

SPECIAL REPORT

Assessing the Enhanced Ranch Program of the Santa Clara County Probation Department

Isami Arifuku
Antoinette Davis
Dana Linda

Introduction

In 2006, the Santa Clara County Probation Department (SCCPD) changed its approach to serving youth in two of its juvenile justice programs—the William F. James Boys' Ranch and the Muriel Wright Center. The overarching objectives of the change were to provide specific therapeutic services to youth and families while maintaining a commitment to public safety. The new cognitive-behavioral model marks a vastly different structure and philosophy, patterned after the evidence-based program developed by the Missouri Division of Youth Services. The new model, entitled the Enhanced Ranch Program, targets youth heavily entrenched in the juvenile justice system and emphasizes positive, peer-based group interactions and a holistic approach to developing individual case plans. Specially trained teams of staff work with small groups of youth offenders. Teams function as therapeutic units that share the daily

activities of life with youth and focus on their critical thinking, personal development, and group processes.

The Enhanced Ranch Program serves high-risk, high-need youth with gang affiliations, substance abuse issues, and significant criminal histories. This model was designed to improve outcomes for youth with extensive criminal histories by ensuring that they receive the most appropriate and purposeful services. The primary focus is to help youth internalize healthy behavior that will help them succeed.

In November, 2008, Santa Clara County Chief Probation Officer Sheila Mitchell, commissioned NCCD to evaluate the implementation of the Enhanced Ranch Program. In large part, this report presents the findings of a process evaluation—an analysis of the specific structure and practice instituted by the County. It also presents some preliminary outcomes for youth.

Needs and Goals

The County changed its approach in part due to a 40% failure rate among wards in the ranches, a high number of incidents at the ranches, the feeling that the old Ranch Program did not promote the growth of detained youth, and a high recidivism rate. The issues faced by SCCPD were not atypical. In fact, their 60% success rate was better than what many juvenile probation departments in the US could claim. To move forward, the County assigned study groups in 2003-04 to explore model programs, sent a 20-person delegation to visit the Missouri program, and then approved \$3.2 million to implement the model.

Outcomes sought by SCCPD were to improve successes and lower recidivism rates. Enhanced Ranch programming focused on developing the following:

- Critical thinking and reasoning skills, independent living skills, and self control.
- Anger management and conflict resolution abilities, skills to avoid drugs and gang intervention, communication and decision-making skills, and anti-criminal thinking patterns.
- Individual understanding and maturity to effectively utilize drug, alcohol, and relapse prevention counseling.
- Enhanced reading, writing, math, health, and science skills, with the intention to increase academic performance by one to two grade levels during confinement.
- Vocational skills to help youth obtain an apprenticeship or entry-level employment in construction, auto mechanics, welding, landscaping, horticulture, and computers.
- Family reunification skills.

To administer this program, SCCPD collaborated with a variety of agencies, including the County Office of Education, public health departments, local community-based organizations, and trade unions.

Methods

Researchers collected a variety of data through site visits, interviews, document review, and focus groups with committed youth. Subjects of NCCD's interviews included residents of the ranches; the Chief Probation Officer and Deputy Chief of Santa Clara County; managers, supervisors, and counselors from James Ranch and the Wright Center; representatives from the courts, Board of Supervisors, District Attorney's and Public Defender's offices; and individuals representing the community-based organizations that provide services to youth at both facilities. In addition, an extract of probation data was obtained and analyzed to compare the Enhanced Ranch Program to the former Ranch Program it replaced.

NCCD assessed the overall operation of the Enhanced Ranch Program as of March, 2009, documented SCCPD's fidelity to the new model, and gauged the extent to which the program was operating as intended. Specific assessments included:

- The distinctions between the Enhanced Ranch Program and the Missouri Model.
- Whether the target population was being served.
- Whether the youth were participating in the prescribed programs and services.
- Whether program goals were well defined and understood by relevant parties.
- Whether the established program goals and objectives were being met.
- Other changes that resulted from the implementation of the Enhanced Ranch Program.

An analytical model with five components—context, goals, identification, intervention, and linkages—structured the collection and analysis of data. NCCD researchers assessed the levels of consistency among these components.

