

## THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM OF VENTURA COUNTY

### INTRODUCTION

The *Ventura County Juvenile Justice Local Action Plan* was written by the Correction Services Agency (CSA) and the Multi-Agency Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (MAJJCC), assisted by two consulting firms. The plan contains profile studies of at-risk youth in this county and a thorough analysis of the juvenile justice system. The Law, Justice and Public Safety Committee decided to address selected recommendations and suggestions specified in the plan.

### INQUIRY

- Committee members gathered information from the following sources:
- Tours of Clifton Tatum Center (Juvenile Hall), Colston Youth Center, Juvenile Restitution Work Release Center and Tri-Counties Boot Camp.
- Observations of probation and correction service officers during field supervision and of Juvenile Court sessions.
- Interviews with the Presiding Judge of Juvenile Court, the Director of the Probation Agency (formerly CSA), the Supervisor of the Juvenile Placement Aftercare Team, the Supervisor of the Community Confinement Program, the Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services of the Ventura County Schools Office, the Principal of Juvenile Court Schools, the Principal of Oxnard High School and a counselor at Rio Mesa High School.
- Meetings with the Multi-Agency Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (MAJJCC), the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Commission, the Interagency Juvenile Justice Council and a conference with Probation Agency staff.
- Written materials obtained during meetings, interviews and tours.

### FINDINGS

#### Court Evaluation of Juvenile Offenders

Juvenile Court sessions are closed to the public to protect the confidentiality of minors being adjudicated. Trials for juveniles are called contests and the judge determines a disposition rather than a sentence. Offices of both the District Attorney and the Public Defender have special units assigned to Juvenile Court.

During ten hours of non-selected observation in juvenile court, 94 cases were heard. One case was a fitness hearing to determine if the juvenile

should be tried in adult court. All others were arraignment, preliminary or disposition hearings.

72 juveniles appeared and hearings proceeded; 60 were boys and 12 were girls.

22 juveniles did not appear, of these:

9 were authorized, such as completion of probation or continuation of present placement, and the matter was settled.

11 were unauthorized and warrants were issued for the Sheriff's Department to make personal notification.

2 were unauthorized but had special circumstances. Warrants were issued to continue court jurisdiction but were held for a specified time period.

1 juvenile was hospitalized.

1 juvenile was terrified of court appearance and fled from home.

Of the 72 hearings observed:

30 were not decided. Continuance was granted or a contest date set.

42 dispositions were determined:

5 were released with time served or charges dismissed.

13 were assigned informal probation.

4 continued probation with additional or special conditions, such as substance-abuse counseling, community service or weekend incarceration.

5 were placed in group homes or residential treatment centers.

2 were placed in Tri-Counties Boot Camp.

2 were placed in the Juvenile Restitution Program.

4 were placed in Colston Youth Center.

5 were placed in Clifton Tatum Center (Juvenile Hall).

1 was assigned to the California Youth Authority (CYA).

1 was placed in Ventura County Main Jail (VCMJ).

In cases with multiple charges, some were dismissed with a Harvey Waiver in which the juvenile admitted guilt and agreed these charges could be reconsidered if additional offenses were committed.

Juveniles were accompanied to court by attorneys during all 72 hearings.

51 juveniles were accompanied by adult and counsel, 46 by one or both parents and 5 by other family members.

21 juveniles were accompanied only by counsel.

4 were over 18 years of age, 3 of these in custody at VCMJ.

1 was in CYA custody and escorted by a state officer.

The remainder appeared to be over 16 years old and the defending attorney frequently announced, "parents are waived". Parents have the right to be present but proceedings may take place without them.

### **Residential Placements for Juvenile Offenders**

**Clifton Tatum Center (CTC)** is Ventura County's Juvenile Hall, serving as the booking and holding facility for juveniles awaiting court proceedings or placement openings. CTC also serves as a secure (locked) detention facility for those who have committed serious and violent offenses.

CTC has been remodeled extensively since it was built in 1955 to house a smaller and more tractable population. The present configuration of the facility is not conducive to safe and effective supervision. Lack of an adequate outdoor recreation area necessitates a waiver from adherence to state standards.

