

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

**MURIEL WRIGHT RESIDENTIAL CENTER
June 2006**

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to the State of California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 229, the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) made two announced visits, March 24, 2006 and May 5, 2006, to the Muriel Wright Residential Center in south San Jose. Three Commissioners were present for the first visit and four Commissioners for the second visit.

The following report summarizes the information gathered from Probation staff, youth, school personnel and medical staff. The report also includes the observations of the Commissioners and a review of documents the Commissioners received. The Commissioners used this information as a basis for the concerns, commendations and recommendations in this report.

DESCRIPTION

Program Overview

The Muriel Wright Residential Center is a minimum security facility that provides 24-hour supervision for female minors between the ages of 12 and 18 and males 15½ years and younger who have been committed to the program by the Juvenile Court. The program is 120 to 160 days long. The youth attend school and the girls participate in a Vocational Education program. A number of programs are offered to give the minors skills and resources to use when they return to the community. The minors also participate in sports programs, on- and off-ranch work crews, and field trips.

Two dorms are available to house the girls and one dorm is for the boys. One girl's dorm has been closed since August 2005. Each of the girl's dorms has a private room for a pregnant girl. During the week, all minors get up at 6:30 AM and go to bed at 9:00 PM. On the weekend, they get up at 7:00 AM and go to bed at 9:00 PM. The boys and girls eat at separate times and are separated in all activities and programs, including school.

In August 2006, the Wright Center will implement the Enhanced Ranch Program, starting with the girls. The program will be six to eight months long, with 12 youth per residential unit. Staff members will be trained to run groups, and six staff members plus two extra-help staff will work all week with the same girls or boys. There will be four levels (instead of the current three levels) in the system used to evaluate behavior and earn privileges. After four to six good weeks, the minor will move to the next level. Punishment will not be used as a way to modify behavior. There will be no home visits

for three months, and families will come to the Wright Center. Emphasis will be on family intervention.

Community Based Organizations (CBOs) will provide services and will be in and out during the day. The Enhanced Ranch Program will be based on the Cognitive Behavior Management Model, which promotes the development of pro-socialization adjustment and socialization skills. This is a big change for the staff. Instead of telling a minor not to do something; the cognitive approach is discuss why the minor did it. When minors are on furlough, teams from Wright Center will visit the minor and their family. Staff members will go home with the minor for one hour at first. Last August, the staff from the Wright Center started to visit the families of minors, to see how they can help minors.

At present, staff members from the Wright Center go to Juvenile Hall to orient new youth. If minors have not received orientation at the hall, they receive it as soon as they arrive at the Wright Center. When a minor arrives, a Counselor is assigned to complete the Individual Assessment and Treatment Plan. This is completed within three days, depending on the Counselor's work schedule. A letter and a color brochure are sent to the family when the minor arrives. The brochure has general information about the facility and the program. It includes directions to the Wright Center, pictures of the facility and the Mission Statement. There is family orientation on Sunday, which is family visitation day.

The court dictates who can visit a minor. Counselors can go to court to request permission for someone to visit who is not on the list. Siblings under 11 years can visit, and Mental Health staff, as part of the family visit, can arrange special visits for older siblings. Non-family members can be approved for visitation if they are significant in the minor's life.

There are written procedures regarding the use of restraints. Only handcuffs are used. If there is a major fight, minors would be restrained, handcuffed only if necessary, and isolated. Staff members have radios to ask for help, and everyone available responds to help. As soon as feasible, a staff member talks to the minors. On rare occasions when an Isolation Room is used, a staff member sits with the minor. If the minor needs mental health services, the Mental Health staff is contacted.

When a minor is ready for release, he/she is placed into a 10-week intensive Aftercare program with supervision by the Aftercare Counselor. Prior to release, a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meeting is held to plan for the minor's return to the community. At that time, the Aftercare Counselor and the Education Specialist make arrangements for the minor to return to school in the community, if appropriate. The minor goes to school the first day after he/she is released. This has been a problem in the past, when a minor would be released prior to having the school placement confirmed.

Inspection Reports

The following reports and documents were received:

1. Muriel Wright Residential Center brochure
2. Wright Center Youth Schedule
3. Wright Center – Shift Schedule
4. Wright Center Program Schedule

5. Annual Report for Muriel Wright School for Department of Corrections, dated 2/1/06
6. Medical Department Annual Report/2005, dated 3/20/06
7. Office of Fire Marshal – Annual Report, dated 11/30/05
8. Thank You Letters from youth for Warrior tickets
9. The County of Santa Clara Probation Department, James Ranch and Muriel Wright Residential Enhanced Ranch Program, updated May 2006
10. Wright Center and James Ranch Site Team, Overview and Mission Statement
11. Corrections Standards Authority, Santa Clara County Juvenile Facilities 2004/06 Biennial Inspection, dated 4/25/06
12. Fleet and Facilities, Annual Building Inspection, dated February 2006
13. Letter from 2005–2006 Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury, dated 11/21/05

Physical Plant

At the entrance to the Wright Center is the construction site of the new building. When this building is completed, the Mental Health and Drug/Alcohol offices will be located there. There will be offices for two staff members, the Probation Manager and two clerical staff, plus a workstation, conference room and interview rooms.

