

FOUTS SPRINGS YOUTH FACILITY

Solano County Grand Jury 2010–11

I. SUMMARY

Fouts Springs Youth Facility is in a remote location and under-utilized. Taxpayers subsidize other counties' use of Fouts Springs. As a result, the Solano County Grand Jury recommends the Solano County Probation Department undertake a complete analysis of the Juvenile Probation system in order to condense and localize the functions of the Department. As part of this analysis, the Probation Department should eliminate subsidies of other counties' wards, and all parties should be charged based on the actual cost involved with housing wards. Furthermore, as the State closes more State-run Division of Juvenile Justice facilities and passes the burden of caring for those wards to the counties, these closures will require Solano County to provide an equivalent facility. The Grand Jury recommends that Solano County work with other counties in the immediate area to develop a jointly-operated facility to house Fouts Springs class of wards and the class of wards housed in State-run facilities.

II. INTRODUCTION

Fouts Springs Youth Facility (Fouts Springs) is located in Mendocino National Forest near Stonyford in Colusa County. This property, while not in Solano County, is under its jurisdiction. Fouts Springs currently operates under a Joint Powers Agreement between Solano and Colusa Counties. The Solano County Probation Department has administrative authority over the facility and Colusa County operates the educational program. Solano County owns the buildings and leases the land in the Mendocino National Forest from the Federal Government for \$6,250 annually. Solano County and the U.S. Forest Service have been in discussions concerning a possible land swap that would result in the County owning the 74 acres of land on which Fouts Springs is located. Solano County Probation staff said the County would prefer to own the Fouts Springs land or hold a long-term lease before making any more capital improvements to the property.

The Juvenile Court places young men, ages 14 through 18, in Fouts Springs when adjudicated of a serious crime other than murder, arson, or sex offenses. Prior to placement, a Juvenile Court Judge reviews the disposition reports from the Probation Department while considering previous adjudication and potential for high community risk.

The facility has served our youths for over 50 years. Although the facility has had a rated capacity of 162 since 2001, the highest average daily population (ADP) since 1999 was 109 just prior to the end of the State of California CYA parole violator program contract in 2002. The ADP dropped to 81 in 2004 and 64 in 2005. The present staffing level supporting a ward capacity of 60 has been in place since 2006.

The facility consists of three main dormitories, an administrative area, kitchen/dining area, recreation hall, basketball courts, and classrooms (including industrial arts building). Also included are housing for on-site staff, various barns, storage areas, plus several acres for other recreational activities. The administrative complex contains office space, intake area, medical offices, one holding room, and a visiting area. Presently, a single dormitory houses all wards.

Upon arrival, Fouts Springs personnel test the wards in reading and math to determine their grade level. Each ward is required to attend school and has the opportunity to earn his high school diploma or General Education Development (GED) certificate. The educational program provides each ward the opportunity to achieve substantial advancement in both academic and grade-level performance. Fouts Springs has the following programs, counseling, group sessions, and components for the wards:

- Cognitive Behavioral Orientation
- Structured Behavioral Modification
- Crossroads Life Skills Program
- Aggression Replacement Therapy
- Fully-Accredited High School
- Vocational Programs (including welding certifications)
- Weekend Work Program
- Evening Self-Enrichment Classes:
 - Drug, Alcohol, and Change
 - Anger Management and Youth Violence Prevention
 - Gang Awareness
 - Parenting
 - Victim Awareness
 - Domestic Violence

California Penal Code § 919, subsection (b) provides that “the Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of public prisons within the County.” Pursuant to the statute, the 2010-11 Solano County Grand Jury inspected Fouts Springs on September 23, 2010.

III. METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury inspected the following:

- Administration office
- Dining area
- Ward dorms
- Class rooms
- Garden

The Grand Jury interviewed Solano County Probation Department staff and Colusa County education staff.

The Grand Jury performed the following activities:

- Observed wards
- Reviewed Fouts Springs budget
- Reviewed ward processing
- Reviewed various program curriculum
- Interviewed wards during lunch

IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS

Fouts Springs is the only County facility available for the placement of older Solano County wards who have committed serious crimes but do not meet the State’s criteria for placement in the State of California, Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) system. As the State closes more of the DJJ facilities and passes the burden of caring for these wards to the counties, the need for such a facility is anticipated to increase. County probation staff stated that these closures will cause a significant impact on the County’s juvenile justice system. Solano County has an average of 10 wards at any given time at DJJ facilities.

