

County of Sonoma - Juvenile Justice Commission

2013 Inspection

According to Welfare & Institutions Code Section 229 the Juvenile Justice Commission conducts annual inspections of the juvenile detention facilities in Sonoma County. It shall report the results of such inspections together with its recommendations based thereon, in writing, to the Juvenile Court and to the California Board of State and Community Corrections.

Facility Name: JUVENILE HALL

Date of this Inspection: 12/10/2013

Address: 7425 Rancho Los Guilicos Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95409

Date of Last Inspection: 12/11/2012

Contact Person: Marty Mitchell

Facility Capacity: 140

Average Population: Approx. 70

Presiding Juvenile Court Judge: Allan Hardcastle

Phone Number: (707) 565-6300

Commission Chair: Mary Cone (707) 565-8164

Commission Inspection Team: Jody Edwards, Hank Mattimore & Pat Veeninga

Staff Interviewed: Marty Mitchell, Division Director, Maria Lopez Assistant Director, Sara Bernstein Assistant Director and Kristen Vela, Health Program manager

Overall Summary:

The Juvenile Justice Commission commends the work of the Sonoma County Juvenile Hall staff in running an exemplary juvenile detention facility. In particular we commend the administration for the following:

1. Continuing and improving the Boys and Girls Club on the premises of the Hall. This has proved to be an innovative and effective program that is serving as a model for juvenile halls throughout the state.
2. Giving priority to more intensive treatment for the hard-core juvenile offenders while channeling other minor offenders into alternative treatments in the community.

3. Emphasizing a more relationship-oriented way of handling the youths in our care rather than a purely behavior-based method of treatment. In other words, treating the youths more as individuals with their own unique needs and potential. The Core Correctional Practices program focused on rehabilitation rather than punishment is an excellent model of treatment.

4. Collaborating with other community agencies in helping to transition youths after they have been discharged from the Hall. The Quest Program, which follows long-term residents into the community, has been implemented this year and has tremendous potential for reducing recidivism and giving youths an opportunity to succeed.

5. Continuing the graduation ceremonies for those youths, who have graduated from high school or have completed their GED while in the Hall. The commission had the honor of participating in this twice-yearly graduation event at the Hall and found it to be a moving experience, and a huge step forward for the youths involved.

6. Instituting an in-house dental care program for all residents. Most dental care will now be available to the youths without the burden and expense of having to take patients out to the community.

Challenges:

Given the nature of the hard-core youths being seen at the Hall, it is understandable that the use of pepper spray or mechanical restraints be used in emergencies. We endorse the efforts of the administration to insist that these methods be used only as a last resort.

Unfortunately our own Juvenile Hall and other juvenile detention facilities are often put in the position of being the de facto treatment center for the mental health needs of youths. This is unfair both to those needing care and to juvenile detention staff. Juvenile Halls were never intended to be psychiatric treatment centers. We endorse the efforts of mental health staff to give interim assistance to our youths and to provide support for transitional youths to find ongoing psychiatric care. We are hopeful, too, that mental health staff at Juvenile Hall work collaboratively with the community to have a local juvenile psychiatric hospital in our county.

Physical Plant and Administration:

Average number of residents, ethnic breakdown, average duration of stay

- Average daily population over the last 6 months is 70 residents
- Ethnic breakdown remains the same as last year at 55% Hispanic, 30% Caucasian, 8% African American, 7% American Indian
- Average duration of stay over the last 6 months is 24 days
- Population is 81% male and 19% female

Staffing ratio, frequency of staff turnover

- Staffing Ratio is 1:10 during daytime hours and 1:20 at night. Very little turnover, except through retirements and promotions. Two new hires were recently brought on because of population increases, not turnover.

Incident reports

- Incident reports are carefully tabulated at the Hall and give a snapshot of the issues faced by the staff and residents. Incidents range from the least serious, e.g. "... threw a raisin at me" to very serious safety issues, e.g., an out-of-control fist fight that resulted in one or more inmates being sent to a local hospital for treatment of injuries.
- It should be noted that incident reports cover not only the inmates at the Hall but also youths who live in the community under an alternative sentence. So, for example, a case of a youth living outside the facility who violates probation by smoking pot will be included in the Hall's incident reports.
- During the annual inspection the commissioners noted that in the month of November there were approximately 90 incidents logged. Forty-three of the incidents were classified as "Inappropriate Behavior." Seven incidents involved the use of mechanical restraints and/or pepper spray. One commissioner noted that there were a number of incidents involving pepper spray in which the spray needed to be used several times on the same inmate before it was effective. There were 7 gang-related incidents and 4 incidents of physical assaults. Incidents categorized as "group disturbances" numbered 11.
- In this particular month, only one incident was classified a serious suicide threat although this was more common in some of the other months this year. In fact, mental health issues play an important role in a significant number of incidents at Juvenile Hall.

