

# PROBATION DEPARTMENT

*“Protection, Service & Accountability”*

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## TESTIMONY BEFORE LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION NOVEMBER 15, 2007

Kim Barrett, Chief Probation Officer, San Luis Obispo County

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your Commission on juvenile justice realignment.

### **Implementing Realignment:**

In San Luis Obispo County we will be utilizing our Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council to provide input to prepare the Juvenile Justice plan. The Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council was mandated in implementing the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act of 2000. Our Council is comprised of all stakeholders in the county, including our Sheriff's Department, District Attorney, County Office of Education, Public Defenders, community non-profits, juvenile justice Commission, Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Services, Child Welfare Services, parent partners and youth who have been in the system. Our plan will also go through our Children's Services Network, which is comprised of many of the agencies listed above. We will be going over our gaps in services along the continuum of care from prevention through incarceration, prioritize services, and make a determination as to how to expend our funds this year, and into the future. This plan will go before the Board of Supervisors for final approval prior to the January 1, 2008 deadline.

### **Capacity to develop necessary services:**

The biggest issues around capacity for San Luis Obispo County involve the county's treatment providers ability to provide evidence-based services and services for our mentally ill youth. Both our public agency partners (particularly Mental Health), and our private non-profits are not up to speed on having staff trained in providing programs and services that are evidence based...that we know work in reducing recidivism. In order to meet the needs of our youth and young adults in the juvenile justice system we must target the criminogenic factors that are identified as problem areas through a risk and needs assessment, and then provide the most effective services to impact those problem areas. Our gang members, mentally ill youth, and substance abusing youth need very specific treatment, and thus far, our county treatment providers are not trained in providing cognitive behavioral therapy, Functional Family Therapy, Multidimensional Family Therapy, trauma focused cognitive behavioral therapy, Aggression Replacement Training and other prosocial skills, and Multisystemic Therapy.

Statewide, bed capacity, particularly for the 18-21 year-olds, will take time, yet the need is now. Many of the youth involved in the realignment of the system are mentally ill. Both in San Luis Obispo County and **statewide**, we lack treatment facilities to stabilize these youth on medications, and provide ongoing treatment, thus leaving them to languish in our juvenile halls. For the smaller, rural counties who have no juvenile facilities, this challenge becomes even bigger. Although we are talking about regional facilities, and SB81 provides capital project funding, we are 3-5 years from building these facilities and the need is now.

**Challenges:**

The greatest challenges that have been identified statewide thus far are bed space and community treatment programs for the 18-25 year-olds; services and treatment beds for the mentally ill youth; the issue of supplanting the realignment dollars by some counties; and the wording in WIC733 regarding the “most recent offense alleged in any petition” must be one described by WIC 707(b) if the youth is to be sent to DJJ.

Some of the youth coming out of DJJ were slated to go into a group home or treatment facility that DJJ has contracted with to provide services. Since the counties do not have these same contracts, we are left without resources for those over 18 years of age. We have asked for the list of live-in programs DJJ currently contracts with, by county, so that we can enter into agreements with these facilities if the county so desires. As of this date, we have not received this information, and yet the youth are being released.

Counties continue to struggle with the lack of treatment beds for mentally ill youth. Our juvenile halls have become the de facto inpatient mental health facilities in most counties. The State Department of Mental Health needs to address this lack of children and youth inpatient beds statewide. It is as if there has been a “realignment” of mentally ill youth to the juvenile justice system, except no announcement, programming or funding came to the counties. Although they are pleased state hospitalization for youth is almost non-existent, these youth do not belong locked up in juvenile halls.

There has already been one county whose Board of Supervisors decided to simply take the realignment funds and utilize them for current services, thereby reducing the general fund support to the Probation Department. If counties are to maintain public safety and provide services to these youth, the realignment dollars must go to new programs and services.

Certainly, counties have and wish to continue to give identified youth who have a WIC707(b) offense found true, another chance at community services or camp commitments and treatment prior to commitment to DJJ. Due to the wording of WIC733, the prosecution may not give that youth “another chance”, since if they then commit a new offense that is not a 707(b) offense, they could not be sent to DJJ. We hope to have legislation to clean up this language.

**San Luis Obispo County Programs and Plans:**

San Luis Obispo County has an extensive diversion program countywide, diverting up to 70% of the youth who come to the attention of the Probation Department out of the juvenile justice system. We also have SB163 WRAP services for our probation youth, both in their homes and in foster care. We have intensive re-entry services for youth coming back from a placement, camp, or juvenile hall commitment. These re-entry services occur prior to the youth coming back into the community and address the risk factors that may impede their successful re-integration into the community. We have specialized treatment programs for girls in our system, and intensive supervision services for our youth involved in gangs.

We also have boys and girls programs in our juvenile hall that youth can follow back out into the community, providing pro-social activities for our youth.

With the realignment funding, San Luis Obispo County plans to implement a department-wide evidence-based risk and needs assessment tool, which is a goal of all Probation Departments statewide. We plan on enhancing our Restorative Justice programs, cognitive behavioral treatment, early gang intervention, parenting programs and others as deemed necessary by the community. We are fortunate in that we have no youth currently in DJJ on a WIC707(a) petition, so no parolees to supervise. Traditionally, San Luis Obispo County has not sent many youth to DJJ, approximately 1 per year, and always off a WIC707(b) petition.

I will be happy to give an update on the State Commission on Juvenile Justice during my testimony.