

1991-92 Grand Jury

Juvenile Probation

The Juvenile Probation department in the 1990-91 fiscal year had a reduction of 38 positions (full time equivalent) from the previous year. An additional budgetary reduction of 60 positions took place in 1991-92.

Analysis:

Since fiscal year 1978-79 the budget for Alameda County has increased from \$341,711,647 to \$1,075,985,043 in 1992-93, a 300% increase, inclusive in this number is the Probation departments budget which increased from \$18,900,000 in 1978-79 to \$34,800,000 in 1991-92, an 84% increase. During the same period other departments in the county have seen their budgets double and even triple. As examples the Public Defender's budget has increased 150%, the District Attorney's budget has increased 165%, and the Sheriff's Budget has increased 237%.

In 1991 cuts in the Probation Department included 65 camp beds, 50 beds in the detention area of the Probation courts. The cuts meant that the juvenile court which had 185 camp beds for the year 1991 were reduced to 60 beds county wide. The closure of Chabot Camp resulted in an elimination of beds for girls.

Findings and Recommendations:

1. The same offender population that drives the need for additional resources in the Sheriff's , District Attorney's and Public Defender's Office, also drives Probation's need for additional resources.

Recommendation #92-33: That services by the Probation Department be given equal funding priority with other public protection departments.

2. During calendar year 1991, 6,783 minors were placed in custody to the Juvenile Hall of the Probation Department. There were 5,909 boys and 874 girls who remained in Juvenile Hall an average of 17.7 days. Article 4, Personnel Section 4279(b) of the State Standard for the California Youth Authority mandates one staff person for every ten minors in confinement. To reduce funds for staffing at the Juvenile Hall is to put the Alameda County Juvenile Department automatically in violation of these minimum state standards.

The Probation Department has fewer beds than two decades ago, yet today more serious offenses are committed by more juveniles. Since December of 1991 there have been members from over 80 different gangs incarcerated in the Alameda County Juvenile Hall.

Recommendation #92-34: That Juvenile Hall's present capacity of 306 minors be retained.

3. Adoption of the 1990-91 budget resulted in reducing the number of camp beds for boys and the closure of 16 camp beds for girls at Chabot Camp. Since that closure, Alameda County has been unable to provide 24-hour residential camp programming for delinquent girls. This unequal treatment of female delinquents must not continue. Greater effort must be applied to the need for the rehabilitation of delinquent girls. Because of the drastic cuts during the last two years, the Probation Department cannot reinstate the female camp program with existing appropriations.

Recommendation #92-35: That alternative methods be sought, including additional funding, to establish the girls residential rehabilitation program.

4. The Week-End Training Academy requires delinquent minors to work under the supervision of Probation department personnel on weekends in lieu of incarceration. This cost-effective alternative program which holds minors accountable and teaches job skills has

been reduced by 57%. Schools and other nonprofit organizations have witnessed the extraordinary good that can be accomplished by WETA crews. Recent County cuts have denied Juvenile court viable options to confinement.

Recommendation #92-36: That appropriations be made to restore the Week-End Training Academy to full strength.

5. Since 1972 the Alameda County Probation Department has lost 127 bed spaces for juveniles; 56 at Las Vitas, 69 at Chabot and 2 at the Probation Center. The 1992-93 budget threatens the elimination of additional beds at the Probation Center (400 Broadway) and at Los Cerros Camp. The closure of the Probation Center as a booking/receiving facility means all bookings would occur at Juvenile Hall, San Leandro. This change would have an adverse fiscal impact on all North County Police Departments causing increased expenses in travel and officer down time.

Recommendation #92-37: That detention and commitment beds administered by Probation be given priority for retention and that funds be appropriated for the full operation of Chabot Camp.

6. The County's Value-Based Budgeting policy gives priority to vulnerable populations such as children and to public safety through prevention and control of crime and delinquency and to alternatives to incarceration. The Field Supervision function of the Probation Department's Juvenile Division qualifies to be given priority for funding. Case loads are presently approximately 90 per deputy which is well beyond a longstanding "yardstick" of 54. Budget reductions which would force the "computer banking" of juvenile cases would be inconsistent with the county's recently adopted policy on Value-Based Budgeting.

Recommendation #92-38: That sufficient funding be provided the Probation Department to demonstrate and reinforce the Board's recognition of the need for supervision of juveniles as a priority.