



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

PROBATION OVERSIGHT COMMISSION

# 2024 ANNUAL INSPECTION REPORT

---

**BARRY J. NIDORF-SECURE YOUTH  
TREATMENT FACILITY (BJN-SYTF)**

**BARRY J. NIDORF JUVENILE HALL**  
16350 FILBERT STREET

AUGUST  
2024



## SUMMARY

The Los Angeles County Probation Oversight Commission (POC), in its mission to oversee and make recommendations to the Los Angeles County Probation Department (Probation), is completing the 2024 Annual Inspections of all of Probation's detention facilities, marking the fourth year of inspections.

The POC has found it of critical importance to provide substantial feedback to Probation, the Board of Supervisors (Board), and public stakeholders after each inspection of the conditions observed within the facilities. This summary presents the findings of the fourth inspection during this annual cycle: Barry J. Nidorf-Secure Youth Treatment Facility (BJN-SYTF). Significant changes occurred at BJN-SYTF in July 2023 when the facility ceased operations as a juvenile hall and took on the sole function of being a Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF).

While the POC collected a large amount of information at this inspection, takeaways were derived from the most impactful observations and interviews made during the day. The following list represents key findings from the inspection of BJN-SYTF:

- ***Trauma-Informed Intentional Language that Aligned with Actions*** – Throughout the inspection, discussions with Directors and Probation officers providing supervision exemplified increased understanding of youth development, including the devastating effects of trauma and incarceration, poverty, and poor mental health as these issues relate to the behaviors of youth. This understanding informed interactions and programming coordinated for youth with positive results.
- ***Remarkable Improvements in Programs and Services*** – Many of the issues with programming noted in the previous years' Annual Inspection reports were resolved, including increased accuracy in the schedule, diversified substance abuse programming offerings, targeted age-appropriate services, and availability of vocational training programs.
- ***Developmental Stage System (DSS) Adoption and Outcomes*** – The connection between the adoption of DSS, a requirement of the Department of Justice (DOJ) settlement agreement, at BJN-SYTF and a unified, countywide approach to practice or discipline in detention remains unclear. The Department has not shared what data will be gathered to determine the success or failure of the system to achieve any expected outcomes for youth.
- ***Increased and Improved Communication with most Co-Located Partners*** – More positive rapport was clearly established from the previous year between Probation and co-located service providers including Juvenile Court Health Services (JCHS), Department of Youth Development's (DYD) contracted credible messengers, and Department of Public Health- Substance Abuse Prevention and Control's (DPH-SAPC) contracted substance abuse counseling provider. The sole exception was relations with Department of Mental Health (DMH) at the facility leadership level, which has reportedly worsened over the last two years.



The POC continues to observe significant improvements in programming and the overall leadership culture at BJN-SYTF in which young people and directors clearly have pre-established relationships based upon positive rapport and mutual respect. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement which is applicable at this facility and has been echoed in other inspection reports: the current departmental plan for improving facility culture relies heavily on the behavior of young people and is significantly less focused on the practices and behaviors of Probation employees. A department-wide adoption of practice standards needed to provide clear guidance and make expectations of youth-centered, rehabilitative, trauma-responsive, and teamwork-focused approach clear using a top-down approach. Until there is a unified goal around what practice should look like, outcomes will continue to rely on the individual choices and behaviors of officers, rather than an intentionally cultivated culture of care.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Los Angeles County Probation Oversight Commission (POC) was established in 2021 as a civilian-led oversight commission focused on systemic reform of the Probation Department. The POC advises the Board of Supervisors (Board) and the Los Angeles County Probation Department (Probation) about progress and challenges within Probation. The POC has considerable authority and responsibilities directly related to juvenile institutions. Specifically, Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations, section 1313 (f), requires the POC to conduct annual inspections of the buildings, grounds, and services delivered to the young people detained in each of the County’s juvenile facilities on an annual basis. The Board also granted the POC specific authority to “as permitted by law...conduct unannounced inspections of any facility, and its non-confidential records, where any juvenile probationer can be held or where probationers receive services and “prepare reports on inspection findings” for the Board (LACC Sections 3.80.040(B) and 3.80.050(A)). The POC submits these annual reports to the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), a statutory agency that inspects for compliance of standards of detention facilities in California, by December 31<sup>st</sup> each year and shares the report with the Board and the public. This is the fourth round of annual inspections conducted by this body.

