

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

**DECEMBER 2023 INSPECTION REPORT OF VENTURA COUNTY'S PROBATION  
AGENCY (VCPA) JUVENILE FACILITIES COMPLEX**



**Inspection Date:** Tuesday, December 5, 2023

**Last Ventura County JJDC Inspection Date:** December 6, 2022

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

**Chief Deputy:** Carrie Vredenburg, Chief Deputy Juvenile Services Bureau

**Division Manager:** Sandra Carrillo and John Declan Tormey

**Presiding Juvenile Court Judge:** Honorable Gilbert A. Romero

**JJDC Inspection Team Commissioners:** Valerie Salazar (Chair), Jennifer Lopardo (Vice Chair), James Ramos (Second Vice Chair), Toby Hopstone (Secretary), Ed.D. James Hodgkins, John D. Horton, M.D., Gabriel Candelario

## **PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF INSPECTION**

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission (JJJPC) 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 JJDPC conducted its annual inspection of the Ventura County Juvenile Facilities Complex (JF) for 2023 in accordance with Welfare and Institutions Code §229 and Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations, “Minimum Standards for Juvenile Facilities.”

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The JJDPC wants to commend VCPA for their immediate attention to the grievances that were submitted and the thoroughness of the incident reports. We were impressed at how fast staff recognized patterns in complaints against certain staff and were quick to address any training gaps that may need closer attention, specifically with new staff. We also went through quite a few incident reports and want to commend staff who noticed situations that could've escalated or been more dangerous had they not been caught as fast as they were.
2. The JJDPC would like to commend Ventura County Probation Agency (VCPA) for their support in keeping the Commission current by financing two commissioners to attend the California Probation, Parole, & Correctional Association's Training Conference (CCPCA) in Ontario September 6<sup>th</sup> through the 9<sup>th</sup>, where we were able to get a JJDPC commissioner training with the BSCC. This has helped the Commission stay on top of a landscape undergoing a lot of changes, and it's been appreciated to build a stronger partnership with VCPA as we understand and revise our procedures in response to new legislation.
3. The JJDPC also wants to comment Providence School, who demonstrates exceptional dedication to holistic education and successful transition of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Notably, their comprehensive approach includes diligent coordination among staff, local education agencies, and community partners. Through tailored educational services, supportive environments, and proactive reentry procedures, Providence ensures that students receive individualized attention, achieve academic success, and seamlessly reintegrate into district schools. The school's commitment to program quality, evidenced by WASC accreditation and commendations from external evaluations, reflects their unwavering dedication to student growth and well-being.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS (listed in order of appearance throughout report)**

**JJDPC Recommendation on Grievances:** The JJDPC recommends the youth's age be included on grievance forms. Consideration of the age of the youth and the situation they are grieving can be helpful and provide insight to the reviewer.

### **JJDPC Recommendations on Education:**

- For *Consistent access to current education data*: Increase dedicated staff time to review IEP timelines and communicate with district staff in order to develop appropriate educational programs.
- For *Liaison at home schools having various effectiveness*: This recommendation has two prongs: 1) admin to discuss with district admin importance of having a previously incarcerated person as liaison; and 2) modify procedure so that there is more consistent consultation between home school and JF to promote more effective re-enrollment.
- For *More dedicated transition services at home school upon reenrollment needed*: JF to recommend district to analyze whether budget for transition specialist at each school site, or additional dedicated time budgeted for person currently with these responsibilities.
- For *Training in best practices of, and consultation with, other counties to address building effective systems in educational programs in high transiency contexts*: Coordinate and plan five 30-minute zoom calls with other JFs across California, to gather information about best practices and challenges.

### **JJDPC Recommendations on Re-Entry:**

- Continue to create robust re-entry opportunities that are inclusive to all clients and families. Perhaps a case coordinator could be utilized to identify programming and ensure referral while youth is still in the facility. Consistent communication with community partners is vital to connecting clients to needed services that will provide the most impact when a youth is released from custody.
- For successful re-entry, the JJDPC recommends finding a community-based organization who can build curriculum in a life skills course that contains topics listed out in the re-entry section of this report on pages 22-23.

## **2022 RECOMMENDATIONS WITH 2023 VCPA UPDATES**

1. In its 2022 Inspection Report regarding **Staffing**, the JJDPC recommended *“implementing an internship program, considering hiring part-time clinicians, working with the County of Ventura to offer more competitive salaries, and most importantly prior to approving the transfer of clinical staff to other county programs, ensuring adequate staffing is already in place.”* Have any changes been implemented in 2023?

At the time of the inspection, Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) was fully staffed and utilizes two Master of Social Work students fulfilling their hours towards

graduation. They work under the supervision of the Behavioral Health Clinician I-V with an emphasis on the facility population.

During the staffing struggle, VCPA used temporary staff regularly. One of the temporary staff was hired full-time, and the other was offered a 32-hour-a-week position but declined. VCPA has a temporary employee with multiple years of JF experience, who is utilized as needed. There has been a general salary increase for County of Ventura staff which resulted in VCPAs ability to now be fully staffed.

2. In its 2022 Inspection Report regarding **Substance Abuse Services**, the JJDPC recommended that *“since there is only 1 full-time equivalent (2 part-time counselors) responsible for providing substance abuse services for all youth/young adults at the JF, it is recommended that additional staff be hired. A review of existing outpatient substance abuse treatment and residential treatment programs should be conducted to determine if there are adequate resources for Ventura County youth and young adults.”* Have any changes been implemented in 2023?

