch, some of it poses challenges. Ground squirrels are ubiquitous, burrowing under buildings and in open areas. This will be a particular challenge when the new soccer field and track are built. A further hazard arises from the swallows that have built dozens of mud nests under covered walkways and the eaves of buildings. They swoop low and deposit their droppings on walkways, walls, and windows.

APPENDIX 3 - YOUTH SURVEY

James Ranch Youth Survey

Hello! We are the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC), and we inspect Juvenile Hall to make sure it is a safe and supportive place. By completing this survey, you will help us continue to improve the Ranch. Please DO NOT write your name on this survey. Your responses are confidential—meaning no one else sees your answers—and your honest opinion makes a difference. Thank you for your feedback!

Demographic Information

UNIT: _____ Age: _____

How long have you been at the Ranch? _____

How many times have you been at the Ranch? _____

For each statement, please select the number below which best represents your experience.

I feel safe at the Ranch.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Adults at the Ranch are supportive and want me to succeed.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I feel protected against COVID-19.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I feel good about the education I receive while at the Ranch.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How to reach the JJC:
(408) 278-5993 • sccjic@gmail.com • Juvenile Justice Commission, 840 Guadalupe Parkway, San Jose, CA 95110

It is OK to tear this piece off to save our information:

Please respond to the following questions about your experiences at the Ranch:

What has been the most difficult part of being at the Ranch?

During COVID, how have you been able to stay in touch with your family?

In your time at the Ranch, who has been most helpful for you?

When you think about leaving the Ranch, what worries you?

If you could improve one thing about the Ranch, what would it be?

Is there anything else that is important for us to know?

It is OK to tear this piece off to save our information:

How to reach the JJC:
(408) 278-5993 • sccjic@gmail.com • Juvenile Justice Commission, 840 Guadalupe Parkway, San Jose, CA 95110

APPENDIX 4 - YOUTH SURVEY TABULATED RESULTS

Youth Survey	Survey date:	9/16/21			Pod:	A8		
James Ranch	Pod population:	23			Surveys returned:	21		
Demographic Information		14	15	16	17	18		
Age		0	2	5	10	4		

Time	Lowest	Mean	Highest
Length of Stay (Months)	3M	4	8
No. of Times in the Ranch	1	NA	3

Question 1:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel safe at the Ranch.	0	0	1	11	9

	A-Pod	B-Pod	C-Pod	D-Pod
Total Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
4.38	4.29	4.20	4.80	4.25

Question 2:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Adults at the Ranch are supportive and want me to succeed.	1	2	4	9	5

	A-Pod	B-Pod	C-Pod	D-Pod
Total Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
3.71	3.43	3.60	3.80	4.25

Question 3:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel protected against COVID-19	1	3	4	10	3

	A-Pod	B-Pod	C-Pod	D-Pod
Total Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
3.52	3.43	3.20	4.00	3.50

Question 4:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel good about the education I receive while at the Ranch.	1	2	1	13	4

	A-Pod	B-Pod	C-Pod	D-Pod
Total Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
3.81	3.14	3.80	4.40	4.25

Question 5:	Better future	Finish H.S.	Being released	More credits	Finishing Program
What do you hope to accomplish at the Ranch?	3	7	6	2	1
	Employment	Programming	Learning	Doing well outside	
	1	2	1		1

Question 6:	Nothing	Lack of phone calls	Lack of activities	Lack of friends	Lack of visits	Missing family
What has been the most difficult part of being at the Ranch?	2	4	2	1	2	2
	Staff	School	Peers	Lack of food	O.T.	Personal
	3	1	2	4	2	1

Question 7:	Little-to-no contact	Phone calls	Facetime calls	Visits
During COVID, how have you been able to stay in touch with your family?	3	10	6	7

Question 8:	Nothing	It's safe	Worry over Delta	Vaccinated	"Everything"
In your time at the Ranch, what have you learned about the COVID-19 vaccine?	8	4	1	3	1
	It doesn't work	Not to get it	Fast Vax Prod.	Mandatory	
	1	2	1	1	

Question 9:	Nobody	Staff	Starlight	Counselors	Family
In your time at the Ranch, who has been most helpful for you?	2	10	5	4	2
	Themselves	Peers	Teachers		
	2	1	1		

Question 10:	Nothing	Recidivism	School	No success	Not changing
When you think about leaving the Ranch, what worries you?	8	3	3	2	2
	Lack of support	Placement	Employment	Aftercare	
	2	1	1	1	

