

SB 823 Subcommittee Meeting

April 5, 2023
12:15 pm Zoom

Meeting called by: Kelly Vernon, CPO **Type of meeting:** SB 823 Subcommittee Quarterly

Facilitator: Kelly Vernon, CPO **Notes taker/writer:** Gina Rizza

Attendees: Kelly Vernon, Chief Probation Officer, Probation
Hon. Hugo Loza, Judge, Tulare County Courts
Hon. Sylvia Hanna, Judge, Tulare County Courts
Margarita Luna, Deputy Chief Probation Officer, Probation
John F. Sliney, Assistant District Attorney, District Attorney
Ron Westphal, Assistant Public Defender, Public Defender
Courtney Sallam, Deputy HHS Dir-Child Welfare Svc, HHSA, CWS
Joseph Hamilton, Mental Health Clinic Administrator, HHSA, MH
Galen Quenzer, CEO, Boys & Girls Club of the Sequoias
Mary Escarsega-Fechner, Executive Director, Community Services Employment Training
Karon Valdivieso, Court School Principal, Tulare County Office of Education

Attendees absent: Adam Peck, Executive Director, Tulare County Workforce Investment Board
Mike Santos, Division Manager, Probation
Greg Powers, Supervising Probation Officer, Probation

Meeting purpose: SB 823 Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant Annual Plan

Minutes

Agenda item: Approval of Meeting Minutes from 1/30/23 Meeting **Presenter:** Kelly Vernon

Discussion:

Meeting was called to order by Chief Vernon at 12:19 pm. Chief Vernon asked committee if there were any questions concerning the meeting minutes and asked for a motion for approval of such if not.

Questions:

Galen Quenzer cited a necessary correction to his title and organization name.

Action Items:

Motion made by Judge Loza with a second by Ron Westphal to approve the meeting minutes from the January 30, 2023 meeting.

Agenda item: Review of DJJ Realignment Annual Plan FY 2023-24 **Presenter:** Kelly Vernon

Discussion:

Chief Vernon asked the subcommittee if there were any questions about the draft DJJ Realignment Annual Plan (annual plan) and advised that the draft will be presented to the Multiagency Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (MJJCC) for approval on April 19, 2023. The approved plan will be submitted to the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) by the due date, which is May 1, 2023. She shared that the plan must be submitted to OYCR annually to continue to receive funding.

Chief Vernon pointed out this year's plan is similar to the plan submitted last year; however, changes made this year include the addition of a de-escalation room, which is in line with our population, and the Step-Down Program. She said that the Step-Down Program is a required component of the plan and shared that the department is actively looking for a residence to purchase near, but also separate from, the Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF) where this program will be implemented and staffed by contracted personnel to teach Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF) population life skills upon release from a secured facility.

Questions/Revisions:

Galen Quenzer said that the annual plan is very thorough and detailed. He asked if staff will ever be alone with youth and/or if there will be cameras in the de-escalation room. Chief Vernon replied that there will indeed be cameras in the de-escalation room and that staff will not be alone with youth in it. She further said that the only place in the JDF that does not have cameras are the youth sleeping quarters.

Ron Westphal brought up Table 3 in the annual plan that lists the dispositions received by juveniles adjudicated for a 707(h) offense by year (2020-2022) and asked if the number of SYTF juveniles adjudicated for these offenses during the year 2023 was available. Deputy Chief Margarita Luna replied that this data will be provided at a future date.

Mr. Westphal said that he participated in the tour of the JDF on February 27, 2023 and thinks the facility looks nice but mentioned that Pod 5 looks like a jail. He said that he observed young male adults being intermingled with juveniles in Pod 5. He wanted to know if there are plans to have a separate pod for the SYTF population, which can have adults up to 25 years old. He further asked if there is a timetable for the future remodeling plans of the JDF and if it will look more like the former Youth Facility. Chief Vernon explained that supply chain issues, the processes of going out to bid for certain contract work, and chronic short staffing issues statewide are factors that affect the remodeling progress and /or housing arrangements. She said that the department is actively recruiting to staff the JDF, but this is not an immediate fix. Judge Hugo Loza questioned if the general population youth are in contact with the SYTF population at the JDF. Mr. Westphal said that he understood that both populations are being schooled together. Chief Vernon emphasized that the department is following Title 15 protocol. Galen Quenzer asked what the minimum number of staff is to open another pod. Chief Vernon replied that there is no specific answer to that question at the time and reiterated that the department is experiencing critical staffing shortages as are other agencies statewide. She further said that a lingering issue is getting qualified individuals to apply who also can pass the required background check.

Galen Quenzer asked if the annual plan is analogous county to county. Chief Vernon responded that each county developed their own distinct annual plan based on the specific needs of the population to be served and the dynamics of each county.

Judge Hugo Loza asked about the availability of the Step-Down Program and if were compared to other counties. Chief Vernon said that it mirrors Fresno County's. She also shared that this on-site treatment program is conducted off-site from the JDF and offers program participants a "homelike" environment overseen by contracted, not Probation, staff. Furthermore, it allows participants in this phase of their supervision the freedom to leave the premises for school or work. Judge Loza asked if the department looked at other treatment programs like Pinegrove Youth Conservative Camp. Chief Vernon replied that the California Department of Corrections and Restoration (CDCR) is using this program.

Ron Westphal inquired about Figure 5 in the annual plan and wanted to know how the department derived at the forecasted number of juveniles who will receive a future SYTF disposition. Chief Vernon replied that a statistical calculation was used that used prior and current numbers to forecast future numbers.

Chief Vernon shared that the February 27, 2023 OYCR site visit, based on communication with them, went well and that they were pleased with the facility. She said that the development of the annual plan is near completion and ready for submittal after MJCC approves it. She proposed that the Subcommittee meet bi-annually instead of quarterly as this will allow more time to report information.

Action Items:

A motion was made by Judge Hugo Loza with a second by Ron Westphal to change the SB 823 Subcommittee meeting schedule from quarterly to bi-annually.

Future Action Items:

The Probation Department will look at the calendar over the next six months and send the subcommittee an invitation once a date is determined.

The meeting adjourned at 12:43 pm.