VCPA Response: We have hired one full-time staff for our Alcohol and Drug Treatment Specialist. She has been on our team for the past two months and has been training to provide Substance Use Services (SUS) to our youth on a more regular basis. She is currently providing screening and assessment for substance-use disorders to Commitment youth that are close to their release date to connect them with the appropriate level of community services needed. We are providing continued evaluation of how these services are provided and how we can improve, including potential SUS screening to all new bookings who remain onsite for at least 48 hours and assessment provision to detention youth, as well. Screenings are completed when a referral is made by probation, Wellpath or VCBH. The ASAM assessment is completed about 14 days prior to discharge since the results of the assessment need to be complete to set up follow-up care upon release. Programming includes Relapse Prevention Group and 1-to-1 counseling.

Based on the number of bookings with a history of substance use, VCPA believes that a second SUS position would be able to focus more on youth and young adults that are in the facility on a short-term basis (days) to provide appropriate linkage. The second position could also provide more groups. In the outpatient setting clients in ADTS attend two groups a week while the JF population only get one.

3. In its 2022 Inspection Report regarding **Re-Entry Services**, the JJDPC recommended *“more housing programs, job training programs and placement, transportation assistance, and access to a greater variety of options for substance abuse treatment including both outpatient and residential treatment.”* Have any changes been implemented in 2023?

VCPA Response: Re-entry release plan meetings involve a multi-disciplinary team, which includes Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH), Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE), WellPath, the commitment DPO, the field DPO, the youth, their parent, and any other provider who would ensure the continuum of care continues.

VCOE sets up educational services and VCBH arranges mental health and drug and alcohol programming upon release. WellPath ensures that the youth and family have the medication needed upon release, if applicable. The youth work with Interface through the Second Chances Program for 90 days prior to release and up to 9 months after release to provide transitional support to the youth and their families. Additionally, while in custody, Interface provides services for eligible youth through Girls Grant. If appropriate and eligible, referrals are made to the STEPS-Y job placement program. The field DPO also works with the youth, their families and Interface to support the re-entry plan.

4. In its 2022 Inspection Report regarding **Grievances**, the JJDPC *“noticed words like “Canteen” and “Kite” being normalized in the JF. We recommend renaming them to something else like “Market” and “Request” going forward to get away from language that could be perceived as grooming for adult jail and prison.”* Have any changes been implemented in 2023?

VCPA Response: The word “kite” has been replaced with “Resident Request” and “Canteen” has been replaced with “The JF Market.” We are in the process of ensuring all forms, policies/procedures, and areas of our computer system are being changed to reflect the new names. Emails have been sent to staff to share new wording, plus was verbally communicated to staff during a meeting and we have implemented the term “Resident Request” in our daily meeting agenda since we review resident requests daily.

5. In its 2022 Inspection Report regarding **Education**, the JJDPC recommended *“working with an Independent Living Program for additional life skills for youth 16 and over. We also recommend exploring programs like the Prison Education Project which can bring life skills to youths, taught by formerly incarcerated persons. JJDPC also recommends working with the local Department of Rehabilitation who might be able to assist with more programming and higher education, especially for SYTF youth who may be in the care of VCPA long enough to complete a 4-year degree or more. We also encourage working with Oxnard College for in-person courses for youths who may be eligible to furlough for them.”* Have any changes been implemented in 2023?

VCPA Response: VCOE and VCPA partnered up with Oxnard College, part of the Ventura County Community College District (VCCCD). Graduates are encouraged to take a college course per semester. The VCOE counselor enrolls the graduates into the Oxnard College Rising Scholars Program. Probation pays for each student’s tuition fees and all school essentials. For the Fall 2023 semester, 21 students were enrolled in online VCCCD college courses. One SYTF student is currently dually enrolled in high school and college. Probation is actively working with Oxnard College to implement in-person college courses.

Staff members from the Prison Education Project (PEP) are currently in background with VCPA. They are scheduled to provide education and life skills courses to our youth in the Spring 2024 semester. Additionally, VCPA has partnered with California Lutheran

University to facilitate an Inside-Out Prison Exchange course. This hybrid course is made up of university students and Secure Youth Track Facility youth. The semester will be facilitated in the Juvenile Facilities (JF). Staff from this program are currently in background with VCPA.

VCPA purchased an educational tablet for each youth. The tablet is a cloud-based learning management system that includes educational programs, life skill courses, industry specific career training, information technology, financial literacy, enrichment programs, improvement for personal development, and access to a nationwide library.

6. In its 2022 Inspection Report regarding **Statewide Youth Overdoses**, the JJDPC recommended *“As a general recommendation, and with overdoses in facilities throughout the state reaching all-time highs, we recommend considering reviewing visitor and employee entry processes, and even bringing in dogs trained for narcotics on walk throughs of the site if not already happening.”* Have any changes been implemented in 2023?

VCPA Response: Since the last inspection, 46 of the current Correction Services Officers (CSO's) have undergone Public Safety-First Aid (PSFA) training which allows them to carry and administer Narcan. It is now a requirement of employment that all CSOs complete PSFA within their first year of employment.

In conjunction with that training, protocols have been established to distribute naloxone kits to youth in need upon release. Additionally, VCPA funded a position for a K9 officer. They are currently in the policy review and planning process for that officer. The JF also purchased and began using full body scanners for visiting and booking with the goal of detecting contraband coming into the facility. They also purchased a smaller mail scanner that allows for the detection of substances and contraband. Lastly, VCPA has regularly teamed with local law enforcement partners to bring their drug detection K9's into the facility.

