

Riverside County Probation Department

Background

The Riverside County Probation Department's mission statement is to:

". . .demonstrate leadership in developing and providing innovative adult and juvenile correctional services for the courts, community and clients, thereby enhancing community protection and generating a climate of opportunity for positive behavior change."

California Penal Code 1203 states:

"Probation means the suspension of the imposition of execution of a sentence and the order of conditional and revocable release in the community under the supervision of a probation officer."

The Probation Department, under the direction of a new Chief County Probation Officer appointed by the superior court, supervises three levels of probationer. These levels are categorized as follows:

Level 1 - Intensive Supervision: These probationers have committed violent felony crimes against persons. In response, they require intensive supervision. This level is the only level receiving consistent field supervision.

Level 2 - Standard Supervision: These probationers have committed felonies and some misdemeanors. They require frequent monitoring with emphasis on program attendance, drug testing, etc., as directed by the court.

Level 3 - Monitoring Supervision: These offenders are deemed to be a less serious threat to people and society in general. They require only occasional monitoring for attendance at ordered programs, current address and employment, as ordered by the court.

Level 1 offenders are directly supervised by officers assigned to the Intensive Surveillance Program (ISP). These officers are armed and Police Officers Standards and Training (POST) certified. They carry a caseload of seventy to eighty offenders per officer. The average contact is one to two times per month, with more frequent contacts for high risk offenders. ISP officers frequently take part in task force operations with local police departments and the sheriff's office. These officers have a knock and enter search authority as agents of the court, which other law enforcement officers do not possess.

Levels 2 and 3 are filed cases and commonly referred to as "banked" within the department.

Juvenile Facilities

The juvenile division of probation has two locked detention facilities, one in Riverside and the other in Indio. In addition, there are two unlocked county-run treatment facilities: Twin Pines Ranch (TPR) and Van Horn Youth Center. They contract with thirty-two private agencies that run sixty-five group homes for placement of various types of juvenile offenders.

County Juvenile Detention Facilities

Juvenile Hall contains three categories of minors: those awaiting a court hearing, those serving custody time and those awaiting placement at a treatment facility. Riverside Juvenile Hall has a capacity of 197. Indio Juvenile Hall has a capacity of 105.

County Juvenile Treatment Facilities

Twin Pines Ranch is a residential treatment facility located in the San Jacinto mountains on 1,100 acres. The facility has a capacity for seventy male juvenile offenders ages fifteen to eighteen. This has been determined to be an optimum number for the existing facility and location.

The camp has been in operation since 1947 and originally was founded with an emphasis on vocational training for youths who were guilty of crimes ranging from truancy to car theft. In recent years, the crimes committed by youth placed

here are more serious such as burglary, robbery and other crimes against persons and property with the most violent being drive-by shootings.

In 1994, a boot camp program was instituted with the aid of federal grants. Those grants are no longer available. The present program includes a military style training with vocational, educational, mental health, vision, community service and counseling programs targeted at giving the cadets a new start on life. The programs help to give the cadet a structured environment, discipline, coping skills, personal growth and tools with which to make appropriate life decisions and exercise self-restraint.

Van Horn Youth Center, located in Riverside, is a forty-four-bed treatment facility. It was built originally to house female youth offenders. The facility now houses both male and female juvenile offenders in two separate living wings. At present, the female population is 10 percent of the total capacity. The facility handles youth offenders from twelve to sixteen years of age. A boot camp-style of training is used. The cadets receive a high school education and life enhancement through vision testing, substance abuse classes, community service and vocational training.