Context

The Missouri model was the program of choice for the County. Its implementation was shaped by many contingencies, organizational issues, and external forces, as well as by explicit policy and program changes encouraged by the Board of Supervisors, planning committees, SCCPD, community-based organizations, and others.

Background

Between 2003 and 2006, Santa Clara County and its community partners engaged in Juvenile Detention Reform through a working partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the main goals of which were to reduce unnecessary youth incarceration and the disproportionate numbers of youth of color in the system. Key strategies were to base decisions on relevant data and to encourage partnerships among juvenile justice agencies, community-based organizations, and other governmental groups. By assessing data collection methods and the effectiveness of rehabilitation services, SCCPD recognized some of its accomplishments. Services to meet the basic needs of youth were in place at the facilities, as were a variety of programs oriented around personal growth, including vocational training, drug treatment, and AA. However, programming did not produce significant growth in youth. While incarcerated and after release, youth displayed the same destructive behavioral patterns that led them into the system; they routinely admitted to “doing their time” but not making changes. Indeed, the Ranch population showed high rates of recidivism, failures, and behavioral incidents.

We used to say that 4 out of 10 youth were failing our program, but we had to kind of shift that focus because it really was our program—the way it was designed—that was actually failing 4 out of 10 youth.

*Sheila Mitchell, Chief Probation Officer,
Santa Clara County*

Goals

to determine the effectiveness of the Enhanced Ranch Program, the process evaluation explored the extent to which program goals were clearly formulated, were shared and understood by relevant players, and were capable of objective assessment.

We were proud of some of the good things that we were doing out there [at the ranches] but we felt that maybe it wasn't enough, and maybe we needed to look at another model.

Deputy Chief Kathy Duque

SCCPD's primary goal for the Enhanced Ranch Program was to help youth identify and replace pro-criminal thinking and behavior with those that are prosocial, through active participation and successful completion of rehabilitative programming.

The program design was developed to provide:

- An appropriate assessment and re-assessment of youths' risks and needs.
- A behavior management program based on cognitive change.
- Comprehensive aftercare supervision and aftercare services as youth transitioned back to their homes and communities.

The Department also expected:

- A decrease in rule violations, fights, escapes, and other criminal behaviors inside and outside of institutions.
- An increase in impulse control and problem-solving skills among youth.
- Reductions in the severity of offenses and readmissions to facilities.

Identification

Criteria for admission to the Enhanced Ranch program were clearly defined. This program was geared toward youth with significant criminal histories for whom other alternatives had been tried and for whom they had failed, including community-based rehabilitation programs. These youth could have had multiple felony or misdemeanor offenses and must have been appropriate for an open housing setting. The program did not accept youth with serious sex offenses, those with a history of severe violence, or those who required residential treatment for high-level mental health problems or drug or alcohol addictions.

Also, youth needed to have a family member who could participate in the program. Managers from the County's Juvenile Probation Services Department served as gatekeepers who reviewed each case before the recommendation for placement went to the judge. The advising probation officer had to justify the recommendation.

According to interviewees, the screening process helped to ensure that the correct youth—those with high-risk and high-need levels—were admitted to the program. Screening also helped the County reduce the wait time among applicants. In fact, the County admitted many of the high-risk offenders who would have been confined to the California Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) prior to SB 81 legislation.

One of the things about the old program is that staff were the boundaries, so when they weren't around or when the youth left the Ranch, their boundaries remained behind. With this program, our minors are able to internalize their own boundaries and do the right thing because it's the right thing to do, not because they are avoiding punishment—I think this is critical.

Mike Simms, James Ranch Manager

Intervention

The Enhanced Ranch Program was designed to be holistic and therapeutic—concentrating on proactive models of rehabilitation rather than reactive models of correction. The services are intended to promote prosocial skills, critical thinking, self control, anti-criminal thought patterns, and positive relationships. Clear-cut rules and structure helped youth internalize their own boundaries.

Community and interagency partnerships enhanced the delivery of services to affiliated youth and families. However, youth relationships with staff were the most vital component. Line staff engaged and developed one-on-one relationships with youth in their care. The small

staff-to-youth ratios and cognitive program modality facilitated these relationships and processes.