Grievance reports

- Along with incident reports, inmate grievances, along with a record of how they were handled by staff, are also logged monthly at the Hall. Like incident reports, grievances range from the relatively minor to the more serious. According to the Hall's procedures, each youth is entitled to a fair hearing of his/her complaint. The result of the hearing is signed off on by both the youth and the supervisor.
- Grievances generally average about four or five monthly and appear to be handled appropriately, due in large measure to the more relationship-based policy of the Hall.

Visitor Policies

- Every youth is allotted two one-hour visits per week, unless the youth is under Administrative Protection (AP).

Use of telephone by residents

- Telephone access is dependent on the level of the resident. The youth currently have no ability to use any other form of electronic communication.

Other

- Marty Mitchell told us about ways they are trying to change the culture of the Hall.
 - One is the Quest program which has been in the planning for years and which was implemented 5 months ago. It is a program for long term male residents who will stay five months minimum with three months of aftercare. This program is for youths aging out who aren't eligible for other programs such as those who are in maximum security. It is a strength-based program accentuating areas where they thrive. A goal is that when they walk out the door, they will be prepared to be responsible citizens and get jobs. It is a core program tailored to individuals, similar to the Crossroads-Sierra Girls Center program for girls. They are very proud of this program and the results it is creating.
 - Another way they are trying to change the culture is through a program they instituted called Core Correctional Practices (CCP). There are 8 core practices whereby staff members learn to engage effectively with youths using these practices. It is about building positive relationships; for example, they list pros and cons of behaviors when working with the youths. They have already had a couple of success stories. The use of CCP has had an impact: less use of pepper spray.
 - Use of Force: There are very strict protocols about when to use pepper spray. It is the last resort. Prior to that there is a set of options including discussion, hands on the wrist, and a control hold. All staff are trained 12 hours on the use of force.
 - The Hall has a zero tolerance about gangs. In the real world you must work with opposite gang members and that is what is required here as well.
 - Determinations for placement into units is based on age, gang involvement, crime committed and number of times in the hall. The difference in the girls unit is that there is only one, so all girls are housed there regardless of crime, age, etc.
- Pat and Jody toured the maximum security unit, the girls unit, and the Quest unit. There was a decorating contest for Christmas in process and all the units looked ready for the holidays. In each area the youths seemed proud of their decorations.

Comments on physical plant

- They have reduced the footprint to save money by minimizing the open housing units to 4 ½ units.

Fire extinguishers

- January 2013

Medications

- Medication is securely stored in the Pharmacy and dispensed by nursing staff based on the prescribing physicians written orders. order

Bedrooms

- Beds were made.
- Blankets were there, seemingly sufficient, and changed monthly.
- Clean sheets are given out weekly.
- Youths clean and sweep every day.
- Clothes are issued every two days.
- Underwear is issued every day.
- All rooms are searched every day and individuals are searched spontaneously.
- All youths are in their bedrooms during shift change from 2:00 to 3:00 and sleep time.
- A youth could be outside of his/her room the entire rest of the day, given the right level of points.
- In the Quest unit they are allowed to have full-size toothbrushes, full-size pencils, more books, and even hard covered books in their bedrooms. They are allowed to keep a week's worth of clothing in the room and they get their own clothing. They are also allowed some private things, like pictures of loved ones and to hang their own writings or artwork.

Lighting, heating

- The units have a great deal of natural light through windows and skylights.
- It was a very cold day and seemed just right in terms of the temperature.

Kitchen

- Very clean
- For menus they follow the same strict guidelines as the public educational programs.
- For their food supply they use food distributors such as Sysco and local ones for produce such as Imwalle's.
- Huge facility, built to accommodate 240 residents
- We walked with the chef around the kitchen.
- There were both positive and negative comments from the residents about the food.

Outside Grounds

- They have very nice covered recreation yards with three separate areas so all can exercise.

