



San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department Proposed Log Cabin Ranch Program Enhancements

In the past year, JPD has worked to rebuild Log Cabin Ranch (LCR) into a viable and effective program for San Francisco youth. While in the past many efforts have been made to create a program that meets the strategies of multiple City departments, LCR has continued to struggle with a low census and inconsistent programming.

In December 2008, JPD established the LCR Planning Committee made up of representatives from the Courts, the Public Defender's Office, the District Attorney's Office, the Private Bar, DPH, and the School District to define the ideal program at LCR. Included in those discussions was a representative from the Missouri Youth Services Institute (MYSI) who was assessing LCR for a possible replication of the Missouri Model, the nationally recognized best practice for juvenile detention and camp facilities.

The LCR Planning Committee met on several occasions to define the LCR population and the programming needed to best serve that group of youth. Based on those meetings, the committee agreed that the current population at LCR is best served in that program environment, as follows:

Population Characteristics

Young men 16-18 Years of Age
High-level offense
Significant Failed Placement History
Risk to Public Safety
Failed Attempts in Rehab
Risk of Flight

Disqualifying Characteristics

Over 18 years/under 16 years
Extremely Violent
Sex Offenders
Level 14 or psychotic diagnosis

The Planning Committee also found that LCR was most in need of a variety of focused programming that supports the population described above. Recommendations include effective vocational education programming, re-entry and aftercare programming, family focused release plans, and individual living skills.

JPD has developed a series of program enhancements and revisions based on the recommendations of the LCR Planning Committee and MYSI. While some changes have already been made, JPD will begin formal implementation of its new programming during the 2009/2010 fiscal year. JPD has budgeted State Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG) funds for all program revisions, and has not requested any additional General Fund support for Log Cabin Ranch in the coming year.

Shifting from a culture of compliance to introspective group process

The core component of the MYSI approach is the shift in focus from a rule-based compliance model to one of self reflection and group process for residents. Currently, LCR staff operate from a perspective of custodial supervision, where rules and behaviors are the primary indicators of success. MYSI recommends an approach where introspective group meeting work is the primary criterion for release. The approach doesn't rely only on formal group interactions, but involves heightened levels of engagement from staff to youth in all activities, functions, and movement.

Although MYSI conducted an analysis independent from the LCR Planning Committee, the recommendations from the two entities were comparable:

- Small group size and exclusive group movement
- Unit based education
- Designated staff teams and group leaders
- A continuum of care, classification, and seamless case management
- A array of services
- Serving youth in the least restrictive environment
- Ample space for group meetings

JPD is working to implement these recommendations, as follows:

Small group size and exclusive group movement

MYSI recommends that all residents work in small groups of 10 to 12 youth to enhance communication, participation, and safety. Currently, all LCR residents reside in one large open dorm and spend the majority of daytime and evening hours together.

JPD will create unique schedules and living spaces for each groups established at LCR. Each group will participate in counseling, meals, and vocational and educational programming together and independently from other groups of residents.

JPD is working with DPW to make the necessary physical changes at the facility. The dorm for example, will be divided into two and eventually four separate living spaces. Each unit will house one group and will include a sleeping area, a dedicated space for group work, and a working area for staff. JPD anticipates that this work will be completed this summer.

Serving Youth in the Least Restrictive Environment/Ample Space for Group Meetings

Another core assumption of the Missouri Model is that youth are more successful in a nurturing and home like environment. A healthy, clean, warm, and organized surrounding is critical for a young person to understand a different vantage point or alternative point of view, especially if the child comes from a chaotic and stressful home.

As JPD continues in the renovation of the LCR dorm, it is upgrading the space to create a more inviting and healthy environment. A new heating and air conditioning system has been installed, the interior walls and ceiling have been painted, the old chipped and broken tile floors are being replaced with carpet, new lockers and desks have been ordered, as has new furniture to encourage group sessions such as comfortable couches, chairs, and tables. Once the upgrade to the dorm is complete, JPD will consider other upgrades to the cafeteria, to establish family style dinning for residents, and to renovate the now defunct wood shop to create a vocational training space that prepares youth for the demands of today's job market.

Unit based education

The Missouri approach also keeps groups together during the school hours. School teachers and the education system work in partnership to achieve the common goal of each youth's success. By keeping groups together during the school day, lessons learned in the prior evening's group session for example can be reinforced in the classroom. Teachers attend team meetings and are updated before class begins on any issues or conflicts with students so they are prepared to respond when those issues arise again during the school-day.

JPD is working with SFUSD to create a school schedule that is consistent with this request. Additional staffing is needed to comply with the recommendation and the District has tentatively agreed to add at least one teacher to the LCR School in the next school year.

Designated staff teams and group leaders

While it is likely the most costly recommendation, increasing the staffing ratio to 2 counselors for every group per shift will have a dramatic impact on the operations and effectiveness at LCR. Current staffing configurations, while compliant with State minimum staffing ratios, do not allow for meaningful interactions between counselors and youth. In addition, varying schedules make it difficult for groups to bond and residents to establish trusting relationships with counseling staff.

Because the census at LCR remains low, there isn't an immediate need for a significant increase in counseling staff. However, as the model is put into operation JPD expects that the population at LCR will grow, resulting in the eventual need to hire additional staff. JPD is working to develop the most cost-effective staffing schedule, as well as strategies to reallocate existing resources to meet the needs of the Ranch. In the mean time, JPD anticipates two possible new hires in the 2009/2010 fiscal year using State YOBBG funds.