Fruit and nut trees were planted at the entrance this spring, and more trees are to be planted. The rooms in the buildings have been painted and the bathrooms have been improved. The girls made knobs for the drawers in the rooms and also made bookcases for the living units while participating in the vocational program at James Ranch. There are new bedspreads, carpet and drapes, and new sofas are on order. The living units are starting to look more like a home. Some of the improvements are a part of the Enhanced Ranch Program.

In September 2005, there was an eight-day emergency evacuation of the Wright Center due to a lack of water. Four girls were sent home and two were placed in Juvenile Hall. All of the boys were placed at James Ranch. The boys hated the James Ranch, per the Probation Manager. Staff members went to see the minors every day.

The Office of the Fire Marshal Annual Report noted some minor problems. The Probation Manager said these have all been corrected.

The Corrections Standard Authority, Santa Clara County Juvenile Facilities 2004/2006 Biennial Inspection, had some incorrect information. The Probation Manager sent a response identifying the errors on May 1, 2006.

- Under Physical Plant, the report stated that the Wright Center has a secure perimeter fence; this description actually fits the James Ranch. The report also said that the Wright Center houses less-sophisticated males; the Wright Center houses all males 15½ and younger.
- Under Operations, the report stated the females attend vocational education program at James Ranch two days per week; they attend three days per week. The Wright Center has computer classes two times per week for the youth.

Overall, the Wright Center is a clean, freshly painted facility. Many minor repairs have been made. Every effort is being made to make the Wright Center as attractive as such a facility can be. The Probation Manager, the staff and the minors are to be commended for the work they have done.

Probation Department Staffing

The Probation staff at the Wright Center consists of a Probation Manager and three teams. Each team has a Supervising Probation Counselor and two Probation Counselors. There are four Probation Assistants, one Aftercare Counselor and one Program Coordinator, plus a pool of extra-help staff. All Counselors are required to have four-year degrees, except for the night staff, which need 60 units of college credit.

Staff members, who currently work 16-hour shifts, wake up the youth and are there to put them to bed. With the advent of the Enhanced Ranch Program, different staffing patterns are being considered. The 16-hour shifts are being reviewed this year.

One staff member has been on workman's compensation for several years, and the Probation Department has been authorized to fill this position. Last year, when the JJC inspection was made, six staff members were on medical or disability/workman's compensation. When extra-help staff coverage is needed, the person with the most seniority is called. Staff members at the Wright Center provide training for the extra-help staff as necessary and appropriate. Staff members are available to speak Spanish and a Vietnamese speaking individual is currently undergoing a background check for addition to the extra-help staff.

The Probation Department is in the process of hiring additional staff for the Enhanced Ranch Program. Eighteen new staff members are to be hired at the James Ranch and the Wright Center by June 1, 2006. Six new positions are authorized for the Wright Center. The Probation Department is having trouble filling positions because some potential hires can't pass the background check.

The Probation Manager at the Wright Center also runs the Women's Work Furlough program. The Probation Manager has been at the Wright Center since January 18, 2005, and was to be transferred on July 17, 2006. This would be about two weeks before the Enhanced Ranch Program is to begin. Although this transfer has now been postponed, it was upsetting to staff and wards. The current Probation Manager has been involved in the development of the new program and has received training. However, a new Probation Manager was to arrive just as new staff members are coming on board and the new program is starting. There will be enough concerns and issues to address without the complication of adding a new Probation Manager, and Commissioners are pleased that the transfer has been postponed.

Commissioners ate lunch with the boys and found that the food was good. Special diets are prepared for the pregnant girl and the Type I diabetic. There were no complaints from the minors. Commissioners inspected the kitchen and it was very clean and met all requirements.

The Wright Center Site Team continues to meet, and is trying to include the school staff. The Site Team is trying to measure outcomes of some of the programs. The Site Team had input into the development of the Enhanced Ranch Program, which will have a pre- and post-test evaluation.

Population

The capacity of the Wright Center is 64 minors. On March 24, 2006, there were 21 minors, ten girls and eleven boys. The overall population statistics on that date were as follows:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>
13	0	2
14	3	3
15	2	6
16	1	0
17	3	0
18	1	0

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>
Hispanic	7	7
White	1	2
Black	1	1
Asian	1	0
Other	0	1

There was one pregnant girl and one Type I diabetic. The Wright Center can take disabled minors as long as the minor is not in a wheelchair. There were no out-of-county minors. One girl will have been at the Wright Center for a year when she is released. Eight additional minors were in the Aftercare program.

The Wright Center does not take minors who have committed crimes involving knives or guns. Typical offenses are Violation of Probation or Assault and Battery. There is one arsonist at the Wright Center. This minor will attend Fire Prevention classes through Valley Medical Center and will also attend Victim Awareness class.

If a minor is returned to the Wright Center, the Probation Manager and a Mental Health staff member see the minor within 48 hours. There were 15 escapes between January and March 2006.

Commissioners ate lunch with the boys and saw the girls in the dorm. Most of the girls' complaints were about the staff. The boys expressed concern about how grades are given or earned. The issue was brought to the attention of the County Office of Education (COE) by the Commission. The matter has been addressed by the responsible officials in COE.

