

**VENTURA COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY
PREVENTION COMMISSION (JJDP)**

**DECEMBER 2021 INSPECTION REPORT OF VENTURA COUNTY'S PROBATION
AGENCY (VCPA) JUVENILE FACILITIES COMPLEX**

Inspection Date: Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Last Ventura County JJDP Inspection Date: December 2, 2020

Address: 4333 Vineyard Avenue, Oxnard, CA 93036 **Phone Number:** 805-981-5527

Chief Deputy: Tim Dowler, Chief Deputy Juvenile Services Bureau

Division Manager: Sandra Carrillo, 805-981-5545

Presiding Juvenile Court Judge: Judge Tari L. Cody

JJDP Inspection Team Commissioners: Valerie Salazar (Chair), Cheryl A. De Bari, Esq. (First Vice Chair), Gina Petrus, Ph.D. (Second Vice Chair), Jennifer Lopardo (Secretary), Daisalyn Chan, David Lopez-Lee, Ph.D., Kate English, James Hodgkins, John D. Horton, M.D., James Ramos, Joseph Ortiz.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF INSPECTION

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission ("JJDP") is authorized through the provisions of §§226 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code, et. seq. The responsibilities of this Commission are broadly defined in §§229 and 233, and the standards set forth by the California Board of State and Community Corrections. The general purpose of the Commission is to "inquire into the administration of the juvenile court law in the county" (§ 229) and "coordinate on a countywide basis the work of those community agencies engaged in activities designed to prevent delinquency". (§233).

The Ventura County JJDP conducted its annual inspection of the Ventura County Juvenile Facilities Complex ("JF") for 2020 in accordance with Welfare and Institutions Code §229 and Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations, "Minimum Standards for Juvenile Facilities." The actual inspection was limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

COMMENDATIONS

1. VCPA has gone above and beyond in protecting the youth and the staff of the Juvenile Facility (JF) during the pandemic. They have reported to the JJDP frequently on measures taken. Their swift policies and procedures even became a model for statewide utilization at other facilities.
2. The JJDP would like to commend VCPA on their robust plan for the Realignment Block Grant that was awarded at the end of 2021. The Annual Plan offered space, programming, and a campus feeling to Transitional Age Youth (TAY), and we hope to see it change lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Grievance Forms Process Recommendation:** The JJDPC recommends that staff receive additional training on how to respond to youth grievances and effectively document those interactions.
2. **Emergency Plans Recommendation:** The JJDPC recommends that VCPA permanently stage at the JF enough vehicles to evacuate active JF population to eliminate/cut down on any potential wait time for vehicles in a high traffic evacuation emergency, or one in which communication or roads have become compromised.
3. **Incident Reports Process Recommendation:** A more detailed explanation or suggestion for referrals by the reporting officers would be helpful in the reports, as well as a designation for violent offenses. Specifically recording incidents as violent or non-violent would seem beneficial in tracking specific youths' behavior, as well as the overall state of the facility.
4. **DJJ Realignment SYTF Recommendation:** The JJDPC recommends continued monitoring of the programs being implemented, mental health of the youths, and re-entry processes being put in place.

2020 RECOMMENDATIONS & VCPA UPDATES

1. In its 2020 Inspection Report, the JDDPC noted that *“Interviewed youth felt that drug rehabilitation intervention would have helped prevent recidivism and that the JF program could be improved. Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) is currently offering substance abuse counseling services. Groups are offered 3 times per week. Other services provided included assessment, individual counseling and case management services (referrals to community services).”* Have any changes been implemented in 2021?

VCPA Response: In 2020, only individual counseling was offered due to COVID, and we had a part time clinician who worked 20 hours per week strictly performing the assessments.

In 2021, VCBH continued to offer substance use counseling services in person at the JF to youth. Substance use groups using the Matrix Model were offered in the units for both males and females committed. In addition, substance use assessments for youth to determine level of care and need, individual counseling with the Alcohol and Drug counselor continued as well as case management and linkage to community alcohol and drug treatment at release with scheduled appointments in the community was provided. We have referred several youths to residential treatment centers as they were assessed by VCBH and met this level of need and several of the youth have declined to enter treatment once accepted, with some agreeing to attend outpatient services, despite the recommended higher level of care. Residential treatment is voluntary for the youth assessed and we are not able to mandate participation.

