

**Juvenile Justice Commission  
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## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **MURIEL WRIGHT RESIDENTIAL CENTER**

**June 2010**

The Juvenile Justice Commission of Santa Clara County is a state-mandated, court-appointed authority. The broad purpose of the Commission is to inquire into the administration of the juvenile court law in Santa Clara County. The Commission is dedicated to the promotion of an effective juvenile justice system operated in an environment of credibility, dignity, fairness, and respect for the youth of Santa Clara County.

In fulfillment of these responsibilities, the Juvenile Justice Commission began its inspection of the Muriel Wright Residential Center (MWC) in February 2010. The following report and recommendations are a result of that inspection.

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The MWC is juvenile detention facility that offers a rehabilitative program for girls who are ages 12 through 18 and for boys ages 12 through 16 1/2 at the time of their commitment to the facility. The goal of the MWC's six-to-eight month program is to have each youth return home with the necessary tools for successful reintegration into family and community. Specifically, staff and Community Based Organizations (CBO) provide mental health and substance abuse programs, medical services, yoga, zumba, gardening, sports and other activities. The youth also learn to make positive decisions, anger management techniques and how to communicate effectively with peers, parents and friends. The facility is located in the western foothills of Santa Teresa County Park on a site overlooking a portion of south central Santa Clara Valley.

The Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) visited the MWC pursuant to California Welfare and Institutions code Section 229. All the visits were prearranged. Six Commissioners inspected the MWC facilities, interviewed staff and youth, and observed many of the MWC programs. The Commissioners visited the MWC on the following dates: Feb 12, Feb 16, Feb 23, Feb 25, Feb. 28, Mar 8, and Apr 13, 2010.

This report provides a summary of information gathered regarding youth, staff, facility inspection, academic programs, and services offered at the MWC. Specific commendations and recommendations are also set forth in this report. Documents pertinent to the MWC that were reviewed by Commissioners are listed. Commissioners also reviewed responses to recommendations made in the report issued by the JJC last year, which are discussed later in this report.

The JJC conducts annual inspections of the MWC. The inspection reports for prior years are available on the internet and can be accessed at: <http://www.sccsuperiorcourt.org/juvenile/jjc.htm>.

**II. POPULATION**

The MWC is licensed for 64 youth, but serves only 48 youth in order to accommodate the principles of smaller living environments in the Enhanced Ranch Program (ERP). At the time of our visit, 16 of the youth in the facility were ages 12-15, and 17 were age 16 and older. On Feb. 12, 2010, there was a total of 33 youth – 20 boys and 13 girls respectively – and no youth were from out of County. There were two minors in Juvenile Hall who were on the waiting list to be transferred to MWC.

**Last 5 years average daily population at the MWC by gender:**

2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
19	14	20	12	25	16	33	12	25	13

**Ethnic Breakdown 2009**

Average 2009	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Other	Total
	2	3	30	2	1	38

**III. STAFFING**

The MWC Probation Department staff includes a full time Manager, 24 Probation Counselors and 6 night Counselors. Their primary responsibility is to give guidance to youth and help them achieve their goals as set by the Probation staff and ERP model. All full time Probation Counselors must be college graduates and participate in a 96-hour training that covers principles of the ERP at the ranch. The Counselors also continue to take classes as required by the Department to keep abreast of program changes. The pod Counselors are assigned to a specific unit so they can develop a relationship with the youth on the unit. The dress code for the Counselors is casual.

In addition to the Counselors, there is one Aftercare Counselor, and one Program Coordinator who is shared with James Ranch. MWC also has 29 part time “extra help” personnel who fill in for Probation Counselors absent due to illness, vacation or training. Many of the “extra

help” personnel are retired Probation Officers and are familiar with the MWC programs. MWC also has a teaching staff, a mental health therapist, a nurse, kitchen staff, CBO staff and volunteers who all receive training in the principles of the ERP so they can better integrate their activities with the Counselors.

