

**Juvenile Justice Commission
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**SANTA CLARA COUNTY SECURE YOUTH
TREATMENT FACILITY
INSPECTION REPORT**

October 1, 2024

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... 3

COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....5

INTRODUCTION AND AUTHORITY..... 6

SYTF: POPULATION, ADMINISTRATION AND FACILITIES..... 7

PROGRAMMING AND EDUCATION.....12

INCIDENT REPORTS & GRIEVANCES..... 15

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES (BHS)..... 15

MEDICAL SERVICES..... 16

RE-ENTRY INTO THE COMMUNITY.....18

TRACKING OF OUTCOMES..... 19

SURVEY..... 19

EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE..... 24

SUMMARY FINDINGS..... 24

Appendix A..... 25

Appendix B..... 26

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) conducted its 2024 annual inspection of the Santa Clara County Secure Youth Treatment Facility Program (SYTF) operated by the Juvenile Services Division of the Santa Clara County Probation Department (JPD or PD). This inspection included the SYTF program at Juvenile Hall (JH) and the newer Learning Independence for Tomorrow (LIFT) program, at the James Ranch (JR). The LIFT program serves as a stepped-down, less-restrictive program, to which the JH SYTF youth are sent, based on the court's decision, before release to the community.

SYTF program is intended for minors and young adults up to 25 years of age (referred to in this report as "Youth") who previously would have been sent by the Juvenile Court to the California Department of Corrections Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ).¹ Their length and conditions of confinement are determined by the Juvenile Court in regular consultation with Probation, Behavioral Health, and the County Office of Education (COE).²

The Santa Clara County SYTF program is still a "work-in-progress", and the focus of the JJC inspection was to understand the improvements in its ability to help rehabilitate youth serving longer-term sentences and to highlight the challenges that remain.

The JJC found the SYTF units at JH and LIFT units at JR well-supervised and thoughtfully managed in compliance with Titles 15 and 24 of the California Code of Regulations.

The programming for each youth is guided by an Individual Rehabilitation Plan (IRP) formulated for the youth at the start of the program. This includes a Cognitive Behavioral Intervention program as well as others including life-skills and family therapy/reintegration approaches. The SYTF administration continues to add new programs for the youth to acquire skills and certifications for employment across areas such as culinary arts, construction, trades, and gardening. It is exciting to observe the impact of these programs as some of the youth move into colleges and others embrace skills such as firefighting and construction.

The LIFT program has started to provide an important step-down model that allows the youth to make outside visits for family, job and educational reasons and help them readjust to the community. The enthusiasm of the staff and the flexibility of the program has gained positive feedback from the youth. At the same time, many issues around job options, transportation flexibility and OT (Out Temporarily) policies remain to be finalized. There is also concern around ensuring sufficient time for creating a proper re-entry plan, as 90 days is not viewed as enough by the SYTF Support Unit.

¹ Before the complete closure of DJJ in June of 2023, there remained several youths who had not yet completed their time and program requirements at DJJ. After planning by all involved parties in this county and the development of IRPs (see below) these youth were returned to the county and housed in units in the B wing near the youth still facing serious charges. Due to the small number of females in detention, the population of SYTF/DJJ girls were housed with the sole female unit in JH.

² See the section, Programing and Education, below regarding the development of the plan by which the individual youth's rehabilitation is outlined.

The disproportionality of Latinx young adults, as described in previous JH and JR reports, also applies to SYTF. In fact, at the time of inspection, almost all males in the SYTF/LIFT program were young adults of color (95%). Finally, as has been stated in past inspection recommendations, the need for data reporting continues to be essential, especially outcome data to determine if programming efforts are successful, and if not, to determine where improvements should be made.

COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations

- Probation, Alternative Education, Behavioral Health, Medical and other departments for supporting the success of our youth through cross-departmental collaboration.
- JR Staff and partners on helping establish the new LIFT program and begin to provide the youth with a much needed, less-restrictive program before release.
- COE Alternative Education Department for continually assisting the SYTF youth to further their education and promoting excitement and motivation to foresee future career opportunities, and fostering the insight of, "if you can see it, you can be it."
- SCCOE for hiring staff who are excited about their responsibilities and willing to invest their time and energy.
- Behavioral Health for using the best practice of treating co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders concurrently, and for providing a clinician who works with a youth while they are in SYTF in JH and then in LIFT at JR.

Recommendations

Probation Department

Previously Recommended and Continued to be Recommended

- Evaluate the efficacy of SYTF programs on an annual basis.
- Assure that the girls have equal access to programming and mirror facilities.
- Develop Policies and Procedures for the SYTF and LIFT youth and personnel be completed, published and put into service.

Newly Recommended

- Establish a systematic process to track SYTF/LIFT youth outcomes as they enter/re-enter the community, and then when they have completed their probation.
- Coordinate Research and Development with COE, and their ability to track the positive outcomes for SYTF youth who have continued toward their educational goals.
- Increase funding for transportation to allow greater access to activities/work while participating in LIFT.
- SYTF to offer Wrap or Wrap-like services as part of the transition of care plan.

Alternative Education Department, County Office of Education

- Memorialize the best practices of the college liaison team to insure the consistency of this program in the future.
- Document the successes of the SYTF participants, including short-term, mid-term and long-term successes of the college-bound and CTE youth., including recidivism.