Implementation of the Core Program Elements

Eleven interlocking and complementary core elements framed Santa Clara County's Enhanced Ranch Program:

1. Staff development and coaching
2. Treatment
3. Family atmosphere
4. Group process
5. Small staff-to-youth ratios
6. Family participation
7. Personal enhancement opportunities
8. Extended lengths of stay for youth
9. Relationship building
10. Education
11. Aftercare programs

The following table summarizes some of the key differences between the corrections emphasis of the previous Ranch Program and the rehabilitation emphasis of the Enhanced Ranch Program.

Table 1: Correction vs. Rehabilitation Model

Correction Model	Rehabilitation Model
Locked facility with external controls	→ Open facility with only those controls necessary to ensure public safety
Limited services	→ Continuum of services
Relationship between staff and youth is limited or often nonexistent	→ Staff relationship with youth is encouraged and expected
Staff are correctional or institutional officers	→ Staff are counselors
Family and community are often seen as the problem	→ Family and community are considered partners and part of the solution
Program has many rules and regulations	→ Program has rules, regulations, and structure
Program staff force youth to comply and follow rules and regulations	→ Program staff help youth internalize their own boundaries
Rules and boundaries are reinforced by staff	→ Rules and boundaries are reinforced by youth and peers
Result is behavior compliance	→ Result is cognitive change and development
A youth's behavior improves because of correctional structure, restrictions, and limitations	→ A youth's behavior improves because of internalized boundaries and cognitive change

1. Staff Development and Coaching

SCCPD managers saw utility in the programming and expected all of their staff to follow the program modules. Even the well educated staff of SCCPD benefitted from the standard 96 hours of intensive classroom instruction in the Cognitive Based Treatment (CBT) model, followed by on-site coaching and mentoring by Missouri Youth Services Institute (MYSI) staff. The latter component proved to be essential. Further, SCCPD staff were trained how to train other staff.

2. Treatment

All youth were assessed within three weeks of entering a ranch facility. The Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)—probation counselors, mental health staff, substance abuse counselors, school counselors, parents, and youth—evaluated relevant case information and developed the treatment plan. Adherence by youth to the treatment plan was mandatory. Treatment included substance abuse counseling and individual and family therapy.

All of our ranch counselors are highly skilled and have college degrees. Most became counselors for the simple fact that they wanted to make a difference in the lives of youth. This new program model will empower them to make that difference. The program will allow them to put their education and training to use—it will allow them to provide programming that can change the life direction of our youth, which in turn will change their lives.

Deputy Duke

3. Family Atmosphere

Treatment pods for 10 to 12 youth created a smaller, personalized living space and supported the level of privacy and safety that is considered ideal for group interaction. Each pod had a central meeting area furnished like a large family room, with carpeting, soft furniture, and artwork done by the youth.

4. Group Process

The group process and counseling supported the personal development of each youth. Youth were encouraged to actively talk out personal problems within the group. Consistent and daily communication among pod members and counselors addressed both collective and individual issues. Counselors referred to this active form of discourse as “circling up.” Although challenging and time consuming, both counselors and youth residents noted that circling up helped youth deal with personal and group issues.

5. Small Staff-to-Youth Ratios

The small staff-to-youth ratio at the ranch facilities helped the counselors get to know and bond with each youth. The low ratio allowed staff to actually supervise and counsel youth rather than just monitor their behavior.

We learn how to communicate with others and learn how to respect each other—like respect each other’s space. You are in a pod with 12 people, and it may be people you don’t like or people you don’t know, but you learn how to work together. It’s not necessarily talking, but learning how to work with them. Like when you get a job when you get out, you might not like the person, but you will still have to work with him.

James Ranch Youth

6. Family Participation

Because family participation was vital to the Enhanced Ranch Program, youth were pre-screened to ensure that a family advocate—a relative, caretaker, or legal guardian—was willing and available to participate. If an appropriate family connection could not be identified, SCCPD searched for an alternative person or placement.

The boys seem to have ways to work out their aggression through physical activities like playing basketball, but the girls seem to need to discuss, blame, point fingers, and then work through it.

Manager Wegl

They don’t let you just go to your room and say forget it, I don’t want to deal with you. You got to work on it until you work it out and that means you can be in group for two hours.

