

San Diego County Juvenile Justice Commission Inspection Worksheet

Youth Transition Campus	
Facility Address: 2861 Meadow Lark Drive San Diego, CA 92123	Date of Inspection: June 1, 2022
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The San Diego County Juvenile Justice Commission is a state-mandated, court-appointed citizens' commission. Its purpose is to inquire into the administration of juvenile court law in San Diego County, to provide leadership for citizen action and to promote an effective juvenile justice system operated in an environment of credibility, dignity, fairness and respect for the youth of San Diego County.

I. Executive Summary

A. Institution Overview

This year's inspection for San Diego County Probation Juvenile Facilities was modified compared to previous years. The Probation Department has had a number of changes to its facilities in Calendar Years 2021 and 2022. Movement of youth occurred from facility to facility due to the closure of Kearny Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility and opening of the Youth Transition Campus (YTC).

The YTC facility was toured by the Commission June 1, 2022. It has a bed capacity of 96 and 70 youth were at the facility on the day of the tour. There were 65 males and 5 female youth. Thirty-one (31) males were committed to the Healing Opportunities for Personal Empowerment (HOPE) program. This program was developed in place of the Youthful Offender Unit (YOU) that was previously housed at the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility. The YTC had thirty-four males that were committed to the Urban Camp program. There was one female committed to YOU program and four females committed to the Girls' Urban Camp. It was disappointing that the HOPE program replaced YOU for male youth and not female youth. Female youth are often not provided same or similar services as the male youth. The contract for behavioral health services identifies the East Mesa YOU population which leaves the girls behind.

The YTC is a beautiful campus that has eight cottages (12 beds each) dedicated as living quarters for the youth. Each room has a toilet and sink, a desk and chair. There is a platform bed that has a six-inch mattress. Doors to the rooms remain unlocked and open until bed time at 9 pm. There is a large day room where activities can take place that has a television and ping pong table. Each cottage has a laundry area. The youth are responsible for washing their own laundry. There are two free phones for youth to use. Staff dial the phone numbers to ensure they are not calling anyone they are not authorized to call (i.e., a victim). A mental health clinician and a probation supervisor office is in the unit which allows better access for youth to mental health services and probation supervisors. Cottages are designed to house male or female populations. They do not mix male and female youth. For transgender youth they take into consideration the youth's input as to what cottage (male or female) they would feel safe in.

The campus has a spacious commons (kitchen) area for the youth to eat their meals. They are given 20 minutes to eat and can converse at their own table for 30 minutes after finishing their meal. Meals are hot and served to youth cafeteria style. Youth do not work in the kitchen as of this inspection but there is a plan to eventually have them work in the kitchen as part of the culinary education. Probation has a contract with Summit to provide the meals for the youth. Special diets are provided by court order.

A visitation area that holds 130-140 people is on the campus. It is an open visitation area with 12 individual rooms for private conversations and a room that is dedicated for visits of committed youth who are parents. There are toys and enough room for activities between the

parent and child. Some younger siblings are permitted to use this room with committed youth. Visitation is by hours are from 8 am to 4:30 pm on weekends, anytime on weekdays and professional visits are from 8 am to 4 pm. All visits are by appointment. For families that cannot come to the facility they have virtual visitation by appointment. Included on the visit approval list are parents/guardians, positive role model, family members and others approved by the casework probation officer.

The intake area has a body scanner. When a person has the body scan performed the officer conducting the scan is of the same sex. Transgender and gender non-conforming youth are asked which gender they prefer to be searched by. The body scan is a tool used to help stop contraband such as narcotics, food, pills, metal and plastic items from coming into the facility.

School is provided by San Diego County Office of Education. They do not mix the male and female population as of this inspection. In the past youth would attend school in one classroom all day. At the YTC youth now attend school based upon subject which is more in line with the traditional high school. This adds a layer for the youth transition into their regular school when they return to their communities. The CTE classrooms are large and contain the equipment needed for learning a trade. They have a woodshop, culinary, and graphic arts. There is a coffee cart program that will be implemented later in the year. This is designed to assist them in barista training as well as small business. Youth are rotated through the programs so all eligible youth have a chance to learn and grow from the experience.

There is a large outside area in the middle of the campus. There were basketball courts and a large enough area within the basketball courts for other recreational activities. Frisbees and volley ball is also something the youth like to engage in. They have held volleyball tournaments. Workout equipment such as ropes and sandbag weights are available to the youth. There is also an indoor exercise room with gym equipment and an indoor gym where youth can play basketball and other sports indoors when there is inclement weather. Within the next few months, the program will include professional outside assistance in working with the youth in regards to physical activities. In an area near the back entrance of the indoor gym were raised plant beds where the female cottage was working on.

The programs at YTC for youth are currently under development. Recently there was a visit from Abe Cruz, Forever Faith Tour with lived experience, who provided a program to the youth in a cottage. Though it is not a regular re-occurring event he offered mentoring to the youth and this is an area Probation is willing to explore for regular mentoring opportunities as well as other credible messengers. Ongoing programs include:

- Anger Replacement Therapy;
- CSEC-My Life;
- Project Aware (gang intervention and restorative practices);
- David Harp program;
- My Choice program for females at risk or involved in CSEC behaviors;
- ADPS staff work with youth with substance abuse issues based on assessment.

Future plans include taking residents to the La Jolla Playhouse for a daily week-long program on theatre and design production. During informal discussions with youth, they like the facility but desire more programs and positive interaction with staff in building positive relationship.

It is important to provide reentry programs for youth that help them successfully transition back into the community, that focus on education, workforce development, entrepreneurship. There are probation officers that are assigned as transition officers who help coordinate a case plan development for reentry transition to the community. The case plan is provided to the court, attorneys and case work probation officer at the youth's court hearing. This is an area still under development but appears to be for the HOPE (male) youth only. This should be incorporated facility wide and made available to all youth.

Mental health clinicians have offices in each of the cottages where they can privately meet with youth. Although assigned to a cottage they will go to other cottages and provide services to youth if needed. The hours of operation are generally 7 am to 10 pm during the week. On weekends there is one clinician available for the entire facility.

In order for the youth to have a voice there is a Youth Action Council (YAC) where the youth are selected by staff in each cottage to participate in monthly discussions with staff on a monthly basis. The youth take it seriously and come prepared to have their voice heard while representing their peers in the cottage. Some youths are BMS-Leaders and serve in capacities such as greeting new youth to the program and serving as a mentor for them. They may also be involved in YAC. Probation is exploring having the youth vote on who attends YAC as their representative.

To increase relationship building between youth and staff the Probation Department has implemented MANDT training. The leadership team has attended training and plans are in place for staff to attend fiscal year 2022-2023. The first session is about building relationships with youth.

B. Commission Comments and Recommendations

Acknowledging the facility is new there are areas that have been identified for the Commission to make recommendations. The Juvenile Justice Commission recommends:

1. Probation to ensure all staff are trained in MANDT in order to build positive relationships with youth;
2. Probation to implement additional programs to youth based on their individual needs;
3. Probation to implement programs for youth that focus on positive youth development, and social and community engagement;
4. Probation to continue to explore and implement programs for youth that include mentors, and individuals with lived experience;
5. As Probation builds in the new behavior system, provide opportunities for youth to have leadership opportunities, so they can develop leadership skills;
6. Probation allow youth to choose their YAC representative.