



COUNTY OF DEL NORTE


PROBATION DEPARTMENT
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DARREN MCELFRISH
Superior Court Judge

ROBERT COCHRAN
Superior Court Judge

AGENDA DATE: October 25, 2022
TO: Del Norte County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Lonnie Reyman, Chief Probation Officer 
SUBJECT: Juvenile Hall report and recommendation

RECOMMENDATION FOR BOARD ACTION:

- 1) Receive and consider additional information regarding the recommendation to close the Juvenile Hall as presented by the Chief Probation Officer; and
- 2) take action on the recommendation to order the closure of the Del Norte County Juvenile Hall as a custodial institution no later than March 30, 2023, and direct staff to implement organizational and operational restructuring to implement closure no later than that date as requested by the Chief Probation Officer.

SUMMARY:

At the Board meeting on October 11, after receiving my report and recommendation, the Board asked for further information and directed me to bring that information back to the Board. Specifically requested was to review hiring practices by the County as it pertains to the recruitment of Juvenile Corrections Officers and to gather information regarding the experience of other counties who have either closed their juvenile halls and transitioned to a contracted custody model or counties that have never maintained a juvenile hall and always contracted for juvenile detention.

DISCUSSION/JUSTIFICATION:

On October 11, I met with Cathy Hafterson, Human Resources Manager/Risk Manager for the county. We discussed ongoing personnel issues within the Department and the current challenges of recruitment, not only for the Department but for all county agencies and the community at large. This was in context of numerous previous conversations between Manager Hafterson and myself over the last five years regarding the streamlining of recruitment processes, the different possibilities and methodologies of recruiting officers and getting them working as quickly as possible, and the exploration of different incentive programs that could be used for recruitment.

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JORDAN ANDERSON, Facility Manager

I do not believe that I misrepresent her in saying that Manager Hafterson has taken every step possible as a professional Human Resources manager to efficiently and effectively recruit for positions in the Juvenile Hall. In speaking with her she is at a loss as to what more can be done given the nature of the job, the nature of the community and the challenges we face (housing for example), and the nature of the applicants (the few) that apply for the positions in the Probation Department. The impacts of the current employment market are not unique to the Probation Department or law enforcement, but are seen in almost every industry as employers, regardless of industry, company, or region, are faced with extreme staffing shortages. As Manager Hafterson is responsible for facilitating the recruitment for all vacant County positions, she does not believe that any more can be reasonably done that has not already been tried; the forces that are driving our current crisis are far outside the control of any of us in Del Norte.

Also since October 11, I've spoken with Chief Richard Griffin of the Crescent City Police Department several times regarding the Police Department's staffing situation. Chief Griffin stated candidly that there was nothing unusual or special about their recruiting processes. In fact, he emphasized that the Department regularly struggles with the same recruitment and retention issues that other agencies do. One aspect that did arise in the conversation was the use of Facebook as a tool to promote the department and share with the public the type of work that is done by its officers on a daily basis. He has had one officer make the decision to come to work for the Police Department because of the information provided on the Facebook page. A challenge that arises out of this type of recruitment is bringing in staff that do not generally plan to invest in an agency for the long-term, instead they are more than willing to move on to other opportunities. Lastly, he discussed his approach to leadership and creating a department culture that emphasizes officer wellness and the balance between work and family.

Board members also had questions regarding other Northern California counties' experiences either closing their juvenile halls or operating without one at all. I sent a survey to eight northern Chiefs representing the counties of Modoc, Lassen, Colusa, Plumas, Trinity, Siskiyou, Sierra, and Glenn. The Chiefs were kind enough to respond quickly to the survey, providing insight into questions regarding when they closed their halls (if they previously did), what was done with the facility, numbers surrounding detentions, information regarding transports, information regarding staffing, issues they have experienced with court hearings and meeting legal requirements, and facilitating visitation.

Of the eight counties 3 have never had juvenile halls, 1 has a regional facility located in another county, and 4 have closed their halls. Trinity initially closed its Hall in 2014, reopened as a special purpose facility in 2015 offering programs as a weekend-only facility and fully closed in 2020. Both Siskiyou and Glenn closed in 2017. Lassen closed its facility in 2019. All four counties cited cost and low/no population as reasons for closing; Lassen also cited an inability to staff the facility. Of the 4 counties that closed halls all but 1 have used the facilities for county offices and programs of one kind or another. Only Glenn has,

for the most part, remained vacant and mostly unused.

Regarding detentions per month, 2 counties average less than 1, 3 counties average 1-2, 2 counties average 2-3, and 1 county averages 3-4. Regarding custody transports, the counties are evenly divided with 2 doing less than 1 per month, 2 with 2-3 per month, 2 with 3-4 per month, and 2 with 4-6 per month.

The counties have approached staffing in one of two ways: six of the counties do not have dedicated staff to conduct transports or provide services, all transports and services are provided by probation officers and existing staff. Lassen and Siskiyou counties do have dedicated staff for transports and services. All but one county indicated that they have staff on-call for transports.

Regarding court hearings and any challenges meeting due process requirements, generally counties have not identified any issues. Lassen, Modoc, and Siskiyou shared that all day transports for court can be challenging, facilitating and coordinating remote video hearings with the housing county has been challenging at times, and short-notice requests for personal appearances have also caused challenges. Four of the counties indicated that they conduct remote court hearings, three indicated that they do not, and one did not provide information. Seven out of the eight counties indicated that no due-process concerns have been brought up to them, and in response to the question Lassen county replied that "Most facilities are open to telephone, video or in person visiting/contact."

Some other challenges noted regarding court hearings were: "Technology and short-set personal appearance requests," "Petition to not appear by zoom increases workload a bit," "Inclement weather," and "No secure temporary custody."

Regarding facilitation of family visitation and reunification, all but 1 county indicated that they play some part in facilitating visits. Three clearly indicated that they coordinate in-county visits when youth are brought home for some reason, five counties indicated they do provide transportation for parents at times and three indicated they provide gas vouchers for families. Several also indicated that they facilitate and/or host phone or video visits between youth and families.

The last question posed to the counties was whether in hindsight they would have come to a different decision regarding closure of their juvenile halls. Along with some sage advice as to how to proceed, to a county they responded that they would not choose to have maintained the operation of their juvenile halls.

ALTERNATIVE:

Provide other direction to staff.

FINANCING:

N/A

CHILDREN'S IMPACT STATEMENT:

This section meets 3 of the following outcome measures for children in Del Norte County:

- Children ready for and succeeding in school.
- Children and youth are healthy and preparing for adulthood.
- Families are economically self-sufficient.
- Families are safe, stable and nurturing.
- Communities are safe and provide a high quality of life.
- No impact to Children as a result of this action.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

N/A

SIGNATURE REQUIRED:

N/A

ADMINISTRATIVE SIGN-OFF:

- AUDITOR:
- COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:
- COUNTY COUNSEL:
- PERSONNEL:
- OTHER DEPARTMENT: