



# County of San Diego

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August 3, 2015

**TO:** Kathleen Edwards, Chair  
Juvenile Justice Commission

**FROM:** Nick Macchione, Director  
Health and Human Services

## **RESPONSE TO POLINSKY CHILDREN'S CENTER 2015 INSPECTION REPORT**

Enclosed is the Health and Human Services Agency's response to the 2015 Inspection Report on the A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center provided by the Juvenile Justice Commission.

The Commission's thorough inspection of the A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center and recommendation is greatly appreciated. The Agency has reviewed the recommendations and attached, you will find a detailed response.

Please contact Edward Cadena, Interim Deputy Director, A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center, at (858) 874-1054 if you have any questions concerning this report.



**NICK MACCHIONE**  
Director

NM/cp  
Attachment

**c:** Debra Zanders-Willis, Director, Child Welfare Services  
Edward Cadena, Interim Deputy Director, Polinsky Children's Center

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**



**A.B. AND JESSIE POLINSKY CHILDREN'S CENTER**

**RESPONSE TO**

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION**

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**July 23, 2015**

# Response to Juvenile Justice Commission Inspection Report 2015

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center (PCC) 2015 Inspection report includes a thorough review of the conditions and operations of PCC with a focus on 1) Facility Background; 2) Administration/Management; 3) Security and Control; 4) Discipline Model; 5) Hospitalization, Assault and AWOL History; 6) Training, Personnel, and Management; 7) Classification and Segregation; 8) Counseling and Casework Services; 9) Grievances, Reporting Incidents and Staff Misconduct; 10) Programs and Activities; 11) Health Services; 12) Meal Service; 13) Sanitation; 14) Transition Plan; and 15) Behavioral Health.

The annual report provides an in-depth analysis of PCC's operations, along with a recommendation for system enhancement. The Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) appreciates the continuing efforts of the Juvenile Justice Commission to improve the overall operations and administration of PCC. PCC staff strives to implement the Juvenile Justice Commission's recommendations whenever possible. The recommendations from the Juvenile Justice Commission's most recent inspection have been reviewed; the following responses address these recommendations.

## **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Recommendation #1:***

Consider a change in the education program by switching the responsibility from the San Diego Unified School District to the San Diego County Office of Education, the agency responsible for education at all other juvenile facilities (including San Pasqual Academy and the Monarch School). An effort should be made during this transition to more fully utilize education resources so that during the school day, there are not four or five staff doing relatively little while the students are transported off campus to their home schools. It should be noted that in the past, the responsibility for Education at PCC did rest with the County Office of Education.

### ***Response #1***

The Polinsky Children's School lies within the jurisdiction of the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD); therefore, SDUSD has oversight of the onsite education at PCC. Only SDUSD may transfer responsibility to another entity (such as the County Office of Education). If appropriate, children are transported to their school of origin, or they may attend nearby public schools within the San Diego Unified School District. Transporting children to their school of origin assists them in maintaining connections and helps ensure their educational success.

### ***Recommendation #2***

Consider a more regular presence on campus by the San Diego Police and a training model including law enforcement components to attempt to reduce the number of AWOL's at PCC. Instead of requesting that the police remove youth to Juvenile Hall or to the psychiatric hospital, the community policing model would be added to PCC for solutions on-site. Thus, if police officers remain on-site for extended periods, they should consider locking up their weapons in a gun locker on PCC premises.

# Response to Juvenile Justice Commission Inspection Report 2015

## ***Response #2***

To best create a positive relationship between law enforcement and the children at PCC, a strong collaborative relationship with the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) has been established. PCC and SDPD meet monthly and as needed, and both participate in the Alternatives to Detention Task force to prevent youth from having contact with the juvenile delinquency system. In addition, SDPD officers visit PCC weekly to answer any questions or address concerns the children may have. PCC defers to SDPD on their policy regarding wearing and/or storing weapons.

The law enforcement psychiatric emergency response team (PERT) is called in the event of a crisis. They decide, based on their assessment, the level of action required (i.e. juvenile hall).

## ***Recommendation #3***

During the past two years, a private contractor, the Fred Finch Youth Center (FFYC), has essentially taken over all mental health services from the County of San Diego. However, FFYC personnel are housed off-site with some space in a trailer on the grounds. If more youth spend mornings and early afternoons on campus, FFYC needs to be permanently on-site. It appears that FFYC staff are now on-site primarily in the late afternoons. The JJC was not able to observe the interaction with FFYC staff and youth (particularly the 12 youth on psychotropic drugs). Although there is a team approach and it appears the FFYC participate fully, the number of unlicensed mental health staff at FFYC is almost double the number of licensed staff. It is noted that FFYC staff do not prepare or participate in writing the Special Incident Reports so that it is likely that instances of threatened suicide or suicidal ideation are not reported. This could be corrected if FFYC staff were able to write and have access to official reports. In the other Juvenile institutions, the Probation Department gives access to its Critical Incident Reports to all Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) personnel.

## ***Response #3***

The Fred Finch Youth Center (FFYC), a contractor with the County of San Diego, provides mental health services at PCC. There are six permanent, on site workstations at PCC for Fred Finch staff to provide direct services to children at PCC. There are five licensed mental health Fred Finch staff. The remaining six staff are license eligible and registered, as required, with the State Board of Behavioral Sciences. These six staff are overseen by one of the five licensed Fred Finch staff. Additionally, per Title 22 regulations, Special Incident Reports are the responsibility of PCC, the licensee. They will not be written by non-PCC staff.

## ***Recommendation #4***

The use of restraints under the Professional Assault Crisis Training (Pro-ACT) procedure seems to be the subject of many Special Incident Reports. The methodology of possibly using four staff members to restrain each of a child's limbs seems extreme. If there is a statistical analysis of how many times this Pro-ACT measure is used (and if any injuries occurred), this would be helpful. Besides verbal therapy and psychotropic medication, what other methods are available? Note: No pepper spray is used at PCC.

# Response to Juvenile Justice Commission Inspection Report 2015

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## ***Response #4***

Pro-ACT is a systematic approach for intervention during incidents in which a youth presents a threat of danger to him or herself or others. Prior to utilizing the restraint component of Pro-ACT, crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques are implemented. PCC tracks, monitors, and analyzes all restraint data and ensures that all PCC staff who participate in restraints are Pro-ACT certified.

## ***Recommendation #5***

FFYC has now taken over all responsibilities of the STAT (Stabilization Treatment and Transition) team. Thus, FFYC staff should be trained in Pro-ACT and PATA (the Polinsky Active Teaching Approach) as well as in writing and reviewing Special Incident Reports. This is necessary for the best functioning of the treatment team.

## ***Response #5***

PCC agrees with the recommendation that an overview in Pro-ACT and PATA for FFYC staff would better support the children and staff of PCC. PCC will provide a Pro-ACT and PATA overview to all Fred Finch staff.