County of Orange
California

James D. Ruth
Interim
County Executive Officer

March 19, 2003

Carlos N. Olvera, Foreman
FY 02/03 Grand Jury
Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92702

Subject: Response to Orange County Grand Jury Report, "Reversing Juvenile Recidivism"

Dear Mr. Olvera:

Per your request, and in accordance with Penal Code 993, enclosed please find the County of Orange response to the subject report as approved by the Board of Supervisors. If you have any questions, please contact Frank Kim at the County Executive Office who will either assist you or direct you to the appropriate individual.

Respectfully,

James D. Ruth

James D. Ruth, Interim County Executive Officer

County Executive Office
10 Civic Center Plaza
Third Floor
Santa Ana, California
92701-4062

Tel: (714) 834-2345
Fax: (714) 834-4416
Web: www.oc.ca.gov

2002-2003 Orange County Grand Jury Report
Reversing Juvenile Recidivism

Response to Findings

1. **Forty-two out of 136 in the experimental group youth have successfully completed the YFRC program.**

   Response to Finding #1: Agrees with finding.

   The 1996-2002 Final Report: Orange County Repeat Offender Prevention Project (ROPP), 8% Early Intervention Program, submitted to the State Board of Corrections, indicates as of June 30, 2002, 42 of 96 ROPP participants had successfully terminated from the program. The remaining 40 youth were still participating at that time.

2. **The experimental group had a better GPA than the control group during the first year but the trend was reversed in the fourth six-month period.**

   Response to Finding #2: Agrees with finding.

3. **The recidivism in the experimental group was significantly reduced during the second and third six-month period while the fourth six-month result was less impressive.**

   Response to Finding #3: Agrees with finding.

   The ROPP Final Report reveals statistically significant less new law violations for ROPP participants with petitions filed for the second, third, and fourth reporting periods.

4. **Youth at the South and Central centers are participating in a program offered by the Orange County Community Council called the Philanthropist which teaches the importance of sharing and giving. The Council matches money raised by the youth on an 8:1 basis. The maximum Council match is $4,500. The youth have a direct positive impact on their community by distributing this money to their selected local charities.**

   Response to Finding #4: Agrees with finding.

5. **YFRC students' community services, restorative justice, and sharing and giving programs help to create clean, healthy, safe, and desirable**

neighborhood environments. YFRC treatment centers make good neighbors. However, some communities still perceive the treatment centers as a threat.

Response to Finding #5: Agrees with finding.

6. **Discipline is a key to the program. The balance between a treatment (counseling and intervention) and probation (sanction and consequence) is an art. Deputy Probation Officers need more immediate discipline options for timely consequences.**

Response to Finding #6: Disagrees partially with this finding.

It is believed that discipline options are satisfactory in that a full spectrum of graduated sanctions are available for interventions when warranted, up to and including a formal probation violation and arrest.

7. **Some students feel isolated because the probation rules prohibit them from contacting their YFRC friends outside of the program.**

Response to Finding #7: Agrees with finding.

The Terms and Conditions of probation generally prohibit association with others on probation or parole, in order to minimize potential negative influences.

8. **Because county departments are experiencing a budget crunch, OCPD has had to freeze two open Deputy Probation Officer positions at YFRC treatment centers.**

Response to Finding #8: Agrees with finding.

9. **Female students at South Center watch a video-taped program during the time the male students are off campus involved in outdoor sports.**

Response to Finding #9: Disagrees partially with this finding.

Site activities vary throughout the year and are dependent upon available staffing and resources. The situation described was a short-term scheduling issue and is not representative of on-going practice.

10. **Orange County Superintendent of Schools provides free or reduced rate lunch for qualified youth. Parents who are not qualified for the free lunch programs are assessed $30 a month, but the collection of this money is extremely difficult.**

Response to Finding #10: Agrees with finding.

11. **Parent participation is an important part of the program.**

Response to Finding #11: Agrees with finding.

12. **In-Home services for the six centers collectively cost the county about $840,000 a year. The service provider submits a quarterly report to detail its services.**

Response to Finding #12: Agrees with finding.

The current annual cost for contracted In-Home Family Intervention Services at the six YFRCs is $802,161.

13. **A nurse is a strong collaborative partner at the North – Early Intervention Program and El Toro sites. The other four centers do not have this advantage.**

Response to Finding #13: Agree with the finding.

