

Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission

Facility Inspection Report

Facility Name:	Sierra Girls Center
Address:	175A Pythian Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95409. There are two administrative buildings, one is for the staff and one is the school and two properties that can hold 6 girls each. The address for those is 179 and 183 Pythian Road
Phone	Main office: (707) 537-8500
Contact Person	Jackie Hardman

J.J.C. Inspector(s)	Jody Edwards and Gayle Ballinger
Date of Inspection	May 1, 2014
Date of Last Inspection	October 2013
C.C.L. Contact	Pauline Muntzer
Date of Last C.C.L. Inspection	2/24/14, at this time their provisional license was extended.

**S= Satisfactory or exceeds N.I. = Needs Improvement/corrective action*

INSPECTED	S	N.I.	Comments
Grounds	X		The properties are in a rural setting with nature all around. For many girls this is their first encounter with deer, snakes and the peace and serenity of such a quiet setting. They are surrounded by trees and as will happen they fall. In late 2013 a tree fell totaling one staff member's car as the trunk of the tree fell on it but she escaped traumatic injury when she was thrown to the ground by the branches.
Building Exterior	X		All in good condition
Living Room	X		The living room which is combined with the dining room was very festively decorated for a youth's 16 th birthday on the day we visited. The recreation room which is where they 'live' most of the time has large comfortable chairs, couches, a TV only used for movies, places for games, art supplies, a washer/dryer and an extra refrigerator. The walls were decorated with the phases of the program, information for the girls and their art work/contracts they make weekly.
Kitchen	X		Clean and orderly, supplied well. Knives, can openers, vanilla and sugar are locked away.
Bedrooms	X		Two students per room - all neat and tidy. When the population permits girls are allowed to have a room to themselves. Girls can decorate a wall and all the girls living there have done that.
Bathrooms	X		Clean, all towels and washcloths are washed daily by the awake night staff.
Fire Safety	X		Fire extinguisher last checked January 2014 and easily accessible.
Food	X		House has stock of good healthy food and girls liked the food.
Health Services	X		We met Gloria Sverchek the social worker, therapist and case manager. She sees all of the girls individually each week and leads group work with them. The majority of the girls come with anger and defiance issues. She stated that they do not get many girls with mental health issues because the place is too quiet and they can't sit with themselves; she says they usually run from here. Therapy is provided, dental care is provided through Western Dental and general medical examinations are provided upon intake and as needed.

Medications	X		Secure and locked medicine cabinets in the staff office area of the house. Binder of medications for each girl was detailed, current and very organized.
Recreation (on site)	X		We were told about the schedule which includes some recreation each day.
Outings (off site)	X		They had just been on an outing to Howarth Park but they go somewhere every week. Sometimes it is to shop at the mall; many times it is an outdoor activity. There is a girl's circle program and a girl scouts class. This is taught once a week by a woman named Shalon who also offers it at the juvenile hall. Jackie said the girls love her. She believes it is the same curriculum as any Girl Scout troop.
Education/ Classrooms	X		<p>Education is an area we wanted to emphasize in this visit. We asked about the issue of having enough population to ensure a teacher. Last year Jackie had told us that if they had fewer than four girls then SCOE would not send a teacher. Their population averages five over the past year. They had no teacher from July – November 2013. In December they were provided a teacher named Julie Corr and she will stay regardless of the population until summer. Jackie does not know what will happen then. If there is no teacher then they do independent study which is managed by one of Jackie's staff members. More information is needed about how SCOE provides support in monitoring progress in this scenario; Jackie could not answer our questions about the curriculum or the content of the packets. The girls attend school from 8:00am until noon and the girls are working to get credits and towards their high school diploma. We viewed the classroom which looked fine.</p> <p>Afternoon involves Vocational study; however this is a problem area. The vocational program is supposed to be weekday afternoons, four of the five days, but it gets canceled approximately half of the time. Steven Jackson who is the responsible party in SCOE is aware of the problem as is Jackie's boss. The vocational program is made up of a culinary class offered two times a week, career development and business school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culinary is one that had the most cancelation. Then a new person started who is a chef and owned a business in New Orleans for twenty years. The youth spoke highly of this part. • For Career Development there have been field trips to SAY, the Santa Rosa beauty college and more. Career Development is taught by Sierra's assigned facility probation officer, Marsha McDowell. She does her best, but juggles many things as a full time Probation Officer; she often has urgent issues that come up resulting in cancellation of the once a week class. It would be in the best interest of the students at Sierra to have a credentialed Career Development instructor. • The Business Skills Class, soon to be taught by the culinary teacher has yet to begin since last July the classes ended due to the teacher leaving. They have been told this class will soon be taught by the same woman who teaches the culinary course. She does very well with the girls and rarely cancels. Before she began teaching there was a lull in the culinary course for a couple months. When they had it there were many cancellations of the business class. <p>At this inspection, there was no evidence that the girls at Sierra are being given access to earning vocational certification as their counterparts do at the boys' camp.</p>
Mail/Phone	X		All the girls have the right to phone calls in privacy as determined by their probation officer. This has been a problem area as the probation officer is required to name everyone they cannot call rather than those they can call.
INSPECTED	S	N.I.	Comments
Family Contact	X		Visits arranged both at facility and/or at home when they have earned it and when the home situation is safe.
Discipline	X		Discipline fits the circumstances, it's about natural consequences. They require 'recommitment projects' that fit the violation when the girls blow it.

