

Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission Annual Report Calendar Year 2021

BACKGROUND

Section 225 of the Welfare and Institutions Code requires each county in the State of California to have a Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC). The role of the commission is set forth in Sections 229, 230, 270, and 271 of the Code. Each commission is enjoined to inquire into the administration of juvenile justice in its county.

The law mandates that the Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission inspect Juvenile Hall and all institutions used by the county for the confinement of minors and report its findings annually to the Juvenile Court and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

The commission consists of between seven and fifteen members appointed by the Juvenile Court Presiding Judge. Commissioners are not paid for their services to the county.

MISSION STATEMENT AND DUTIES

The mission of the Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission is to advocate for and protect the safety and well-being of dependent and delinquent youth in Sonoma County.

Commission responsibilities include:

- Inspecting juvenile facilities including detention facilities and group homes used for the placement of minors in Sonoma County.
- Conducting investigations into complaints brought to the commission concerning the welfare of children in the Juvenile Justice System.
- Conducting hearings on matters relating to juvenile law in Sonoma County.
- Advocating for needed services for youth in the justice system.

2020 – 2021 COMMISSIONERS:

Gayle Ballinger
Michael Charpiot
Mary Cone
Gina Crozier
Jeanette Lebell
Richard Miller

Arnold Rosenfield
Dennis Ruggiero
Amber Shields
Jane Ure
James Weathers

Dennis Ruggiero resigned at the end of his term, February 2021. Amber Shields resigned April 2021. Richard Miller resigned at the end of his term, August 2021. Jim Weathers resigned at the end of his term, November 2021. Jeanette Lebell and Jane Ure were sworn in by Judge Gness in December 2021.

Due to 2020 COVID-19 Sonoma County Public Health Orders for “Shelter-in-Place,” the April 2020 Monthly JJC Meeting was cancelled and an email report was made by Commissioners in lieu. Beginning May 2020, JJC Monthly Meetings were conducted electronically via Zoom.

INSPECTIONS

Due to the 2020-2021 COVID-19 Sonoma County Public Health Orders for “Shelter-in-Place,” in-person inspections were halted after March 15, 2020. The Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission has continued to conduct monthly phone contact check-in with Facility Directors instead. A guideline of questions and reporting was developed for these phone check-in’s.

As the commission is mandated by law to inspect any jail or lockup within the county that is used for the confinement of minors and report the results to the Juvenile Court, the Juvenile Justice Commission conducts annual inspections of Juvenile Hall, the Probation Camp and Valley of the Moon Children’s Home. Additionally, for each of these three facilities commissioners review incident reports on a monthly basis. Sonoma County Probation Camp officially closed December 2020. Director Melissa Segura requested a final physical inspection by the JJC.

The Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission also annually inspects group homes housing dependent or delinquent youth within the county and reports the results to the Juvenile Court, the Probation Department, Community Care Licensing, respective facility director, and CA Board of State & Community Corrections.

Normally two commissioners conduct inspections of group homes. Facilities are notified in advance that they will be inspected on a designated date and are required to fill out a pre-inspection report prior to the Commissioner’s visit. This form contains relevant information such as the number and ages of youth served, average stay, staff training requirements, grievance procedures, etc.

The actual inspection includes a session with administrative staff, house staff and private interviews with house residents. Emphasis is placed on overall facility condition, adequacy, comfort and cleanliness of accommodations.

Commissioners look into safety procedures, educational and recreational opportunities, maintenance of the facility, and anything else relevant to the fair and safe treatment of the youth.

During the calendar year 2021, one or more commission members checked-in monthly with the following group homes:

- Greenacre Homes
- Hanna Boys Center
- Seneca Family of Agencies: Sonoma Compass
- TLC Child and Family Services
- Victor Treatment Center
- Valley of the Moon Children's Home

Additionally, commissioners inspected and/or checked-in monthly with the following facilities:

- Sonoma County Juvenile Hall
- Santa Rosa, Healdsburg, Cloverdale and Sebastopol Police Stations
- Sonoma County Crisis Stabilization Unit

These reports can be found on the Commission website at:
www.juvenilejusticecommission.org

SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION

Academic Awards for Youth

The commission presents a certificate and annual cash honorariums to youth in Juvenile Hall, the Probation Camp and in Group Homes who have earned their GED, High School Diploma, or Certificate for High School Completion. Honorariums were given to youth at group homes mid-year: Victor, TLC, Hanna Boys Center, and Greenacre. The 2020-2021 COVID-19 "Shelter-in-Place" orders prevented any in-person attendance by Commissioners after March 2020.

ACTIONS TAKEN DURING THE YEAR 2021

- The Membership Committee reviewed and interviewed incoming Commissioner Applicants
- Commissioners participated in the Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) quarterly meetings.

- The Continuum of Care Reform Committee continued to review current legislative actions and maintain contact with other JJC/JJDPCs.
- The Sonoma County Probation Camp is not currently housing court-appointed youth. The Director requested an in-person inspection, citing: “It is unclear at this time whether there will be any residents living there in the near future, but since a yearly inspection had not been done as yet, she believed it was important to have one done and available to meet any protocols in place for when there would be full time occupants even if unsure if it is required.” The Probation Camp facility is being offered to other agencies for use at this time.
- Planning was begun for an educational video for youth entering the Juvenile Court. Partnerships on this project included Commissioners, Probation Department representatives and the education director at Juvenile Hall.
- Letters were sent from the Commission to the City of Sebastopol in opposition to a proposed Safe Parking Program for homeless. The proposed site would have been adjacent to Greenacres group homes. There were concerns for the safety and well-being of the youth and staff at Greenacres. The City of Sebastopol cited that their decision to disqualify this site for consideration for this program was due in part to the letters from the JJC.
- Inbound Education:

The commission continues to educate all members to ensure we are knowledgeable about juvenile justice issues in the county. Speakers over the course of the year included:

- Elizabeth Goldstein, Chief Program Officer, Social Advocates for Youth
- CPO David Koch
- Deputy CPO Vanessa Fuchs
- Christina Hess, District Public Defender
- Community Care Licensing (CCL) Staff from the Rohnert Park Field Office

Respectfully submitted on January 31, 2022 by

Mary Cone, Co-Chair

Michael Charpiot, Co-Chair

Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission

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