

1978-79 Grand
Jury

RECOMMENDATION 13 : The Grand Jury recommends that the Joint Interagency Council expand its services provided by the Guidance Clinic to assure fully adequate diagnostic evaluation, consultation, and treatment of juvenile offenders.

About 35 to 40 per cent of serious crime in Oakland is committed by persons under 18 years of age. The Youth Services Division of the Oakland Police Department reports that Oakland has one of the highest delinquency rates in California. About 30% of truants are arrested for criminal acts. About 60% of juvenile incorrigibles are female. The problems thus highlighted are compelling.

An analysis or evaluation of the juvenile offender is needed by the court to assist in the initial hearing and/or for an appropriate disposition of the case. Proper evaluation may also be required or desired for other reasons that can bear heavily on future health or rehabilitation treatment. There have been in the past or are currently available, at least four sources of diagnostic examination and evaluation:

1. The Diagnostic Clinic previously associated with the Alameda County Juvenile Hall facilities.
2. A somewhat similar source of analysis and report from the California Youth Authority.
3. Psychiatric evaluation from private practitioners under contract.
4. The Guidance Clinic now associated with Juvenile Hall.

As the Grand Jury studied the usefulness and quality of reports from these sources, it was met with a spectrum of differences of opinion by those who solicited or used the reports. There was also little consensus as to the relative value of the reports in relation to substantial cost differences. The Diagnostic Clinic which had been administratively under Las Vistas was terminated after the passage of Proposition 13, as was Las Vistas. Its costs were about \$3,100 per client for approximately a 90-day study, and it also provided treatment of clients.

The diagnostic reports from CYA cost about \$1,500 per juvenile for a three-month study, but did not include any significant treatment. One school of thought said that the CYA study produced little beyond the Probation Department report that accompanied the juvenile in his assignment to CYA, while the case was continued pending the report. Others considered the results more cost effective than the Alameda County Diagnostic Clinic, and fully adequate for all needs. The contract with CYA for detainees from this county was terminated in 1972, but could still be reactivated if desired. The original reason for establishing a local diagnostic clinic was dissatisfaction with the CYA reports.

The most costly of the four sources listed, in dollars per referral, was evaluation by an outside private practitioner. The Court Administrator's office gave an approximate annual expenditure of \$45,000, with an estimate that about one-fourth of the figure was for juveniles. Although the reports received from outside practitioners were considered adequate for most purposes, their high cost makes them impractical except in the most extreme cases.

The current Guidance Clinic, with offices in Juvenile Hall, is a short-term low-cost service with a projected budget of \$353,000 for FY 1979-80. The approximate cost per client is substantially less than the other alternatives and the resulting reports

have been adequate in most instances. The cost per juvenile varied. The average number of hours consumed for each juvenile studies varied from around 5 to 7 or 8, again depending upon the source of the inquiry, et al. The cost per study was described to the Grand Jury as about \$180 to \$200.

The questions resulting from the Grand Jury's inquiries concern how best to provide the diagnostic and treatment services so clearly needed within the currently strained budget. From the above summary it can be seen that the diagnostic needs of the Alameda County juvenile facilities can best be handled by the presently established Guidance Clinic so that clients referred to it for evaluation can receive needed treatment in the same centralized facility. Greater success with efforts at rehabilitation insist on better and more extensive treatment services than are now in practice.

RECOMMENDATION 14 : The Grand Jury recommends that the Alameda County Board of Supervisors request an in-depth study of the ongoing operation of the Guidance Clinic and how it may provide better service to the courts and referring agencies as the Joint Interagency Council matures.

In January 1979, the Interagency Council, comprising Probation, Social Services, and Mental Health Services, was given the responsibility of overseeing the operations of the Guidance Clinic. It is anticipated that this change in procedure will increase and diversify the case load at the clinic, resulting in the above recommendation. This study might best be done by a joint subcommittee from the Juvenile Justice Commission, the Delinquency Prevention Commission, the Probation Dept., the Mental Health Advisory Board, and the Juvenile Court.

This recommended study by representatives of existing relevant commissions and boards does not suggest a new level of bureaucracy nor additional expense to the county. It is asking the Board of Supervisors to request existing groups to undertake a valuable investigation to help clarify a complex problem.

RECOMMENDATION 15 : The Grand Jury recommends that a unit similar to Las Vistas should be reopened to provide a county facility to accommodate delinquent or disturbed girls who are not or cannot be detained in Juvenile Hall but need interim placement during evaluation and initial treatment.

This recommendation reflects a desperate need in our county. With the closing of Las Vistas in 1978, the only remaining disposition choices for juvenile girls by the courts are release on probation, CYA, foster home, or the home from which they came. In many cases, none of these alternatives is appropriate whereas a Las Vistas type of facility would be. Since the physical plant is still available, it should be put to use.

In 1959, the County Probation Department determined there was a need for an institution in the county that could accommodate girls whom the court did not wish to send to the CYA or simply return to their home environment on probation. To fill this need, Las Vistas was established.

Today, figures from the Oakland Police Department show that juvenile female involvement with the police has risen from a total crime rate of 13% in 1965-68 to 21% in the 1975-78 period. Most of these crimes involve theft.

Las Vistas, which would provide a custodial atmosphere with mandatory education, but without the criminal atmosphere which pervades the CYA, would fill the gap. A county home with approximately 10 to 15 beds available for juvenile females in

need of counseling, guidance, and a mandatory education program, is essential.

Such a residential program could easily tie in with the county's program for boys at Chabot Ranch, at an estimated cost of \$290,000 per year, based on Probation Department figures for Las Vistas.

RECOMMENDATION 16 : The Grand Jury recommends that a higher percentage of Alameda County juvenile criminal offenders be placed by the court in custodial institutions. The youth will receive constant supervision and guidance, along with a consistent education program.

Statistics from the Oakland Police Department show that approximately 35 to 40% of all serious crimes are committed by juvenile offenders under 18. These crimes include battery, assault with a deadly weapon, robbery and murder.

Although it is the philosophy of California law that juvenile status offenders should not be institutionalized, repeat juvenile offenders who do commit crimes against society should not be released back into the same environment from which they came. In 1977 and 1978, of a total of 11,361 juvenile criminal cases (602s) heard in Juvenile Court in this county, 15.9% were committed to a custodial environment. Only 3% were sent to the California Youth Authority.

The Criminal Justice Committee of this Grand Jury has spent many hours in study and investigation of juvenile crime in the County. Juvenile holding facilities, camps, group homes, and guidance facilities have been visited. Judges, police officers, probation officers and directors of institutions have been interviewed.

Although Alameda County has many beneficial programs geared to helping youths adjust to the society in which they live, it is the feeling of this Grand Jury that many youthful offenders would benefit greatly by being removed from society and placed in a structured environment. We strongly urge the juvenile courts of this county to take a stronger stand against the juvenile offenders, with the hope that this would act as a deterrent in keeping the youth from following a life of crime and would serve to protect innocent persons from becoming victims of additional acts of violence.