

# county of ventura



## CORRECTIONS SERVICES AGENCY

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To: M. L. Koester, CAO  
From: Frank Woodson, Director, CSA  
Subject: Responses to the 1996/97 Final Grand Jury Report

The purpose of this memo is to comment with respect to the findings and recommendations contained in the final grand jury report for 1996/97. I have reviewed and considered both the findings and the recommendations and have shared these with staff. In accordance with Sections 933 and 933.05 of the Penal Code, I have responded to each recommendation or finding of the Grand Jury. Those responses are presented below:

### Findings:

- In 1990, an outside consulting firm recommended that the county build a 42-bed facility to accommodate the growing juvenile offender population, estimating that the facility could be operational by 1995.

In subsequent years, Grand Juries and various other organizations have reported the crisis in juvenile facilities.

CSA agrees with this finding.

- The county youth population has increased 114% since 1985, yet juvenile institutions have added only eight beds since 1971.

Since Ventura County has no juvenile camps, it has a 20-bed arrangement with Santa Barbara County.

CSA agrees with this finding.

- Colston and Juvenile Hall are overcrowded beyond occupancy limits. Stress is placed on the system by the necessity of separating gang members and hard core juveniles.

- Colston and Juvenile Hall are overcrowded beyond occupancy limits. Stress is placed on the system by the necessity of separating gang members and hard core juveniles.

Due to overcrowded conditions at Colston, juveniles sentenced to 180 days (whose parents participated in their rehabilitation programs) rarely served their full terms.

CSA agrees with this finding; however, I would like to make one clarification. The Colston Youth Center is not crowded beyond occupancy limits. It cannot, however, keep up with the demands of Juvenile Court. When the program is full, those who have been committed are detained in Juvenile Hall, waiting an opening. Consequently, the result is greater overcrowding at Juvenile Hall. Other than that technical clarification, CSA agrees with the finding.

- Juvenile Hall is an antiquated facility which presents safety and security problems for assigned personnel.

Maintenance requirements are high due to the age and design of the facilities.

Indoor living and outdoor recreation spaces are inadequate, particularly the outdoor area which does not meet California Code of Regulations (CCR) standards. Because of grandfather clauses, Title 24, Part 1, Chapter 12, Subdivision (b) Exclusions, the facilities are allowed to function even though they do not meet present codes.

The Juvenile Judicial System has limited alternatives in its handling of juvenile offenders due to the lack of facilities, programs, and beds.

Because of overcrowding, juvenile offenders under electronic surveillance and probation conditions are returned to the same negative environment from which they came.

- CSA agrees with this finding. However, I would like to point out that staff have done an excellent job of minimizing the potential problems of safety and security associated with the facility design in combination with the overcrowding.

- There are few county-wide intervention programs for juveniles who have mental health, drug, or alcohol problems. Drug and alcohol use are big factors in the commission of juvenile crimes. Those who have such problems are often ordered to attend adult Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

CSA agrees with this finding. It should be noted, however, that working closely with the County's Behavioral Health Department has resulted in some additional resources being provided for juveniles in our institutions who have serious mental health, drug, or alcohol problems. Efforts will continue to increase the amount of services for this at-risk population.

- Juveniles frequently appear before the judge without a parent or guardian.

CSA agrees with this finding.

- Most of the problems regarding the Juvenile Justice System are due to the low priority in funding.

CSA partially disagrees with this finding. CSA and the Board of Supervisors have placed a high priority on the Juvenile Justice System. During the past three years, CSA has reallocated resources within the Agency from adult services to juvenile services. In addition, the Board of Supervisors funded eight new positions for juvenile facilities and three new DPO positions for juvenile aftercare services in Fiscal Year 1996/97. The Board of Supervisors also provided funding in this fiscal year (97/98) for the operation of Ventura County's share of the Tri-County Boot Camp, as well as an aftercare component to provide close supervision for those juveniles released from the Tri-County Boot Camp. Lastly, the Board of Supervisors approved Ventura's participation in the State-funded Challenge Grant in Fiscal Year 1996/97. The funding is available in Fiscal Year 1997/98 and for two years subsequent. The total amount of this funding is 4.5 million dollars. It is true, however, that the Juvenile Justice System needs additional resources and will, in the foreseeable future. The biggest cost item on the horizon is the expansion of juvenile facilities and the proposed development of a juvenile justice complex. Funding for this venture will be a challenge to the county. It is hoped, however, that the Legislature will place a State bond issue on the ballot in November of 1998. There are two proposals pending, one in the Senate and one in the Assembly. Both would provide approximately \$350 million Statewide for the development of juvenile institutions.

- Money can be made available from Proposition 172 (the sales tax initiative to raise money to be used in the fight against crime) by allocation of the County Board of Supervisors.

CSA partially disagrees with this finding. Proposition 172 funds have assisted the Juvenile Justice System. CSA is a partner in the County ordinance that specifies the distribution of these funds.

- There is no consolidated Juvenile System in Ventura County.