CTC has a rated capacity of 84 beds but has exceeded this number regularly since 1994. Other placement programs have been revised and expanded to reduce the CTC population, which still averaged 109 during 1997. Consultants have estimated a Ventura County juvenile hall population of over 150 by the year 2005.

Over half the juveniles detained at CTC have committed crimes against persons or property. Commitment for serious offenses can be for 90 to 180 days, or up to more than a year. The average stay at CTC is 11 days.

Although detained juveniles are required to participate in group sessions, there are no specialized units for those with substance abuse or serious mental health problems.

A detailed and formal risk/needs assessment, modeled after that developed for the South Oxnard Challenge Project, will be used as part of CTC's intake procedures in the near future.

**Colston Youth Center (CYC)** has a rated capacity of 45 and is a secure facility in which juveniles receive intensive treatment within a tightly structured environment. The average length of commitment is 4 months. In current corrections terminology, CYC is a junior camp program.

Treatment programs at CYC include behavior modification, family participation and group sessions emphasizing areas such as anger management, criminal thinking errors and victim awareness.

CYC's mental health component has been a model program for over a decade. Gang, alcohol and drug issues also are addressed. Resources are not available to provide intensive treatment for substance abuse.

A program of early release to community confinement aftercare was implemented at CYC in 1996 to relieve overcrowding at CTC. Residential confinement was reduced by as much as one third but resulted in a significantly higher failure rate during aftercare. The system recently has been changed to one in which detainees must earn an early release by demonstrating positive behavior. It is anticipated that fewer will participate in community confinement, but more who do so will complete it successfully.

**Juvenile Restitution Work Release Center (JRP)** is a 24-bed minimum-security facility which houses a program similar to Work Furlough for adults. It is classified as a senior camp program.

Older juvenile offenders are assigned to JRP for a period of 60 to 90 days. During this time they must maintain employment and pay restitution to victims from their earnings.

The treatment program at JRP emphasizes responsibility, job skills and community service. Detained juveniles leave the facility to report to work each day. They provide their own transportation, most using bicycles they have assembled from JRP's stockpile of used parts.

JRP has been considered a model program since 1979 when it opened in the building which it still inhabits. The facility was built in 1941 and is deteriorating rapidly; colorful murals cover decaying walls.

Expansion of JRP on the present site is not possible, but the Probation Agency is exploring the feasibility of acquiring a building within the Work Furlough facility in Camarillo.

**Tri-Counties Boot Camp (TCBC)** opened in October 1997, as a joint project by the Counties of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Ventura. Ventura County holds 20 of the camp's 40 beds.

TCBC is located in the Los Padres National Forest approximately one half-hour's drive from the City of Santa Barbara. The site has been used since the 1940s by Santa Barbara County as a detention facility known as Los Prietos Boys Camp (LPBC).

TCBC and LPBC share the same physical site but are operated as separate and distinct programs. LPBC's 56 detainees wear different uniforms; detailed scheduling permits shared use of facilities while maintaining separation of the two groups.

The Santa Barbara County Probation Department staffs both TCBC and LPBC. Medical, mental health and teaching staff also are employees of Santa Barbara County. The two camps have a single director and share kitchen, medical and some support personnel. Each camp has its own program and supervisory staff.

A Ventura County Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) is responsible for all juveniles from this county who are assigned to TCBC. The DPO assists in the placement process, visits detainees weekly and participates with camp staff in ongoing evaluation of individual behavior. When a juvenile

is qualified for release, the DPO facilitates transition to this county's aftercare program.

TCBC is designated specifically for low-risk nonviolent male offenders from 13 to 17 years of age. Commitments are for 120 days with the possibility of earning up to 30 days' early release. Following release, a six-month period of intensive aftercare is specified.

All candidates for admission to TCBC are screened carefully by an intake staff. Because the camp is not fenced and is located in a forested area in close proximity to recreational sites, offenders who pose any risk of committing arson or otherwise endangering public safety cannot be accepted. Also excluded are those who lack social or emotional skills necessary to live in a large dormitory and participate cooperatively in group projects. Medical documentation of a sound body is required, as much of the camp program consists of strenuous physical activity.