### **MAJOR FOCUS AREAS FOR 2023 JJDPC VISIT**

1. Grievances
2. Education (Special Needs and Re-Entry)
3. Re-entry Services

**GENERAL AREAS FOR INSPECTION**

**I. POPULATION**

The total admissions and/or bookings as of December 5, 2023, was as follows:

**Detention:** 529, which included 398 males, 130 females, 1 transgender, and 0 non-binary/gender non-conforming youths.

**Commitment:** 23, which included 18 males, 5 females, 0 transgender, and 0 non-binary/gender non-conforming youths.

**SYTF:** SYTF had 0 bookings in 2023.

On the date of the Juvenile Facility inspection, the youth population totaled 75. This breaks down to 14 in the Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF), 18 in Commitment, and 43 in Detention. Of those 75 youth, 45 were under 18, and 30 were 18 to 24. The table below shows the exact breakdown:

AGE	TOTAL	AGE	TOTAL
11	0	18:	18
12	0	19:	2
13	1	20:	6
14	2	21:	2
15	8	22:	0
16	18	23:	2
17	16	24:	0

The tables below show the Percentages of Population by Race for 2022 and 2023:

**Percentages of Population by Race for 2022:**

African American	Hispanic	Native American	White	Other (includes Pacific Islander and Asian)
6.5%	84.5%	0%	7.8%	1.1%

**Percentages of Population by Race for 2023:**

African American	Hispanic	Native American	White	Other (includes Pacific Islander and Asian)
3.99%	82.60%	0%	10.33%	3.08%

Since the last inspection, there have been 0 suicides, 0 attempted suicides, and 0 deaths from other causes. There have also been 0 escapes.

**JJDCPC Comment:** Over the years, VCPA has taken measures such as hiring consulting agencies to assist in addressing the racially disparate number of youths in the facility and on probation. Most recently, the work with the Burns Institute tried to address this, and the work continues through the YES Collaborative and the Youth Equity positions housed in the County of Ventura. For all the efforts being made, the data of youth in the juvenile facility continue to show overrepresentation of youth of color.

**II. STAFFING**

At the time of inspection, the total current number of staff was 169, up from 166 in 2022. The number of sworn staff was 131, down from 134 in 2022. The number of bilingual VCPA staff is 29. The percentages of VCPA staff by race for 2023 is as follows:

<b>African American</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Native American</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Other (includes Pacific Islander and Asian)</b>
3.5%	65.6%	0%	24.2%	6.7%

Compared to in 2022:

<b>African American</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Native American</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Other (includes Pacific Islander and Asian)</b>
5%	66%	0%	24%	5%

**Staff to Youth Ratio**

Detention: Awake: **1:10** Sleeping: **1:30**  
 Commitment & SYTF: Awake: **1:15** Sleeping: **1:30**

**Please list and briefly describe any new staff programs or special trainings instituted during the current year.**

In January 2023, Deputy Probation Officers (DPO’s) who had never worked in the JF were reallocated. They completed 40 hours of training, which included the following: orientation, emergency response training, youth engagement, professional boundaries, officer safety training, and policy review. They also participate in On the Job Training (OJT) that involves the following: youth supervision duties; scope of decisions they shall make; identification of their supervisor; identification of persons who are responsible to them; persons to contact for decisions that are beyond their responsibility; ethical responsibilities; individual and group supervision techniques; regulations and policies relating to discipline and rights of youth pursuant to law; basic health, sanitation and safety measures; suicide prevention and response to suicide attempts; policies regarding use of force, de-escalation techniques, chemical agents, mechanical and physical restraints; review of policies and procedures referencing trauma and trauma-informed approaches; procedures to follow in the event of emergencies; routine security



measures, including facility perimeter and grounds; crisis intervention and mental health referrals to mental health services; documentation (incident reports, log books, movement tab); and fire/life safety training.

**What efforts are being made to recruit and train staff to fill vacancies?**

VCPA has a Public Relations Committee that attends career fairs, provides presentations at high schools/colleges, and participates in community events. This committee also has a social media team who sends out regular posts and videos on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Tik Tok advertising that we are hiring. Regarding training, all newly hired staff participate in 40 hours of training and then two weeks of on-the-job training. They also have to attend a minimum of 168 hours of Juvenile Core Training within their first year on the job. As mentioned above, VCPA is currently reallocating DPO staff to assist with daily coverage. All these staff must complete 40 hours of training, which is outlined in the response above. Their Professional Standards Unit continues to engage in process improvement related to our background process, which includes using an electronic case management system and the shifting of the schedule of background related activities. The officers responsible for conducting background investigations, an integral part of hiring, are constantly addressing methods and practices to streamline our processes. While VCPA can do little about pay and overall job appeal, they can hopefully affect the time needed to get interested people through the process. Additionally, they recently engaged with an online recruiting program called Handshake to target potential employees.

**How often are staff trained in LGBTQ+ cultural sensitivity and which staff are trained?**

Developing Cultural Competency and Inclusion is mandatory training for all staff and is completed within 30 days of hire and biennially thereafter.

Beginning in 2023, all probation staff were required to participate in Diversity Equity and Inclusion training from BiasSync. BiasSync is a science-based training tool, using data and expert learning strategies to help assess and manage unconscious bias in the work environment. The purpose is to create fair and respectful workplaces. All sworn staff are required to participate in at least 8 hours of cultural diversity/competency training every year, which can include different courses such as: “Tools for Tolerance” (at the Museum of Tolerance), “Diversity, Now What?”, “Hate Crimes and White Power Movement”, “Cultural Considerations in Facilities and Field”, “Multicultural Competence and the Workplace”, “Cultural Diversity Issues”, “Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Transgendered Youth; Problems with Incarceration” and a number of other classes they can choose from.