## **METHODS**

At the beginning of the 2024 Annual Inspection cycle, Probation ran six juvenile facilities: one juvenile detention center (“Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall”), three juvenile camps, one locked placement that also serves as the camp and Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF) for girls and gender-expansive youth, and two facilities solely dedicated to housing young people dispositioned to SYTF, including Barry J. Nidorf-SYTF (BJN-SYTF) and Campus Kilpatrick.



For the BJN-SYTF Inspection:

- Three POC Commissioners conducted the inspection and three POC staff members provided support.
- Dates for the inspection was coordinated with Probation leadership and leaders from the facility as well as co-located partners were aware in advance of the inspection.
- The BSCC does not have a required template for the inspection report. The POC developed a detailed facility inspection template that was updated this year and reviewed by Probation and the BSCC.
- Within the inspections template, key themes are included to ensure a thorough inspection of both physical structure and environment. The template also highlights the need to examine practices and the treatment of youth at the facility.
- The BJN-SYTF inspection took eight hours to complete.

The information below depicts data gathered directly from the BJN-SYTF inspection. It should be noted that the data is a “snapshot” of information recorded only to the day of the inspection. The data collected about the “facility’s rated capacity,” “population” and “staffing” was provided to the POC staff directly by facility Directors; each of these numbers was directly stated in this report. The only two numbers which required calculation in this report were the “Staff to Youth Ratio” and the “Number of Graduates.” Staff to Youth ratio is calculated by dividing the number of total staff at the time of inspection by the total youth population. For clarification, these ratios do not reflect the actual staff to youth ratios per shift, but rather a broad staff to youth ratio for each facility. The findings stated in this report are a compilation of POC Commissioner and staff observations made while conducting the inspections.

**FINDINGS**

Inspection #4 – Barry J. Nidorf-Secure Youth Treatment Facility (BJN-SYTF):  
*Facility Rated Capacity: 414*

Youth Population (Physical) – Co-Ed.	Youth at Court/ Medical	Total Staff (Payroll)	Total Active Staff <sup>1</sup> (DPO’s and GSN’s)	Staff to Youth Ratio (Number of Staff at time of Inspection / Youth Pop.) rounded to whole number	Line staff on Duty at time of inspection	Total Permanently Assigned Teachers (LACOE)	Number of High School Students	Number of High School Graduates
65	1	176	154	1:1	69	4	25	40

<sup>1</sup> Probation’s reports of Active Staff and Line Staff on Duty includes individuals with work hardening, or light duty.



**Access to Medical and Mental Health Services**

<b>Juvenile Court Health Services (JCHS)</b>	Services Offered: 7 days / week	Coverage: <b>24hr coverage; 3 shifts</b>
<b>Department of Mental Health (DMH)</b>	Services Offered: 7 days / week	Coverage: <b>7:00 AM – 6:30 PM plus 24-hour access to on-call DMH psychiatrist</b>

**Facility and Physical Environment**

Upon arrival to the Barry J. Nidorf Secure Youth Treatment Facility, (BJN-SYTF), there were two security guards outside the facility and one inside facilitating bag searches and entrance for providers and Probation Oversight Commission (POC) Commissioners and staff. The security officers reminded visitors about the cell phone ban and other non-allowed items including metallic water bottles. POC Commissioners and staff members loaded all belongings in the black bins, which were x-rayed by another set of security guards inside the facility entrance. To enter the facility, one commissioner and one POC staff member were instructed by Probation’s security staff to turn in their County issued identification cards and were provided visitor passes. It was noted by Commissioners that other Commissioners and staff were not required to take this step to enter. No explanation was given for the difference.

Facility grounds appeared aged but well-kept. Large grass fields were cut and maintained. These areas are used daily for outdoor recreation programs. Since the 2023 Annual Inspection, a section of the field bordering a wall was fenced off to be used exclusively as a dog park for the animals placed in the step-down units as part of the Paws for Life program. The dog park area included a large chest for storing dog care and training supplies. Youth were observed with their dogs using the area during the day of the inspection as it allowed the animals an open space to run and play without using a leash.