The TCBC program is based upon a military model which emphasizes character development through discipline, structure, physical conditioning and group accomplishment. Therapy sessions and academic classes are important components and detainees build a work ethic by participating in crews assigned to forestry projects. Receipt of a certificate from the U.S. Forest Service upon completion of training is both a vocational asset and a tangible indication of success.

Placement at TCBC is a frightening prospect for some Ventura County juveniles, particularly those who have never experienced a camp setting or been very far from home. They plead to be assigned, instead, to Juvenile Hall where they can remain close to their families and compliant behavior is all that is expected of them. Despite their original resistance, nearly all will adjust to the demands of their new environment within the two-week orientation period.

Girls cannot be accommodated at TCBC. A program of character development in an isolated setting does not exist for female juvenile offenders in the Tri-County area.

**Group Homes and Treatment Centers** provide a placement option for juvenile offenders who need to be removed from their own homes but do not require confinement in a detention facility. Such residential placements vary from group homes which provide close supervision for up to 6 juveniles to large centers which care for as many as 80 at one time. Most are privately operated and all must meet strict requirements for licensing and receiving state funds.

A very limited number of placements in homes and centers is available. Many are located outside Ventura County and some are in other states. Girls are especially hard to place. As of January 1998, a total of 62 Ventura County juveniles actually resided in such facilities. Half were assigned to locations outside the county.

Jurisdiction remains with Ventura County when out-of-county placements are made. Responsibility for supervision rests with DPOs from this

county who are required to visit juveniles routinely at their placement locations.

### **Educational Programs for Juvenile Offenders**

The Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office operates three **Juvenile Court Schools (JCS)** which are administered as a single unit with one principal and staff. The 1997 report of a review team from the California State Department of Education commended the court schools for their use of effective and innovative strategies and for providing appropriate educational service to all their students. JCS also received a candidacy visitation in the fall of 1997 from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), an organization which grants accreditation to secondary schools.

The JCS curriculum follows California State Frameworks in English, history and health. Requirements for graduation are similar to those of other public high schools; they include a total of 220 credits, a number of required courses and demonstrated proficiency in reading, mathematics and writing. Nine students completed their high school diplomas in 1996/97.

JCS students usually are enrolled for less than a semester. Class attendance is mandatory and absence is only allowed for court appointments, illness or restriction due to misbehavior. Test results collected over several years indicate that a majority of students increase their skill level in reading and mathematics by an average of two months for every month they spend in the program.

The JCS teaching staff is augmented by the support services of a full time school counselor and a school psychologist. Two resource specialists and two paraeducators work with special education and bilingual students. Development of competency portfolios for student assessment is being pursued as part of a research project with California State University, Northridge.

**Marguerite McBride School** is located within CTC (Juvenile Hall). The school population consists of students from elementary grade levels through high school and includes those considered to be high security risks. The combined volume and turnover rate of approximately 2,500 students per year is greater than that of any other public school in Ventura County.

McBride's educational program is designed for students of varying ages and abilities, most of whom will attend for only short periods of time. Particular emphasis is placed on motivation and positive learning experiences.

The school day at McBride is 240 minutes long, the minimum requirement by California State Education Code. Classes of approximately 12 to 16 students are taught in self-contained classrooms. Students on restricted status are instructed within their living units; assignments are completed using stickers in place of writing implements which could be used as weapons.

**Frank A. Colston School** provides the educational component at CYC. Students are all of secondary school age and are committed for a period of four months to a full year. Classes are self-contained and approximately 12 to 16 in number. The school day is 270 minutes long.

Colston's educational program emphasizes the development of each student's academic foundation within a total treatment plan. One example of this integrated approach is use of written complaints to express frustration and dissatisfaction. A student who is upset over what he perceives as unjust treatment by staff learns to put his feelings on paper and is rewarded when his written grievance is given formal consideration.

Elective classes at Colston include art, ceramics and woodshop. Students also are given instruction in life skills, consumer economics and career planning. As a pilot project during the 1997/98 school year, seven Colston students were taken to the Regional Occupational Program (ROP) site in Camarillo for three weeks of vocational instruction in printing.