Question 11:	More phone calls	Food	New commissary	Programming	Outside food	Visits
If you could improve one thing about the Ranch, what would it be?	5	10	2	1	5	1
	Portion sizes	O.T.	Food visits	Hygiene	Care Packages	More activities
	1	2	4	1	1	2

Question 12:	NA	Commissary	More phone calls	Better food	Lack of respect	Masks
Is there anything else that is important for us to know?	8	1	2	2	1	1
	Lack of activities	Outside food	O.T.s	Food visits	Blankets	
	2	2	1	1	1	

APPENDIX 5 - POLICIES & PROCEDURES MANUAL REVIEW

James Ranch Policies and Procedures Manual remains much as it was in the 2020 review, which covered many of the needed revisions, but did not cover every potentially needed revision. Revisions to the manual will be required as the Ranch Program is modified and redefined through the process being assisted by the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute, and the proposed merger of the Juvenile Hall and James Ranch Policies and Procedures will hopefully bring all documents up to date.

The continued inclusion of section 03.02, from the last revision approved in 2015, excludes many present JR youth and would not accommodate the anticipated step down from the setting in JH for a Secure Track youth. It also fails to acknowledge the allowed housing of young persons over 18 who are now eligible for services under the Juvenile Court's jurisdiction. However, Section 3.03 appears to address some of the services necessary for those deemed ineligible for commitment in that previous section.

The JJC has been informed that the treatment program is simply the "James Ranch Program," but a number of Policies continue to use the term "The Enhanced Ranch Program."¹⁹

Section 01.02, II, E (last revision 2015) indicates the capacity of JR as 100, while after the new dorm was built JR can house 108.

A number of sections (i.e., staff duties and expectations, and operations) have not been updated since 2016, but appear to cover the programs and expectations for counselors as the program is now defined.²⁰

Section 02.11, IX, refers to the Edge Program which has not been in operation for several years.

Section 02.01 does not indicate the possession of the greater range radios provided to the Ranch to enable the staff to successfully cover areas in which the older system failed, but then there was never an acknowledgement that there were black areas for radio transmission previously. Also, subsection IX of this policy does not correctly identify the pods that exist in the new dorm. (Approved 4/2018)

Section 03.06 does not address the release of a young adult. (Approved 4/2016.)

Section 03.08, Clothing Hygiene and Bedding, though addressing clothing appropriate for field trips and sports participation, makes no reference to the potential that certain religious dictates require special attire.

Section 5 of the Manual addresses the expectations for education at JR. Section 05.02 outlines the requirements for the Blue Ridge School's Education Program. Last year's JR report was critical of the delivery of education at Blue Ridge through Edgenuity and (*reference to the Ed Section*) the ranch has returned to in person instruction but Fine Arts, electives, career education, Art and Music were being touted as newly/just added portions of BR education.

Section. 5.05 references visiting sites no longer in use and contains contradictory information (II, D 11 indicates Cigarettes are not permitted in the facility but II, D, 28 says visitors are only allowed to smoke in the parking

¹⁹ JR P&P Sections 03.06, III, A. Section 4.08, I. B. Section 5.07, I. A.

²⁰ JR P&P Section 02.09 (Nighttime Operations) does not reflect from its adoption date of 10/24/16, that it has been modified, however it refers to "the old admin building" but references to changes in duties as it relates to the New Dorm

lot. Nor does it reference the alternative of virtual visits which may continue after Covid. Visiting hours are designated by Pod, but most Pods are now empty.

Pre-Release (Section 5.06) has not been updated since 4/2016 and it is unclear if any changes in the practice have taken place other than those dictated by the Covid early release of youth from the JR program. (Approved 8/2016)

Section 05.09, Facility Searches references searches in the portable units²¹ or the Auto Shop that no longer exist.

Escape Section 06.06 lists the names and numbers of the people to be notified of escapes, but those people no longer fill the roles of Ranch Manager and his supervisor. (Approved 4/2016)

Section 07.07 address preservation and destruction of the youth's JR records and does not consider the sealing and purging of a youth's records as presently provided by law. (Approved 4/2016)

Section 08.01 intimates that a youth 13 and below has the automatic right to be represented by counsel.²² Now all youth are represented by counsel, and this section needs revision. Also, section 08.02 does not recognize that anyone under the age of 18 cannot be interviewed by law enforcement without an attorney. (Approved 4/2016)

Section 9.09 Restricted Areas and Restricted Access relies on the old configuration of the JR facilities and needs to be updated with the present facilities. (Approved 4/2017)

Section 10.02 does not have the updates in the medical services that have taken place since this section was last approved in April of 2016.