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 and young adults of the County.

In fulfillment of these responsibilities, the JJC conducted its initial inspection of the new SYTF institution in April, 2022, the next inspection in July/August, 2023, and the current one from June-September 2024, pursuant to California Welfare and Institutions Code (W&I) §229. SYTF is intended for young people who previously were sent by the Juvenile Court to the California Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). SYTF is a comprehensive rehabilitation program within a secure confinement facility for young people up to 25 years of age. The disposition and conditions of confinement are determined by the Juvenile Court in regular consultation with Probation, Behavioral Health, and Education.³

SYTF is required to comply with Title 15 and 24 minimum standards of the California Code of Regulations for local juvenile detention facilities. These regulations set standards for the management and conditions of detention facilities, treatment of and programming for young people. This includes education, behavioral health and medical services, recreation/exercise, and the handling of personal effects and food and nutrition.

The JJC inspection team of eight Commissioners conducted in-person and virtual interviews with administrators and staff from Probation, the County Office of Education, Behavioral Health, and Custody Health Services. Commissioners reviewed internal documents related to SYTF operations, reports and presentations from Probation and articles and reports focusing on juvenile justice. The SYTF team focused exclusively on those elements unique to SYTF/LIFT and distinct from the JH and JR program.

Santa Clara County's only secure housing option in 2020 was JH. The original youth dispositioned into SYTF were housed in the empty A wing. Upon the arrival of youth from the county who had not yet completed their time and requirements of their commitment to DJJ, those youth were housed in unused units on the B wing, in proximity to the youth still pending serious charges. Due to the small number of females in detention, the population of SYTF/DJJ returnees were mixed in the sole female unit in JH. A step-down facility (consisting of 2 pods) was established in 2023 at the JR to provide a less-restrictive environment for the LIFT program. With appropriate measures in place, these arrangements ensure appropriate sight and sound separation between SYTF and JH and JR youth.³ The following report contains the results of the SYTF inspection in SYTF administration/operations, facilities, programs and education, behavioral health and medical services, and a survey of the SYTF youth and staff.

³ See Welfare and Institutions Sections 208.5 and 208.55

SYTF: POPULATION, ADMINISTRATION AND FACILITIES

The youth population at SYTF/LIFT has grown from 27 at the time of the 2023 inspection to a total of 57 youth that have now participated in the program since 2021 (this includes youth in JH/JR, out in the community in probation phase, and youth who have left the program).

At the time of the 2024 SYTF Inspection (June-Sep 2024), there were about 45 youth who were being supervised across JH/JR and the community. They were mostly male except for the 3 females. Towards the end of the Inspection (Sep 2024), all three of the females had returned to the community.

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

SYTF by Gender and Fiscal Year of Commitment (n=57)				
Gender	FY 21-22	FY 22-23	FY 23-24	Total
Female	0	2	2	4 (7%)
Male	10	30	13	53 (93%)
Total	10	32	15	57 (100%)

SYTF by Age at Adjudication and Fiscal Year of Commitment (n=57)

Age	FY 21-22	FY 22-23	FY 23-24	TOTAL
15-16	1	4	2	7 (12%)
17-18	4	12	7	23 (40%)
19-25	3	16	5	24 (42%)
Over 25	2	0	1	3 (5%)
Total	10	32	15	57 (100%)

SYTF by Race/Ethnicity and Fiscal Year of Commitment (n=57)

Race/ Ethnicity	FY 21-22	FY 22-23	FY 23-24	TOTAL
Asian/PI	0	1	0	1 (2%)
Black	2	2	2	6 (11%)
Latino	8	27	11	46 (81%)
Other	0	1	0	1 (2%)
White	0	1	2	3 (5%)
Total	10	32	15	57 (100%)

ADMINISTRATION AND FACILITIES- JUVENILE HALL

For most of the 2023-24 year, SYTF was operating between four and five units in JH; two units on the “B” side for DJJ returnees and a girl’s unit that was shared with non-SYTF females. Two units on the “A” side were used initially only for Santa Clara County youth dispositioned directly into the SYTF program. For most of the year, the youth in those units had similar housing to others, although on April 23rd, one unit was transferred into the newly opened A3, which had been “softened” to create a more home-like feel and decor. It had new furniture for their rooms with a single bed, a desk and a bookcase, and a better set-up for the common areas. Wire mesh was replaced with plexiglass to look less custodial. The two “B” units were phased out as some of the DJJ returnees were folded into the programming and housing of the “A” side programming and housing, and some were released. The JJC continues to find it less than desirable that SYTF girls are housed with the rest of the female population in the JH, because they cannot enjoy certain advantages found in housing for the males, such as a kitchen area where the youth can prepare

their own breakfast or a snack. At one point there were three SYTF females and they have since stepped down to the LIFT program.

At the time of the inspection, JH had an overall Program Manager, two Supervising Group counselors and 21 group counselors assigned to SYTF.

A Program Manager oversees both the SYTF in JH and the LIFT at JR and seeks ways to enrich their experiences and successfully transition the youth back into the community. Included in the Program Manager's duties is grant writing and monitoring contracts. The counselor's bid for two-year assignments have special training to prepare them to manage the young adult population.

Two probation managers oversee facilities and programs for the whole of JH facilities, including the SYTF and the general JH population.