Female Ranch Youth

7. Personal Enhancement Opportunities

A variety of activities including competitive sports and vocational and employment training enhanced personal and interpersonal development. The recreational activities improved cognitive skills, communication, leadership, and teamwork. The vocational and

employment training provided exposure to professional etiquette and responsibilities.

8. Extended Length of Stay

The program includes a six to eight month stay in custody, followed by six months of supervised aftercare. It was planned to be long enough for youth to develop the necessary tools to reintegrate back into their families and communities.

Despite stakeholder concerns about the additional one to two months of program length and the cost associated with it, SCCPD wanted to do a better job; the intention was not to lock up youth for longer periods but to reduce recidivism—to have fewer youth cycling through the system.

To implement this program to its fullest capacity, the Department needed staff to work different hours. You can't build a relationship and bond with youth working ten days a month.

SCCPD Manager

9. Relationship Building

Experts note that the one-on-one relationship between youth and line staff was a key element in successful outcomes. Consistent interaction built trust and helped youth to be more receptive to group discussions. One facilities manager reported that staff knew every single child they worked with personally. Youth simply seemed to work a little harder because they saw that the counselors really cared.

I gave the requirements to the managers and empowered them to figure out the shift schedules that they believed would work well with the program and also take staff needs into consideration. And the schedule that they came up with better meets the needs of the youth, program and staff. It has increased communication between POD staff teams, improved the consistency of the treatment approach for the youth, and enhanced our treatment team's ability to meet and discuss case plans in detail.

Deputy Duque

I never really experienced a lot of the programs that are here, like the yoga and Zumba. This is a whole new experience for me, but at the same time, it gets me thinking that there are other things out there that I can try and do instead of just the same thing all day.

Focus Group Participant

10. Education

Blue Ridge School was operated by the Santa Clara County Office of Education and served students at both ranch facilities. School attendance was mandatory. The Office of Education provided 300 minutes per day of classroom instruction, compared to the state mandate of 240.

Most of the students at the Ranch have very high need levels—many are emotionally disturbed and need special resources and a lot of one-on-one time to do their work.

Ranch Teacher

11. Aftercare Programs

After youth successfully served their in-custody commitment, they moved to the aftercare phase, which shifted the program focus toward family involvement and reunification and included interim home visits by staff.

Table 2:

Custodial Components				Aftercare Components	
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Phase 1	Phase 2
Orientation	Core Program Activities	Family Reunification Planning	Reentry and Aftercare Preparation	Pre-release	Continued Aftercare
1 month	2-3 months	2 months	1 month	2.5 months	3.5 months

Program Levels

The treatment phase of the Enhanced Ranch Program had two key components: custodial and aftercare. Custodial services included the first four levels of the program, wherein a resident’s privileges and responsibilities increased as she or he progressed along the continuum of mandated services. Aftercare began when youth were released from custody to transition back into their families and communities. The levels offered structure and a way to quantify the goals for youth and their success in meeting those goals.

Level 1 was the orientation phase and lasted approximately one month. Youth residents and their families were oriented to all aspects of the program, admittance and assessment tests to identify risk factors were administered, and a case plan—a guide for treatment—was developed by the MDT. Youth learned the rules of the program, their readiness for change, how to trust program counselors, and how to feel safe in their new environment. Level 1 youth had very limited privileges.

Level 2 encompassed core program activities and lasted two to three months. Youth were required to participate in programs as specified in their case plans. They prepared for later home visits (Level 3) by focusing on self-improvement and family dynamics. Goals included learning to identify destructive behavior patterns, to control impulsive behavior, and to develop proactive decision making. Youth accomplished this by adopting objectives related to school, work, programs, and family, and through counseling focused on specific issues such as gang involvement, substance abuse, self control,

and family dysfunction. Level 2 youth participated in vocational training, recreational sports, and work crews at off-site locations.

Level 3 focused on family reunification and lasted approximately two months. Before weekend furloughs began, the youth and family participated in three or more family counseling sessions with probation counselors. Additionally, probation counselors must have deemed the home environment and family structure acceptable for visitation. Youth built on Level 2 skills, developing appropriate boundaries, learning to take care of themselves, forming healthy relationships, and setting positive personal goals. They accomplished these objectives in part through counseling that focused on self-reflection and alternative behaviors. Youth could receive privileges such as phone calls, field trips, sports programs, special jobs, and weekend furlough eligibility.