Library			
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ADDITIONAL NOTES

The Sierra Girls Center is a Level 12 residential treatment program whose purpose is to "Rehabilitate repeat teen girl offenders in the Juvenile justice system", specifically girls on probation aged 12 to 18. It is owned by Crossroads Treatment Centers, Inc. out of Sacramento. It has been operational since March 2013, and has an extended provisional license. It provides on-site school and treatment in a family style setting. They are currently licensed for 12 girls but have only 3 residents today of which only one is from Sonoma County. It is not a locked facility, the girls can walk out if they want to but that would be a violation of their probation.

The program is phase-based and designed to turn girls around rather than simply house them. It is an evidence based program, it is structured, and it is tangible and results in girls who can be successful in society. They place a strong emphasis on behavior modification using a color coded system. The colors represent a resident's current level of behavior, responsibility and privileges. It is designed to enhance self-esteem, responsibility and motivate residents to move to a different color status offering increased privileges and autonomy. Girls stay an average of 9-12 months before graduation but the minimum is 6 months and the maximum is 18 months.

Placement in Sierra is determined by the judges, the probation officers and Crossroads intake coordinator. The judges send many Sonoma county girls out of county in order for them to get away from their prostitutes or the gangs. Crossroads has an intake coordinator in Sacramento who makes decisions about placement in all the Crossroads facilities. She selects girls according to a long list of child characteristics and behaviors. (We were given a copy). Then she also looks at the current population, for example if Sierra has a girl residing there who was in the Nortena gang she would not place a girl from the Surenos. Another example is that if a girl was a constant runner from another county she might be placed in Sierra because we are in the woods and the girl may not know where to run. Jackie couldn't tell us why the probation officers dealing with the girls in Juvenile Hall aren't placing more girls there. She suggested we ask them and gave us the names of the probation officers who she deals with as Jennifer Moore and Cheryle Leda and Marsha McDaniel. Last week there were 5 girls, today there are three. One girl is from Stockton, one from Napa and one from Sonoma County. Jackie stated that it is tough to keep a full house. The two girls who went AWOL on Sunday were both sexually exploited or gang members. One had been there nine months, was in the highest level and they had found a job for her for the summer; they were shocked when she ran.

We asked about staff member training. Jackie described that the staff go through 24-32 hours of unpaid pre-employment training and then shadow someone for 16 hours. Only then are they hired. They have newly instituted a policy of paying them \$200 if they take a position. We were given a description of all of those hours of training. Then they have a weekly mandatory two hour staff meeting. In addition to this they have training for two hours a week either individually or in a group. Jackie has gone through the certification to teach ProAct. This is a program that teaches that there is always an underlying need whenever a girl acts out. They are trained in this from 8-16 hours over the year.

