

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE

Rehabilitation vs Punishment

INTRODUCTION

The 2016-17 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury (Jury) visited juvenile detention centers as part of its mandate to visit holding facilities and jails. Santa Barbara County (County) has two juvenile detention centers: the Susan J. Gionfriddo Juvenile Justice Center in Santa Maria and the Los Prietos Boys Camp in the Los Padres National Forest. As part of the overall juvenile justice system, the Jury also observed the operation of the Teen Court program. A former center in Santa Barbara, La Posada, was closed in 2008 for budgetary reasons and now is used only as a temporary holding facility for juvenile court dates.

Both the Gionfriddo Center and Los Prietos were built to hold double the population they now house, as juvenile crime has decreased over the past decade. Also, fewer youth are detained since low-level crimes no longer result in incarceration. Now the focus is on restorative justice where the emphasis is rehabilitation rather than punishment. Nonetheless, these two facilities are fully active with education and community programs for the current wards of the court. Staff at both facilities are proud to work there and eager to help the juveniles.

La Posada Juvenile Hall

La Posada, a former juvenile hall in Santa Barbara, is currently used only as a temporary holding facility for juvenile offenders who are going to appear in court in Santa Barbara. These juveniles are from the Santa Barbara area, but are incarcerated at the Susan J. Gionfriddo Juvenile Justice Center in Santa Maria. Usually, only nine youths at a time are transported to Santa Barbara for court appearance. They are placed in holding cells while waiting for a call to court. The juveniles are then escorted across the property to the Juvenile Court.

The La Posada facility is used Monday through Thursday for court appearances. When the juvenile offenders are there, security protocols are enforced. They are separated according to health, degree of crime risk, gang affiliation and even suicide watch, which determines how often they are checked inside the holding cells. They are at La Posada for only a few hours, but in the event of an emergency, the staff will call mental health or 9-1-1. Sometimes family visitations may be arranged on site.

The County continues to maintain the building and its 60 cells in the event that Los Prietos Boys Camp needs to be evacuated. However, because of the location of the fires in the last two evacuations, the wards at Los Prietos Boys Camp were transported instead to the Susan J. Gionfriddo Juvenile Justice Center in Santa Maria.

The County is considering plans to repurpose the La Posada Juvenile Hall and move juvenile court appearances to downtown Santa Barbara. The Santa Barbara County Juvenile Probation (Probation) Home Supervision Program currently uses some of the offices at the facility. There have been juvenile probation activities at La Posada Juvenile Hall; however, these activities have declined in recent years.

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The staff indicated that the Home Supervision Program is a success. It ranges from checking ankle bracelets or receiving call-ins several times a day, to full house arrest. Two home detention officers go out into the field to see how the juveniles are doing. They monitor their whereabouts, give breathalyzer tests, review electronic records and check the home status. Overall, the emphasis is on encouraging the juveniles to do well and congratulating them when they do.

Los Prietos Boys Camp

The Los Prietos Boys Camp (Camp) is a residential correctional/treatment facility for 13 to 18 year-old male wards of the court. It is located north of the City of Santa Barbara on 17 acres within the Los Padres National Forest. Established in 1944, the facility now serves 50-56 juvenile offenders. The Court assigns boys that meet certain criteria to 120 or 180 days at the Camp. There is 24-hour video surveillance. It is clean, well maintained and well-staffed. All the staff members have the best interests of the boys in mind. Both the staff and the boys stated that the care is all encompassing at the Camp. Jurors were told by wards at Los Prietos that they considered themselves fortunate to be at the Camp.

Los Prietos provides a structured program and healthy environment where wards receive numerous services. They are involved in various activities from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. They can catch up on school credits in the County-run Los Robles High School at the Camp; the ratio of students to teachers is six to one. The boys also receive individual counseling. Each one has an individual case plan formed with the help of the Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness (Behavioral Wellness). Family counseling, drug and alcohol counseling, and grief counseling are also available. The boys learn to live without regard to gang affiliation or social rank and most of the boys seem to honor that while at Camp. Their personal security is the number one priority according to Camp staff.

A variety of programs gives the boys training in vocational skills (e.g. culinary arts, business, forestry, reprographics, landscaping, and computer technology). Community groups offer assistance with scholarships and internships when they leave the Camp. Since so many community groups request the services of the well-trained and well-behaved wards, the staff have had to decline some opportunities. The boys perform community service with local community groups as well as work with the U.S.D.A. Forest Service. Physical fitness is also part of their program. There are incentives for good behavior for the wards who are often rewarded with trips and shows. The boys are given opportunities to make the right decisions on the inside with the hope that they can do the same on the outside.

Los Prietos is an idyllic setting where the juveniles work on social, emotional and academic goals. They are encouraged to modify their behavior, develop self-esteem, and prepare themselves to re-enter society. A re-entry and a five-week after-care program facilitate the boys' return to their community. The focus of this program is school, drug and alcohol counseling, and jobs. There is a need for more volunteers to mentor and support the boys once they are released.