There are five Spanish speaking staff at the MWC. These numbers are inclusive of the Probation Assistants, Counselors or Supervisors. Two staff members speak Vietnamese. The Aftercare Counselor speaks English and Spanish. One CBO volunteer speaks Punjabi.

Staff members at MWC demonstrate great commitment to the ERP model and to helping the youth achieve their goals. Based on observations of interactions between staff and youth, there appears to be mutual respect and caring between the youth and the staff.

Staff often goes the “extra mile” for the youth at MWC. Commissioners observed that a low-income youth who was preparing to graduate from the MWC was provided food and some clothing to bring home. We heard similar reports about other youth who were leaving MWC. Additionally, staff pay attention to and address the needs of the families by doing things such as picking up parents at the Light Rail Station on visiting day.

During our inspection, the Manager at MWC was moved to a leadership position at Juvenile Hall. The Manager had been in the job for the past 5 years and was responsible for implementing ERP. She was well liked by staff and youth. The new MWC Manager has 26 years of experience with the Probation Department.

#### **IV. Youth**

On the first visit, two Level 4 female youth gave Commissioners a tour of the facility. The girls were very enthusiastic and praised the ERP. They praised the staff for providing them guidance to achieve their goals to graduate from MWC and return home.

Commissioners spoke with several youth during the course of the MWC inspection. In many cases, the youth spoke positively about their experience at the MWC. Many spoke about the value of attending the Teaching Important Pro-Social\_Skills (TIPS) program and how they were now able to utilize the “self-calming” techniques taught in the program. One young woman, graduating on the day of our inspection, reported that she had wanted to “run” when she first came to the MWC, but after a conversation with a Counselor decided not to run. She also spoke positively about the mentor she had from Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY). FLY mentors provide guidance to the youth during their residency and after completion of their residency. The mentors ensure that youth follow through with their goals of school attendance and/or finding a job when they return home. One positive aspect of the mentors is their ability to communicate with youth because they are close in age and willing to listen to youth’s concerns.

The younger men at MWC (14 – 16 years old) seem to have more difficulty with the lessons from the TIPS program. While some of the young men were getting ready to graduate and

were resolved to take what they learned and continue their education, others did not seem to fully value the skills they were being taught.

One youth with whom Commissioners spoke felt he would benefit from substance abuse treatment through Pathways, but since he was not court-ordered to participate he was not allowed to participate in the program.

## **V. FACILITY**

The MWC facility was upgraded in 2007. The facility meets the ERP requirements to provide home-like living conditions to youth during their stay at MWC. The kitchen and dining area, program rooms, office space and classrooms are well equipped and provide a lively environment for the youth. The Medical office is small but has all the needed supplies. Classrooms have computers for individualized training. There is a planting area for the Master Gardener Program. During the summer, the youth of each pod participate in growing vegetables and learn gardening techniques. There are conference rooms available for meeting with parents or students if necessary.

Residents are assigned to one of the four pods or residential units. Each pod can accommodate up to 12 youth. The pod system is an essential part of the ERP, which is described later in the report. Two pods have individual rooms for the youth and two pods place two youth in each bedroom. All boys and girls activities are segregated and depending on the number of male and female youth at MWC, the Probation Manager can change the mix of residency pods. On our first visit, there were two pods for girls and two pods for boys. The pods have showers and toilets. Each pod has furniture, TV, DVD player and books. Pod living quarters have beds, mattresses, and comforters. The pods appeared clean and in good condition and according to the youth interviewed, are comfortable during winter. However, during summer, all the buildings at MWC get very warm and uncomfortable. The Probation Manager has submitted a request for an A/C unit for the portable office building, which has been approved for the past 6 months but has to be ordered by Purchasing.

The Kitchen has a set menu for each day of the week. The menu meets the federal nutritional guidelines. All the appliances were properly working and proper temperatures were maintained. The pantries were well stocked with supplies. Male and female youth take turns keeping the dining area clean during the day. Youth are provided breakfast, lunch and dinner. Commissioners had lunch with the girls on the first day of the visit. A hot lunch was served. Youth expressed general satisfaction with the meals served. Two youth complained about the portion sizes being too small.

## **VI. PROGRAMS**

### **Enhanced Ranch Program (ERP):**

The Enhanced Ranch Program (ERP) began at the MWC in August 2006. The ERP is based on an evidenced-based practice referred to as the “Missouri Model.” This model has been

modified for Santa Clara County, but the original training of the MWC counselors and managers was conducted by those who developed the “Missouri Model.”

The program focuses on cognitive behavioral management and promotes interpersonal problem-solving, taking responsibility for one’s actions, avoidance of high risk situations and practical techniques to control high-risk thoughts and feelings. Participants progress through “levels” by meeting higher behavioral expectations and earning rewards.

During visits, Commissioners spoke with youth who told stories of when they had felt upset, paused and thought about it, and then made a conscious decision to calm down and not let the situation get out of hand. The youth also spoke about getting together and talking out issues that arose during the day. They said, they learned that it was OK to make a mistake, because you can start over and learn from it. The youth displayed a level of maturity and an ability to communicate that was impressive.

One aspect of the ERP program is a more home-like living environment. At the time of the Commissioners’ visit, the girls in one of the pods were watching a movie (it was not a school day) and working on crocheting. The common room was spacious, clean and had a comfortable seating area. The girls’ single rooms appeared more institutional, but there were small touches (pictures, artwork) that gave the rooms a more personal feel.

One difference between the MWC ERP program and the Missouri Model is that in the Missouri Model, youth wear their own clothes rather than uniforms. There are logistical issues involved with implementing this aspect of the program (e.g., providing laundry facilities for the youth to wash their own clothes). However, it may be worth exploring and may ultimately help with the youth’s re-integration into their community when they leave MWC.

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) issued a thorough report entitled “An Assessment of the Enhanced Ranch Program” on July 24, 2009. The Commissioners reviewed this document and Probation Chief Sheila Mitchell made a presentation on the report at the January 2010 JJC public meeting. The NCCD assessment showed that there has been a significant decline in “on ranch” incidents following the introduction of the Enhanced Ranch Program:

Examining behavioral incidents (fights, gang activity, disruptive conduct, possession of contraband) at the ranch facilities, previous ranch participants had a total of 4647 incidents over 24 months while the Enhanced Ranch youth had 1294 over 18 months. With 475 youth in the previous program and 262 in the Enhanced Ranch Program, the average number of incidents per individual is 9.8 for the former and 4.9 for the latter.

*See* NDDC Report. There was only a slight decline in the number of probation violations and new arrests 12 months after leaving the program:

Within 12 months of exiting the ranch previous ranch participants had more violations and failures (42%) compared to Enhanced Ranch youth (37%), more probation violations (11% to 9%), and new arrests (31% compared to 28%).

### **Teaching Important Pro-Social Skills (TIPS)**

TIPS formerly known as Aggression Replacement Training (ART), is comprehensive cognitive behavioral therapy model. It is evidence-based and contains the following elements:

- Skill streams – Through presented material and interactive role playing, youth learn everyday life skills such as asking for help, dealing with peer pressures and how to say “no” and avoiding fights.
- Morality – Youth learn about feelings of others. Through group discussions, youth learn how to deal with different life situations and morality issues.
- Anger Management – this is the most important part of cognitive behavior training. During several interviews with youth, Commissioners learned that most if not all youth have a problem with anger management. Many, if not all crimes the youth commit were committed when they were angry. Youth are taught the ABC’s of behavior (Action leads to Behavior, which leads to Consequences). Youth are taught to calm down before they utter a response when they are angry. “Think before you act” is the mantra youth are taught in this behavior control training.

### **Aftercare Program**

The Aftercare Program is the last phase of a MWC Commitment. It is a 10-week program for youth when they graduate from MWC. Youth return to the community with an Aftercare Contract. The Aftercare Counselor monitors most of their activities. The current Aftercare Counselor served in this position for 2 years, then returned to the pods and now is in his first year of a new 2-year commitment in Aftercare. This is his ninth year as a Counselor.