Findings

1. In fiscal year 1995-96, a budget reduction resulted in fifty-six layoffs from this department. The greater percentage of layoffs were in adult supervision.
2. Historically, the average level 3 caseload per probation officer, to provide adequate supervision and monitoring, should be 100 offenders per officer. The reduction of personnel in 1995, and the increased number of offenders, have resulted in twelve banked caseloads ranging from 151 cases in Blythe (one probation officer) to 1,000 in Temecula (one probation officer) during the month of March 1998 (a representative month). County-wide, for the month of March 1998, the average number of cases per probation officer monitoring banked cases was 588.
3. Nine out of ten felons on level 2 and 3 probation are not directly supervised. They are monitored only for subsequent arrests and supervised through telephone or mail follow-up. The remaining 10 percent are seen infrequently at the probation office. Many level 3 offenders are contacted only one to two times per year.
4. Another situation resulting from the reduction in personnel is the transfer of level 1 offenders to level 2 or 3 status prior to documented reduction of a threat to society. This reduction of classification is to allow entry into the system of "perceived" higher risk offenders as directed by the court.
5. The caseload of level 1 offenders should be thirty to forty per ISP officer to allow for adequate face-to-face supervision. At present, the average caseload per ISP officer is seventy to eighty per officer. This does not allow adequate face-to-face supervision and monitoring.
6. During March 1998 (a representative month), the probation department had 14,900 offenders assigned to probationary supervision, 80 percent of those received no face-to-face supervision.
7. Because of inadequate supervision of felons, many convicted misdemeanors are not put on probation.
8. Probation officers prepare investigative reports for court disposition; thus time for offender supervision is compromised.
9. Volunteers are very rarely used or recruited.
10. Determination of placement for juvenile offenders is a multi-departmental venture during the pre- and post-sentencing phase of placement. Screening committees, consisting of representatives of the Department of Public Social Services, mental health and probation, evaluate the minor and make recommendations to the court as to the proper placement of the minor.
11. California Welfare and Institutions Code 626.5 requires that a juvenile is placed in the least

restrictive setting that will serve the child's needs. Rule of Court #1430 defines the levels of restrictive custody as follows:

- a. Placement in the home of the person entitled to legal custody
- b. Placement in the home of a non-custodial parent
- c. Placement in the home of a relative or friend
- d. Placement in a foster home
- e. Commitment to a private institution
- f. Commitment to a county institution
- g. Commitment to the California Youth Authority (CYA)

12. Fees paid to group homes per placement are set by the California Department of Public Social Services (CA-DPSS) Rate Bureau and range monthly from level 4 at \$1,200 per placement to level 14 at \$5,400 per placement. These fees are calculated based on the facility's education programs, child-to-staff ratio and complexity of retraining programs. Currently, Riverside County pays from \$2,067-\$5,014 per month for placement. The average time in placement ranges from nine to twelve months. Placement is restricted to the five-county area (Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange and San Diego) to allow for easier counseling and reunification of the family.

13. California Welfare and Institutions Code 903 allows for the county to collect reasonable costs from the parent of a minor, or estate of a parent or minor, for the support of the juvenile offender. The cost is limited to food, food preparation, clothing, personal supplies and medical expenses only. The current charge to parents by the County of Riverside is \$10.50 per day for housing at Twin Pines, Juvenile Hall and Van Horn. The cost of housing at group

homes is paid by the CA-DPSS and then reimbursement is sought from the parents by the district attorney's office.

14. In May 1998, there were 347 juveniles in private placement. The runaway rate for juveniles placed in private placement in 1996 was 37 percent; in 1997 it was 22 percent. The greatest percentage of runaways occurs around Christmas, spring break and during the summer months.

15. Private placement agencies hold non-profit status. This non-profit status allows for Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) remuneration. In addition to AFDC, approximately 95 percent of the cost of juvenile placement is reimbursed to the county DPSS by CA-DPSS. Those costs are not reimbursed to the county if the juvenile is an illegal alien or if the paperwork for that reimbursement does not meet state regulations for content or time limit.

16. In an effort to control costs, the five-county area constructed, and attempted to open, a locked treatment facility in Riverside. Because of financial constraints, the locked facility is operated as an unlocked facility by a private entity.