Each youth seen by Behavioral Health and our 5 licensed Clinicians on site and Psychiatrist is assessed to determine if there are mental health or substance use that is impacting their functioning and/or impairment is identified. The Behavioral Health

Clinicians assess and diagnose youth for substance use and mental health concerns and many youths at the JF have both mental health and substance use diagnoses and participate in medication support, individual and group substance use counseling, and group and family behavioral health interventions with the Behavioral Health team. The MAYSI mental health screening tool used at the facility indicates both potential mental health and substance use concerns on the tool which is reviewed by Behavioral Health staff within 24 hours of booking in most cases (no in-person BH staff on Sundays and holidays).

In 2021, the substance use counselor began assessing and meeting with the TAY individually with specific identified TAY in collaboration with court, Probation and VCBH team for TAY needing additional assessment for adult residential drug treatment, drug treatment for pregnant and parenting young adults and TAY with moderate to severe substance use. The TAY were provided with resources and an opportunity to be linked to adult services. In addition, in November and December 2021, the 5 VCBH Clinician's on site have been completing the ASAM certification to increase the team's capacity to complete the substance assessment tool required for youth seeking referrals to substance use treatment. The ASAM criteria is the most widely used and comprehensive set of guidelines for placement, continued stay and transfer/discharge of patients with addiction and co-occurring conditions. The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) tool is used by the Behavioral Health Substance Use team to identify level of care need.

2. In its 2020 Inspection Report, the JJDCPC recommended "*use of additional Substance Abuse Clinicians so that ALL youth can be assessed, and ALL youth can participate in a Substance Abuse Counseling Group (prevention).*" Have any changes been implemented in 2021?

VCPA Response: In 2021, VCBH hired a full-time clinician who could conduct assessments and offer the substance abuse counseling groups. The youth that come into the facility are ALL offered assessment by the Behavioral Health staff when they enter the facility. The youth can decline Behavioral Health services as they are voluntary. This is a very small group that enter the facility (ex. There are 60 youth at the JF today and 1 youth refused to meet with Behavioral Health). The five Behavioral Health licensed clinician's do assess the youth for substance and mental health needs. Currently we have approximately three Substance Use Counseling groups for the facility per week and the alcohol and drug counselor is here up to 20 hours per week which does not allow for expansion of substance use groups to all the units, as we currently have about 6 units open. The counselor will meet with some youth in the other units individually with this need and we are collaborating with Probation to determine if this position should be expanded to full time which was recommended in discussions between the agencies in 2021. The 5 Behavioral Health Clinicians attend clinical training to address co-occurring treatment needs of youth. In December 2021 we are adding a TAY substance use group to implement the substance use group curriculum in this unit as well. Currently those youth identified as needing substance use specific interventions, in addition to co-occurring mental health interventions meet

individually with the alcohol and drug counselor in which she uses the matrix curriculum to address substance use symptoms.

3. In its 2020 Inspection Report, the JJDPJPC recommended “programming that is centered on girl/leadership/empowerment and psychoeducation around gender-specific issues. Perhaps a partnership with a community-based organization (“CBO”) to provide gender-specific services for females with the goal of positive youth development could be made.” Have any changes been implemented in 2021?

VCPA Response: In collaboration with Interface, a grant was submitted for gender specific programming to reduce risk of juvenile girls. This grant is pending review. Meanwhile, we have contracted services through “Women of Substance, Men of Honor” (WOSMOH) to provide gender specific programming. In addition, Forever Found provides individual counseling and the “Word on the Street” program which is an educational program for youth at risk of sexual exploitation (CSEC). It is for male and female youth who are considered at risk or who have been victims of CSEC.

MAJOR FOCUS AREAS FOR 2021 JJDPJPC VISIT

1. Policies/procedures for youth and community member grievances; review all youth and community member grievances for 2021.

