

**SANTA CLARA COUNTY  
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION  
INSPECTION REPORT**

**WILLIAM F. JAMES BOYS' RANCH  
2005**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission inspected the William F. James Boys' Ranch on March 3, 2005 in an announced visit, pursuant to the State of California Welfare and Institutions Code §229. On April 7 and May 27, 2005, the JJC returned for unannounced visits. Commissioners inspected the facility, reviewed programs, observed activities and interviewed wards and staff.

This report is a summary of the information gathered regarding the wards, staff, physical plant, programs, school, medical clinic, mental health services, and survey results. From this descriptive information concerns were noted, commendations made, and recommendations listed.

**DESCRIPTION**

**Population** On the March 3, 2005 visit Commissioners were given a population summary for the month of February 2005. The population was 68 on March 1, 2005. The average daily population was 61. There were two escapes for the month, one Ranch failure and nine were in the Aftercare pre-release Program. There were 32 new admits during the month. Sixteen were original commitments; one was from another Ranch; nine were returning escapees; two were returning failures; and four were returns from pre-release.

On April 7, 2005 the population was 84. During the first week of April there were no escapes or serious injury and no wards on the pre-release program. On the May 27<sup>th</sup> visit the population was 86 with two additional wards being released that day and 17 on the pre-release program. The following data reflect the ages of the wards on the April 7<sup>th</sup> visit:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Number</u>
15	15
16	25
17	35
18	<u>9</u>
	84

The ethnic breakdown of the Ranch population on April 7, 2005, was:

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Hispanic	49	58
White	14	17
Black	11	14
Vietnamese	6	7
Other Asian	2	2
Samoan	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	84	100

The "working capacity" of the Ranch is 88, keeping six beds for pre-release failures and two beds in the isolation rooms for the total rated capacity of 96. Upon completion of the on-site Ranch

program, wards are returned to their homes or other placements in the Aftercare Program under the supervision of the Aftercare Probation Counselor. Aftercare is the Pre-Release aspect of the program. They are still a part of the ranch program and have not been released from probation supervision by the judge. On May 27<sup>th</sup> there were 17 wards on Aftercare.

Monolingual and bilingual wards have their language translation needs met by staff. Many of the wards at the Ranch have committed serious offenses. Gang issues are an ongoing concern. When 58% of the population is Hispanic, there is a potential for Norteño/Sureño conflict that can flare up to violence very easily. Wards with mental health problems are also a concern.

The closing of the Holden Ranch contributed to population increases giving the feeling of a crowded condition at the James Ranch. In the past two years the Ranch population has almost doubled.

There is a room in the dorm that can be used if a ward needs to be placed in isolation until the mental health staff can come to the Ranch. It is rarely used. If a ward is placed in this room, a probation staff member must sit outside the door and maintain the watch sheet every five minutes. A ward who poses a danger to himself or others is transported to Juvenile Hall for evaluation and/or treatment.

Commissioners ate dinner with the wards on the April 7<sup>th</sup> visit. Several wards said school was good and the GED program was good. Counseling sessions had too many wards. They need shampoo because hand soap is being used as shampoo. They do not have enough time to go to the bathroom. They would like to have food from places like McDonald's. One boy, at the Ranch for the fourth time, was completing his high school education and felt he now had the skills to succeed.

During the Commission's April 7, 2005 visit there was a fistfight in the bathroom between two boys. There appeared to be no major injuries, but the Probation staff had to assess the situation as there was no nurse on duty. The incident was gang related and both boys failed the Ranch. They were awaiting transport back to the Hall.

**Staff** Commissioners found the staff to be very cooperative during the three visits. The following staff provided information:

1. Ranch Superintendent, probation supervisors, and counselors (full time and extra help)
2. Medical Services and Mental Health Services personnel from Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System (SCVHHS)
3. Staff from the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE)
4. Vocational education staff from the Enterprise program
5. Kitchen staff

The Ranch is staffed by a Probation Manager, three Probation Supervisors, 21 probation counselors, three night attendants, 15 extra help counselors, four kitchen staff, five school teachers, two teacher's aide, four vocational education teachers, and a nurse. On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, one staff member was on sick leave as he had injured his knee on one of the work crews. Another staff member has been on worker's comp for a month.

James Ranch staff tend to stay, so turnover is very low. Line staff work 16-hour shifts. The Commission understands the reasons (i.e. labor union contracts) why the staff work the long shifts, but also believes that the wards would be better served if that were changed to a shift of no more than a ten-hour day. Some counties, which used the 16-hour days for many years, have changed to a

shorter day, i.e. Orange County, and found that staff have fewer injuries and are better able to cope with the wards and their behaviors

**Recent Changes** A comprehensive assessment of the Ranch program has been initiated. Regular meetings with the Juvenile Detention Reform Steering Committee, including members of the Bench, are scheduled to address Ranch escapes and failures and to find ways to address this problem and to work on having more parental or guardian involvement with wards at the Ranch.