ADMINISTRATION AND FACILITIES- JAMES RANCH

Since last year's SYTF Inspection Report, the step-down (less restrictive) program has been put in place at the James Ranch. At the time of inspection, SYTF males were housed in the H pod and SYTF females were housed in the G pod. The units (or pods) are set up in a dormitory style. Each pod has 6 bunk beds with a free-standing cabinet for personal belongings next to each youth's bed. Large screen televisions are in each pod. The bathroom is set up with double amenities to allow for use by two people.

Adjacent to both the male and female units is a separate room used as a lounge area. It contains a microwave, refrigerator, storage area and desk area with laptops. Both the sleeping areas and lounge areas have a softened appearance to make them more home-like and have been personalized by the youth with decorations, photos, and posters.

SYTF youth have access to the same general Ranch facilities as the rest of the population. Youth may access the gym, library, classrooms, pools, outdoor recreation areas and the culinary arts building, where youth can, with prior approval, prepare food for themselves. SYTF youth use the same facilities for their medical and behavioral health visits and areas for monitored phone calls. At the time of our June visit, there were eight SYTF youth at the Ranch: six males and two females, ranging in age from 18 to 22 years. After the bid cycle for staff rotation at the beginning of August, 12 Probation Counselor II staff were in place; six existing and six who are new to the SYTF program. All staff have been with the James Ranch for at least one year. SYTF youth are engaged in paid internships or jobs outside the Ranch, volunteer work, and some were enrolled in school for the summer. When the school year begins at the end of August, some youth will attend regular in-person school through either Evergreen College or San Jose City College. There is also enrollment in the LiUna⁴ program for those youth seeking certification in the trades.

⁴ Career and technical education by Laborers' International Union of North America.

On the weekends, youth engage in various activities such as Saturday school, optional religious services, outings and classes of their choice.

Youth wear Ranch-issued clothing for ordinary activity around the Ranch. They may wear their street clothes for school attendance and for jobs outside the Ranch. Staff ensure they have clothing appropriate for the activity.

Due to the age of SYTF youth, they are very often engaged in other activities, many of which take place outside the Ranch facility. Coordinating these daily trips and the time involved presents an ongoing challenge for staff to get these youth to and from where they need to be. Should any need arise during the time they are off campus, basic cell phones are loaned to them so they can communicate with the counselors to maintain safety.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (P&P)

The status of policies and procedures for SYTF remains the same as it has for the three preceding years. There are no separate policies and procedures for SYTF and LIFT. The JJC has been informed by BSCC (Board of State Community Corrections) that the issue is being addressed as there is ongoing work to prepare a separate document for the two levels. Since October of 2022, the three-volume set offered by Lexipol and adapted for this county is the same controlling documents for all youth in custody in Santa Clara County, though there is a separate Procedures Manual for each the JH and JR. The JJC continues their previous recommendations that the rules for the SYTF and LIFT youth and personnel be completed, published and put into service.

PROGRAMMING AND EDUCATION

The Santa Clara County SYTF program was initiated in July, 2021, upon the SB 823 mandated closing of DJJ. The programming for each youth in SYTF is guided by the Individual Rehabilitation Plan (IRP), which is formulated as the individual is admitted to the program. These requirements are reviewed by the judge involved in the case, progress is based on the youth's progress toward meeting those specific requirements outlined in the IRP. Most IRPs include a UCCI⁵ Cognitive Behavioral Interventions program which consists of 40 group sessions plus seven sessions focusing on re-entry planning. Other programs also deal with Victim Impact/Awareness, and special requirements might be based on the issues underlying the petitioned offense. Other programming, including Life Skills, Family therapy/reintegration services are also offered as needed.

SYTF programming at the JH facility has progressed over the last three years, expanding options for the residents. With all but one of the DJJ returnees having merged into the available programming and housing in the SYTF units, the SYTF administration explored the options for providing greater rehabilitation services. Funding and grants have allowed the expanded options for programming. SYTF youth can participate in several programs while at JH. A previously unused unit (A5) has been turned into a program hub. A full-time culinary arts teacher (shared with LIFT) has a kitchen to use for a full culinary arts program. The virtual forklift has been relocated there for its additional space. Art and music programs are especially robust, as there are a variety of ways that the youth can explore these activities. A bicycle repair program runs out of unit A5, giving youth an opportunity to earn money repairing bicycles, and perhaps explore the possibility of starting a business, which would be very pertinent in the Bay Area with its emphasis on a bicycle culture.

In both JH and JR, classes in construction and other trades are offered. If the actual hands-on training is not offered on site, residents have the option to participate in 180 hours of tool safety training that accumulates certificates in multiple trades, which qualifies them for apprenticeships upon release. A seven-week course designed to provide 150 exploratory classes to expose the participants to other available options is also available. Less formal training, but still valuable skills are gardening and cooking programs, though the offerings vary between units in JH. Additional services and support offered includes a writing workshop, tutoring, and a library. One youth is taking advantage of the firefighting training at Pine Grove Youth Conservation Camp.

STAFFING

The Alternative Education Department of the Santa Clara County Office of Education (COE) provides high school and college programming for SYTF youth at both JH and JR. Two full time instructors support the culinary arts program at JH and JR. There are three college liaisons- one supports SYTF youth only, while the other two support the general population (one each for JR

⁵ University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute

and JH). The SYTF liaison travels between both sites. The principal oversees all school staff and the three college liaisons.

