



May 8, 2009

Honorable Darrell Steinberg  
Senate President pro Tem  
California State Senate,  
State Capitol, Room 205  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Steinberg:

I want to thank you for your comments at my confirmation hearing on April 15, 2009. I am always interested in concerns and feedback relating to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. One of your questions that I was asked on the 15th was why the Preston Youth Correctional Facility (Preston) only had nine wards enrolled in its Substance Abuse Treatment Program (SATP). I had my inspectors research this issue and can now fully answer your question.

Preston provides the only SATP for the Division of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ) northern region's 18 and older ward population. The reason Preston only had nine participants in its SATP at the time of your inquiry was because the SATP had only been in operation at Preston since March 2009. The first group of nine wards started the curriculum on March 2, 2009, and the second group started the week of April 13. The 180-day program is designed so that groups of nine wards are staggered into the program every six weeks until a maximum capacity of 36 participants is reached. Each group will be in a different phase of the curriculum once the program is filled.

The DeWitt Nelson Youth Correctional Facility (DWN) previously operated the SATP until its closure in July 2008. When we asked DJJ officials why they waited until March 2009 to reestablish the program at Preston, an official told us that some of the counselors from the DWN program did not transfer to Preston, therefore time was needed to select and train new counselors and funding needed to be identified. The training was completed in January 2009.

The employee staffing for the program is based on the SATP Institutional Therapeutic Community Model and includes both custodial and treatment staff for the 36 person living unit. At the time my inspectors visited Preston on April 20, 2009, there were a total of 18.5 program employees: one program administrator, one treatment team supervisor, one senior youth correctional counselor, five substance abuse treatment youth correctional counselors, seven therapeutic community counselors (youth correctional counselors), a half-time psychologist, two case managers (youth correctional counselors), and one parole agent.

There are three other SATPs for wards throughout the state—34 budgeted slots at the O.H. Close Youth Correctional Facility which serves the under 18 population in the northern region, 72 budgeted slots at the Heman G. Stark Youth Correctional Facility which serves the 18 and older population in the south, and 34 budgeted SATP slots at the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility to serve DJJ's female population. In total, there are 176 budgeted SATP slots at the four DJJ locations.

Wards are placed into the SATP after DJJ considers several factors. One of the factors used to identify wards needing treatment is a substance abuse assessment questionnaire taken at the time they enter a DJJ facility. The ward's score on that questionnaire will dictate whether he/she is identified as needing treatment. Another factor is the ward's parole date. The ward needs to be within six to ten months of his/her parole date. Yet another factor is the ward's disciplinary record for the 60 days prior to admittance into the program. Wards must not have had any serious behavior reports such as those that involve violence, weapons, or threats. However, serious behavior reports related to substance abuse offenses do not bar a ward's admission into the program. Wards needing substance abuse treatment but who are already assigned to a mental health treatment program are considered only after an agreement is reached by the ward's current treatment team and the SATP team. Further, because the SATP is based on a therapeutic community model, the wards are housed in the same living unit and must voluntarily accept admittance into the program and sign and accept gang neutrality and other group rules.

In the course of their research, my inspectors identified the following problems that could potentially reduce the effectiveness of the SATP:

- Employee continuity. Youth Correctional Counselors are entitled to move to other shifts and assignments may change through the "bidding" process provided in their bargaining unit agreement. This practice may result in significant counselor turnover within the program and negatively impact participants' progress.
- Not fully a "therapeutic community." The SATP participants must still leave the program to obtain their education classes. When they leave, the "therapeutic community" is interrupted and the participants are subject to the peer pressure and negative influences in the general ward population. (One possible solution would be to provide education programming inside the SATP living unit. This solution would likely result in increase costs for additional teachers.)
- Less than optimal timing with the ward's parole date. If a participant completes the SATP several months prior to parole, he/she likely would be transferred to another living unit which may counteract any benefits received during the program. The SATP was designed as a gate program, meaning that the intent is for participants to complete the program just prior to parole so that they can use their newly developed skills as they transition back into the community. (Possible solutions would be to better coordinate the SATP with the ward's parole date or allow the wards to stay in the SATP until their parole date.)
- Admission factors may be too limiting. It appears that some wards will not receive any formal substance abuse treatment under the current DJJ treatment model and eligibility

factors. According to DJJ's *Farrell Remedial Plans and L.H. Class Action Lawsuit Legislative Briefing (February 2009)*, 58 percent of the wards housed by DJJ are in need of substance abuse treatment services. Yet, it appears that a much smaller percentage of wards actually qualify for admission into the SATP, because of the various admission factors noted above.

- Success may be jeopardized by limited availability of continued treatment for participants upon parole (aftercare). There are only limited aftercare resources available for the participants who complete the program and then parole. For adults, research shows that recidivism reduction requires aftercare. If this holds true for wards, the lack of aftercare may hinder the participant's successful reintegration into the community. (One possible solution is to obtain funding to develop and make available more aftercare services.)
- There is no SATP for parole violators. The DJJ used to have a 120-day SATP specifically for parole violators but that program was eliminated at the time of the DeWitt Nelson Youth Correctional Facility closure in July 2008.

Given the number of potential problems identified, my office plans to conduct additional inquiries into the effectiveness and utilization of the substance abuse treatment programs at the DJJ facilities statewide.

Again, I thank you for raising to my attention the issues that concern you most. If you have any other questions or concerns, please call me at (916) 830-3600.

Sincerely,



David R. Shaw  
Inspector General

cc: Jenny Oropeza, Senator, Senate Rules Committee, California State Senate  
Sam Aanestad, Senator, Senate Rules Committee, California State Senate  
Robert Dutton, Senator, Senate Rules Committee, California State Senate  
Gilbert Cedillo, Senator, Senate Rules Committee, California State Senate  
Nettie Sabelhaus, Appointments Director, Senate Rules Committee, California State Senate  
Matthew L. Cate, Secretary, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation  
Bernard Warner, Chief Deputy Secretary, Division of Juvenile Justice