The Chief Probation Officer and Ranch manager have been meeting with local residents to develop ways to solve the security problems at the James Ranch. In addition, the Ranch manager meets with the Santa Clara County Sheriff department and the Morgan Hill Police Chief to discuss security concerns and work on solutions.

Administrative and line staff changes have occurred in the past year. In addition to the new Chief of Probation and new Ranch Manager, other changes since October 1, 2004 include: two probation staff provide, as their sole responsibility, security and surveillance from 6:30 am to 10:30 pm and Sheriff Deputies patrol the exterior perimeter of the Ranch from 9:30 am to 9:30 pm. There are two less staff persons assigned to youth supervision at the Ranch. All of these changes have an impact on the staff. An extensive debriefing process by probation staff has been implemented after every runaway. A volunteer mentorship program for Ranch youth is being developed.

The County is changing the Ranch to a physically more secure facility in response to the nearby community's concerns. The Board of Supervisors approved fencing for the Ranch on May 24, 2005. A GPS system for wards was investigated and found not feasible at this time.

**Physical Plant** Major construction has been going on since the last JJC visit. The cafeteria has been enlarged and the tables changed. A new Program Building is under construction. GSA personnel and an independent contractor were working to get the wiring completed for the alarm system in preparation for an inspection. The Program Building also had some construction personnel working. On May 27<sup>th</sup> Commissioners noticed that the roof on the dining/kitchen building roof was undergoing some minor repairs.

The Program building was to open on March 18, 2005, but it was delayed, as the alarm system for the Ranch had not been wired correctly—with the auto body shop not even included! The Program Building has a large conference room for programs and meetings; three interview rooms, two offices (one for the Probation Manager), the medical clinic, large storage areas, a janitor's closet, and a restroom. When the Program building opens, the medical clinic will relocate. Supervisory staff will move to the current manager's office. Pathways personnel will move to the Counseling building.

The Annual Building Inspection Report, dated February 2004, stated in effect that the items requiring repair are partly a result of wear and tear. The only item identified as a hazard was the sidewalk from the dormitory to the school buildings as it is uneven and cracking. The Commission believes that some minor repairs to the raised and cracked sections would eliminate this safety problem. Commissioners noticed that the exterior of the buildings are in need of painting and some of the gutters were not connected properly.

Commissioners noticed that the recreation room/fitness equipment is in woeful condition. In addition new pool tables are needed. Balls and other sports equipment are in short supply. Almost all of the basketball backboards need to be replaced. The interior of the dorm building is

dingy and in need of a painting. In the dorm also, refurbishment is needed for the lockers along side the bunks.

**Documents Reviewed** The following reports were reviewed:

Office of the Fire Marshal, Santa Clara County Fire Department Inspection, dated September 27, 2004.

2. Santa Clara County Office of Education, Annual Report for Blue Ridge High School to the California Board of Corrections, dated October 25, 2004.
3. Evaluation of Memorandum of Understanding for Court Schools in Santa Clara County, Huskey & Associates, Inc., dated May 2, 2005.
4. Annual Health Inspection for 2003. Commissioners were informed that the 2004 inspection was completed but the Report had not yet been received.
5. Annual Building Inspection Report, dated February 2004.
6. Documents from the William F. James Ranch Community meeting, February 15, 2005.

**Incident Reports** On the April 7<sup>th</sup> visit, incident reports for the last several months were reviewed. Some were merely informational. There was a Mental Health referral. There was an attempted escape and a medical emergency. Others include disruptive conduct and gang related incidents. There were several incident reports when wards lost points, which are called "issues."

**Medical Care** The Valley Medical Center of the SCVHHS provides medical services. Prior to being sent to the Ranch, all wards are given a medical clearance by the medical director. The doctor comes every other week by schedule, not always every two weeks. Last year the doctor visited the Ranch weekly. Currently, there is one nurse who works a split shift from 7:30 am to 11:30 am and 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm. This schedule is the same for weekdays and weekends. Continuity of care is negatively affected as different nurses are scheduled on an irregular basis. Commissioners were informed that medical calls are made four times daily. Due to the workload, the nurse is often unable to leave at 11:30 am. The split shift schedule makes it difficult to document services and review charts during the shift.

During the month of March, 11 wards were taking prescribed psychotropic medications. The number of wards on some form of medication varies, but can be as high as 80%. There were no known contagious diseases at the Ranch. The nurse monitors controlled medications and distributes all medications. Wards cannot be forced to take medication. If a ward will not take his medication, the nurse can talk to him and/or the doctor.