SYTF Education

There are youth considered as “special education”, high school students, and college attendees who have been benefiting from education services offered to the SYTF youth.

The SYTF college liaison provides excellent service for the youth who are working on their college degrees. To date, 47 students have been supported by his college liaison services. Currently, there are 30 SYTF youth involved in these college services. This number increases when the dually-enrolled students (in high school and community college) are added to this number.

Seven LIFT youth visited the University of California at Berkeley for “Cal Day” on April 13, 2024 to expose the youth to the resources available to them, to college life, and to Project Underground. The youth were encouraged to “see” themselves in college, potentially obtaining a 4-year degree.

Not only have the SYTF participants received basic education, junior college and trade preparation, they have the chance to participate in advanced/college classes with a variety of options. San Jose City College and Evergreen Community College offer classes while the youth are housed in the facilities. Several young adults at the LIFT leave to go to classes in person.)

The SYTF liaison partners with community-based organizations (CBOs) to augment the services he can provide the SYTF youth. Some of these CBOs and the services they provide are as follows:

1. Educational Opportunities Projects and Services (EOPS) from San Jose City College (SJCC)- provides academic counseling
2. Rising Scholars Network (RSN)- through Evergreen Community College District: they hired a program coordinator to run an academic center at SJCC to provide support services but this center has not opened yet. The SYTF youth will be transitioned to this Program Coordinator. They still have plans to hire an academic counselor. RSN works with all seven South Bay Community Colleges.
3. Project Rebound (PR)- A program at the 23 California State University (CSU) campuses as well as at the University of California (UC) campuses. The CSUs and UCs have similar programs to RSN. PR engages with youth while they are still in custody to expose them to the rigor of college courses. The youth take CSU and UC classes while in custody. The CSU classes are college-level ethnic studies courses. For the UC classes, the students use Zoom to participate in a UC Berkeley class.
4. Underground Scholars (US)- program at UCs that supports students who have been involved in the justice system. UC Berkeley has a center for these students specifically.

Both PR and US follow the SYTF students for all 4 or 5 years that the student is enrolled. These programs reconnect with the SYTF college liaison periodically to provide updates and progress notes on the SYTF youth. Both programs have a holistic approach to supporting these students, focusing on all their needs as students and young adults. They are given support with CalFresh (state nutrition program), housing, transportation, etc.

One of the SYTF youth visited UC Berkeley with the SYTF college liaison and a probation officer. They met with a volunteer at the center who will check in with the youth weekly to help them stay on track academically. The SYTF college liaison is a graduate of UC Berkeley and uses their extensive network as an alumnus to leverage additional services for SYTF youth.

Another SYTF youth is due to start UC Los Angeles in Fall 2024. Underground Scholars connected with this youth to follow up with his transition to college. The youth's mother is also keeping the SYTF college liaison updated on her child's progress.

There is another LIFT youth who is extremely interested in the medical field, Through the SYTF college liaison's connections they have interned in a lab at Stanford University. Many of these youth wanted more education because they didn't receive adequate (or any), education while at DJJ. Thus, it is common for these youth to overload their schedules, which the college liaison advises them not to do. These youth are provided with technological support to aid their success, including laptops for college.

Tracking Of Educational Outcomes

There are many inspiring success stories developing with our SYTF youth population. The Education Subcommittee inquired about tracking the SYTF young adults' success four to five years into the future. Information on the SYTF students' success in college will be tracked by the probation officers. The youth at UC Berkeley is part of the first cohort of SYTF students at this university so data is not yet available. SCCOE is interested in collecting this data and the principal will encourage the college liaison team to collect this information, so that he can share this with the JJC and the community at large.

Support for Families

The LIFT youth are the closest to transferring from a community college to a four-year college. The SYTF college liaison helps the youths' families navigate the complex college and financial aid application processes. The SYTF college liaison has made it a priority to involve the youths' parents as much as possible through this transfer process, especially as it pertains to applying for financial aid via the Free Application For Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Filling out financial aid forms is time-intensive for the college liaison because these families require extensive assistance, particularly regarding income tax information.

While hearing the SYTF college liaison speak about this program was inspiring and filled with wonderful anecdotal information, the Education Subcommittee thinks it is incredibly important to document these successes and look for lessons learned in the spirit of continuous improvement.

Documenting the success of the college liaison program would truly help in acquiring more funding and public/private partnerships.

The success of the SYTF college program as it currently stands seems to revolve around the SYTF college liaison's enthusiasm, initiative, and personal connections. Successful activities and methods should be documented so that it can be replicated by another college liaison and won't be dependent upon the personality of whoever fills this role.

INCIDENT REPORTS & GRIEVANCES

The JJC's review of Incident Reports for JH, JR and SYTF are triggered by a review of the Due Process forms that a youth receives after some action results in a discipline for a youth. The total number of Due Process forms for youth housed in the JH facilities was 66. Notably, in the month of December, there were no Incident Reports for the SYTF youth.

