

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

**WILLIAM F. JAMES BOYS' RANCH  
2006**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission inspected the William F. James Boys' Ranch in a series of announced visits on February 26, March 6, March 27, April 17 and May 1, 2006, 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.

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

**DESCRIPTION**

**Population**

There were 49 youth residing at the James Ranch on January 31, 2006 and 53 youth on March 6, 2006. By comparison, the population was 84 on April 7, 2005. The average daily population of the James Ranch is 51 in 2006 to date versus 63 in 2005. The boys range in age from 15½ to 18.

The ethnic breakdown of the Ranch population on January 31, 2006 was:

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Hispanic	38	78
White	7	14
Black	2	4
Asian	2	4
Other	0	0
Total	49	100

The Corrections Standards Authority (CSA), formally known as the Board of Corrections (BOC), rated capacity of the James Ranch is 96 youth, including six beds for pre-release failures and two beds in the isolation rooms. Upon completion of the on-site Ranch Program, youth are returned to their homes or other placements in the Aftercare Program, where they are supervised by the Aftercare Counselor. Aftercare is the Pre-Release aspect of the Ranch Program in which youth have not yet been released from probation supervision by the judge. On March 27, 2006 there were 24 youth on Aftercare.

**Ranch Staff**

Commissioners found the staff to be very cooperative during the five visits. The following staff provided information to the Commission:

1. Ranch Manager, Probation Supervisors, Aftercare Counselor and other Ranch Counselors (full time and extra help)
2. Medical Services and Mental Health Services personnel from Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System (SCVHHS)

3. Staff from the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE)
4. Vocational education staff from the Enterprise program/Regional Occupational Program (ROP)
5. Kitchen staff
6. Deputy sheriff
7. Life Skills, Gang Intervention (supplied through California Youth Outreach) and Pathway drug and alcohol service personnel (supplied through community-based organizations)

The Ranch is staffed by the Ranch Manager, two Probation Supervising Counselors, 21 Probation Counselors positions, four Probation Assistants who work night shifts, one Ranch Aftercare Counselor and one Enterprise Counselor, plus 19 part-time “extra help” Counselors. Not all of these positions are currently filled. The part-time staff is used to fill in for “coded” staff on leave because of sickness, vacation, training, and for overload purposes. The Ranch Manager reported that currently everyone on the Probation staff is a college graduate. There are also four kitchen staff, four school teachers, a teacher’s aides, four vocational education teachers, a nurse, two mental health clinicians, two Deputy Sheriffs and contract staff from outside community-based organizations such as Pathways and Community Solutions. James Ranch staff turnover is very low.

The Ranch Manager works an 8 am to 5 pm shift, nine Counselors work 16-hour shifts, 6:30 am to 10:30 pm., three Counselors work a 7:30 am to 3:30 pm shift and the overnight shift is 10:30 pm to 6:30 am. The ratio of staff to youth population appears to meet CSA guidelines. Some counties, i.e. Orange County, which previously used 16-hour shifts for many years, have changed to a shorter workday and found that staff have fewer injuries and are better able to cope with the youth. Some members of the Probation staff prefer the 16-hour shifts, one reason being that, because of the high cost of housing in Santa Clara County, some staff must travel long distances to work and appreciate the reduced commute. There is also a perceived staff advantage in not having to hand youth over to other Counselors at afternoon shift changes.

The Office of the Sheriff is a presence on the Ranch campus in two 12-hour shifts. There is therefore always a Deputy Sheriff on duty. The Deputy Sheriff interacts with youth and is said by all to be a great enhancement to Ranch order. The Sheriff’s helicopter is available within ten minutes should an emergency arise.

### **Documents Reviewed**

The following reports/ documents were reviewed:

1. Office of the Fire Marshal, Santa Clara County Fire Department Inspection, dated October 12, 2005
2. Santa Clara County Office of Education, Annual Report for Blue Ridge High School to the California Board of Corrections, dated February 1, 2006
3. Incident Reports and Grievance Reports
4. Environmental Health report, dated July 27, 2005
5. Annual Health Inspection, dated March 20, 2006
6. Juvenile Detention Reform Monitoring Report, February 16, 2006
7. “Welcome to the James Ranch” orientation booklet, no date
8. William F. James Guidebook, February 2005, an explanation of rules, the belt system and rights of youth in custody
9. Enhanced Ranch Program Draft dated October 10, 2005
10. Prerelease Contract defining the Aftercare conditions
11. Juvenile Justice Commission Inspection Report of James Ranch, dated June 13, 2005
12. Probation response to June 13, 2005 James Ranch Inspection, dated October 17, 2005
13. James Boys Ranch Safety and Security report from the Civil Grand Jury, dated May 24, 2005

14. Santa Clara County Juvenile Facilities 2004/06 Biennial Inspection, Corrections Standards Authority, April 25, 2006

**Enhanced Ranch Program**

The County of Santa Clara Probation Department James Ranch and Muriel Wright Residential Center Enhanced Ranch Program report dated October 18, 2005 contains a section entitled *National Best Practice Models and Philosophy*. 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 behavior 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 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 has also shown a positive impact on disproportionate minority over-confinement. Recommendations to pursue this form of rehabilitation, which is 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 Rousch and Bobbie Huskey have all promoted similar concepts.

The Probation Department has retained Mark Steward to implement the Enhanced Ranch Program. He developed the Missouri Model and currently works as a consultant. Staff training for the Enhanced Ranch Program will commence in May 2006. Each member of the staff is to receive two months of training, and the initial program is scheduled to start in August 2006 at the Wright Center and in October 2006 at the James Ranch.

The Ranch Manager reported that the current ratio of minors to staff is 15:1. Under the new plan, the total preferred capacity of the facility will be reduced to 60 minors and the ratio of minors to staff will be reduced to 7:1. The current dormitory will be divided into five rooms, or pods, of ten to twelve minors each. A total of 10 staff will form the core “team” and provide individualized and group counseling for their pods. Pods will have two staff each.

There will be an enhancement in the relationship between Counselors and the youth. All staff will be involved in a collaborative way with the new approach and there will be cross-training among the Ranch professionals. The Ranch Manager reported to the inspection committee that 80% to 85% of the staff is ready to get on with the new program.

It remains to be seen if the current staff can adapt their methods to the new Missouri Model of cognitive behavioral control. Those not wishing to, or who can’t function under the new system will have to leave if they cannot be successful in the new system. The 16-hour workday does not seem to lend itself to the Missouri Model, which requires consistent daily contact with the youth in their pods.