For over five hours during each day there is no nurse on duty at the Ranch. Injuries that occur on the work crew, during PE, and as a result of gang altercations often happen when there is no nurse on the premises. As a result, even minor injuries require emergency medical attention. A ward needing immediate medical care is taken to South Valley Clinic in San Martin. In the event of a major medical emergency, the ward is taken to Valley Medical Center. A ward may also be taken to the Juvenile Hall Clinic.

Dental care procedures are the same as reported in the 2004 inspection report. There is no dentist on-site. Wards are taken to South Valley Clinic in San Martin for emergency dental appointments. They can receive dental care at Juvenile Hall. If the ward has offsite privileges and he has dental insurance, his family may take him to a private dentist with appropriate permission.

**Mental Health Services** Counseling and psychiatric services at the Ranch are provided by the SCVHHS Mental Health Department. The psychiatrist cares for the wards at Juvenile Hall as well as those at both Ranches. There are two fulltime clinicians and one half time

clinician. The mental health staff provides individual and group counseling and is able to meet the language needs of the wards. If a ward needs services that cannot be provided by the on site staff, he may be transported to the Hall. The staff carries pagers and can respond to emergencies.

Staff reported that wards need to address these issues: adjustments to structure and discipline, personal and family issues, and gang tensions. Some wards are clinically mentally ill and the staff is trying to find away to deal with these wards before they come to the Ranch, i.e. Starlight.

Family counseling works best. The staff has had good response from the parents. The Mental Health staff has received Gang Prevention training and they are to receive even more training. The Mental Health staff feels that wards need more services. Additional staff would need to be available to provide these services.

There are two staff from the Family Partners program who work with the ward's family. These Partners, who are volunteers, help by transporting the family to appointments and helping to connect them to services and resources in the community that may help them and their son. They also work with the family to smooth the transition when their son returns home. The Family Partner Program is a resource available to the Aftercare Counselor.

The Mental Health staff is providing training to the Probation staff. The purpose of the sessions is to help the Probation staff understand the behavioral issues and mental health concerns being experienced by the wards. The Mental Health staff feels they have a very good relationship with the Probation staff but that more problems occur when extra help staff are on duty.

## **PROGRAMS**

**Orientation** Prior to coming to the James Ranch, a ward attends a one-week orientation program at Juvenile Hall. There is an Orientation form and a checklist that is checked off by Probation staff and the ward. When the ward arrives at the Ranch, the staff repeats the presentation of the orientation material and the forms. The ward and staff sign off that it has been completed. Each time a ward comes to the Ranch, he completes the orientation and sign-off process.

Parents also have an orientation program at the Ranch. It is held on weekend visiting days avoiding an extra trip for parents. Special arrangements are occasionally made to accommodate that work schedules of parents. The parents also sign off on the documents.

The Probation Manager personally talks with all runaway returns and failure returns. There is a log as to who did what. Medical information is reviewed on each ward when they arrive.

When a ward arrives at the Ranch, an MDT is usually done within 48 hours but at least within the first week depending on the arrival timing. Staff from Mental Health, Pathways, Medical, and Probation evaluate each ward and decide on the appropriate plan for him. If needed, a second MDT might be convened. For a ward to succeed at the Ranch, he must understand cause and effect. School staff rarely attend the MDT's due to scheduling conflicts. School staff receive the results of the Ranch Plan, the Aptitude Test and Career Assessment.

**Behavior Management Program** The basic Ranch program is 120 days and can be up to 150 days. A point system is used to evaluate the ward's behavior and to earn privileges. The day is divided into two parts, 10:00 pm to 12 noon and 12 noon to 10:00 pm, these parts are called periods. Each period a ward can earn a maximum of 15 points, so each day a ward can earn up to 30 points. He must have 11 or more points during the period to earn one "good period". The objective is to have a good period. A ward must have 56 good periods to move from "C" belt to "B" belt and

from "B" belt to "A" belt. It takes a minimum of 28 days to move from "C" to "B" and another 28 days to move from "B" to "A." To move from "A" belt to "Senior A" belt a ward must have 42 additional good periods (a 21 day minimum). The boys are given "issues" meaning lost points when unacceptable behavior is observed. Issues for negative behavior can be challenged by the boys, but are generally upheld by the staff.

The supplemental programs at the James Ranch are anger management, chemical dependency treatment, domestic violence education, gang awareness, health realization, religious services, sexual offender counseling, sports and the Straight Life Program. Some of these programs are provided by the following agencies: Pathway Society, Friends Outside, California Youth Outreach, the Department of Alcohol and Drug Services and Gardner Family Care Corporation. The Catholic religious services are held off-site but may be scheduled at the Ranch according to the manager. With increased security at the Ranch, only wards that are not on restriction can go. All wards may attend religious services that are on site.