A Grievance Form is available in every unit and is often used for the youth to access services and to bring to the attention of the staff in terms of their interactions with the youth. The grievances for the year for SYTF include:

- Requesting a haircut,
- Lights being too bright to allow for sleep,
- Covid concerns about unmasked staff,
- Concerns about the unit closing (which was only a rumor.)
- Whether they were offered programs that were essential to the completion of the IRPs,
- The young women's felt that they were not getting the same programming offered to the SYTF men
- Complaints about the use of the phone and air conditioning.

Staff responded to all issues.

The only incident for LIFT was initiated through the proper mechanism (grievance) for a violation of the youth's rights. It was thoroughly investigated and found that grievance was actionable. The staff was instructed to cease the violation.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES (BHS)

The behavioral health team assigned to the SYTF program was fully-staffed at the time of this inspection. It is composed of a Program Manager II, Program Manager I, A Clinical Supervisor, two Psychiatric Social Worker/Marriage Family Therapist positions, two Psychiatric Occupational Therapists, and three Rehabilitation Counselors. The Clinical Supervisor position and one of the

Rehabilitation Counselor positions are funded by the Probation Department, reflecting the shared responsibility and partnership between the two departments.

Youth are assigned to a clinician when they first arrive at JH, and if they are later placed in the SYTF program, they continue to receive services from the same clinician, who also continues as their clinician, when they step down to the program at JR. Youth are seen a minimum of once a week or as determined based on the clinical need.

A team approach is used to support the youth in the program. The youth and their natural supports, such as family members, are involved in decision making and the development of each youth's IRP. Multi-disciplinary team meetings are currently held every six months to review progress on the IRP, but it was stated during the inspection that there are discussions to hold them more frequently. As youth make progress on their individual goals and step down from the program at Juvenile Hall, they enter the LIFT program at JR. Behavioral health services are provided to youth for as long as they are deemed clinically necessary. Part of discharge goals include supporting youth to have the skills to recognize when a BH need occurs again in the future and to have the knowledge of how to access services.

When youth are ready to transition from the LIFT program at the Ranch to the community, they are assessed for continuing behavioral health needs. If they still need behavioral services, a referral is made to a provider in the community and every effort is made for a warm hand-off, where the youth's current clinician contacts the new provider to facilitate a smooth transition.

The BHS is using the Neuro-sequential Model of Therapeutics that focuses on young children and adults who have experienced trauma, with the goal of enhancing overall behavior and functioning. Since this is a new program, the BHS does not have a large enough sample size to track pre/post outcomes. With that said, early indications are that the program is having a positive impact. The indicator for success will be tracking how the young adults fare as they transition back into the community and face the stressors of real life.

The BHS states that they have a strong, collaborative relationship with other partners within the SYTF/LIFT programs (JPD, COE, the Medical Clinic, County Care Providers), and they especially value the partnership with the Probation Department, who have been very responsive to their needs. The behavioral health team reports that the number of youths referred to the program is larger than they had anticipated but they have adapted, particularly with the support of the Probation Department which is paying for two behavioral health staff positions.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Medical services for SYTF youth are provided by Juvenile Custody Health Services (JCHS) at JH and at the JR. When a youth transitions to SYTF, medical staff endeavors to "pick them up where they are" to ensure continuity of their individualized medical care. Due to their older age, developmental stage, and the duration of their stay, these youth require age-appropriate medical

care and screening that mirror existing medical guidelines. Youth have access to comprehensive medical, optical and dental care as well as specialty care as needed.

Staff include: three physicians, multiple nursing and licensed vocational nursing staff, one Medical Social Worker, three Medical Clerks and an Administrative Assistant. The addition of the SYTF youth has prompted a request for an additional full-time Nurse to augment care for all youth in both facilities. Telehealth is available to JR youth and for non-emergency after-hours care.

The medical facilities include exam rooms, office space for patient consultation, a medication room with a Pyxis auto-dispensing system, a lab, basic onsite x-Ray facilities, a small waiting area and two infirmaries. They have received pre-approval for remodeling the reception area at JH and they are waiting for approval for renovations at the JR clinic. A need for additional infirmary space was determined after the Covid pandemic, which would enable and enhance the medical team's ability to respond to infection control measures, should they need to be employed.

The medical staff is launching a Peer Health education program for SYTF and LIFT youth. It is similar in nature to the Peer Health intervention for the Youth Advisory Council, in that it teaches a group of youth leaders to teach their peers about relevant health education information. It is made up of four youth from JH and two youth from the Ranch, one of whom is female. Peer Health is a six-week health curriculum covering general health, STDs, substance use and reproductive health (e.g., birth control, pregnancy). This program was successful at the James Ranch and is now used at Juvenile Hall. During the interview, it was reported that there was positive feedback showing that there are benefits to youth trained by a peer trainer (such as knowledge retention) and to the trainer themselves, who develop leadership and communication skills as a result of this program.

Transition of Care

The staff are dedicated to preparing these youth to take ownership and control of their health care after release. They assist them with obtaining insurance, such as eligibility for Medi-Cal, finding a primary care physician, and how to engage with medical personnel so they can be an advocate for their own care. Medical Services can also utilize California Health and Human Services' CalAIM (California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal) program for those enrolled in Medi-Cal. This major reform to the Medi-Cal program is designed to offer greatly improved care for vulnerable populations, such as those who are system-impacted and justice-involved.