Youth Interviews

TOPICS	S	N.I.	Comments
Evaluation of Program	X		All three girls said they appreciated the program, it was helpful and they have learned a lot and experienced things they have never experienced before, for example seeing deer and the ocean. They also said they felt safe here. One girl said, <i>"If I didn't come here I would probably be out still getting in trouble. They make it so family like here. I will miss it when I leave."</i> This same girl said she said she has learned things she likes and will take home with her such as everyone sitting at the table together to eat and the etiquette associated with it. She appreciates learning that because she wants to be a professional working person and feels what she has learned will help her. She said, <i>"I like it better here than other programs."</i> When asked where else she had been, she mentioned R house.
Counseling/ Therapy	X		One girl said it has solved lots of my anger issues. Another girl specifically mentioned Gloria, the social worker and said she is a big help. She said, <i>"I used to run away from my problems but not I'm pushing myself forward."</i>
Physical Education	X		They mentioned walking, hiking and lots of opportunities for physical exercise.
Health Services			
School	X		One girl said she has been learning a lot from the school and doing independent work. She said that when she gets out of here she will go to Ridgeway and she is

			happy about that because there won't be kids from her former school that she hung around with and got in trouble with. Another girl hopes to go to the JC when she gets out; she has already graduated from high school. They mentioned the school schedule and had no comments about the classroom part of school. All mentioned the culinary school and the good food they make. One said that has caused her to decide she wants to be a chef.
Food	X		They liked the food and felt like there was plenty of it. They also liked the cooking they got to do.
Snacks	X		One mentioned she likes the snacks. Another mentioned that she wishes she could keep the snacks that her parents bring to her.
Library			
Chores	X		They do chores and the girls described the various chores which include everything about keeping a house clean and orderly. One girl could quote all the rules and felt they made sense. We asked about knives and she said we if we are cooking and you have to be a particular phase to be able to do that; you have to ask to use knives.
Money			
Mail / Phone	X		One girl described receiving letters from her father. No one mentioned any issues about phones.
Levels (privileges)	X		They felt the yellow phase which said they could have home visits was unclear and confusing because when one of the girls got to yellow, her therapist said she could not have a home visit.
Laundry			They all do their own laundry.
Grievances	X		
Activities & Entertainment			Two of the three girls mentioned the garden work and really liked it.
Program Length Understood	X		The girls volunteered their levels, one was in the top phase, and one was in the second from the top and desired to get to the top. And the third given she had only been there a few days started in the neutral phase. It appears they clearly understood the program and the privileges associated with the different levels.
Staff evaluation	X		One girl described that lots of staff care, they like their jobs and that is different from when she has been other places.
Discipline			We asked what happens when there is a conflict. One girl described, <i>"When there are conflicts, Jackie sets up a meeting some the staff member, the youth and herself and works through it in a respectful way. No one is disrespectful, they always give options."</i>
Allowance	X		They are given allowance and the amount varies by phase. There is also an opportunity to earn more money by fulfilling your contracts.
Clothes	X		The girls could all describe the minimums about clothes such as you need 5 or 6 shirts and if you don't have them then you will be given money to go buy them. She said they were taking inventories right now and were planning a shopping trip.
Medications			
Drugs/Alcohol			
Probation officer			

ADDITIONAL NOTES & SUGGESTIONS BY YOUTH

of Youth Interviewed: 3

Ages of youth interviewed: 1) F - 16 2) F - 16 3) F-17

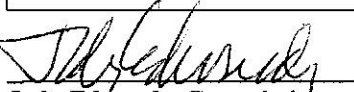
Length of time at this facility: 1) 6 mo. 2) 2 mos. 3) 5 days but was in the program once before for 5 months

The interviewees

Inspection Summary

Sierra Girls Center appears to be a strong program that provides a home-like atmosphere with a clinical component. There has not been time enough to judge the success of the overall program. In the last year the average population was five girls. They have four runaway's a month. For our next visit it would be good to review the outcomes since Sierra began. Our interview with the one girl residing there for 6 months suggests that the program has been very successful and this particular girl has taken the appropriate steps to turn her life around. Yet, another girl was here for five months, left the program, had an issue and is back again. She was both embarrassed at being back and pleased to be assigned to this place and says she will take full advantage of all the services available to her.

Issues to be watched and worked on by the people in charge are education both classroom and vocational as well as the low average population. Given the fixed costs associated with Sierra and the number of girls in Sonoma County Juvenile Hall, we believe we should maximize the number of girls residing at Sierra.


Jody Edwards, Commissioner

Date: May 13, 2014

Next Inspection Recommended: ___ or X Annual Inspection


Mary Cone, Chairperson

cc: Honorable Judge of the Sonoma County Superior Court
Commissioner of the Juvenile Court
Probation Department, Chief of Probation
Department of Social Services
State of California, Community Care Licensing
Juvenile Probation Director
Facility Inspected