## **EDUCATION**

**Blue Ridge High School** Wards attend the on-site Blue Ridge High School run by the SCCOE. Classes are held Monday through Friday in the afternoon. School consists of five periods: two periods of English/Language Arts, one period of Math, one period of Independent Studies and one of PE. There are five classes at James Ranch - four regular classes and one Special Education Special Day (SDC) class. The regular students have one teacher for two periods then have another teacher for two periods. Most classes have 17-18 students. On the day of the May visit, four classes had 17 enrolled. However, the SDC class had the highest number with 18. Some days this class is as high as 22 students. The fifth class is called an "overflow" class and is taught by a long-term substitute for the past six months. This is the class which will be cut when, and if, the population drops, but there were 17 wards in this class.

There is one SDC aide and one regular aide for the time being. As of June 30 all regular classroom aides are being cut, due to budget reasons. The Special Ed Department assigns one Resource Program (RSP) aide occasionally to work with identified RSP students. On the days of JJC visits, one or two of the teachers were substitutes. The Commissioners were amazed to see one class being taught by the aide "working out of rank" in the absence of the regular teacher. The students accept the aide as a teacher because he knows them, their class schedules and material. This happens frequently when a substitute is not available. It had occurred four days in the two weeks prior to the May 27<sup>th</sup> visit and was planned for three days in the following week .

The wards' academic levels range from second grade to high school, which makes it difficult to teach the wards. Lessons are directed to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading level so high school credit can be given for the coursework. With the very large span of academic levels, teachers said one person cannot teach all of them at the same time. Students with limited English or limited reading skills are assisted by an RSP aide when available. Commissioners wondered if this is the appropriate use of Special Education Resource aides when they are assigned to work with the general population students. The JJC is concerned that there will be limited assistance for lower-performing students when the only academic aide is cut in June. Commissioners also question whether it is appropriate to continue to call this program "high school" now that the average age has been lowered with the addition of the junior high boys from Holden.

The Huskey Report (p.154) discusses the lack of progress of Blue Ridge students in reading and math after six months in the following statement: "The James Ranch minors demonstrated a 7 month gain." The Report further stated: "In other court schools, it is not uncommon to realize a 2.6 grade increase after 6 months."

Several of the teachers said they were concerned for their safety, especially as the class size is increasing. They said it is dangerous when the class size is 17 students and even more dangerous when there are 20. Three regular classes do not have aides at any given time as all four rooms share one aide. The teachers said, "You need another pair of eyes in the room." The teachers said they could not use the blackboard, as they would have to turn their backs to the wards. Several commented that they spend more time disciplining students in the crowded classrooms rather than teaching. They expect it to get worse without any regular classroom aides.

The classes were reading the books titled Night, Dogsong, and Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. Wards read other books as part of the character-based literacy program to teach them life skills as part of the literacy program. One class had an insufficient supply of books and the teacher had to borrow a copy of the paperback from one student because she did not have an extra for herself. The JJC feels that an adequate supply of books should be available for all expected students, the teacher, the aide, and others who may be assigned when the class size exceeds normal.

The school program is being evaluated for possible move to morning classes when the boys are fresh, not when they are tired after work crew assignments. Educational best practices show mornings to be the optimal learning time. This was a recommendation made in the Huskey Report (p.154). This change would cause a conflict for the girls from the Wright Center. Because they currently have morning school they can participate in the afternoon non-traditional-female vocational program. Boys and girls will not be attending voc ed classes together. A decision must be made for the James Ranch. Programs must then be developed for the girls.

Two students at the Ranch are already education success stories. One has already graduated and is serving as a classroom Teacher's Aide. Another boy will graduate in June at the COE headquarters. After that he will continue some individual studies and be a TA. The TA can only act as another pair of eyes and not assist individual students or discipline another boy. This position will in no way serve in lieu of a classroom aide.

Two Probation Officers were chatting or roaming outside on the patio. They are there to provide security only – if they hear a ruckus or a phase button is pushed. Can a more effective way be found to use the counselors' time to assist in the classroom?

The time spent in the classroom is minimally proscribed by the BOC. While the JJC would like to see the length of the school day extended, the Probation staff are not adhering to the daily starting time. Because the 86 boys in the dorm were getting their individual mid-day behavioral reports, the boys were 15 minutes late for the start of class on the May 27<sup>th</sup> visit. Teachers report this is a constant occurrence. Several boys were pulled from class during the school periods. Three wards were out of school for mental health or Pathways counseling. Five to six students leave class one-half hour early every day to work in the kitchen for dinner preparation. The school day is already a minimum day. The JJC objects to the constant outflow from the classes. Is it possible to call the kitchen work a work experience or culinary voc ed?