Level 4 prepared youth for the transition to aftercare service and family reunification or placement. Youth were expected to have developed leadership skills and to have become role models for their lower-level peers. They moved away from dependence on staff to a healthier understanding and practice of interdependence. This was accomplished through peer guidance, strategy-sharing, and counseling focused on reintegrating into home, work, school, and community environments. Developing healthy networks in the community was a key element of success beyond the program. Each resident received a post test, a Risk Avoidance, Protective, and Resiliency Asset assessment, and a review of treatment plan goals to determine advancement to aftercare and appropriate services.

Aftercare

Following custody, aftercare lasted six months and incorporated two components—Phase 1: Pre-release and Phase 2: Continued Aftercare. During aftercare, youth had to comply with all court orders and attend programs and counseling as specified by the MDT. Noncompliance could lead to additional weeks of supervision or a return to the Ranch or Juvenile Hall.

Phase 1 was a 10-week pre-release program in which youth were monitored by the aftercare counselor. Pre-release was intended to be part of a gradual process that still provided youth much structure and supervision. Youth had to comply with a stringent curfew, check in with the aftercare counselor by phone each night, and physically meet with him or her at least weekly.

You really get the feeling when you go out there that the people who work there like the kids. Of the Probation Counselors, another Judge agreed. I think they really care and I think they're working hard to make those programs work.

Santa Clara County Judge

Phase 2 began after completion of the 10-week pre-release program, when youth moved to the second phase of aftercare, which was less restrictive. Instead of aftercare counselors, youth are monitored by ranch probation officers. As in pre-release, they were still obligated to attend programs and to engage with counselors and a therapist for the duration of aftercare. Returning home often proved to be a very difficult transition even under the best circumstances, and many youth returned to tough neighborhoods and challenging family structures.

The first 30 days of aftercare is like being on house arrest. You cannot leave your parents' supervision. You can go to school, work and programs by yourself but when it comes to free time, or social outings, you need to be with your mom or dad or legal guardian.

Ranch Youth

Linkages

SCCPD partnered with a variety of agencies and community-based allies to provide a diverse set of programs intended to help youth develop cognitive skills that enabled them to successfully reintegrate back into family and community. The relationships among the partners were important to the success of the project, including the following:

- General agreement on the program's purpose and the resulting ability to target appropriate clients
- Staff–youth bonding
- Youth-to-youth interpersonal relationships

A key asset of the Enhanced Ranch Program was strong relationships between the staff, courts, community-based organization, schools, and youth. Participants in the courts established a collective understanding of who qualified as an appropriate client for the program, which led to better outcomes for more youth.

Some of them have wanted to stay and some of their parents have wanted them to stay and said this is a better situation for you while you are growing in this situation than it is to be back out again and tempted. But probably more than anything it gives them a sense of self worth. And the kids tell me that as well.

Board of Supervisors President Kniss

Interviewees emphasized that a high level of interaction between representatives from probation, mental health, community organizations, and the courts fed discussions of system issues. The institutional support that the Enhanced Ranch Program received at all levels reflected positively on the program and allowed it to continue to move forward.

The counselors are there for you. I've never had that.

Wright Center Youth

Interviews with individuals who were not a part of the staff noted the overall support demonstrated by staff toward youth and by youth toward one another. Staff showed a commitment to the Enhanced

Ranch Program and a willingness to adjust to the new model and actively invest in the youth they served.

Program participants expressed the perception that staff really cared about the youth and provided more one-on-one support than staff in other programs they had experienced.

I like the idea of the pod, the ranch moving as a unit...[I]f someone's having a bad day, doesn't mean we're all going to have a bad day, but we're all going to help out to move this young woman along.

Aftercare Specialist

I think they really are able to lean on each other and, since everybody's goal is to succeed in this program, they are kind of able to lean on each other in a positive way.

Probation Counselor

In focus groups, youth indicated that the level of care and support displayed by their counselors was more obvious than they had experienced in other programs.