A total of 33 Grievance Forms were made available for review between an initial review date of August 18, 2021, and during the inspection on December 7, 2021. All grievances were submitted by youth. No caregiver or community grievances were reported. All grievances were resolved within the 48-hour time frame. Most of the grievances were related to housing conditions and complaints about staff. However, there was a pattern of grievances filed by youth on “separation status”. Youth described lack of access to “free time” and programming.

Many forms were incomplete or missing information. Documentation under “Response to Grievance” often contained language that was punitive in nature and not trauma informed.

2. Emergency Plan Review

On September 22nd, 2021, Commissioners Joe Ortiz and Kate English visited the JF and reviewed the following documents in relationship to VCPA Emergency Planning at the JF:

- COVID-19 Worksite Reopening Plan & 4/10/20 COVID-19 JF Update
- Emergency Action & Fire Prevention Plan
- Procedure 227.1 Central Control Emergency Procedures
- Procedure 320 Incident Command System
- Procedure 323 regarding Medical Emergencies, VCPA JF Procedures Manual (Pos Orders)
- Procedure 337 Fire Safety Plan
- Relevant Facility Maps

- Transportation Protocol via Work Release Vans

They interviewed key personnel regarding the above procedures and found these documents, procedures, and staff knowledge of the procedures to be extremely thorough.

The Commissioners also interviewed staff on the following topics:

- **Active shooter scenarios:** Staff demonstrated keen knowledge in procedures regarding this type of emergency.
- **JF evacuation scenarios:** This had been an area of concern during the previous year's inspection after the Maria Fire had potentially threatened the JF's air quality. JF staff shared that in a potential evacuation scenario, several work furlough vehicles would be brought over and staged at the JF for possible use, from the Work Release Program which is located at 345 Skyway Dr., in Camarillo. Per Google Maps, this is 7.7 miles and approx. 14 minutes away during non-high traffic times. Additionally, in a broad emergency VCPA has an MOU in place with Ventura County Sheriff's Office (VCSO) for mutual assistance and would be in constant communication and utilize the resources and support of the VCSO OES (Office of Emergency Services). Ventura County also has an MOU in place with multiple other Counties across the Southern region of California that includes temporarily housing youth as needed at other facilities. JF leadership has received training from the Office of Emergency Services in being responsive during emergencies and OES cautions that agencies cannot prepare in writing/policy for every possible scenario as emergencies are too unpredictable and require flexibility and adaptation in the moment.

3. Incident Reports

The incident reports primarily pertained to youth violations of institutional policy. The reports provided the staff version of accounts, as well as an outline of resulting disciplinary actions. Many of the reports included conjecture by staff, such as gang or personal affiliations between the youth named in the report and other individuals or groups that may or may not be relevant to the event. In some events, monikers and "tagging" were attributed to youth based on logical reasoning and lacked firm evidence in the report for support. This seems relevant due to the obvious confusion on behalf of some of the youth evident in their grievances of the incident. The responses to the "appeals", or grievances, to the minors attempting to explain some of these incidents included, at times, a large amount conjecture and personal advice resulting in a full page of writing, which read as extremely personal in nature and led the Commissioners to inquire into the training of the senior officers to offer direction to the youth in this way, sometimes attributing loss of privileges to a "bad attitude" and not the actual infraction cited in the report.

The reports also do not provide a section for referrals. It is not evident to the Commissioners reviewing the reports that these youth, especially those whose incidents involved drugs, manufacturing of a weapon, or abnormal “outburst” behavior, were referred to mental health or drug treatment professionals, although some follow up revealed that these referrals often did take place.

4. Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Realignment Plan

Per VCPA, there are no policies/procedures specific to 18+ or SYTF youth as per BSCC, they are considered youth under SB823). Programs and Services include Ventura County Behavioral Health involvement, screening, treatment, and programs. There is a prevalence of mental health/substance abuse disorders among DJJ youth/young adults.