**List trainings (with titles, trainers, dates) on trauma informed and ACES approaches in which staff are trained.**

All staff attend 8 hours of Trauma Informed Care training within their first two years of hire. We currently use ACE Overcomers to provide "Trauma Informed and Beyond." All corrections staff are also required to take Mental Health Curriculum for Juvenile Justice. They are required to take this 8-hour course once within their first 12 months of employment. This course covers key factors in adolescent development, common mental health and substance use disorders, how trauma impacts adolescent development, and ways that staff can work with youth who have been diagnosed with a mental health or substance use disorder. Additionally, staff can select from courses such as: "Identifying and Assessing Trauma Impact", "Impact of Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment", "Adolescent Brain Development and Adverse Choices", and numerous other trauma informed courses.

**Have there been any changes this year to how interpreting and translation services are offered?**

There have been no changes to these services. VCPA has staff who are bilingual, on-site interpreters who can read, write, and speak Spanish, and have access to a 24-hour phone translation service where a variety of languages can be translated.

**III. PROGRAMS**

**Describe any changes to the JF programs instituted in 2023, including any new and/or discontinued programs, and the reasons for those changes. (The JJDPC received a copy of the schedule during the inspection).**

The new programs added include youth automotive technology, career exploration, landscaping, and workplace essentials to enhance vocational and re-entry services, Fatherhood programming, and co-parenting classes. Additionally, VCPA purchased new Paxton-Patterson modules and hired a second Boys & Girls Club facilitator. Auto, career, landscaping, and workplace essentials is taught by Career Technical Education through the Ventura Co. Office of Education. Fatherhood classes are provided by First 5. Co-parenting is facilitated by VCBH, and Paxton Patterson is facilitated by CSO staff.

Interface Children and Family Services were awarded a contract with probation as the program coordinator for the JF. They are responsible for planning, developing, coordinating with service providers, conducting fidelity reviews, assisting with contracts, and ensuring all programs are evidence based. They are also responsible for the publication of the weekly programming schedule.

**Please provide a list of any program cancellations with the reason why.**

No programs have been cancelled during the 2023 inspection year.

### **Are programs in the following areas available?**

The following programs are available to all youth in the facility (program types from BSCC Title 15 Minimum Standards):

- Victim Awareness/Restorative Justice
- Vocational Training
- Post-Secondary Education
- Work Programs
- Community Service
- Parenting Classes
- Sexual Harassment Classes
- Religious Activities

#### **IV. MEDICAL, DENTAL, AND VISION SERVICES**

There were no changes to the JF Medical, Dental, and Vision services instituted in 2023. The JJDPC did talk with the head nurse of the JF, Nurse Shirley, and she was able to walk the JJDPC through the nursing station and medical area and describe the processes already in place, as well as the dental office located inside the facility.

#### **V. BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES**

In July 2023, VCBH absorbed the Substance Use Treatment Services, specifically one full-time Alcohol and Drug Treatment Specialist III position. The provider in this position currently works Tuesday through Saturday and provides individual counseling, group counseling, assessments, and referrals for post placement services at the appropriate level determined by the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) assessment.

The VCBH JF team is currently fully staffed with the following positions:

- One part-time Psychiatrist
- Five full-time Behavioral Health Clinicians (BHC's.) Four of these BHC staff are on a rotating schedule to include Saturday coverage. In addition, three of the BHC staff have completed the ASAM assessment training and provide treatment to dually diagnosed youth and young adults.
- One full-time Mental Health Associate (MHA.)
- One full-time Alcohol and Drug Treatment Specialist III (ADTS-III.)
- One part-time Educationally Related Social Emotional Services (ERSES) Clinician.
- Two part-time Master of Social Work Student Interns.

**Youth Behavioral Health Statistics (based on the day of inspection)**

	Youth Under 18	Youth 18+
Number of youths on psychotropic medication:	13	17
Number of youths with a mental health diagnosis:	25	25
Number of youths with a substance use diagnosis:	14	20

Please note: There are presently 48 individuals who are dually diagnosed (substance use diagnosis and mental health diagnosis). Twenty-four are under the age of 18 and 24 that are 18 years old and older.

**Caseload ratios:**

- Behavioral Health Clinicians I-III ratio is 1:12
- Behavioral Health Clinician IV ratio is 1:7
- Alcohol and Drug Treatment Specialist ration is 1:30
- Mental Health Associate ratio is 1:8

**VI.**

During 2023, additional no-climb fencing was added to certain parts of the facility for safety and security reasons.

**VII.**

Additional cameras were added in the units, visiting area and in the vocational center and the Santa Rosa classrooms. Suicide resistance doorknobs were installed on all the unit doors inside the Santa Cruz building.

**VIII.**

**Describe any changes instituted during 2023:**

There were no changes during 2023.

**IX.**

**Describe any 2023 changes in the youth orientation process (f/u to Title XV) for the JF and for the SYTF:**

Per VCPA, no new changes were made to the youth orientation process. All youth receive a Youth Handbook at booking These are available in English and Spanish. The housing rules, the Youth Bill of Rights, grievance process, and contact information for the Ombudsperson is posted in all units. Title 15 Regulations are also available in all the units. The JJDPC confirms that they saw all of these on the units we inspected.

**X. DISCIPLINE OF YOUTH**

**Describe any 2023 changes in the discipline process for youth:**

There were no changes to the discipline process for youth during 2023.