CSA partially disagrees with this finding. The Juvenile Justice System in Ventura County handles approximately 10,000 juvenile referrals per year. Almost 80% of these juveniles are handled informally. The remainder of the juveniles are processed through the Juvenile Court system. To handle this workload effectively requires cooperation from all components of the Juvenile Justice System, as well as assistance from service providers, both public and private. CSA works very closely with the Juvenile Court, the District Attorney, and the Sheriff and local police departments in arresting, citing, and processing these juveniles through the system. CSA also works closely with Mental Health, Alcohol and Drugs, and PSSA in providing services to these juveniles in the institutions, as well as home on probation. Accomplishing this task of providing sanctions for such a large group of juveniles and providing a wide variety of alternatives and options for the Juvenile Court cannot be accomplished without cooperation from all involved in the system. CSA meets bimonthly with the Interagency Juvenile Justice Council to review programs and problems within the Juvenile Justice System. The council is composed of all criminal justice agencies within Ventura County, the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, a member of the County Board of Supervisors, the Chief Administrative Officer, a member of the Public Social Services Agency,

a member of the Behavioral Health Agency, and the Superintendent of Schools. It is the opinion of CSA that the Juvenile Justice System in Ventura County is consolidated and would not function as well as it does without a “systems approach.”

- There is little community involvement or input regarding juvenile problems.

CSA partially disagrees with this finding. It is true, however, that additional community involvement would provide for a stronger, more effective system. Involving the community is one of the most important components of the new Challenge Grant. The experimental approach in this grant requires a tremendous amount of community involvement. There will be an advisory board working closely with the project that is made up of individuals from the community where the Challenge Grant is located. Victims will become a more important part of the process, and there will be a greater emphasis placed on involving volunteers in the juvenile justice process. It should be noted, however, this Agency has a very viable Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Commission. The commissioners are appointed by the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court and represent all communities in Ventura County. The Agency also works closely with a non-profit organization called Bolder Options that provide volunteer assistance and mentoring to juvenile offenders. Additionally, the Agency has a cooperative agreement with both Cal State Northridge and Pepperdine University to provide student mentors for juvenile offenders.

#### Recommendations:

1. The Board of Supervisors declare the juvenile system a county-wide emergency and make the construction of a Juvenile Justice Complex a top priority, with or without the state and/or federal funds.

This recommendation has been partially implemented. The Board of Supervisors have not declared the juvenile system a county-wide emergency; however, they have placed a high priority in dealing with the overcrowding and have made the construction of a new Juvenile Justice Complex a high priority. The Board of Supervisors have appointed the county CAO Lin Koester as the individual responsible for developing funding for the proposed Juvenile Justice Complex.

2. The Board of Supervisors should visit the Juvenile Justice Complex in Orange, CA, as a model for Ventura County.

This recommendation is not applicable to the Corrections Services Agency.

3. The Board of Supervisors put a bond issue before county voters, exclusively for Juvenile Justice System reform.

This recommendation is not applicable to the Corrections Services Agency.

4. The Board of Supervisors should reconsider the Sheriff’s proposal to close the Adult Work Furlough facilities at Camarillo Airport and transfer the adults to Todd Road Jail. This could save the county approximately \$1 million, and the vacant airport facilities could be converted to a minimum security camp for juvenile offenders. Corrections Services Agency could still

maintain control of the Work Furlough Program with the Sheriff only being responsible for housing the inmates.

This recommendation requires further analysis. It should be noted, however, that this recommendation was made to the Corrections Services Agency, and we asked the State Board of Corrections to review the adult Work Furlough facility in relation to its ability to act as a juvenile facility. The report from the State Board of Corrections is attached for your review. In summary, the Board of Corrections indicates that an excessive amount of remodeling would be necessary to bring the facility into compliance with the minimum standards of juvenile camps and would result in a camp that would be difficult to operate. The Board further states that "if Ventura County wants to pursue operation of a secure camp, in our opinion, a new site should be selected that could provide better operational function; reduced construction/remodel costs; and offer a higher level of safety and security for minors/staff in the community." The agency previously asked the California Youth Authority to review that facility for a juvenile institution and received similar feedback. The estimated cost of remodeling the facility is approximately \$1 million.

5. Consideration should be given to building a Juvenile Justice Complex at the Camarillo State Hospital site.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but the agency will explore this option and report back in 120 days. The recommendation refers to the Camarillo State Hospital site. The expiration of this option will consider land owned by the State of California that extends beyond the hospital "site."

6. Set up a commission (similar to a Police Commission) to oversee the entire juvenile system; it should have the same powers and authority.

This recommendation will not be implemented as this is currently the responsibility of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission. That commission receives its authority from Section 233 of the State Welfare and Institutions Code. Responsibilities include inquiring into the administration of the Juvenile Court law, having access to publicly-administered institutions for juveniles, and annually inspecting all such institutions that house juvenile offenders. They are also responsible for coordinating, on a county-wide basis, the work of those governmental and non-governmental agencies engaged in activities designed to prevent juvenile delinquency and in the operation of the Juvenile Justice System.

7. The Board of Supervisors support AB1212 for establishing funds for juvenile capital expenditures which is now pending before the state legislature.

This recommendation applies directly to the Board of Supervisors and not the Corrections Services Agency. However, it should be noted that the Board of Supervisors previously supported a State bond issue that would provide funding for both adult and juvenile facilities. This proposition was on the November 1996 ballot and did not receive a majority of support from the public. It is expected that either AB1212 or a bill similar will be placed on the November ballot in 1998. If such a bill is placed on the ballot, CSA will request that the Board of Supervisors publicly support such a bond effort.