

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

**WILLIAM F. JAMES BOYS' RANCH
FEBRUARY 2007**

I. INTRODUCTION

The William F. James Boys' Ranch (James Ranch or Ranch) is a rehabilitative program offered for boys aged 15½ to 18 by the Santa Clara County Probation Department. The goal of the six-to-eight month program is to have each youth return home with the necessary tools for successful reintegration into the family and community. The facility is located on Malaguerra Avenue in Morgan Hill.

The Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission (Commission) inspected the James Ranch in a series of announced visits on February 5, 18, 22 and 26, 2007, pursuant to the State of California Welfare and Institutions Code §229. Commissioners inspected the facility, reviewed programs, observed vocational and academic activities and interviewed youth, families and staff. In addition, an off-site interview was conducted on March 1, 2007 with personnel from California Youth Outreach (CYO), a Community Based Organization (CBO) that provides selected programs at the Ranch.

This report provides a summary of information gathered regarding the youth, staff, physical plant, programs, school, medical services and mental health services. Specific commendations and recommendations are also listed.

II. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Copies of documents and reports from various sources were requested as part of the inspection, but some of the 2006 reports (including the Annual Report for Blue Ridge High School and the Annual Health Inspection Report) were not yet available. The following documents/reports were reviewed:

1. Office of the Fire Marshal, Inspection Notice, dated November 15, 2006
2. Incident Reports and Grievance Reports, dated January 1-31, 2007
3. *Welcome to the James Ranch*, orientation booklet, undated
4. *William F. James Boys Ranch Guide Book*, August 25, 2006
5. *James Ranch & Muriel Wright Center, 6-8 Month Proposed Program*, dated September 1, 2006
6. Juvenile Justice Commission Inspection Report, William F. James Boys' Ranch, dated May 15, 2006
7. Probation Department response to May 15, 2006 James Ranch Inspection Report, dated June 14, 2006
8. Santa Clara County Office of Education (COE) response to May 15, 2006 James Ranch Inspection Report, dated June 21, 2006

9. Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System (SCVHHS) response to May 15, 2006 James Ranch Inspection Report, dated October 20, 2006
10. James Ranch Program Schedule, dated December 4, 2006
11. James Ranch Organization Chart, undated
12. James Ranch Shift Schedule, undated
13. Aftercare Contract form, dated September 21, 2005

III. POPULATION

The California Corrections Standards Authority (CSA) rated capacity of the James Ranch is 96 youth. However, concurrent with the recent implementation of the Enhanced Ranch Program (ERP), the Probation Department now limits the capacity to 60 youth. The youth are divided into five “pods” of 12 each, with each pod assigned to a specific set of Probation Counselors.

There were 54 youth residing at the James Ranch at the time of the initial Commission visit on February 5, 2007, with an additional four scheduled to arrive from Juvenile Hall the next day. At that time, there were 21 youth in Juvenile Hall awaiting placement at the Ranch. By comparison, there were 49 youth at the Ranch on January 31, 2006 and 84 on April 7, 2005.

The following population breakdown by age and ethnicity/race was obtained for February 12, 2007, when there were 57 youth at the Ranch:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
15	1	1.8
16	17	29.8
17	31	54.4
18	<u>8</u>	<u>14.0</u>
	57	100.0%

<u>Ethnicity/Race</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Hispanic	43	75.4
Black	7	12.3
White	3	5.3
Asian	2	3.5
Other	<u>2</u>	<u>3.5</u>
	57	100.0%

It was noted that almost 95% of the youth were identified as ethnic/racial minorities.

IV. STAFFING

Probation Department staff assigned to the James Ranch includes the Ranch Manager, four Supervising Probation Counselors, 32 Probation Counselors (including one assigned to Aftercare and one assigned to the Enterprise Program), and seven Probation Assistants. Two of the seven Probation Assistant positions were vacant at the time of the

inspection. In addition, there are 14 part-time “extra help” personnel who fill in for Probation staff members when necessary due to sickness, vacation or training, and are also used for overload situations. It should be noted that Probation Counselors must be college graduates, and that staff turnover is very low. Staffing levels have increased significantly with implementation of the ERP:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Number (Current)</u>	<u>Number (Pre-ERP)</u>
Ranch Manager	1	1
Supervising Prob. Counselor	4	3
Probation Counselor	30	21
Aftercare Prob. Counselor	1	1
Enterprise Prob. Counselor	1	1
Probation Assistant	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>
	44	31

Probation Counselors previously worked 16-hour shifts, but this schedule was not consistent with the objective of building one-on-one relationships between youth and staff in the ERP. Accordingly, a new shift schedule has been developed in which each Probation Counselor not assigned to Aftercare or the Enterprise Program is assigned to one of three teams. Each team works a rotating series of 8, 10 and 16-hour shifts over a two-week cycle, covering the period from 6:30 am to 10:30 pm, seven days per week. Each Probation Counselor is consistently assigned to the same pod. Probation assistants work the overnight shift from 10:30 pm to 6:30 am.

Two Aftercare Probation Officers also have offices at the Ranch, but they are not formally considered to be part of the Ranch staff.

In addition to Probation Department staff, the following personnel are assigned to the James Ranch:

- Blue Ridge High School staff from the COE
- Medical Services and Mental Health Services staff from the SCVHHS
- Vocational education staff from the Regional Occupational Program (ROP)
- Deputy Sheriff (9 am to 9 pm daily)
- Kitchen staff
- Maintenance supervisor
- Contract staff from CBOs such as CYO and Pathway Society

V. ENHANCED RANCH PROGRAM

Background

According to national juvenile justice experts, smaller capacity facilities, or at least facilities that focus on providing services to youth in small work group settings, are crucial to improving youth outcomes within the juvenile correction system. These same experts note that cognitive behavioral management programs provide the most effective method of reducing recidivism rates. Experts note the key element in working with youthful offenders is the one-on-one relationships formed between youth and line staff. Specialized cognitive

program modality allows staff members to get to know the youth on a very individual basis, thus impacting their ability to acquire the pro-socialization skills they need to impact their lives in a positive manner. These best-practice models have proven to reduce recidivism rates and have also shown a positive impact on disproportionate minority over-confinement.

Recommendations to pursue this form of rehabilitation, often referred to as the Missouri Model, have come from a number of experts hired by Santa Clara County to examine program enhancements. Dr. Edward Latessa, Dr. David Roush and Bobbie Huskey have all promoted similar concepts.

Traditional youth offender rehabilitation methods (such as the old James Ranch program) focus on changing the way the youth acts. The fundamental concept behind the best-practice cognitive models is that faulty thinking patterns result in juvenile delinquency and recidivism. The cognitive model focuses on trying to change the way youthful offenders think, and not just the way they act. Through the cognitive model, youth develop interpersonal problem solving skills and moral reasoning ability, and learn how to see their world in different ways and deal with issues and problems that come up in their daily lives.

Program Design

The document *James Ranch & Muriel Wright Center, 6-8 Month Proposed Program*, dated September 1, 2006, describes the ERP and its underlying philosophy. The core of the ERP is the cognitive behavioral management program. The program philosophy has an emphasis on a holistic approach to the development of individual treatment/case plans by a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). These individual case plans are the guide for the youth's progression through the ERP. The program duration is from six to eight months (an increase from the previous duration of four or five months), but each youth's progress is to be closely monitored at each level to ensure that progress is being made as outlined in the case plan. There is a strong emphasis on positive peer group dynamics through individual counseling, group counseling, family therapy, substance abuse counseling and additional program services provided by CBOs. The program is designed to be an interactive and participatory experience. It is not designed to be one in which the youth are "lectured to," but rather as one in which they actively participate and acquire skills.