The boys thought the programs were good, although they asked for a vocational program like the girls have. One boy said a handball court would be nice. Another boy said he had asked his counselor for new clothes; the counselor said he didn't need them. Some of the boys complained that the younger boys got on their nerves. They felt that a boy should be at least 14 to be sent to the Wright Center. They would like more toothpaste, as they are only allowed a very small amount. There was also a complaint about the hand soap; it made one boy's hands dry.

The Probation Manager is looking at new conditioner. When the Enhanced Ranch Program starts, the minors will have access to a canteen where they can purchase better conditioner, shampoo, powder, etc. Families can bring a bottle of shampoo if it can be shared with all of the minors. This puts pressure on the parents, so it isn't really encouraged.

Staff Comments

Probation staff members state that they get the minors too late, similar to comments made by counselors at the James Ranch. They think part of the reason is that Juvenile Detention Reform opposes locking up minors. Staff members see the Ranches as residential treatment programs and they should not be at the end of the continuum of services.

Last year there were only four or five girls all summer. It was noted that it was like running a group home. Most of the girls did well, but they didn't want to go home.

Staff morale was up until the early part of March 2006. With the pending changes, staff members are a little concerned. Some are concerned about the possible loss of the 16-hour shift, as this would affect their commute. Some are happy that they will be working with the same minors all of the time. Others are happy that they will be doing counseling. The staff room has a computer in it now for staff members to use.

Some suggestions to improve the operation were to have input from line staff and have a quarterly round table with judges and staff to discuss the Wright Center and to share information.

Probation management did send an e-mail to all Probation staff members regarding the new program, and staff members were asked to be involved. Every Wednesday the Probation Manager and the Supervisors meet and minutes are sent out to the staff. On May 24, 2006, a presentation of the Enhanced Ranch Program was to be made to all Probation staff members. The Probation Manager said there was better communication with staff during the month of April 2006 regarding the new program. The Supervisors have put together an Orientation packet for new staff.

Programs

All minors at the Wright Center attend school. The other programs offered are Substance Abuse (Pathways), Mental Health, Victim Awareness, Anger Management, (including a conflict resolution component), Health Realization, Sexual Abuse Counseling (Gardner Health Center), Alcoholics Anonymous, Girl Scouts, Life Skills, (with a communication and decision making component), Gang Intervention (with an emphasis on refusal skills), Anti-Criminal Thinking and Behavior Patterns, Religious Programming, and Vocational Education. Other activities include sports programs, on- and off-ranch work crews, community service work, and field trips. Some of the programs are provided at no charge to the County and some of the programs are contracted. A Program Coordinator oversees all of the programs.

The Department of Alcohol and Drug Services (DADS) provide the Health Realization program. The focus is on health rather than the dysfunction of disease. Each session is one hour in length with a maximum of 10 minors per class. The program is open to all boys and girls. There is one DADS staff member, who is available evenings and weekends. Over a year ago, one minor brought drugs into the Wright Center. The Probation Manager thinks one of the girls threw some drugs around the construction site. Several girls were high that night. A drug sniffing dog was brought out the next day, but didn't find anything. No cigarettes, matches or other contraband has been brought in. All minors who are away from the Wright Center, unless they are with staff members, are drug tested when they return.

Minors participate in a Socialization program where they learn how to relate to their mothers, fathers, teachers, girlfriends/boyfriends, etc. The nurse provides the

Adolescent Family Life Program for pregnant girls and teens who are parents. The Ranch Program Coordinator facilitates the Anger Management program. It is a six-hour course that focuses on personal power, goal setting, anger signals and hot buttons, self-talk and cooling off. Minors are encouraged to develop a plan to use what they have learned in real life situations. All minors are referred to this program.

Pathways provides Chemical Dependency Treatment, one hour of individual counseling and two hours of group counseling weekly. Alcoholics Anonymous meets weekly for one hour. All minors are referred to Domestic Violence Education, which is provided by Friends Outside. Girls Scouts offer a 1½ hour weekly program for the girls. The emphasis is on development and enhancement of self-image, teamwork, leadership skills, and anger management skills.

Gardner Health Center provides Sexual Abuse Treatment. Minors who have been identified as victims of sexual abuse receive both one hour of individual and 1½ hours of group counseling per week while at the Wright Center. The objectives for individual treatment are to engage the minor in the therapeutic process to build a supportive and positive experience. Group counseling focuses on how sexual abuse history affects current functioning, decreasing shame and self-blame with support of others who have had similar experiences, developing positive communication and coping skills to reduce self-destructive behavior, and creating a positive therapeutic framework to continue counseling upon release.

Gardner Health Center provides Sexual Offender Counseling consisting of one hour of individual counseling and two hours of group counseling on a weekly basis. The focus is on developing non-deviant sexual behaviors, confronting the minor on his denial of behavior, promoting victim empathy, improving social and interpersonal skills, and teaching minors to recognize antecedents (internal and external) to sexual offending behaviors.