Section 10.07 Special Medical Considerations refers to a referral to both Pathways and Starlight though Starlight is the sole provider of these services presently.²³ (Approved 1/2016) And Section 10.10 also refers to Pathways as the substance abuse service provider. (Approved 4/2016)

JR has successfully evacuated to Juvenile Hall due to the wildfire threat, and has returned Covid exposed and positive youth back to Juvenile Hall. The sections (11.03 and 11.04) that deal with evacuation in the Manual date back to June of 2015. The process taken at the time of the recent evacuation and transfers could be updated as best practices for any further JR evacuation. There was at least an issue with the use of flexible cuffs used during the evacuation.

Section 11.08 on Emergency Shut offs has not been updated and does not reflect the new facilities at JR. (Approved 6/2015)

JR has instituted many policies and changes related to the Covid pandemic. These should be memorialized in case similar circumstances arise in the future.

²¹ P&P Section 05.09, VII, B

²² P&P Section 08.01, I, G

²³ P&P Section 10.07, II, 6

APPENDIX 6 - DOCUMENTS REVIEWED BY THE INSPECTION TEAM

- County of Santa Clara, Facilities and Fleet Department, Capital Programs Division. (October 9, 2020). *Title 15, Section 1313 Inspection of Buildings and Grounds*.
- Probation Department, County of Santa Clara, *James Ranch Program Resource Guide April 2021*.
- Board of State and Community Corrections, State of California. (2019). *Title 15 Minimum Standards for Juvenile Facilities*; Title 15 Crime Prevention and Corrections, Division 1, Chapter 1, Subchapter 5.
- Probation Department, County of Santa Clara. (n.d.) *2019 Annual Report, Juvenile Justice, Santa Clara County*.
- Probation Department, County of Santa Clara. (n.d.). *William F. James Ranch Youth Guidebook*.
- Probation Department, County of Santa Clara. (n.d.). *2017-2019 James Ranch Evaluation*.
- Probation Department, County of Santa Clara, Research and Development Unit. (2021). *James Ranch Client Experience Survey Results April 2021*.
- Probation Department, County of Santa Clara, Research and Development Unit. (2020). *James Ranch Client Experience Survey Results CY2020*.
- Probation Department, County of Santa Clara. (n.d.). *Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Annual Report 2020*.
- Probation Department, County of Santa Clara. (9/14/21). *JJC Virtual Site Visit: Data and Outcomes*
- County of Santa Clara Public Health Department. (2020). *Environmental Health Evaluation* (William F. James Ranch).
- County of Santa Clara Public Health Department. (2020). *Medical / Mental Health Evaluation* (William F. James Ranch).
- County of Santa Clara Public Health Department. (2020). *Nutritional Health Evaluation* (William F. James Ranch).
- Sullivan, C. et al., University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute. (2021). *Final Evaluation and Checklist*.
- Board of State and Community Corrections, State of California. (2020). *Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall and William F. James Ranch 2018-2020 Biennial Inspection Pursuant to WIC 209 And 885*.
- Probation Department, County of Santa Clara. (2020). *Annual Evaluation Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) and Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG) Funded Programs*.
- Probation Department, County of Santa Clara. (2020). *Prison Rape Elimination Act Annual Report 2020*.
- Probation Department, County of Santa Clara. (2021). *Ranch Program Redesign, Phases 1 and 2*. (Slides).
- Starlight Contract with Behavioral Health Department. Exhibit (FY22) A9 (Scope of Work) July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022.
- Monthly BHSD and Starlight YTIP Meeting agenda and notes, 7/20/2021.
- Coordination of Care Plan - Youth transitioning from Juvenile Hall to James Ranch & vice versa*.

Children, Youth & Family Mental Health Services Act Utilization Slides CSI YTIP.

Juvenile Justice Commission, Santa Clara County (2020). *William F. James Ranch Inspection Report 2020*. <https://www.sccourt.org/documents/jjc/2021/2020%20JH%20Report.Final.pdf>

Also on the JJC page of the Court website are responses to previous years' report recommendations from various agencies.