



# Ventura County Probation Agency

Calvin C. Remington  
Director/Chief Probation Officer

August 13, 2003

# RECEIVED

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**VENTURA COUNTY GRAND JURY**

The Honorable Bruce A. Clark  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
Ventura County Hall of Justice  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

Re: 2002-2003 Ventura County Grand Jury Report entitled *Intervention Programs for Delinquent Non-Violent Juveniles by the Sheriff and Probation Departments in Ventura County.*

Dear Judge Clark:

In accordance with California Penal Code §933.05, this letter is a response to the findings and recommendations of the 2002-2003 Grand Jury in the above referenced report.

The Grand Jury indicated concern regarding the County's non-violent youth who may be deemed a risk to themselves or to the public in general. They, therefore, revisited the need for some type of juvenile delinquency prevention and intervention programs.

The Probation Agency, too, is concerned about these youth, as well as others, who come within our jurisdiction and for whom we can offer or make referrals to appropriate programs and services. Our juvenile justice strategy, which clearly includes these youth, is to provide a coordinated continuum of graduated sanctions that promote community safety, personal accountability and reparation to the victim and community. Our juvenile justice strategy has a number of well defined principles that encompass these youth.

We believe:

- An effective intervention strategy responds to community safety and to the needs of the youths and their families.
- Delinquency prevention and early intervention are the most effective approaches in combating youth crime.
- Intervention is most effective when "at risk" behavior first occurs.
- Accurate assessment of risk, strengths and need is essential to identify the appropriate level of intervention.
- Building on family strengths has the most positive and long lasting impact.

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- Probation services, in partnership with youth and families, the Court, schools, social services agencies, other law enforcement agencies, community based organizations and the faith based community can enhance the development of capable, mature and responsible youth.

Our youth programs are based on nationally recognized "best practices" models, such as individualized services, a community based approach and an emphasis on family. They utilize cognitive-behavioral techniques, include a strength based assessment and case plan and provide unified, collaborative, and family-focused services and referrals.

During the past five years, we have adopted what is called the "eight percent solution." This approach is based on research that indicates 8 – 10 percent of all delinquents are serious habitual offenders who commit over 50 percent of all delinquent behavior. The solution to this problem is to identify those potential youth at first referral. The identification occurs as the result of an assessment instrument and once identified, intensive services are provided these youth. This occurs both in our youth services system, as well as for those placed on formal probation. We think this approach has served the County well and has contributed to the unusually low rate of delinquency we are currently experiencing.

#### **Recommendation R-1**

*Ventura County Sheriff and the Probation Departments need to work together to establish non-residential programs for youth at risk.*

#### **Recommendation R-5**

*If the Sheriff is unable to fund programs formally under his jurisdiction, contract cities should continue or add programs for youth at risk in their communities.*

#### **Response**

These recommendations have been implemented for many years. We firmly believe that collaboration is the key to the success of our juvenile justice strategy. In addition to the Sheriff's Department, our primary partners include: ACTION, Anti-Defamation League, Behavioral Health, Boys and Girls Clubs, City Impact, Coalition to End Household Violence, the District Attorney's Office, El Concilio, Girls Inc., Human Services Agency, Interface, Palmer Drug and Alcohol Programs, each of our local police agencies, the Public Defender's Office, Public Health, School Districts, and the Superintendent of Schools. We offer a wide variety of programs to be better able to meet the needs of youth in their home communities.

Prevention and Early Intervention: Our Youth Services Family Resource Centers coordinate prevention and diversion programs for youth who are diverted from the Juvenile Courts. Many programs are offered through contracts with community based

organizations. All of these programs, with the exception of "cool homes," are non-residential services for at-risk youth. Services are geographically based throughout the county. Services include:

- Crisis intervention
- Work with School Attendance Review Boards (SARBs)
- Teen Courts
- Truancy programs
- Specialized classes and groups in the schools and community
- Informal probation
- Early intervention services

A risk assessment determines whether the youth (and parents) is sent to a class, an 8-10 week group, pays restitution or a charity contribution, completes community service, attends victim/offender mediation, attends teen court, or receives other services from a probation officer or community based organization. One time classes offered by Youth Services Probation Officers include Violence Prevention, Theft/Vandalism Prevention, and Substance Abuse. Eight to ten week groups include Anger Management, Conflict Resolution, and Life Skills. A 10-week parenting group, the Parent Project, is also offered.

The following describes a typical **month** for Youth Services:

- 1,356 community service work hours completed by youth
- \$5,608 restitution collected from youth
- \$2,713 charity contributions paid by youth
- 18 Parent Project classes facilitated by Youth Services Officers
  - 113 parent attendees
- 9 classes facilitated by Youth Services Officers
  - 69 youth attendees; 71 parent attendees
- 24 groups facilitated by Youth Services Officers
  - Average number attendees per group: 24
- 70 victim contacts
- 387 youth contacts (in addition to classes/groups)
- 116 Court actions
- 296 youth on Informal Probation contracts
- 105 youth on Early Intervention contracts

All of these efforts are extremely successful. For example, nearly 80 percent of the over 5,000 youth handled by Youth Services in 2001 were successfully diverted from further involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Formal Probation: Youth placed on formal probation by the Court are assigned to probation caseloads based on risk, services needed, and residence location. Officers supervise and monitor youth to enforce court orders, ensure accountability to victims and the community and to reinforce and modify the case plan as needed. Field probation officers rely on strong interagency and community partnerships to coordinate supervision and services. Regular supervision level for these caseloads is 1:80.