Funding for the SB823 Block Grant was recently approved on 11/9/21 by the County Board of Supervisors and includes a Vocational Center, lived-experienced mentors, the delivery of the ARISE gang program, and enhanced re-entry services and transitional housing. The housing unit that will be utilized for the Vocational Center is being cleaned and painted. We are in the process of developing a request for proposal for mentors with lived experience and are meeting with Ventura County Office of Education and local Community Colleges to develop the vocational pathways that will be offered. Computers, additional Paxton Patterson modules, and new furniture are also in the process of being ordered however shipping will be delayed due to the pandemic. We do not have an actual start date for the program currently but are working to get it up and running soon.

5. Youth Interviews

Two youth were interviewed during our annual inspection. Both youths commented that they felt safe in the facility, were treated well, and one who had been in and out multiple times commented that they had built relations with the staff. One commented that the food wasn’t very good, while the other one commented that it was good.

It was also said that they are only able to stay clean while in custody but didn’t feel that they were getting any assistance in treatment that was long term for once they got out. They commented that they did well on tier statuses, liked the online college classes and did good in those, and even though tutoring resources and other options were given upon release, falling back on drug addiction continues to get in the way. They felt if there were a drug program in place to help them work through their addiction, that they were able to follow after release and implement into the “real world” that they might be able to make real progress. They also discussed how they really missed the programming that COVID-19 had halted since the start of the pandemic.

GENERAL INFORMATION

POPULATION

2021 Total Admissions/Bookings: **497**

Maximum Census & Month: **72 (March & April)**

Minimum Census & Month: **49 (August & November)**

Population on December 7, 2021 Inspection Date: 60

Detention: Males: **20** Females: **6** Non-Binary: **0**

Commitment: Males: **29** Females: **5** Non-Binary: **0**

Number of Minors: 41 **Number Over Age 18: 19**

Percentages of Population by Race for 2021:

African American	Hispanic	Native American	White	Other
4.9%	77.5%	0%	15%	1.2%

SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION:

Number of Suicides: **0** Number of Attempted Suicides: **0**

Number of Deaths from Other Causes: **0** Number of Escapes: **0**

STAFFING

Total Current Staff: **150** (2020: 139)

Number of sworn staff: **115** (2020: 112)

Note: The total numbers include support staff, kitchen, and laundry staff. The numbers do not include any Behavioral Health, Medical or Providence School staff.

GENERAL AREAS FOR INSPECTION

I. Staff Development

New training for CSOs. Included Peer Support team members scheduling a few days per month to meet with staff onsite. Special trainings include Enhanced on the Job Training for new CSOs, and VCPA has created a DEI workgroup and has begun DEI discussions. Sophistication in adult custody settings and secondary trauma are two trainings that staff asked for to prepare themselves to work with the Transitional Age Youth (TAY) population.

LGBTQIA+ cultural sensitivity training. Corrections Officers receive 4 hours of Cultural Awareness as part of JCO Core (2 hours Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Disparity and 2 hours on Gender Identity). Every two years they are required by the County to take Discrimination Prevention and Developing Cultural Competency and Inclusion. VCPA also requires an 8-hour Cultural Diversity class within the first two years of hire. In the past, they have offered a specific LGBTQ training as an elective. Relias, VCPA's online training, also offer: Cultural Awareness in Corrections (1.5 hours), Safe Management of Lesbian and Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and Intersex Populations (2 hours).

II. New JF Programs for Youth in 2021

Probation has been gifted some subscriptions to **Masterclass**, which is an online service providing instructional videos from celebrities, athletes, business professionals, etc. Several youths in Sycamore 1 have signed up for the program. The program will be open to youth on achievement or excellence levels.

Beginning Friday, 12/3/21, we will be starting a new program for all JF residents aged 17 and up. This will primarily be for commitment youth; however, exceptions will be made due to the units being intermixed. The **Release Prep** program was modeled after the foster care system's Independent Living Skills Program, which prepares youths 17+ to become more self-sufficient, familiar with community resources, and ready to live more independent lives as young adults. The class is four weeks long and includes eight modules. It will be taught by DPO staff and will include a workbook for each youth that accompanies the module presentations.

After a long hiatus, the **radio program** will be returning to the JF next week. The program is officially located in Anacapa classroom # 2, but for now will be run out of the units. The Ventura County Arts Council will be conducting the program. Youth create and record poetry, conduct interviews, operate recording equipment, etc. In time, these recordings will be made into a radio show that will be broadcast on the internal JF station, 107.9, along with music and other programming.