There is limited space in the classrooms for technology equipment. The "desks" are tables that are crowded together with chairs closely arranged. In many cases the boys are literally shoulder-to-shoulder. Therefore, there is no space for computers. Only one teacher had a table with student access to computers.

The Mental Health staff said a real problem for teachers is dealing with gang issues in the crowded confines of the crowded classroom. Personal issues and gang issues can blow out of proportion in a limited space and when the boys are tired in the afternoons.

**GED** The GED prep class is being offered Monday through Thursday from 8:30 am to 10:00 am. Wards preparing to take the GED test start to attend GED prep classes as soon as they arrive at the Ranch. They usually go for about 30 days. This works well as the boys cannot participate in the Vocational Education programs until they are at the Ranch for three weeks. Are the boys given an option to continue the GED program instead of voc ed or regular classes? Or can they work on their GED during the school periods if their goal is GED because they are too far behind in class credits?

The combined rehabilitation program given to a youth of a high school diploma or GED and job skills with career training is the best hope of success after leaving the Ranch program and succeeding in life. The education component of the job training program is significant for these boys. They will have the opportunity to continue or enter union trade apprentice programs when they leave the ranch. But – they must have a GED or high school diploma to meet the entry requirements! For so many, high school graduation is out of reach. The JJC strongly feels that they need this alternative.

**Vocational Education Programs** Vocational training programs include welding, construction technology, auto mechanics and horticulture. The horticulture program started in December 2004 and works with the County Parks and Recreation Department and in conjunction with the science class at Blue Ridge. The six wards currently in the program are working on native plant restoration. As part of the program, wards go to various area creeks to search for native plants. At the Ranch greenhouse the native plants are propagated and returned to their original habitat. Plans to work with the State Fish and Game Department are being developed.

The auto body shop was to open the end of March. Because of an oversight by those working on the construction, the opening has been delayed. The Ranch's upgraded alarm system for the shop was not wired to the Central Facility! Due to the bid process delaying project completion including inspections, the building will no doubt remain closed possibly until July. When the auto body shop finally opens, there would be an opportunity to perform oil changes and lube jobs for South County cars and those at the Ranch. There are other hopes to make the service open to local residents and for more involved repair jobs for County vehicles. Labor union issues may preclude some of those plans. It is also hoped that people will donate cars for the program.

Welding program students are building a metal shelter for cover to work under. They also build pig traps, fire rings and little smokers. The boys also attend off-site performances of opera arranged by the long time welding teacher.

The construction program participants continue to build picnic tables, the first of the projects in this program. Currently two large off-site buildings, the largest of which is an 11,000 sq. ft. garage/office in San Martin, are being constructed. The program has a self-contained van that can be taken to off-site jobs. At the time of the inspection visits, there were 11 wards from the construction program also enrolled in the GED prep class. It is crucial for the wards to earn either a high school diploma or a GED in order to be eligible in the trades for which they are training.

Wards receive certificates of completion indicating what they have learned. Wards are taken to job fairs and trade shows sponsored by trade unions.



During February, Wright Center girls started to participate in a less detailed introductory version of three of the four vocational programs. Currently, eight girls are transported to the Ranch for two hours three afternoons a week. The girls spend one day at each of three subjects. The number is limited due to necessary supervision. The girls will have hands-on experience later after the basics are completed.

The ROP teacher from the Wright Center has expressed a willingness to expand her computer technology program to include the boys at the James Ranch. Because of so many recent changes this plan has been put on hold and may be discussed as part of the new Ranch program in the future.

**Enterprise Program and Fund** The Commission reported information about the Enterprise Program and Fund for the past three years. Each year some changes were made since the fund was set up in July 2002. But, the main goal of the fund, restitution wages for the wards, has not yet been realized. The Site Team has begun working on a re-definition of the Mission, Goals and Objectives of the Enterprise Program.

Wards perform contract jobs off site for the water companies or county parks. These programs are part of the long time traditional Ranch school/work program. It was reported that recently work crews have been curtailed a bit due to security issues. Some of the money received by the County for the services of these boys is to be directed to the boys' financial obligations for court costs and victim restitution. In response to the 2004 recommendation about the Fund, the Commission was told that the Probation Department "is evaluating the issue" of "earned payments to wards." Obviously this evaluation has been delayed. But -- why? There is no information or evidence at this time to indicate that the wards will receive any funds in a timely manner.

The recent Huskey Report, on page 93, stated: "In April 2005, the students will be able to receive a stipend at \$480.00 per minor for their participation in the Enterprise Program." How was the stipend amount calculated? How did that April start date originate? Perhaps the \$480.00 per ward amount stated in the Huskey Report is an ambitious one! The Commission feels that each ward should receive "wages" commensurate with the amount of time spent in the program working. Participation should be tracked and funds maintained for the wards until they are released. Using even an estimated number of 200 wards completing the program during the course of a year, the total would be \$96,000.00 to be paid in "wages" to the wards.