The following is a typical **month** for 602 wards:

- 138 victims are contacted by probation officers
- \$14,600 in restitution is paid by youth
- 2800 hours of community service work is completed by youth
- 280 searches are conducted by probation officers
- 100 items are confiscated, including drugs, alcohol, weapons, and gang items
- 484 reports are written by field probation officers
- 12 arrests are made by probation officers

Many services are particularly earmarked for high risk offenders. Supervision caseloads range from 1:25 to 1:50 for these youth. Special programs include the following:

Gang Violence Prevention (GVP)/Gang Violence Suppression (GVS): Probation officers provide supervision and intensive monitoring of youth who are gang involved in partnership with local police, the District Attorney's Office, schools and community based organizations such as City Impact, the Police Athletic Leagues (PALs) and the Boys and Girls Clubs. Activities also include education and outreach efforts to youth in danger of gang involvement through classroom presentations and recreational opportunities. The probation officers are located in the Ventura, Oxnard, and Santa Paula areas, which are the largest areas of gang involvement in the county. GVP is funded through the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) and GVS is funded through grants from OCJP.

Repeat Offender Prevention Program (ROPP): An interagency team provides supervision and treatment of first time 602 wards of the Court under age 15 ½ who are identified as being at risk of becoming chronic offenders. Services are provided by probation officers, City Impact and Palmer Drug and Alcohol Programs. Minors are also exposed to many cultural and recreational opportunities as incentives for program participation. The program is currently funded through JJCPA.

Juvenile Drug Court: A multi-agency team, including probation and corrections officers, mental health professionals and community based treatment providers, defense attorneys and prosecutors, lead by the Juvenile Court Judge, coordinates supervision and treatment of youthful drug offenders. The program is primarily funded through federal block grant monies, the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG), allocated to the County and to individual cities in the County based on the population of

at-risk youth. Additional funding for special services is derived from other grants received by the Superior Court. This program is not only a model of success for program graduates, whose recidivism rates fall far below non-graduates, but also as a model for building funding streams through many sources to combat a serious problem through a coordinated approach.

Aftercare/Day Reporting: Aftercare services are an integral part of case plans for youth who have been in residential care. The focus is successful reentry into the family and community. The Day Reporting Center serves as an alternative to custody and an aftercare services hub. Intervention options include individual, group and family counseling, substance abuse education and treatment, conflict resolution and anger management, victim awareness, mediation services, tutoring and homework assistance, self reliance skill building, community service projects and recreational activities. Funding is through JJCPA.

### **Recommendation R-2**

*It is imperative that a program such as Grizzly be established in Ventura County or the County should aggressively send our juveniles to San Luis Obispo County's program. This program is funded through Federal and State grants, and Ventura County Sheriff and the Probation Department should seriously study their procedure for obtaining such grants.*

### **Response**

This recommendation has been implemented since the inception of the Grizzly ChalleNGe program in California in 1998. Grizzly ChalleNGe is a national program funded through the National Guard. There are Grizzly ChalleNGe programs in 27 states. The Ventura County Probation Agency supports the California program, Grizzly Youth Academy which is located at Camp San Luis Obispo

Entry criteria include:

- U.S citizen and California resident
- 16 – 18 years of age
- A high school dropout, unemployed or underemployed
- Drug free
- Not currently on probation, parole, serving time or awaiting sentencing, or charged with a crime, except a status offense (e.g. truancy, curfew, runaway)
- Physically and mentally able to participate in the program

Grizzly Youth Academy is a 22-week residential program with a one year follow-up period. Youth from Ventura County have routinely made up 1/3 of the total Academy classes.

Ventura County probation officers provide written and verbal information on the Grizzly Youth Academy to interested youth and parents with whom they come into contact. They assist youth and families in completing referral forms, interface with the Grizzly Academy and, on occasion, provide transportation to the program.

The Ventura County Probation Agency receives millions of dollars each year in grant money to support needed programs. We also encourage and support other agencies and community based organizations in pursuing grants which will offer programs to meet gaps in service for youth in our communities. We receive many of these grants and are solicited to apply for certain grants, as we are recognized as leaders in developing and delivering high quality, effective and efficient programs.

### **Recommendation R-3**

If we do not send our juvenile youth to Tri-County Boot Camp, it is urgent to establish such a facility in Ventura County, possibly at our new Juvenile Justice Center.

### **Response**

Our Court has stopped committing youth to the Tri-County Boot Camp as of June 30<sup>th</sup> in anticipation of the new programs that will soon be available at the Juvenile Justice Center (JJC). Each of the program elements mentioned in the findings will be available at the JJC. It should be noted that less than 10 percent of the youths who come into contact with our juvenile justice system are incarcerated. Most of our programs are community programs for youth who live in the community. Services available for those youth who are incarcerated will include:

- A strength based assessment and case plan, using the Northpointe Compass
- Thinking for a Change, a cognitive behavioral program, nationally recognized as a "best practices" model
- Anger management
- Life skills
- Gang intervention, with the facility as a "violence-free zone"
- Conflict resolution
- Drug and alcohol counseling
- Individual, group and family counseling
- A comprehensive school program
- Transition and aftercare planning
- A comprehensive recreational program
- Community service opportunities
- Job training
- Job placement

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- Gender specific programs
- Tolerance program, "Eliminate the Hate"

Thanks so much for the opportunity to address our youth programs. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (805) 654-2100.

Sincerely,

*Calvin C Remington*

Calvin C. Remington  
Director/Chief Probation Officer

*by [Signature]*

cc: ✓ Grand Jury  
County Clerk & Recorder (2)  
County Executive Office