

Los Angeles County Probation Oversight Commission

Dorothy Kirby Center (DKC) and Camp Scott
Facility Inspection Reports: 2022

Report Prepared by
Erica Reynoso, Ph.D., LCSW
Jennifer Ochoa-Garcia, MPA

BACKGROUND

This year (2022) marks the second full year in which the Los Angeles County Probation Oversight Commission (POC) completes facility inspections. In 2021, the POC completed facility inspections in eight (8) juvenile facilities, 2 juvenile detention centers (“juvenile halls”), and 6 juvenile camps, including the Dorothy Kirby Center (DKC) in Commerce, CA ([2021 Facility Inspections Report](#)). For this year, the POC conducted two Facility Pre-Inspections at Central Juvenile Hall (CJH) and Campus Kilpatrick ([2022 Pre-Inspections Report](#)), which were prompted by extenuating factors related to the temporary closure of CJH and subsequent merging of the two (2) juvenile halls in March 2022 and the plan to move the former “Department of Juvenile Justice” (DJJ) population (hereafter “secure track youth”) to a permanent secure facility.

As per the authority to inspect under Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations and as part of standard operating procedure, the POC intends to complete another inspection cycle this year of eight (8) juvenile facilities, currently operating in Los Angeles County. This official inspection cycle commenced in June 2022 with inspections of the Dorothy Kirby Center and Camp Scott, both located in Commerce, California.

METHODS

Although DKC and Camp Scott are co-located in Commerce, California, the POC conducted two separate inspections of DKC and Camp Scott. To note, Camp Scott was relocated to Commerce in 2020, but remains operating independently of DKC. Two POC Commissioners inspected DKC and one POC Commissioner inspected Camp Scott. In addition to the Commissioners conducting their inspections, two POC staff members provided support during each inspection.

With ample notification, the inspection at DKC and Camp Scott was coordinated with Probation leadership and leaders at each facility. Further, the template for the inspection was shared with Probation along with email correspondence indicating information, expectations, and suggestions for preparing for each inspection. It should be noted that the data is a “snapshot” captured for that day (of the inspection). Further, the facility’s demographic data, such as the “facility’s rated capacity,” “population” and “staffing” was provided to the POC staff directly by the facility’s Director or Administrative Supervising Deputy Probation Officer (SDPO); each of these numbers was directly reported in this report. The partner agency data was received from DMH and JCHS managers or leads.

FINDINGS

The information in each table depicts data gathered directly from the inspected facility. The narrative portions below, which include youth and staff accounts, derived from face-to-face interviews, are direct reports provided by POC Commissioners who conducted the inspections. For the sake of this report, we will refer to Commissioners who inspected Dorothy Kirby Center as “Commissioner A” and “Commissioner B” and will refer to the Commissioner who inspected Camp Scott as “Commissioner C.” Notations in the ‘Supplemental’ section are notes/observations or suggestions made by commissioners during the inspection of this facility. Finally, to fully engage the Probation Department and key stakeholders, this report offers findings and elicits answers to questions posed by the Commission following these inspections.

DOROTHY KIRBY CENTER (DKC)

Youth Population (Physical) – Co-Ed.*	Number of Youth at Court	Facility’s Rated Capacity	Total Staff (Payroll) - all	Total Active Staff (DPO’s and GSN’s)	Staff to Youth Ratio (Day)	Staff to Youth Ratio (Night)	Attempted Suicides	Escapes and documented attempts
30	0	92	168	147	1:5	2:5	2	2, 1

Total Credentialed Teachers (LACOE)	Number of Students	Number of Graduates
10	32	1

*2 youth out for medical appointments (Total pop = 32)

Access to Medical and Mental Health Services

Juvenile Court Health Services (JCHS)	Services Offered: 7 days / week	Coverage: 6:30 AM – 10:00 PM * (RN’s work 8-hour shifts) *6:00 AM start (on days when blood draws are done)
Department of Mental Health (DMH)	Services Offered: 7 days / week	Coverage: 8:00 AM – 8:30 PM (Staff Shifts: 10-hour days, Sun – Wed or Wed – Sat.) plus 24-hour access to on-call DMH psychiatrist

Inspection Report #1

During this inspection, Commissioner A walked through several boys’ and girls’ cottages and visited the outside and inside areas. Commissioner A inspected areas within each cottage, such as living areas (including the youth rooms, dayrooms, bathrooms, supply closets, dining, and recreational areas). Commissioner A spent a lot of time walking through classrooms and talking with staff and school personnel. Commissioner A also observed a meal in one of the cottages during lunchtime. This service ran well, and the lunch consisted of hot dogs and chips. Special dietary needs for one youth who required it was observed.

