



County of Orange

California

Thomas G. Mauk
County Executive Officer

August 23, 2011

Honorable Thomas J. Borris
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Subject: The Youth Leadership Academy: A Program Review

Dear Judge Borris:

Per your request, and in accordance with Penal Code 933, please find the County of Orange response to the subject report as approved by the Board of Supervisors. The respondent is the Probation Department. If you have any questions, please contact Michelle Zink at (714) 834-7487 in the County Executive Office who will either assist you or direct you to the appropriate individual.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas G. Mauk".

Thomas G. Mauk
County Executive Officer

Enclosure

cc: 2011-12 Orange County Grand Jury

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2010-2011 Grand Jury Report
The Youth Leadership Academy: A Program Review
Probation Department
Responses to Findings and Recommendations

Responses to Findings F.1 through F.6

F.1 The primary way the YLA responded to the need to significantly reduce overall budget expenditures was to idle one of two units; therefore the program is operating at approximately half capacity.

Response: Agrees with finding.

F.2 New management has successfully implemented changes in how residents are regarded and treated, and has instituted evidence-based programming.

Response: Agrees with finding.

F.3 The YLA has just undergone another change of leadership (March 2011); so far, changes that were implemented are expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

Response: Agrees with finding.

F.4 The YLA has been successful in improving overall security and safety, as indicated by the near elimination of serious problem behaviors on the unit.

Response: Agrees with finding.

F.5 Although the program has been successful with adopting evidence-based practices, more work needs to be done to measure outcomes, including progress toward reducing recidivism.

Response: Agrees with finding.

F.6 The program has developed effective links to the community to facilitate the successful transition of residents back into their neighborhoods.

Response: Agrees with finding.

Responses to Recommendation R.2 through R.6

R.1 Recast program goals into measurable objectives (e.g., recidivism rates for YLA graduates) in order to facilitate the quantification of results.

Response: The recommendation requires further analysis.

The ability to track multiple outcomes across all service areas has been hampered by a lack of available staff. The department may have the ability to develop specific measurable criteria, and the recommendation will be evaluated as it specifically applies to YLA recidivism rates, with a decision as to capability to be made by November 30, 2011.

- R.2** Develop efficient ways to track the progress of YLA graduates in order to better measure rates of recidivism; use this information to demonstrate program effectiveness over time.

Response: The recommendation requires further analysis.

The department's ability to collect, analyze and report out on data has been reduced significantly due to loss of qualified staff due to ongoing budget constraints. The department will study current data collection efforts in order to begin to report out on program effectiveness over time. A decision as to capability will be made by November 30, 2011.

- R.3** Continue to search for research and training grants, including private foundation and professional association grants.

Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

The department maintains a grant coordinator at the Division Director level who is responsible for identifying, analyzing and pursuing grant opportunities. The availability of grants is cyclical, with many RFP's released in the spring of each year. In addition, the department has pursued and obtained grant support from private foundations such as the Annie E. Casey foundation and the Burns Institute. The department has also embarked on a multi-year research project with UC Irvine known as the "Crossroads Study" which will study outcomes for minors who do and do not enter the juvenile justice system. Information about the project can be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/OCProbationDept>

- R.4** Develop collaborative ties to a criminology department at a local university or college; encourage graduate students working on master's theses and doctoral dissertations to study YLA programs and outcomes.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The department has embarked on a multi-year research project with UC Irvine known as the "Crossroads Study" involving most minors entering custody, including YLA minors. Although not specific to the YLA program, the Crossroads Study will delve in to effectiveness of various interventions across all juvenile institutions. It is impractical to begin another research study that will eventually cover the same ground. The department will report findings by institution as they become available.

- R.5** Improve the utility of current quarterly statistical reports by incorporating short empirical studies, surveys, and analyses of data already being collected.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The department is unable to incorporate short empirical studies and surveys due to the loss of many qualified research staff as a result of budget reductions. Insofar as it is practical, the department will provide quarterly reports which will include comparisons of quarter to quarter, and year to year data being collected and reported on with an eye towards spotting trends and need for improvement.

- R.6** When using specific Evidence-Based Programs, maintain fidelity to the model's procedures and interventions, so that YLA results will be empirically supported.

Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

All YLA staff has received multi-day training on the delivery of "Thinking for a Change" and other evidence based interventions. Covered in the training is the importance of fidelity (adhering to the program parameters) from presentation to presentation, group to group and staff to staff. All probation staff has received training in Evidence-Based Programs (EBP's), the importance of focusing on the highest risk criminogenic factors, fidelity to the model, and use of a standardized curriculum.