It is not because there are no funds available! The Fund carried a balance of \$95,443.60 into the beginning of FY '04-05. As of February 23, 2005, the latest available to the Commission, the Fund balance was \$157,546.06. The \$62,102.46 difference results in a 65% increase! Yet, no "wages" or "stipends" have been made to the wards! It is probable that the process with the Finance Department for the County has not yet been finalized making assignment to ward accounts impossible. This is regrettable, as the County has been working on it for three years! No County employee would wait three years to get paid for work completed.

The Fund disbursed money to the total of \$2,845.35 for pizza, part of a fishing trip for some wards, a DVD recorder, Dish Network Service, and the Central Coast Ranch Athletic Fee. Formerly these expenses came from the Activity Fund. Such activities were not mentioned in the original program proposal. The Commission believes that if the Fund underwrites those events and items, then the Fund can surely now be in a position to live up to its stated goals!

The Commission consistently stated that restitution wages/stipend is part of the cost of “doing business.” Another issue remains—how will prior wards who earned the “start up” money be reimbursed for their hard work? It is apparent that those wards have long ago left the Ranch.

The original program objectives, dated January 12, 2001, included three objectives that addressed some component of education and achievement rates. The Site Team is urged to keep an education objective that will assure that the wards will be able to work toward the GED. Earning a GED or a high school diploma is a must for the wards to enable them to secure employment after release from the Ranch.

The Commission continues to support the Enterprise Program as a means of helping wards meet their requirements to their victims and the community and learn personal responsibility. The Commission does not support the erosion of the program’s original goals and objectives.

### YOUTH SURVEY ANALYSIS

The Commission requested that each ward complete a survey—79 of the 83 wards (95%) returned usable responses. Six Spanish language forms were used. Not all of the questions were answered by all respondents. Therefore, percentages are based on total responses to a particular question. At least 70 wards responded to each question, with most responses in the 74-78 range. The table below compares 15 topics over two or three years. It is important to note that results reflect the population and environment at the time.

This particular Ranch population was very communicative as most made comments. Some even added letters to the Commission. As noted in previous surveys, spelling, grammar and syntax used by many wards in the comment sections indicated that those skills are deficient.

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
1. Can talk freely & openly with counselors	No		75%	83%
3. Do you feel safe at this Ranch?	Yes		63%	58%
2. Is discipline handled fairly for everyone?	No		70%	93%
4. Are there specific needs that are not being met?	No		73%	45%
5. When you came were rules explained to you?	No		55%	41%
6. Do you have a copy of the rules?	No		66%	40%
7. Can you get an explanation of rules, if you ask?	No		35%	43%
8. Subjected to verbal abuse from staff?	Yes		37%	70%
9. Subjected to verbal abuse from minors?	Yes		57%	59%
10. Subj. to physical abuse from staff?	No		89%	91%
11. Subj. to physical abuse from minors?	No		89%	83%
12. Food is good?	Yes		44%	45%
13. Get enough to eat?	Yes		40%	54%
14. Can contact PO?	Yes		56%	27%
15. PO never contacts minors?	Yes		51%	74%

The JJC is very concerned about several significant thoughts expressed by the youth and the downward trend of the responses. Item #1 regarding interaction with counselors continues to be disturbing. Recommendation #2 from the 2004 JJC inspection report and #6 from the 2003 report both addressed the need for staff training in that area. In fact, this year there was a significant increase of 12% of the wards who felt that they cannot “talk freely & openly with counselors” compared to the 2004 survey report and 25% more compared to the 2003 report! **The Commission is very concerned about this trend.**

Fully 90% of the wards stated that discipline is not handled fairly. This is a 20% increase over the two previous years. Verbal abuse from other minors was mentioned by 59% of the group, very close to the 57% from 2004. Another rather alarming fact is that 70% of the youth said that they are "subjected to verbal abuse from staff" - up from 37% last year. **The Commission is very concerned about this trend.**

Fewer wards this year feel that they can ask for an explanation of the rules (#7 above). The wards feel that staff will not listen to them. This is a significant deterioration for that item. Are the wards so different now? Is the increase of gang-affiliated wards at the Ranch causing more stress for counselors as well as the wards? Do counselors still need more training? Could the use of extra help add to this problem? These are questions that need to be addressed.

Only 58% feel safe at the Ranch. Gangs, fights, staff attitudes, fear of being failed led the reasons for the response. Only 45% felt that they have no unmet needs. Comments on the item centered on wanting phone calls, more food, more "head" time, and being able to talk with the counselor. On a positive note, very few feel that they are subjected to physical abuse. Of the 44 minors who said they are on medications, 82% said that they are given on time. When asked what they feel the greatest challenge will be after the Ranch, 12 mentioned Aftercare.

Written comments given by the wards were, in some instances, impossible to decipher. In general, written communication skills appear to be far below the grade levels of the wards as seen in the verbatim listing of the remarks. Twenty-three youth mentioned staff by name with only one being complimentary. Fully 29% of the respondents wrote about specific staff and occasions (many in multiples). Only five such written comments were noted in 2004.

Counselors' professional responsibilities are to help wards succeed in the Ranch rehabilitation program. The above trend data are indications that there is something amiss at the Ranch. The administrative professionals must take a hard look at this and use their expertise to address the issues for the benefit of the wards, the staff and the community.

**Community Issues** The Morgan Hill community met with the Probation Department, the Supervisor of District 1, the Morgan Hill Police Chief and others regarding the situation of the Ranch in their neighborhoods. Citizens were becoming increasingly uneasy about the Ranch being so close, especially because of escapes. The changing neighborhood is one factor. There are several very large housing developments of million dollar plus homes that are being built just outside the James Ranch property. The community has organized and is concerned about the type of youth who is sent to the Ranch and security. Attached to this report is an Addendum describing visits to some Morgan Hill real estate offices to gather, first hand, data regarding the information given to prospective buyers.

## **CONCERNS**

**Enterprise Program/Fund** For the third consecutive year the Commission remains concerned about the manner in which the Enterprise Program has strayed from its original goals and objectives. Although the Fund has grown to over \$157,000.000, wards who earned the money have not yet received any money toward meeting their restitution/fines/fees obligations. In addition, almost \$2,000.00 was spent in the current fiscal year up to February on miscellaneous, extraneous items that were never mentioned in the approved set of Goals and Objectives for the program. The Site Team's two meetings discussing the program's goals and objectives revisions that have taken place so far are a good beginning to redefine the program. But—the crucial part has not yet been addressed—restitution wages! Policies and procedures to set up the restitution wages process and

implementation must be delayed no longer. The Commission urges the Probation Department to rectify this by the end of calendar year 2005.

**Program** Last year the Commission expressed concern about the arrival of younger boys from Holden Ranch. Fortunately, the change has not appeared to be a problem. The gang confrontations and the number of runaways and failures have increased. Population increases give the feeling of over-crowded conditions, especially in the school and dorms. The Ranch program, the type of minor sent there, how many times a ward is returned, and security are all being carefully reviewed. The local community is more involved than it has ever been. As previously mentioned, changes have occurred and more are to come. The eventuality of the fence will dramatically change the atmosphere of the Ranch.

**Staff** The Commission is concerned that an ever-increasing number of wards, 83% of the survey respondents, feel that they cannot talk to staff. This year 70% of the respondents said that they were "subjected to verbal abuse from staff." Wards also said that some staff used profanity, made racial slurs, and were very inconsistent in applications of the rules. **The Commission is very concerned at the lack of improvement in staff conduct when dealing with the wards.** It is obvious that additional staff training is needed and some assignments altered.

By the time a new policy can be put into place and staff become adjusted to the new way of working, a new directive is often made because of a new intervening issue. There seems to be a constant state of flux for staff.

**Medical** The Commission is concerned that Ranch staff must assess injuries and medical problems and make decisions when there is no nurse on the premises.

**Security** As the level of security at the Ranch increases, the tone at the Ranch will be affected. Also the money to pay for increased security will have to come from an already shrinking pool of money. Where will this money come from? Past experience shows that when funding is tight, program money becomes very vulnerable and is often targeted for adjustment.

**School Programs** Classroom safety is the primary issue of concern. As of June 30, all regular classroom aides are being cut, due to budget reasons. The safety of staff and students is more worrisome as the atmosphere of tension escalates. The wide scope of academic levels, the number of students with limited English or limited reading skills, and the sophistication of the wards requires another pair of eyes and a helping hand in the room.

Class size continues to be another significant concern. Most classes have 17-18 students. However, the SDC class had 18 and was reported as high as 22 students. A Special Ed class is supposed to be the smallest to provide the time and attention to the goals and objectives as specified in the IEP's. Besides violating the BOC Title 15 maximum, the JJC does not feel that this class size is appropriate.

The GED program should not be limited to the first 30 days when a boy arrives at the Ranch. The option to continue the GED classes or an independent study plan for GED is necessary to meet the varied needs of all the students. The Commission knows from past experience that many do not have the high school credits to graduate or time to complete them before aging out of the system.

Classroom size and room space are mandated by the BOC Title 24. That section specifies "a minimum of 160 square feet of floor space for the teachers' desk and work area and a minimum

of 28 square feet of floor space per minor.” (emphasis added.) While the JJC did not feel this was met, this space problem could be alleviated by reducing the number of students to 15-16 rather than 17-18.