The Gang Awareness program includes male and female gang intervention. The goal is to assist the minors to disassociate themselves from the gang culture and prevent further involvement. With the decreased population, the gang problems have decreased. The existing problems are between rival girl gangs.

The girls go to James Ranch each Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon to participate in the Enterprise Program. They have made bookcases and replaced the handles on drawers at the Wright Center. The vocational programs offered are welding, construction technology and auto mechanics. The girls receive school credit and learn entry-level job skills, which they can use to obtain employment when they are released. Apprenticeship programs are available if the minor has received a high school diploma or has passed the General Educational Development (GED) test and received a high school equivalency certificate. Originally, when the Enterprise Program was created, the minors were to be paid and this money was to be used to pay court-ordered restitution. To date, no minor has received any money. The boys at the Wright Center are to start attending vocational programs at the James Ranch. When the boys start, the girls will go two days a week and the boys one day a week.

The Computer Lab started after the computers arrived in December 2005. There are currently 14 computers. The minors use the Computer Lab on Monday and Friday. Each minor is on the computer for one hour and twenty minutes per day for a total of two hours and forty minutes per week. On May 5, 2006, Commissioners visited the Computer

Lab while the boys were there. The minors learn to use the keyboard, internet (academic) and Microsoft Office. The computers are used to assist in Language Arts and Social Studies classes. The minors can do research on the internet, and can use the computers to prepare reports. On the day Commissioners were there, minors were using the computers to learn about immigration reform, immigration proposal facts, and Ellis Island immigration. The boys were using headsets purchased by the teacher for a dollar each from the Dollar Store. If the minors were on task, they were allowed to use the headsets to listen to filtered music. The teacher said it helped the minors to block out distractions and improved their work.

The Computer Lab teacher works Tuesday and Thursday at Gavilan College and Wednesday at an older adult program. She is trying to get a program established at the James Ranch. She has contacted Cisco, and found that they will fund the program. They want to see a fully functioning Computer Lab staffed by COE. The preliminary work has been done at James Ranch, and the teacher is looking for 15 computers. The teacher at the Wright Center would teach the classes at the James Ranch.

The Probation Manager started a tutoring program. She recruited four tutors and solicited donations of books to the Wright Center. The minors are participating in this program and reading the books.

The minors at the Wright Center no longer work for the Water District, as the San Jose Conservation Corps now has the contract. The Probation Manager talks to the Santa Teresa County Park rangers when she sees them, to see if they have any work. The minors were working at the stables, but that was taken over by the Mountain Rangers. The minors clear trails with the rangers on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Work crews are important and the Probation Manager would like to have more.

The Wright Center is a part of the Central Coast Ranch Athletic League. The sports activities at the Wright Center are basketball, volleyball, softball, and Frisbee. The program encourages the minors to be team players and to learn leadership skills. All minors may participate.

Medical/Dental Care

There is a full-time nurse working a split shift every day of the week. The regular nurse works five days and a relief nurse fills in on her days off. The Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System employs the medical staff. Commissioners saw the relief nurse on the day of the JJC visit, as Friday is the nurse's day off. The relief nurse also works at Juvenile Hall. Nurses divide their time based on the needs of the minors, so they can work four 4-hour shifts or three 5-hour shifts, etc. The day Commissioners were there, the nurse was working from 6:15 AM to 11:15 AM and then returning to work from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM. On this day, there were no diabetics. The nursing staff is particularly concerned about diabetes, and will arrange their work schedule to meet the needs of the diabetic minor. There is one pregnant girl. Her parents take her to the doctor.

If an emergency occurs, the nurse stays over or comes back. The regular nurse and the relief nurse live near the Wright Center. If a fight occurs while the nurse is gone, the minors are usually taken to Juvenile Hall. If there is a serious medical problem, minors are taken to Valley Medical Center. The medical charts go with the minors. Minors are usually delivered to the Wright Center on Tuesday and Thursday from Juvenile Hall; they arrive with medicine and their charts. The doctor comes monthly to

the Wright Center. If there is a problem, the nurses call the doctor at Juvenile Hall. The future plan is to have a video screen where minor's injuries at the Wright Center can be evaluated by the medical staff at Juvenile Hall. This is to be installed once there is money to pay for it. A counselor or nurse will be able to show the injury to the medical staff at Juvenile Hall for an evaluation

On the day Commissioners met with the nurse, there were 23 minors on medication, with five on psychotropic medication. The total population this day was 24. One minor on psychotropic medication was refusing to take his medication. One minor had asthma, but it was not too serious. Most of the minors were on medication for acne and/or allergies. Allergies are a big problem this time of the year. The chart is flagged if there is a problem with the minor taking their medication.

Both the relief nurse and the full-time nurse, who was also contacted, said that everything works well. Members of the medical staff were to attend the meeting on May 24, 2006 to learn about the Enhanced Ranch Program.

There is no dental care at the Wright Center. The dentist at Juvenile Hall provides dental care as required. If a minor is covered by his/her family dental plan, they may be allowed to have an "OT" (Out Temporarily), if approved by the staff at the Wright Center. Most minors are in need of dental care, as they usually have not received dental care in the community.