**XI. DISCIPLINE OF STAFF**

**Describe any misconduct issues with staff and what course of action was taken:**

One staff member's action related to the use of force is currently under investigation. That staff was placed on leave. The investigation is ongoing.

**XII. GRIEVANCE POLICIES/PROCEDURES**

**Please provide copies of all policies and procedures related to Grievances for youth and community members.**

There is a formal complaint process for community members. Current Title 15 Regulations require a grievance process for youth only.

**How many youth grievances were submitted during 2023? 95**

**How many community grievances were submitted during 2023? 0**

The JJDPC reviewed all 95 grievances. Grievances followed policies and protocols set in place, and all had a timely turnaround in response. We noted quick actions and responses from staff from noticing new graffiti to conflict between youth and contraband. We also saw that when there were multiple grievances on the same staff, prompt action was taken to ensure that they received further training or other courses of action taken.

**JJDPC Recommendation on Grievances:** The JJDPC recommends on grievance forms that the youth's age is included in the form when they fill it out, as understanding the age of the youth and the situation they are grieving can be helpful and insightful to the person reviewing it.

**XIII. TELEPHONE, CORRESPONDENCE, VISITATION PROCEDURE**

**Describe any changes in the procedures since the December 2022 Inspection, including procedures for SYTF youth.**

As indicated in the previous year, beginning on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, youth no longer pay for phone calls.

**XIV. PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF YOUTH**

**List any changes in required dress or laundry services for youth since the December 2022 inspection. Please also list the current color-coding process, and what each color represents.**

There have been no changes in required dress for facility youth. The youth who are participating in the Providence Scholar Program are allowed to wear shirts with their local community college logo on them. SYTF youth wear green shirts/college shirts with dark blue pants, detention youth wear white shirts with dark blue pants, commitment youth wear maroon shirts with tan pants, and females wear teal/turquoise shirts with grey pants.

#### **XV. INSPECTIONS & ACCREDITATIONS**

**Fire** (Health & Safety Code § 13146.1): Date: 12/7/2023 Result: Passed

**Public Health:** Date: 10/24/2023 Result: Passed

**Environmental Health:** Date: 6/8/2023 Result: Passed

**Nutritional Health** (Health & Safety Code § 101045) Date: 7/26/2023 Result: Passed

**Facility Safety & Security** Date: 6/26/2023 Result: Passed

#### **XVI. OTHER REPORTS**

**Please provide copies or links to the following:**

**Incident Report logs and resolutions:** Due to the volume of the incident reports, this information will be provided to the inspection team on the day of their visit via computer.

Programming schedules/calendar including attendance records for all Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Recreational Therapy groups: The programming schedule will be sent as an attachment. Mental Health, SA, and other groups will be provided by BH.

#### **XVII. EDUCATION**

##### **PROVIDENCE SCHOOL**

**School Staff Number: 17 total**

- Stefanie Rodriguez, Director of Alternative Education
- Teresa Vega. Ed.D., Assistant Principal
- Nicole Garr, School Counselor
- Monica Roman, Induction/Transition Specialist
- Ryan Tanney, Psychologist
- Monica Ceniceros, School Office Manager
- Francie Barrett, Teacher
- Mike Cogan, Teacher/Resource Specialist
- Marla Cornelius, Teacher
- Fatima Chavez, Teacher

- Joe Martin, CTE Automotive Instructor
- Chris Geist, Teacher
- Suzanne Reed, Teacher/Resource Specialist
- Amanda Castellanos-Rodriguez, College and Career Specialist
- Sallie Covarrubias, Special Education Paraeducator
- Sandra Muñoz, Paraeducator
- Joy Wanamaker, Paraeducator

Providence School staff consists of both certificated and non-certificated personnel. All six full-time Providence Court School teachers, the CTE instructor, the school counselor, the school psychologist (part-time), and the administrators are highly qualified and appropriately credentialed.

In addition, Providence School also has three classified para-educators, an office manager, induction/transition specialist, and a part time college and career counselor.

**Number attending school:** Enrollment changes daily. On Tuesday, November 21, 2023, 53 students attended Providence.

**Number in Independent Study:** 0

**SYTF number attending school:** 4

**Number of minors not attending school and reason?** All non-graduates attend school.

**Specific steps taken to encourage their involvement?** N/A

**Number of youth in each classroom:** Class size ranges from 1 to 17.

**Activities and coursework:**

Providence School is part of VCOE and is Western Association for Schools and Colleges (WASC) Accredited. All students who enter the JF and have not graduated from high school are immediately enrolled in Providence School. Because it is a Court school, students enter and leave our school every day, and enrollment constantly changes.

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

Providence School provides all students and staff with materials so that they may participate in and access all core subjects and supplemental programs and

interventions. Providence School provides textbooks, consumables, and related materials in mathematics, English, science, and social science. All equipment is purchased, maintained, and accessible to all participating students and staff. Providence School students can enroll in elective courses and engage in credit recovery through the APEX online learning program or individualized guided curriculum work. Supplemental services are provided. These services include ELD, HiSET, and credit recovery support.

Teachers use curriculum-embedded formative and summative assessments to modify instruction and regularly monitor student understanding of the core subjects (mathematics, English, social science, and science). These data are used to determine student progress and adjust instruction based aligned assessments to ensure that students are prepared for the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). Local assessments consist of quizzes, tests, and projects on student performance. Providence School continues to develop CCCSS.

All students have necessary supplies and access to technology. Students are not assigned homework and can work on credit recovery during school hours.