The living areas inside the units all looked fairly similar with rubber seating, bolted down metal tables with attached stools, and multiple televisions with gaming systems. All units appeared clean, and all equipment appeared to be in working order. Any graffiti in and around the entrances of the units was minimal and looked old, the majority of which appeared to be etched in and unremovable. The units visited appeared to have dim lighting, with at least two to three Probation officers on the floor, and about two to three Probation supervisors/seniors inside the office. Two buildings were closed for homelike renovations, which were observed to include ripping out modern, recently installed laminate wood floors to be replaced with colorful tiles reminiscent of a hospital setting. Commissioners were told by Probation staff that this was because the Department of Justice (DOJ) monitor did not approve of the prior improvements. Since the last annual inspection, the razor wire previously seen near the majority of living units had been replaced by roller bars.

During the building observations it was noted that plans were underway to move Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) classrooms from their current location near



the buildings referred to as “The Compound” due to their high security look of being surrounded by chain link, to the “North School”, near the units on the northern side of the facility. Commissioners visited the North School which was being remodeled. The remodel includes an area that will ultimately be used for a teen tech and music production center, which was planned to launch in November 2024. Probation was excited to show the progress on construction in one of the units. The goal was to create a home-like environment which included new flooring that resembled what you would see in any new home development. It was reported that carpet would also be installed soon.

Throughout the facility, posters providing young people with information about their rights were mostly easily accessible, viewable at eye-level, or present in a variety of spaces utilized by youth throughout their day. This included posters for Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), Grievances, Youth Bill of Rights and Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) Ombudsperson posters. LACOE classrooms in use and the gymnasium did not have posters. The school principal reported that posters were frequently torn down by the young people or taken down by Probation Officers for security reasons. It was shared that on various occasions contraband was found hidden behind the posters and as a result, posters were usually needing to be replaced every two weeks. The principal shared that the new classrooms in the North School, which was under construction with no instruction occurring currently, did have all the posters up in preparation for opening.

### Kitchen and Food

The kitchen appeared clean, spacious, and orderly. POC Commissioners and staff were instructed to wear hairnets in order to maintain a hygienic environment. During the inspection of the kitchen, it was noted that all equipment was in good working order and the kitchen staff reported being sufficiently staffed. The recurrent menu comes from a Probation dietician. Menus were seen posted and all meals included vegetables and fruits at each mealtime. It was mentioned that the young people were recently surveyed about food, and the kitchen staff reported regularly tasting the food to ensure high quality and appealing flavors in what is served. Commissioners observed young people eating lunch, which was comprised of a beef burrito, which was the same lunch offering that was served to all employees for young people with dietary restrictions, the alternatives offered included a veggie burrito. All meals took place in the living areas of the units.

### School

Two LACOE classrooms and one college classroom were observed during the inspection. LACOE classrooms were described in a range of conditions by commissioners. One classroom visited was described by a Commissioner as clean and orderly, while another was described as “tragic, dim, and outdated” with minimal classwork displayed which was not produced by any of the students actually in the class.



The LACOE classrooms observed were in the summer session, one of which was an English class where six students sat in the room with the lights off while watching a recording of a Rams football game. The environment was quiet and calm, though students did not appear to be engaged in learning.

In one LACOE classroom there were four young people with one LACOE substitute teacher and one Probation Officer. The young people had just returned from the college/career fair. One young person was observed working on class work, the other three were just sitting down, not engaging with any class materials. The educator explained that the class was mainly science, but this was not the only subject being worked on in the classroom as different young people were working on different subjects. The classroom had some of the young people's class work hanging on the wall. Overall, there didn't seem to be academic learning taking place during the observation of this classroom.