**The JRP School** at the Juvenile Restitution Work Release Center consists of a single classroom, one teacher and one paraeducator. Students spend 265 minutes daily in a combination of independent self-paced study and instruction in groups of ten to twenty.

JRP's educational program is individualized to fit each student's scholastic needs and employment schedule. Academic subjects, life skills and personal growth in responsibility are emphasized. During the 1996/97 school year, 18 JRP students passed examinations to receive General Educational Development (GED) certificates.

Ventura County juveniles committed to TCBC attend Academy High School, one of two schools operated on the campsite by the Santa Barbara County Juvenile Court and Community Schools Program. They receive class credit at either the junior or senior high school level and may earn a high school diploma, a California High School Proficiency Examination certificate or a GED.

Academy High School's educational program combines work experience and vocational skills with academics. The areas of mathematics, social studies and English are emphasized. Bilingual and special education instruction are available. Each student must apply his skills in composition and word processing to the successful completion of a "senior project" before leaving the program.

Upon release from detention, students will transfer from a court school back into the public school system. Students who have attended McBride School for only a short period of time return to the school and the classes they left. Any work accomplished at McBride is incorporated into their grades at the original school. A longer commitment requires a withdrawal transcript from the court school and re-enrollment in the local school district.

From the perspective of a high school counselor, enrollment of students returning from court schools would be facilitated if two pieces of information were available when the student arrives. An unofficial copy of the transcript would allow immediate placement in appropriate classes. As course titles rarely are specific, especially in mathematics and English, brief course descriptions attached to the transcript would assure that the student is placed in a comparable class.

Comprehensive high schools award five credits for successful completion of a semester class; anything less receives no credit and requires the entire class to be taken again. Court schools and other forms of alternative education acknowledge completion of less than a full semester's work with a grade and partial credit. When a student returns to a comprehensive high school and is placed in a comparable class, a transfer grade is applied to completion of the semester, but partial credit cannot be utilized for dissimilar courses.

According to administrative and guidance staff, students returning from a court school to a large high school campus try to avoid fights and stay out of trouble. Their good intentions frequently are undermined when they encounter difficulty in dealing with peer groups and conforming to the behavioral expectations of a regular school environment.

The Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office reports that approximately 98% of court school students are accepted in either their original school or an alternative placement in their district. Students who have been expelled, are seriously deficient in credits or who cannot adjust to a regular school environment are accepted at Gateway Community School.

Approximately 80% of the court school population comes from the attendance area of the Oxnard Union High School District. Representatives from the district have met with county schools staff to develop specific procedures for return of these students.

### **Community Placements For Juvenile Offenders**

**Informal Probation** may be ordered by a juvenile court judge as the penalty for a first or minor offense. Minimal restrictions are applied and a DPO is assigned.

**Home Supervision** is assigned when the court releases a minor from detention in CTC to parental custody during the period prior to disposition. Home Supervision is a form of house arrest requiring adherence to strict requirements and may include electronic monitoring.

**The Community Confinement Program** began in 1995 with addition of electronic monitoring to an existing home supervision program. The program presently supervises juveniles for two to three months on early release from CYC and those in predisposition placement for approximately two to four weeks. Additionally, some juveniles are removed from CTC to the Community Confinement Program after their commitment and careful screening at CTC. The program averages 50 participants at any one time.



Community Confinement staff is composed of a Supervising DPO, a Senior DPO, five Corrections Services Officers II, a student aide, and clerical assistants. A social worker from the Behavioral Health Department provides assistance with individual cases. Officers work in teams and caseloads are divided on a flexible basis.

All juveniles in the Community Confinement Program are considered to be under house arrest; with about 80% monitored electronically.

The County contracts with a private company for monitoring services and equipment. Monitoring equipment consists of a base unit about the size of a VCR, which is connected to the home's telephone line, and a small radio transmitter which is worn permanently on the individual's ankle. As long as the wearer remains within a predetermined distance from the base unit, a normal signal is transmitted to the monitoring company. Whenever the wearer leaves the confinement area the signal is broken and it is established again upon return. Leaving and returning times are recorded along with automatic checks every four hours. Removal of the ankle transmitter will send an immediate alarm and notification to monitoring headquarters at CTC.

