

NAPA COUNTY
RESPONSES TO THE GRAND JURY REPORT ON THE
SKYLINE ACADEMY AT JUVENILE HALL DELAY AND DISORGANIZATION

AUGUST 20, 2024

FINDINGS

Finding 1. Although Skyline Academy was scheduled to open at the end of 2023, the Jury’s investigation detected limited organized effort toward the opening, no urgency, and minimal forward progress.

The Chief Probation Officer disagrees with the finding. Contrary to this finding, the Skyline Academy opened as a pilot program in Juvenile Hall in January 2024 and has since served seven in-custody youth with enhanced evidence-based programming, prosocial activities, and targeted interventions addressing criminogenic needs. This initiative required a substantial coordinated effort among multiple agencies, community partners, and stakeholders, all working towards a common goal.

The project's success necessitated extensive infrastructure work, including approvals, funding allocations, and conceptual designs. Construction in a detention facility demands multiple levels of legal compliance and design review, which naturally take time to work through county and state processes. The preparatory phase involved significant data mining, financial and resource reviews, and reallocation of staffing resources, alongside efforts to recruit for hard-to-fill positions.

Recognizing that the heart of every successful program lies in its people, the project emphasized staff involvement. Experts in their respective fields were given the opportunity to contribute through a committee-based approach, ensuring buy-in and long-term sustainability. The pilot program aimed to keep youth local, focusing on their rehabilitative goals, and provided staff and providers the chance to engage with the youth prior to the formal program launch. This approach allowed the youth to have a voice in their own rehabilitation process.

The pilot program has been serving seven Napa County youth who would have otherwise been transferred outside of the county, away from their families. The pilot program underscores the commitment to building a culture of support, safety, rehabilitation, and opportunity for the youth. The program continues to develop and is scheduled to formally open by the end of Summer 2024, reflecting a deep commitment to fostering a supportive and rehabilitative environment for youth in need.

Finding 2. Repeated requests for details on the development of Skyline Academy went unmet, leading the Jury to conclude that no formal project plan is being implemented.

The Chief Probation Officer partially disagrees with the finding. All requests for information made directly from the Chief Probation Officer were provided timely, which is the expectation, and all staff will be notified via memo of this standard. The definition or expectations of a formal project plan may be interpreted differently, as the focus was on designing and developing a program that meets the individual needs of youth, creating linkages to robust community supports, engaging a variety of stakeholders, organizing construction projects, completing contracts and requests for proposals, creating new logos, increasing youth literacy and educational opportunities through new tablets for youth and career-technical education, painting murals to soften the look of the facility, seeking ways to expand

opportunities for youth both inside and outside of the program, increasing mental health services, and creating programming infrastructure that is culturally relevant and in the native language of the youth and their families when possible.

The development and implementation of the pilot program involved numerous stakeholders and was structured through the department's strategic planning initiative, intentionally designed to leverage a committee structure. This collaborative approach ensured that subject matter experts within the department had the authority and ability to contribute to the design, creation, and implementation of the program, resulting in a more innovative and community-focused initiative.

The pilot phase was led by a committee of staff and has allowed for valuable learning and adjustments, ensuring that the final program is well-suited to the needs of the youth and families they serve. By fostering a collaborative environment and involving various experts in leadership roles, the program aims to deliver targeted and effective interventions for youth. The formal program documents are being finalized, with full implementation scheduled by the end of Summer 2024, reflecting a steadfast dedication to building a supportive, accountable, and rehabilitative culture for youth.

Finding 3. The Jury found that normal operations in the Prospect wing of Juvenile Hall (which houses short-term youth) have been resumed following the suspension of Covid restrictions.

The Chief Probation Officer agrees with the finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. By October 1, 2024, the Board of Supervisors direct the Napa County Probation Officer to develop and implement a detailed project plan for the Skyline Academy. The plan should formalize the project scope, be updated monthly, and provide a timeline, steps toward completion, assigned tasks, progress towards goals, available resources, and a budget.

Response, Chief Probation Officer: This recommendation will not be implemented, because it is not warranted.

The Skyline Academy is scheduled to formally open by the end of Summer 2024, making this level of detailed project planning for implementation unnecessary. The program has been in a pilot phase since January 2024.

The need for this program arose, in part, from the rapid passage of Senate Bill 823, which realigned the Division of Juvenile Justice population in California from the state to the local level. This historic change required a complete redesign of how serious and violent youth were handled statewide. Napa County did not open a Secure Track Program, which is designed for youth who would have otherwise been sent to the state Division of Juvenile Justice. Napa County prioritizes the rehabilitation of youth while holding them accountable for their behaviors with the goal of rehabilitation prior to adulthood. Consequently, the County has not sent many youth to the state for care and could not sustain opening a Secure Track Program.

The Skyline Academy is designed to be a local program that meets the individualized needs of youth with the goal of preventing escalation into a Secure Track Program and enabling re-entry into the Napa

Community rehabilitated, with positive supports in place and a new opportunity to be a productive member of our society. The program will have set policies that meet Title 15 regulations as required by law, and a program handbook to ensure that youth, families, and staff understand the programmatic goals.

Additionally, the budget has been approved in a public meeting by the SB 823 subcommittee of the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council for fiscal year 2024-2025. No additional staffing resources are requested for this program, as the Napa County Probation Department is allocating only previously existing positions to operate the Skyline Academy. For ongoing data collection and program evaluation, Napa County has partnered with the University of Cincinnati to assist in the design of programmatic data and outcomes.

The Board of Supervisors agree with the Chief Probation Officer.

Recommendation 2. By October 1, 2024, the Board of Supervisors direct the Napa County Probation Officer to identify a project manager to be accountable for the timely and successful completion of Skyline Academy.

Response, Chief Probation Officer: The recommendation has been implemented.

The Napa County Probation Department recruited and hired a Chief Deputy Probation Officer to oversee Juvenile Hall, who also serves as the project manager for the program. Additional support includes the Assistant Chief Probation Officer and the Chief Deputy overseeing the Juvenile Division to ensure the program operates as intended both during the pilot phase and the formal operations phase.

The Board of Supervisors agree with the Chief Probation Officer.