



County of Orange
California

James D. Ruth
County Executive Officer

August 9, 2004

Tom Staple, Foreman
FY 03/04 Grand Jury
Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92702

Subject: Response to Orange County Grand Jury Report, "Combating
Truancy in Orange County"

Dear Mr. Staple:

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 Brian Wayt at the County Executive Office who will either assist you or direct you to the appropriate individual.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James D. Ruth".

James D. Ruth
County Executive Officer

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**2003-2004 Grand Jury Report
“Combating Truancy in Orange County”
Response to Findings and Recommendations**

Response to Findings 17, 21, 22 & 25:

17. School districts repeatedly identified three particular skills as being essential if SAR Boards are to be effective; law-enforcement skills (e.g., a School Resource Officer), prosecutorial skills (e.g., a Deputy District Attorney), and probation skills (e.g., a Probation Officer). Yet, more often than not, these skills are not present at district SAR Board meetings.

Response: Disagrees partially with the finding

It is noted by the District Attorney's office that they do not see the presence of prosecutor as an essential component of the SARB in that SARBs are not adversarial or criminal proceedings. Probation officers serve in an advisory capacity as one member of the multi-disciplinary team that comprises a SARB. Probation continues to participate in SAR Boards where the Districts have requested our participation. Currently ten juvenile probation officers participate in SAR Boards through out the county.

21. School districts that have chosen to embrace the Truancy Response Project have experienced significant improvements in their truancy problems and increased awareness among parents and students of the importance of regular attendance.

Response: Agrees with finding

22. School Districts repeatedly identified a Deputy District Attorney, a law-enforcement officer and a probation officer as three key people who should make presentations to habitually truant students and their parent(s) at the District Attorney's Community Meetings. Yet more often than not, neither a law-enforcement officer nor a probation officer is present at such meetings.

Response: Disagrees wholly with the finding

The District Attorney Community Meetings include a power point presentation by a deputy district attorney that serves to inform the parents of the consequences of continued truancy by their student. This presentation includes information on the SARB process as well as the eventual outcome of the filing of a petition in Juvenile Court if the student's attendance problems are not resolved. The process is adequately covered and it is believed unnecessary to have a deputy probation officer present.

25. Truancy support by the Probation Department and the District Attorney's office needs to be fully funded if these organizations are to be as effective as the school districts would like them to be.

Response: Agrees with finding

Response to Recommendations 16 & 21:

16. The Probation Department and the District Attorney improve the operational effectiveness of district-level SAR Boards by assigning, respectively, a Probation Officer and a Deputy District Attorney to attend SAR Board meetings in those school districts that request such participation.

Response: The recommendation has been implemented

The Probation Department currently serves on thirteen SAR Boards as requested. We will continue to accommodate requests by school districts as our resources allow. If every school district were to request Probation participation it would exceed our ability to respond unless additional funding were available to support this activity.

21. The Probation Department provides for having Probation Officers participate in the Truancy Response Project by making presentations to habitually truant students and their parents at the District Attorney's Community Meetings.

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

As responded to in Finding #22, the District Attorney's Community Meetings are advisory and the District Attorney's office adequately presents the information to the parents both in their power point presentation and presence. Probation participation is not necessary to this process in its current format.