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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

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August 23, 2016

Honorable James Herman
Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara Superior Court
County Courthouse
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara CA 93101

Reference: Response to FY 2015-16 Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury report titled, "Los Prietos Boys Camp: Effective, But Underutilized", (Published June 9, 2016, Grand Jury Website).

Judge Herman:

Please find attached the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (Board) response to the above referenced Civil Grand Jury Report. As directed by the Grand Jury, all responses are provided in accordance with Section 933.05 of the California Penal Code.

The Board appreciates the work conducted by the Probation Department and their assistance in responding to this matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Peter Adam, Chair of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors.

Peter Adam, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

CC: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Maria Millsaps, Foreperson, 2015-16 Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury

Attachment A

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury 2015-2016 Report
Los Prietos Boys Camp
“Effective, But Underutilized”

Finding 1

The Los Prietos Boys Camp (LPBC) at its current staffing level can care for up to 50 youth yet the number of juveniles held is less than this number.

The Board Agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 1a

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors direct the Santa Barbara County Probation Department to conduct a study of ways to increase the utilization of the Los Prietos Boys Camp.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The County disagrees with this recommendation as the established best practice for low/medium risk youth utilizes community-based supervision and programming, which allows the youth to remain in their home environment. Thus, utilization of Los Prietos Boys Camp (primarily used for high-risk youth) is generally not appropriate for low/medium risk youth. The mission of LPBC is to provide a safe, secure and effective juvenile detention and treatment program to serve youth that are at high risk of re-offending, thus the LPBC population will go up if the total offender population of higher need youth increases. Statewide there is a reduction in population of juvenile offenders. Out of custody options are most effective in preventing low risk offenders from becoming high risk offenders and removing youth from their home can have adverse effects. Section §726 of the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC), defines that no ward or dependent child shall be taken from the physical custody of a parent or guardian, unless upon the hearing the Court finds one of the following facts: (1) That the parent or guardian is incapable of providing or has failed or neglected to provide proper maintenance, training, and education for the minor. (2) That the minor has been tried on probation while in custody and has failed to reform. (3) That the welfare of the minor requires that custody be taken from the minor’s parent or guardian. Based on §726 WIC, the Probation Department implements various “system filters” such as risk and needs assessments, to determine the appropriate level of supervision and evidence-based practice to meet the needs of the juvenile in the least restrictive environment. Probation has adjusted the Camp program to meet the trends and needs over time. The staffing is currently for 50 youth, which allows the program to adjust to population trends and staffing demands. The LPBC dorm has a Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) rating capacity of 56, and is able to house that number youth. Given the number of youth that warrant a commitment to the LPBC, the staffing and utilization is appropriate. The Department is looking at ways of increasing out of custody evidence-based programming to add to proven methods of recidivism reduction without the need of costly incarceration.

Recommendation 1b

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors direct the Santa Barbara County Probation Department to reevaluate its acceptance criteria and process to develop methods to increase the number of youth who are ordered to the Los Prietos Boys Camp program.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

Changing the reevaluation and acceptance criteria to increase the number of youth ordered to Los Prietos Boys Camp would result in combining youth with low/medium risk assessments with youth who are at a high risk to re-offend. Placing low risk youth in programming intended for the higher risk population often has a negative impact on such youth and could cause an increase in recidivism and is not recommended. Further, changing the eligibility requirement may result in youth being ordered to the program with needs that exceed the programs capability, most notably in situations where youth have distinct mental health needs and/or learning disabilities. Increasing the number of youth ordered to LPBC is not the preference of the Probation Department. The Department is looking at ways of increasing out of custody evidence-based programs to add to proven methods of recidivism reduction without the need of costly incarceration.

Recommendation 1c

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors direct the Santa Barbara County Probation Department to evaluate the possibility of decreasing the lengths of the programs in order to accommodate more youth.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

Youth ordered to Los Prietos Boys Camp are eligible for a 120-day or a 180-day program. The Juvenile Court determines the length of stay based on offense, delinquent history, and needs of the youth as they relate to his family, school and community. The inclusion of a 120-day commitment provides a decreased program option. Probation agrees with decreasing the length of stay based on rewarding positive behavior and increased participation, which is built into the program and enables youth to complete Los Prietos in 90 or 120 days respectively. Probation does not agree that a further decrease in the duration of a program to accommodate more youth (that are not appropriate for this program) would be in the best interest of youth. Evidence-based programming offered requires a lengthier commitment and mixing shorter-term commitments can have an adverse impact. There is a core length of time needed to facilitate lasting change in this population. Many of the youth committed to the program have not been successful in other community-based or residential programs, and historically require a lengthier commitment to fully realize the program's benefits.

Finding 2

No similar camp program for female juveniles exists in Santa Barbara County.

The Board Agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 2

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors direct the Santa Barbara County Probation Department to evaluate including female juvenile offenders in this successful program.

The recommendation requires further analysis.

The success of gender-specific efforts in the Santa Maria Juvenile Hall by the Probation Department are underway and demonstrate that traditional male oriented approaches do not serve the female youth well. It is through de-institutionalizing their environment to the fullest extent possible that meaningful treatment can be realized with the female population. Probation agrees that gender specific programming is beneficial and is pursuing other options which would enhance educational, vocational and rehabilitative programming. Probation also agrees, and a recent study noted, that a "local option where girls could receive intensive mental health treatment would be preferable to out-of-county group homes".

Probation would like to further explore potential opportunities for in-county residential treatment and programming for female juvenile offenders, which could occur in a camp setting. This subject has been discussed for several years, and warrants closer focus and discussion among stakeholders, such as the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC), the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Council (JJDC) and other partners.

The Probation Department will review options in addressing this issue over the next six months with stakeholders to determine the interest in developing a similar program for female offenders that the Camp offers male offenders.

Finding 3

Freedom 4 Youth offers a post incarceration mentorship program that is only available to youth who live in the South County.

The Board Agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 3

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors encourage the establishment of a similar mentorship program for North County youth.

The recommendation requires further analysis.

The County and the Probation Department welcome non-profit and self-funded programs to support youth in the community. We encourage the development of programs that would assist those already working with our population. Referrals to such programs are voluntary on the part of a youth and should not substitute Probation's role of engaging family members or friends for the long-term mentorship. Probation seeks to identify appropriate persons already in the life of a youth who can serve as a long-term support or mentor over the course of many years. The Probation Department will review the South County Mentorship program with North County non-profit organizations within the next six months to evaluate its applicability and their interest in developing a similar program.

Finding 4

No standard calculation methodology exists within Santa Barbara County for measuring juvenile recidivism.

The Board Agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 4

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors direct the Santa Barbara County Probation Department to establish a single calculation methodology for juvenile recidivism and utilize it in all future reporting.

The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented in the future.

The Probation Department is working to update their data and case management system and recidivism calculations to be uniform across programs and commitments to assist in appropriate comparisons of effectiveness. Probation will be reviewing current processes during the next six months to ensure the Department remains aligned with the Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC), the BSCC standards and definitions for recidivism and to implement this recommendation into the Probation Departments annual reports. Maintaining consistency with State and CPOC protocol is also an important factor for compliance with State and Federal grant reporting requirements. Local practices must be congruent with those of other areas. It is agreed that jurisdictions must remain proactive in reviewing their method of calculating recidivism in order to appropriately measure program effectiveness and should be comparable across local programs and other counties.