The college classrooms were starkly contrasted to LACOE classrooms; they were well lit, spacious, and pleasantly decorated. There were graduation pictures, certificates of completion, and college banners on the wall as well as a poster recognizing two students who had made the Mission College Dean's list. The day of the inspection was the first week of a new semester for a math class, which was conducted virtually "live" via Zoom with students from Campus Kilpatrick. This was a two-hour class with five students supervised by three Probation officers. It was reported that this class was offered three times a week, and the Mission College counselor was available for course planning. The teacher was orienting the students to the class and appeared to be very successful in engaging young people into the class. He was sharing stories, was personable (e.g., "Here's how you can contact me if you have questions"), and affirming (e.g., "Feel free to correct me if you notice I made a mistake"). A couple of the students looked a little bored, but all appeared to be paying attention as much as any other college student. A Probation education services staff member was also in the classroom offering technical and educational support to the young men.

On the day of the inspection, a College and Career fair occurred in the gymnasium co-planned and facilitated by Probation Education Services and LACOE. The organizers of the event were happy to point out each other's contributions and the general atmosphere with the youth was encouraging and pleasant, with everyone appearing happy to be there. Tables included automotive, marines, construction, project rebound, hospitality, and vocational program provider at the facility. The principal referred to the event as a "soft launch" to see how the young people responded, and then a larger more official fair would be planned for the fall. Young people were seen taking turns visiting the fairs in groups and they were walking around to the different tables, asking questions, and indicating interest in the offerings.



## Grievances

During the inspection, POC was informed that electronic grievances were no longer collected at BJN-SYTF nor any other facility, as the GMS interface was no longer functional effective July 5, 2024. Since grievances were now submitted only on paper, all grievances were being scanned and stored in Microsoft Teams, which is a cloud-based software platform, and August 2024. Commissioners noted that there were approximately 95 grievances (based on a hand count) written by same young person in the month of July. Leadership reported that they spoke with this young person extensively to resolve these grievances and address his underlying issues and concerns. Leadership also described a conversation in which it was explained to the young person that while they are free to write grievances, false or embellished grievances take up time and other resources that could otherwise be spent improving conditions in the facility. It was reported and observed that grievances from this youth drastically decreased in the following month.

One Commissioner noted that most grievances reviewed were related to phones being shut off during programming periods. In these grievances, the young people described being upset as they adjusted to the new change. One grievance alleged physical abuse from a Probation Officer. This grievance did not appear to have any documentation about the incident, nor was there indication of meaningful follow-up, however it was still within the three-day review period. A commissioner inquired about this grievance, and facility leadership provided additional information, including discussing their review of video of the incident. The commissioner was also given an opportunity to speak with the young person who authored the grievance. It was noted that this grievance was not yet closed, thus additional documentation needed to be completed and attached. The commissioner was ensured by facility leadership that this grievance would be further examined. The commissioner noted that there were other grievances about this same Probation officer, which appeared to have been adequately addressed and resolved.

A commissioner noted review of a PREA related grievance that alleged a Probation officer made a young person uncomfortable when showering. The documentation said that young people in the unit were interviewed, and the investigation showed that the grievance appeared to be retaliatory against the officer. Staff who oversee the grievance process at BJN-SYTF explained that the PREA unit reviewed video footage and confirmed that the accused Probation officer was not working in the unit when the young people showered. The investigation happened within a three-day period, but the grievance remained open because Probation hadn't received an official closure letter needed to resolve the grievance.

Another grievance documented a young person's complaints of sustained breathing issues two days after experiencing a deployment of OC spray. The young person was referred to Juvenile Court Health Services (JCHS) for treatment and it was documented that the youth was issued medication to improve his condition and breathing. Other grievances reviewed included issues related to unfair school suspensions, collective





punishment, unfair treatment by a supervisor, request for new bedding, clothing-related requests, disputes around losing points for behavior, haircuts, programming, and change of Probation officer.

Grievance response rates ranged from one day up to one month for review, though they are meant to be resolved within three business days per policy. When the review period was exceeded, in a number of instances, email communication documented this as an issue (e.g., “We need a response on this because we are out of the appropriate response period”). One Commissioner explained that of twelve grievances reviewed, five were granted, four denied (e.g., youth wanted a bigger size of clothing and Probation felt they were too big for him), two remained in progress; and one was a mixed outcome, where part of the request was granted, and the other part denied.

It was observed that grievance procedures were scarcely posted throughout the facility, but young people explained in interviews that they knew how to file grievances and felt that the process was useful. One youth shared that he had filed grievances and they resulted in immediate action and resolution to his satisfaction.