This Counselor experienced MWC before and after the introduction of the ERP. He sees that the ERP program is an improvement: youth expect and benefit from the counseling; they are able to share their thoughts and discuss behaviors and consequences; they know about “checking in”, and “circling up;” and they know that improved communication with their parents is important.

The Aftercare Counselor usually already knows the graduating youth since he also coaches sports and spends time in the pods when other counselors are absent. The Aftercare Counselor will work with the youth’s family and make referrals to parenting classes and/or family counseling. The Aftercare Counselor monitors the youth for school attendance, drug use and gang involvement and he has a caseload of eight youth. This small caseload allows the Aftercare Counselor to visit the youth and family often. The Aftercare Counselor can fail a youth and return him to MWC or to Juvenile Hall if the youth is not successful in fulfilling his/her Aftercare contract.

In Aftercare, one of the barriers to the youth’s success is transportation because most families have no car and have difficulty attending counseling sessions, classes and fulfilling the other requirements of Aftercare. Some counseling programs do provide bus passes, but without the bus passes family therapy is often dropped. A Community Worker also works with the Aftercare youth and s/he can transport the family to appointments and other community based organizations.

Commissioners discussed the youth’s home situations with the Aftercare Counselor. He said many of the youth have limited material goods. They might not have a television set, a bed or may live in a one-bedroom apartment with many other individuals. Many of their parents are single parents and are working more than one job. The youth tend to be Latino, live in East San Jose and be gang entrenched.

The Aftercare Counselor reported that it was hard to predict who would be successful in Aftercare. Youth may graduate from the ERP as a model kid and then fail in the first few weeks at home. The struggling kid who had great difficulty coping with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy may not make it. The boys are 12 to 16 and therefore may have trouble getting a job. The girls, usually 17 or 18 when they graduate, often get a job on their own. Becoming employed and enrolled in school are success indicators. Vocational training opportunities may help, but MWC does not have as many vocational training opportunities as the James Ranch. The Probation Manager hopes to expand the opportunities in the future.

The Aftercare Counselor is hoping to bring the Parent Project, an evidence-based, 12-week parenting education class to MWC. He said it has been provided in the community for the past year and because of its success, has expanded outside of San Jose. “Never yell at your kids again” is the class mantra and parents are encouraged to continue to meet as a group after the class is over and support each other. He sees this type of community building an important tool for overwhelmed parents and offering it at MWC may help parents take the class who otherwise may not have access to it.

Following Aftercare, most youth remain on Probation for at least another year. They may talk with their Pod Counselor and/or Aftercare Counselor.

The table below shows the percentage of youth arrested after completing Aftercare:

<b>Year</b>	<b>% Arrested within 6 months of completing Aftercare</b>
2005-06	40%
2006-07	15%
2007-08	10.3%
2008-09	21.0 %

## **Multidisciplinary Team Meetings (MDT)**

The goal of MDT meetings is to bring together all services providers (medical, mental health, probation, education) and with the benefit of their collective experience, develop individualized plans for each youth. The youth and their family participate in these sessions. MDT meetings generally take place within three weeks of the placement of youth at MWC and again before the youth leaves for home. If necessary, additional meetings are arranged if adjustments need to be made during a youth's stay at MWC. About half of the parents attend the MDT, which is held approximately 6 weeks before leaving the MWC.

## **VII. BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT**

### **Level System**

The core of the ERP cognitive behavior program is the "level system." Youth awaiting placement at Juvenile Hall are introduced to MWC programs during a two to four hour orientation meeting. Upon arrival at MWC, youth are provided another orientation session explaining program expectations.

A youth's progress in the ERP must be demonstrated by growth in approved and desired behaviors and attitudes, as recognized by advancement through the level system. The level system is a performance scale of four graduated steps and is designed to enable youth to acquire specific skills and competencies. Each of the four levels contains objectives and expectations measurable by all staff members and is explained to the youth in the MWC Guide Book. Advancement levels are represented by the color of a youth's belt. Youth enter the MWC at Level 1, represented by wearing a white belt, and in order to graduate, must actively work toward Level 4, a black belt. The belts are visible on the waists of the youth throughout the day.