The ERP follows the lead of the best-practice models for effective cognitive behavioral management, and puts an emphasis on building one-on-one relationships between youth and staff. It is this bond that allows growth and change to occur in rehabilitative settings. In addition, there is an emphasis on positive peer group interactions, development of thinking and reasoning skills, and involvement of families in the process. The family counseling component of the ERP is important, because family members need to acquire the same new skills and problem solving techniques as their son(s).

The cognitive behavioral skills taught by Probation Counselors through individual and group counseling are: problem solving; social skills; negotiation skills; managing emotions; values enhancement; and critical reasoning. All Probation Counselors are to be trained in the principles of effective interventions, behavioral strategies such as modeling and the application of re-enforcers (both negative and positive), motivational interviewing techniques, treatment planning, understanding risk and need factors related to criminal

conduct, cognitive group facilitation, role playing and skills development, and the use and interpretation of assessment instruments.

Through the ERP, youth learn how beliefs, attitudes and thoughts that underlie mood and emotions can affect the choices they make. Most important is the idea that the individual is responsible for his or her own actions. Goals of the program are for youth to learn how to avoid high-risk situations and how to gain control over high-risk thoughts and feelings. In short, the individual develops alternative means to satisfy needs and longings previously fulfilled through deviant actions and negative peer associations.

Implementation

The Probation Department implemented the ERP at both the James Ranch and the Wright Center on August 28, 2006. This represented a change from the previous plan, under which ERP was to start at the James Ranch in October 2006, two months after startup at the Wright Center. The last youth committed under the “old” program left the Ranch in early January 2007.

The total preferred capacity of the Ranch has been reduced from 96 to 60 youth and the dormitory has been divided into five rooms, or pods, of twelve youth each. At the same time, the number of Probation Counselors has been increased and shift schedules modified so that a core team of six Probation Counselors (two on each of three rotating shifts) provides individual and group counseling for each pod. There is also a Probation Assistant assigned to each pod overnight. The Probation Counselors hold three group counseling sessions (7:30 to 8:30 am, 12:30 to 1:00 pm and 6:00 to 7:30 pm) in their pods every day, and each youth now receives 400 hours of counseling before leaving the Ranch.

The length of stay has been increased from four or five months to six-to-eight months. The commitment time is initially set at six months, but can be increased if there is lack of suitable progress as determined by the Ranch staff. At the time of the Commissioner’s visit, youth awaiting placement at the Ranch did not get credit for time served in Juvenile Hall. However, this policy changed on March 5, 2007 with implementation of the Ranch Readiness Program at Juvenile Hall. Commissioners were told that youth can now receive one day of ERP credit for each two days spent in the Ranch Readiness Program.

Progression through the Program

Prior to arriving at the Ranch, each youth attends an orientation session at Juvenile Hall. An orientation form and a checklist are completed by the Probation Counselor and the youth. Additional orientation is provided when the youth arrives at the Ranch, and medical information is reviewed by the nurse at this time. There is also a Ranch orientation program for parents. However, during the Commissioner’s visit on February 18, 2007, only one of the fourteen parents interviewed said that they had received any orientation.

An intake MDT (including Probation Counselor, Probation Officer, Mental Health, Pathway, School, the youth and parents) meets within the first month after a youth arrives at the Ranch to evaluate all relevant case information and develop a treatment plan. Interim MDT meetings can be convened when a youth’s progress is poor or when there is concern

for their ability to successfully complete the program, and an exit MDT meeting is convened as part of the preparation for transitioning to Aftercare.

The previous process of recognizing a youth's advancement through a point system by the use of different colored belts has been abandoned at the James Ranch. Progress must now be exhibited by growth in approved and desired behaviors and attitudes, as recognized by advancement through a new "level" system. The level system is a working performance scale comprised of four graduated steps and is designed to enable the youth to acquire specific skills and competencies. Each of the four levels contains objectives and expectations measurable by all staff members. Youth enter the Ranch at Level 1 and must actively work toward Level 4 in order to graduate. The four designated levels and their approximate durations are:

- Level 1 (Orientation) – one month
- Level 2 (Program/Treatments) – two months
- Level 3 (Family Reunification) – two months
- Level 4 (Continuing Care Plan) – one month

There are specific expectations, privileges and restrictions at each program level. For example, youth are first eligible for field trips, sports programs and Off-Ranch work crews at Level 2, while youth at Level 3 are eligible for daytime weekend furloughs after completion of three family counseling sessions and 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 their overall behavior is congruent with the level expectations and goals. A specific number of successful weeks is required at each level to qualify for level advancement. Any Incident Report (IR) would result in an "unsuccessful week," which lengthens the youth's stay by one week. Youth in any one pod are all at different levels. They do not graduate as a group, but rather complete the program as individuals. Youth say the ERP is much more difficult than the old program, and that they are asked to do a lot more than under the old program.

Staffing/Training

The Probation Department retained Mark Steward, who developed the "Missouri Model," as a consultant to develop staff training for the ERP. Staff training commenced in May 2006, but only two-thirds of the Probation Counselors at James Ranch had been fully trained in ERP by the time of the initial Commission visit on February 5, 2007. All Probation Counselors had at least completed orientation, and the next group was to start training on February 12, 2007. There will be an additional 96 hours of training for each Counselor during 2007.

As noted previously, Probation Department staffing levels have increased significantly with implementation of the ERP. The program is still in transition, with everyone going through a learning and adjustment period, and it remains to be seen how the Probation Counselors will adapt their methods to the new model of cognitive behavioral management. Commissioners were told that some staff members are resisting the new program, but that there has been no staff turnover attributable to its implementation.

The inspection team met informally with two Probation Counselors. Both are long-time staff members who spoke favorably about the ERP. They recognize that the ERP is new and needs “tweaking,” and that the Ranch is still transitioning from the old program to the new program. They said the pods are working well and commented favorably on working with small groups and providing individual counseling to the youth. One of the Counselors felt that not all youth at James Ranch were suited to the ERP. Both Counselors felt that the rules were not always applied consistently, and favored aspects of the old program that provided for immediate punishment or reward. One of the Counselors felt there was need for more motivation in the program. One example given was that it takes three months to qualify for a furlough (Level 3), and that this incentive is too far removed.

Feedback received through discussions with some Ranch personnel indicated concerns about the new role of Probation Counselors. One individual expressed a concern that, despite their ERP training, Probation Counselors are not required to have a formal education in counseling. A second concern is that Probation Counselors’ ability to engage the youth in honest, open discussion may be compromised by their role in assessing progress and their power to declare unsuccessful weeks. There have been indications that some youth are reluctant to really “open up” and speak honestly in counseling sessions within their pods, preferring to “tell the Counselors what they want to hear” to avoid possible negative consequences.

VI. FACILITY

The general appearance and condition of the dormitory has improved greatly since last year. Although construction work associated with permanent improvements has not yet begun, the large barracks-style room has already been broken up into five individual pods, “A” through “E,” using door-height partitions/room dividers. In addition, new bunk beds, lockers, sofas, chairs, desks, tables and area rugs have been provided in each pod. The new pods seem to provide a more positive environment for the youth, and the dormitory has much less of an “institutional” feel than in the past. The design of the permanent improvements has been completed, and the project awaits funding approval. Construction is expected to take four months, with completion anticipated by January 2008. Youth will have to be temporarily relocated once construction begins, but the longer term benefits should be substantial. No firm decision has been made as to how youth will be housed during the construction period.