All counties in California may contract to send male wards between the ages of 14 and 18 to Fouts Springs. Presently, 12 counties send their wards to the facility. Depending on the county, ward placement can be six months, nine months, or one year long. For example, Solano’s program is nine months and San Bernardino’s is six months. After a ward graduates from the program and leaves the facility, he goes to an after-care program provided by his local probation department.

The following table displays the average daily ward population, the average daily Solano ward population, and the average daily ward population from other counties for the last five years:

	Average Daily Wards Solano County	Average Daily Wards Other Counties	Average Daily Ward Population
2006	11.14	38.17	49.31
2007	17.99	38.03	56.02
2008	19.41	38.58	57.99
2009	19.26	34.61	53.90
2010	16.79	29.98	46.77

The projected expenses for Fouts Springs fiscal year (FY) 2010-11 is \$4.1 million. The revenues to offset these expenses come from “Charges for Service” and State and Federal grant monies. The Solano County Probation Department uses reserves from the “net Fouts Springs asset account” to balance the fund. Staff anticipates that all of these reserves will be needed to balance the FY 2010-11 budget.

The Fouts Springs Board of Directors and the Solano County Board of Supervisors approve the budget. They also establish and control ward charge rates, programs, and staffing.

Supporting revenues (Charges for Service) are from fees charged to the counties using the facility. The following are the charges for each county per month:

- Solano/Colusa Counties (Owners) = \$6,400/month/bed
- Solano County pays for 18 beds per month, even if not utilized.
- Colusa County pays for two beds per month, even if not utilized.
- Contracted User Counties (*e.g.*, San Bernardino) = \$4,200 per month per bed, only for beds used.

The average cost per ward for the FY 2010-11 budget is \$5,694, based on a minimum complement of 60 wards. The facility breaks even with costs at a complement of 58 wards. The current average cost to house a ward is \$5,890/month. At the time of inspection, the ward population was 39 with two more wards being processed.

The facility provides transportation of wards to and from Sacramento Airport if the User County maintains ten wards in residence at the facility. If the User County population falls below 10 wards, there will be a \$250 cost per transport fee charged until the 10-ward minimum is re-established.

The biggest Fouts Springs expense is salaries and benefits (77% of operating expense). At this time, the State is funding two staff members. The present staffing level for Fouts Springs includes the Facility Manager, two supervising group counselors, five senior group counselors, 14 group counselors, two group counselors extra help, one registered nurse, three culinary staff, one fiscal analyst, one secretary, and one maintenance person for a total of 32. The Title 15 mandated counseling staff to ward ratio is 1-to-15 during the day and 1-to-30 at night. The staff's working schedule is three days on and four days off. Due to the length of workdays and the remoteness of the facility, Fouts Springs provides housing and eating accommodations for the on-duty staff.

If the registered nurse cannot provide the necessary medical attention for a ward, Fouts Springs provides transportation by van to Glenn Medical Center in Willows or by helicopter to Enlo Hospital in Chico. Fouts Springs contracts with a local physicians' group in a nearby community for routine medical care.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1 - The underutilization of Fouts Springs, Solano County's subsidizing of contracting Counties, and the facility's remote location cause the facility to operate at a deficit.

Recommendation 1 - The County Probation Department should undertake a complete analysis of the Juvenile Probation system to condense and localize the functions of the department. As part of this analysis, the Probation Department, with the approval of the Solano County Board of

Supervisors and Fouts Springs Board of Directors, should eliminate subsidies of other counties' wards and all parties should be charged based on actual cost involved with housing the wards.

Finding 2 - The State is reducing its role in the Juvenile Justice area, thus causing Solano County to find or create a facility to house the displaced wards from Department of Juvenile Justice facilities.

Recommendation 2 - The County Probation Department should work with other counties in the immediate area to develop a jointly-operated facility to house this class of wards.

Finding 3 - The high cost of operating Fouts Springs is an inefficient use of taxpayers' money.

Recommendation 3 – The County Probation Department should work with other counties in the immediate area to develop a jointly-operated facility to house the class of wards that is currently being housed at Fouts Springs. The Probation Department should consider combining such a facility with the facility discussed in Recommendation 2.

COMMENTS

- The Solano County Grand Jury commends the staff of Fouts Springs for continuing to operate a clean, well-run facility.
- The educational program seems to be working well at this facility.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Solano County Probation Department (Findings 1, 2 & 3)

Fouts Springs Board of Directors (Finding 1 & 3)

Solano County Board of Supervisors (Findings 1, 2 & 3)

COURTESY COPIES

Solano County Administrator

Solano County Juvenile Court

Colusa County Board of Supervisors

Colusa County Superintendent of Schools

Colusa County Juvenile Court

Colusa County Department of Probation