The length of stay, currently a maximum of four months, will increase to six months and each minor will receive 400 hours of counseling before leaving the facility. Individual case plans for youth will be carefully charted. The day will be structured similar to the current programming hours from 6:30 am until 7:30 pm. A new skill/focus, such as counseling, vocational training, anger management, or gang relations, will be taught each morning in a two-hour block within the pods. The minors will then attend regular school in the afternoon. One section of the Enhanced Ranch Program was written by COE staff.

Aftercare is a critical component of the new program, and will be more structured than in the recent past. “That’s what we used to do in the old days,” said one of the Supervisors. The program consists of ten weeks of Aftercare, with both an Aftercare Probation Officer and an Aftercare Counselor. At least two Counselors from the James Ranch will be involved in Aftercare, with the second Aftercare Counselor to be added in August. The program is also seeking a wider base of Aftercare support individuals – other people who are important in the minor’s life who can be

incorporated into the minor's life. It is critical to the success of the program that school staff in the youth's district be included in the Aftercare plan.

### **Ranch Management**

The County has set aside \$3.2 million for implementation of the Enhanced Ranch Program. The Ranch Manager described four major priorities:

- There must be some structural changes by October 2006 to create the smaller pods within the walls of the current dormitory space.
- Some new Probation staff will be hired, all to be college graduates. The Manager will be looking for counseling and psychology majors with experience.
- Staff training for all staff must be completed. The written materials are already available.
- An outside group will be hired to collect data and establish the metrics of success and behavior changes.

### **Physical Condition of Facility**

The general appearance and condition of the dormitory is poor, although this should improve with the planned modifications. The lockers are scarred with abrasions and the floor needs to be replaced. The door stop was missing and a large rock substitutes. As one Counselor said in an aside "easy to replace the rock with a real doorstop and eliminate the rock as a potential weapon". The iron beds are lined up one after the next with some bunk beds and the blankets are army-issue.

The Recreation Hall contains several pool tables and an enclosed weight room; however the furniture is worn and torn, with rips in the coverings on almost every chair. The Commission has been told that plans are in place to paint the recreation room. The kitchen and dining room are clean and bustling. The Ranch Manager said the only outstanding maintenance problem was a disagreeable smell emanating from the kitchen whose source can not be found. There are newer buildings in satisfactory repair housing management, staff, mental health and medical personnel. The vocational classrooms are generally in good order. The youth help with Ranch and kitchen cleanup and can receive work experience credit for these activities.

The landscaping is overgrown and the grass is just beginning to be mowed. The concrete walkways are uneven and cracked, and Commissioners sometimes lost their footing during inspections. The wooden walkway overhang is leaking, and puddles of water pool along the walkway. The softball field needs to be renovated. Money is available, but, because of county contract oversight, renovations still have not begun. The pool is currently closed for the winter.

The Environmental Health Report indicated that the pool needs a chlorinator. A chronic disorder of the kitchen grease traps was also noted. The Fire Inspection Report is up-to-date, and there were smoke detectors, sprinklers and fire extinguishers in the dormitory and recreation hall. The Fire Inspection report noted the fire danger from the uncut grass and weeds. Commissioners were told that this problem is being addressed, but a plan for regular grass mowing needs to be in place. Two other deficiencies noted were the lack of a master key and assigned staff to control it as well as confusion concerning the opening of the Ranch gates.

It is disappointing to see the dilapidated condition of the furnishings and facilities. Understandably, given the renovations that will take place for the new program, there has been some deferred maintenance. However the torn furniture, leaking overhang and broken walkway should be an embarrassment to everyone in County government.

A new metal security fence has been installed around the perimeter of the Ranch to deter runaways. The fence has curved wire over the top, and the Ranch Manager is exploring further fence enhancements. There have only been two Ranch escapes since the fence was completed on October 5, 2005. In point of reference, James Ranch escapes numbered 102 in fiscal year 2003-4 and 95 in fiscal year 2004-05.

## **Incident Reports**

The inspection team made a detailed review of the Incident Reports (IRs) written in January and February 2006.

A total of 48 Incident Reports were written in the month of January. Behavior Report/Disruptive was listed as the reason for 22 of the IRs, and Information was the reason for writing seven of the IRs. There were four Incident Reports where the individual had failed the ranch program and was returned to Juvenile Hall. Contraband was listed as the reason for three IRs. There were two IRs prepared where the reason stated was Mental Health referral. One IR was written for each of the following reasons: Under Influence, Tagging/Gang, Sports Injury, Medical Referral, Threatening Behavior, Escape/Aftercare, Injury, Parental Contact, Attempted Escape, and Escape from Van.

There were 56 Incident Reports written during February. There was a marked increase in gang activity at the Ranch and in the number of youth returned to Juvenile Hall for failing the Ranch program. There were eight IRs where the classification was either Assault-Gang Related or Fight-Gang Related. There were 21 IRs where the reason for the action was either Disruptive Behavior or Information. Tagging was the reason for five of the Incident Reports, which probably were also gang related. There were three IRs for Under the Influence and two for Insubordination. The remaining Incident Reports were for one-time-actions similar to those listed in the January summary. The dates and the reasons youth failed the Ranch program were as follows:

February 12	Escape (2 individuals)
February 13	Juvenile Hall/Failure at Ranch
February 14	Juvenile Hall/Tested positive for marijuana
February 15	Juvenile Hall/Ranch Failure
February 17	Juvenile Hall/Mental Health
February 18	Juvenile Hall/Ranch Failure (3 individuals)
February 19	Juvenile Hall/Gang Activity (3 individuals)
March 1	Escape (jumped from Van)

The March 1 incident, Escape - jumped from Van, is noted because a similar event occurred in January. The Ranch Manager informed the Commission that, since those escapes, the door locks in the van have been replaced with childproof door locks, preventing youth from opening the van doors from the inside.

## **Grievances**

The William F. James Boys Ranch Guidebook states a grievance procedure is available to all youth in the Rehabilitation Facilities. Matters that are 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, which can be 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, and should be delivered within three days of the precipitating action. There is no deadline after which a grievance will not be processed.

The grievance is to contain: (1) the specific decision, action or condition that the youth wants changed or corrected; (2) a statement of the facts in support of the youth's grievance; and (3) the names of any individuals the youth believes can assist in resolving the case.

If the grievance relates to staff, it will be forwarded to the Counselor against whom it is filed. That individual must resolve the grievance within three working days during which they are on duty. If the grievance is not resolved at the Counselor level, the youth is to be advised that he may talk with the Shift Supervisor. The Supervisor is to prepare a written statement addressing the pertinent points and issue(s) of the grievance, the reason(s) for the decision, and whether or not there was agreement regarding the disposition. If the grievance is not resolved at the Supervisor level, the

youth is to be advised that the grievance will be forwarded to the Ranch Manager for administrative review and resolution. The decision of the Ranch Manager is final.