There are specific expectations, privileges and restrictions at each program level. For example, youth are first eligible for field trips, sports programs and off-site work crews at Level 2, while youth at Level 3 are eligible for daytime weekend furloughs. Youth at Level 4 are eligible for overnight weekend furloughs. Youth are evaluated weekly to assess their progress. A "successful week" would result if the youth is working on current expectations and his/her overall behavior is congruent with expectations and goals. A specific number of successful weeks are required at each level to qualify for advancement. The resident must make written application for level advancement. An Incident Report (IR) might result in an "unsuccessful week," lengthening the youth's stay by one week, although the youth may file an appeal regarding that status. Some youth are returned to Juvenile Hall for a "Cooling-off" period when serious transgressions such as drug possession are documented. Individual youth in any one pod may be at different levels. They do not graduate from the MWC as a group, but rather complete the program as individuals.

Since the last inspection report of the MWC, the guidebook has been improved and now available in English and Spanish.



## **VIII. MEDICAL SERVICES**

The Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System (SCVHHS) provide medical services at the MWC under the supervision of the Nurse Manager at Juvenile Hall. There is one full-time female nurse at the MWC. Probation Counselors are not allowed to dispense medications. Since there has to be a nurse available for the morning and the evening “pill calls,” she works a split shift with normal working hours Monday through Thursday from 6:15 am to noon, followed by evening hours 6 PM to 8 PM. She has Fridays off. She works on Saturday and Sunday, from 7AM to 11 AM. A relief nurse, who also works part time at Juvenile Hall, fills in on the regular nurse’s days off. The split shift usually covers both the morning and evening medications and the necessary “sick calls.”

The nurse’s station is compact, and includes locked medication storage and a teleconferencing unit that connects to the medical staff at Juvenile Hall, available 7/24 and can be used for an acute medical issue or injury of a youth. The teleconferencing allows staff at Juvenile Hall to make a recommendation as to whether the youth should be transported to Valley Medical Center or another health facility for treatment. Every two weeks, a doctor and a psychiatrist visit the MWC to see youth on medications and to evaluate new referrals.

At the visiting entrance of the MWC, there are instructions to visitors to wear a mask if they have any signs of infection. However, there were no masks available at this station. When one of the Commissioners asked for a mask, she was first taken to the nursing station where a substitute nurse was working, who her she could not have a mask. Then the front desk staff then took the Commissioner to another location in the office where a mask was found.

Since other visitors to the MWC may not be as willing to seek assistance with receiving a mask, these (and perhaps hand wipes) should be available at the visitor’s desk. Further, given the nature of the residential care at the MWC, it may be prudent to ask every visitor if they are experiencing any signs or symptoms of illness when they arrive and provide mask if needed in order to maintain the health of the youth at the MWC.

## **IX. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

In a change from 2009, the Mental Health Department now contracts with Community Solutions (a CBO located in Morgan Hill) to provide mental health services. The current Therapist has a Master’s Degree in Holistic Health and is a Marriage and Family Therapist Intern and receives clinical supervision from a therapist at Community Solutions. She works 40 hours per week Tuesday through Saturday, 8:30-5:30. Although she is the only Mental Health Therapist on site, she says she feels she works on a team with other providers.

The Mental Health Therapist provides the following:

- Counseling
- Monitoring youth on psycho-tropic medications,
- Conducts a mental health assessment at intake,
- Participates in the MDT,

- Motivational Interviewing
- Conducts individual and group therapy,
- Does crisis intervention, and Consults with team members on youth behaviors.

Because the Mental Health Therapist is not a county employee, she does not have access to Mental Health data from Juvenile Hall. She can work with the Medical Clinic Nurse to access data on psychotropic medications. A psychiatrist visits MWC twice a month and she will consult with the psychiatrist on certain youth.