A continuum of care, classification, and seamless case management

This recommendation, referring to the need for coordinated and comprehensive case management is critical. Specifically, the single most important issue to other system stakeholders such as the Courts, the Public Defender, the District Attorney, and the community in general is the enhancement of LCR's transition and aftercare planning for youth returning to the community. Transition planning and continued aftercare are crucial to a young person's success after returning to the community. JPD has given this recommendation considerable thought and has determined that such programming must serve as the foundation to the LCR program model. It is not a service that can be delegated to an outside provider for one or two hours a week; transition planning begins the moment a new resident arrives at LCR. The following changes will be implemented to ensure complete coordination and wrap-around planning for every youth residing at LCR:

Enhancement of the Probation Officer Role for LCR Youth

Currently, the Probation Officer assigned LCR works with those youth only for the duration of their stay at the facility. When returning to the community, youth can be assigned to a new Probation Officer. This practice disrupts the bond youth form with their Probation Officer during their time at the Ranch, and compromises a young person's ability to successfully transition back to their family and community.

With the implementation of the new program model, the Probation Officers assigned to LCR will work with youth from the time they arrive at LCR, after their release, and during their transition to the community. This is a significant shift from prior practice. LCR Probation Officers will serve as the youth's primary case managers, and will have to balance that role with the compliance and enforcement function they've traditionally held. LCR Probation Officers will also be expected to work closely with LCR counseling, program, and clinical staff, to ensure consistency in all interactions with youth. The Probation Staff assigned to LCR will participate in extensive training and coaching delivered by MYSI.

Additional Clinical Support

JPD has collaborated with DPH to assign an additional clinical social worker to LCR. The additional staff support will allow the clinicians at LCR to create individual clinical case plans for each youth. As opposed to the case plans developed by Probation Officers, the clinical staff are responsible for developing the therapeutic plan for each resident. Per the Missouri Model, the case plans will be critical in determining a youth's readiness for release, and will be reviewed and discussed in weekly team meetings to ensure consistency and continuity amongst all program staff. Costs associated with the additional position will be covered using State YOYG funds.

MST Step Down

DPH will introduce a Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) program that uses a "step-down" approach for youth preparing to transition back into the community. JPD is working with DPH to build on an existing work order with Seneca to provide these services. MST programming for system involved youth is an evidence based practice, with demonstrated success. YOYG funds have been budgeted fund this program.

An Array of Services

While JPD has always contracted with community service providers to offer additional programming at LCR, there lacked any consistency or greater purpose to the range of programs available to LCR youth. Beginning in the next fiscal year, JPD will work to create a series of program options that focus on vocational/education planning for sustainable employment in emerging markets, specifically green collar jobs as well as programming that provides opportunities to build life skills while learning about the environment.

San Francisco Conservation Corps- JPD will build on existing contracts the City holds with the San Francisco Conservation Corps (SFCC) to establish on-site project based learning opportunities for LCR youth. All projects will focus on the green sector and will use ongoing capital improvements or other resources available in the unique surroundings of LCR as learning opportunities for our youth. JPD is also working with the SFUSD so that classroom curriculum may compliment and reinforce the work of the SFCC.

Workforce development- Upon their release, LCR youth will transition to the RAMP program coordinated by the Office of Economic and Workforce Development. Through RAMP, LCR youth may continue to work with the SFCC or may choose another type of job experience. Release dates for LCR youth will be coordinated with the RAMP schedule to ensure a seamless transition and immediate engagement in the new program setting.

Kitchen Garden Project- JPD is working to create a kitchen garden for LCR. With the intent of replicating a model similar to the Edible School Yard, JPD is working to create learning opportunities for LCR residents that focus on organic growing, nutrition, and the preparation of healthy and good tasting food. JPD is working with Urban Sprouts to develop a program plan that challenges residents to take full responsibility for the garden, including its design, construction, and management. Planting is anticipated to begin this spring.

GED programming and On-line college courses- JPD now offers GED programming for LCR youth. In fact six youth residing at the ranch today obtained their GEDS while living at LCR, and are enrolled in on-line college courses. The SFUSD has agreed to add a Vocational Specialist in the coming school-year, dedicated to managing the on-line college program. JPD is also installing more computers at LCR with the intent of creating a dedicated workspace for residents after school hours.

Enhanced Library programming- JPD has been working with the SF Public Library to enhance the library program at LCR. A dedicated Librarian is now at LCR three days a week, and improvements to the space are underway.

JPD is working to develop an implementation schedule that will begin with intensive training for all LCR staff and managers in July 2009. MYSI has proposed an extended 180 hour training schedule, which includes coaching and observation to help staff to transition to the new program model. Because the census at LCR remains low, JPD expects that training can begin immediately, and the first “genesis” group will be formed immediately after the introductory training is completed. Attached is an estimated timeline for the implementation of the project initiatives described above.

As stated, the above changes will be funded primarily with California State YOBG funds, which have been allocated to JPD exclusively for the enhanced care and programming for youth who would have otherwise been sentenced to the Division of Juvenile Justice. JPD anticipates an ongoing annual appropriation of approximately \$1 million in YOBG funds, which will continue to support the efforts described above. In addition, the Department has a small reserve of YOBG funding dedicated to one-time expenditures, such as the LCR dorm renovation.

The enhancements planned for the coming year are critical to transforming Log Cabin Ranch into a model program for San Francisco’s most vulnerable population. However, it should be noted that this is only the first phase of a long commitment to LCR. As the program gains momentum and success, expansion will be necessary to meet the needs of the many young people in San Francisco who deserve an opportunity to succeed.

While the costs associated with these changes are high in the short term, as with any investment, this commitment to San Francisco’s highest risk youth will soon lead to substantial savings for the City and will change hundreds of lives.