The Health Care Agency currently provides the services of a Public Health Nurse at the El Toro site, which is funded through a grant from the California Juvenile Justice Commission. The Public Health Nurse works closely with the youth and their families to assess the health needs of each member of the household and then works to link household members with available community health care resources to meet identified needs. This Public Health Nurse also provides services to clients and families at the Santa Ana Youth and Family Resource Center on a referral basis. The services at the North – Early Intervention Program are more clinical in nature and are provided by a nurse practitioner under a separate agreement between the Probation Department and the Orange County Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Response to Recommendations

1. **Continue to follow-up these graduates for at least 10 more years to validate whether they are still law-abiding citizens.**

Response to Recommendation #1: This recommendation has been implemented.

The department is dedicated to continuation of the ROPP data collection and analysis for as long as is feasible.

2. **Investigate why the youth became less responsive to the treatment after 18 months and make modifications to the program as indicated.**

Response to Recommendation #2: This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

The post-ROPP data analysis is to include many additional sub-factors including length of participation, and will occur within the next six to twelve months.

3. **Approach the Orange County Community Council about expanding the youth empowerment program, Philanthropist, to the other four centers.**

Response to Recommendation #3: This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

The Council will be approached once the current projects are successfully completed within six months. However, the Philanthropist Project is on an annual cycle and the number of participating schools is limited.

4. **Solicit community's involvement in the treatment center's activities.**

Response to Recommendation #4: This recommendation has been implemented.

Community involvement is desirable and varies by region. Many community service projects, outings, and resource linkages foster positive relationships with community groups and members. This outreach will continue.

5. **Give Deputy Probation Officers more option to hand troublesome youth timely consequences.**

Response to Recommendation #5: This recommendation has been implemented.

Resources continue to challenge these efforts. However, a grant application has recently been submitted to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for a specialized drug and alcohol treatment program for YFRC youth who continue to demonstrate substance abuse, a common cause for program violations.

6. **Create a mentor program that addresses the issue of isolation. Students at the local colleges and universities are good source for role models.**

Response to Recommendation #6: This recommendation has been implemented.

The department's Volunteer Services unit provides volunteers and student interns at all sites.

7. **Recruit and train volunteers to fill some of the voids caused by the countywide budget cuts.**

Response to Recommendation #7: This recommendation has been implemented.

Volunteer Services has recently increased recruitment efforts for Volunteers In Probation and Volunteer Probation Officers. A VPO Class is currently nearing completion.

8. **Create more program opportunities for female students.**

Response to Recommendation #8: This recommendation has been implemented.

Each site does have on-going groups and activities specifically for girls, and plans are underway for the development and implementation of a girls sports program.

9. **Include lunch money in the YFRC budget for the students whose parents fail to pay.**

Response to Recommendation #9: This recommendation will not be implemented.

The school lunch program is administered by OCDE according to federal and state guidelines. Food and snacks are provided to all youth throughout the day. However, providing a meal budget for youth who do not otherwise qualify for the lunch program is prohibited by county policy as a gifting of public funds.

10. **Use parent participation as one measure to rate the performance of the In-Home service counselors.**

Response to Recommendation #10: This recommendation has been implemented.

This figure is included in monthly and quarterly reports.

11. **Examine In-Home Services performance reports in a detailed manner to insure the program's cost effectiveness.**

Response to Recommendation #11: This recommendation has been implemented.

Current contract language for these services emphasizes family involvement and providing services to a greater number of families.

12. Add a part-time nurse to the collaborative team at the four centers that are without or find a more affordable alternative.

Response to Recommendation #12: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable.

Health Care Agency Response:

The Health Care Agency (HCA) agrees that the services of a Public Health Nurse would be a valuable addition to the collaborative team at each of the Youth and Family Resource Center (YFRC) sites. However, HCA does not currently have the funding needed to add these positions. In light of the current State and County budget constraints, the addition of new services is expected to be limited to mandated requirements.

HCA is in the process of exploring available options to secure grant funding for the addition of Public Health Nurses at as many of the YFRC sites as possible. It is hoped that interim funding can be obtained to maintain the services of the Public Health Nurse at the El Toro YFRC while grant funding is sought. As conceptualized, the proposed program would incorporate a combined Public Health/Clinical model to provide assessment of needs, continue direct health care services to YFRC clients and offer a long-range approach to linking youth and their families with available health resources, increasing their integration into the community.

Probation Response:

This recommendation will not be implemented, unless adequate resources and funding are made available. Implementation is largely dependent upon HCA and budget resources. However, a working committee, the 8% Health Services Team, has been actively pursuing potential outside funding and this effort will continue.