The interviews also revealed positive relationships among youth in the Enhanced Ranch Program, and some felt that the pod system supported these relationships.

One observation was that youth at higher levels in the program tended to watch over the lower-level participants; Level 4 participants acted as "junior staff" through their leadership and experience in the program.

Thus, the mutual support offered by all individuals and divisions in contact with the Enhanced Ranch Program worked to effectively facilitate the implementation of the program.

That's been my biggest frustration, is the wait to get kids out there. By the time they get out there you know they're pretty burned from having been in the Hall for a long time. And I think it sort of hardened that position that, you know, "Nobody can fix me."

Juvenile Court Judge

Challenges

There were differences of opinion expressed about the length of the Enhanced Ranch Program. One counselor expressed doubts that a stay of six months could really impact a youth's life, while a defense attorney felt that the length of the program was excessive.

Implementation of the Enhanced Ranch Program initially resulted in a growing number of youth on the waitlist to enter the Ranch. With some troubleshooting, the wait time for youth improved by March of 2009. After that point, youth waiting for placement received their Ranch Orientation while in Juvenile Hall.

More beds discourages all of us from really focusing on the other programs in the community and all the other alternatives that are out there.

Juvenile Court Judge

At the Wright Center, girls had a longer waiting period than boys. Some felt that adding more beds, although an option, may have shifted the focus away from other opportunities and alternatives.

Characteristics of Program Residents

Data from two cohorts were analyzed for this report. Cohort 1 consisted of youth committed to the Old Ranch Program between April, 2005, and March, 2007—499 youth. Cohort 2 consisted of the youth

committed to the new Enhanced Ranch Program between September, 2007, and February, 2009—291 youth, reflecting a reduction in bed capacity.

Figure 1: Gender of Cohort 2

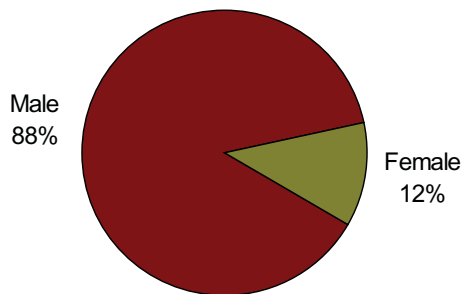


Figure 2: Race/Ethnicity of Cohort 2

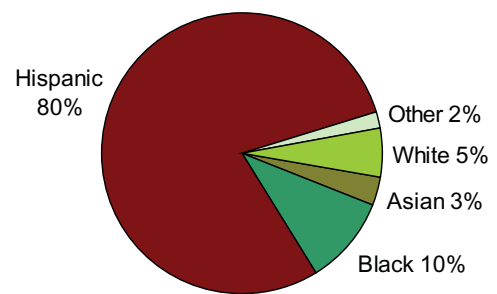
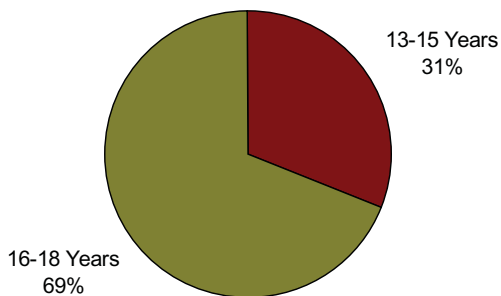
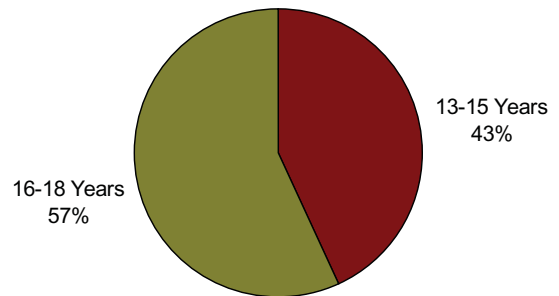


Figure 3: Age of Ranch Residents by Cohort

Cohort 1



Cohort 2



Most Serious Sustained Offense Type

The Enhanced Ranch Program served youth with very serious charges. Approximately 40% of Cohort 2 youth were committed to a facility due to a felony crime against a person—first degree burglary, felony threat, felony assault, kidnapping, and felony sex offenses. In

comparison, only 30% of Cohort 1 was committed to the Ranch for this offense category. As noted earlier, the Enhanced Ranch Program admitted many of the high-risk offenders who, prior to SB 81 legislation, would have been confined to DJJ.