Youth, in general, enter the facilities with complex needs and a history of substance use disorders and other comorbidities. The medical team provides comprehensive medically-assisted therapy, or MAT, for substance-use disorders, specifically opioid use disorders. Youth can request services or be started on services with consent when identified by the youth or others. The medical staff collaborates with BHS and JPD as appropriate for comprehensive care and to support transitions into the community.

RE-ENTRY INTO THE COMMUNITY

For the SYTF program, Support Unit probation officers' involvement begins once a youth is committed to Santa Clara County's SYTF. After disposition, personnel trained within the system work on the admittee's IRP. The Juvenile Probation Officer (JPO) that has worked with the young person through to disposition is an essential part of this process. A SYTF Support Unit JPO is assigned to the youth, as well as Behavioral Health, Psychiatric Services, Medical and Probation Counselors who will be working with the youth when the youth enter the SYTF unit. The IRP also takes into consideration the committing offense, which determines the amount of time set as the youth's base term and the needs to address not only the youth's criminogenic needs, but also to help the youth successfully reintegrate into society. The attorney for the youth and the District Attorney also has input into the IRP, as well as the youth's family. All of this is mandated to take place within 30 days and is approved by the judge.

The youth's base term can be reduced if the youth is making progress leading to the goals set out in the IRP. Judicial reviews are conducted every six months, at which time the Court, after reading a report from the youth's SYTF Support Unit JPO and input from the youth and other parties, can reduce the youth's base time, order changes in housing (LIFT at JR) OTs (out temporarily) as possible visits home with structured guidelines, and even order the youth to be released. Before the actual release into the community the JPO creates a comprehensive Community Transition Plan with the youth, their family and other partners before release and/or discharge.⁶

The time after release is also covered by court reviews. While youth released from a commitment to JH or JR have Wrap services, these are not available for release to the SYTF youth. It would be valuable for Wrap-like services to be available to this population and may be resolved by Re-Entry services provided by Santa Clara County Department of Education (SCCOE) and Adult Probation.

The supervision of the SYTF youth in the community is provided by the Support Unit POs as they transition. These POs are a central part of the development of each youth's IRP and work with the youth from release until the end of supervision by the Probation Department. The Support Unit POs receive special training in working with young adults that enable them to consider ways to assist in this population upon their release. A separate issue was the re-entry for the DJJ returnees who had lost almost all contact with their families and therefore had housing needs upon release as well as searching for employment. If these youth were released from their custody time from JH instead of the LIFT program at JR, this resulted in not having any unsupervised OTs to prepare them for their release. All youth released need simple OTs to go to DMV, a bank to set up an account, explore housing, and work or school options and to learn other life skills, and to reunify with their family if returning home.

Services for youth, who are released from SYTF directly from JH, are more intensive. All OTs for these youth must be approved by the court. A request from the SYTF Support Unit is for

⁶ There have been incidents in which there had been too short a time to effectively set up this plan which led partners in successful return to the community, scrambling to see facilities and services in place.

more “Life Skills” programming, and an increased ability to transport the LIFT residents to jobs and outside schooling in which they can participate when they are 6 months from their expected release date.

Because of transportation deficiencies, the residents are limited to jobs within Morgan Hill. OTs to families start with a four-hour release once a week. Family team meetings are part of the development of the IRP and continue incrementally before actual release.

Some SYTF releases are either referred to or self-refer to Adult Probation’s (AP) Re-Entry Services. Adult Re-Entry services also are offered through Santa Clara County Office of Education which runs a school for those receiving their services to complete their high school education. These services see themselves as Re-Entry Champions and try to provide caseworker-like support including “adulting lessons” (for example, how to react like an average person and make eye contact.) They also work with CBOs such as Debug, Catholic Charities, New Hope for Youth and Fresh Lifelines for Youth.

TRACKING OF OUTCOMES

JJC Commissioners had a meeting with the Probation Research and Development (RAD) team to understand data tracking. The RAD team is diligently tracking relevant information for the SYTF/LIFT youth, including their journey through JH/JR and stages, ages, ethnicity, status, etc. However, the tracking of longer-term outcomes and recidivism data remains unclear. Longer term data such as educational status, employment, and housing are hard to collect as it depends on the ability and interest of the youth to remain in contact. Furthermore, any recidivism would only be captured if it happened within Santa Clara County. Approval had been obtained only recently to survey the outgoing youth and families to get their consent to participate in future discussions and to identify their best point of contact. The Commissioners also discussed the potential to use a third-party organization to gather relevant data, since youth and families may be more willing to speak to someone not directly connected to the Probation Department.

The JJC has also had discussions with the Probation leadership to start a systematic tracking of “near-term successes” of the SYTF/LIFT youth, as they leave the program. Key youth status information (such as housing, education and work status) will be captured by the Probation supervisors as the youth enter their probation period (away from the JH/JR) and again as they complete their probation. This would give a sense of the near-term progress and level of rehabilitation of the youth. While certainly not a measure of longer-term success, it can help to raise awareness of success and risks.

SURVEY

During the Inspections of the SYTF Program at JH and at the LIFT, the Inspection Team distributed anonymous surveys to the youth in those facilities to better understand their

challenges and success. As this is the third report since the transfer of this program back to the county from state run facilities, the JJC was especially interested in reviewing some longer-term data from youth regarding the success of the new programs.