We have also added **Tutors for Providence Scholars**. These are tutors for those enrolled in college courses.

III. MEDICAL, DENTAL, AND VISION SERVICES

There were no changes to the Medical, Dental and Vision Services in 2021. There was an accreditation report due in 2020 that was to be reviewed, however the accreditation company through the Institute for Medial Quality dissolved since the last inspection in 2018. In speaking with Nurse Shirley Scott at the JF, they are keeping their standards to the accreditation requirements while waiting for this gap to be filled which is expected shortly through the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (CCHC).

IV. BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

In 2021, Behavioral Health added a TAY MRT group, TAY Mindfulness/DBT skills group and in December 2021 adding a TAY Substance Use Group. In response to the youth and TAY that are parents themselves, we began co-parenting therapeutic sessions to address co-parenting concerns and improve communication and problem solving between youth parent detained and the out of custody co-parent. It is hopeful that improved communication between the co-parents will improve outcomes for their own children to foster healthy and safe relationships.

V. GROUNDS

No major modifications or improvements were made to the grounds in 2021.

(VCPA): Future development of a Vocational & Career Center. The targeted population will inherently have longer lengths of stay and will likely transition to a young adult while in the facility and upon release. We plan to convert a housing unit into a dedicated place to learn specific trades that leverage their strengths and have regional demand. Within the Vocational Center will be a functional Career Center for youth to assess and explore their strengths, different trade certifications and career paths. We plan to work together with our Human Services Agency (HSA), Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE), and local trade unions to develop the programs. We applied for and were awarded the one-time Youth Programs and Facilities Grant (YPPFG) Program to apply to this endeavor. We plan to use grant funds for facility infrastructure needs and equipment, furniture, cameras and computers for the Vocational Center. Santa Cruz and Wheeler 1 & 2 have been vacant for over a year. We are in the process of having these units cleaned and prepped to move our commitment youth to these units once the pandemic winds down.

VI. INTERIOR OF BUILDINGS

No current changes to the building in 2021. Plexiglass is being installed in Detention Housing staff desk area to prevent youth from jumping over to other side (planning phase).

VII. MEALS AND NUTRITION

In 2021, Title 15 nutritional guidelines for the new young adult population requires more protein which was incorporated into the breakfast meal. In turn, Title 15 requires more dairy and snacks, so the young adults are being offered more overall.

VIII. ORIENTATION FOR YOUTH

2021 changes in the youth orientation process (f/u to Title XV) included a new Youth Handbook (English and Spanish) handed out in Booking.

Covid-19 vaccination is offered to all youth in the facility. Youth stay in an Intake unit for 10 days and can move after having two negative Covid test results. Symptomatic youth are held in medical isolation.

IX. DISCIPLINE OF YOUTH

No 2021 changes in the discipline process for youth.

X. DISCIPLINE OF STAFF

There was one misconduct issue with staff where an inappropriate conversation occurred. The action that was taken was suspension.

XI. GRIEVANCE REVIEW

No 2021 changes in the grievance review process.

XII. TELEPHONE, CORRESPONDENCE, VISITATION PROCEDURE

Since 2020, no changes were made to policy. In person visiting resumed in May 2021 and in October 2021. There was a period in between where reverting back to phone video calls became necessary due to a spike in COVID numbers.

XIII. PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF YOUTH

Since the December of 2020 inspection, colored uniforms are now being used so staff can easily identify the TAY and for the purposes of sight and sound, the TAY began wearing Green colored shirts, beige sweatshirts, and navy bottoms.