The inspection team reviewed each of the 17 grievances that had been filed in January and February 2006. It was noted that nine of the grievances were marked "resolved at staff level" or "no further action necessary". Three of the grievances were marked "denied". One grievance was marked "escape", one was marked "ranch failure/at JH", one was marked "released to Aftercare", and one was marked "penalty appropriate".

### **Medical Care**

The Valley Medical Center of the SCVHHS provides medical services. The Nurse Manager described the three major health goals:

1. Comprehensive Health Assessment screenings
2. Treatment for diagnosed medical problems
3. Health education and health prevention activities such as immunizations

All youth are given a comprehensive medical examination by the medical director prior to being sent to the Ranch. The doctor comes to the Ranch every other week and a nurse is on duty seven days per week. The Nurse Manager reported the following medical statistics during 2005:

1. 118 doctor appointments
2. 7 hospitalizations
3. 688 sick call visits by the nurse
4. 28 dental referrals
5. 57 VMC outpatient contacts

She also cited renewed efforts to integrate follow-up referrals for youth dismissed from the Ranch through Probation and Public Health liaisons. There are presently no handicapped youth, no diabetics and no known contagious diseases at the Ranch.

The Registered Nurse interviewed by Commissioners has worked at the Ranch for over four years. He works a split shift from 7 to 11am and 5 to 9 pm, but, due to the workload, is often unable to leave at 11:00 am. He said a nurse can be called in when there is a gang fight. The nurse could not remember a suicide attempt at the Ranch during his tenure. He has provided medical education, such as STD Prevention and Sex Education, in the past, and this is to resume in July 2006.

The nurse monitors controlled medications and distributes all medications in four pill calls each day. 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. Six youth were taking prescribed psychotropic medications. The Health Services Report cited the successful implementation of a psychotropic medication peer auditing procedure that reduced the error rate for medication distribution by 50%. By law, youth cannot be forced to take medication.

There is no nurse on duty during the middle of the day. Injuries that occur on the work crew, during Physical Education, and as a result of gang altercations often happen when there is no nurse on the premises. As a result, even minor injuries can require emergency medical attention offsite. A youth needing immediate medical care is taken to Saint Louise Regional Hospital in San Martin. In the event of further care the youth may be transferred to Valley Medical Center. A youth may also be taken to the Juvenile Hall Medical Clinic. It was also noted that continuity of care is negatively affected when different nurses are scheduled on an irregular basis. SCVHHS is examining the possibility of a camera system to assist in long distance diagnosis so that counselors can use this device to assess medical problems during the 11am - 5 pm period when there is no nurse on the premises. Later, this could be expanded so that the nurse on-site could conference with specialists within the system. The Nurse Manager says such a system would cost approximately \$20,000.

Dental care procedures are the same as reported in the 2005 inspection report. There is no dentist on-site, but youth can receive 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 prevention dental procedures are available since youth at

the Ranch are not eligible for MediCal, even if they were before eligible being placed on probation. If the youth has offsite privileges and has dental insurance, his family may take him to a private dentist with appropriate permission. The Commission would 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.

### **Mental Health Services**

Counseling and psychiatric services at the Ranch are provided by the SCVHHS Mental Health Department. The psychiatrist cares for the youth at Juvenile Hall as well as in both Ranches. There are two full-time clinicians and one part-time Licensed Clinical Social Worker Manager at the Ranch. Additionally, there is one Family Partner staff member who visits youth in their homes and provides family intervention. The mental health staff provides individual and family counseling and is able to meet the language needs of the youth. Family counseling seems to be the most productive intervention according to Mental Health staff, parents and Counselors.

If a youth needs services that cannot be provided by the on-site staff, he may be transported to Juvenile Hall. 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.

Mental Health staff members carry pagers and can respond to emergencies. There is a room in the dorm that can be used if a youth needs to be placed in isolation until the Mental Health staff can come to the Ranch. It is rarely used. If a youth is placed in this room, a Probation staff member must sit outside the door and maintain the watch sheet every five minutes. Generally, the Ranch does not provide mental health and or suicide watches as is done in Juvenile Hall.

The Mental Health staff has received Gang Prevention training, and they are to receive even more training as a part of the Enhanced Ranch Program. The Mental Health staff also provides training to the Probation staff on issues such as conflict resolution. The purpose of these sessions is to help the Probation staff understand the behavioral issues and mental health concerns being experienced by the youth. The Mental Health staff feels they have a very good relationship with the Probation staff.

Training in a new best-practices model (aggression replacement therapy) has been provided to Mental Health and Probation staff. This is a 10-week program that will be provided to groups of 6 to 10 youth in three 1½ hour sessions per week. It is a very comprehensive model that includes building communication skills, controlling anger and assessing moral reasoning. The program cannot be implemented yet because of scheduling difficulties associated with the Probation staff's 16-hour workdays. Santa Clara County was selected as one of five statewide sites to implement this program. The program addresses skills such as communication and listening skills, coupling "skills streaming" with concrete steps to anger management and instruction in moral reasoning. A key device in implementing this program will be role-playing. Youth will be taught to think, "If I do this, then that will happen." Interactive cognitive reasoning will replace "talking at youth."

Mental Health staff will need to look at their weekend availability as they become involved in the Missouri Model and more parent involvement and family counseling is required.

## **PROGRAMS**

### **Orientation**

Prior to coming to the James Ranch, each youth attends a one-on-one counseling session concerning the Ranch program provided by Ranch staff. Commissioners were told that this is a one-to-two hour session. There is an Orientation form and a checklist that is completed by Probation staff and the youth. When the youth arrives at the Ranch, the staff repeats the presentation of the orientation material and the forms. The youth and staff sign off that the orientation has been completed. Medical information is also reviewed by the nurse when the youth arrives.

Parents also have an orientation program at the Ranch. It is held on Sundays after visiting hours, thus avoiding an extra trip for parents. Special arrangements are occasionally made to accommodate the work schedules of parents. The parents also sign off on the documents. During the Commissioner's visit on February 26, 2006, at least four sets of parents said that they had not had an orientation. Those parents were invited to an orientation following their scheduled visit, although they said they had not heard about the orientation until they were leaving the Ranch.

The Ranch Manager personally talks with all ranch failure returns. There is a log as to who did what. There are no longer any Ranch failure units in Juvenile Hall.

When a youth arrives at the Ranch, a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) is usually convened within 48 hours but at least within the first week depending on the arrival timing. Staff from Mental Health, Pathways, Medical, and Probation evaluate each youth and decide on the appropriate plan for him. School staff members rarely participate in the initial MDTs due to scheduling conflicts, but do receive the results of the Ranch Plan, the Aptitude Test and Career Assessment and may participate in the exit plan for Aftercare. If needed, a second MDT might be convened. More involvement of school staff will be needed when the Enhanced Ranch Program is in place because school progress will be an important factor in a youth's potential success.