## **ON-LINE COLLEGE ACCESS**

### **Partnerships**

**College Classes:** VCOE and VCPA have an impressive, collaborative, and positive partnership with the VCCCD, which consists of Moorpark College, Oxnard College, and Ventura College. Every graduate is strongly advised to take a college course. Our VCOE counselor enrolls those who decide to take a college course in collaboration with the Oxnard College Rising Scholars Counselor and Probation. Probation pays each student's tuition fee. For the fall semester, 21 students enrolled in online VCCCD college courses. One student is dually enrolled in high school and college. The student is a long-term Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF) student, nearing graduation from high school, and has expressed interest in taking a college course.

The Oxnard College Rising Scholars counselor supports our incarcerated students in the completion of their courses. The Rising Scholars counselor works with college instructors to ensure that the instructors address the limitations of their confined students. The Rising Scholars counselor also facilitates tutoring and special education services.

Oxnard College provides released students with computers and hot spots so that they have the necessary tools to continue taking college courses once released. In addition, the VCOE counselor and the Oxnard College Rising Scholars Counselor assist students in the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

**Students with Short Commitments:** The Providence School counselor links young people who are not enrolled in college and will be leaving the JF within a short period of time to the VCCCD Rising Scholars counselor and provides community college



information. The Providence School counselor connects them to agencies and helps students search for local jobs in the area in which they are transitioning.

**Newly Incarcerated Students:** Newly detained students taking online college courses continue to take their courses with the assistance of the VCOE and VCCCD Rising Scholars counselors. Our counselors work closely together to accommodate the students' needs and course completion while they are detained.

**Number of youths enrolled:** For the fall 2023 semester, 21 students were enrolled in online VCCCD college courses.

**Specific steps taken to encourage their involvement?** Students are counseled by Probation and school staff to encourage college attendance.

**Number of youths enrolled:** 17 currently (14 are enrolled for the Spring of 2023)

**Number of SYTF youth enrolled:** 11 of the 17

**Specific steps taken to encourage their involvement?** The enrolled youth are allowed to wear a community college logo shirt, they receive tutoring, daily encouragement and they get to celebrate the end of the semester with a special food item request.

**Activities and coursework:** The youth are completing general education classes (English, Social Sciences, Humanities, etc.). One youth took a Biology class and had to do experiments.

All students have necessary supplies and access to technology and materials are provided by VCPA and VCOE. College classes require the completion of work completed independently.

## **VOCATIONAL**

Career and Technical Education: VCOE has contracted with VCPA to offer Career Technical Education classes in the JF for graduates. These classes include Career Exploration, Workplace Essentials, Transportation/Automotive Engine Repair, and Agricultural/Natural Resources.

**Specific steps taken to encourage their involvement?** Students selected to participate are identified by VCPA. Student participation is built into the VCPA incentive system.

**Activities/coursework:** Students complete required activities and coursework.

**JJDPC Summary and Recommendations:** The Ventura County JJDPC completed an annual Site Inspection on December 5, 2023. Prior to the inspection, there were several areas of concern voiced by commissioners and shared with the staff, who were given a list of questions beforehand. The interview provided an opportunity to review their

responses and ask any additional or clarifying questions. Present at this interview were Dr. Teresa Vega, Assistant Principal at Providence School; Nicole Garr, Counselor; and Stefanie Rodriguez, Director of Alternative Education.

Providence Court School faces challenges shared by all counties in the state seeking to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to incarcerated youth. These challenges include a daily fluctuating student enrollment; students entering at extremely disparate levels of ability and achievement, from multiple districts of residence; IEPs at all stages of development, including many students requesting initial assessment; integration of meaningful and relevant curriculum that includes Social and Emotional Learning (SEL); compliance with regulations regarding notice, due process, and parent rights; and management of the reentry process back to home local education agency (LEA).

### **Systems Working Well:**

**Identifying and addressing needs of Providence School students with IEPs.** Upon enrollment, updated information is gathered and shared among staff. In the 22-23 school year (SY) 278 students were enrolled at Providence and 108 (38.84%) received special education services. Because enrollment fluctuates daily, the percentage of students with IEPs can be between 30% - 50%. Eligibility areas include emotional disturbance, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech/language impairment, intellectual disability, autism, and hard of hearing. Student information is obtained through CALPADS, and service providers are notified that a new student requires services. Providence staff coordinate with the district, VCOE, SELPA, and out of county as needed to obtain necessary information for developing special education service provision. All students can meet with a clinician and have access to related services as designated on IEP.

**Compliant procedures and credentialed staff available for review and implementation of IEPs in the juvenile facility.** Providence School coordinates with home school and LEA for completion of and participation in IEP triennial reviews. Should a student have an open assessment plan upon enrollment, LEA will complete the assessment. Once a student is enrolled, however, VCOE assumes this responsibility. The district both develops IEPs and has staff present at IEPs. All veteran staff: Two credentialed teachers and a paraeducator provide educational services, along with ancillary support as needed, drawn from VCOE HR.

**Academic progress of students.** Providence often is the most consistent school experience students have had, and most do well. They benefit from the supports provided, smaller class size, and earn credits after ten days. Teachers and paraprofessionals are able to differentiate instruction and scaffold learning effectively due to lower class size. There is a behaviorist to support staff and students, as well as the provision of a literature program regarding emotional well-being. There is a Book Club, currently reading *A Long Way Down*, which helps them to process their experiences. In 22-23 SY, 98% of all students who were enrolled in Providence for ten days or more earned credits. Currently, all students but one are on the diploma track.