In general, the classrooms looked a little depressing; small things such as inspirational posters and things of that nature could probably brighten it up, but overall classrooms looked well kept, appeared neat, and the furniture was also well kept; it didn’t look like a lot of wear and tear on it. The girls’ classrooms were brighter, and more of them had a “classroom” feel, whereas the boys’ classrooms seemed a little bit gloomy overall.

At DKC, there seemed to be the potential to increase the vocational programming for youth. Staff spoke to Commissioner A about interest in expanding the mechanics program. Commissioner A was also interested in learning more about available construction programs or apprenticeships offered to youth at DKC; particularly any training programs with pathways to an apprenticeship, meeting union standards (credentialing).

From conversations with Probation staff (DPO’s or “Treatment Counselors” (T&C’s), Commissioner A gathered that the staff appreciate working at DKC because their work is primarily focused on youth and is “collaborative” (‘work with the team’). However, there are challenges, particularly expressed in the staff’s case work or in their role as T&C altogether. Staff explained not having time or nor being supported in their case work (by management), which involves preparing court reports and being available for court hearings. Often, scheduling is not appropriate or is not aligned with the role expectation. When asked about ways to improve these areas, staff was specific and cited the need to schedule (staff) better and the need to clarify and define roles in this facility. For instance, one DPO explained that he is unclear of when he is expected to perform “DPO duties” as a court DPO or when he is expected (or scheduled) to work in the cottage. Staff find the latter problematic and confusing at times. Another DPO commented on this, explaining that scheduling is not ‘intentional’ as he

primarily works with the boys (does not have much experience working with the girls, in the female cottages) but he may be sporadically assigned to work in a female cottage.

Finally, in speaking with staff typically assigned to the HOPE Center at DKC, they reported that it [HOPE Center] is not utilized all the time (youth not always assigned to HOPE) – the staff identified the need for more programs, with a wider variety of focus, especially in the HOPE cottages.

(Notation: the HOPE Centers house youth that are having difficulties or need time to be able to deescalate).

Supplemental inspection notes

- The classrooms looked a little depressing; small things such as inspirational posters and things of that nature could probably brighten them up.
- Collaboration is important, necessary – create increased opportunities for DPO's, T&C's and Partner agency staff to collaborate and have multi-disciplinary discussions, with youth at the center.
- Have at least two (Probation) school liaisons work alongside school personnel to support educational goals and behavior management plans.
- Provide access to virtual learning for youth or support by paraprofessionals – this is especially needed during quarantine periods (COVID-19)

Inspection Report #2

During this inspection, Commissioner B had the opportunity to view the interior and exterior of the facility. Commissioner B noted that the landscape was well maintained and provide a tranquil environment. Though the security perimeter walls were tall and imposing the lay out of the buildings and landscaping minimized the institutional appearance. Unlike other LA County Probation custody facilities that Commissioner B have inspected, there was no detectable signs of graffiti which this commissioner found remarkable.

In inspecting the girls' dorm, Commissioner B found it to be clean and very well staffed. There were nine girls present and at least three DPO's were also present. Commissioner B noted there was positive interaction between the youths and staff. Commissioner B also observed that the youths interacted well with each other. During Commissioner B's visit to the girl's dorm, lunch was delivered. Most of the ladies received a hot dog and chips lunch, while one received a special lunch to meet her dietary needs. Throughout this visit, Commissioner B noticed that staff had positive interactions with the youths and there was respect by the youths for staff.

During this inspection, Commissioner B spoke to several youth and staff. All interviews were conducted privately to try and get accurate feedback and information. Most youth Commissioner B spoke to expressed feeling 'safe' at DKC, respected by the staff and peers, and felt the program at DKC is 'beneficial.' Most of the youth described staff as helpful, caring, akin 'big brother or mentors.' One youth mentioned feeling encouraged to be 'a good citizen' and to 'finish high school and go to college' by both Probation and LACOE staff. However, one youth, although relayed that she thought the programming was good, enjoyed going to school and felt safe from everyone except one DPO. The youth explained that in her mind the DPO had attitude and was verbally threatening her. Commissioner B explored this with the youth and asked her to elaborate. The youth claimed that the DPO stated: "I have friends here that will hurt you if you get out of line." In further exploring, Commissioner B learned that the youth filed a formal complaint and that it was under investigation. At the conclusion of this interview with this youth, Commissioner B met with the facility Director to follow-up. He confirmed that a complaint had been filed and was under review. Since internal investigations are confidential pursuant to 3300 of the California Government Code, Commissioner B asked no further questions and will rely on the department to resolve the matter.