### **Behavior Management Program**

The current Ranch program is 120 days and can last up to 150 days. A point system is used to evaluate the youth's behavior and to earn privileges. Youth can earn points for positive behavior to move from "C" belt to "B" belt and from "B" belt to "A" belt, and are given "issues" (meaning lost points) when unacceptable behavior is observed. Issues for negative behavior can be challenged by the youth, but are generally upheld by the staff. Youth who have been at the Ranch for at least 30 days and achieved "B" belt status may earn a home visit on a weekend for up to 10 hours. "A" belt youth may stay overnight on Saturday. Senior "A" belts may stay home Friday through Sunday evening.

### **Community Based Programs**

The supplemental programs at the James Ranch include Anger Management, Chemical Dependency Treatment, Domestic Violence Prevention Education, Gang Intervention/Refusal Skills, Life Skills, Victim Awareness, Health Realization, religious services, team sports and sexual offender counseling as appropriate to each youth. Most of these programs are conducted through contracts with community based organizations such as: Pathway Society, Friends Outside, California Community Solutions, Youth Outreach, Department of Alcohol and Drug Services and Gardner Family Care Corporation.

Anger Management is an eight-week course consisting of one two-hour class session per week in which youth learn to resolve conflict and understand the dynamics of domestic violence.

Pathway provides a Chemical Dependency Treatment program to youth at the Ranch. It consists of one hour of individual counseling and two hours of group counseling each week. Help is provided to each youth to look at his drug and alcohol usage and how this affects families, friends, employment and school.

Gang Intervention/Refusal Skills is also offered to James Ranch youth. This consists of one two hour session per week. The focus is to develop appropriate pro-socialization skills to steer youth away from their gang involvement. Individual counseling sessions are also available.

Two commissioners observed the Life Skills class, which is an eight week program held once per week. The maximum participation is 13 youth, with nine currently in class. The discussion that day focused on "values." Other class topics included: conflict resolution, community resources, "Who you gonna call," job applications, resume writing, and financial matters. Youth appeared to be bored, and the questionnaire being reviewed seemed to be above their reading level. Commissioners also noted that job applications and resume writing were already being covered in ROP vocational programs. With the implementation of the Missouri Model, Probation management

needs to examine the effectiveness of each of these social programs and eliminate redundancy. Programs should meet the language and reading ability of assigned youth.

Youth are also offered Victim Awareness workshops. These are conducted by volunteers trained through the California Youth Authority and Mothers against Drunk Drivers. This program includes four sessions, two hours per week. It is a best-practices model that has been shown to help youth achieve a level of empathy towards their victims. Since the Enterprise Program implements victim restitution, youth need to be able to understand why they are providing restitution and how this addresses their victim's needs.

Catholic religious services are held off-site but according to the Ranch Manager, may be scheduled at the Ranch. With increased security at the Ranch, only youth not on restriction can go off-site. All youth may attend religious services on-site.

The Ranches are a part of the Central Coast Athletics League. Youth have spoken about the positive experiences they had participating in group sporting events. They participate in four sports: basketball, volleyball, softball and Frisbee.

## **EDUCATION**

### **Blue Ridge High School**

Students attend the on-site Blue Ridge High School run by the Santa Clara County Office of Education (COE). Time spent in the classroom is minimally proscribed by the CSA to be 240 minutes. Classes are held Monday through Friday for four hours in the afternoon. School consists of four periods: two periods of English/Language Arts, one period of Math, and one period of Physical Education. The regular teachers also teach Physical Education. Some students initiate an Independent Studies contract to study the other required classes for a high school diploma, such as sciences and social studies. Youth are also supposed to read six to ten books during their Ranch commitment. Regular students have one teacher for two periods, and then have another teacher for two periods.

The staff is headed by a shared principal with Wright Center and other alternative school programs. The office coordinator, school counselor, resource specialist, secretary and custodian are also shared. Instructional aides are not available for the three regular ranch classrooms. The school buildings are maintained at the expense of the Probation Department. According to the Blue Ridge Annual Report, attendance varied during the current school year from 40 to 75 youth. Most classes have 15 to 20 students. On the day of the March 27 visit, two classes had 17 enrolled.

Each Special Education student at the Ranch receives an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) with specific goals and specified services for that youth as required by federal law. There is one self-contained Special Education Special Day Class (SDC) with a teacher and an SDC aide. The SDC class size has fluctuated from 8 to 18. An SDC class is supposed to be the smallest in size to provide time and attention to the goals and objectives as specified in the IEPs. The Commission plans to monitor whether adequate SDC services can be provided to these more severely impacted Special Education students without a class limit of 10 to 12 students.

The COE Special Education Department assigns one Resource Program (RSP) aide to work with identified RSP students individually or in small groups for a maximum of one hour per RSP student per week. Oddly, **all** IEPs are being written to this specification for RSP students. Commission members contacted other school districts about their RSP services and they varied from 1 to 3 hours per day/ per week. The Commission will monitor these services very carefully over the next year.

The Commission reviewed IEPs as part of this inspection. Most of the IEPs were current and complete. In one exception, a boy had notably been at Juvenile Hall for one month and at the Ranch for one month without completion of his IEP. In addition, it was found that one Speech Therapy student had not been receiving the services of a Speech Specialist due to a mix-up in deciding who would provide the services when the student moved to the Ranch. This student was subsequently scheduled for Speech Therapy starting the second week in May. The Commission

understands the caseload of the RSP teachers at Juvenile Hall to be very heavy which forces them to make decisions on whom to test first. Out-of-county placements are given priority, with the idea that the others can be completed when the students are at the Ranch. The IEPs prepared by COE staff for Resource students specify the minimal services. Those prepared by public school districts, while not out-of-date, specify services such as 2-3 hours per day for 5 days a week.. If a new IEP is not in place than the COE must provide services specified in the last IEP. One hour a week of RSP service would not meet this mandate.

The IEPs for SDC students are not as current. For the 11 students on one day in April, six came to the Ranch with expired IEPs and one would expire within the month. Three have now been updated and two triennial reports (much more difficult and time-consuming) are in process. Teacher preparation time needed for testing, notices, and meetings underscores the need for a limit on the number of students in the SDC class.

Each regular education student at the Ranch receives an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP), as specified by the CSA, with specific goals for that youth. Youth academic levels range from second grade to high school, which makes it challenging for the teachers. Lessons are directed to the ninth grade reading level so that high school credit can be given for the coursework. With the very large span of academic levels, teachers said one person cannot effectively teach all students at the same time. Students with limited English or limited reading skills are no longer assisted by an aide, as those aides have been cut.