## **X. EDUCATION**

The Santa Clara County Office of Education oversees the Blue Ridge High School (BRHS) at MWC. Commissioners met with the current principal, an employee of the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE), who also serves as the principal for the high school at the James Ranch. The new principal was assigned to the MWC in November 2009. Since he was fairly new to MWC, the past year's principal also joined in this meeting. Prior to his assignment to the MWC, the principal worked as, among other positions, a coordinator with the Regional Occupational Program, overseeing technical education programs. There are four full-time teachers and one aide at MWC and there is a Counselor in each classroom at all times.

There are four classes of students at the BRHS, with each class composed of students from one of the pods. School starts at 7:50 am is 300 minutes a day, five days a week. Students have class periods (usually 50 minutes long) and subjects include English language arts, mathematics (including pre-algebra and geometry), world history and geography, life science, physical science and PE.

The goals of the education program at BRHS are to provide educational opportunities for students, to ensure that no student regresses while at the MWC, to fill in gaps in the student's education, and to assist students in passing the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), or, where applicable, the General Education Diploma (GED). Attendance to BRHS is required.

Youth arrive at MWC on Tuesdays or Thursdays and receive an orientation to the BRHS program. This orientation includes curriculum offered, the grading system, how credits are earned, school rules, class schedules and individual plans. New students begin school the day after they arrive at MWC.

Incoming students take an assessment test at Juvenile Hall (JH) and are re-assessed at least every 90 days thereafter. A detailed individualized education plan (IEP) is required for each special education student and all other students have individual learning plans (ILP - soon to be renamed Student Success Plans). BRHS teachers do not receive prior notification of new students and there may be a delay in the arrival of the student's academic records. The school administrator is working to address the transfer of education data of the youth from Juvenile Hall to MWC and James Ranch at the time of placement at the ranches. This problem should be fixed before end of 2010.

At the time of our inspection, there were 11 special education students at BRHS. In addition to classroom time, special education students meet regularly one-on-one with tutors.

The Commissioners visited four class sessions during the inspection process. In one English class for girls, the girls were taking turns reading aloud. The teacher stopped the reading several times and asked questions about the passage and added insight on the historical milieu. The time period of the book was the early 1960's and the topic was segregation. The student reader read well and with emotion. The other students seemed to be engaged in the class. The second class the Commissioners visited was a boys' social studies class on the impact of World War I. The teacher was using a new computer-driven Smart Board, which projected a large image, which was clearly visible from any location in the classroom. It tracked the classroom discussion and had the capability to expand on any of the topics covered. Commissioners visited a math class where several of the students were engaged in reviewing multiplication table flash cards.

There are several computers in each of the classrooms and there is a dedicated computer classroom. It was mentioned that students who are missing credits in specific areas can attend "cyber-high" online to work on the deficiency. The computer teacher comes one and half days a week and there are plans to expand this coverage to two and half days per week. Students work on projects, learning computer applications such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

In 2009, two girls took the GED test. In order to take the GED test you have to be at least 17 years of age. Since the boys at MWC are younger, no boys took the test. There are no specific GED targeted classes, but girls are given GED study guides and have tutors available to them. For those youth who were not able to complete all GED tests while incarcerated, arrangements will be made for them to continue the process at an official site when they return to a comprehensive campus.

One of the stumbling blocks for BRHS is the difficulty in clearly quantifying the impact of the BRHS educational program on the students. Current state testing models assume a relatively stable cohort of students. That is never the case at BRHS. A test that is given one year will be given to a completely different population of students the next year, as new students come to BRHS and current students complete their placements. This situation may improve when a state project for unique student identifiers is implemented, allowing for tracking the progress of individual students. Currently the student population tests significantly below grade level, 4 years below for 10-12 graders and more than 3 years below for students in grades 8-9. As discussed earlier, an assessment is given to the students at least every 90 days. The information from this assessment is shared informally with the teachers. It may be valuable to establish a formalized process to share this information and to track on a school-wide basis whether the individual students are making at least 90 days progress between each assessment period.