The ages of the 23-youth surveyed ranged from 16 through to 21, and they had been involved in this level of treatment between two months to five years and three months. The survey included questions that had been asked of some of them in previous years inspections. During the JJC's time with the youth the Commissioners were able to hear their open concerns, many of which were reflected in their responses to the survey.

The five satisfaction questions on the survey were:

1. *The probation counselors are supportive and want me to succeed.*
2. *I feel protected against Covid -19.*
3. *I feel I am making progress in my education.*
4. *I feel safe around the probation counselors.*
5. *I feel safe around other participants in the program.*

Each question could be answered by one of five options: with the range from Disagree to Agree with a numerical value between one to five. Most responses were of the most positive nature, with only two most strongly disagreeing with the question regarding counselors being supportive and wanting me to succeed. A few (no more than three were neutral) and all the rest were positive responses.

As in previous years, the surveys questioned the relationship the youth were able to maintain or rebuild with their families, as the postulation that the participants were more likely to be able to have a successful return into society if they were near to "home" and able to keep or rebuild relationships with their families. All but one youth have been able to use in-person visits and/or phone, mail and electronic media to have contact with their family. Another tenet of SYTF is to allow family counseling to resolve any issues that might be detrimental to the youth's reintegration. The two responding youth who were parents had been visiting their own children as well.

As discussed earlier, the basis for the modality of SYTF is a youth's IRP. The response to the youth's satisfaction with their IRP had only three participants dissatisfied with their plan, and their belief that their IRP would be helpful to their release had only two denying that it would help them, with six indicating they thought it was going to be very helpful and the rest thought it would help some.

The question of who was helpful in their participation in the process ranged from family to peers or to all or many members of their support teams (BH, therapists, group counselors, etc.) with comments like one youth's response, "staff and peers who have shown me the importance of life," and another, "those who help me stay on point."

Unfortunately, when queried whether each youth had a support person who was participating with them, nine of the 23 did not. Fourteen youth felt that at least one of the programs in which they were participating was helping, though two said that they were not.

The question "When you think about leaving this program, what worries you?" Most youth focused on issues that might be referred to as "adulting." Concerns ranged from "housing," "ability to get a job," "finances" to the fear of being unable to resist the lure of drugs.

When asked what could improve the programming they were receiving, several youths asked for more programming in several areas, including mental health, drug counseling, and preparation for release. Others responded with a stated need that staff treat participants with consistency in the enforcement of the rules. And the theme of more food, exercise equipment and more "privileges" was reflected in several of the open questions.

The question of "what programs you would like to see that are not yet offered," merged with the list of college or vocational classes in which they would like to participate. They ranged from: criminology, medical training, philosophy, psychology, economics, computer technology, business, sociology, biology, to Chicano studies as areas into which they would like to study. Vocational areas of interest include training to be: a barber, an electrician, HVAC, welding, carpentry, sheet metal work, plumbing, more varied construction, and to qualify as a personal trainer. There was also a request for more in-person classes. The follow-up question was whether the youth felt as though they were getting support for these interests. Only two felt that they were not, nine felt they were getting some support, and eight felt that they were getting that necessary support. One answer that came under another question suggests that hands on craft-making as well as learning finance would be helpful for the youth.

The question of what other things the youth would like to have in their unit resulted in the following responses: several youths discussed requesting having a pet in the unit of which three youth specifically requested a turtle. They indicated that they would like to be able to use their tablets in their rooms. Other requests included new video games, more activities, and cooking supplies. They also asked for more workout equipment including specific requests for free weights, a bench press, and exercise and fitness programs.

A question about their reading choices and what they would like to see made available to them ranged from college texts to biographies, to American history, from more "urban/street life" books to ones that included non-violent ways to communicate. For entertainment, when they are not reading, they like to: work out, watch tv and movies, play games including chess, play video games, listen to music, and use the computer.

The youth who responded to the question about using educational videos from the medical clinic responded that they wanted more information about how to remain drug free, videos about nutrition and anything that deals with the workings of the mind.

The question about the hardest thing about being in SYTF drew responses from struggling to reach a higher level under the PBIS system, difficulties with dealing with others, trying to do well while others around were bad influences, being away from family, “doing time,” a desire for more “nutritional” food, lack of respect from the staff and what was felt as inconsistency in their treatment, lack of flexibility in the rules, and not being able to spend time running in the grass. For at least one youth the hardest thing about SYTF was an inability to be employed.

When asked what the youth would like the Commission to know, they again requested more food, more programs, more privileges for those in the top levels of the PBIS program, and more preparation for being in the community upon re-entry. Several youths commented that there was a need for funding for housing upon release, and several were grateful for the opportunity to have another chance in life, and they want to succeed.

The youth in LIFT were appreciative to have actual welding available, that they could have OTs which allow them to go to off-campus classes, go to work and spend time with family. When the Commissioners inquired about how they felt about their “Aftercare Counselor” they reminded the Commissioners that Aftercare was for youth completing a commitment to James Ranch while the LIFT youth had Re-Entry POs.

Staff Survey⁷

Five SYTF staff returned surveys to the Commission. While the responses to all three questions were generally positive there were some issues raised.

The first question was: *What do you think about the programming for the youth who are your responsibility? What works for you? What works for the youth? What doesn't work?*

All staff indicated that there was still work to do to ensure a successful program. This included more consistent standards for programming and guidelines for youth. However, several mentions were made about the positive rehabilitation that was occurring and the ability to help the youth engage with the community and find services in the community.