### Discipline and Positive Behavior Reinforcement

It was reported that in July 2024, BJJN-SYTF launched a “task-oriented system” called Developmental Stage System (DSS)<sup>2</sup> as an alternative to Behavior Management Program (BMP), the formerly utilized positive behavior reinforcement program. It was reported that the model utilizes a series of eight stages which build upon each other to encourage prosocial behaviors and skill development, which also enable the “purchase” of material incentives that can be purchased with earned points at the canteen and earn youth intangible incentives such as becoming a unit ambassador, moving to the step-down unit, or being transferred to Campus Kilpatrick, where the DSS initially launched. It was reported that the program was changed in some ways from the way that it was planned and executed for Campus Kilpatrick where it was expected for youth to spend less time than they would likely spend at BJJN-SYTF. A core function of the system included an interactive journaling process. It was unclear if the program in any of its iterations was evidence based or had documented success without full implementation of its corresponding model, the Positive Youth Justice Model<sup>3</sup>, in other jurisdictions prior to its adoption.

It was reported that all youth and Probation officers received orientation to DSS twice during the roll out to encourage understanding. One officer who received DBT, DSS, and LA Model training previously reflected that they thought all the training was “good, but all staff need to buy into it to reinforce what the youth are learning.”

---

<sup>2</sup> Following the receipt of this report, BJJN-SYTF staff provided information clarifying that DSS is a mandate of the DOJ Settlement Agreement which has been in development for use within Probation’s facilities since 2019. It was also shared that DSS was developed at Campus Kilpatrick prior to its SYTF designation as part of the LA Model since it was meant to be used in a small group, collaborative, and community-based service delivery model. It was reported that at BJJN-SYTF, this model has integrated Credible Messengers and contracted Substance Abuse Service providers.

<sup>3</sup> [Positive Youth Justice Model Handbook](#)



It was unknown how Probation was planning to gather or share outcome data regarding the effectiveness of the system. There were no reported plans to fully implement the LA Model at BJN-SYTF, though leadership reported that on goal would be to have a small group model in the future with no more than five youth in any one unit, and no more than 10 youth in a building.

### Access to Medical and Mental Health Care

Upon arrival to the medical unit, there was no JCHS supervisor present at the facility, so Probation leadership provided a tour of the newly refurbished unit. At the time of inspection, there were no young people housed nor present in the medical unit. It was reported by Probation that the dental office was functional and that spaces for x-ray and optometry services were currently being worked on and would be functional soon. POC staff and commissioners were informed that a JCHS supervisor was in route to the facility after requesting to speak to them, and it remained unknown whether the absence of a JCHS supervisor was a common occurrence at the facility. JCHS scheduled hours were reported to have 3 shifts with a doctor on-site Mondays and Wednesdays. The BJN-SYTF medical team also had access to consult with Los Padrinos physicians on Tuesdays and Thursdays and have doctor on call after hours for additional consultation.

Department of Mental Health (DMH) leadership at the facility reported that their staffing was comprised of seven clinicians and three case managers. They reported that in order to increase the continuity of care since youth move through housing assignments within the facility, DMH no longer assigned clinicians to specific units. Clinicians are assigned a caseload and are expected to visit their clients wherever the youth is assigned. It was reported that clinicians are assigned to provide Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) groups in 16 week-cycles on specific units, which was rolled out in the weeks leading up to the inspection. Eventually the DBT groups were planned to expand to all units. It was reported that all other group psychotherapy services, including anger management, coping skills, mindfulness and other trauma focused groups had been put on pause until DBT groups are solidly established. There was no anticipated timeline shared for other services to resume. DMH leadership reported that they are leading the DBT groups with Credible messengers as co-facilitators, which was seen as a positive addition to the services by DMH. It was reported that Probation's participation and training in the DBT process was limited.

DMH reported that they participate in crisis intervention at the facilities by assigning a DMH officer of the day who calls the assigned clinician to respond to their assigned clients whenever possible. DMH also reported participation in Probation's Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), which is meant to exclusively provide verbal de-escalation during crises, however multiple reports from Probation conflicted with that report and it was repeatedly stated that DMH does not participate in the CIT or respond to crises in the facility but rather waits until after the youth is stable to speak with them.



