



San Diego County Probation Department

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Adolfo Gonzales, Chief Probation Officer

October 12, 2016

Kimberly D. Allan
Juvenile Justice Commission Chair
2901 Meadow Lark Drive
San Diego, CA 92123

Response to 2016 JJC Juvenile Facility Inspection – East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility

Ms. Allan,

The Probation Department/East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility is in receipt of the 2016 Inspection Report by the Juvenile Justice Commission. The Juvenile Justice Commission noted the follow-up recommendations as follows:

1. **RECOMMENDATION:** BHS needs to hire an on-site psychologist for East Mesa. BHS also needs to increase the number of on-site clinicians and psychologists in order to allow for improved youth access to services during daytime hours, nights and weekends. Currently the mental health staffing ratio at East Mesa is 1 staff member for every 17 youth, compared to 1 staff member for every 10 youth at Kearny Mesa. BHS should consider hiring unlicensed Ph.D. interns or psychologists.

RESPONSE: Probation is continually evaluating services offered at EMJDF. Working collaboratively, BHS and the Probation Department have created three mental health clinician positions that will enhance services during nights and weekends. One position was recently filled and we are in the process of filling the remaining two.

2. **RECOMMENDATION:** Staff report that they have created youth-led support programs to deal with peer conflict. This is a great idea that should be implemented in more programs, as empowering youth to work together rather than apart should reduce the overall conflict level.

RESPONSE: STAT Team clinician is running a Peer Conflict Manager training which recently expanded into both YOU units, Alpha and Bravo.

3. **RECOMMENDATION:** Adopt the violence intervention program that proved to be a successful pilot at Kearny Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility.

RESPONSE: Probation will research and implement any successful program across facilities.

4. **RECOMMENDATION:** Establish a Trauma Response Unit (TRU) at East Mesa to assist minors who have experienced trauma, similar to the unit at Kearny Mesa. Creating a TRU unit at East Mesa will help identify higher at-risk youth, as well as provide a trauma-informed setting that would allow youth to acknowledge trauma and begin the healing process.

RESPONSE: Due to the success of the pilot at KMJDF, the Department will evaluate the possibility of expanding the TRU programs for boys and girls across facilities.

5. **RECOMMENDATION:** Continue to reduce the use of Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) ("pepper") spray. Consider having officers carry small canisters only and/or store canisters in a nearby location rather than having officers wear canisters. Research methods of conflict de-escalation that are used in counties where pepper spray use has been discontinued. Research the usage of pepper spray at East Mesa in order to determine the types of incidents that give rise to the use of pepper spray and use a best practices approach to find alternatives to the use of pepper spray. Seek input from youth about best ways to reduce the need for pepper spray..

RESPONSE: Probation continues to evaluate the use of O.C. OC spray is used in accordance with the department's current Use of Force Continuum and is only utilized when necessary and other measures have not been successful; or when there is a perceived threat of physical harm. OC spray often mitigates injury to staff and youth. Probation has been investigating a variety of techniques to decrease the use of OC. The Department is piloting the implementation of whistles to gain compliance prior to the use of OC. The Department is also looking to implement the Missouri Model in our facilities to increase engagement and reduce violence and the use of OC.

6. **RECOMMENDATION:** Consider bringing back correctional counselors. Staff additionally reports that there are currently no correctional counselors. Staff reports researching new evidence-based practices to use with inmates, as well as creating best practices and utilizing best practices approaches. However, dedicated correctional counselors could ensure a more successful transition of youth back to the community.

RESPONSE: Probation will look into adding correctional counselors at EMJDF.

7. **RECOMMENDATION:** Consider reinstating the preparation of food on-site under the guidance of a nutritionist rather than having it brought in by the Sheriff's Department. East Mesa was built with a state of the art kitchen facility which is not being used at this time. In addition, youth were able to earn a culinary certificate, but can no longer do so with the kitchen not being used. Consider reinstating a culinary certificate program, and consider allowing the youth to work in the kitchen to earn community service hours, as long as they are not pulled out of the classrooms to do so. Also, use food grown in the gardening program into meals at the facility.

RESPONSE: Probation will evaluate the possibility of preparing food at each facility versus hot trays prepared centrally. The menus are posted in each unit. Probation will continue to work with SDCOE for Career Technical Education options at KM. The Department is working closely with

Children's Initiative and a community work group will be formed to enhance food and nutrition in the facilities. The culinary arts (CTE) teacher who manages the culinary arts program at Camp Barrett will be starting culinary arts program at EMJDF. Probation is working collaboratively with SDCOE and the Sheriff's Department Food Services to design the hands-on portion of the culinary arts program.

8. **RECOMMENDATION:** Review and increase the CTE (Career Technical Education) options at East Mesa. The San Diego County Office of Education can develop and work with Probation to establish appropriate programs, including obtaining grants to fund such programs.

RESPONSE: Probation will continue working with SDCOE to increase CTE options at EMJDF.

9. **RECOMMENDATION:** Consider instituting a program of having appropriately trained on-site mentors for youth, perhaps through partnerships with organizations in their home communities. Youth at the facility talked about the lack of mentors available to them due to their inaccessible location. Youth reported that they would love to have mentors on-site to help them resolve peer conflicts, and to have someone to talk to outside of officers and therapists.

RESPONSE: Probation is seeking mentorship programs for youth at EMJDF and will consult with Second Chance counselors in the facility.

10. **RECOMMENDATION:** Institute the Puppies in Prison program and offer a career development certificate as a part of the program. Staff also mentioned a music program coming to East Mesa. Establishing this as a permanent program will provide youth with alternative ways to express themselves. Providing youth with more programs that allow them to develop job skills should help reduce conflicts and reduce the rate of recidivism.

RESPONSE: Probation has partnered with San Diego County Animal Services and Tender Loving Canines, a non-profit organization, to create a dog handler program. Once this is implemented the youth will train shelter dogs to become adoptable or for dogs with the appropriate temperament to become service dogs.

11. **RECOMMENDATION:** The garden program is amazing; however, at the time of our visit only three youth were participating. This program should be expanded to allow more youth to participate and the vegetables grown in the program should be used in the state-of-the-art kitchen for youth meals.

RESPONSE: Probation is in the process of expanding career technical education options at EMJDF. Probation will use items grown in the garden as part of the culinary arts program.

12. **RESPONSE:** Phase out Probation's non evidence-based programs and adopt the use of evidence-based programs for anger management and chemical dependency, as there are many great programs available. Providing different personal development programs is critical, but when there are so many that overlap too much, their effectiveness is diluted. Re-evaluate the programs that are currently being given with these considerations in mind.

RESPONSE: Probation will evaluate programs being offered and will explore evidence based options available.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'A. Gonzales', with a long horizontal line extending to the right. Below the signature, the word 'for' is written in blue ink.

ADOLFO GONZALES
CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER

cc: Cesar Escuro, Exec. Deputy Chief Probation Officer
Dan H. DeLeon, Deputy Chief Probation Officer