

PROBATION CAMP

Summary

The Sonoma County Grand Jury reviewed the facilities, procedures, and programs at the Sonoma County Probation Camp. Of particular interest were the housing accommodations, adequacy of facilities to meet required needs, and educational and rehabilitative programs provided. The Grand Jury concluded: the sleeping, eating, and bathroom/shower facilities are adequate for the 24 youth in residence; educational and vocational programs offered are impressive; office space is small but adequate; Camp procedures and practices have been revised and strengthened since January 2002; and with its many successful programs, Probation Camp should be enlarged so that more qualified young men can benefit from its opportunities.

Reason For Investigation

A criminal matter of a sexual nature involving a female Camp Supervisor and one of the young men from the Camp was reported in the media after the Grand Jury had commenced its review. It was addressed by local law enforcement and the courts, and is outside the jurisdiction of this Grand Jury.

The Grand Jury visited and reviewed the Probation Camp as part of a routine review of Sonoma County detention facilities. During the review, three citizen complaints were received (two as to a Probation Department administrative action involving the Camp, and one involving a personnel matter at the Camp).

Background

The Sonoma County Probation Camp, located near Forestville, is a 24-bed residential treatment program that provides Court-ordered services to 16-18 year old males. Its Average Daily Population in Fiscal Year 2001-2002 was 24, and the average length of stay was 120 days.

The Camp program is divided into three phases. The first phase is a 24 hour in-residence program. The second phase (Transition Phase) is divided into two parts: T-1 and T-2. In T-1 the minor is allowed to stay home, utilizing a home-based electronic monitoring system, and attends a "Day Program" at Camp. In T-2 the minor is no longer required to attend the "Day Program," but is expected to attend school in the community or be employed full time and is to remain on electronic monitoring. During the third phase (Community Step), the minor is no longer on electronic monitoring but continues to be supervised by a Camp community caseworker and, in most cases, continues to attend family counseling.

After the completion of all three phases, the minor returns to Court for graduation from the program and, in most cases, is released from probation. The Average Daily Population in Fiscal Year 2001-2002 for the Transition Phase was five and the Community Step Phase was three. The Camp also implements the Home Treatment Program in conjunction with Mental Health and

Juvenile Probation, and provides “time-out” overnight stays for certain Home Treatment and intensive supervision youth.

The Camp provides a diversity of education, training, and programs:

- Academic classroom study toward achievement of the GED or high school diploma
- Daily physical education
- Individual, group, and family counseling
- Drug treatment (NA and AA)
- Food service procurement and preparation in a culinary arts program
- Landscape/horticulture training
- Woodworking/metal shop experience in the operation of power tools and equipment
- Welding and electrical training wherein youth may receive competency certificates
- Training and experience toward OSHA-approved forklift driver certification
- Participation in a year-round “Wilderness Experience” program.

Commercial production contract work at the Camp produces wood and metal products for State and local parks, the County Public Works Department, and schools.

The Probation Camp has received the California Youth Authority Award for Creative and Innovative Programs and for continuous outstanding Institutional Service. It also received recognition awards from the California Parole, Probation and Corrections Association, the California Chief Probation Officers’ Association, the Juvenile Justice Commission, the Board of Supervisors, and County Departments.

Investigative Procedures

The Grand Jury:

1. Interviewed the following persons:
 - Chief Probation Officer, Sonoma County Probation Department
 - Juvenile Division Director
 - Division Director (Probation Camp)
 - Representative of the Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission
 - Three Citizen Complainants.
2. Reviewed the following documents:
 - County of Sonoma Budget, Fiscal Year 2001-2002
 - Sonoma County Probation Approval Department, Application For Approval (dated April 26, 2001), of its Comprehensive Multiagency Juvenile Justice Plan for funding under the Schiff-Cardenas Crime Prevention Act of 2000
 - Probation Department memoranda
 - Probation Camp/SAC Organizational Chart, Revised 01/2002
 - Sonoma County Probation Camp Orientation Packet
 - Probation Camp/SAC, pamphlet entitled “45 Years of Change”
 - Probation Camp/SAC, information sheet entitled “Sonoma County Action Corps”
 - Probation Camp HTP/SAC, information sheet entitled “A Measure of Success”
 - Probation Camp/SAC, information sheet entitled “2001 Fact Sheet”

- Probation Camp Pamphlet describing and showing wood and metal products offered
- Probation Department information sheet entitled “2001 Fact Sheet”
- Probation Camp Kitchen Policy and Procedures, March 2000 Updated List of Policy Changes (at Probation Camp), 03/11/02.
- Summary Findings of the Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission Probation Camp Investigation and Meeting, 01/30/02
- Updated List of Policy Changes (at Probation Camp), 03/11/02.

Findings

- F1. The Probation Camp main building houses staff offices and a small conference room in one area. In the larger area there is a staff station which is open to a kitchen and a dormitory style sleeping area (with showers and toilets to the side). The entire facility is well lighted with windows offering pleasant rural views.
- F2. Successful completion of the three-phase step program is required for graduation from the Camp.
- F3. Academic and industry-related skills being taught are designed to enable those who complete the program to re-enter the public school system or to be readily employable in the workplace.
- F4. Vocational and shop training is realistic on a small shop industry level. Products produced and marketed generate income that funds various other activities and acquisitions at the Camp.
- F5. Assignment of qualified youth to Camp is limited due to a maximum capacity of 24.
- F6. Expansion of camp operations is limited due to its 5.23 acre parcel.
- F7. For a period of time until mid-year 2001, Camp Youth Supervisors were allowed to determine some practices at the Camp with little or no management oversight. In March 2002, the Division Director issued new policy guidelines for Youth Supervisors.
- F8. During October 2001, the camp Chef was transferred to Sierra Youth Center. The transfer resulted in the interruption of a successful culinary program at the Camp and public concern over such a loss. A new chef was assigned and the program resumed in April 2002.

Conclusions

Probation Camp has a long history of innovative programs designed to teach youth necessary skills so they may be returned to the community as productive citizens. With its rural setting and its many successful programs, Probation Camp has been the jewel in the crown of the Probation

Department's juvenile detention facilities. It is managed and operated by professionals who strive to provide an environment and opportunity for its youth population to learn to abide by the laws of the community, be self-sufficient, be gainfully employed or attend school, and participate in healthy relationships with family and others. Since the resumption of its culinary program and the issuance of new policy guidelines that provide more management oversight and involvement, Probation Camp is well positioned to carry on its rich tradition.

It is unfortunate that the Probation Department has been unable to expand the operations of the Camp beyond its limited 5.23-acre parcel. It is surrounded by a 350-acre parcel owned by Santa Rosa Junior College. Although tentative expansion plans have been developed, negotiations for acquiring a mere 8.5 acres from Santa Rosa Junior College have been unsuccessful. The Probation Department, the County Board of Supervisors, and the community need to get behind this project and make it happen. The Camp and its youth population deserve such expansion because until the situation changes or other arrangements can be made, the Probation Camp will continue as an elite facility for the chosen few.

Recommendations

- R1. The Probation Department and the County Board of Supervisors should develop a proposal for purchasing or leasing 8.5 acres adjoining the Probation Camp from Santa Rosa Junior College and assemble a negotiating team for carrying such proposal forward.
- R2. The Probation Department and the County Board of Supervisors should develop an alternative plan for expansion of the Probation Camp in the event acquisition of property from Santa Rosa Junior College is unsuccessful.
- R3. Any question, whether oral or written, and whether raised at a Probation Camp meeting or otherwise (including but not limited to parental comments during home visitations), regarding the propriety of behavior involving any Probation Camp staff person or any adult person who is in any way involved with the performance of duties or delivery of services at the Probation Camp, should be immediately forwarded to the Camp Manager and the Chief Probation Officer.
- R4. A seminar program should be developed, requiring annual attendance by all Camp staff so that professional standards, Camp policies, and performance evaluations can be reviewed.

Required Responses to Findings

None

Required Responses to Recommendations

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors: R1 and R2
Chief, Probation Department: R1 through R4
Division Director, Probation Camp: R3 and R4