



# San Diego County Probation Department

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*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 Kearny Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility (KMJDF)**

Dear Dr. Lansing:

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

**RECOMMENDATION #1:** The JJC recognizes that the current facilities have structural limitations with regards to the kitchen designs, garden placements, and recreational areas but strongly recommend that these issues are proactively taken into consideration when designing the layout and amenities available at the new campus.

Important considerations should include:

- a. shared garden areas (not limited to access to only girls or boys);
- b. dining and classroom options for gender integrated activities for appropriate youth (based on age or other considerations). The San Diego County Office of Education could use a model like the coed. class instruction facilitated at San Pasqual Academy;
- c. open recreational spaces;
- d. improved meal plans that incorporate healthy foods that are not degraded by re-heating;
- e. kitchen facilities that permit actual cooking, rather than limited (e.g., reheating) functions in order to facilitate culinary art training, dining and hospitality training; and
- f. continue to expand the Career Technical Education (CTE) options available to youth (e.g. horticulture, media arts).

**RESPONSE #1:** The County of San Diego expects to break ground on the first phase of the Kearny Mesa Master Plan in the summer of 2019. It is currently expected that all of the above recommendations will be addressed as plans move forward on the overall Juvenile Justice Campus. However, as we await completion of the first phase, there are also plans to expand horticulture areas and opportunities for youth at the current Kearny Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility and Urban Camp.

While the new Juvenile Justice Campus is expected to improve the kitchen facilities and overall appeal of the food served, Probation is not waiting to address food quality. 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 kitchen at Kearny Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility to transition our model to on-site, freshly prepared meals for youth. Kitchen improvements at Kearny Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility will be completed later this month. 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.

**RECOMMENDATION #2:** The JJC continues to recommend the use of gold-standard, evidenced based practices, implemented with regards to fidelity and oversight over contracted services.

**RESPONSE #2:** Existing programs are reevaluated as part of the contract cycle and Probation continues to identify and explore options to enhance evidence based programming. Additionally, our partnership with the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform under the Youth in Custody Practice Model technical assistance program is expected to result in additional evidence based programming recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATION #3:** The JJC continues to recommend the use of gold-standard Trauma Informed Practices training for all staff, and the use of these practices with all youth.

**RESPONSE #3:** The San Diego Probation Department continues to provide training to officers who are assigned to specialized units that incorporate trauma informed care practices. Our ultimate goal is to provide Trauma Informed Care training to all officers assigned to institutions and Probation will continue to explore opportunities to enhance and expand training opportunities for staff that will have positive impacts with the youth in our care.

**RECOMMENDATION #4:** The JJC continues to recommend that OC spray be minimally used (as trends are indicating) or essentially eliminated, with other more appropriate training and tools provided to the staff as a replacement.

**RESPONSE #4:** 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 #5:** Specific considerations for Kearny Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility include:

- a. The Juvenile Justice Commission recommends that 2016 Recommendation #5 be implemented with follow-up from facility management to ensure staff compliance with documentation.

**RESPONSE:** Probation will work with Behavioral Health Services to determine needs of the youth are addressed. Probation will ensure the reporting of incidents is completed when required. Probation will use staff briefings to emphasize the importance of including documentation when the STAT Team is involved in incidents.

- b. The Juvenile Justice Commission recognizes that lower youth to staff ratios will provide more opportunity for staff interaction with youth and will provide additional oversight for youth safety. The Juvenile Justice Commission recommends the Probation Department adopt, at a minimum, the PREA standard ratio of eight youth to one staff (8:1) daytime and sixteen youth to one staff (16:1) at night to better serve the youth in custody.

**RESPONSE:** It is anticipated that in January 2019, Institutional Services will be transitioning our staff to a 12-hour shift schedule. With the anticipated change, the staff to youth ratio will be increased to achieve 24-hour PREA compliance within each unit. This will also allow additional staff coverage for youth engagement, staff training, and relief.

- c. The Juvenile Justice Commission recommends Probation decrease the amount of staff vacancies.

**RESPONSE:** Probation has taken action to reduce the amount of vacancies and has implemented a process to mitigate future vacancies.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Juvenile Justice Commission 2018 Facility Inspection Report for Kearny 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

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