The clean appearance of the recreation hall was also quite evident. New carpeting and some new furniture have been provided in the large main room, and the walls have been painted. In addition to tables, chairs and sofas, the main room also contains several pool tables. There is an enclosed weight room on one end of the building and another enclosed room on the opposite end that is being converted into a library where students can have a quiet place to complete homework, pursue Independent Study or prepare for the General Educational Development (GED) exam. Book shelves were being installed in the new Library at the time of the inspection.

The kitchen and dining room are clean and bustling, and the longstanding problem of a disagreeable smell emanating from the kitchen has apparently been resolved. During the

inspection, Commissioners noted the appropriate temperature levels for the refrigeration and freezer units as well as the condition of the washer unit that sanitizes utensils and trays. The kitchen and storage areas were found to be neat and clean. Youth from the On-Ranch work crew were assigned to kitchen duty and were occupied with serving food and cleaning up afterwards. A hot lunch was served, consisting of vegetable soup, cheeseburgers, potatoes, milk, fruit cup, and chocolate pudding. The meal was exemplary, and Commissioners noted that food was not being thrown away in large quantities as has been observed at Juvenile Hall.

There are newer buildings in satisfactory repair that house Probation management and staff, as well as Mental Health, Medical and Pathway personnel. The school and vocational classrooms are generally in good order. However, the leaking overhangs and broken walkways are still in need of repair or replacement. The cement walkway along the older buildings is periodically mended, only to crack again.

The swimming pool chlorinator has been repaired since the last Commission inspection, but a new one is needed. However, a new chlorinator cannot be installed until the pool is resurfaced to repair chips and cracked plaster. The pool will be open this summer, but youth will be required to wear flip-flops.

The grounds appeared to be in much better condition than last year. The grass was generally mowed, and mulch had been applied to some areas that were formerly barren or full of weeds. Youth on the On-Ranch work crew help with Ranch cleanup.

A new metal security fence was installed around the perimeter of the Ranch in October 2005 to deter runaways. There were only four Ranch escapes in 2006 and two so far in 2007. Two of these escapes occurred when youth waited for the vehicle entrance gate to open and then slipped out. By comparison, there were 102 escapes in Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 and 95 escapes in FY 2005.

VII. INCIDENT REPORTS, GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS

Incident Reports

Incident Reports (IRs) are prepared by Counselors and other James Ranch staff members to document violations of Ranch rules. Commissioners reviewed each IR written in January 2007. A total of 89 IRs were written, with 17 of the 89 coming from the Blue Ridge High School.

A detailed review of the IRs reveals that six youth were returned to Juvenile Hall during the month of January. Two were classified as Administrative Ranch Returns and the remaining four were classified as Ranch Failures. The dates of the actions were January 8, 16, 18, 24 (two), and 27.

Grievances

A grievance procedure is available to all youth. Matters subject to the grievance procedure are those related to any condition of confinement including, but not limited to, health care services, program participation, telephone, mail or visiting procedures, food,

clothing, bedding, and any alleged violation of “Rights of Minors.” Youth may file a written grievance on a form obtained from any Probation Counselor or from the box labeled “Grievances” on the side of the dormitory office. The grievance may be delivered to any Probation Counselor.

Grievances are handled at the lowest appropriate staff level. Youth who disagree with the response to a grievance are entitled to have the matter heard by a person not involved in the circumstances that led to the grievance. If the grievance is initially reviewed by a Probation Counselor and is not resolved at that level, the youth may talk to the Probation Supervisor. If the grievance is not resolved at that level, it is then forwarded to the Ranch Manager for administrative review and resolution. The decision of the Ranch Manager is final.

There were no grievances filed in January 2007.

Appeals

At the time of preparation of an IR, the youth is notified in writing of the rule violated using the “Notice of Violation” form. The youth may file an appeal on a form obtained from any Probation Counselor or from the box labeled “Appeals” on the side of the dormitory office. The appeal may be delivered to any Probation Counselor.

Each appeal is reviewed by the Probation Supervisor. If the appeal is not resolved at that level, it is then forwarded to the Ranch Manager for administrative review and resolution. The decision of the Ranch Manager is final.

There were no appeals filed in January 2007.

VIII. MEDICAL SERVICES

The SCVHHS provides medical services at the Ranch. The Nurse Manager at Juvenile Hall, who also supervises medical services at the Ranch, has previously described the three major health goals:

- Comprehensive Health Assessment screenings
- Treatment for diagnosed medical problems
- Health education and health prevention activities such as immunizations

All youth are given a comprehensive medical examination by the Medical Director at Juvenile Hall before being sent to the James Ranch. A Registered Nurse is on duty at the Ranch seven days per week, working a split shift from 7 to 11 am and 5 to 9 pm, and a doctor comes to the Ranch one morning each month. Depending on the circumstances, youth needing additional medical care can be taken to Valley Health Center – San Martin, Valley Health Center – Bascom, the Juvenile Hall Medical Clinic or, if necessary, the emergency room at Valley Medical Center. “Sick call” is in the morning, right before or after the youth have breakfast.

The nurse monitors medications and distributes all medications in four “pill calls” each day. By law, youth cannot be forced to take medication. Most of the medications are over-the-counter items such as cold and allergy medications, and the doctor occasionally prescribes a sleeping pill such as Benadryl. The number of youth taking prescribed psychotropic medications varies, but is typically no more than 10% of the population. There were two youth at the Ranch on February 22, 2007 taking prescribed psychotropic medications. There were also two diabetics at the Ranch, one taking pills and the other on insulin, and two youth on inhalers for asthma. The nurse could not remember a suicide attempt at the Ranch during his tenure.

The nurse also provides medical education, such as proper skin care, STD prevention and sex education, to individual youth as necessary or as requested. Chlamydia is the most commonly seen sexually transmitted disease among youth at the Ranch.

As noted previously, there is no nurse on duty between 11 am and 5 pm or between 9 pm and 7 am. Thus, injuries that occur on work crews, during Physical Education or during altercations often happen when there is no nurse on the premises. As a result, even minor injuries have in the past required that youth be taken off-site for emergency medical attention. In December 2006, the SCVHHS installed video cameras and communications equipment to provide a videoconferencing link between the James Ranch Medical Clinic and the Juvenile Hall Medical Clinic. Probation Counselors at the Ranch can now use this link to obtain remote nursing assessment of medical problems when there is no nurse on the premises. The nurse would also like to use this communications link to confer with the Medical staff at Juvenile Hall, but that is not part of the current protocol. The equipment is tested each morning and has already been used at least once to provide remote nursing assessment.

There is no dentist on-site, but youth can receive restorative dental care at Juvenile Hall. The two major dental issues are tooth pain and tooth abscesses. There is no care for youth needing root canals or crowns. Unfortunately, no teeth-cleaning or other preventive dental procedures are available since youth at the Ranch are not eligible for MediCal, even if they were eligible before being committed to the Ranch. If the youth has off-site privileges, his family may take him to a private dentist with appropriate permission. The Commission continues to urge the SCVHHS to explore the use of a mobile dental van through such resources as the Health Trust to provide preventive health care to youth.

IX. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mental Health services at the Ranch are provided by the SCVHHS Mental Health Department. The Supervisor of the James Ranch Mental Health Clinic, who is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), is also responsible for the Mental Health Clinic at the Wright Center and the South County Mental Health Clinic in Gilroy. She is supported at the Ranch by a full-time LCSW, a full-time Associate Clinical Social Worker, a full-time Mental Health Community Worker (also known as a Family Partner) and a part-time Mental Health Community Worker/Family Partner. Mental Health Community Workers are paraprofessionals who work with youth and their families, including home visits, and also provide case management support. They can be used when incidents arise that are not

necessarily mental health issues, but which require intervention. For example, if a youth is upset about breaking up with a girlfriend, a Mental Health Community Worker might be summoned to speak with the youth and help him work through the event. Mental Health staff members carry pagers on-site and can respond to emergencies.

The Clinic currently provides Aggression Replacement Training (ART) as well as individual and family counseling. Approximately 50% of the youth are currently in family counseling. Functional Family Therapy, a form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) that has been proven to be very effective, is to be implemented in May 2007.

The Mental Health Clinic is open Monday through Friday. Staff members generally arrive between 8:00 and 9:00 am, and the Clinic typically remains open until 6:00 or 6:30 pm, although staff members sometimes stay until 7:00 or 7:30 pm to accommodate the schedules of working parents. There is a serious concern that it might not be possible to maintain the current level of service in light of pending County budget cuts.

Overnight and weekend coverage is not available at the Ranch, but youth can be transported to Juvenile Hall if necessary. This is also the case for youth who need Mental Health services not available at the Ranch. Some youth with diagnosed mental health problems may be too difficult to handle at the Ranch, particularly if they are suicidal. A youth who poses a danger to himself or others is transported to Juvenile Hall for evaluation and/or treatment. Two psychiatrists are on staff at Juvenile Hall to provide services, and, starting the first week in March 2007, one of them will now be available to come to the Ranch as needed.

Mental Health staff members do not have walkie-talkies or emergency buttons to summon assistance, if necessary, when talking to a youth. Although there have been no known incidents in recent memory requiring such action, there is always the possibility of an emergency situation for which the availability of an office telephone is insufficient.

Aggression Replacement Training

ART is a very comprehensive therapeutic model that has been heavily researched and tested with delinquent youth. It was initiated at James Ranch during the past year as a 10-week program provided to groups of 6 to 10 youth in three 1½ hour sessions per week. Youth are selected for ART by a Probation Supervisor, but participation is voluntary. Three or four groups have been completed to date and there is currently one group of eight youth in the program. All groups are co-facilitated by Mental Health and Probation staff, and a considerable number of Mental Health and Probation staff members have already been trained. A Probation Counselor has also been trained as an ART trainer, and Commissioners were told that additional “train the trainer” sessions would be held in March 2007. The long-term goal is for each pod to have its own ART program. “Mini-ART” sessions are currently being conducted in one of the pods as problems arise, and feedback has been positive.

The three ART sessions each week focus on:

- Skill streaming (Monday) – Through presented material and interactive role playing, youth learn everyday life skills such as asking for help, dealing with peer pressures, how to say “no” and avoiding fights.
- Morality (Wednesday) – Youth learn about feelings of others and are presented a new dilemma each week. Through group discussions, youth learn how to deal with different life situations and morality issues.
- Anger Management (Friday) – Youth are taught ABC’s of behavior (Action leads to Behavior, which leads to Consequences). Through role playing, youth learn how to recognize behavior “triggers” and how to calm down.

X. SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAMS

Supplemental programs at the James Ranch include Chemical Dependency Treatment, Gang Intervention/Refusal Skills, Anti-Criminal Thinking/Behavior Patterns, Life Skills, Health Realization, Career Education, Victim Awareness, Sexual Offender Counseling, tattoo removal, religious services, and team sports as appropriate to each youth. Most of these programs are conducted through contracts with Community Based Organizations such as Pathway Society, Community Solutions, California Youth Outreach (CYO) and Gardner Family Care Corporation.

Commissioners noted that instructors for supplemental programs do not receive information on incoming youth such as the Multi-Agency Assessment Center (MAAC) worksheets provided to instructors at Juvenile Hall.

Pathway Society provides the Chemical Dependency Treatment program for youth at the James Ranch. Participation can be ordered by the Court or can be requested by a Probation Counselor. Each group of three-to-five youth receives one 1½-hour group counseling session per week plus individual counseling. Counseling sessions are held during the morning, and youth are pulled out of vocational program activities as necessary. The program focuses on helping youth realize the seriousness of their drug and/or alcohol usage and how it affects school, friends, employment and family. Resources and techniques for staying clean and sober are emphasized. The approach is to never criticize, blame or complain about the youth’s behavior. The counselor must first develop a relationship with each youth through listening and allowing the youth to talk about what is important to him before he can be taught to deal with his responsibilities.

The youth in each pod rotate as a group through the following five programs: (1) Gang Intervention/Refusal Skills; (2) Anti-Criminal Thinking/Behavior Patterns; (3) Life Skills; (4) Health Realization; and (5) Career Education. Each program is conducted over an eight week period, except that Career Education is divided into two four-week blocks, with approximately 50% of the youth in a pod participating in each block. All of these programs are conducted in the morning, and youth are pulled out of vocational program activities as necessary.

CYO provides both the Gang Intervention/Refusal Skills and Anti-Criminal Thinking/Behavior Patterns programs, supplementing two-hour weekly group sessions with individual counseling. The focus of Gang Intervention/Refusal Skills is to develop appropriate pro-socialization skills to steer youth away from their gang involvement. A resource packet is provided to each youth at the completion of the program, and CYO also works to connect youth with community resources through its work with the Aftercare Program. Anti-Criminal Thinking/Behavior Patterns is a cognitive behavioral program directed at challenging criminal thinking, beliefs attitudes and behaviors, and addressing faulty patterns of behavior.

The Life Skills program, provided by Community Solutions, focuses on the development of life skills, positive communication skills and decision making skills.

The SCVHHS Department of Alcohol and Drug Services provides the Health Realization program, which focuses on the innate health and well-being inherent in every human being.

Career Education is a highly focused career exploration/job skills program provided by a volunteer educational services specialist.

Youth are also offered Victim Awareness workshops conducted by volunteers trained as facilitators through the California Department of Juvenile Justice and Mothers against Drunk Drivers. This program is based on a best-practices model that has been shown to help youth achieve a level of empathy towards their victims.

All youth may participate in church services on Sunday morning and bible study on Thursday evening.

Once they've reached Level 2, all youth may participate in team sports through the Central Coast Ranch Athletics League. The four available sports are basketball, volleyball, softball and kickball. Youth have spoken about the positive experiences they've had participating in group sporting events.

XI. EDUCATION

Students attend the on-site Blue Ridge High School, which is run by the Alternative Schools Department of the COE in facilities maintained by the Probation Department. The Principal is responsible for both "regular" and special education at Blue Ridge High School, Osborne School (at Juvenile Hall) and the Wright Center School. The full-time teaching staff is comprised of three credentialed "regular education" teachers, a special education Special Day Class (SDC) teacher and an SDC aide. A special education Resource Specialist Program (RSP) specialist and an RSP aide are shared between Blue Ridge High School, the Wright Center School, South County Community School and the Boys and Girls Advent group homes in Gilroy. Special education personnel are under the direction of the Special Education Department of the COE.