Mental Health Unit

Three Mental Health staff members, two clinicians and one Family Partner, work at James Ranch and Wright Center. This means that the Wright Center has one clinician and a half-time Family Partner, although the clinician at the James Ranch will come to the Wright Center, if needed. The Pathways Counselor is a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) and is very helpful. Commissioners were going to talk to the Mental Health staff during their second visit, but found that both clinicians had resigned for personal reasons between the first and second visits. The Mental Health Department is in the process of hiring new staff.

All minors are screened for Mental Health services. Members of the Probation staff say that approximately 25% of the minors have mental health issues and may be on medications. If they receive services, the minors have an open file. There is one boy who is transported to Stanford Hospital every week to see his therapist. In the past year, two minors sent to the Wright Center had mental health problems that could not be dealt with by the Wright Center staff.

Members of the Probation staff said that the Mental Health staff is at the Wright Center in the morning and that there is nothing for them to do since the minors are in school. The Wright Center does not allow any school pullouts since the staff believes that school is important. Members of the Probation staff said the Mental Health staff needs to be at the Wright Center occasionally on weekends.

School

The minors at the Wright Center attend school in the morning. There are no pullouts for non-school activities, because school is a priority. Four classes are offered: Language Arts; Math; Social Studies; and Physical Education (PE). Classes are fifty minutes, and school is in operation all year. The students have two periods of Language

Arts. These classes include reading and vocabulary improvement, with twenty to thirty minutes devoted to silent reading. PE class is a large-muscle program. Science classes are not offered, but an individual studies course can be arranged if a student needs science to meet high school graduation requirements.

Commissioners observed boys in the Language Arts class. There were seven boys, who were discussing a novel they were reading about Jewish resistance during WWII. Commissioners also observed 11 girls in a PE class. The minors earn one unit of high school credit for each 15 days of productive classroom attendance.

The school is operated by the County Office of Education, and is headed by a shared Principal with James Ranch and other alternative schools and Special Education programs. There are two full-time teachers at the Wright Center, with one being designated as the Head Teacher. Both have taught previously at James Ranch. The school secretary also works at James Ranch, South County Community School, and Advent Homes. This provides the opportunity for consistency in preparing transcripts for the youth. The Head Teacher has to do some clerical work.

Last June, due to budget cuts, the Special Education program was cut and the Classroom Instructional Aide position was eliminated. The Head Teacher begged to have the Instructional Aide position reinstated. A retired educator now comes for four hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to serve as a part-time Instructional Aide.

Many of the minors at the Wright Center have been identified as students needing Special Education services. As of May 5, 2006, five students were identified as needing full time Special Day Class (SDC). Most of these minors have emotional problems. A Resource Specialist Program (RSP) Aide comes to the Wright Center two times per week, Tuesday and Friday, for students requiring Special Education (SDC or RSP) services. Students are pulled out of regular classes to receive these services, and receive a minimum of one hour of instruction per week. Depending on recommendations from teachers, students may receive up to one or two additional hours of Special Education instruction per week. The current Special Education services seem to be insufficient for Resource Specialist Program students and are definitely inadequate for students needing a full-time Special Day Class.

Achievement levels of the minors vary, but, in general, the girls are reading at about 6th to 7th grade level and boys are reading at 4th to 5th grade level. One girl will graduate this year. She needs an Art class and this has been arranged. There is one student whose English proficiencies place the student at the elementary ESL (English as a Second Language) level. Some of the Hispanic minors come to school from homes where parents have little formal education in any language and are thus functionally illiterate. This creates a special instructional problem, as these students do not have adequate English skills or skills in another language. Thus, teaching English is a primary focus of the instruction in language programs.

There are no students in the GED program. The student must be at the 9th grade reading level to pass the GED test. Most of the boys are too young to take the test and most of the girls who are old enough are functioning below the 9th grade level.

The school staff had positive comments regarding the Aftercare program and the Education Specialist. Two or three weeks before a minor is scheduled to leave the Wright Center, the Education Specialist sets up a school meeting. Since a minor does not now leave the Wright Center until a school placement has been arranged, fewer minors are

returning as school failures. Most of the minors at the Wright Center cannot function in regular classes, although there are a few bright minors who can return to regular school. It is easier to monitor the behavior of minors in Aftercare if they are in smaller schools. The Bridge School is used to transition minors from the ranches to other schools. Minors can go there if they are released late in the semester.

The MDT meetings are usually held in the morning when the teachers are in class, although they may be at lunchtime so that teachers can attend. Teachers are invited by Probation, if needed. Probation chooses who will be discussed. School input into the MDT treatment plan and goals is important. The MDT meetings set the goals of the Wright Center for the minor, and the teachers should have more opportunity to participate in the on-going evaluation of the youth's progress. A work sheet used for determining credits completed, credits to be completed within the Wright Center program, and credits necessary for graduation is a useful tool for educational planning for the minors.

Commissioners were told that staff may see the Principal once a month and that, many times, meetings are cancelled.

The expressed needs were reinstatement of a full-time Classroom Instructional Aide position and money to purchase books. The textbooks are old and there is no petty cash fund to purchase supplementary reading materials. The school could use donations of outdated periodicals for research and as collage material and social studies art projects. There have been no supplementary funds provided in the past six years, thus necessitating the teachers to use their personal funds. The minors take books on OT and don't return the books. Borders Bookstore has been very helpful.