A printout of all recorded times is sent daily to CTC. Staff compares this record with the juvenile's detailed schedule and notes any discrepancies. Most exits are authorized, as juveniles in the program are required to attend school and other assigned activities. Parents may request authorization for excursions not on the regular schedule. Some printouts contain many leave-return entries.

Juveniles placed in community confinement are visited three to five times weekly by a team of two Correction Services Officers who follow a very flexible schedule and may appear at any location where the individual should be. Routine visits may last from 15 minutes to over an hour and include a mandatory search as well as a drug test. Additional contact is made by phone two or three times daily with the juvenile, the family, the school or others. Officers respond immediately if a removal alarm is transmitted, a major discrepancy is found on the printout or an emergency call is received.

Juveniles who evidence substance abuse or commit a criminal offense while in the Community Confinement Program are arrested and returned to CTC pending a court hearing. The penalty for serious violation of program regulations is determined by a DPO and social worker. Most violations are minor and an incident report is placed in the case file.

**The Juvenile Placement Aftercare Team (JPAT)** was created in 1996 to reduce overcrowding by releasing offenders more quickly into a nonresidential treatment program. JPAT presently assists the Court in determining appropriate residential placements and provides intensive supervision and support following release from detention.

JPAT placement services begin with assessment during initial detention of the juvenile at CTC. After reviewing background information and conducting an intake interview, appropriateness for placement is deter-

mined. A variety of placement positions are considered and contacted for willingness to accept the juvenile and availability of openings. The DPO decides which placement will best meet the individual's needs and prepares a recommendation for the Court.

JPAT provides aftercare for juveniles who successfully have completed commitments in residential confinement at CYC, TCBC, group homes or in other placements. Statistics indicate a high percentage of juvenile offenders will violate their probation conditions within two months if they are released without aftercare. JPAT is designed as a safeguard during this vulnerable period.

The DPO assigned to juveniles detained at TCBC is involved through the intake process and the period of commitment until a transfer into aftercare is completed. Participation with juveniles in other placements begins with a meeting to determine a pre-release plan and continues for a period of 60 to 90 days following release. Approximately 200 juveniles are in the aftercare program at any one time.

JPAT staff is composed of a Supervising DPO, a Senior DPO, two DPOs assigned to placement, six DPOs assigned to aftercare, three Corrections Services Officers II, a student aide and clerical assistants. A social worker from the Behavioral Health Department is available on a limited basis to assist in the transition from detention. Caseloads for DPOs range from 25 to a maximum of 32.

Aftercare supervision for those from TCBC begins at a high level of intensity and gradually is reduced during the final months. Visits are made weekly to the homes of others in the program and include a mandatory search as well as a drug test. Serious probation violations require a return to CTC and a court hearing, but DPOs use creative sanctions for minor infractions.

**The Multisystemic Therapy (MST)** model is used by JPAT in working with juveniles and their families. The MST strategy is to analyze a number of factors within the offender's environment and build on strong points. School peers and recreational pursuits are considered but the family plays a central role. The goal is to increase cohesion and empower the family to cope with problems. DPOs assist in problem solving, review progress, provide positive reinforcement and help to secure firm connections to services and resources within the community.

A juvenile is released from aftercare when home and school situations are stabilized and the family is linked securely to a network of community resources. An extensive 60-day review is conducted to determine what level of further supervision is needed. About 80% are released to general probation; the remainder continue in the program, some for as long as five months.

### **Intervention Programs For Juvenile Offenders**

Intervention programs are directed specifically toward juveniles whose delinquent acts have come to the attention of law enforcement or school

authorities, whereas prevention programs are oriented toward all youth. During development of the Local Action Plan, consultants conducted a study of youth in custody and a placement simulation exercise. Findings indicated that early intervention might have made a difference in 73% of the cases studied.