Figure 4: Most Serious Sustained Offenses that Resulted in Confinement of Ranch Residents

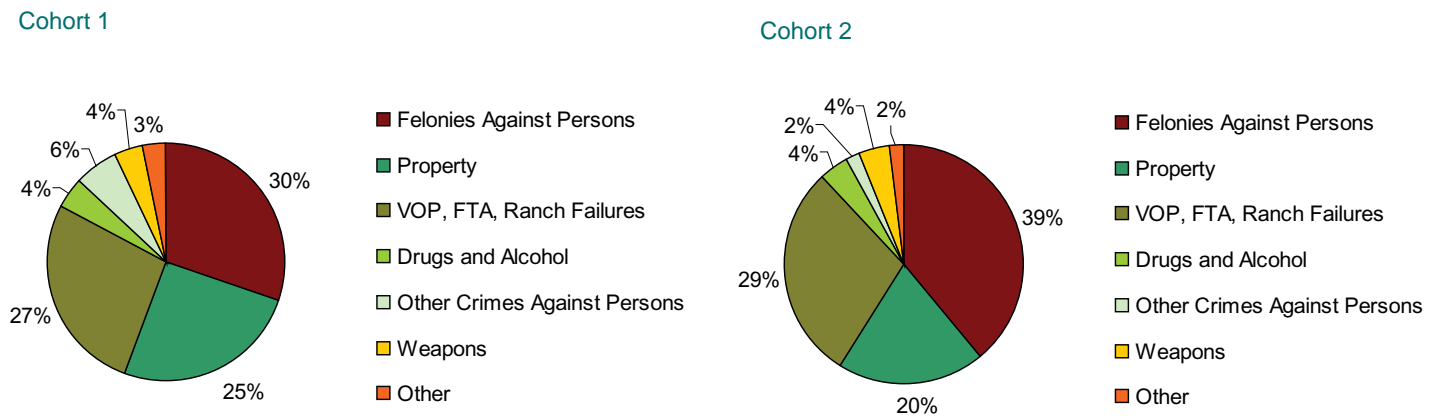


Table 3: Offense Category Details

Offense Category	Included Offenses
Drug and Alcohol	Driving under the influence, drug possession and sales
Crimes Against Persons – Felony	Robbery, first degree burglary, felony threat, felony assault, felony domestic violence, kidnapping, and felony sex offense
Crimes Against Persons – Other	Misdemeanor assault, fighting, misdemeanor domestic violence, misdemeanor sex offenses, other misdemeanor against people
Other Crimes	Escapes, traffic violations, and other felonies
Property Crimes	Second degree burglary, possession of stolen property, auto theft, grand theft, arson, vandalism, and possession of theft and burglary tools
Violation of Probation, Failure to Appear	Violation of probation, failure to obey order, and Ranch failures

Outcomes

One of the primary questions related to this evaluation was whether the program resulted in better outcomes for youth. For each cohort, researchers looked at new probation violations and arrests for youth in the Ranch Program and within one year after leaving the program.

The reduction in the number of behavioral incidents at the Ranch facilities such as gang-related fights, gang activity, disruptive conduct, and possession of contraband was another outcome of interest identified by SCCPD. The Deputy Chief noted a significant reduction in gang-related incidents at both facilities. The probation department continued to collect data and evaluate outcomes from the Enhanced Ranch participants.