A credentialed School Counselor expedites the compilation of school transcripts for the youth and works to implement continuity of the educational process as a youth moves from their regular school to the Osborne School at Juvenile Hall, to Blue Ridge High School at the Ranch and then back out to their assigned school placement in the community. The School Counselor is shared between Osborne School, Blue Ridge High School, the Wright Center School, South County Community School and the Boys and Girls Advent group homes in Gilroy. An Educational Counselor from the Probation Department Community Services Division works with the School Counselor in assisting Blue Ridge students with school placements as they leave the Ranch. The Educational Counselor also assists students at the Osborne School. An office coordinator, school secretary and custodian are also shared with other alternative schools.

Time spent in the classroom is minimally proscribed by the CSA to be 240 minutes per day. The COE will be expanding the school program at Juvenile Hall from 240 minutes to 300 minutes per day and is considering such an expansion of the school programs at Blue Ridge High School and the Wright Center School.

Classes are held Monday through Friday from 1 to 5 pm, with a schedule consisting of four 50-minute periods: two periods of English/language arts; one of math; and one (last period) of physical education. This equates to one high school credit for 15 days of instruction in a given subject (which is consistent with the statutory requirement of one credit for 12 hours of instruction or five credits for 60 hours of instruction). Some students also initiate an Independent Studies contract to study the other required classes for a high school diploma, such as sciences and social studies. Teachers utilize some of their contract time not normally involved in actual classroom instruction to engage youth in Independent Studies.

Ranch personnel try to avoid interruptions of the school day due to unnecessary student “pull-outs.” Youth on the kitchen duty miss some class time while cleaning up, but such duty is rotated, thus minimizing pull-out time for individual students. Pulls-outs also occur for mental health counseling and the Pathway program.

Each “regular education” student at the Ranch receives an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP), as specified by the CSA, with specific goals for that youth. ILPs continue not to accompany youth arriving from Juvenile Hall, so that the Blue Ridge teachers must prepare ILPs based on test results and observation.

Commissioners visited each of the classrooms on February 5, 2007. Individual class sizes numbered 11, 11, 12 and 13 students, which does not represent the full complement of youth at the Ranch that day. Commissioners did not ascertain where the “missing” students may have been. While visiting classrooms, Commissioners noted that some Probation Counselors stayed in the classrooms with the youth from their pods and went around the rooms helping students with their studies.

Commissioners noted that classes continue to be held in the afternoon, while classes at the Wright Center School are held in the morning when students are more alert and attentive. Commissioners were told that the two facilities have different school schedules

primarily so that youth from the Wright Center can use the vocational training facilities while James Ranch youth are in school.

Unfortunately, the current structure of the school program does not mesh well with the structure of the ERP, in which youth assigned to the Ranch are divided into five self-contained “pods.” With three regular teachers and an SDC teacher, it is not possible to maintain each of five pods as a self-contained group. Teachers have accommodated this by taking youth from more than one pod into their classrooms. The only way the pod structure could be fully maintained within the school program would be to open an additional classroom and assign another full-time teacher, neither of which is economically feasible at this time. Another classroom would require new construction, and classrooms of 12 students would not generate sufficient state reimbursement to fund an additional teaching position.

Library books at the appropriate reading levels are still lacking. The new library is receiving donated books, although they are still boxed pending installation of bookcases. Each box of books is labeled regarding the reading levels of the contents.

Special Education

The RSP specialist prepares an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each special education student if an IEP doesn’t already exist or if the existing IEP is outdated. The IEP lists specific goals and specified services to be provided for the youth as required by federal law. School staff members noted that approximately 40% of students who are in need of special education services arrive at the Ranch without a current IEP, often because of frequent moves from school to school or lack of school attendance. About 60 days are required to complete an IEP, with a parent’s signature required before the process can begin. The IEPs for all youth eligible for special education services are brought up to date, including the triennial review (as appropriate), by the time the youth complete the ERP.

There is one self-contained Special Day Class with a teacher and an aide. While the class size may vary depending upon the student population at the Ranch, an SDC is envisioned to be the smallest in size to provide time and attention to the goals and objectives as specified in the IEPs. There were 13 SDC students as of February 13, 2007, making this the largest class.

An RSP aide is assigned to work with identified RSP students individually or in small groups for a maximum of one hour per week for each RSP student. IEPs for RSP students are still being written to this specification, but Commissioners are concerned that it may not provide sufficient educational instruction to the students. As of February 13, 2007, there were nine RSP students.

GED

A student in an institution may take the GED examination at age 17½ in order to receive a high school equivalency certificate, and may take GED preparation classes earlier than that. The CSA requires that GED preparation be offered to youth at the Ranch.

Youth preparing to take the GED exam used to attend GED preparation classes for about 30 days, starting as soon as they arrived at the James Ranch. The class was offered in addition to regular school classes, Monday through Thursday from 8:30 am to 10:00 am. This class was ended and the GED teacher transferred to Juvenile Hall in the fall of 2005. However, a GED preparation program has been reinstated at the Ranch as of January 31, 2007. One teacher comes in early to provide the program before lunch, with 11 or 12 students participating as of February 5, 2007. The actual GED exam is administered at Juvenile Hall.

The combination of a high school diploma/equivalency certificate and job skills with career training may provide the best hope for a youth's success after leaving the Ranch program. The opportunity to obtain the high school equivalency certificate is critical since timely high school graduation is out of reach for many Ranch youth.

XII. VOCATIONAL TRAINING (ENTERPRISE PROGRAM)

Enterprise Program

The Enterprise Program is a partially self-sustaining vocational training program that teaches entry-level job skills while producing products that can be sold. Community resources, including trade unions, local businesses, and community service organizations, were utilized in establishing the program, and the formation of The Upward Bound Youth Foundation developed from this activity.

The Enterprise Program is geared toward obtaining three goals:

- give youth at the two Ranch facilities (James Ranch and Wright Center) entry-level job skill training in viable career fields, so employment may be more readily sought upon release
- develop revenue from said programming, to make it self-sustaining and to allow future wage earning potential for youth to be directed toward the payment of court-ordered victim restitution
- have vocational training available for both male and female populations at the Wright Center

A Ranch Enterprise Trust Fund was established in May 2001, and all revenue earned from products made in the vocational programs and from Off-Ranch work crews goes into the Trust Fund. The balance in the Trust Fund was \$208,187 on December 31, 2006, as compared to a balance of \$170,850 on December 31, 2005. Revenue has previously been used to pay for materials and for expansion of the programs. After much delay, wage earning potential for the youth is now a reality. Approvals were finalized in July 2006, and the first payment for a youth's labor at the Ranch was made in November 2006. A youth can earn as much as \$60 per month, with completion of the Aftercare program established as a prerequisite for payment. After fees, fines and restitution have been deducted, any remaining earnings go directly to the youth.

Vocational Training/Work Crews

The James Ranch currently offers the following vocational training programs:

- Construction Technologies
- Welding
- Auto Technologies
- Horticulture
- Computer Technology

The Construction Technologies, Welding, Auto Technologies and Computer Technology programs are provided under the auspices of the COE Regional Occupational Programs (ROP), although the Welding program is funded by the Probation Department. The Horticulture program is supervised by County Park Rangers.

A Culinary Arts vocational training program continues to be considered. As part of such a program, it may be possible for youth to prepare meals for catering at the new Justice Training Center, located on the site of the former Holden Ranch.