The supply of textbooks and assignment of substitutes is an administrative problem that should be addressed by the Blue Ridge High School Principal or the Site Team.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Juvenile Justice Commission commends:

1. The Chief Probation Officer and the Probation Manager for responding to the community and addressing their concerns regarding security at the Ranch.
2. The addition of a Horticulture Program to the Enterprise Program to develop job skills and, as a secondary benefit, enhance the science class.
3. The Mental Health Department staff for their plan to continue to provide mental health training to the Probation staff.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Juvenile Justice Commission recommends that the Santa Clara County Probation Department:

1. Initiate the payment of restitution wages for wards who completed work in the Enterprise Program since its inception.
2. Emphasize education goals including GED as part of the Enterprise Program goals assuring that wards will be able to strive for a goal of employment or higher education upon leaving the Ranch.
3. Evaluate current staff training programs to insure that staff do not subject wards to verbal abuse. This is the third consecutive year the JJC has recommended action on this deteriorating issue.
4. Continue communication with the residents of Morgan Hill and the Morgan Hill Police Chief.
5. Assess the effects of the reduced medical coverage at the Ranch and the impact on probation staff and address the need for additional coverage with SCVHHS administrators.
6. Address the gang confrontations or separate the conflicting groups. Combining Norteño and Sureño gang members in the same dorm, same work group, and same class aggravates the potential for violence and serious injury to youth and/or staff. Gang affiliation and gang membership show no sign of decreasing. Should all gang members be together? Could Probation Officers develop positive motivation techniques for quelling gang violence? Is there a “best practice” for this problem?

7. Resolve schedule conflicts so that students arrive for class on time.
8. Add shampoo to the hygiene products provided to the wards.
9. Urge the GSA to assess and repair the hazardous walkway between the dorm and school buildings to prevent injuries to youth or staff.

**The Juvenile Justice Commission recommends that the Santa Clara County Office of Education:**

1. Provide the teachers at the Ranch with an instructional aide in each classroom for safety reasons and to assist in teaching wards whose academic abilities range from second grade to high school.
2. Alleviate the class size and room space concerns by reducing the number of students to 15-16 rather than 17-18.
3. Increase the emphasis on GED to give the youth the option of strong educational choices and goals.

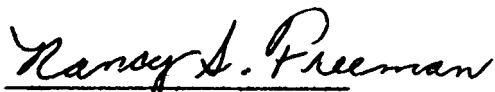
**The Juvenile Justice Commission recommends that the SCVHHS management:**


1. Re-evaluate the workload of the nurse at the James Ranch and develop a plan for more coverage. The ward population has doubled, but the nursing staff is one nurse for a total of eight hours a day. When the population was half the size, there was twice the coverage!

**CLOSING COMMENT**


With so many changes occurring at the James Ranch and the inevitability of more coming, the program is bound to experience some significant ramifications. The entire Ranch program, staff and wards will continue to be impacted due to these changes. The Commission will monitor the effects of these changes.

**Approved by the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission on June 7, 2005**

  
Nancy S. Freeman, Ph.D., JJC Chairperson

  
Date

  
Patricia A. Khan, JJC Inspection Chairperson

  
Date

## **ADDENDUM**

### **REAL ESTATE INFORMATION PROJECT**

On Sunday April 10, 2005, a Commissioner and spouse toured one home and three new property developments to determine what information the real estate people were conveying to prospective buyers about the Ranch. The properties viewed were listed from \$880,000.00 to \$1,500,000.00. Promotional materials from four real estate developers/agents in the Morgan Hill area were reviewed by Commissioners.

One home, just one block away from Malaguerra Road quite near the entrance to the James Ranch, was for sale through a realtor. The fact that the Ranch was nearby was listed in the "Disclosures" part of the information available. When asked "What is the boys' ranch?" the real estate agent said, "It is a minimum security place that has no barbed wire fence that is to rehabilitate boys back to the community." She said that she lives in the area and feels that the Ranch is not a problem for her.

Sales office agents from three new developments were queried: "We heard that there is a prison nearby." None avoided the issue. One said that the information is in their disclosures, another said that no violent offenders are there and that the community is keeping watch. When asked if youth escape, one said, "There are about two escapes per month but that the boys head for the freeway. There were a couple of incidents but it could not be proven that escapees were involved." Another agent said that the place is what "we used to call Reform Schools." She was very open and provided the Probation website address and offered to give phone numbers should we want to pursue the matter. Two of the agents used copies of the information they received from the Probation Department at the February meetings as a reference.

None of the people encountered evaded the questions. Rather, they gave measured responses. They were each careful in their choice of words. One even said that she "thought that before the County took over the place that it was operated by the District Attorney! Hopefully the community meetings have corrected the misconceptions regarding the Ranch.