Finding educational staff to work at the Wright Center is difficult. With the high price of gasoline, substitute teachers don't want to drive that far. Also, finding substitute teachers who can work with the students at the Wright Center is difficult. The substitute teacher leaves at 2:30 PM, although the workday is not finished. Some Instructional Aides only want to correct papers, and it is hard to find Instructional Aides who want to, or will work one-on-one with the minors.

The teachers work with most of the special-needs student like they work with Special Education students. This seems to work best with this group. If classes are larger than 15, it is hard to manage the class. In general, there are very few ESL students. Usually there are only a handful of ELL (English Limited Learners) students. The part-time Instructional Aide, who is bilingual (English/Spanish), works with ELL students who are pulled out of class. A designated person does all testing for the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. The Head Teacher works with minors on Monday and Friday to help prepare them for STAR testing. The school staff started the Superintendent's List through which minors can earn bonus points. Minor must have a B average or better to get on the list. The list is strictly academic. It has generated some positive results, including reducing students' commitment times.

Incident Reports

The Special Incidents Reports for the last four months were reviewed. Examples of incidents reported were disrespecting staff, community school violation (refusing to remove red shirt), refusing to follow directions, and informational. Consequences included ranch failure, additional time and counseling. There were 15 escapes between January and March 2006. There were some gang related or minor-on-minor assaults,

although none were major. One minor-on-minor assault and one community school incident involved minors in the Aftercare program.

Grievances

One minor escaped after filing a second grievance. The first one was for tagging. He was to repaint the classroom bathroom. The second was for not following instructions during school.

One grievance was minor-on-minor, throwing milk on one another. The grievance was upheld and all minors were counseled. Others were a dispute over points and not following the rules (the minor opened the door at night). There were five Discipline Appeals; all were minor issues. Three were upheld, one will be dealt with differently and one was reduced.

Survey

On March 24, 2006, Commissioners asked the minors to complete the JJC Ranch Youth Survey. The minors were told the information was confidential and the surveys were completed in the presence of the Commissioners. Twenty minors, nine girls and eleven boys, completed the survey. All surveys were completed in English, as the Spanish version was not requested. The majority of the minors had been at the Wright Center for about one month. Twelve minors saw their parents weekly, three saw them sometimes, and three rarely/never saw their parents. A majority said the food was good and they got enough to eat. Seventeen out of twenty minors said they had received necessary clothing items. The girls said they were not supplied with the necessary soap, shampoo, etc. The boys said, ten to one, that they were supplied the necessary soap, shampoo, etc. Sixteen said the rules had been explained. Seventeen had copies of the rules. Sixteen said they could get an explanation of the rules, if they asked. The majority said they get time each day for recreation, sports activities, and exercise.

The majority of the minors were able to participate in church or religious services, get medical care, see a therapist, and take medications at the right time. All minors were in school four hours per day. The girls said they could get the classes they needed; six boys said yes and five boys said no. The majority of the minors said they were able to get GED classes if they want them. The girls said they have help with their homework, if they need it. Eight of the eleven boys answered no to the question.

The girls said they could get in touch with their Probation Officer. Six boys said they could and five said they couldn't. Seven girls said they would rather be at Juvenile Hall. One girl said she preferred the Wright Center. The reasons the girls preferred the Juvenile Hall, with the number of girls providing each response in parentheses, were: the counselors are nicer and more caring and understanding (3); because you can sleep (2); and concerns for baby (1). The reasons the one girl preferred the Wright Center were: good food and go home to see Mom. The boys' answers to where they would rather be were nine at the Wright Center and two at Juvenile Hall. The reasons for the Wright Center were: home passes (3); better food (3); it is easy to pass (1); more fun (1); we can see the girls and listen to music (1); its better (1) and freedom (1). No reasons were given for choosing Juvenile Hall. Last year the girls' responses were that 88% would rather be at the Wright Center.

Five boys and eight girls said no when asked if they feel they can talk freely and honestly with staff/counselors. Five boys said yes and one girl said yes. The response to this question last year: 50% of the boys said yes and 53% of the girls said yes.

Something has changed within the girls' population from 2005 to 2006, based on the above responses to the questions regarding were they would like to be and being able to talk freely with staff/counselors. Most of the staff members at the Wright Center have been there for a long time, as there is very little staff turnover, so changes in staff would not seem to account for the differences.

Most of the minors do not believe that discipline is handled fairly for everyone. Thirteen minors said no, five said yes and two said 50/50. Of the thirteen, eight were boys and five were girls. This continues to be a problem. The surveys in 2004 and 2005 indicate this is a problem area. In 2005, 29% of the boys and 6% of the girls said discipline was handled fairly.

Comments by the boys were: some counselors on a power trip (2); IRs given for no reason (1); unfair to certain races (1); and counselors don't pay attention (1). The girl's comments were: some discipline too harsh for the rules broken (2); and it depends on the counselor (2).