**Transition back into district schools and dependably functioning reentry procedures.** Per AB 1354, all students complete an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) upon enrollment. VCOE and Ventura County Probation Agency have to ensure smooth transition into district schools upon release from juvenile facility. The key point person is the induction/transition specialist. Transition specialist communicates weekly with districts throughout a student's tenure, including enrollment and release notification, and meeting with student to discuss school enrollment plan for when they will be released. Transition specialist also participates in the Release Plan Meetings sponsored by Probation for students at Providence longer than 60 days. Family is included, along with facilities PO, field PO, behavior health therapist, and student. Home school contact information, as well as Ventura County post-secondary academic and vocational opportunities and financial aid programs are placed with student's belongings, so it is available upon release. The transition specialist enters current data and updates student's transcripts, ensuring all accrued credits earned at Providence are captured in transcript, which is then sent to the home school. Home school notifies Providence as soon as the student re-enrolls.

**Parent/Family Involvement while at JF and Notification Upon Release.** Parents participate in all IEP meetings once students begin at Providence. Administrative placement or Addendum meeting held after 30 days of enrollment to review FAPE offer and discuss service provision. Parents are contacted by induction/transition specialist with information about how to re-enroll their child back in school. Prior to release, every Wednesday afternoon during visiting time, Providence staff connect with the parents who come to the JF and answer any questions. Info pamphlets are left in the JF reception area so that parents/caregivers can access this while visiting students. Providence staff and administrators strive to be connected and provide an explanation of all educational services.

**Reenrollment monitoring.** The induction/transition specialist: a) documents re-enrollment status in the VCOE student data system upon notification from the home district, home school, CALPADS, or Probation; b) maintains a list of students who have been released and the school in which they are enrolled; c) sends field probation officers (FPOs) a list every Friday of students released who have not re-enrolled, notifies school and district of their status, and participates in the SARB process.

**Monitoring of program quality at Providence.** Providence School is WASC accredited. In 2018-2019 VCOE Court and Community Schools (Providence and Gateway) conducted a WASC review and were given a 6-year accreditation with a mid-cycle review. This accreditation validates the integrity and quality of the program. In March 2022, a mid-cycle virtual review was held that gave many commendations. Strengths noted were student/staff relationships, positive school culture (pride and appreciation, clean campuses), use of technology in classrooms, induction/transition specialists and counselors, rigorous curriculum aligned to state standards, partnerships with community colleges, strong leadership, flexible/professional staff and college and career readiness programs, and post-secondary planning. Additionally, there is an annual Board State of Community Corrections (BSCC) review to ensure the program provides a quality education and adheres to Title 15 standards. In December 2022, the

Oxnard College acting VP of student development served as an external entity to evaluate program, and commended Providence court school in the areas of communication and collaboration; prioritizing students' educational experience; transition planning; work with local community colleges and having a dedicated college counselor at Oxnard College as a resource to students; celebrating student achievement with graduation ceremonies; excellent leadership. Providence is also included in mandated statewide accountability systems of CDE, such as the California Dashboard, which shows student performance and disaggregates data of subgroups; the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), in which program successes and needs are identified; and the Single School Plan for Student Achievement (SSPSA), in which the expenditure of Title I, Part D funding is outlined. In addition, Providence School holds School Site Council (SSC) meetings in which student, community, and staff representatives review, analyze Dashboard results, school goals and outcomes, then determine how to allocate Title I funds.

### **Challenges with Recommendations:**

**Consistent Access to Current Educational Data.** Ensuring most updated information is utilized in development of educational program for increasing numbers of students with IEPs has become more of a challenge.

- **Recommendation:** Increase dedicated staff time to review IEP timelines and communicate with district staff in order to develop appropriate educational programs.

**Liaison at home schools have varying effectiveness.** The role of the liaison at home school can impact the success of re-enrollment. Providence staff is pushing to have a previously incarcerated liaison, which, they report, is legally mandated.

- **Recommendation:** Two prongs: 1) admin to discuss with district admin importance of having a previously incarcerated person as liaison; and 2) modify procedure so that there is more consistent consultation between home school and JF to promote more effective re-enrollment.

**More dedicated transition services at home school upon reenrollment needed.** Transition back to school would benefit from a transition specialist at each school site in which a student is re-enrolling. If there was a transition specialist at each site, it could help the students enroll in the right classes. They would also know to whom they could go with questions.

- **Recommendation:** JF to recommend district to analyze whether budget for transition specialist at each school site, or additional dedicated time budgeted for person currently with these responsibilities.

**Training in best practices of, and consultation with, other counties to address building effective systems in educational programs in high transiency contexts.** The transiency of student population is very high. The number of students receiving

special ed services changes everyday, as does student enrollment, and often location of classroom. How are other counties addressing these realities effectively? It would be helpful for special education team to meet with professional counterparts in similar contexts across the state.

- **Recommendation:** Coordinate and plan five 30-minute zoom calls with other JFs across California, to gather information about best practices and challenges.

**Regular review of WASC growth areas.** WASC visiting committee in 2022 concurred with schools' identified areas for growth, including: decrease chronic absenteeism; increased parent/family engagement; increase academic supports, interventions and mentoring for students; professional development for staff, consistent implementation of curriculum in all instructional programs; increased time for staff collaboration; and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs); and continued implementation of student supports.

- **Recommendation:** Review of WASC areas is a great start. Are goals being set and plans put in place?