The Commission also reviewed ILPs, and found that no ILPs are coming to the Ranch from Juvenile Hall. Rather, the Blue Ridge teachers are preparing ILPs based on test results and observation. The Commission found the ILPs current and complete.

There continue to be issues surrounding the transfer of credits. The coordination and compilation of individual student transcripts is a key factor in ensuring that youth get school credit all along the path from regular school, to school at Juvenile Hall, to school at the Ranch and then back out to their assigned school placement. In an interview, a Blue Ridge School staff member said composite transcripts are only provided for those youth who will be graduating from High School. Also, COE personnel state that there continues to be difficulty in obtaining acceptance of the home school districts to take the returning youth back into their local schools. The Ranch Manager pointed out that a designated “point person” was really needed in each school district to expedite the transfer of records at the beginning of a youth’s stay at the Ranch and assisting in providing placement in the resident school district upon the youth's release from the Ranch program.

The COE Alternative Schools Department (ASD) provides credit at the Ranch based upon 0.5 credits for each six days of attendance. Of two statutory methods of providing high school credit, this is the method most advantageous for the students. Frequent moves from school to school and program to program at times result in small increments of class time, and this procedure allows greater flexibility in bringing courses to completion during the commitment process. As minor as this may seem, it does become an important factor when the local district is approached regarding acceptance of the returning youth into the district’s schools. Students are also given school credit for vocational classes at the Ranch through a Work Experience class.

According to the California Education Code §48645.5: “Each public school district and county office of education **shall** accept for credit full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by a pupil while attending a public school, juvenile court school, or nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency. The coursework **shall** be transferred by means of the standard state transcript. If a pupil completes the graduation requirements of his or her school district of residence while being detained, the school district of residence **shall** issue to the pupil a diploma from the school the pupil last attended before detention or in the alternative, the county superintendent of schools may issue the diploma.”

Some classes are still experiencing pullouts. On the visit on May 1, many boys had left campus for the day to participate in the volleyball league out of town. Youth are also being pulled out of class for Mental Health counseling and drug treatment.

There is limited space in the classrooms for technology equipment. The “desks” are actually tables that are crowded together with chairs closely arranged. The boys are literally shoulder-to-shoulder in many cases, and there is little space for computers. Only one teacher had a table with student access to computers. Classroom size and room space, stated as square footage per student and teacher, are mandated by the CSA. While the Commission does not feel the minimum standards were met, this space problem could be alleviated by reducing the number of students in a class to 15 rather than 17-18.

The Mental Health staff said a real problem for teachers is dealing with issues in the confines of a crowded classroom. Personal issues and gang issues can blow out of proportion in a limited space and when the boys are tired in the afternoons. This sometimes results in youth receiving numerous demerit “issues”.

When asked about the supply of textbooks, school staff noted that the students sometimes take the Character Based Literacy (CBL) books, the classroom novels, to read in the dorms and that they are infrequently returned. The number of required texts and optional books is strictly limited and students cannot take them from the classroom. Although this is technically a “high school”, many students are reading at an elementary or middle school level and need texts at a lower reading level. The need for remedial level books should be addressed by the Blue Ridge Principal, and the return of borrowed books should be addressed by the Site Team.

When asked for their level of input for the Enhanced Ranch Program, the school staff expressed misgivings. Remarks such as “the stepchild in the family” were noted. The Commission was told that the Principal does not regularly participate in current Site Team meetings, and it appears that limited attention has been given to the incorporation of current school personnel into the Enhanced Ranch Program planning. It must be very challenging for Ranch school staff since their Principal, Secretary, and Counselor is rarely on campus. With the new model in place communication by COE off campus and on campus and with Probation and Mental Health staff will need to be enhanced.

In addition, there is limited integration of school personnel into the MDT meetings and evaluations because a schedule has been established for weekly meetings in the afternoon when school is in session. The COE’s financial situation permits only one Educational Counselor for Juvenile Hall, the ranches and certain community schools. This one individual already has insufficient time to plan classes, evaluate credits and facilitate outplacement into community schools for each student. Without increased funding for additional school personnel, it doesn’t appear that he would have the time to participate in MDT meetings. Will the principal be expected to get acquainted with each student to participate in treatment plan discussions in MDT meetings? Could alternative class scheduling, such as in Juvenile Hall (where students attend four of five periods in staggered groups), be of assistance in allowing school personnel to participate in MDT meetings?

The Huskey Report recommended small class sizes, morning classes, 300 class minutes, GED preparation, and fewer class interruptions for services. The Commission feels that the change process to the Missouri Model would be the most appropriate time for these topics to be addressed. To best meet the needs of the students, all ideas should be openly and freely discussed. How will the proposed school program monitor the student growth in academic performance? Who will assess an increase by 1-2 grade levels and how will it be monitored if school staff can’t participate in MDT meetings? The Blue Ridge School must be made a full partner in the planning and evaluation process.

### **GED**

A student in an institution may take the GED examination at age 17½ and may take GED preparation courses before they are eligible to take the test. The CSA requires that GED preparation be offered, and many students at the Ranch expressed an interest in GED preparation courses. Youth preparing to take the GED test used to attend GED prep 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. This transpired even though the School Site Team said that GED classes were one of their priorities. Now, COE administration says that school staff members are offering GED content through the regular school day content.

Numerous parents complained to Commissioners during the February 26, 2006 family visitation that their boys had been enrolled in GED preparation classes in Juvenile Hall and were preparing to take parts of the test when they were transferred to the Ranch. Reports were received of a few boys who considered intentionally failing the Ranch Program so they could be transferred back to Juvenile Hall and get back in the GED program. Parents said they were told there was no GED program now being offered at the Ranch. The Ranch Manager is very concerned about the loss of this vital program.

The combination of a high school diploma or GED and job skills with career training may offer a youth's best hope of success after leaving the Ranch program. They will have the opportunity to continue or enter union trade apprentice programs if they have a GED or high school diploma to meet the entry requirements. Thus, the opportunity to obtain a GED is critical since high school graduation is out of reach for many Ranch youth. Also, it should be noted that adult education programs assign and accept credits granted when all sub-tests of the GED are passed at a specific score level. These credits can then be applied to the student's graduation requirements for a regular high school diploma, amounting to as many as 75 credits toward a diploma. This procedure could be adapted by the COE Alternative Schools Department and by local high school and unified school districts.

According to the most recent Blue Ridge School report, only four James Ranch youth received their high school diplomas during the last school year. School staff provided the Commission with documentation that eight boys passed the entire GED by July 2005.

