

Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission

Annual Report 2017

BACKGROUND

Section 225 of the Welfare and Institutions Code requires each county in the State of California to have a Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC). The role of the commission is set forth in Sections 229, 230, 270, and 271 of the Code. Each commission is enjoined to inquire into the administration of juvenile justice in its county.

The law mandates that the Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission inspect Juvenile Hall and all institutions used by the county for the confinement of minors and report its findings annually to the Juvenile Court and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

The commission consists of between seven and fifteen members appointed by the Juvenile Court Presiding Judge. Commissioners are not paid for their services to the county.

MISSION STATEMENT AND DUTIES

The mission of the Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission is to advocate for and protect the safety and well-being of dependent and delinquent youth in Sonoma County.

Commission responsibilities include:

- Inspecting juvenile facilities including detention facilities and group homes used for the placement of minors in Sonoma County.
- Conducting investigations into complaints brought to the commission concerning the welfare of children in the Juvenile Justice System.
- Conducting hearings on matters relating to juvenile law in Sonoma County.
- Advocating for needed services for youth in the justice system.

2016 – 2017 COMMISSIONERS:

Gayle Ballinger
Cathy Brooks
Michael Charpiot
Mary Cone
Gina Crozier
Jody Edwards
Robert Faux
Michael Fried
Eve Goldberg
Richard Miller
Jane Person
Dennis Ruggiero
Edy Ullman

INSPECTIONS

As the commission is mandated by law to inspect any jail or lockup within the county that is used for the confinement of minors and report the results to the Juvenile Court, the Juvenile Justice Commission conducts annual inspections of Juvenile Hall, the Probation Camp and Valley of the Moon Children's Home. Additionally, for each of these three facilities commissioners review incident reports on a monthly basis.

The Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission also annually inspects group homes housing dependent or delinquent juveniles within the county and reports the results to the Juvenile Court, the Probation Department, Community Care Licensing, respective facility director, and CA Board of State & Community Corrections.

Normally two commissioners conduct inspections of group homes. Facilities are notified in advance that they will be inspected on a designated date and are required to fill out a pre-inspection report prior to the Commissioner's visit. This form contains relevant information such as the number and ages of youth served, average stay, staff training requirements, grievance procedures, etc.

The actual inspection includes a session with administrative staff, house staff and private interviews with house residents. Emphasis is placed on overall facility condition, adequacy, comfort and cleanliness of accommodations. Commissioners look into safety procedures, educational and recreational opportunities maintenance of the facility, and anything else relevant to the fair and safe treatment of the youth.

During the calendar year 2017, one or more commission members inspected the following group homes:

- Greenacre Homes
- Hanna Boys Center
- Plumfield
- R House (closed in May 2017)
- Seneca Family of Agencies: Sonoma Compass
- TLC Child and Family Services
- Victor Treatment Center
- Valley of the Moon Children's Home

Additionally, commissioners inspected the following:

- Sonoma County Probation Camp
- Sonoma County Juvenile Hall
- Santa Rosa Police Station

These reports can be found on our website at:

www.juvenilejusticecommission.org

SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION

Academic Awards for Youth

The commission presents a certificate and annual cash honorariums to youth in Juvenile Hall, the Probation Camp and in Group Homes who have earned their GED, High School Diploma, or Certificate for High School Completion. Six youth were presented with these at Juvenile Hall in 2017. When possible, the awards were made to the individuals in person by a commissioner and, if possible, in the presence of the youth's family and peers.

ACTIONS TAKEN DURING THE YEAR 2017

- The commission accepted resignation of Jody Edwards and welcomed back Richard Miller.
- Recruitment of New Commissioners:

The outreach search for new, younger commissioners was not successful during 2017. Contacts were made with Sonoma State University and a few high schools. It has proven quite difficult to get longer term commitments from young people.

- A "Close to Home" article was written by Commissioner Goldberg for the Press Democrat entitled: The Tragic Closing of a Group Home.

