

AUG 28 2009

# SONOMA COUNTY

## PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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*L. Ochs*

August 28, 2009

TO: Honorable Gary Nadler, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
FROM: Robert M. Ochs, Chief Probation Officer *LMO*  
SUBJECT: Probation Department's Response to 2008-09 Grand Jury Report

GRAND JURY  
SEP 26 2009  
RECEIVED

### Findings

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**F-3** The Probation Camp has a full time chef who prepares food for the boys, and teaches culinary skills. At SYC the girls prepare their own breakfast and receive their other meals from the Juvenile Justice Center food services.

*Response: We agree with this finding.*

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**F-6** After extensive review of financial records, the Grand Jury did not receive an adequate explanation as to why there is such a disparity in programs between the two youth facilities, given the apparent parity in funding.

*Response: We cannot agree or disagree with this finding.*

*The Probation Department provided full disclosure on budgets, accounting, staffing, and programs. Every question, written and verbal, was answered thoroughly, based on the best available information. It is not clear what the Grand Jury believes was inadequately explained, as this was never stated to us by members of the Grand Jury. Should the Grand Jury have additional questions, these would be answered to the best of our ability.*

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- Jail Services  
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(707) 578-6042  
FAX (707) 542-8214
- Jail Alternatives  
1000 Coddington Ctr  
Suite 102  
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(707) 565-8280  
FAX (707) 565-8294
- Juvenile Probation Services  
7425 Rancho Los Guillicos Rd  
Dept. B  
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(707) 565-6229  
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- Juvenile Hall  
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- Supervised Adult Crews  
300 Fiscal Drive  
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- Probation Camp  
7400 Steve Olson Lane  
Forestville, CA 95436  
(707) 565-8900
- Administrative Services  
P O Box 11719  
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(707) 565-2149
- Sierra Youth Center  
Juvenile Weekend Crew  
538 Eliza Way  
Santa Rosa, CA 95409

## Recommendations

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**R-1** The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors should take all necessary steps to retain the program at SYC, even if budget cuts are required for the Probation Department. SYC must be allowed and given appropriate time to fully develop into a gender-responsive program, and prove its true benefit to our communities.

*Response: The recommendation has been implemented for Fiscal Year 2009/2010.*

*The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors has been supportive of SYC, both this year, and in years past. The Probation Department's budget for FY 09-10 contains adequate funds to maintain SYC. Some cuts may occur, but the extent remains unclear, as the County is negotiating with employee associations over cost-savings mechanisms that, if agreed to, would maintain programming and capacity.*

*In future years, assuming the County's budget development process remains as it has been, the Probation Department will make recommendations for budget expenditures in order to meet funding limits, and the Board of Supervisors will necessarily prioritize SYC along with every other County program.*

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**R-2** The Probation Department should enhance existing programs at SYC, and expand them to include certified vocational programs. It should develop and/or make available trainings comparable to those offered to the boys at Probation Camp, including a Culinary Arts Program. This can be done by bringing a chef back to SYC, which will provide vocational training and offer a positive role model.

*Response: The recommendation will be partially implemented.*

*SYC and the Probation Camp are different facilities, serving different youth. The Probation Camp has over 50 years of history, and has acquired property and facilities that allow for the rich vocational programs that now exist. These could not be created in today's economic climate, and the County does not currently have the resources to create this level of programming for SYC. Additionally, boys at the Camp are generally 16 to 18 years old, being prepared for emancipation; many of the girls at SYC are younger, and the focus is on family reunification. Indeed, SYC was transformed into a gender-specific program in large part due to the different needs of boys and girls.*

*In 2005, the Probation Department contracted with Dr. Barbara Bloom, a nationally recognized criminal justice consultant and Sonoma State University Associate Professor, to evaluate SYC's programs and services. Dr. Bloom referenced the distinct gender*

*differences in pathways to crime, and that girls have distinct needs from boys. She stated, "Girls entering the juvenile justice system often find themselves placed in programs that were created for delinquent boys due to the fact that the juvenile justice system has been designed to deal with the problems of boys and young men and, in doing so, has neglected the gender-specific programming and treatment needs of girls and young women." She goes on to say, "At their stage of development, it is often the case that the girls need to focus on breaking the cycle of abuse, trauma and exploitation."*

*That is not to say that access to vocational experiences and opportunities is not critical. This has been, and will continue to be, an important part of the SYC program, and, based on individual needs and preferences, SYC has created many different and individual vocational programs for its girls.*