The prior GED preparation program was well received by the community, as well as the students. Upward Bound, a local charity interested in at-risk youth, had raised and donated \$20,000 to purchase computers, software, and electrical connections to enhance the GED program. Upward Bound also made arrangements to allow needy, but prepared, students to apply for scholarships if their families could not pay the testing fees (about \$100 per sitting). About one month later, the GED program was disbanded. GED testing has not been provided by COE but rather is conducted on a contract basis by an outside educational resource. Specific requirements must be met to have a qualified GED testing site. The new GED room was planned, equipped and certified for testing by the Probation Department, and a Probation Counselor was trained and certified to be a qualified GED test administrator.

The Commission strongly believes the GED program should be immediately reinstated. The option to continue the GED classes is necessary to meet the varied needs of all students. The Commission knows from past experience that many do not have the high school credits to graduate or time to complete them before aging out of the system. A cost per year of \$20,000 for a GED teacher was suggested by the Ranch Manager.

### **Enterprise Program**

The inspection team received a handout entitled *Welcome to the James Ranch*. The handout contained a four-page description of the Enterprise Program. The summary states that the program is geared toward obtaining three goals: (1) to give youth at the two Ranch facilities entry-level job skill training in viable career fields, so employment may be more readily sought upon release; (2) to 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; and (3) to have vocation training available for the Wright Center, for both male and female populations.

The program was started in 1998 when the Probation Department was asked to allow consultants to conduct a study, assessing the programming that was offered for the youth at the Ranch/Rehabilitation facilities. The goal was to establish a true Enterprise program, a self-sustaining vocational program for the youth that could expand without the need to ask the Board of

Supervisors for financial support. Working with the Probation Department's Accounting Office, the County Counsel and the County Controller's Office, a Trust Fund was established in May 2001.

The James Boys Ranch is currently offering four ROP/Vocational programs. The Construction Technologies program offers training in construction trades and provides the basic skills to enter the job market as an apprentice or as an entry laborer. The Welding program provides the skills, with the educational standards met, for the youth to enter the job market as an entry-level apprentice. The Auto Technologies program teaches youth the basics in auto repair and tire changing, and qualifies the youth for an entry-level position in the auto repair business. The James Ranch also provides a Nursery/Horticulture program during the non-rainy season.

Off-Ranch work crews are also part of the programming of James Ranch. The youth do work, throughout the County, with the Santa Clara Water District, County parks, State Fish and Game, and the City of Morgan Hill. These programs are honor-type programs, to which youth must earn their way with good behavior, schoolwork, and recommendations from their assigned Probation Counselors. Youth can receive work experience credit for participation in these work crews.

Currently, all revenue earned from products made in the Vocational Programs and the Off-Ranch work crews goes to the Ranch Enterprise Trust Fund, with revenue earned to pay for materials and expansion of the programs. County Counsel and Probation continue in the planning stages of instituting a wage earning and or restitution paying potential for youth at the facility. The Commission has been told that now the Probation Department must seek a Standing Order to allow them to order that the payment through the Enterprise Fund for restitution/fines be finalized by the courts.

The Enterprise Fund printout showed that \$170,850.20 was in the fund on December 31, 2005. The fund produces approximately \$30,000 (gross) per year. Obviously the Enterprise Fund and the vocational (ROP) programs are closely interrelated.

### **Vocational Education Programs**

As described above, the Vocational Programs include Welding, Construction Technology, Auto Mechanics and Nursery/Horticulture. A Food Service program is being contemplated for the future when the old Holden Ranch is taken over for a peace officer training center. Computer Training will be offered through the new Enhanced Ranch Program. There should now be enough slots for every Ranch youth to be enrolled in a vocational program.

There is an additional benefit to the work and vocational aspects of the program - the youth receive additional school credits under work experience. During a youth's stay, this work experience averages between nine and twelve additional school credits added to their regular school curriculum. The youth must also attend a minimum of one hour per week in subject matter such as resume writing, preparing for job interviews, and tips on how to find jobs. Approximately 65% of youth enrolled in vocational training receive a Certificate of Completion, opening job doors to youth after their Ranch commitment. Youth are taken to job fairs and trade shows sponsored by trade unions.

As an example the Nursery/Horticulture program was started in December 2004, and seasonally may work in conjunction with the science class at Blue Ridge School when such a teacher is provided by COE. As part of the program, youth go to various area creeks to search for native plants. At the Ranch greenhouse, the native plants are propagated and returned to their original habitat.

The new auto shop still is not functional. Because of an oversight by those working on the construction, the opening has been delayed. In-kind services of \$400,000 went to the building and purchase of new equipment to upgrade the auto shop, but they still can't use the hoist because the electrical connection is not operative. When the auto shop finally opens, there will be an opportunity to perform oil changes and lube jobs for South County cars and those at the Ranch. There are other hopes to make the service open to local residents and for more involved repair jobs for County vehicles. Labor union issues may preclude some of those plans. It is also hoped that people will donate cars for the program. There are ten computers in the auto shop building that have

a software program to teach Auto Mechanics. Unfortunately, they still don't have headphones so youth can individually follow the lesson plans. The software program is extremely high quality according to the ROP teacher. The teacher said that it took eight months alone to get COE approval for the training.

Welding program students completed a metal shelter for cover under which to work outside. They also build pig traps, fire rings and little smokers. The boys also attend off-site performances of opera arranged by the long-time welding teacher, who also has a drama background. This program seems to be an excellent skill development program for appropriate youth.

The Construction Technology program participants continue to build picnic tables, the first of the projects in this program. Currently, two large off-site buildings, the largest of which is an 11,000 sq. ft. garage/office in San Martin, were constructed. The program has a self-contained van that can be taken to off-site jobs. The Ranch can fulfill both private and public requests. The youth are learning more than just vocational skills - tenacity, patience, responsibility, self-esteem, peer assistance - and many were genuinely proud of their products. In the new Enhanced Ranch Program Goal 111 states that "the Ranch program will provide minors with Vocational Training viable career fields for future employment opportunities, to help achieve success while also deterring further involvement in criminal activity by building self-esteem, as well as improving and developing skills needed for successful reentry into the community." Another objective of the Enhanced Ranch Program is for 70% of minors to receive computer training administered through ROP.

The ROP programs of north and south Santa Clara County are the vehicle through which the vocational programming is provided. These programs are not under the Alternative Schools Department, but rather a separate department of COE. The Welding program is the exception to this, as it is funded under the Enterprise Program. The Central County Occupational Center (CCOC) in San Jose does not provide direct services to Ranch youth, but youth could become involved in this program after Ranch release. When enrolled in local high school programs, youth who have attained junior class standing or turn 16 may attend CCOC vocational classes half-days. Such youth who are residents of San Jose Unified District may attend full-time classes at CCOC Capitol High School located on the CCOC site. Academic classes are provided half-time in addition to the vocational programming in this program.

