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April 10, 2025

TO: Mike Dempsey
Monitor for California Department of Justice

FROM: Eric Bates 
Assistant Inspector General

SUBJECT: Quarterly Report on Programming, Room Confinement, and Grievances at Barry J. Nidorf and Los Padrinos Juvenile Halls for the Third Quarter of 2024

This quarterly report reviewing the Los Angeles County Probation Department's compliance with the access to programming, grievance process, and room confinement mandates outlined in the Detailed Plan for the Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall (BJNJH) and the Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall (LPJH) covers the third quarter of 2024, from July 1, 2024, through September 30, 2024. All previous determinations of compliance were based on information and documentation provided by the Department in good faith that it was working toward implementation of an electronic data system. However, the electronic data system has not been implemented, and as noted in the previous quarterly report, the Department continues to provide incomplete and untimely information.¹

Based on the latest information provided by the Probation Department, the Office of Inspector General is not confident that under standard auditing principles the information received allows for an accurate determination of the Department's compliance with the Detailed Plan. As a result, once again, the Office of Inspector General lacks sufficient information to determine the Department's compliance with the

¹ While the Office of Inspector General is not directly responsible for monitoring the implementation of computerized tracking systems or other processes that are included in the Detailed Plan, the lack of implementation of computerized systems and improved processes hinders the Office of Inspector General's ability to monitor the sections of the Detailed Plan assigned to our office. This is especially true when there are delays in providing documents timely as required by the Detailed Plan.

Detailed Plan for providing programming and tracking room confinements, and grievances.

Access to Programming, Recreation, Religious Services and Visitation

The Detailed Plan requires that the Probation Department provide youth with programming, recreational activities, religious services, visitation, and phone calls (“Required Activities”) as required by law, regulation, and County policy.² The Detailed Plan also prohibits the Department from preventing access to Required Activities by confining youth to their rooms, unless it determines that a youth poses a threat to the safety or security of the facility. The Detailed Plan requires that Department staff document and log any denial of Required Activities by providing the staff member’s reason for denial, the signature of the staff member, and the validation of the superintendent of the facility.³ The Department must create and review weekly reports of all denials of Required Activities and report them to the Office of Inspector General on a quarterly basis. Those reports are not being provided timely to us.

For substantive compliance, the Detailed Plan requires that the Probation Department provide Required Activities each day for at least 93 percent of youth that it has not found pose a threat to the safety or security of the facility or themselves (“eligible youth”). To determine compliance, the Office of Inspector General reviews written Title 15 programming exception logs, as well as supporting documentation, that are required by the Board of State Community Corrections when youths miss required programming. This quarter, the Department failed to provide complete logs and accurate information to

² Title 15 provides that all youth shall be provided with the opportunity for at least one hour of daily programming to include, but not be limited to, trauma focused, cognitive, evidence-based, best practice interventions that are culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate, or prosocial interventions and activities designed to reduce recidivism. Examples of such activities are (1) Cognitive Behavior Interventions, (2) Management of Stress and Trauma, (3) Anger Management, (4) Conflict Resolution, (5) Juvenile Justice System, (6) Trauma-related interventions, (7) Victim Awareness, (8) Self-Improvement, (9) Parenting Skills and Support, (10) Tolerance and Diversity, (11) Healing Informed Approaches, (12) Interventions by Credible Messengers, (13) Gender Specific Programming, (14) Art, creative writing, or self-expression, (15) CPR and First Aid training, (16) Restorative Justice or Civic Engagement, (17) Career and leadership opportunities, and (18) Other topics suitable to the youth population. Education provided to the youths by Los Angeles County Office of Education is not considered “programming.” As mentioned in the Monitor/SME Compliance Rating comments on the Detailed Plan, “more needs to be done to improve the overall programming, reduce idleness, and ensure that the programming being provided is based on a youth’s individual needs.”

³ The Office of Inspector General interprets “validation” under Paragraph 24(c) to mean a signature on the log by a supervisor and superintendent.

the Office of Inspector General within the necessary timeframe in order for our staff to audit the exception log for accuracy and to assess compliance as required under the Detailed Plan.⁴ The Department attributed its failure to provide the documentation to lack of staff. In addition, the Department has not provided information regarding religious services, visitation, and phone calls provided to the youths for this quarter. As a result, once again, the Office of Inspector General lacks sufficient information to determine the Department's compliance with the Detailed Plan for this quarter.