**Teen Court** is a combined intervention project of local high schools and Ventura County. High schools supply the location and students who play the parts of all court personnel except the judge and defendant. The judge is a volunteer from the county's court system. The Probation Agency screens referrals for appropriate cases and a college student, paid with grant funds, organizes the court calendar. Court is held twice a month in the afternoon after school and may hear more than one case in a session.

Defendants in teen court have committed minor offenses such as truancy, fighting in school, vandalism, graffiti, trespassing or curfew violations. The defendant must be present and accompanied by a parent or guardian. A student defense attorney has perused the case earlier and meets with the client before the session begins. A judgment against the defendant brings an automatic requirement to serve as a juror in another trial and a sanction such as performance of community service.

Ventura County's first teen court was established at Oxnard High School and handles cases from the five high schools on the Oxnard Plain. Of the 21 juveniles adjudged in teen court during the 1996/97 school year, 81% have not reoffended. New courts have been created at Adolfo Camarillo High School, Newbury Park High School and Simi Valley High School.

**The Early Intervention Program** was implemented as a pilot project by the Probation Agency's Youth Services Unit in September of 1996. The program is patterned after Orange County's *Eight Percent* program, directed toward an at-risk juvenile population of which it is predicted that 8% will become chronic offenders. Those in the program are directly supervised for six months to a year and will be followed to determine eventual outcomes.

Ventura County's program is located in Oxnard and served 58 juveniles and their families during the first year of operation. At the end of the year, 37 cases were still open and 18 had been referred to the District Attorney for consideration to become wards of the Court. The Probation Agency estimates that Oxnard would generate 60% of all cases, were the program to be implemented countywide, and that 500 to 600 cases per year would be eligible in Oxnard if additional criteria beyond those of *Eight Percent* had not been used.

Participation in the Early Intervention Program is limited to children under 14 years of age who have been referred by a School Attendance Review Board (SARB), or have received a citation from law enforcement, and who meet three or more additional criteria. The following characteristics are considered to be qualifying: pre-delinquent or high-risk behavior such as acting violently, stealing, running away, setting fires or associating with gang members; consistent drug or alcohol use; being a

victim of abuse or having a parent on probation for child abuse or domestic violence; a family history of dysfunction indicated by criminal behavior, mental illness, substance abuse or a lack of support for pro-social activities.

Two DPOs are assigned to the program as Early Intervention Officers; each has an average caseload of 20 and a maximum of 25. They work with the whole family and enlist other county agencies and community organizations to provide services such as family counseling and youth mentoring. When a serious need develops, such as finding a place to live, officers frequently will assist the family directly if they cannot find help through a community resource.

**The South Oxnard Challenge Project (SOCP)** is a three-year experimental demonstration and research project funded by a \$4.5 million grant from the California Board of Corrections. The project officially opened in January 1998 and is anticipated to provide an array of services to about 300 youth in the next three years.

SOCP is an intervention program for high-risk youth between the ages of 12 and 18 who live in the area of South Oxnard and the City of Port Hueneme. Referrals are made by schools and the Ventura County Probation Agency. To meet the requirements of a research project, half the probation referrals are being assigned randomly to a control group that will receive no special treatment services. Those in the treatment group are given a risk/needs assessment and provided with intervention services to match identified needs. The project will be evaluated by comparison of the treatment group's school and delinquency records with those of the control group.

Treatment services are provided by a combination of governmental and community based agencies. The county provides DPOs, educational aides and social workers. Recreation specialists are from the City of Oxnard. The Oxnard City Corps is in charge of community service and vocational projects. Mentors, called Navigators, are supplied by El Concilio del Condado de Ventura. Interface conducts mediation counseling and the Palmer Drug and Alcohol Program runs support groups.

A key element of SOCP is community involvement. An advisory group of local citizens has participated in planning and will continue to be involved in decisions. The program is based upon the theory of *Corrections of Place*, a concept that views crime as harm done to people and communities which must be acknowledged and repaired by the offender. Community service and victim restitution are part of the project's activities.