Health and Safety: Conversation with Kristen Vela, Health Program Manager

- This facility does everything it can to take care of the kids. We (in Health Services) get to see them as kids and at times it's apparent that they just need a mommy. This facility prides itself on being able to support the kids and help them. We won't make up for how they've been raised; in many cases they've never been taught how to take care of themselves. We have a link up with SAY's tattoo removal program and watching them make decisions about that is really fun.
- If youths are Medicare eligible appointments can be arranged for them. When they are released they are taught where and how to get services.

Physical exams on entry

- At intake the youths are asked a set of physical health questions, mental health questions and alcohol and drug questions. Then within the first 24 hours they will meet with a nurse.
- If the youth is a young woman, we do a pregnancy test - and then another pregnancy test two weeks later.
- If they are coming off drugs, we have detox protocol to follow if we believe they will be safe. Every kid gets a complete physical once a year by an RN. Therefore, if they have been here before and it's been within a year we might not do it. Otherwise every kid gets a complete physical.
- When they bring medications they are verified with the prescribing physician and we check the pills to see if the youth is taking them in the amount prescribed, and if the pills are exactly what they are purported to be.
- Parents have to provide written consent for medications and the kids have to agree.
- All immunizations are updated with parental consent.

Access to medical services

- If youths want to receive services they tell a staff member they want to talk to a mental health person. Or they can complete a health services request form and be seen within 24 hours except on Sunday.
- If there is an emergency, i.e., a fight or assault, there is usually a nurse on duty who can come right away.

Professional Medical Staff

- The medical director is Dr. Lee Hall. The acting health officer is Karen Holbrook. The health program manager is Kristen Vela, the nurse practitioner is Michelle Porter. And there are 5-6 RN's. Temporarily the psychiatrist is Dr. Bravo.

Mental Health Services

- The youths with mental health issues dominate the majority of people's time which includes weekly and sometime daily visits with medical health staff. We work as a team and we can customize programs for the kids. We work with the community to get kids into programs. In county mental health they can assign a case worker who won't provide a place to live but will mentor them and monitor their meds. The program is called Transitional Aid to Youths and you must have a mental health diagnosis to be a part of it. We work with Tamayo house getting kids in there.
- Lots of kids are situationally depressed.
- Psychiatrists are available once a week on site and are available by phone. They are also on staff through the Department of Health.

Dental Services

- We have dental services back on site now with all the equipment needed. Given our populations, wisdom teeth are an issue. Our dentist can do simple extractions on site but will send other cases to an external oral surgeon.

Recreational/ Educational Programs

- The Boys and Girls Club is on site. This program is one of three clubs in institutions in the state of California. The Boys and Girls Club is even better than last year.
- They earn their way to the club with the exception of the Quest unit. The Quest unit can come here as a part of being in that unit. There's lots of fitness equipment. One of the two hours of their time in the club is a structured program. The other hour is for recreational time and there are music studios, exercise areas, study areas and more.
- The leader of the club told us about the structured time plan for that day. They will have a presentation on global world cultures and will give them samples of the food from different countries.
- Every unit comes in two times a week. The director said this program has really had an impact on behavior in the Hall.
- REACH -- The acronym stands for Reentering our community to Establish Academic and Career success, character, and Healthy lifestyles.
- The REACH program provides intervention services to high risk youths. Our goal is to assist club members in enjoying our community from juvenile hall and sustaining crime-free, prosperous and healthy lives after release.
- The Boys and Girls Club have a grant to work with these youths and develop relationships here which can be followed up outside. They will then mentor them and provide support such as suits and interview attire.
- The program is targeting 50 kids. It's been a huge success and a fabulous partnership. Recently they hired a kid formerly from juvenile hall who had enjoyed the club while he was here, made a relationship, then when he was outside went to the club there and volunteered for 100 hours, and was recently hired. Now, they're working the same process with another youth.

Opportunity for Physical Exercise

- Recreation is two hours a day. It's built into the schedule. One of the two hours is a PE school credit. The afternoon session of recreation has to be a lot about large muscle exercise; it can't simply be reading as recreation.
- There are three large recreation yards and all the units except maximum security can go out to the track area. The maximum security youths have to stay in an enclosed area with an incredibly beautiful view. There is a huge basketball court.

Outdoor Sports

- As stated above, there are numerous opportunities for outdoor sports including several field and indoor outdoor basketball courts. There are small basketball courts attached to every unit for residents who need supervision.