Susan J. Gionfriddo Juvenile Justice Center

The Susan J. Gionfriddo Juvenile Justice Center (Center) opened in 2004, expanding the County's capacity for housing juvenile offenders. It is a maximum-security facility for both males and females, ranging from 12 to 18 years of age. Juvenile Court places the wards here for varying lengths of time.

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There are six housing units with a total capacity of 140. Not all of the units are occupied and at the time of the Jury's visit, there were 64 wards of the court. The number of girls is usually between six and seven. The unused cells have housed the boys from Los Prietos Boys Camp when evacuated due to fires or other natural disasters. The facility has an extensive video surveillance system that is monitored at all times.

Medical services are available to the juveniles at the Center seven days a week. The health provider also offers sex education, diet and health advice. The Jury was informed that many of the juveniles at the Center receive mental health help. From October 2015 to September 2016, the caseload of wards with Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness ranged from 76-93 percent.¹ Each juvenile receives a treatment plan coordinated with the family, probation officer, mental health counselor and teachers.

In the Center, the Santa Barbara County Education Office provides a complete high school program and focuses on recapturing credits. The school, Dos Puertas, is inside the housing units. Computers are available, but the internet is not.

The Girls Circle day program was created by the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), in collaboration with Behavior Wellness and Probation. The program at the Center is offered twice a week and is now limited to eight girls, all with some form of trauma. The girls meet with a Probation officer specializing in trauma, as well as volunteers from UCSB and the community. An additional day is spent in therapy with the Seeking Safety program, to help the girls attain safety from trauma and/or substance abuse. In general, girls need more mental health therapy, notably for depression and anxiety. A former housing pod has been remodeled, softening the look and feel of the jail facility. During the hours of the program, rules have also been relaxed. The girls have responded well to the program, with positive results in anger management and self-image.

The juvenile population at the Center has dropped considerably since it first opened and it has subsequently lost personnel. In particular, the Girls Circle day program has not been budgeted but the Center is determined to keep it. A Baby Elmo program, begun in 2011, promotes bonding between the incarcerated juveniles and their children. The Jury was told that this program is safe from budgetary cuts at this time, but other programs are needed to help with the rehabilitation of the youth. The success of all programs is dependent upon volunteers.

Following a 2015-16 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury report, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (BOS) began to study more program options for girls along the lines of the girls program at the Center. The BOS has started looking into "de-institutionalizing their [girls'] environment," and looking for "a local option where girls could receive intensive mental health treatment." At this time, there are 24 girls in group homes outside the county. There are only two group homes for girls in Santa Barbara County, which is why the BOS directed Probation to look for alternative residential and high treatment housing inside the County.

¹ Susan J. Gionfriddo Juvenile Justice Center Information Packet, 2016

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Teen Court

Teen Court is a successful and unique program in Santa Barbara County operated by the non-profit Council of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (CADA). It is active in Santa Maria, Lompoc, Santa Ynez, Santa Barbara, and Carpinteria. This program provides a restorative justice opportunity for youth offenders to help them stay out of the juvenile justice system or school disciplinary system. Teens who do not reoffend during the program will not have an adjudication on their record.

Youth may be referred to the Teen Court program through juvenile probation, law enforcement, schools, or directly by their parents. These youth, who are 12-18 years old, must take responsibility for their actions and show they want to change in order to participate in the program. Once accepted, the teens and their parents must attend a hearing, which is held at the courthouse and supervised by a volunteer adult judge. A jury of peers questions the teen about his or her offense. The teen jury then deliberates, with staff supervision and guidelines. Each sentence will include jury duty, community service, reflective projects, educational classes, counseling groups, drug and alcohol treatment as needed, and a parent program. This sentence will take the client up to three months to complete while providing the parents with skills to help their child's healthy development. Currently the six-week parent program is only available in South County.

Between July 2015 and June 2016, 345 youth were accepted into the Teen Court Program. There were 272, or nearly 80 percent of the youth, who completed their sentences successfully. The Jury learned that of the clients served, 60 percent were referred to the program for having committed drug or alcohol related offenses. Regardless of the offense, 63 percent of the clients admitted to alcohol use or abuse, and 71 percent to the use or abuse of marijuana or other drugs. During this time, over 40 percent of Teen Court clients were referred for treatment at the Daniel Bryant Youth and Family Services, which is a separate program run by CADA but working out of the same location as Teen Court. It is reported that this collaboration with treatment services is one of the keys to success for the Teen Court program. As found with many non-profits, Teen Court is supported by volunteers who believe in the success of the program.

CONCLUSION

The 2016-17 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury found that the juvenile justice programs in Santa Barbara County accomplish good work with the help of staff and volunteers from the community. The programs provided give young people avenues for positive development and personal success.

Under *California Penal Code §933 and §933.05*, this activity report does not require a response.