SOCP is headquartered at the South Oxnard Community Center on Bard Road. The center serves as a single place to house counseling, tutoring, recreation and other positive activities under the guidance of a professional staff. A day reporting center is another SOCP facility. It opened in April at Southwinds, the Oxnard Police Department's storefront station and recreation center. The day center can serve up to 25 juveniles who

report there for the day if they do not attend regular school, or in the afternoon if they do. Special tutoring and help with homework are the primary activities conducted at this location.

### **Plans For the Future of Juvenile Offenders**

In 1997 the California State Assembly passed two bills to increase juvenile incarceration and one of them is a version of third-strike legislation. As juvenile crime has become more violent, the public is demanding harsh treatment for juveniles who commit serious offenses. The juvenile at-risk population, ages 10 through 17, increased by more than 13,000 from 1985 to 1995. The arrest rate per 1,000 juveniles increased 19.5% from 1990 to 1995 and felony arrests increased by 18%. The overall crime rate in the county has decreased since 1995, but juvenile crime continues to increase.

The present total housing capacity of all Ventura County juvenile detention facilities is 177 beds. Conservative estimates place the number of beds needed in the next two years at 216, a shortfall of 18%. The probation agency is exploring the feasibility of relocating and expanding JRP. At an estimated cost of \$800,000. Building 252 of the adult Work Furlough Program can be converted to meet California Board of Corrections standards to house 40 juveniles. The Camarillo location would provide sufficient employment opportunities for the expanded program. Approximately 20 to 25 additional JRP placements would free bed space at CTC for high-risk offenders.

The Probation Agency is considering various alternatives to increase the capacity of CTC. If JRP is relocated, the current building could be remodeled and used as a minimum-security facility of up to 20 beds for those presently housed in CTC while serving short-term commitments or awaiting placement in a non-secure environment. Another option is to create an average of eight additional beds by housing all Juvenile Court offenders in adult jail once they reach the age of 18.

Roles of juvenile incarceration facilities are being clarified as part of the Ventura County Juvenile Justice Master Plan. The mission of CTC will be that of transition and detention rather than treatment. CYC, JRP, TCBC and other "camp" programs will focus on reduction of recidivism through education, treatment, behavior modification and skill building. The CYC program will remain much as it now exists and a program will be developed to accommodate older and more sophisticated offenders who will require a longer commitment in a high-security setting.

Assembly Bill 1212 proposes \$350 million for construction of local juvenile facilities across California. This bond will appear on the ballot in the November 1998, election. A matching 25% will be required from local funding. If AB1212 and the bond issue pass, a juvenile justice complex will be built in Ventura County. It will include courtrooms and support units, an assessment center and detention facilities for 160 to 200 juveniles with separate mental health and substance abuse units.

Work is progressing on development of the Ventura County Juvenile Justice Complex Master Plan. Recommendations regarding specific details are being received from the agencies, offices, departments and service providers who will operate within the complex. Funding sources for the County's required share of capital expenditures are being developed by the Ventura County CAO.

The Comprehensive Youth Services Act of 1997 provides Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to be used by county probation departments for services which meet specific criteria to children in the juvenile justice system.

Next year approximately \$800,000 will be available in Ventura County and MAJJCC has been designated as the advisory group to guide allocation of funds among programs for at-risk youth. At a meeting in April 1998, MAJJCC established early intervention as this county's highest priority. An early intervention program will be implemented in the Santa Clara River Valley using the existing pilot project in Oxnard as a model. Other recommendations from the Local Action Plan were ranked according to priority; TANF funds will be directed primarily toward intervention with abused and molested girls, expansion of parent education programs and implementation of services for children of incarcerated parents.

## CONCLUSIONS

Juvenile crime is the fastest growing segment of the criminal justice system and Juvenile Court plays an important role in deterring future crimes by youthful offenders. A minor may be assigned to probation, placed in non-secure confinement or committed to a locked facility.

In more than one fourth of 94 cases observed, parents or other family members were not in court to provide additional information to the judge or support to the juvenile.

**CTC (Juvenile Hall)** is an antiquated and chronically overcrowded facility. Treatment programs recommended in the *Ventura County Juvenile Justice Local Action Plan* cannot be implemented under present conditions, although a risk/needs assessment instrument is being developed.