The girls said they were not subjected to verbal abuse from staff or other youth. The boys' responses were different. Three boys said they were subjected to verbal abuse by staff and eight said no. Three said they were subjected to verbal abuse by other youth and seven said no. All but one minor said they were not subjected to physical abuse by staff. One girl did not answer. One boy and one girl said they were subjected to physical abuse by other youth. Eighteen minors said any specific needs they have are being met. One boy and one girl said no. Eighteen minors said they feel safe at the Wright Center. One boy and one girl said no. Nineteen said they know the terms for their release. One girl said no.

When asked about their biggest challenge after completing the Ranch program, the girls' responses were: passing Aftercare (4); staying out of trouble (3); and staying in school on my own (2). The boys said: passing Aftercare (5); staying at home (3); staying out of trouble (1); and getting off probation (1).

The boys' responses to what's the best thing about being here were: OTs (6); food (3); nothing (1); activity (1); and freedom (1). The girls said: OTs (6); food (3); and people (1).

The boys' responses to what's the worst thing about being here were: teachers (6); staff (4); school (1); and failing (1). The girls said: staff (5); work (1); cleaning bathrooms (1); getting up at 6:30 (1); no pay phone (1); and time goes slowly (1).

OBSERVATIONS

The Wright Center is clean and the staff is making it as attractive as possible. The Probation Manager is instrumental in bringing about these improvements, which include the trees at the front entrance and the new carpet, drapes, and bookcases. Most of the interior has been painted. Staff members are very open and readily answered Commissioners' questions. They seem to be positive and upbeat.

The minors were eager to talk to the inspection team. The boys especially wanted the Commissioners to know about the teacher mentioned in the survey results. Last year,

five of 16 boys indicated on the survey that the “worst part of being at the Center” is the teachers. No girl this year or last year had such an opinion of the teacher. One problem is that this teacher’s grading system makes it very difficult for the boys to get on the Superintendent’s Lists to earn privileges. Since most of the boys function below grade level, it is difficult for them. They are not able to read and understand the instructions.

Staff members try to be creative and innovative. The Probation Manager was able to recruit tutors for the minors and to get books donated. The Computer Lab teacher purchased headsets for minors to listen to filtered music if they were doing well. The school staff introduced the Superintendent’s List to reward positive academic achievement. For Mother’s Day, the minors were going off-site to a nursery to pick up flowers for their mothers.

The Probation Manager thanked the JJC for helping her to get the computers for the Computer Lab this past year. She called the JJC when the computers hadn’t been delivered. The Computers arrived and, within two to three weeks, they were up and running.

Follow-up to 2005 Inspection Report

There were seven Recommendations in last year’s JJC inspection report. Recommendation #1 was to ensure that Anger Management Classes, currently taught by staff, be presented by contract specialists. The Probation Department was going to evaluate this, but with all of the other changes that have happened or are about to happen, this situation is the same.

Recommendation #2 was to investigate the possibility of changing the brand of hygiene products currently used to brands more generally accepted by youth. The brands have been changed. There are still some complaints, especially by the girls. Probation is still looking into this issue. When the Enhanced Ranch Program starts, the minors can use the privileges they earn to purchase items from the canteen.

Recommendation #3 was concerned with the Site Team’s effort to monitor class population for compliance with Board of Corrections (BOC) required maximum class size. When the number of boys or girls exceeds 20, the student-teacher ratio should focus on the needs of the students. Probation is working with COE on this issue to ensure that class size does not go beyond standards. This has not been a problem in the past year as the population has been very low. With the Enhanced Ranch Program, a maximum of 12 students will be in each class.

Recommendation #4 was that the Site Team should begin to measure the outcome of some of the programs. Probation said the Site Teams at all of the facilities have developed Mission Statements and Goals and Objectives. As part of the Objectives, the Site Teams are developing effective outcome measures to determine the effectiveness of program services and contract services provided at the facility. In addition, as part of contract services established for this fiscal year, specific program objectives and measures will be included to ensure agencies are providing data on the effectiveness of their services. Members of the Probation staff at the Wright Center said they were working on this. A component of the Enhanced Ranch Program will be a pre and post test evaluation.

Recommendation #5 directed Probation Counselors to prepare a progress report and recommendation for the court review of each minor. This is being done.

Recommendation #6 was to consider the addition of another half-time Pathway Counselor. The youth speak highly of the benefits of this program. This was not done because the Wright Center population was so low for the last year.

Recommendation #7 was to monitor the behavior and attitude of incoming minors following court placement, in view of the cancellation of the Ranch Orientation Program (ROP). The Probation response said that the ROP had not been cancelled. Wright Center staff members go to Juvenile Hall and conduct an Orientation for the minors, who then receive a second Orientation when they arrive at the Wright Center. If minors are returning, the Probation Manager and the Mental Health staff see them. They conduct a special entry MDT for those minors who have previously failed or escaped from the program.