There was a suggestion that youth need to be held more accountable with one staff opining that not all youth can benefit from the program.

Question 2: *What further programing do you feel could be added to improve the likelihood of SYTF success after Less Restrictive Housing and/or Release?*

The staff responded that the youth need stable housing on release and continuing supportive services out in the community. While in the program there were several suggestions that life

⁷ See Appendix X

skills such as financial literacy and community engagement should be addressed. There was also a comment that more trade school training and connections should occur.

Question 3: " *Would you bid to work in SYTF in the future? Why or why not?*"

Four said yes and one said maybe. While there were very positive comments about seeing the youth grow and learn. They also enjoyed helping the youth to reintegrate into the community and find necessary resources. But one very positive reviewer did say that access to computers had created a problem, and one was concerned about staff safety.

EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The JJC strives to view every aspect of its work through an equity and justice lens. This perspective permeates all aspects of its reports, as it has in this SYTF report. Santa Clara County juvenile justice system partners have made major efforts to address disproportionality in the juvenile justice system.

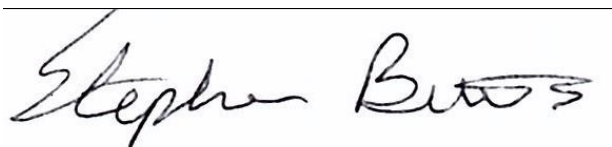
At the time of the inspection, 95% of SYTF were youth of color. However, disproportionality is not SYTF’s issue alone. As has been stated in previous JJC inspection reports, “this persistence [of disproportionality] reinforces the JJC’s call to address equity and social justice issues upstream of the justice system, to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline.”

SUMMARY FINDINGS

The JJC has completed its annual inspection of SYTF/SYTF. Based on what the JJC learned during its inspection and review of documents, data, and state and agencies’ inspections, the JJC considers the SYTF residents are well-supervised and thoughtfully managed and that SYTF meets the requirements of Titles 15 and 24 of the California Code of Regulations. The Commendations and Recommendations in this report lists successes and opportunities for specific improvements. The Commission requests responses to its recommendations by January 1, 2025.

Approved by the Juvenile Justice Commission, Santa Clara County, on October 1, 2024

Stephen Betts, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Betts". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below a horizontal line.

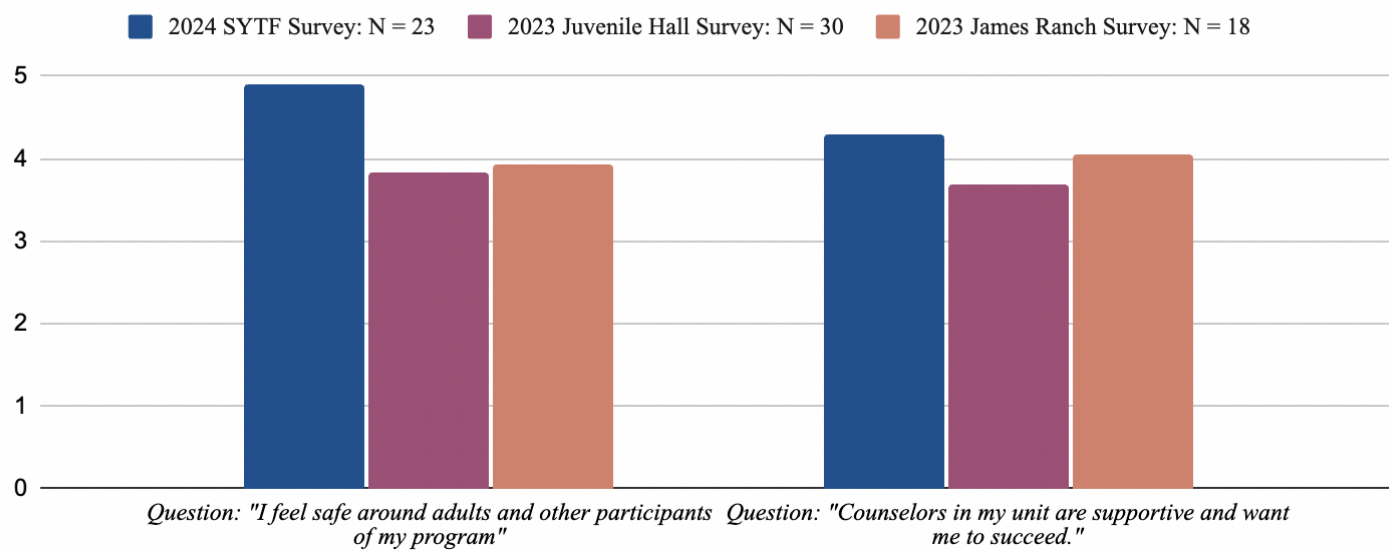
Dev Ghoshal, Chair, SYTF Inspection Cmt

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ghoshal". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below the name.

Appendix A

Comparison of Mean Scores Between General Population and SYTF Youth on Likert-Scale Questions

Data Gathered from 2024 SYTF & 2023 JR/JH Calendar Year Inspections



Appendix B

*Mean Scores of SCC's SYTF Program on Likert-Scale Questions
2023 Calendar Year Inspection: N = 23*