Undoubtedly, implementing computerized databases will provide a more seamless, and timely, way to provide documentation to the Office of Inspector General for review. The Probation Department reported on the status of implementing computerized electronic data systems. It is developing two electronic data systems, the Youth Activity Tracking System (YATS) and the Institutional Programs and Calendar Application (IPCA.) The YATS will track all daily movement of youths within the facilities including religious services and visitation. Due to the lack of Wi-Fi in its youth facilities, the Department is as yet unable to implement YAT and cannot provide an expected implementation date.

The IPCA system will track all daily youth programming, including self-separations and room confinements, provide weekly and monthly event calendars, alerts for canceled events and track any changes made to youths' records, all of which will enhance the Probation Department's auditing and reporting capabilities. This system is in phase two with implementation and testing expected soon according to the Department. The Department reported that is not able to provide an expected completion date due to the complexity of integrating existing electronic systems with the new system.

The Office of Inspector General is tasked under the Detailed Plan with ensuring that youth are not improperly denied programming and that all eligible youth "have been provided programming, recreation, exercise, religious services, visitation, and phone calls, as required by law, regulation and County policy."⁵ Merely giving youth the opportunity to engage in programming is not the same as **providing** programming.

⁴ Supporting documentation includes Title 15 programming logs, Self-Separation forms, SIR/PIR forms, court and medical documents.

⁵ To find substantial compliance with Paragraph 24(c)(i-iv) of the Detailed Plan the Office of Inspector General must find that "93% of youth who have not been found to represent a threat to safety and security have been provided programming, recreation, exercise, religious services, visitation, and phone calls, as required by law, regulation and County policy." Ensuring that appropriate steps to re-engage youth in programming is necessary to achieve meaningful compliance.

Simply providing access to the Required Activities does not fulfill the goal of the Settlement Agreement and Detailed Plan that youth are engaged in the programming. Allowing youth to self-separate with no efforts to encourage participation thwarts the goal of this section of the Detailed Plan that programming is actually provided, which is also the goal of the applicable state laws, regulations, and County policy. To ensure compliance with the Detailed Plan, it is therefore necessary for the Office of Inspector General to audit efforts to re-engage youth who decline to participate, which is noted in Probation Department records as self-separation. As noted in previous quarterly reports, Department staff track the specific reasons why youths decline to participate on Self-Separation forms. These forms were not provided to the Office of Inspector General for the third quarter of 2024. Without this documentation, the Office of Inspector General lacks sufficient information to determine whether staff took all appropriate steps to re-engage self-separated youths and encouraged them to resume participation in Required Activities. The Department utilizes the Guard1 electronic safety tracking system for the required Title 15 safety checks of the youths in their rooms. The *Notes* field in the Guard1 system provides the Department the ability to note efforts made to re-engage youths who self-separate. However, the Department recently reported that the *Notes* field is no longer utilized due to staff routinely entering incorrect and incomplete information in that field. The Office of Inspector General recommends that the Department properly train its staff to properly utilize the *Notes* field to document efforts made to re-engage the youths in Required Activities, and the Department prioritize the completion of the electronic tracking systems to digitally memorialize youth participation, reasons for non-participation in Required Activities, and attempts to re-engage youth in programming.

Room Confinements

The Detailed Plan in paragraph 20 requires that the Probation Department create and implement an internal process to better identify and track room confinements. This system must include a mechanism to promptly notify juvenile hall superintendents of room confinements that violate Department policy or state law. It must also facilitate the swift implementation of remedial measures to address any identified deficiencies. The Detailed Plan further instructs the Department to create an approved internal process to provide the Office of Inspector General with data and documentation of identified violations of room confinement policy or state law as well as the remedial measures taken in response to these violations. The Department has created an internal process

for room confinement but has not received monitor approval.⁶ As noted above, the Department is working on integrating existing Department data systems with a new electronic system to track room confinements. Until the Probation Department implements a process approved by you, as the DOJ monitor, and provides the data to you and the Office of Inspector General, it remains out of compliance with the Detailed Plan requirement for tracking room confinements.

The Detailed Plan requires Probation Department staff to notify superintendents of the juvenile halls promptly when room confinements do not comply with Welfare and Institutions Code section 208.3, other state laws, and Department policy. Based on the review of the available documents at both BJNJH and LPJH, during this quarter, the Department imposed 16 room confinements at LPJH and 26 room confinements at BJNJH. All confinements complied with state law and Department policy, so no notifications were required under this provision of the Detailed Plan.

The continued lack of sufficient internal tracking processes, including a computerized database, continues to prevent the accurate collection and analysis of room confinement incidents to properly determine whether the Department identifies and properly documents in writing all instances of violations. Because of this, the compliance stated in the paragraph above must be viewed with caution given the possibility that information is missing due to the lack of a computerized database.