17. At present, there are no state regulations to permit a locked juvenile facility by a private concern.

18. The average time spent at Juvenile Hall, from the date of court-ordered placement to actual relocation into group homes, is forty-five days. The average number of juveniles awaiting relocation is 100-120 per day.

19. There is a shortage of group homes for girls (ages sixteen to seventeen).

20. There is a shortage of group homes for juvenile sexual offenders. The typical program for these offenders lasts from twelve to twenty-four months.

21. The annual fees for placement of county juvenile offenders at CYA are on a sliding scale. They range from \$1,800 per year for crimes such as rape, murder, burglary and kidnaping to a yearly maximum of \$31,000 for lesser crimes against persons and property or parole violations. The yearly cost for fiscal year 1997-98 is estimated at \$1.9 million.

22. Twin Pines Ranch receives water through well water and surface water that is treated on-site. Should a severe drought occur resulting in exhausting of surface and well waters, an evacuation plan has been developed.

23. There is a shortage of kitchen refrigerator storage space at TPR.

24. Total placements for 1997 at TPR was 171. On average, there are five to fifteen juvenile males waiting at juvenile hall daily for placement and transfer to the ranch. Average time spent at juvenile hall awaiting transfer to the ranch was 35.8 days. There was an average of fourteen new placements monthly during 1997. The average stay at the ranch is six months.

25. The runaway rate for TPR during 1997 was 24.8 percent with the highest propensity for this occurring during the first week of placement.

26. Twin Pines Ranch is currently down seven staff employees from fiscal year 1996-97.

27. Vocational training at TPR includes programs such as auto repair, masonry, plumbing, culinary and agriculture. A major auto manufacturer has donated a mini-van for the cadets to use for auto repair training. The auto repair department is attempting to procure a diagnostic machine.

28. Indio Juvenile Hall, with a capacity of 105 offenders, currently is housing 129 offenders.

29. Riverside Juvenile Hall has a capacity of 197. With beds being added to the gymnasium, the current number of offenders housed is 228.

30. The average time spent at Juvenile Hall awaiting placement is forty-three days. Daily, there are five to six male juvenile offenders awaiting transfer to Van Horn Youth Center. The center has a capacity of forty-four youths; their average stay is six months. Total placements for 1997 were 100, with an average of eight placements per month.

31. Juvenile offenders are returned to their former environment with minimal follow up direction after release from treatment.

Recommendations

County Board of Supervisors:

1. Increase funding for hiring of additional probation department personnel to at least the 1995 level prior to budget cuts.
2. Reassess the financial benefits of jointly funding a locked juvenile treatment facility with the surrounding Southern California counties.

Probation Department:

1. Increase the number of ISP officers to establish a caseload of thirty to forty offenders per officer. In addition, assign one to two ISP officers for random face-to-face checks of banked caseload offenders.
2. Increase the number of level 2 and 3 probation officers to establish a caseload of a maximum of 200 offenders per officer.
3. Hire additional probation assistants for court investigation, report preparation and completion of paperwork for reimbursement of placement costs.
4. Maintain assignment of offenders to proper levels until the "threat to society" is reduced to meet a lower level of supervision.
5. Pursue the creation and establishment by private agencies of more group homes with immediate emphasis on female (age sixteen to seventeen) and sexual offender treatment facilities.
6. Provide an adequate water holding structure at TPR to eliminate the need for evacuation during a drought.
7. Expedite remodeling of kitchen facilities at TPR with emphasis on food storage and refrigeration.

8. Evaluate the need for an additional county-run boot camp facility or facilities with retraining programs that mirror the best of both Van Horn and TPR.

9. Ensure that screening for illegal aliens is done prior to placement.

10. Initiate an intensive volunteer recruitment and training program allowing volunteers to supervise level 2 and 3 offenders through telephone follow-up of terms of probation. Compensate the volunteer with a nominal honorarium.

11. Initiate a feasibility study to begin a work program that would allow released juvenile probationers a minimum of six months of supervised post-release follow-up.