Figure 5: Outcome Measures

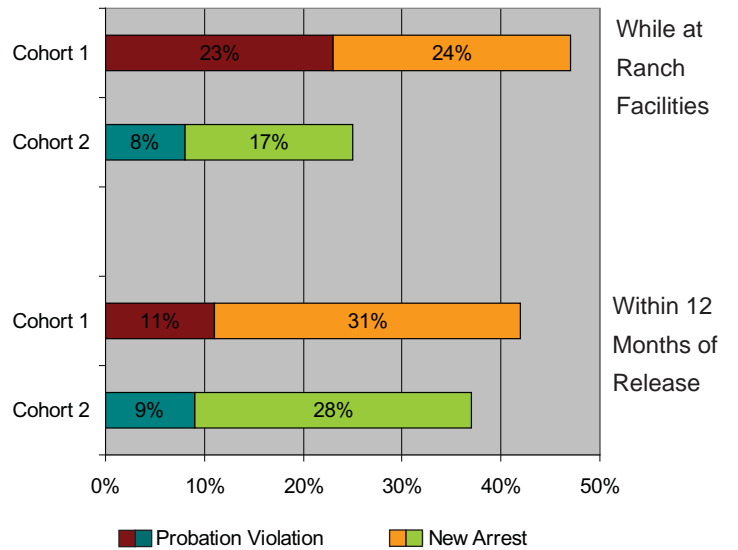
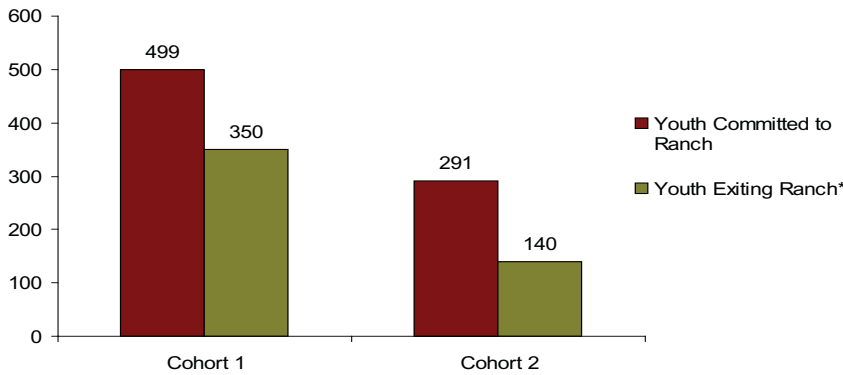


Figure 6: Number of Youth Committed to Ranch Programs and Exiting Ranch Program



Population of youth at Ranch = youth committed to Ranch program during specified time. For Cohort 1 (April 2005 to March 2007, N=499) and for Cohort 2 (September 2007 to February 2009, N=291).

*Population exiting Ranch = youth had a date indicating that he/she “exited the ranch to aftercare.”

Table 4: Reported Incidents at Ranch Facilities by Cohort

Offense Category	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Total Number of Incidents	4,647	1,294
Number of Unique Individuals	475	262
Average Number of Incidents per Individual	9.8	4.9
Range per Individual	1-65	1-46

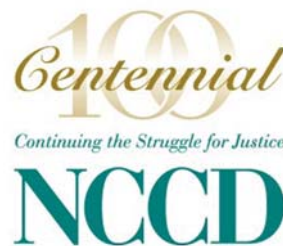
Conclusion

After determining that it was not doing all it could to help the youth in its care, the Santa Clara County Probation Department tried a new approach and instituted the Enhanced Ranch Program. To improve upon its 40% failure rate, county officials adopted a version of a holistic approach, based on the Missouri model and tailored to Santa Clara County. The new rehabilitative program put an emphasis on real, cognitive behavioral change rather than mere compliance with rules. It stressed an open facility with a home-like atmosphere, where the staff were counselors rather than guards, the family was an active participant, and the rules were enforced by youth leaders.

An analysis of the County's implementation of the core elements of the program revealed a high level

of integrity and fidelity to the model. In addition, the youth in the Enhanced Ranch Program had improved outcomes over their counterparts in the previous Ranch Program with respect to behavioral incidents and fights during detention. There were also reduced probation violations and new arrests during and after completion of the program.

The process and outcomes for youth in Santa Clara County prior to the Enhanced Ranch Program were not unusual for the nation's juvenile justice departments. There appears to be much to be learned and gained from new, holistic approaches to rehabilitation of youth in detention. A fully detailed outcome evaluation of this ongoing program could reveal much useful information.



National Council on Crime and Delinquency

1970 Broadway, Suite 500 • Oakland, CA 94612
tel 510/208-0500 • fax 510/208-0511 • nccd-crc.org