CONCERNS

1. The Commission is concerned that staff morale and staff performance are adversely affected by the frequent change of Probation Managers. The Probation Manager has been changed three times in approximately four years, and the current Probation Manager was to be transferred on July 17, 2006. The Commission is pleased that she will now stay to implement the Enhanced Ranch Program, but understands that no decision has been made about her length of stay.
2. The Commission is concerned with the impact that the Enhanced Ranch Program will have on staff members' lives and attitudes, since the current 16-hour shifts may not work with the Enhanced Ranch Program. Some staff members live far away due to the cost of housing in Santa Clara County. The 16-hour shift reduces their commute time and transportation expenses.
3. The Commission is concerned that some staff members will have trouble adjusting to the Enhanced Ranch Program. Every aspect of the current program is based on behavior modification. With the Enhanced Ranch Program, every aspect of the program will focus on cognitive behavioral control. This is a drastic change, and some staff members have never worked in such a system. It should be easier for new hires, as they will be starting fresh.
4. The Commission is concerned that line staff perceives communication between management and line staff to be a problem.
5. The Commission is concerned that there were 15 escapes between January and March 2006, and these were not reported as serious concerns on monthly incident reports to the Commission.
6. The Commission is concerned that the work schedule of the Mental Health staff conflicts with the school schedule. It was reported that clinicians are at the Wright Center in the morning and that there is nothing for them to do since the minors are in school.

7. The Commission is concerned that there is no full-time Classroom Instructional Aide to assist teachers in dealing with the difficulties resulting from the wide range of grade levels of students at the Wright Center. Additional help is also needed for safety reasons.
8. The Commission is concerned that there is not a compliant Special Education program. As of May 5, 2006, five students were identified as needing full-time Special Day Class. Special Day Class students do NOT have a separate class; instead, each receives one-to-three hours of Special Education services per week.
9. The Commission is concerned that the inconsistent systems and criteria are used for evaluating student work in school. Differences between teachers in grading systems and criteria for points are very upsetting to the students.
10. The Commission is concerned that MDT meetings are scheduled when teachers are in class. These incoming and outgoing meetings will be important in the Enhanced Ranch Program to set the goals of the Wright Center for the minor, and the teachers should have more opportunity to participate in the on-going evaluation of progress.
11. The Commission is concerned that school textbooks are old and that some are missing, in part because minors take them on OT and don't return them.
12. The Commission is concerned with the survey responses regarding Wright Center staff and programs:
 - that 88% of the girls indicated they would rather be at Juvenile Hall while 81% of the boys said they would rather be at the Wright Center
 - that 89% of the girls said they did not feel they could talk freely and honestly with staff/counselors while 55% of the boys said they did not feel they could talk freely
 - that the minors indicated they feel that discipline is not handled fairly for everyone (This year, 83% of the boys and 55% of the girls said this was true. Last year, more girls said this was true.)

COMMENDATIONS

The Juvenile Justice Commission commends:

1. The Probation Manager and the staff for the improvements that they made to make the Wright Center a clean and attractive facility.
2. The Probation Manager for establishing a tutoring program and finding resources in the community to provide books for the program.

3. The Chief of Probation for addressing Recommendations from the 2005 Inspection Report and for implementing most of them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Juvenile Justice Commission recommends that the Probation Department:

1. Assess the effects of the frequent change of Probation Managers on staff morale and staff performance. The Commission is pleased that the current Probation Manager will stay to implement the Enhanced Ranch Program.
2. Work toward minimizing the negative impact that the Enhanced Ranch Program may have on staff members' lives and attitudes with the possible change from the 16-hour shift.
3. Provide extensive training on the Cognitive Behavior Model to all staff members at the Wright Center, not just Probation staff, as all staff members (including those from CBOs) will need to develop new skills to implement the Enhanced Ranch Program.
4. Work very closely with the line staff in moving toward implementation of the Enhanced Ranch Program because the success of the program is dependent on the support of line staff.
5. Schedule MDT meetings when teachers can attend. These program setting and evaluation meetings will be important in the Enhanced Ranch Program. Given that the youth are in class four hours each school day, the teachers should have more opportunity to participate in the on-going evaluation of progress.
6. Report to the Commission on the monthly numbers of escapes and the actions being taken to address this problem.

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

1. Reinstate the full-time Classroom Instructional Aide position to assist teachers in dealing with the difficulties resulting from the wide range of grade levels of students at the Wright Center. Additional help is also needed for safety reasons.
2. Reinstate the Special Education program, especially the Special Day Class, to comply with state and federal regulations.
3. Ensure that consistent systems and criteria for evaluating students' work are applied by all teachers.
4. Provide the opportunity for teachers to attend MDT meetings and participate in the on-going evaluation of progress.

5. Consider providing additional money to purchase books. The textbooks are old and some are missing, in part because minors take them on OT and don't return them. There should be a petty cash fund to purchase textbooks and supplementary reading materials.

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

1. Revise the work schedule of clinicians to avoid conflicts with the school schedule by providing afternoon, evening and/or weekend Mental Health services.

SUMMARY

Many changes will be taking place at the Muriel Wright Residential Center, starting this summer. New staff members are being hired to work in the Enhanced Ranch Program. The program at the Wright Center will no longer be based on behavior modification, but will be based on cognitive behavioral control. The Juvenile Justice Commission looks forward to visiting the Wright Center to observe the new program.

Approved by the Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Commission on June 29, 2006.

William J. Scilacci, Chair
Juvenile Justice Commission

Patricia Khan, Chair
Wright Center Inspection Committee