It was noted by Commissioners that most students in public high schools have one or more hours of homework daily. At BRHS, most students are below grade level and these students would benefit from homework. The possibility of assigning homework to be completed back on the pods after school should be explored. At the very least, there should be an established reading period of 20 minutes in the pods in the afternoon (television and other activities are stopped to read for 20 minutes). For this to be successful, it would be important to provide the youth with a variety of

reading materials include topical magazines such as car and beauty magazines, graphic novels and other popular literature.

Commissioners spoke with several of the students while visiting the MWC and many of them expressed a sense of hopelessness when it came to their education and their ability to succeed. Another young woman who was on grade level for math, felt she was not provided the support she needed to learn new math information because she was in a classroom where most of the students were working on basic math skills such as multiplication tables and these students required most of the teacher's attention. Since the student population at the BRHS is a "captive audience" there is a real opportunity to help these young people begin to close the gap in their education and develop a sense that they can be successful educationally. If these youth are to be successful when they leave the MWC, they need to realize that working in school is important, that they can make progress and that they may need to be their own advocate for what will help them most educationally.

SJ 2020, the County Office of Education/City of San Jose initiative designed to close the achievement gap in San Jose, has outlined several strategies that can be implemented to improve student outcomes. The strategies should be implemented at BRHS and include:

- Create a culture of success that includes high standards for all students.
- Engaging students in reflection and provide feedback to inform them of what they need to know and what they need to work on (including tracking student progress using a formatively based system.)
- Use regular assessments to inform instruction.
- Employ extended learning time strategies.
- Involve parents in their children's education.
- Utilize a multidisciplinary approach and curriculum that is relevant to the real world beyond high school.
- Unite the community to support students and families holistically

### **Education Program Development**

The MWC Site Team meets quarterly. Representatives from probation, the school, mental health, medical services, California Youth Outreach, Pathways, Gardner, DADs, Girl Schools, and Victim Awareness attend and share their experiences and concerns. Topics covered include funding issues, training, staffing changes, program updates and discussion of possible solutions to current issues, e.g. lapses during home visits and gang influences.

### **XI. INCIDENT REPORTS**

The Commissioners reviewed the incident reports for November 2009 through January 2010. There were a total of 23 reports for November, 39 reports for December, and 22 reports for January. The Probation Manager explained the higher number for December, saying that the holidays are always difficult times for youth and there tend to be more incidents.

On-site violations were largely for disruptive conduct, use of profanity, refusal to follow instructions and insubordination. Reading the reports, it was noted that the youth were counseled repeatedly before the additional step of filing an incident report was taken. The administrative results for this type of conduct included additional counseling, having a note made in the youth's log or having an "unsuccessful week". An unsuccessful week affects a youth's progress through the level system and can impact their length of stay.

When compared, the Commissioners found that there were no discrepancies between the major incidents noted on the monthly salient features report for November and December 2009 and the original incident reports. In January, however, the salient features reports indicated that there had been one escape from the ranch, but the incident report showed that two youth had escaped on the same day. The Probation Manager retrieved the data she had submitted for that date and it showed two escapes. She called the probation office immediately inquiring into the discrepancy.

It was discouraging to see the number of escapes from MWC (3) and from Other Temporary leave (2), and the number of other violations that took place when a youth was off-site (10). In each case, additional weeks were added to the youth's time at MWC. When asked, one youth stated that reason for running was the difficulty of changing behavior, the fear of failing a week and the possibility of lengthening the stay.

## **XII. APPEALS AND GRIEVANCES**

Commissioners reviewed appeals and grievances for the past year. There were no major appeals. Most were minor issues and were appropriately addressed.

Twelve grievances were filed between January and December 2009. These grievances usually involved issues between a youth and a staff person. In most cases, the filing of the grievance was followed by a conversation with the youth and the staff involved. All of the grievances seemed to be resolved and were signed off by the youth. In three cases, the grievance was found in favor of the youth.

The procedures for filing a grievance are included in the MWC Guide Book. Grievance forms may be obtained from a Counselor or from a box labeled "Grievances" in pods.