*In addition, the following efforts have been made to strengthen vocational components of the Sierra Youth Center:*

- The Garden Project is a newly added component, and provides an opportunity to encourage career skills development in small business planning, environmental studies, and health and nutrition. All SYC residents participate in this project for their entire stay in the program. Residents are involved in every aspect of the garden, starting with planning, continuing through to harvesting, and utilizing that which has been harvested. The girls participate in soil preparation, seed germination, planting, installation of the watering system, maintenance of the garden, harvesting, composting, product marketing, etc. There are several organizations supporting and sustaining this project, including the Luther Burbank Garden Project, Santa Rosa Men's Garden Club, Valley of the Moon Rotary Club, Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE), and the Public Defenders' office.*
- Sierra has enlisted Lisa Maldonado, Executive Director of the North Bay Labor Council, for the Sierra Advisory Committee. With Ms. Maldonado's assistance, apprenticeships with building trades and labor unions are currently being explored.*
- The Assistance Dog Institute program offers a Certificate of Participation to residents who enroll in the dog-training program for the duration of their stay at Sierra. In addition to the specific skill of training dogs, this experience helps girls gain work readiness skills, such as applying and interviewing for jobs, and development of patience and other attitudes and values necessary for workplace success.*
- Sierra, with the assistance of Advisory Committee members, is exploring apprenticeship opportunities in the health care industry through Kaiser. A recent meeting indicated there are opportunities for paid internships and job shadowing, in areas tailored to girls' specific interests.*
- SYC reached out to the Regional Occupational Program (ROP) at SCOE to discuss the possibility of implementing vocational services. ROP agreed to implement two certification programs in the fall of 2009, for Animal Science, and Landscaping Maintenance certificates. Unfortunately due to cuts within SCOE's*

*budget, these two certificate programs were eliminated. SCOE, however, does provide a Work-Ready Certificate, which confirms that students have the entry-level workplace skills that employers require. Through this certification process, SYC residents learn key skills, attitudes and values that are essential for success in the workplace. A computer literacy component is also part of this certification.*

- *The Probation Department is exploring the idea of bringing the Probation Camp chef to Sierra one day per week, to provide culinary education and training to SYC residents. In addition, with the assistance of Advisory Committee members and the Valley of the Moon Rotary Club, a grant proposal was submitted to a local winery, requesting the assistance of a chef to teach culinary skills.*
- *SYC administration recently met with representatives of a local organization interested in Sierra's vocational needs. These representatives are considering recommending to their Board of Directors that they fund a chef for SYC.*

*Ultimately, SYC is a relatively new program, and it is anticipated it will continue to develop and improve programming and services. SYC cannot be compared or modeled after the long established programs and activities provided at the Camp. Additionally, the County is currently under contract with a criminal justice consultant to evaluate the juvenile system and make recommendations for improvements. This study will be presented to the Board of Supervisors in the Fall of 2009.*

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**R-3** Until a new facility for SYC can be realized, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors should make all necessary upgrades to the existing physical location to enhance the therapeutic environment. The following improvements are needed immediately:

- **Furnish and install an Intercom system**
- **Furnish and install indoor and outdoor cameras**
- **Repair the existing access road to SYC**

OK

**Response:** This recommendation will be implemented based upon available resources and in light of other priorities.

*While implementation of these specific recommendations might be helpful, these proposals were not generated by the Department; rather, members of the Grand Jury asked the SYC Director if SYC could use cameras, and an intercom system. Estimates for the recommended improvements have been requested and while the costs may not be prohibitive, it still represents additional funding above normal operations and which, in light of reduced resources, will need to be prioritized against other competing projects.*

*In terms of the access road repair, further evaluation would be required to determine whether storm water management and accessibility issues need to be addressed. The*

*Probation Department will evaluate its financial situation, and consider recommending to the CAO and the Board that this work be undertaken this fiscal year.*

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**R-4** The Probation Department should establish and secure the necessary space requirements for conducting all programs, so that SYC staff does not have to search out available space/rooms, move equipment and supplies, nor rearrange schedules. Similar Type One fire-resistive reinforced concrete construction, now being occupied by SYC, exists nearby and can be re-occupied as I-3 Occupancy under the Uniform Building Code.