Indoor games

- There are a variety of board games and cards available in all of the units.

Movies/television, video games

- Each unit has a T.V. but many other activities, including video games, a mixing board for DJ's and other recreational and educational activities are available through the Boys and Girls Club

Educational and Training Programs:

- The library cart in each unit is refreshed every week and the librarian takes requests for books.

Sexual harassment

- Verity teen assault program and other client centered specific interventions as needed

Psycho-Sexual Development

- Verity sex education

Parenting

- Teen parent connections, Dads Make a Difference and Health services training

Gang issues

- Different approach of focusing on other pro social activities targeted towards the specific youth.

Substance abuse

- Narcotics Anonymous, a brief intervention with Health Service and AOD for Quest 17 week curriculum.

School

Classrooms

- We viewed a school classroom. It seemed sufficient for learning. There is only one computer, although kids aren't asked to do work on computers. The students were not in the classroom when we were there.

Teachers

- There are five full-time teachers; rarely do they have substitutes.
- Teachers are assigned to each unit and will work with the youths one-on-one. There are also about twenty tutors who are volunteers.
- The population has large academic deficits.
- Kids aren't positive about learning but that's the challenge.
- They had a celebration for four youths who received their high school diploma or GED.

Curriculum

- The curriculum is the standard high school curriculum but there are slightly less credits required for an institutional school.

Classroom discipline

- There's less discipline on the unit as a whole because they want them to learn. They might be a little more patient and willing to allow certain behaviors because the benefits of being in school outweigh the costs.

Physical appearance of classroom

- It appeared sufficiently orderly with appropriate graphics

Interviews by Jody Edwards and Pat Veeninga

Girl, Age 17

- 12 days at J.H. now, also here a year and a half ago for 55 days.
- When I asked if she feels safe, she said yes she feels safe.
- I asked about respect. Her response was, "Every staff is different some more so than others it's a mutual thing."
- When asked what she is learning that will help to make good decisions outside, she said, "You see how people are, staff gets to come and go as they please. This shows me that I wanna have a job, not be stuck in here."
- When asked about school, she said, "It's a set schedule and you have to get or lose points. For going to school, you get to do fun activities. Everybody's on a different level, grades are different so it's hard. The teacher has to go 1-on-1 or little groups so it's kind of difficult with the different age groups. The teacher spends more time on the lower level subjects so if you have a question, you have to wait and not accomplish anything."
- "If you have good behavior all week then on Saturday you get a level party which is fun.
- "The books are great, outside of here I never read and I read a lot here. The librarian person is really helpful in suggesting books that you might read. That's really nice."
- When asked what is it you would change if you could, she said, "School because there are so many different levels, add a teacher."
- Asked about the food, she said, "There are occasions where it's good but then it's bad." I asked for an example of what is bad, she said, "There's nothing we enjoy, the bacon is like rubber. "
- She said, "For the most part everything seems pretty fair here. You get used to everyone. It's like family. Not for me but for others here. The mental health has really helped. There's more advice needed from the staff and more hands on conflict resolution."

3 Youths in the Quest Unit: Age 17, 8 months in J.H. Age 17, 3 months in J.H. Age 17, 3 months in J.H.

- To the question of do you feel safe the answer was, “Yes I feel safe, especially in this unit. The staff are direct about how this program runs, there's no tension in this unit we. We all work together the northerners and southerners (opposing gangs) help each other out. The new kids come and we inform them how this plays runs we tell the kids when they come. In other units some kids don't care, there's always tension. If you're saying talking to a certain kid it means things in other units but in here it works because they believe in us. That's why I works.”
- I asked how he was going to make it work for himself when he got out and he said he was going to move.
- They said, “We’re treated with respect and we give respect. In here they are preparing us to leave, if it wasn’t for me being here I wouldn’t be getting credits toward a high school degree. I wouldn’t be going to high school. We are high risk youths, we have IEPS, ADHP, PTSD.”
- “Outside there are distractions, gangs, girls, here we are supported on our choices.”
- The youths were excited about the Christmas decorating contest and seemed very proud of their decorations. One asked us to admire his artwork.
- “In school out teacher supports us in many ways, with candy and he makes us feel good about our work. He’s always motivating us.”
- “I think the Juvenile hall is doing a great job. There’s a lot of communication. In other units, they don’t communicate all the time. They’re not asking us to trust them, just to talk to them.”
- They really appreciated the staff, some in particular.