## **XIII. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED**

### **County Of Santa Clara**

1. SCVHHS, Public Health Dept., MWC Inspection Report May 15, 2009
2. Fire Inspection dated Dec. 28, 2009.
3. Annual Fire and Life Safety Inspection Nov. 30, 2009
4. Monthly Safety Inspection report Jan. 15, 2010
5. Institution Services Training Plan
6. Special School Annual report for MWC
7. 2009 Guidelines for Level Presentations and Expectations not dated

## **Santa Clara County Probation Department**

1. Copies of Appeal and Grievance forms
2. MWC brochure
3. MWC Residential Center Guide Book in English and Spanish
4. Class Daily Schedule
5. Probation Counselors and Staff Daily schedule for the month of March.
- 7: Chief Probation Officer response letter dated July 9, 2009.
8. "An Assessment of the Enhanced Ranch Program" issued on July 24, 2009 by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD).

### **XIV. RESPONSE TO 2009 RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were ten (10) recommendations made in last year report. According to letter from Chief Probation Officer dated July 9, 2009 all recommendations had been addressed or were being addressed.

No major concerns to date.

### **XV. COMMENDATIONS**

#### **The Juvenile Justice Commission Commends:**

1. The MWC staff is passionate and highly motivated to help youth succeed in graduating from the Ranch program. The staff should also be commended for their efforts to take care of the multiple needs of the youth.
2. The MWC Manager for her efforts to instill team work approach from Staff, CBO, Mentors and volunteers.
3. The BRHS principal and teachers who are passionate and committed to meet the diverse learning needs of the youth in their classrooms.
4. The Aftercare Counselor for his ongoing effort to ensure youth follow the probation plan and condition.
5. The Mental Health therapist for her concern and passion to help youth to get control of their life including her team work effort to work with the Nurse, Medical staff and Counselors.
6. The Nurse who everybody likes and respects has gone above and beyond the call of service to the youth at MWC for the past 12 years.
7. The Maintenance crew for keeping MWC clean and safe.

## **XVI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Purchasing should place an order of an air conditioning unit for the portable office unit as soon as possible. It has been approved for the past 6 months and has yet to be ordered and installed.
2. MWC staff and the Probation Department should evaluate the possibility of having youth wear and care for their own clothing while at the MWC.
3. Continue to enforce and improve Enhanced Ranch Program. It would be beneficial if youth who are not court-ordered but wish to attend classes such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and anger management could do so.
4. MWC should have masks and hand wipes/disinfectant hand cream at the front desk available to visitors. It may be prudent to ask visitors if they are experiencing any signs or symptoms of illness when they arrive and ask them to “mask up” in order to maintain the health of the youth at the MWC.
5. All mental health reports and other relevant information about the youth should be made available to the Mental Health Therapist.
6. The Santa Clara County Office of Education should explore and prioritize implementing the principles of SJ 2020 into the education program at the Blue Ridge High School. In particular, focus should be placed on establishing academic tracking systems to support teachers and students in understanding their progress in different subject areas with the goal of creating a climate of success and high expectations.
7. MWC Leadership should explore providing time to do homework during afterschool hours. Minimally, there should be a 20-minute time period where everyone is asked to read, but ideally it would be good to have a one hour homework time, where Counselors and volunteer tutors are available to help the youth with homework assigned during class time. For the reading period, it would be important to have a variety of reading materials available such as current magazines on topics of interest, graphic novels and popular books.
6. MWC staff continues to encourage parents or guardian to attend meetings with Mental Health Therapist, Aftercare Counselors or teachers to understand youth issues and concerns at home.

**XVII. SUMMARY**

MWC continues to make improvements. It is run professionally by Probation Department staff and effectively utilizes community based organizations and volunteers to support the ERP.

Based on the inspection, the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission believes that the MWC meets the Commission's standard for a safe and effective Juvenile detention facility for the youth of Santa Clara County.

**Approved by the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission on July 6, 2010.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pam Serrano, JJC Chair

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vinod Mehta, MWC Inspection Chair

Date