*Response: This Recommendation has been partially implemented.*

*Current SYC programming occurs on a regular basis in the following spaces:*

- *School building—the main classroom for the SYC residents. Used for Work-Ready certification program, parenting education groups, some Girl Scouts trainings, and drug and alcohol groups.*
- *Tahoe building – used for Assistance Dog Institute training.*
- *Old Juvenile Hall Gym—used for recreation, and Physical Education.*

*The following spaces are currently used by SYC, but consistency and continuity is a concern:*

- *Old LG community school building—currently used to conduct Girls' Circle, provide art therapy, and some workshops related to Work-Ready certification.*
- *Kitchen area in Tahoe building—used for the mural project.*
- *Training classroom D—used for Yoga classes twice a week.*

*This recommendation mentions a nearby, existing Type One fire-resistive reinforced concrete building that can be re-occupied. If this refers to the Bella Unit of the old Juvenile Hall, this recommendation will not be implemented, as it is not reasonable. The Bella Unit has ADA (American with Disabilities Act) compliance, hazardous materials, and structural problems, and the Department does not possess the resources to make this building suitable for ongoing programming for SYC girls.*

*Full implementation of this recommendation will not be pursued immediately. The Sonoma County's Strategic Plan has directed that all county facilities and sites be evaluated for best use, and the County has begun a Comprehensive Facilities Planning process. Most efficient use of these other buildings, as well as the best location for SYC going forward, would likely come out of this evaluation.*

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**R-5** The Probation Department should be required to explain the expense anomaly between SYC and Probation Camp, given the difference in staff size and

number of juveniles served. Providing transparency will lead to more equitable allocation of resources and adequate funding for SYC.

*Response: This Recommendation has been implemented.*

*As previously indicated, the Department was fully transparent in all its responses to the Grand Jury, and provided full disclosure and the best available information on budgets, accounting, staffing, and programs.*

*In addition, the Department's budget is reviewed by the County Administrator, and approved by the Board of Supervisors each year. For FY 09-10, the budget process began in February, and was adopted by the Board on June 16, 2009.*

*If the Grand Jury has additional questions, these would be answered fully.*

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**R-6 Immediately upon completion of the current Juvenile Justice study, the Probation Department should furnish the Grand Jury with its findings.**

*Response: This recommendation will be implemented.*

*The County has retained the services of David Bennett Consulting, a national expert in evaluating criminal justice systems, to continue the work of the Sonoma County Criminal Justice Master Plan for the adult system. At the recommendation of the County Administrator, and directed by the Board of Supervisors, David Bennett expanded the current adult justice system study to include the needed juvenile study, which was launched in August, 2008.*

*The purpose of the juvenile study is to determine if Sonoma County is maximizing the use of alternatives to detention and whether detention beds are used as a last resort, appropriate to community risk. The results of the study will help determine where Sonoma County can make the best investments to reduce recidivism among the juvenile population, and examine the role of the juvenile justice system in diverting juveniles from future involvement in the adult criminal justice system.*

*The report will help guide the use of SB 81 funding, the measure that precludes some juvenile offenders from being sent to the State Department of Juvenile Justice. It will also provide an update of the juvenile hall population projections to the year 2035, which will help guide future decisions about the need to expand the juvenile hall, or other step-down facilities.*

c: The Board of Supervisors  
Chris Thomas, County Administrator  
Janice Atkinson, County Clerk

Sonoma County Grand Jury Final Report 2008-2009

Response from Probation Department

Dated August 28, 2009

The Probation Dept response was direct and courteous. It said that most of the recommendations in the Grand Jury Report are either already implemented, will be implemented or depend on available funding.

R1. Implemented for current FY. Future years depend on how BOS will prioritize along with all Dept budget requests.

R2. Partial Implementation. It is impossible to follow the Boys programs at SYC but strengthening of programs here are continuing with new added ones. The Garden Project for skills related to small business planning, environmental studies and health and nutrition as well as all the aspects of garden program. A new member of Advisory Comm. Is Exec Director of North Bay Labor. The Assistance dog Inst. offers a certificate Program and a cert. program in health care through Kaiser is being studied. The Chef from Probation Camp may come one day weekly to teach culinary skills. Funding for a Chef at SYC is being looked into.

R3. Intercom, cameras and road repairs will be implemented if additional funding can be found.

R4. Has been partially implemented. The County has begun a Comprehensive Facilities Planning process. This will eventually effect SYC.

R5. Has been implemented.

R6. Will be implemented. The inclusion of Juvenile Study will help guide the use of SB81 funding and projections to determine future needs for expansion or other step-down facilities.