DMH indicated that while family therapy is offered at BJN-SYTF, there were barriers to successfully conducting services because they would need to take place on a HIPAA compliant device and those have been made unavailable at the facility due to the ban on smart devices that are capable of carrying the appropriate software. It was also emphasized that “Youth sometimes want to do it and sometimes they don’t. Only a few are happening”. Creative solutions to engaging clients into family therapy processes or chosen support network were not offered at the time of the inspection. It was reported by Probation that six youth are participating in baby bonding programming and that others are fathers but not able or permitted to visit with their children.

### Agency Relationships

JCHS indicated that there were improvements in youth’s attendance at appointments, which they credited largely to helpful changes in Probation’s operations including advanced preparation of the young people, transportation improvements, and collaborative actions from facility leadership. It was reported that these changes influenced the development of “great communication” between JCHS and Probation over the last year.

Description of the relationship between Probation and DMH varied widely. DMH reported communication improvements with some continued room for improvement over the last year, but that sentiment was not shared by multiple Probation staff who indicated lapses in communication, including non-responsiveness and a perceived lack of transparency from DMH leadership. DMH shared that their clinicians have been consistent and that they are facilitating regular programs, while Probation shared concerns about programming cancellations, use of placeholders on the programming schedule, and limited DMH program offerings over the last year<sup>4</sup>. Probation employees interacting with DMH leadership at the facility expressed that professional relationships had deteriorated over the last two years, particularly when Probation began asking for more accountability from DMH in tracking and scheduling services.

DMH noted that as safety improved at the facility since the facility transitioned and stabilized housing only youth dispositioned to SYTF, there has been a sense that “everyone feels more comfortable” which allows clinicians to do their work with less disruption. DMH shared that Probation appeared to be more open to DBT groups and trauma-informed care in the last year. DMH reported: “We’ve always had great relationships with line staff,” which was validated by numerous Probation officers. Other Probation officers did express a desire to see DMH clinicians spend more time in the units, because they saw the clinician as a helpful presence. It was reported that clinicians facilitating groups checked in with Probation officers in the unit to gain understanding of the tone of the unit and any potential tensions they should be aware of before starting. DMH staff noted that they have regular contact with Probation’s officer of the day, who

---

<sup>4</sup> POC audits of programming at BJN-SYTF that occurred since the last Annual Inspection also found that group psychotherapy services to be provided by DMH were not occurring as scheduled according to Probation, DMH clinician, and youth reports.



lets them know of any updates with youth including movements, behavior issues with their assigned clients, and more.

Since the last inspection of BJN-SYTF, a contractor through the Department of Public Health-Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (DPH-SAPC) had ramped up services to provide individual and group substance abuse services to all of the units in the facility. This was a change from the previous inspection where this was a shared task with DMH. During interviews held throughout the day, young people, Probation officers, and Probation leadership alike expressed satisfaction with the change, increased presence on the units, and regularity of the services which helped to build rapport and relationships. There were some concerns expressed by Probation officers doubting the usefulness of substance abuse services overall, but this appeared to have little to do with the specific provider but rather a personally held opinion regarding young people who use drugs and cynicism about change.

There was report from LACOE that in the last several months prior to the inspection, there were lapses in communication and a slowing of progress around shared projects, including the planning and progress toward re-opening and move to the North School. LACOE attributed the slow down to abrupt changes in Probation leadership overseeing the facility. Multiple expressions were made by LACOE toward wanting increased understanding and knowledge of Probation's future plans and desire to be a helpful partner.

## Staffing

Remarkable improvements have been noted at BJN-SYTF, with intentional approaches that began prior to the 2023 Inspection and were noted in that report<sup>5</sup>. It was noted throughout the day in various interviews with facility leadership and multiple Probation officers working in the units that there was a science-backed, human development-focused understanding of the youth dispositioned to BJN-SYTF. Most Probation interviewees demonstrated some understanding of the effects of trauma on youth behavior and how that connects to the need for meaningful connections with trustworthy adults.

Many of the professionals at the facility called the youth "the kids" and made statements regarding their understanding that many of the youth may have an adult chronological age but missed critical childhood experiences that prevented expected maturation. Many facility employees interviewed assessed that spending multiple years in detention at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall had primarily impeded prosocial development in many of the youth, which was a core goal addressed with a high level of success at BJN-SYTF. There was a sense of professional pride expressed by officers in the way that they have been able to cultivate more safety at the facility through listening, consistently addressing youth needs, and using positive rapport coupled with verbal de-escalation tactics.

---

<sup>5</sup> [Probation Oversight Commission Annual Inspections: Campus Vernon Kilpatrick, Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall, and Camp Glenn Rocky](#)



Notably absent from interviews were oft heard narratives that blame youth for facility culture or confuses the need for accountability with a desire to inflict punishment. Statements were also made throughout the day by various professionals in the facility who took pride their cultivation of a managed, safer environment and lamented the chaos of the juvenile hall while reflecting that “These are the very same kids.” Numerous officers and other professionals in the facility regularly talked about youth in ways that highlighted how redeemable they were, praised those youth that had even small successes, and there was repeated emphasis on accountability and forgiveness when problems arise.

Facility leadership shared a strategy currently in place to continue their improvement in service delivery which included a “Leadership Self-Assessment”, where leadership shares their progress/highlights, and outstanding issues are discussed.

It was shared that much of the positive turnaround in the facility relates to the idea that professional culture creates safety, and “employees don’t come to work when it is unsafe”, but everyone wants to come (to work) here”. Facility leadership shared that employee morale depended on employees being able to see career paths within Probation and knowing that they were succeeding in their work as they observe positive behavior change in youth through the course of the program at BJN-SYTF. It was shared proudly that some deployed staff did not want to go back to their original assignment and wanted to remain at BJN-SYTF permanently.

When speaking with the young people, one young person shared that they were “happy with programs, staff are cool, and there is no reason for grievances.” Young people throughout the day expressed general dissatisfaction with being detained and some statements were made indicating continued opportunity for improvement including, “Some staff are disrespectful and will do things to agitate you, but others will try to help calm you down when you’re upset.” Various youth interviewed throughout the day had some positive things to say about Directors and various officers that directly supervise them in the living units. One youth reported, “I feel safe. Staff does what they need to do here. They listen and help you cope. This is better than LP [Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall].” One youth was observed referring to a Director as “Aunty” and youth were observed interacting with officers and directors alike with established positive rapport, with head nods, handshakes, asking for follow up on earlier discussions respectfully, and sometimes just saying “What’s up?”.

### Room Confinement

BJN-SYTF has a HOPE Center located in Unit Q which can serve as a permanent housing assignment and a short term cool down space. On the day of the inspection, no young people were observed in any cells in any living unit under room confinement and no one was in the Hope Center.



## Programming

Positive changes were observed in the planning, management, and quality of programming at BJN-SYTF since the prior inspection. Having a dedicated programming director at the facility has assisted with providing the young people with programming they want and coordinating events with co-located partners, including working with LACOE to host an Olympics event, and the College Fair observed on the day of the inspection. The programming director shared a planned strategy to encourage young people to participate in vital, albeit less popular, CORE programming, such as Substance Abuse and Seeking Safety, by linking it to Plus programming, which includes more popular music and sports programs that youth actively seek out. The plan included empowering youth to select programming they could commit to for a certain number of months almost replicating selection of classes for a semester of college. This individualized programming plan was reported with an expected launch date of November 2024.

The calendar was full and organized, indicating that programming occurred on every unit every day. The calendar also showed weekly availability of Protestant and Catholic chapel services and bible studies. Vocational programs were also available, which was also confirmed by young people. Probation officers and young people talked about there being an abundance of programs offered, and some of the favorites of young people included Jail Guitar Doors and Give a Beat which focus on music and writing, and Paws for Life which brings two dogs at a time to be cared for and trained in the step-down units before adoption. In contrast to previous years, there were programs offered weekly that specifically catering to young adults only, including “Criminal Gang Anonymous” which is a twelve-step program, and “Victim Impact”. It was reported that previous issues with calendar inaccuracies were resolved in large part by increasing the number of Substance Abuse services provided by the DPH-SAPC contracted provider and incorporating Department of Youth Development (DYD) contracted credible messengers to deliver Seeking Safety.