Commissioner B spoke to several DPO's in various cottages. Most of the DPO's Commissioner B spoke with in the girls' dorm talked about the positive interactions between staff and the youth under their care and in general and how well the girls were responding to the programs provided. One staff member showed Commissioner B the storage room for personal hygiene supplies, cleaning items, and other items that needed secure storage. Commissioner B saw that the room was extremely well organized. This staff member then introduced Commissioner B to a 17-year-old young woman who took great pride in how she had organized and maintained the storage room. To Commissioner B, this demonstrated an example of pride in ownership and in being responsible.

Through interviews with both youth and staff, Commissioner B noted their interactions as well (especially as staff were escorting youth to their interviews with Commissioner B) – they seemed to have positive and mutually respectful interactions. As Commissioner B finished one interview at the school with a youth, Commissioner B asked to talk to the DPO who had escorted that youth. Commissioner B was impressed by the DPO's commitment to the youth in his care. The DPO explained that he enjoys working with the youth (“I work here because I want to make a difference”) and shared that he has a degree in sociology and grew up in South Los Angeles. This positive attitude was also noted of the facility director, who seemed to be in-tune with staff members.

Commissioner B also interviewed a LACOE teacher whose classroom was decorated with the projects, posters, and work her students had completed. She explained that she took great pride in working with the “troubled boys.” The teacher pointed out that many of the youths had never experienced anybody taking an interest in their education. She relayed that she has been successful in stimulating educational interest in many of the youth in the small class setting.

Although Commissioner B has been to several facilities over the years, through the inspection of this facility, it was concluded that this was the first time Commissioner B has seen such a complimentary population of youths. It appears that a tone is established at this facility of respect, encouragement, and acceptance. Since this was an announced visit, they knew we were coming, and did not seem anything had been rehearsed.

Supplemental inspection notes

- Remarkable finding: “Unlike other LA County Probation custody facilities, there was no detectable signs of graffiti.”
- Confirmed filing of grievance by youth (and currently under investigation)
- Facility's tone found to be respectful and encouraging

Question 1: Are you engaging CBO's that specialize in vocational training, particularly those that offer special certifications to participants? If so, how many are currently offering services, and/or how many do you plan to engage in the future?

Question 2: What is Probation doing to clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectation among case carrying DPOs, and cottage staff?

CAMP SCOTT

Youth Population (Physical) – Female	Number of Youth at Court	Facility’s Rated Capacity	Total Staff (Payroll) - all	Total Active Staff (DPO’s and GSN’s)	Staff to Youth Ratio (Day)	Staff to Youth Ratio (Night)	Attempted Suicides	Escapes and documented attempts
3	1	92*	12	11	2:3	2:3	0	0, 0

*DKC’s Rated Capacity

Total Credentialed Teachers (LACOE)	Number of Students	Number of Graduates
6	3	0

Access to Medical and Mental Health Services

Juvenile Court Health Services (JCHS)	Services Offered: 7 days / week	Coverage: 6:30 AM – 10:00 PM * (RN’s work 8-hour shifts) *6:00 AM start (on days when blood draws are done)
Department of Mental Health (DMH)	Services Offered: 7 days / week	Coverage: 8:00 AM – 8:30 PM (Staff Shifts: 10-hour days, Sun – Wed or Wed – Sat.) plus 24-hour access to on-call DMH psychiatrist

Inspection Report

Camp Scott is housed in a cottage within the Dorothy Kirby Center (DKC). In the cottage, there is a closed-in outdoor concrete area called the “patio” that can be reached through glass doors of the common area. The doors are chained closed. The rectangular patio is enclosed with brick walls that are at least 8 feet high that then open up for a few feet with fencing before connecting to a “roof” made of wire fencing. There is barbed wire on top of the walls. You are able to see the trees and sky through the fenced part of the walls and “roof.” It is reminiscent of a very large cage. The furniture, including mattresses, appeared to be in adequate condition. Youth are allowed to decorate and have personal items in their rooms, including stuffed animals. In the individual rooms, the lower half of the windows are painted and the reason given was PREA compliance. The soap dispenser in the toilet area of the bathroom was empty. The entire camp is surrounded by tall brick walls with barbed wire above it. The outdoor space (e.g., grass, flowers) was well-maintained. The recreation area includes a blacktop (asphalt) area with a volleyball net and basketball hoop. There are large cracks (some with grass growing in them) throughout the area. There is also an area with outdoor exercise machines that seem functional.