On-Ranch and Off-Ranch work crews are also part of the vocational program. On-Ranch work crews are responsible for kitchen duty and other assigned tasks at the Ranch. The Horticulture program is integrated into On-Ranch work crews during the spring, summer and fall. Off-Ranch crews do work throughout the County, with County Parks, State Fish and Game, the Conservation Corps and the City of Morgan Hill. The youth seem to enjoy their Off-Ranch duties, including trail building and water conservation projects. Youth must advance to Level 2 before they are eligible to participate in Off-Ranch work crews.

The Computer Technology program was started in December 2006, and has been incorporated into the afternoon school program. Training is available from 1 to 3 pm on Monday and Wednesday in a computer lab outfitted with computers for up to 15 youth.

With the exception of Computer Technology, vocational training programs are conducted from 8:30 am to 12 noon, Monday through Friday. It was noted that these programs started at 8:00 am prior to introduction of the ERP. Vocational programming is also made available to youth from the Wright Center during afternoon visits to James Ranch, with boys participating in Auto Technologies workshops and girls participating in Construction Technologies and Welding workshops.

Youth receive additional school credits under work experience for the vocational training programs and work crews. During a youth's stay, this work experience has typically added between nine and twelve additional school credits added to their regular school curriculum. They will be earning even more credits under the ERP because of the longer stay at the Ranch. The youth must attend a minimum of one hour per week in subjects such as resume writing, preparing for job interviews, and tips on how to find jobs. Last year, under the old program, approximately 65% of youth enrolled in vocational training received a Certificate of Completion.

Introduction of the ERP has altered the vocational programs, which are no longer considered “honors” programs. Now, every youth receives vocational training. The Commission made this recommendation last year and is pleased to see it come to fruition. Previously, youth signed up for three months of training in a specific vocational skill of interest or earned it as a reward. Now, the youth in each pod rotate as a group to a different program every eight weeks. The five programs in the rotation are: (1) Construction Technologies; (2) Welding; (3) Auto Technologies; (4) On-Ranch work crew, which includes Horticulture on a seasonal basis; and (5) Off-Ranch work crew.

The new approach to vocational programs has involved certain tradeoffs. Depending on their pod assignment and length of stay, some youth may not have the opportunity to receive vocational training in areas of specific interest. It is also not possible to cover as much material in an eight week class as was previously possible in three months, a situation that is exacerbated by a reduction in daily class time from 4 hours to 3½ hours. This also creates a challenge for the instructors, as does the increase in class size (from eight or nine to twelve). The presence of youth who are not interested in the program is another concern, since they may participate reluctantly and could potentially create a disruptive class atmosphere. Experience with the new approach may indicate that additional changes are needed to better meet vocational program goals and objectives. One change already under consideration is an increase in the length of program rotations from eight to ten weeks.

Commissioners visited the Construction Technologies, Welding and Auto Technologies classes. The instructors said they are adapting to the new eight-week pod rotations. The youth are learning tenacity, patience, responsibility, self-esteem and peer assistance in addition to vocational skills, and many are genuinely proud of their products. The computer lab was visited, but class was not in session at this time. The lab contains computers for 15 youth plus one for the instructor. A visit was also made to the Horticulture program greenhouse.

As mentioned in the discussion of Education programs, the GED class was finally reinstated in January after not being available for over a year. This is particularly important for the vocational training program, which is predicated on the achievement of a high school diploma or equivalency certificate so that the youth might be accepted into a trade union apprentice program to receive training for a career position.

The inspection team witnessed a variety of activities in the Construction Technologies program. A segment of the class was working with computer-aided design, a carpentry group was learning to install doors and windows and a plumbing group was learning the requirements for a sink installation. Stations were set up for tile-setting and sheetrock, and youth were also using power tools. Heavy-duty redwood barbecue tables and benches, an ongoing project, were under construction. The instructor said that the goal is to rotate the youth through the different stations so that each day they learn something new about construction. The youth normally work in teams of two at each station. A visit was made to an office/garage project in San Martin that youth from James Ranch had completed. A competitive price had been quoted for the project, but the prospective client was advised that completion of the project would take nine months. Youth in the Construction Technologies program did all of the work: framing; roofing; electrical; plumbing; and

finishing. The inspection team was impressed by the professionalism exhibited in the completed project.

Youth in the welding class were nearing the end of their eight-week cycle. The instructor was examining the finished products and testing the strength of the welds. The inspection team examined the work sheets the instructor maintained wherein he recorded daily progress and the grade for each youth. This seems to be an excellent skill-development program for appropriate youth.

Youth were assembling engines in the Auto Technologies class, with an engine available for each team. The new auto shop is still not functional. In-kind services of \$400,000 went into the building and purchase of new equipment to upgrade the auto shop, but the hoist still can't be used and must be replaced because of a defect. When the auto shop finally opens, there will be an opportunity to perform oil changes and lube jobs for County cars and those at the Ranch. There are hopes to make the service open to local residents and for more involved repair jobs for County vehicles, although labor union issues may preclude some of those plans. It is also hoped that people will donate cars for the program. There are ten computers in the auto shop building that have a software program to teach auto mechanics. The headphones that were missing from the computers last year are now in place. The instructor indicated that the software program is of extremely high quality.

Commissioners visited the greenhouse and saw saplings being readied for planting as part of the Horticulture program. The Horticulture program is relatively new, having been started in December 2004. Native plants/seeds and cuttings have been taken from the areas around local creeks and lakes, planted and propagated in the greenhouse and reintroduced back to their original habitat.

XIII. AFTERCARE

Aftercare is the pre-release aspect of the Ranch Program in which youth have completed the on-site Ranch Program, but not yet been released from Probation Department supervision. Upon return to their home or other placement, each youth is supervised for ten weeks by an Aftercare Counselor.

In order to qualify for the Aftercare Program, the youth and their parent or guardian must sign an Aftercare Contract in which they agree to adhere to the conditions of the Program as well as specific behavior expectations. The standard conditions include "house arrest" during the first month, a curfew, compliance with an approved school or work program, weekly drug and alcohol testing, a ban on association with known gang members, and a ban on gang colors, clothing, haircuts or paraphernalia. Failure to comply with the stated conditions and expectations can result in a return to the Ranch to complete the program or to Juvenile Hall and the Court as a Ranch Failure.

There is currently one Probation Counselor assigned to Aftercare, with a caseload of 16 youth as of the Commission visit on February 22, 2007. Although the caseload can vary considerably over time, the average is typically closer to 25 youth. Youth in Aftercare also

have an assigned Probation Officer for six months. The Counselor said he sees his responsibility as helping the youth succeed after the Ranch program, even though they are often returning to a troubled home life and a gang environment. The Aftercare Counselor calls the youth regularly and visits them at home, in counseling sessions, and in school. He will even visit a youth on the job, if appropriate. "Curfew calls" are no longer done on a regular basis. Commissioners were told last year that a second Aftercare Counselor would be added under the ERP, but this is no longer planned.

The Aftercare Counselor said that five youth had successfully completed the Aftercare Program since he assumed responsibility on January 15, 2007, and that another five youth were scheduled to complete the Program the next day. Unfortunately, three youth absconded from Aftercare, five were returned to the Ranch for time periods of up to 30 days and four failed Aftercare during this same 5½-week period. All of these youth had been committed to the Ranch under the "old" program.

XIV. FEEDBACK FROM PARENTS AND YOUTH

On February 18, 2007, two Commissioners visited the James Ranch during family visitation, regularly scheduled on Sundays from 11 am to 2 pm. Commissioners were escorted to the recreation hall, where families were sitting at tables talking and eating food brought in by the visiting family members. A Probation Counselor was sitting at a desk observing the visits.

Commissioners interviewed a total of 14 families. Youth who were interviewed ranged in age from 16 to 18 years old and were serving Ranch commitments for offenses such as violations of probation, auto theft, robbery, and drug charges. They reported stays in Juvenile Hall ranging from one to eight times prior to their Ranch commitment. All youth spoke English. Only two parents did not understand or speak English; therefore, the youth served as interpreters for these parents.

Ranch Access

The vehicle entrance gate to the Ranch was closed when Commissioners arrived. A woman was standing at the buzzer located outside the gate, that, when activated, alerts staff in the Administration Office to visitors at the gate. She activated the buzzer for some time, but had no response from anyone inside the Ranch. Finally, Ranch staff responded to the buzzer and the gate opened. The woman identified herself as the mother of one of the youth and said she was quite upset she was delayed at the gate, losing visitation time with her son.

School

All of the youth interviewed offered positive and, sometimes, enthusiastic comments regarding the school program at the James Ranch. For example, one youth said he liked school and looked forward to being in class. He only needs 15 credits to graduate and he emphatically reported he will graduate before his Ranch release date. The parents of the youth were pleased that their sons were participating in the Ranch school program and getting school credits.

Only one youth reported participation in a special education program, and he has hopes of obtaining his GED. Another anticipates his GED requirements to be completed by March 1, 2007. A few of the youth are in various stages of receiving their high school diplomas, with one expecting to graduate in June or July of 2007. One youth has plans to attend San Jose City College after release from the Ranch. Only two youth did not know how many credits were necessary for graduation, nor did they know how many credits they had completed as of these interviews.

Orientation

All youth interviewed reported receiving a brief orientation about the Ranch while in Juvenile Hall, prior to being transferred to the Ranch. According to the youth, orientation included, and was limited to, viewing an orientation video and being given a packet of written material; however, both were for the “old” Ranch program. A few of the youth had been at the Ranch under the old program and were currently serving their second Ranch commitment under ERP. These youth reported viewing the same orientation video both times. One youth remembered that, in addition to the video, a Juvenile Hall Counselor told him the “do’s and don’ts” expected of him at the Ranch and he was required to sign some papers regarding his personal property. One youth rated the orientation video as “50/50 good” and he thought the orientation should include more information about gangs. A second youth said other youth in Juvenile Hall told him the Ranch Counselors “like to push your buttons and you have to follow all the rules, even the little ones.” This youth thought orientation should prepare them for dealing with Ranch Counselors, while his mother thought it was a “control issue with Ranch staff.”

Only one of the parents interviewed reported receiving orientation regarding the James Ranch, either before or after their son was transferred to the Ranch. Most reported that they were not even aware of an orientation program for parents. They each received a letter notifying them of their sons’ transfer to the Ranch, except for one mother who did not know her son had been transferred until she received a telephone call from him. This parent wasn’t contacted until she spoke with a Counselor during the last family visitation and was told that an orientation appointment would be scheduled soon. The one-page letter sent to parents contains a map to the Ranch, visitation schedules, Ranch rules and a short list of items youth can and cannot possess while at the Ranch. All parents interviewed denied ever receiving orientation or any information regarding the ERP. In fact, the only thing parents knew about ERP was that the program is longer than the old program. One mother spoke with a Counselor during the previous week, at which time she was assured that an orientation appointment would be scheduled soon. All parents interviewed reported that they have had no conversations with Ranch staff except at family visitation. This was a concern among the youth and parents interviewed.

Medical Services

Some parents indicated that there is a need for improvement in medical services. One parent expressed a desire to take her son to her personal physician for medical care, but does not believe the Ranch will allow her to do so. Two of the parents indicated dissatisfaction with the handling of visible dermatology problems. The parents of one youth stated that he was told he couldn’t be treated without their consent, and the youth therefore had to wait until he had a furlough for his parents to take him to a doctor. The other youth

was given a couple of Tylenol and told he would be alright. While the parent of this youth was relating the incident, the youth adopted a very negative attitude and insisted that the parent not say anything else about it.

One youth remembered not feeling well when he was first sent to the Ranch. After being seen in the medical clinic, he was immediately transferred to a hospital, where he stayed for one week and was diagnosed as having diabetes. His blood sugar level is checked twice daily and the nurse gives him two insulin pills daily to maintain his glucose level. Another youth reported being given Benadryl because he could not sleep during his first two months at the Ranch. No other youth interviewed reported being on any medication.

One youth has dental problems and was told that he needed a root canal. The parent is very concerned since this is an expensive procedure that the parent cannot afford. Another youth has been in therapy since he was four years old, and is currently being seen at Eastfield Ming Quong. He feels that his counseling sessions are going well.

Youth interviewed seemed confident that medical attention is always available and that they know the appropriate procedure to follow in order to be seen in the medical clinic. One youth stated that the nurse is available in the morning and the late afternoon, and a video camera link to Juvenile Hall will be used if they need a nurse outside these hours.

Enhanced Ranch Program

All youth interviewed and the majority of the parents interviewed thought that ERP is too long. A few youth thought they were treated like children under the new program, because the Ranch is now like a group home and they sleep in bunk beds “like little kids.” Youth interviewed believed that fewer boys are running from the Ranch now, but that more are failing.

All youth interviewed understood that the time they served in Juvenile Hall awaiting placement at the Ranch does not count towards their Ranch commitment time. Parents interviewed generally did not understand the rules for Juvenile Hall credit. One mother remembered hearing the Judge say in court, “Starting from this day, you’re serving six months at the Ranch,” but she had since learned that the six months did not start until her son arrived at the Ranch. (NOTE: This policy changed on March 5, 2007 with implementation of the Ranch Readiness Program at Juvenile Hall.) This is of special concern for the youth and their parents as they report waiting periods of one to two months in Juvenile Hall before being transferred to the Ranch.

It was pointed out by the youth and their parents that a youth could serve up to ten months for a six-month Ranch commitment. ERP is a six to eight month program, based on a youth’s ability to complete the program. Youth receive a “successful week” for good and expected behavior. If a youth receives an “unsuccessful week” because of incidents or negative behavior, an extra week is added to the six-month commitment. Thus, a youth can receive up to two months extra time, bringing commitment to a full eight months. This time, coupled with a possible two-month waiting period in Juvenile Hall, could bring a youth to a ten-month commitment period. Youth and parents interviewed thought a youth would be

better served if a definitive commitment period were imposed. As one youth commented, “I just want to do my time and get out.” On the other hand, some youth thought that the ERP taught them how to get along with other people and how to think when they are released from the Ranch.

The majority of youth interviewed did not like living in pods and being separated from other youth at the Ranch. Youth are interacting and living daily with the same Counselors. One youth thought pod living was better than the living arrangements under the old program, but, conversely, he felt isolated in the pod, because he could not talk to other youth. He thought the Ranch was “like Disneyland now” and that the Counselors were “catering to us.”

