

COMMUNITY TRANSITION CENTER ANSWERING THE REALIGNMENT CHALLENGE

SUMMARY

In November 2011, the State of California enacted the Public Safety Realignment Act (AB 109) to alleviate prison overcrowding, reduce recidivism among low-level inmates, and reduce costs for the state. In compliance with AB109 counties throughout the state have to receive and provide supervision for individuals previously under the supervision of state parole officers. Essential elements for the success of AB109 are programming and therapies aimed at behavior modification.

The Community Transition Center (CTC) was established by the San Diego County Probation Department in conjunction with the county criminal justice and social service agencies, to comply with AB 109. The San Diego County Probation Department began operating CTC in January 2013.

Each county in California has been tasked with addressing the requirements of realignment. However; there are three things which make the San Diego County CTC model unique:

- 1) Inmates are transported directly from prisons to CTC
- 2) Short-term transitional housing is available onsite
- 3) Each inmate is assessed immediately and linked to services and therapeutic services.

According to CTC staff, these three elements do not exist in any other California county reentry program. Since its inception in 2013, CTC has processed 10,238 inmates. Of this number, 880 committed probation violations and were returned to the CTC for further treatment in lieu of going back to county jail. Returning these 880 to the CTC program saved an estimated 6,160 jail days resulting in fiscal benefits to the county.

The 2017/2018 San Diego County Grand Jury commends the CTC for its work with newly-released inmates who are transitioning into local communities.

PROCEDURES

The Grand Jury toured the Community Transition Center and spoke with probation officers, mental health and substance abuse-treatment staff, and a few residents of the facility.

DISCUSSION

AB 109 was enacted to reduce the state prison population by sending inmates convicted of non-serious, non-violent, non-sexual offenses back to their home counties. The introduction of felons into local probation and detention facilities created the need for reentry programs. In response to this demand the San Diego County Community Corrections Partnership Intervention and Supervision Services Workgroup developed the CTC.

In the Old Town district of San Diego CTC shares a renovated motel with the Lighthouse residential substance-abuse treatment program. Lighthouse provides alcohol and drug treatment

services as well as around-the-clock custodial supervision. After pre-release planning in state prison inmates are transported directly to CTC by the probation department. The San Diego County Probation Department is the lead agency for a multidisciplinary team (MDT). The MDT includes a healthcare-delivery service, licensed mental health clinicians, a case-manager nurse, two Medi-Cal application advisors and probation officers.

Once transported to the CTC, offenders are tested for current substance use and are assessed for potential criminal activity, substance abuse, and mental-health issues. Offenders in transitional housing at CTC receive early intervention services which may include:

- Alcohol and Drug education
- Cognitive behavioral interventions
- Relapse-prevention training
- Conflict resolution
- Parenting skills
- Life skills

All offenders are accompanied in and out of the facility. They are not permitted to go anywhere unescorted. Most of the offenders are released in a couple of days. For offenders who lack immediate housing there are up to 60 beds available.

Probation develops a Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS) plan with input from the MDT and the offender. Plans are linked to the needs of the offender.

The CTC has staff on duty 24 hours a day to provide security, programs, and daily schedules. Probation staff and the behavioral-health service team are on site seven days a week during regular business hours to conduct assessments, pre-release screenings, develop case plans, and provide links to appropriate services.

CTC is a means by which newly-released offenders are screened, assessed, and integrated into the community, thereby reducing the need for beds in the frequently overcrowded Sheriff's detention facilities.

During the Grand Jury visit, MDT staff displayed compassion and dedication. After a comprehensive assessment of their needs, most offenders are released into the community the day they are released from prison. The CTC residential program maintains safety and order. Violation of CTC policies or rules results in swift and sure consequences. The CTC partners with Second Chance and the Center for Employment Opportunities to provide job-readiness training. Medical team members check in with the offenders on a daily basis and the MDT team acts as an advocate for its clients. A probation officer supervises offenders and follows them through their reentry transition and throughout their post-release case plan.

Commendation

The 2017/2018 San Diego County Grand Jury commends the Community Transition Center for the important work it is doing in addressing the basic intent of AB 109. Further, the Jury

commends the San Diego County Probation Department for developing the CTC model, and the CTC Probation Officers and their multiagency partners for rising to the challenge of realignment with purpose and dedication.

The Grand Jury supports the San Diego County Probation Department in its practice of providing behavior modification through therapeutic and intervention programs.