Grievances

The Detailed Plan requires the Probation Department to implement a grievance policy to provide youth and families to submit grievances through a secure online portal.⁷ As described in the previous quarterly and semi-annual reports, the Probation Department implemented its electronic grievance management system (GMS) in February 2023,

⁶ The Probation Department is utilizing an expedited procurement process authorized by the Board of Supervisors' emergency motion dated December 17, 2024. It is expected to have a selected vendor by the end of the first quarter of 2025. It will then commence the implementation process and integration with existing Department data systems.

⁷ Detailed Plan Para. 31(a): Within the timeframes set forth herein, the County will implement a revised grievance policy to provide: (i) additional avenues and means for youth and families to submit grievances, including through secure online portals; (ii) tracking of grievances for responses and appeals in compliance with California Code of Regulations, title 15, section 1361, with oversight by OIG; and (iii) a process for prompt review of and response to grievances alleging physical or sexual abuse of youth and documentation of referral to the appropriate investigating agency[ies].

which allows youths to file grievances through their laptop computers.⁸ In June 2024, the Department reported that the GMS electronic system had a technological problem that the Department's Information Technology unit could not repair without taking the system offline and expected it to be resolved in early 2025. Until the program can be restarted, staff will continue to utilize *paper* grievances to report problems as was done prior to the GMS' implementation.

Grievances can also be sent to the Office of Inspector General as well as the Probation Department's Office of the Ombudsman. The Department indicated that it still had not procured the grievance kiosks that will allow youths to enter grievances directly into the system and recently reported that it is negotiating with a specific vendor. The Department does not have an expected completion date. Because of the Department's lack of an online portal system, the Department is not in compliance with that requirement in the Detailed Plan. In addition, as noted in previous Office of Inspector General reports, the lack of this electronic system raises concerns regarding the accuracy of the documentation provided to the Office of Inspector General.

Despite the lack of a computerized data system, the Office of Inspector General reviewed the grievance logs to examine how often youths reported that facility staff deprived them of telephone calls, family visitation, recreation, or religious services to determine the percentage of all grievances related to denials of Required Activities. BJNJH and LPJH in accordance with the Department's current policies.

For BJNJH, the Probation Department documentation that it received 173 grievances in the third quarter of 2024. Of these, 19% (33 of 173) related to programming, 1% (2 of 173) related to visitation, 6% (10 of 173) related to phone calls. The Office of Inspector General observed no grievances related to denials of religious services or recreation. The balance of reviewed grievances addressed issues not subject to the Detailed Plan. The Department reported it resolved 90% of grievances according to policy as required by the Detailed plan.

For LPJH, the Office of Inspector General reviewed 250 grievances submitted in the first quarter of 2024. Of the 250 grievances, 8% (20 of 250) related to programming, 4% (10 of 250) related to phone calls, 2% (5 of 250) related to recreation, and 1% (2 of 250) related to visitation. The Office of Inspector General observed no grievances related to

⁸ GMS is an electronic grievance management system used for tracking and distribution system of grievances, which replaced the previous system JIGS that was an email method of distribution that was flawed therefore replaced.

denial of religious services. The balance of the grievances addressed issues not subject to the Detailed Plan. The Department reported it resolved 90% of grievances according to policy as required by the Detailed plan.

Conclusion

The Office of Inspector General's review of the Probation Department for the third quarter of 2024 indicates that the Department continues to fail to (1) provide timely documentation for programming, (2) create and implement an internal process to better identify and track room confinements, and (3) install grievance kiosks for youths to electronically file their grievances and for the Department to track responses. These failures prevent an appropriate audit of the requirements of Detailed Plan, resulting in a lack of compliance for each of the plan requirements discussed in this report.

In addition, the lack of documentation on re-engaging youths who have self-separated, means that the Office of Inspector General is unable to audit whether the Probation Department is making efforts to ensure youth *receive* programming. Allowing youth to self-separate without efforts to engage youth in programming contravenes the purpose of the Detailed Plan and the only way for the Office of Inspector General to accurately assess whether 93% of the youth are being provided programming as required by the Detailed Plan is to review efforts to re-engage youth who self-separated.

The Office of Inspector General continues to stress the importance of the Department developing and implementing computerized data systems to properly collect information that is needed to monitor the Department's compliance with the Detailed Plan, increasing tracking of and efforts to engage youth in programming, and disbanding field units and reassigning field staff to the juvenile facilities to provide sufficient custodial staff to comply with the County's legal obligations.

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