### **XVIII. Re-Entry**

The youth's assigned commitment DPO schedules a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Meeting prior to their release. Those involved include VCBH, the youth's assigned field DPO, Substance Use Treatment Services (SUTS) counselor, and Providence School staff. The meeting is mostly in person. However, the parent/guardian's telephone in or go onto Microsoft Teams. Other members of the team have the option to do it via Teams as well, but they typically are in person. During the meeting, each participant provides information to assist the youth following his/her release and provides information regarding what the youth completed and/or has been working on while at the JF. At the conclusion of the meeting, the youth is provided reporting instructions to his assigned field DPO upon his release.

Youth who are diagnosed by facility medical or behavioral health doctors with any condition that requires medication may have it prescribed in the facility. It is then administered by the registered nurse. The nurse conducts a morning and evening pill-call. Additionally, if needed, the nurse will make additional unit visits to administer medication. Upon release, if the youth was being administered medication in the facility, the youth or their parent will receive a prescription for the next 30 days out of custody.

The release tab requires the CSOs contact medical before they are able to complete a release. Medical will provide prescriptions for any medications that their doctor has prescribed to youth. Upon a youth's release, Wellpath has indicated that they send a prescription to a pharmacy for the patient to pick up for psychiatric medications and essential medical medications per Wellpath's policy. There are certain instances where they will release new medication for youth who are being sent to a placement as they may not be able to see a doctor right away. On occasion, Behavioral Health will schedule a follow up appointment for the youth.

With the pending implementation of CAL-AIM for the justice involved population, the warm handoff of services from the facility to the community will be greatly improved.

### **Re-Entry Recommendations:**

The JJDPJPC recommends that the JF continues to create robust re-entry opportunities that are inclusive to all clients and families. Perhaps a case coordinator could be utilized to identify programming and ensure referral while youth is still in the facility. Consistent communication with community partners is vital to connecting clients to needed services that will provide the most impact when a youth is released from custody.

For successful re-entry, the JJDPJPC recommends finding a community-based organization who can build curriculum in a life skills course that contains topics such as the following:

- **Personal Finance Management:** Budgeting, saving, investing, debt management, understanding credit, taxes, and financial planning.
- **Communication Skills:** Effective verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, conflict resolution, negotiation, and public speaking.
- **Time Management and Organization:** Setting goals, prioritizing tasks, creating schedules, managing deadlines, and organizing physical and digital spaces.
- **Problem-Solving and Decision-Making:** Critical thinking skills, problem-solving techniques, decision-making models, and analyzing consequences.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** Self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, managing emotions, and building healthy relationships.
- **Health and Wellness:** Nutrition, exercise, stress management, sleep hygiene, mental health awareness, and substance abuse prevention.
- **Career Development:** Resume writing, job search strategies, interviewing skills, professional networking, and workplace etiquette.
- **Technology and Digital Literacy:** Basic computer skills, internet safety, cybersecurity awareness, social media literacy, and digital communication etiquette.
- **Basic Home and Car Maintenance:** Basic household repairs, vehicle maintenance, safety precautions, and emergency preparedness.
- **Cooking and Nutrition:** Basic cooking skills, meal planning, grocery shopping, understanding nutritional labels, and healthy eating habits.
- **Civic and Community Engagement:** Understanding civic responsibilities, volunteerism, community involvement, and advocacy.

- **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:** Analytical thinking, logical reasoning, creative problem-solving, and decision-making skills.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** Conflict resolution, empathy, active listening, teamwork, and collaboration.
- **Resilience and Adaptability:** Coping with adversity, managing stress, embracing change, and developing a growth mindset.
- **Environmental Awareness:** Sustainable living practices, environmental conservation, and climate change awareness.
- **Cultural Competence and Diversity:** Understanding and respecting different cultures, perspectives, and identities.
- **Self-Care and Wellbeing:** Techniques for self-care, stress management, mindfulness, and maintaining overall wellbeing.

These are necessary skills for future success. These also encourage youth to start thinking about their future and realizing that there is life beyond their time spent at the juvenile facility. This provides them with a road map to start creating it.

#### **XIX. Youth Interviews**

Commissioners Valerie Salazar and James Hodgkins completed interviews with four youths. All the youths we spoke with said that most of the staff are helpful and encourage them to participate in programming and find ways to make changes that can help them upon release. They talked about the iPads with applications, specifically one that educates on financial planning being beneficial. The youth who mentioned this said he shares it with anyone who will listen to him, and wishes it was more promoted by staff. He said financial planning and thinking about the future are important for him and others in the facility, and he hopes that the programs can grow more robust in this area.

Other things mentioned were that they wished there was more stuff to stream and things to do. Some go to programming they don't really need just to have something to do. When we asked if they felt they were treated with respect, most felt that they were, and they felt they could go to staff if they had a problem or were having a difficult time. Other things mentioned were that they wish there were more streaming options, better games, more books to read, and more stuff to do.

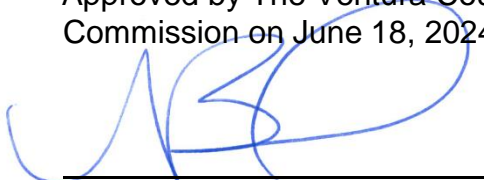
## **CONCLUSION**

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, The Ventura County Chief Deputy Juvenile Services, the County of Ventura Youth Equity Office, the Office of Youth and Community Restoration, and local Community-Based Organizations who provide services to youth in the legal system. The report will also be made available online at the JJDPC website.

The JJDPC plans to return in December 2024 for the next annual inspection.

Approved by The Ventura County Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission on June 18, 2024.



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Date: June 25, 2024

Valerie Salazar, JJDPC Chair