



# San Diego County Probation Department

Post Office Box 23597 • San Diego, California 92193-3597  
www.sandiegocounty.gov/probation



---

*Adolfo Gonzales, Chief Probation Officer*

September 28, 2018

Dr. Amy Lansing  
Juvenile Justice Commission Chair  
2901 Meadow Lark Drive  
San Diego, CA 92123

## **Response to the 2018 Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) Facility Inspection Report for the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility (EMJDF)**

Dear Dr. Lansing,

We are in receipt of the Juvenile Justice Commission 2018 Facility Inspection Report for East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility. Below, please find the San Diego County Probation Department responses to the JJC Recommendations as it pertains to East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility.

### **RECOMMENDATION #1:** Designate Staff for Programming and Field Trips.

The JJC recommends adding staff who are designated to assist with programming and additional field trips. Having this designated staff would allow EMJDF to enhance the opportunities for long-term YOU youth and others to participate in programming in the facility and plan additional field trips in the community.

**RESPONSE #1:** It is anticipated that in January 2019, Institutional Services will be restructuring staff schedules to 12-hour shifts. This will create more staff coverage during peak waking hours which will allow more latitude for staff and youth to participate in off-site events and opportunities.

**RECOMMENDATION #2:** The increase of staff would also increase the ratio of staff to minors and give EMJDF a stronger ability to continue the goal to reduce/eliminate the use of OC spray. If the elimination of OC spray is the goal, then there needs to be support added to replace that tool. In this case, increasing the ratio of staff to minors so that there could be more positive interaction between staff and minors would be logical as it would allow for CDPO and minors the opportunity to build rapport and respect which would increase the likelihood that minors would more be responsive to the CDPO's verbal commands hence lowering the need for OC.

**RESPONSE #2:** The department continues to review and evaluate the need for OC in institutions; however, OC spray remains one option available to break up fights and assaults, and is used only when other options are ineffective or would be unsafe.

Additionally, the department is working with the team from the Youth in Custody Practice Model to sustainably transition our model to one based on positive youth development. It is anticipated that in January 2019, Institutional Services will be transitioning our staff to a 12-hour shift schedule. With this anticipated change, the staff to youth ratio will be increased within each unit at all facilities while providing additional staff coverage for youth engagement, staff training and relief. Staff will also be assigned to teams, working the same schedule as their direct supervisor, for better supervision and improved fidelity as we continue to transition to a positive youth development model within all of our institutions.

**RECOMMENDATION #3:** Continue developing of a softer more nurturing environment by continuing to engage the minor's talent in art with painting murals and replacing the institutional furniture.

**RESPONSE #3:** EMJDF has been utilizing Career Technical Education to develop softer more nurturing environments in our living units through mural painting. We have recently dedicated a staff member to full time Career Technical Education and will seek new opportunities to beautify the facility. Additionally, one unit was recently outfitted with new, more home-like furniture.

**RECOMMENDATION #4:** Continue with field trips and organized activities with the minors.

**RESPONSE #4:** Within the last four months, EMJDF has dedicated one of its supervisors to identify, coordinate and participate in various community events for EMJDF youth.

**RECOMMENDATION #5:** Continue to increase opportunities for educational programs for the youth.

**RESPONSE #5:** EMJDF will continue to work collaboratively with our partners to provide educational programming to our youth.

**RECOMMENDATION #6:** The JJC recommends that the food services at EMJDF be altered to utilize the new on-site preparation and that youth be able to participate in serving food as part of credit for culinary arts class.

**RESPONSE #6:** Over the last year, Probation has worked closely with the Sheriff, community advocates like the Children's Initiative, and the youth we serve in our facilities to continually improve our food service. This includes changes to the menu based on input from a survey of the youth, increased portion sizes, fruit bowls in each unit for fresh snacks throughout the day, additional condiments and spices for the food, an additional snack time, and expanded special holiday meals for youth and their families.

Presently, most Probation Department meals are prepared offsite, frozen, and reheated in Probation kitchens. Earlier this year, Probation and General Services began renovating the kitchens at Kearny Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility and East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility to transition our model to on-site, freshly prepared meals for youth. Kitchen improvements at East Mesa's renovation will be completed by the end of October. Once completed and fully operational, the on-site meals will further improve quality and provide additional culinary arts opportunities for youth in custody. It should be noted, the prepared meals will be cooked and served fresh daily.

The Probation Department understands the importance of nutrition in supporting positive physical and psychological development and that proper nutrition can improve outcomes in

education, increase responsiveness to rehabilitative programming, and reduce violent behavior. To that end, we have and will continue to work closely with our partners to improve the quality and appeal of the meals served to youth in our care.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Juvenile Justice Commission 2018 Facility Inspection Report for the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility.

Very respectfully,



ADOLFO GONZALES  
CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER  
SAN DIEGO COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT

CC: Rueben Littlejohn, Assistant Chief Probation Officer  
Scott Huizar, Deputy Chief of Institutional Services  
Mindy McCartney, Division Chief, East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility  
AG:mm