Some youth thought that Ranch staff members have not been properly trained for ERP. One youth stated that either the Ranch needs new Counselors or the Counselors need more training. Youth pointed out that staff members do not always understand new rules, such as visitation and what items youth are allowed to have in their possession. The majority of youth interviewed thought the old program was better. Some youth indicated that they think the ERP is designed to make them fail. The major complaint is the manner in which time is added to their length of stay. Some youth dislike the one-on-one interactions with Counselors and feel that the Counselors are not consistent with discipline – that the entire group is punished for the actions of a few.

It was reported that furloughs are shorter under ERP. Under the old program, youth could furlough from Friday at 6 p.m. to Sunday at 6 p.m. Youth can now furlough from Saturday at 8 a.m. to Sunday at 6 p.m. under ERP.

Recreation

It was reported that youth vote as a pod on free-time activities, and that they rotate as a pod between these activities. Rotation of weekend activities depends on the Supervisor of the day. Youth interviewed thought that this limited their time in activities they preferred. For example, one youth reports having access to work-out equipment only one time each week, instead of daily, as he had during his commitment under the old program. One youth pointed out that pod living is stressful and that working out serves as a good stress reliever.

When asked about the types of recreational activities they would like to see added to the Ranch program, one youth suggested installation of a handball court and several youth stated that football and swimming should be added.

Grievances

Only one youth interviewed reported filing a grievance. This youth filled out the required grievance form, in which he reported mistreatment by one of the Counselors. The youth gave the form to the Supervisor of the day, who, according to the youth, read the form and then laughed at him. The grievance was filed three days before this interview and the youth has not had a response from Ranch staff. One youth cited a rule that gives all youth 20 minutes to eat their meal in the cafeteria. One day, this youth was not allowed to finish his meal and he thinks the Counselor “violated my rights.” The youth had no explanation why this happened, because other youth were allowed a full 20 minutes. This youth and

some other youth interviewed thought the grievance procedure does not work and they would not file a grievance for any reason.

Gang Affiliation

Youth reported experiencing less difficulty with gang issues at the Ranch than at Juvenile Hall. Several youth admitted gang affiliation, but none of those interviewed thought gang issues were a problem in the Ranch, pointing out, “We respect each other.” One youth estimated approximately 50 to 60% of youth at the Ranch are gang affiliated. None of the youth felt threatened or unsafe at the Ranch because of gang issues. This represents a positive change from last year, when Commissioners noted that “there was a marked increase in gang activity at the Ranch.”

Restitution

Several youth interviewed are part of the restitution program. Two youth stated that they are taking full responsibility for their actions and feel that the restitution program is fair. One parent voiced a strong dislike for how the repayment system is set up. He feels that his son should take responsibility for his actions and that the victim should be reimbursed. He is repaying his son’s portion of the fine while the youth is at the Ranch. His concern is that two youth committed the crime and were held equally responsible under the law, but that the other family is reneging on the fine, so that he must repay the entire amount. Another youth and his parent felt that the program is unfair because it was not the youth’s problem; rather, it is the victim’s fault for leaving a door unlocked.

Miscellaneous

All of the parents interviewed seemed to appreciate the new furniture and the clean appearance of the recreation hall. There were no complaints offered about food at the Ranch and all the youth thought food at the Ranch is much better than in Juvenile Hall. Parents and youth liked the visitation schedule/rules at the Ranch.

XV. COMMENDATIONS

The Juvenile Justice Commission commends:

1. The Santa Clara County Probation Department for implementing the Enhanced Ranch Program (ERP) and making related improvements to the facility.
2. The Santa Clara County Probation Department for establishing the Ranch Readiness Program for youth at Juvenile Hall awaiting Ranch placement.
3. The Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System for implementing the tele-nursing system to provide remote nursing assessment when no nurse is on duty.
4. The Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System Mental Health Department and the Santa Clara County Probation Department for implementing Aggression Replacement Training classes.

5. The Santa Clara County Office of Education for reinstating the General Educational Development (GED) program so that youth can prepare for the GED exam in order to receive a high school equivalency certificate.
6. The Santa Clara County Probation Department for instituting the payment of wages from the Ranch Enterprise Trust Fund to be primarily directed toward payment of court-ordered fees, fines and victim restitution.
7. The Santa Clara County Probation Department for restructuring vocational programs so that all youth have the opportunity to participate in vocational training and work experience programs.
8. The Santa Clara County Probation Department for introducing the Computer Technology vocational training program, which is now integrated with the afternoon school program.

XVI. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Clearly communicate to youth, parents, the community and the Court that, due to the reduced capacity and increased length of commitment associated with the ERP, there is a backlog of youth awaiting placement at the James Ranch that will persist.
2. Initiate preparations for intake Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings when youth enter the new Ranch Readiness Program rather than waiting until youth are actually placed at the Ranch.
3. Ensure timely up-front communications with parents or guardians so that ERP orientation can be scheduled as early as possible.
4. Initiate an independent evaluation of ERP counseling to assess the degree to which Probation Counselors' dual roles of counseling and assessing progress may be affecting their ability to engage the youth in honest, open discussion. Determine if new or modified training is needed to help Probation Counselors better address the sensitive issues involved in balancing these two roles.
5. Replace, or make appropriate repairs to, the leaking overhangs and broken walkways to eliminate a safety hazard for youth, staff and visitors.
6. Evaluate the grievance system to determine if the low number of grievances is an indication that youth don't have faith in the system, as was indicated in interviews with Commissioners, or perhaps have fears of reprisal.

7. Work with the SCCVHS to ensure that preventive dental care is available on site. Continue to explore community programs such as the Health Trust's mobile dental van.
8. Ensure that Mental Health staff members and other personnel who work with youth outside the presence of Probation Counselors have access to walkie-talkies or other suitable means of summoning aid in case of emergency.
9. Ensure that instructors for supplemental programs receive information on incoming youth such as the Multi-Agency Assessment Center (MAAC) worksheets provided to instructors at Juvenile Hall.
10. Continue to work with the COE to evaluate the feasibility of expanding the school program from 240 minutes to 300 minutes per day within the structure of the ERP.
11. Continue to work with the COE to evaluate the feasibility of restructuring schedules to accommodate morning classes.
12. Continue to work with the COE to solicit book donations from the community and to ensure that books at the appropriate reading levels are available.
13. Establish a Culinary Arts vocational training program to provide additional, diverse opportunities for entry-level job skill training in a viable career field.
14. Expand the vocational programs from eight weeks to ten weeks in duration to allow more time for youth to learn and develop specific vocational skills.
15. Eliminate excessive, unnecessary delays for visitors entering through the main gate for family visitation.

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

1. Continue to work with the Probation Department to evaluate the feasibility of expanding the school program from 240 minutes to 300 minutes per day within the structure of the ERP.
2. Continue to work with the Probation Department to evaluate the feasibility of restructuring schedules to accommodate morning classes.
3. Continue to work with the Probation Department to solicit book donations from the community and to ensure that books at the appropriate reading levels are available.
4. Initiate updating and/or completion of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) when youth enter the new Ranch Readiness Program rather than waiting until youth are actually placed at the Ranch.

The Juvenile Justice Commission recommends that the Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System:

1. Work with the Probation Department to ensure that preventive dental care is available on site. Continue to explore community programs such as the Health Trust's mobile dental van.

XVII. SUMMARY

Based on this inspection, the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission feels that the William F. James Boys' Ranch meets the Commission's standards for assuring the safety, well-being and rehabilitation of youth in a juvenile detention facility.

Approved by the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission on May 1, 2007.

William Scilacci, JJC Chairperson

Date

Michael A. Smith, JJC Inspection Chair

Date