### **Aftercare Services**

There is one Counselor currently assigned to Aftercare services. This Counselor is experienced, with nine years at the James Ranch. The Aftercare program lasts approximately ten weeks. The current caseload is 24 youth, although caseloads have varied from 12-42 youth during the past year. Youth in Aftercare also have an assigned Probation Officer. The Counselor said he saw his responsibility to help the youth succeed after their Ranch program, even though they are often returning to a troubled home life and gang environments. Drug and alcohol testing is a regular part of the program. A watered-down urine test is considered the same as a positive test, as youth sometimes drink lots of water to cover up drug use. Youth in Aftercare must abstain from wearing gang colors or clothing.

The Aftercare Counselor visits the youth at home, in counseling sessions, and in school. He will even visit a youth on the job if appropriate. He said that when he visits the youth at home he sometimes finds the youth sleeping on a couch with no real food in the house and clothing very limited. He says many of the boys come from single-parents families and the parent can just become "overrun" by the youth.

The Aftercare Counselor has recorded statistics over the past year showing that, out of a total of 141 youth, 98% successfully completed the 10 week program and 2% were returned to Juvenile Hall. Nineteen youth have absconded since then, thereby reducing the overall success rate to 69%. Thirty-five youth were returned to the Ranch from time periods varying from one week to 30 days.

Two Aftercare Counselors will be in place in the new Enhanced Ranch Program. The Aftercare Counselor believes that the current 120-day stay does not give a youth the time to really

change behavior. However, he feels that the new model focusing on cognitive behavior versus behavior modification remains to be proven in effectiveness. The Aftercare Counselor also cited a program he thought was very successful for the youth - a Prison Diversion Program. He said having the youth visit a prison such as Deull really helped them see what life could be like if they didn't succeed at the Ranch and return to criminal behaviors. He said that program was in danger of being terminated.

### **James Ranch Sunday Family Visitation**

On Sunday, February 28, 2006, three members of the Juvenile Justice Commission visited the James Ranch during the scheduled family visitation. The Ranch entrance gate was open. There was no one on duty in the office, so we asked a staff member where the visitation was taking place. We were escorted to the Recreation Center, where the room was filled with adults and youth. The entire Hall was buzzing, with families sitting around tables or with their chairs in a circle. It was an ethnically diverse group. Families had brought food items such as pizza, burgers and or homemade treats. There were three Counselors monitoring the visits. Twenty groupings were counted, but more came and went during the visitation period. Commissioners visited with about 18 groupings, introducing themselves to the families and asking permission to talk to the youth and families after explaining the role of the Commission. Commissioners had ten possible questions focusing on the strengths and weakness of the youth, family, school, the Ranch program, visitation opportunities and personal safety.

#### **Personal Strengths/Weakness**

Parents and youth had trouble describing personal strengths. At least three of the parent groupings were non-English speaking, and the youth had to translate. One youth commented that his goal was to "keep his mouth shut and get out". One boy said he loved to DJ at parties and loved all kinds of sports such as kick-boxing and football. Many youth said they were at the Ranch because of probation violations, Electronic Monitoring Failure and APA failure. Crimes cited by parents were burglary, robbery, drugs and gang affiliation. One boy talked about his love of writing poetry and raps. He showed the Commissioner some of his work that he was reciting to his parents. He said he had written several appeals and grievances while in Juvenile Hall because other boys couldn't do it. He said he had all of his grievances addressed except for one. Another boy spoke of his love for sports including basketball and baseball.

#### **School**

Parents and youth seemed to be generally satisfied with the school program. Some parents voiced that their sons were doing better in school here than at home. One parent wondered if her son could stay in the Ranch until he finished the semester. Some youth were working towards a diploma. The major complaint was the lack of a GED program. Families said that youth had been working on GED classes while at Juvenile Hall, but those classes were non-existent at the Ranch. One boy who had been in the Ranch for one month said he still wasn't in school. All of the youth spoke English. Several families spoke highly of the Alternative Placement Academy and its school programs. Youth hoped to transfer there after completing the Ranch program. One young man said he had "triple dyslexia." He was not accepted at APA because he needed Special Day Classes and the Ranch did have the program. He said there were 11 youth in his Special Day Classroom and he felt like a "nobody." He said he was jealous of youth who could read.

#### **Ranch Programs**

Parents wished their sons could be more involved in vocational programs. One parent felt it would be good experience for the youth to do more maintenance and repair work at the Ranch. He cited the dirty appearance of the Recreation Room. One parent suggested that the youth be given tests to identify vocational aptitudes such as the Meyer-Briggs-Kiersy Temperament Sorter. Parents wondered if classes in roofing, plumbing, electrical, computer skills and general maintenance skills could be offered. One parent commented that he thought there was only one computer in the whole Ranch for youth use. Several parents spoke of the need for an increase in Mental Health counseling. They spoke highly of their involvement with the Juvenile Hall Mental Health staff, but commented

that those services were not as good at the Ranch. Both group and individual counseling should be increased said one parent. They needed to be provided on evenings and weekends. Youth need to understand the consequences of their behavior before they find themselves in the adult system. Several youth appeared to be on medication. One parent whose son had tried to commit suicide was upset that he had finally been accepted into a Kaiser Mental Health program, and then he was transferred to the Ranch instead of the Alternative Placement Academy where he had hoped to attend. This mother said she owed over \$3000 “for a program that is not helping me or my son.” Another parent said that medications were often not given at the same time at the Ranch. Their son has a bipolar disorder and ADHD, and he sometimes didn’t get his medication at all. At home he and his family were in weekly counseling, and now they had nothing. Another boy spoke of attending church service that morning and appreciating bible study classes.

### **Visitation**

One youth whose parents spoke no English said that it was very difficult for his parents to visit him at the Ranch because they were only allowed to visit on Sundays when both parents worked. They visited him often at Juvenile Hall, but this was their first visit since his placement at the Ranch. He said a Counselor let him call home on occasion and there was some discussion of setting up an alternative visitation schedule. Some parents felt that older siblings, relatives and girlfriends should be able to visit. One parent felt that since the Counselors worked 16-hour shifts they were not available to speak with parents regularly. Parents said Counselors were seldom there on Sunday. Another parent said she didn’t feel Counselors read the youth’s file. Several parents said they had not been invited to attend an orientation. It turned out that there was an orientation after this visitation, but the parents were not informed about that fact ahead of time. One parent suggested a mentor type program for parents. Several parents said they visited their sons everyday in Juvenile Hall, and Sunday only visitation didn’t work for them.