During this inspection, youth and staff were interviewed. Each were interviewed away from the group, in private spaces. Per Commissioner C’s observations, none of the youth had been handcuffed or placed in “solitary confinement.” Youth love the outside “patio” where they talk a lot, play cards or draw. Sometimes they are allowed to stay outside longer than the designated recreation time if they ask. There is a small charcoal grill in the patio, and they used it the day earlier for Memorial Day. Youth spoke positively about staff. One said they are there when you need someone to talk to. They generally are accommodating. Youth did not express any problems with quality or access of medical and mental or behavioral health services. One noted that she requests services using medical forms and gets timely responses from the nurse who comes in the morning, after school, and at night. Another said she could immediately see someone if needed. One youth noted that her therapist is good. One youth said she sees her therapist weekly.

No youth expressed discomfort with having staff of different genders. Sometimes they play volleyball against staff during recreation. All youth said they had plans for their transition out of the facility. More than one youth

said that their probation officer assigned to supervise them upon release visited them regularly. There were no complaints about the hygiene products provided.

Staff (including the teacher) seemed to care about the youth and wish they could have more flexibility to provide youth with more programming, field trips and ways to reward/motivate/celebrate youth in ways that are meaningful and appropriate for the youth. It appears that they do what they can with what they have, and what is permitted, to engage youth. The 'Scott team,' including LACOE personnel, report feeling supported by Probation and feels the camp tone is safe, however, note that ensuring that certain activities are permitted by the host facility's management is challenging at times.

Regarding programming: program schedule and conversations with youth and staff show there is very limited programming offered at the camp. When asked to describe their days, youth recounted that most of their time not in school or in outdoor recreation is spent sitting inside in the common area or their room, or outside on the patio talking, playing cards and games, drawing, doing arts and crafts, and watching movies (that they can request). Based on conversations and the schedule provided, it's not clear how often "Life Skills Group" takes place. "Life Skills Group" is listed every day in a time slot that also gives the option for Cottage Recreation. The specific Community Based Organization (CBO) groups that regularly offer programming at Camp Scott include Anti-Recidivism Coalition; they offer program on Sunday for 1.5 hours; the Million Little Group program is scheduled for 2.5 hours on Thursday (and replaces some of the school time that occurs on all of the other weekdays after lunch) and the STRONG program is scheduled for 1 hour on Saturday. One youth praised a work program that youth can do on the weekends and get paid \$15/hour to do things like sweep, mop, clean bathrooms, do laundry, or otherwise help the supervisor. Youth can work a maximum of 4 hours per weekend. Their wages are given to their probation officer or to them when they are released. During this inspection, Commissioner C noticed the arrival of a CBO (volunteer) at the end of the school day leading art projects with Camp Scott youth.

Supplemental inspection notes

- Probation staff expressed the need for better communication and collaboration among the different agencies (DMH, JCHS, LACOE) and facilities (DKC) and would like to see more engagement and communication between CBO's and Probation staff as well.
- Increase collaboration and communication between the two facilities (DKC and Scott)
- Probation staff indicated that they had better programs, increased flexibility, space (track, grass field) and more CBO's offering services at the (original) Camp Scott (in Santa Clarita) compared to Scott at Kirby.
- Some staff agreed that they would like to see more CBO's that are focused on "life skills" (in addition to "art")
- Probation staff report benefitting from "trauma-informed" training but would also like to see an increase in practical, day-to-day type of training that could enhance their job performance at the facility
- Concerns expressed about staff shortages or lack of staffing resources solely dedicated to Camp Scott

Question 1: What are some opportunities being created to enhance team building, cross training, and inter-facility communication between Camp Scott, DKC, and agency partners?

Question 2: What is the plan to increase the daily programming opportunities at Camp Scott?

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