

## Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission Group Home Inspection Report

Facility Name:	Sierra Girls Center (SGC)
Address:	On File
Phone	On File
Contact Person	Laurel Anderson, administrator of Sierra

J.J.C. Inspector(s)	Gina Crozier Jody Edwards
Date of Inspection	4/3/2015
Date of Last Inspection	May 1, 2014
C.C.L. Contact	Pauline Muntzer
Date of Last C.C.L. Inspection	

**\*O = Outstanding \*S= Satisfactory or exceeds \*N.I. = Needs  
Improvement/corrective Action**

INSPECTED	O	S	N.I.	Comments
Grounds		x		Rural setting, very nice, surrounded by trees. We walked by a volleyball court which looked very nice but needed some weeding.
Building Exterior		x		No issues identified
Living Room		x		Nice area where we sat with the girls and interviewed; very comfortable chairs and set up.
Kitchen		x		Menus posted, kitchen looked fine.
Bedrooms		x		All bedrooms looked comfortable; there were places on the walls for the girls to make the bedrooms their own.
Bathrooms		x		Appeared in good shape with no lack of products
Fire Safety --Extinguishers		x		Recently inspected
Fire Safety --Smoke Alarms		x		
Fire Safety --Evacuation Plan		x		
Food		x		We saw lots of healthy food in the refrigerator. Staff make the meals.
Emergency Supplies		x		
Health Services		x		Peer counseling is provided once a day, individual counseling is weekly, individual family counseling is weekly and based on family need, substance abuse and anger management counseling is weekly. Crisis counseling and conflict resolution counselling provided as needed.

Medications		x		
Recreation (on site)		x		Girls were getting ready for Easter and dying eggs and doing crafts
Outings (off site)		x		As the girls move up to different levels, the trips off site are less restrictive. They have gone to Six Flags amusement park, community events, as well as weekly hikes up the mountain. In addition they just had a major excursion to Monterey bay Aquarium. They won some prize as a result of their cooking that enabled this excursion.
Education & Classrooms				In the past year it was decided that SCOE wouldn't send teachers to this site unless their population stayed above five girls. Therefore since January 2015 the girls have attended various local schools. At Maria Carrillo there have been issues for some of the girls because of too much freedom such that they had to change to a non-public school. In addition, Laurel has struggled with getting the proper attention by administrators of Maria Carrillo in providing IEPs on a timely basis. The non-public school they are using is Pivot Charter which is self-paced and only goes from 9:00-12:00. They sit in separate cubicles and go as fast or slow as the child is motivated.  In addition and given the need, Laurel has begun regular onsite NA meetings. She also ensures the culinary classes happen; there is Life Skills every Thursday night and sex education weekly.
Mail/Phone		x		There is a phone that they are allowed calls to family for 15 minutes. As the higher good behavior levels are reached, the girls have more time on the phone.
Discipline		x		
Library		x		Shelf of novels and books for the girls

**ADDITIONAL NOTES**

The grounds and living environment seem very nice. The house feels like a home, with comfortable rooms and bedrooms. The girls we talked with really liked being there and said it was the best place they had ever been.

The program is phase-based and designed to turn girls around rather than simply house them. They place a strong emphasis on behavior modification using a color coded system. The colors represent a resident's current level of behavior, responsibility and privileges. It is designed to enhance self-esteem, responsibility and motivate residents to move to a different color status offering increased privileges and autonomy. Girls stay an average of 6-9 months before graduation and they get discharge plans set up on day one.

The Sierra Girls Center is not a locked facility, the girls can walk out if they want to but that would be a violation of their probation. In the past year they have had two girls run away and not return. They have had many more go AWOL and then be returned by the police.

**Youth Interviews**

TOPICS	O	S	N.I.	Comments
Evaluation of Program		x		
Program Understood		x		
Levels (Privileges)		x		

Grievances		x		The girl who had been there for some time spoke of a girl she didn't feel safe living with. She said this girl threatened herself and the other girls and staff. She believed the staff just ignored the behaviors.
Discipline		x		
Staff Evaluation			x	Even though there was high praise for the therapist and some staff, it appears that the girls sense the staff frustrations and lack of support. They like the director as well, but feel she too, has not enough time to do everything she needs to do.
Health Services		x		
Counseling/Therapy		x		
Chores & Allowance		x		They felt they were "ok."
Laundry		x		
Clothes		x		
Food		x		
Snacks		x		
School		x		One girl is at the public high school, two girls are going to the charter high school with independent learning. They really seem to enjoy having a different school that helps them with lots of personal attention.
Library				NA
Activities & Entertainment		x		There is a local group of women who come to work with the girls in the garden and then with culinary skills. The girls especially seem to like this. They also like the activities that they can do
Money				

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES & SUGGESTIONS BY YOUTH

# of Youth Interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_4\_\_\_\_\_

There was one girl who had been there for 11 months, one for a few weeks, and two were new. One girl received a call from her probation officer and had to leave the same day she arrived. She called the JJC hot line to request a way to stay there after we had spoken to the girls about the way to use the line have a place to speak about unfair treatment. Again, we were struck by how the girls loved being there. One said she intended to stay until she graduated.

#### Inspection Summary

In March 2013 Crossroads began operation of this facility. SGC is a level 12 facility. For the past two years their stated purpose was to rehabilitate repeat teen offenders in the Juvenile Justice system. During our past two visits, one in January, 2015 to discuss education issues with Laynee Kuhn, the supervisor of Laurel Anderson, and then again during this inspection we have heard both administrators say that they intend to place dependent youth at this facility as well. Laurel told us that the issues of teen girls in her experience are very similar whether they are delinquents or dependents. Both of the commissioners are concerned about the direction and believe it could be problematic to combine both girls from Juvenile Hall and possibly girls that have behavioral needs and not probation.

They have told us that part of the reason they are speaking of this change in target population is to maximize the total population in their facility. Currently SGC is licensed for 6 but they have another house on site so with licensing approval they could take 12 youth. The average annual population is 4.5 with a high of 6 and a low of 2.

Today all the population come from Juvenile hall and are serving their time here rather than at the hall. Laurel couldn't tell us what the criteria was at the hall to offer the choice of Sierra. We would like to understand that.

The administrator, Laurel is spread very thin. As we understood it, in addition to her administrator responsibilities, she is the trainer, the de-facto recruiter, the fill-in when employees are late or absent, or simply haven't been hired yet, the educational liaison, the in-take person when that person isn't there, as on the day of our inspection and more. There appears to be little support for both her and the staff. Staff training is minimal and apparently focused more on shadowing than on sets of skills to be learned.

This is a beautiful facility with a lot of potential. With additional support for administration and staff, it could be a wonderful place for girls to learn a different way to be in the world and begin to realize their potential.

**Gina Crozier** \_\_\_\_\_  
Inspection Commissioner

**Next Inspection Recommended: 6 months or Annual Inspection**

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Mary Cone, Chairperson

cc: Honorable Judge of the Sonoma County Superior Court  
Commissioner of the Juvenile Court  
Probation Department, Chief of Probation  
Sonoma County Family Youth & Children's Services  
State of California, Community Care Licensing  
Facility Inspected