XIV. INSPECTIONS & ACCREDITATIONS

Fire (Health & Safety Code § 13146.1)

Date: **11/19/21** Result: **Passed**

Medical/Mental Health:

Date: **7/30/18** Result: **Passed**

Environmental Health:

Date: **6/1/21 and 10/1/21** Result: **Passed**

Nutritional Health (Health & Safety Code § 101045)

Date: **5/6/21 and 10/1/21** Result: **Passed**

Facility Safety & Security

Date: **9/7/21**

Result: **Reviewed**

XV. EDUCATION

Providence School

The commission finds this component of the annual JF inspection was addressed in the current education programs at the JF - Providence Court School. Because of COVID access was limited to an interview of the Assistant Principal Teresa Vega. During the interview she presented the results of the annual Education Program Review and Evaluation by the Ventura County Superintendent of School (VCOE). The report reflected satisfactory remarks regarding the overall education programs at the JF. All requirements were met. A copy of the full evaluation/report is available at Providence Court School. During my conversation with Ms. Vega, we discussed the following:

- Class sizes
- Ability grouping, and appropriate accommodations for Special Ed. Students
- Teacher evaluations and hiring criteria.
- Restorative Justice programs and other intervention programs that assist youth in adapting to the controlled environment they are in.

School Staff Number: 14

Administration

1. Alt Ed Director: Stefanie Rodriguez
2. Assistant Principal: Teresa Vega

Office Manager

3. Monica Cenicerros

Support Staff

4. Counselor: Nicole Garr
5. Induction/Transition Specialist: Monica Roman

Psychologist

6. 50% Renae Portz

Teaching Staff (6 Teachers)

7. Teacher: Francie Barrett
8. Teacher: Mike Cogan
9. Teacher: Marla Cornelius
10. Teacher: Scott Peterson
11. Teacher: Chris Geist
12. Teacher: Suzanne Reed

Paraeducators

13. Special Education Paraeducator: Sallie Covarrubias

14. Paraeducator: Gloria Ortega

Please describe their credentials:

All staff are highly qualified and hold credentials necessary for their position.

Number attending school: 37-45 **Number in Independent Study:** 0

Number of minors not attending school and reason? 5

There are currently five students attending school through independent study because they had self-separated from others and won't come out of their room to attend school.

Number of youth in each classroom:

The number of students enrolled in each classroom fluctuates on a daily basis. Each classroom has anywhere from two to 15 students.

Activities and coursework:

Providence Court School is part of the Ventura County Office of Education and is Western Association for Schools and Colleges (WASC) Accredited. Providence Court School demonstrates the ability, dedication, and competence to support high-quality teaching and learning and ongoing school improvement.

All core subject course materials and curriculum are aligned to the Common Core State Standards, this includes performance standards. All supplemental used (e.g., Character- Based Literacy, online tools used in science, social science and mathematics) are in alignment with Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and are utilized to support the development of technology and 21st Century skills. All teachers develop lesson plans, pacing guides, and assessments in alignment with the CCSS.

Providence Court School provides all students and staff materials so that they may participate and access all core subjects as well as supplemental programs and interventions. Providence Court School provides textbooks, consumables, and related materials in mathematics, English, science, and social science. All equipment is purchased and maintained and is accessible to all participating students and staff.

Supplies? (Books, paper, computers?) Yes No

Students have access to one-to-one computer devices.

Ability to do homework? Yes No

All work is completed in class.

ON-LINE COLLEGE ACCESS

Please describe the available on-line college access programming.

Interested high school students participate in online college classes at Oxnard College, Moorpark College, or Ventura College. Students enroll in the courses of their choice. This program is designed to give students the opportunity to learn about college and career prospects.

Number of youth enrolled: 11

Activities and coursework:

Students complete coursework specific to the course in which they are enrolled.

Supplies? (Books, paper, computers?) Yes No

Ability to do homework? Yes No

VOCATIONAL – N/A

Providence does not provide vocational programming.

CONCLUSION

The JJDPC concludes that the Juvenile Facility residents are well-supervised in a safe and secure environment. The JJDPC believes that, based on this inspection, the Ventura County Juvenile Facilities Complex meets Title 15 standards for a safe juvenile facility.

This report will be sent to the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, The California Board of State and Community Corrections, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, The Ventura County Chief Director/Chief Probation Officer, and The Ventura County Chief Deputy Juvenile Services. The report will also be made available online at the JJDPC website.

The JJDPC plans to return again for the next annual inspection in December 2022.

Approved by The Ventura County Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission on October 4, 2022.



Valerie Salazar, JJDPC Chair

Date: October 21, 2022