- AB 403 Committee accomplished the following:
 1. Commissioned an analysis and summary of AB 403 and AB 404 so that we could all better understand these bills.
 2. Produced a tri-fold, color brochure entitled “Crisis In Care For Dependent Youth.”
 3. Distributed above brochure to all 58 JJC’s in California, all Juvenile Judge offices in California, many CASA offices in California, the Board of Supervisors in all 58 counties in California, each individual Supervisor in Sonoma County, and each Stanford Law School Professor.
 4. Had phone discussion with the office of Mark Stone, author of the Continuum of Care Reform (AB 403), regarding the purpose and implementation of the bill, and our concerns about the need for some dependent youth to remain in treatment and not be pushed out to foster care before they are ready.
 5. Had phone discussion with Department of Social Services, statewide office in Sacramento, regarding implementation of AB 403.
 6. Met with Nick Honey, director of Sonoma County Family, Youth & Children’s Services to discuss our concerns about implementation of the Continuum of Care Reform (AB 403), particularly in regards to dependent youth.
 7. Began work on a video about dependent youth and group homes. So far, we have filmed interviews with several group home directors, several group home staff, and two former group home youth who are succeeding in their lives. We have also filmed footage in several group homes, as well as dependent youth involved in classroom work and sports activities (all faces and identities of youth completely hidden). Video currently on hold as we re-assess its need, purpose, and distribution plan.

- JJC/JJDPC Statewide Alliance Committee:

The ultimate goal of the JJC Statewide Alliance is to broaden our influence on issues of importance to Sonoma County JJC Members by joining together with other Juvenile Justice/Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commissions (JJC/JJDPC) throughout the state. The midterm goals of this Alliance were to provide a roster of contacts for all California JJC/JJDPC’s, to enhance communication between Commissions, to encourage active participation and dialog on issues pertaining to the JJC/JJDPC’s in California, and share materials such as procedures/plans, articles and blank forms.

The JJC Statewide Alliance Committee accomplished three goals in 2017:

1) Membership: Membership in the Alliance has continued to grow. The number of membership contacts has risen to 40 California counties.

2) Communication: Our first "CA JJC Alliance" e-newsletter was published in May 2017. It contained reports from Commissions throughout the state and reviewed juvenile justice issues of importance to our members. Additionally, shared access to information and material was created on the Sonoma County JJC website.

3) Statewide Workshop: A second JJC Statewide Alliance Workshop was held in November 2017. The focus was on communication and networking and 19 Juvenile Justice Commissions were represented. (A more detailed report follows.)

2017 Statewide JJC Workshop:

On November 4, 2017, Sonoma County hosted a second statewide JJC/JJDPC Alliance workshop, which resulted in 50 attendees representing 19 different counties in California. A number of commissioners from last year were in attendance as well as new counties represented. Taylor Cone, from SMALLIFY, again facilitated the day. Each commission was given the task of a 2-minute update of what their commission had accomplished during the year. Some key points of what's been working are: inspections, the "Inside/Outside" publication, and relationships and partnerships in communities. Some key points of what's not been working: not having enough volunteers, diversity, and leadership changes.

The attendees all came to same conclusion that it would be more transformative if there were more communication between all commissions, more collaboration, and more sharing.

The Keynote Speaker was Linda Evans who spoke about the benefit of statewide networking and advocacy and about the importance of legislative change to reform what can help children within the system.

Prior to lunch participants took part in a "Luck Circle" which is a form of openness and having your eyes open to what you want and need. This was an opportunity for counties to state: Why are you here? What did you come to learn or talk about? Each individual was requested to have an ASK of the group and/or OFFER to the group. This was a very helpful part of the day. The afternoon was for break-out sessions which were: legislation/AB403, inspections/procedures, mental health, wrap-around services, communication and collaboration, education, restorative justice, and funding a Commission.

- Modification of WIC Committee:

The Sonoma County JJC discussed the negative response that was being received from CDSS and the reluctance of Sen. McGuire's office to advocate

for the change without CDSS support. We then decided to abandon this effort as unproductive or even counterproductive and end the committee's work, at this time.

- Inbound Education:

The commission continues to educate all members to ensure we are knowledgeable about juvenile justice issues in the county. Speakers over the course of the year included:

- Nick Honey, Department of Social Services;
- David Koch, Chief Probation Officer, Sonoma County
- Linda Evans, Legislative Process
- Youth Panel: Santana Mateo (North Bay Conservation Corps), Ruby Wright Powell (CASA), and Joe Finnegan (Voices).
- Commissioners also attended conferences offered by local private and county agencies throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted on January 8, 2018 by

Mary Cone

2017-2018 Chairperson

Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission
PO Box 358
Santa Rosa CA 95403
www.juvenilejusticecommission.org