POC staff and commissioners observed and verified that scheduled programming occurred throughout the day, including a DMH Life Skills group, Seeking Safety, and art programs taking place in the morning for high school graduates. A Commissioner attempted to observe Healing Circle programming in the afternoon and noted that the Healing Circles provider was unable to get in due to miscommunication around their clearance. It was also observed that the scheduled afternoon session of Seeking Safety was delayed significantly because the young people were taken to the pool despite the schedule. Credible messengers expressed flexibility around the change.

All units at BJN-SYTF have access to credible messengers from two different agencies through DYD. As expressed above, credible messengers reported delivering various types of support to young people at BJN-SYTF, including Financial Literacy class, “Beyond Coping Skills” class, Seeking Safety, co-facilitation of DBT with DMH, and provision of specific curriculum on various topics like emotional regulation while visiting units. Credible messengers reported that they visit all units daily to provide support. Youth



interviewed reported varying levels of enthusiasm regarding the credible messengers, and the feedback overall was positive. Concerns were raised by multiple Probation officers regarding what one officer described as “signature gathering the whole unit” after interaction with few youth. Some officers interviewed described the services provided by credible messengers as having a positive impact while others casted doubt about whether the services had any impact.

It was shared that barber equipment had recently been procured by leadership at the facility after many month’s delay due to “red tape”. As it related to programming, it was also reported that the kitchen at BJN-SYTF was not set up for cooking classes since there are safety concerns due to equipment stored there.

### Harm Reduction

Interviews with Probation officers and youth during the inspection indicated that contraband continued to be a concern at BJN-SYTF since the last Annual Inspection. Interviews most often identified vape pens as common contraband, though people expressed continued concern regarding the possible entry of illicit pills containing fentanyl. Probation and LACOE alike reported some cases of youth allegedly under the influence of substances over the course of the last year, but both reported the perception of significant decreases in illicit drug use.

POC Commissioners and staff spoke with Probation officers regarding naloxone, a lifesaving opioid overdose reversal medication also called Narcan, and some officers shared that they carried Narcan regularly on their belt. Other officers reported that they would depend on the supply in the office area in the event of an emergency. It was observed that JCHS staff carried Narcan. DMH reported that while their staff was mostly trained on how to use Narcan, they did not carry it in the facility and did not readily have access to it, despite a January 2023 motion unanimously approved by the Board<sup>6</sup>. It was reported by Probation leadership and officers that youth in the facility did not have access to Narcan, despite a March 2023 motion unanimously approved by the Board to ensure this<sup>7</sup>.

Commissioners were informed that substance abuse and harm reduction focused programs included a variety of options available to youth available to youth for individual and group substance abuse services (See *Programming* for more information). It was reported by JCHS that substance abuse education was being provided by JCHS educators to Probation staff to increase awareness and decrease stigma.

Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) is available to young people at BJN-SYTF. Through interviews it was implied that the provision of MAT was an interagency coordination amongst JCHS and DMH psychiatry, with JCHS as the lead prescriber, to assess and

---

<sup>6</sup> January 10, 2023 [Motion: Saving Lives by Making NARCAN Readily Accessible in the County’s Juvenile Halls and Camps](#)

<sup>7</sup> March 7, 2023 [Motion: Addressing Illicit Substances and Contraband Entering the Los Angeles County Juvenile Halls](#)



offer the service to young people coping with opioid use and addiction. It was noted that the nurses had the data on the number of young people on MAT, and this number “remained stable from last year”. On the day of the inspection, four youth were receiving MAT.

### Oleoresin Capsicum Spray

BJN-SYTF continues to keep oleoresin capsicum spray (OC spray) available to all Probation officers as a use of force intervention. There is currently no phase out plan for the facility. Young people interviewed did not express significant concern regarding the use of OC spray at the facility, and officers and youth alike described use of the pepper spray as “rare”. One grievance related to a suspected breathing-related injury resulting from OC spray was reviewed during the inspection (see *Grievances*).