### **Personal Safety**

Most youth said they felt safe at the James Ranch. There was a sort of macho attitude towards answering this question. Even though several parents talked about scary gang incidents, youth seemed to deny they were at personal risk. Youth did say it was unfair to punish all boys if only a few were involved in an incident. One youth did say he felt “unsafe” at the Ranch – “I’m a sitting duck here.” He said there were more Counselors at Juvenile Hall, and that Nortenos and Surenos were separated from rooming together. At the Ranch, the dorm was open and he (a Norteno) was first placed between two Surenos. He said he couldn’t sleep. One morning, one of the Surenos tried to hit him and suddenly there was a huge fight. He said those two Surenos were back at Juvenile Hall, but might come back at any time. His mother said that Counselors don’t look at what is happening to the youth at home. This boys’ father had died of cancer last year and she lost both her father and grandfather, who had helped support her, the same year. One parent complained that her son was forced to wear only his underwear to bed and that he was very cold. Ranch management confirmed that the youth sleep only in their underwear.

### **Community Issues**

Morgan Hill community members have met with the Probation Department, the Supervisor of District 1, the Morgan Hill Police Chief and others regarding the situation of the Ranch being located in their neighborhood. Citizens were becoming increasingly uneasy about the Ranch being so close, especially because of escapes. The changing neighborhood is one factor. There are several very large housing developments of expensive homes being built just outside the James Ranch property. The community has organized, and is concerned about the type of youth who are sent to the Ranch and security at the Ranch. The addition of the Deputy Sheriff and the building of the security fence are two improvements made to the Ranch environment as a result of community complaints.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Juvenile Justice Commission commends:

1. The Chief Probation Officer and the Ranch Manager for responding to the community by addressing concerns regarding security at the Ranch and erecting the Ranch security fence. Mental Health staff also lauded the fence, as it has reduced the number of ranch failures. The Commission believes that the fence is not intrusive to the Ranch environment.
2. The Ranch vocational programs, which seem to be running effectively, and the truly dedicated staff members who assist the youth in developing real-life job skills.
3. The SCVHHS Mental Health Department staff for their attempt to begin the new Aggression Replacement Therapy modules as quickly as possible.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

1. Initiate payment of restitution/ wages for youth who work through the Enterprise Program. For the fourth consecutive year, the Commission urges the County not to stray from the original goals and objectives of the Enterprise Fund. Although the Fund now has over \$170,000 earned by youth since its inception, youth still have not been able to pay restitution or receive a wage commensurate with their labor. This should be implemented immediately. The Victim Awareness Program, which is supposed to be mandatory for all youth, should be integrated into the Enterprise Program.
2. Immediately reinstate the GED preparation class to give youth the option of strong educational/vocational choices. GED classes started at Juvenile Hall and continued at the Ranch will support the Enterprise program goals for employment readiness.
3. Place every youth in a vocational and or work experience program while at the Ranch. For example, skills learned in Horticulture and or Auto Mechanics could have a distinct value to youth looking for employment after their Ranch experience.
4. Increase to two the number of Aftercare Counselors, even before the initiation of the Missouri model in October 2006. Aftercare has proven most effective if it is integrated with the youth's after-Ranch school program.
5. Support Mental Health in implementing Aggression Replacement Therapy as soon as possible. As many as three classes could be run simultaneously.
6. Reevaluate the 16 hour work week for some Ranch counselors, as it does not promote the one-on-one relationships needed in the new Enhanced Ranch Program. Management should seek staff able to be more flexible in work hours to enhance youth and family outcomes.
7. Further incorporate school personnel into the Enhanced Ranch Program planning and execution. Proposals in the Huskey report recommend small class sizes,

morning classes, 300 class minutes, GED and fewer class interruptions for services. These topics need to be addressed by all the parties.

8. Examine all community-based programs for their effectiveness, areas of duplication and content. Youth may be hampered from maximizing the benefit of these programs because of language and reading deficiencies.
9. Provide nursing staff on duty from 7 am through 9 pm. Nursing staff can then return to their involvement in health education classes such as smoking cessation and sex education and become part of the Enhanced Ranch Program team.
10. Ensure that preventive dental care is available on site. Probation and SCCVHS staff should explore utilizing community programs such as the Health Trust's mobile dental van.
11. Repair the pool chlorinator and identify the troublesome odor emanating from the kitchen in accordance with the Environmental Health Report.
12. Place a master key in a prescribed location immediately in accordance with the Fire Marshall's recommendations. Ranch management also needs to clarify emergency gate opening procedures and all staff members need to be trained on location of master key and gate opening emergency procedures.
13. Regularly mow and weed the grounds to prevent a large scale fire which could quickly endanger the James Ranch and surrounding homes as per the Fire Marshall's Report. A fast moving fire could jeopardize all the planning and alterations made to the Ranch to institute the Missouri Model.
14. Repair the walkways and overhangs and recover or replace the ripped and torn furniture. The walkways were fixed once this year, but quickly deteriorated. This is a hazard for staff, youth and visitors.
15. Continue communication with the residents of Morgan Hill and the Morgan Hill Police Chief.

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

1. Immediately reinstate the GED preparation class to give youth the option of strong educational/vocational choices. GED classes started at Juvenile Hall and continued at the Ranch will support the Enterprise program goals for employment readiness.
2. Hire and train instructional aides for each classroom at Blue Ridge School to meet the challenge of effectively teaching youth with a range of academic abilities. Teachers need assistance and support to provide individual tutoring for remedial students, English language learners, ILP testing, independent study and GED preparation (until that class is reinstated).
3. Alleviate the class size and room space concerns by reducing the number of students in each classroom to 15-16 rather than 17-18.

4. Facilitate the credit transfers, transcripts and IEPs needed for appropriate class placement and to expedite return to local schools. Transcripts for these youth often have many gaps because of multiple school sites. One person at COE should be responsible for a complete transcript for every youth leaving Blue Ridge School.
5. Review the services provided for Special Education students to ensure compliance with the educational needs of the youth.
6. Limit the SDC class size to 10–12 students to provide time and attention to the goals and objectives specified in the IEPs.
7. Continue to incorporate school personnel into the Enhanced Ranch Program including the on site teachers who will be involved in the Fall of 2006. Proposals in the Huskey report, morning academic classes, GED, and smaller class sizes need to be on the table for discussion by all parties.

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

1. Ensure that preventive dental care is available on site. Probation and SCCVHS staff should explore utilizing community programs such as the Health Trust’s mobile dental van.
2. Provide nursing staff on duty from 7 am through 9 pm. Nursing staff can then return to their involvement in health education classes such as smoking cessation and sex education and become part of the Enhanced Ranch Program Team.
3. Examine the weekend and evening availability of Mental Health personnel to youth and families when the Missouri Model of programming is implemented.

**Approved by the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission on \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_  
William Scilacci, JJC Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nora Manchester, JJC Inspection Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

