



San Diego County Probation Department

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Tamika Nelson, Chief Probation Officer

June 5, 2024

Maya De La Torre
Juvenile Justice Commission Chair
2901 Meadow Lark Drive
San Diego, CA 92123

RESPONSE TO THE 2023 JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION (JJC) FACILITY INSPECTION REPORT FOR THE EAST MESA JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY

Dear Commissioner De La Torre,

We are in receipt of the Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) 2023 Facility Inspection Report for the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility. Below, please find the San Diego County Probation Department responses to the JJC Recommendations as it pertains to the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility.

ADMINISTRATION:

RECOMMENDATION #1: Investigate the areas mentioned in the Family Grievance section of this report and provide the JJC with its findings and resolutions.

RESPONSE #1: The Probation Department appreciates the JJC bringing these grievances and complaints to our attention; we will investigate to the extent we have enough information and will address these issues as may be warranted. Following the JJC's efforts to connect families with Department leadership, facility leadership has been meeting regularly with the parents and addressing their concerns directly. Parents may also file grievances directly with the Probation Department without fear of retaliation at psg.probation@sdcounty.ca.gov.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Provide important information to parents and guardians, through a Family Handbook.

- a. Publicly distribute external agency information (phone numbers, addresses, emails) to parents/guardians if they wish to make a complaint.

RESPONSE #2: Parents are provided with a handbook that outlines all parental rights while the youths are in our custody. The handbook provides youth and family rights, Court process information, the role of Probation, supportive services information, Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) information, and information needed to voice concerns or complaints (grievances).

- a. The contact to make a direct complaint is: psg.probation@sdcounty.ca.gov.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Open communication with families and facility management.

RESPONSE #3: Facility leadership has instituted a monthly parent meeting to directly address concerns, issues, and complaints on a regular ongoing basis. These meetings are held in the community during the evening hours to allow enhanced access to attendees.

RECOMMENDATION #4: Provide youth with written and anonymous feedback forms for youth to document their recommendations/concerns.

RESPONSE #4: Currently, in each housing unit at the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility there is a process for youth to provide anonymous feedback, recommendations, and/or concerns to facility staff. This process includes a box where youth can submit/report their anonymous feedback, recommendations, and/or concerns. These boxes are checked nightly by Supervisory personnel for follow-up.

RECOMMENDATION #5: Improve training of staff in the area of autism.

RESPONSE #5: Current Juvenile Institutions CORE training curriculum teaches staff how to interact with youth with developmental delays, including autism. In addition, the department is in the process of securing a new provider that will facilitate a stand-alone autism training course for probation officers.

RECOMMENDATION #6: Administer cultural competency trainings based on facility's youth ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

RESPONSE #6: The department currently offers over 21 hours of curriculum which addresses cultural diversity and cultural competency. These courses are available to new and existing staff and can be taken as part of the 24 hours of mandated annual training hours.

RECOMMENDATION #7: Consider shadowing staff performing their duties to ensure compliance with code of conduct and standards with youth's safety as priority.

RESPONSE #7: The department has developed and implemented a comprehensive and robust training curriculum for all new officers assigned to the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility. This training curriculum includes 84 hours of direct "shadow" training, followed by 3 weeks of phase training which includes weekly check-ins with an officer at the Senior or Supervisory level. In addition, Supervisor and Senior Probation Officers have been tasked with providing enhanced direct oversight of unit operations. This has resulted in Supervisors and Senior Probation Officers spending more time in housing units and providing more mentoring and guidance for new officers.

RECOMMENDATION #8: Ensure youth are safe by re-evaluating the use of the vent-type above the toilet area in youth rooms.

RESPONSE #8: Verified with the County of San Diego's Department of General Services and the contractor that the vent in use is designed for suicide prevention.

RECOMMENDATION #9: Ensure age-appropriate activities/services so there is not "one-size fits all" activities and services.

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RESPONSE #9: The East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility provides a variety of programs to a wide range of youth that we serve. Programs are matched to youth based on a variety of factors, including age, risk, needs, and appropriateness. The department continues to seek out new providers and programs to enhance these services.

RECOMMENDATION #10: Probation should follow through on changes to calorie intake based on youth needs.

RESPONSE #10: The calorie changes are in place for the Youth Development Academy units. However, the calories provided were already adequate for up to age 25 based on the national caloric guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION #11: Probation ensure youth are provided every opportunity possible to eat in common area.

RESPONSE #11: Probation staff prioritizes youth spending time outside of their rooms, to include during meals.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the April 27, 2023, Juvenile Justice Commission Facility Inspection Report for the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility.

Very respectfully,



TAMIKA NELSON
Chief Probation Officer

cc: Denise Huffhines, Assistant Chief
David Joralemon, Deputy Chief of Institutional Services
Brandon Abriel & Chris Flores, Division Chiefs, East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility