



# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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INSPECTOR GENERAL

December 14, 2023

TO: Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair  
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis  
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell  
Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath  
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Max Huntsman  
Inspector General

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Max Huntsman".

SUBJECT: **FIFTH REPORT BACK ON ADDRESSING EMERGENT ILLICIT  
SUBSTANCES AND CONTRABAND ENTERING THE LOS ANGELES  
COUNTY JUVENILE HALLS  
(ITEM NO. 56A, AGENDA OF MARCH 7, 2023).**

### **PURPOSE OF MEMORANDUM**

On March 7, 2023, the Board of Supervisors (Board) passed a motion directing the Probation Department to report on its efforts to address the flow of contraband and illicit substances into the County's juvenile halls, and directing the Office of Inspector General, with support from the Probation Oversight Commission (POC), to report back in writing within 45 days after the Probation Department's report and every 60 days thereafter on the following: (1) whether expanding the use of K-9 search teams and supplementing existing security with law enforcement was effective in reducing the flow of substances and contraband in the juvenile halls, (2) any misuse or misconduct on the use of K-9 search teams, (3) any discrepancies with reporting on searches, and (4) further recommendations on addressing illicit substances and contraband. After consulting with the POC, the Office of Inspector General provided an initial report on March 22, 2023, and subsequent reports on May 9, July 7, and September 11, 2023. The Office of Inspector General now provides this fifth report.

**A. EFFECTIVENESS OF EXPANDED CANINE SEARCHES IN  
REDUCING CONTRABAND IN JUVENILE HALLS**

The Probation Department reported to the Board on March 22, 2023, that as of March 6, 2023, it had increased searches for contraband at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall (BJNJH) and Central Juvenile Hall (CJH), conducting random searches of the living units Monday through Friday, including the use of canine searches. During this latest reporting period, the Probation Department also began to conduct searches at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall (LPJH) after transferring most youths from BJNJH and all youths from CJH, to LPJH.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the increased efforts to prevent illicit substances in the juvenile halls, since the last Office of Inspector General's report back, an incarcerated young adult at BJNJH was arrested for the possession of illicit drugs, two youths were administered a medication for treatment of a known or suspected opioid overdose and transported to the hospital, and a football stuffed with marijuana and lighters was discovered on the grass area at BJNJH. These incidents show that illicit drugs continue to enter the facilities and that youths continue to use them.

As noted in the Office of Inspector General's second report, the Probation Department conducts searches for contraband in the juvenile halls using staff search teams, canine dogs from its Special Enforcement Operations (SEO) unit, and a contracted canine search company, Interquest Detection Canines (Interquest). The Office of Inspector General's fourth report reviewed data provided by the Probation Department regarding canine searches of the juvenile halls from mid-July 2023 to mid-August 2023, to compare canine searches conducted during that period to those conducted during the prior two months to determine the effectiveness of increased canine searches in reducing the flow of contraband into the juvenile facilities. Based on the Office of Inspector General's review, it appeared that the expanded canine searches continued to aid in discovering and recovering contraband in the juvenile halls. This report compares the canine searches conducted at the juvenile halls during July and August 2023 to those conducted during September and October 2023.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Youths were transferred from CJH and BJNJH on July 12-13, 2023, and July 17-18, 2023, respectively, due to the Board of State Community Corrections finding that CJH and BJNJH were unsuitable to house youths.

<sup>2</sup> The review for this report was for the period June 16, 2023, to August 18, 2023, in comparison to August 18, 2023, to October 18, 2023.

### **Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall**

Over the two-month period from August 18, 2023, to October 18, 2023, the Probation Department's SEO canine unit conducted canine searches of all housing units at BJNJH on 21 occasions, 20 of which recovered contraband.

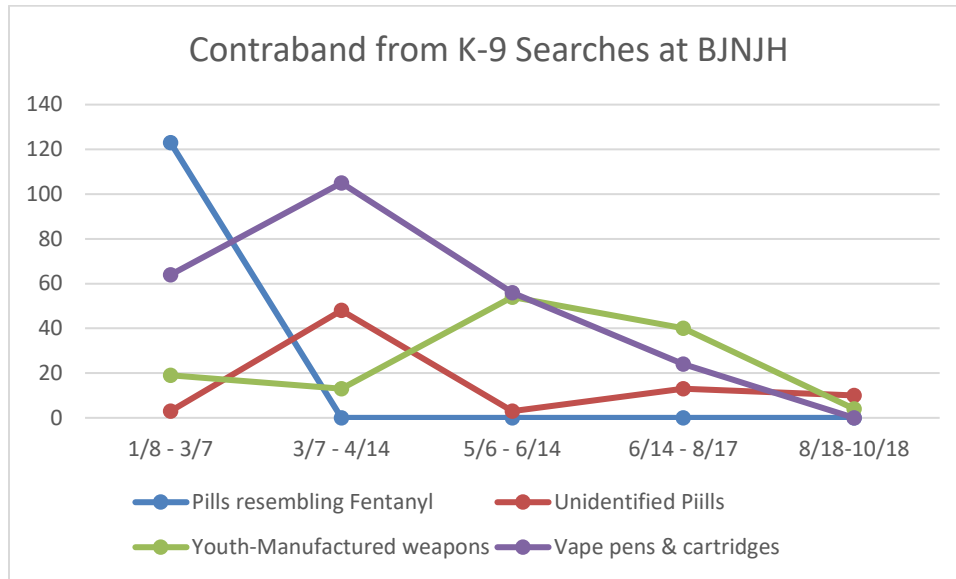
The SEO unit generally conducted the searches Monday through Friday, resulting in the recovery of 10 unknown pills, 4 youth-manufactured weapons, 6 marijuana cigarettes, 1 cellular phone, 9 cords/charging devices, 7 batteries, 5 tattoo devices, 1 black tar substance, 1 unknown key and 1 handcuff key. The searches recovered no pills typical of illegal Fentanyl during the two-month period.<sup>3</sup> The searches also recovered items of less serious safety concern including electronic devices (such as Firesticks and earphones), markers, pay/owe sheets, and PayPal account numbers.

In comparison, from June 14, 2023, to August 17, 2023, the Probation Department conducted 32 searches, which recovered 13 unknown pills, 40 youth-manufactured weapons, 24 vape pens and cartridges, 10 marijuana cigarettes, 1 cellular phone, 26 cords and charging devices, 7 tattoo devices, and pruno.<sup>4</sup> While the amount of contraband recovered dropped significantly in this reporting period, the Probation Department moved about two-thirds of the youths out of this facility on July 18, 2023, keeping only youth housed in Secured Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTF), the highest security housing the Department operates.

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<sup>3</sup> Fentanyl can be found in pill, powder and liquid forms. Brightly covered pills referred to as "rainbow" fentanyl have been identified as a recent trend in the United States as an illegal form of fentanyl. (California Department of Public Health, Substance and Addiction Prevention Branch, [The Facts About Fentanyl](#), updated September 25, 2023.) There were no pills consistent with commonly seen forms of pills containing fentanyl. The pills were not tested for a definitive determination.

<sup>4</sup> Pruno is homemade alcoholic beverage made from fermented fruit, sugar, and yeast.



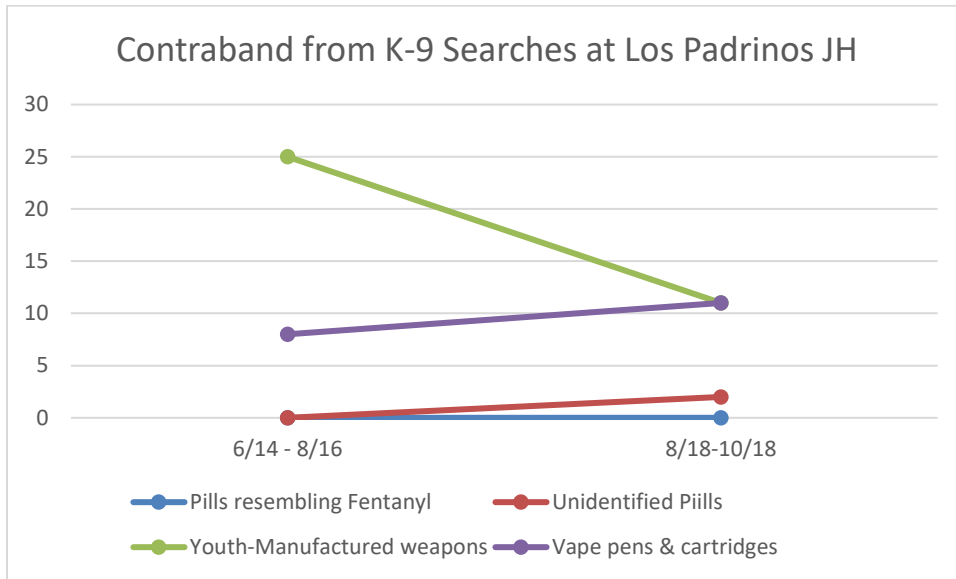
Frequency of K-9 Searches at BJNJH					
Period	1/8 - 3/7	3/7 - 4/14	5/6 - 6/14	6/14 - 8/17	8/18 - 10/18
# K-9 Searches	7	18	26	32	21
Avg. days between searches	8.3	2.1	1.5	2.0	3.0

### Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall

Over the two-month period from August 18, 2023, to October 18, 2023, the Probation Department’s SEO canine unit conducted canine searches of all housing units at LPJH on 34 occasions, 14 of which recovered contraband. The SEO unit conducted searches mostly daily, Monday through Friday, resulting in the recovery of 11 vape pens and cartridges, 7 cellular and electronic charging cords, 11 youth manufactured weapons, 8 marijuana cigarettes, 3 laptops, 1 tattoo device, 2 unknown pills, 4 batteries, 1 Guard One wand battery, and 1 key.<sup>5</sup> The searches recovered no pills consistent with

<sup>5</sup> Guard One wands are handheld devices used by Probation Department staff to document safety checks conducted. The wands are scanned across an electronic plate on each housing room as the Probation Department staff checks the room during required safety checks.

commonly seen forms of Fentanyl pills during the two-month period. The searches also recovered items of less serious safety concern including small electronic devices.



Frequency of K-9 Searches at LPJH		
Period	7/13 – 8/16	8/18 - 10/18
# K-9 Searches	11	34
Avg. days between searches	3.0	1.8

**Effect of Increased Canine Search Teams**

As noted in the previous report, the additional canine searches by the Probation Department aided in discovering and removing contraband from the juvenile halls. None of the searches conducted since March 7 have recovered any suspected fentanyl pills, compared to the recovery of 123 pills in searches from January 8 to March 7 of this year. This significant reduction may indicate that the increased frequency of searches has deterred the introduction of illicit drugs into the halls. However, given the arrest of a young adult for possession of illicit drugs and the transport of two youths to the hospital, the presence of illicit drugs poses an ongoing concern. The Office of Inspector General recommends continuing the increased searches as well as the recommendations noted below.

The Probation Department executive staff reports continuing efforts to retain a canine search expert to evaluate the effectiveness of the Probation Department's use of canines for contraband searches, but that the process experienced delays after an expert the Department initially identified became unavailable. The Probation Department should use the retained canine expert to provide guidance and training on best practices for searches with canines, to increase the discovery and recovery of illicit substances and contraband in the juvenile halls by both SEO and Interquest. It should also use the expert to evaluate the effectiveness of Interquest to determine whether to continue to use its services.<sup>6</sup>

**B. MISUSE OR MISCONDUCT ON THE USE OF CANINE SEARCH TEAMS**

The Probation Department is required to report to the Office of Inspector General any complaints of misuse or misconduct with the use of canine searches. The Probation Department reported that it has not received any complaints of misuse or misconduct related to the use of canine search teams, nor has the Office of Inspector General received any such complaints. The POC indicated that it has not received any complaints or concerns about canine searches from youths or members of the public during this review period.

**C. DISCREPANCIES WITH REPORTING OF CANINE SEARCHES**

The Board instructed the Office of Inspector General to report any discrepancies discovered regarding the Probation Department's reporting of its use of canine searches. The Office of Inspector General reviewed canine search reports of searches conducted at BJNJH and LPJH from August 18, 2023, to October 18, 2023. The reports detailed the units searched, the Probation Department staff who conducted the searches, and the contraband recovered. The Office of Inspector General did not discover any discrepancies in the Probation Department's reporting of the canine searches.

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<sup>6</sup> This report does not separate data for contraband found by Interquest from that found by SEO because Interquest primarily searched at Central Juvenile Hall (CJH) and at LPJH after youths were transferred from CJH to LPJH during the last reporting period. Historically, Interquest did not recover as much contraband as SEO.

**D. USE OF THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT TO SUPPLEMENT THE PROBATION DEPARTMENT'S SECURITY STAFF**

As noted in the Office of Inspector General's previous reports, the Probation Department executive staff continues to discuss the use of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Sheriff's Department) Security Officers to (1) supplement the Probation Department's existing security staff used at the entrances of the juvenile halls, (2) increase perimeter checks of the juvenile hall facilities, (3) use its narcotics canine teams to assist Probation Department staff with contraband searches, and (4) conduct a security/contraband assessment of the juvenile halls.<sup>7</sup> As reported previously, the Sheriff's Department has a significant number of vacancies for security officers, and therefore currently does not have sufficient staff to assist the Probation Department. As previously reported, Probation Department executives continues its efforts to bolster security through use of these security officers, having the SEO unit continue to assist with contraband screening at the facilities, and recently created a new Probation Department Security Specialist position. Creating a new Security Specialist position and using Sheriff's Department security officers do not appear to be viable options for the near future due to staffing shortages at both departments and the need to abide by County processes for creating and hiring for new positions.

**E. FOLLOW-UP TO FOURTH REPORT BACK**

The Office of Inspector General has continued monitoring how illicit substances and contraband are entering the juvenile facilities as previously instructed by the Board, and provides the following update to its fourth report back:

**1. Packages thrown over perimeter walls at BJNH:**

Probation Department staff reported that the number of packages thrown over the walls has decreased since the previous report. However, this may be due to transfer of the youths housed there to LPJH. The Probation Department executive staff has stated that the perimeter patrols continue despite the reduction of youths, to assist in reducing contraband being thrown over the walls.

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<sup>7</sup> The security at BJNH is currently provided by Allied Universal Security Services, Securitas at LPJH, and the Probation Department staff at CJH due to the transfer of youths to LPJH. The Sheriff's Department provides uniformed non-peace officer Security Officers to provide security at the entrances to courthouses and other Los Angeles County facilities.

**2. Entry into BJNJH:**

The Office of Inspector General staff recently observed the main entrance into the facility used by visitors and staff. Members of the SEO unit continue to assist the contracted security officers with searches of visitors and staff and maintain a presence at the entryway Monday through Friday. During this reporting period, the Probation Department replaced the previous contracted security service with a different contractor, Citiguard Security. During a recent visit, the Office of Inspector General staff observed appropriate security screening of all items entering the facility, including food items, which previously were not properly screened. The Probation Department executive staff indicated that it continues to develop security plans and has submitted requests to purchase updated screening machines and body scanners to be used at both BJNJH and LPJH.

**3. Contraband storage at BJNJH:**

As noted in the Office of Inspector General's initial report on April 7, 2023, staff at BJNJH stored recovered contraband in a locked closet inside the Superintendent's office, without an official written inventory of the contraband. Staff did not notify local law enforcement, nor did they log the evidence, even though Probation Department staff has access to the evidence-logging database system used by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Also noted in the last report back, the Probation Department reported to the Office of Inspector General staff that it had transferred all the seized contraband from the Superintendent's office to contraband lockers and properly logged it, if it was needed as evidence, or transferred to the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department for destruction or use in its canine training program.

During this review period, the Probation Department executive staff reported to the Office of Inspector General that it recently discovered contraband stored in a U.S. mailbox converted into an unlocked storage locker. Based on the dates noted in the contraband log found with the unlocked storage locker, the recently discovered contraband may have been stored in the unlocked storage locker despite the assertion by Probation Department executive staff that all contraband was in the Superintendent's locked closet.

Probation Department executive staff report that they will conduct an audit of all contraband at BJNJH and institute a policy for the handling of contraband including documenting the recovery and the disposition of all contraband



items found in the facility. The Office of Inspector General will monitor the audit, and the reconciliation of the contraband and logbooks, as well as the development of proper policies and procedures related to the proper processing of recovered contraband.

#### **4. Entry into LPJH:**

Office of Inspector General staff recently observed the main entrance into the facility used by visitors and staff, operated by a contracted security service, Citiguard. Citiguard's security screening consistently required all persons entering the facility to walk through a metal detector and to put all belongings, including food, through the x-ray screening device. Staff and Commissioners of the POC have also entered LPJH on various occasions during the reporting period to conduct planned and unannounced inspections and report that security measures at the entrance to LPJH are consistently enforced and more comprehensive than procedures formerly in place at CJH and BJNJH. The security service appeared to conduct the screening properly and consistently.

#### **F. TREATMENT AND PROGRAMMING**

In addition to preventing the contraband from entering juvenile facilities through improved security and searches, the Probation Department should address the root cause of drug use, including addiction, mental health, socio-emotional well-being, and trauma.

The Probation Department currently contracts with outside treatment facilities to provide alcohol and drug treatment services to youths referred by Department of Mental Health (DMH) staff or Probation Department staff. In addition, the DMH and the Department of Public Health - Substance Abuse Prevention Control provides treatment services. The Probation Department reports it is in the process of onboarding more staff at BJNJH to open a Substance Use Treatment Unit utilizing outside contracted treatment services, which will be available to youths during all work shifts. Currently, there is only one DPH substance abuse counselor and one part time DMH substance abuse counselor at BJNJH. It is intended that the Substance Use Treatment Unit will employ certified alcohol and drug treatment credible messengers through a program with the Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC). These ARC credible messengers will also provide culturally competent care and assistance with re-entry into the community and assist girls and the gender-expansive youth community at LPJH as part of a recent initiative.

In April of this year, the Department of Youth Development (DYD) issued a [report](#) recommending that the Probation Department include assessments and programming to address illicit drug use in custody. As set forth in the *Recommendations* section of this report, the Office of Inspector General concurs with DYD's recommendations. In response to the DYD recommendation for psychological assessments to identify substance use disorders, the Probation Department reports conducting psychological assessments through the Department of Mental Health. However, POC staff have spoken to DMH staff and youth at the facilities who provided information that these assessments are not necessarily conducted immediately upon admission, calling into question the timely referral and provision of appropriate mental health services. The Probation Department reports it is in the early stages of implementing the DYD recommendation for the *Seeking Safety* program, an evidence-based practice administered by DMH addressing substance use and trauma; however, the Probation Department reported plans for this only in LPJH. According to the information provided by Probation staff, none of the other recommendations by DYD have been implemented.

In addition to providing needed alcohol and drug treatment services, the Probation Department should also provide meaningful programming to ensure that youth are engaged in mentally stimulating activities throughout the day and receiving services that will assist with reintegration into the community.

#### **G. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In addition to the recommendations in its [Report Back on Addressing Emergent Illicit Substances and Contraband Entering the Los Angeles County Juvenile Halls](#), the Office of Inspector General recommends adopting the recommendations made in the Department of Youth Development's April 21, 2023, [report](#) on addressing emergent illicit substances and contraband summarized as follows:

1. Administer psychological assessments by the Department of Mental Health of youths during admission to identify substance use disorders, and the creation of a comprehensive treatment plan.
2. Implement *Seeking Safety*, an evidence-based practice addressing substance use and trauma.

3. Provide early intervention services by the Department of Public Health, provide comprehensive screenings and post-release treatment referrals to substance use treatment facilities, and peer-supported housing where participants are concurrently enrolled in outpatient treatment services.
  4. Provide access to online and in person services such as *Narcotics Anonymous* and *Alcoholic Anonymous*.
  5. Remove barriers to access and utilization of substance use treatment and prevention services such as lack of appropriate and private space for providers to offer service, and limited access to SYTF youth at BJNJH.
  6. Follow best practices in reducing substance use among detained youth, which includes proper assessment and treatment matching, comprehensive and integrated approaches to treatment, family involvement, developmentally appropriate programming, gender and culturally competent programming, a focus on meaningful engagement and retention, and continuing care with aftercare facilities.
  7. Ensure that all camps and halls provide group and individual substance use disorder services weekly to all youths in need and continue the support after the youths graduate from the group program. Also, a review of the existing partnership with the Department of Mental Health and contracted outside treatment facilities, to ensure the proper services are being provided to the youths within the juvenile facilities.
- c: Guillermo Viera Rosa, Chief Probation Officer  
Fesia Davenport, Chief Executive Officer  
Celia Zavala, Executive Officer  
Dawyn R. Harrison, County Counsel  
Wendelyn Julien, Executive Director, Probation Oversight Commission