The inception of TCBC has increased the custodial capacity of Ventura County's Juvenile Justice System, as recommended in the Local Action Plan.

Two recommendations of the Local Action Plan touch upon common characteristics of incarcerated girls, but special programs for the needs of a small minority of female offenders are difficult to implement in an institutional setting.

Ventura County Juvenile Court Schools and Academy High School at TCBC provide a scholastic curriculum similar to that of an ordinary

public secondary school. Creative teaching strategies are utilized to promote accomplishment during each student's term of commitment. At Colston, JRP and Academy schools, academic skills are part of the total rehabilitation program of the facility.

A student's smooth transition from a court school to a comprehensive high school can be hampered by enrollment problems with credits and classes. Adjustment to the social pressures of a large campus may be difficult. Obstacles impede successful reintegration of juvenile offenders into mainstream schools, as is recommended in the Local Action Plan.

Electronic monitoring is a cost-effective method of constraint. It is a tool which provides tangible reinforcement and a reminder to follow regulations. It must be combined with surveillance by trained human beings, as equipment cannot indicate what the juvenile is doing when a leave is recorded. Even a sophisticated tracking system would require an individual to be capable of understanding recorded data and making appropriate contact with the monitored juvenile.

Aftercare is crucial to the treatment efforts of all juvenile justice confinement programs. The JPAT program of Ventura County provides support and supervision of juvenile offenders during the period when recidivism is most likely to occur. JPAT only supervises juveniles who have been confined in TCBC, CYC, group homes and treatment centers, but those released from all facilities would benefit from aftercare.

The Ventura County Juvenile Justice System has not been able to meet Local Action Plan recommendations to expand substance abuse and mental health services during detention and aftercare. JPAT's caseloads are more than double the number recommended for application of Multisystemic Therapy. The mental health needs of over 200 juveniles cannot be met by one social worker.

Ventura County's Juvenile Justice System is meeting the Local Action Plan's recommendation to expand early intervention programs. The need for such programs has been shown to be greatest in Oxnard, where the Probation Agency's pilot program has been operating since 1996. When it is in full operation, the South Oxnard Challenge Project will extend intervention services to another 300 at-risk youth in Oxnard and Port Hueneme. MAJJCC'S recent decision to direct TANF funds toward early intervention will generate additional programs in other areas of the County.

The Local Action Plan's suggestion that teen courts be established at additional schools was accomplished during the 1997/98 school year. A day reporting center, also suggested, opened in April as a component of the South Oxnard Challenge Project.

Unless current trends change drastically, more Ventura County juveniles will be in custody within the next two years and they will be detained for longer periods of time. Changes being considered by the Probation Agency for CTC and JRP would furnish an additional number of beds nearly equivalent to the projected increase in the offender population.

Utilization of the existing JRP facility to house low-risk, less mature offenders would meet the Local Action Plan recommendation to provide semi-secure confinement for those awaiting placement who do not require a highly restricted environment.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- That Ventura County Juvenile Court judges require the presence of a parent or guardian with every juvenile under the age of 16 appearing for a disposition hearing or contest.
- That the Ventura County Juvenile Justice Master Plan include long-range planning for a tri-county girls' camp to parallel the boot camp program for boys, but designed to develop skills and strengths in a manner applicable to female offenders.
- That Ventura County Juvenile Court Schools and Academy High School provide exiting students with an unofficial transcript of work accomplished and a brief written description of courses taken.
- That the Ventura County Placement Aftercare Team (JPAT) be expanded to provide aftercare to juveniles released from the Juvenile Restitution Program and long-term commitment at Clifton Tatum Center.
- That the JPAT staff be increased sufficiently to allow caseloads appropriate for full utilization of Multisystemic Therapy, and additional Behavioral Health Department social workers be assigned to advise and assist DPOs in dealing with issues of substance abuse and mental health.
- That resources be allocated to develop mental health and substance abuse programs at juvenile detention facilities, as recommended in the *Ventura County Juvenile Justice Local Action Plan*.

## **RESPONSE REQUIRED**

Presiding Judge of Juvenile Court

Probation Agency

Behavioral Health Department

County Superintendent of Schools