

# Fouts Springs Youth Facility

Issued April 27, 2009

## Chief Probation Officer response to the Grand Jury Report:

**Finding 1** – While there is sufficient land and buildings to house up to 162 wards, the current configuration of the buildings and the staffing level provided by the Solano County Board of Supervisors currently allows for a maximum of 60 wards. At the time of the Grand Jury's visit, the prescribed capacity of 60 wards was participating in the program at Fouts. There is a substantial waiting list for placement at Fouts from various counties within the State of California. The key to increasing the ward population at Fouts appears to be the cost of staffing, as opposed to available buildings and land.

**Probation's Response to Finding 1** – Probation disagrees partially with this finding. Although the population was 60 on the date of the Grand Jury's visit, by late November, it had dropped to 49 and over the last several months the average daily population has been in the mid to low 50's. This reduction reflects the budget crisis in many California counties which has limited resources for out of home placement. What is referred to as a waiting list is actually a screening list and generally about 40% of these wards will not be placed at Fouts for various reasons including lack of suitability or being placed elsewhere by their counties.

**Recommendation 1** – The fixed costs at Fouts tend to remain the same regardless of population levels. If the facility pays for itself now with user fees, an increase in ward population would not result in any additional cost to the County and, in fact, may result in savings to the taxpayer. The fixed costs of operating the facility will remain basically the same and the income from the additional ward fees will pay for the additional staff required.

**Probation's Response to Recommendation 1** – The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. An expansion of capacity has two potential significant fiscal risks. First, unless one or more user counties guarantee payment for a sufficient number of beds, filled or not, over a substantial period of time, there is a risk that revenue will not be sufficient to cover staff costs. Given the current fiscal situation throughout the State, it is unlikely that any county would be willing to enter into this type of agreement. Second, there is currently a trend toward smaller group care which we have been able to successfully address through fidelity to a program model with a foundation in evidence based practices in corrections. This includes individual treatment plans, small group activities and quality interactions between staff and wards which would be difficult to maintain in a large, congregate setting. An increase in capacity could jeopardize referrals due to variance from this successful model.

**Finding 2** – Solano County has proposed capital improvements to the Fouts Springs land and buildings. There is no incentive to initiate these improvements until Solano County takes ownership of the land.

**Probation's Response to Finding 2** – Probation agrees with this finding.

**Recommendation 2** – The Solano County Board of Supervisors and the Fouts Springs Board of Directors should continue their efforts to complete the potential trade of land between Solano County and the United States Department of Forestry Services, which would allow the facility to make much-needed upgrades to the water system as well as the grounds. The Solano County Board of Supervisors should, through its legislative lobbyists, encourage the United States Congress to reintroduce legislation enabling the above-mentioned trade of properties (Deafy Glade and Fouts Springs).

**Probation's Response to Recommendation 2** – This matter is not under the control of the Probation Department.