



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

312 SOUTH HILL STREET, THIRD FLOOR
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90013
(213) 974-6100
<http://oig.lacounty.gov>

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INSPECTOR GENERAL

July 26, 2023

TO: Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell
Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Max Huntsman
Inspector General

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Max Huntsman", is written over the printed name and title.

SUBJECT: Transfer of Youths from Barry J. Nidorf and Central Juvenile Halls to Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall

This letter provides the Board of Supervisors an update on the recent transfer of youths from Central Juvenile Hall (CJH) and Barry J. Nidorf Hall (BJNJH) to Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall (LPJH) after a finding by the Board of State and Community Corrections that both CJH and BJNJH are unsuitable to house detained youths.

Notification to the Office of Inspector General and the California Department of Justice

Before the transfer of the youths, there were extensive discussions between the Probation Department, the California Department of Justice (DOJ) and Office of Inspector General staff regarding the necessity of both agencies receiving adequate notification in order to be on scene to monitor the transfer of youth from CJH and BJNJH to LPJH. Probation Department command staff assured me that timely notification would be made to the Office of Inspector General so that Office of Inspector General staff could be present on scene to monitor the transfer.

My Assistant Inspector General for Probation received notification in the morning on July 12th that the initial transfer from CJH to LPJH would take place that afternoon.

While the Office of Inspector General was notified of both transfer dates for the movement of youth from CJH, the Probation Department failed to make a notification regarding the transfer of the first group of youths from BJNJH to LPJH. It was not until the following day that the Office of Inspector General received notification that the first phase of the transfer from BJNJH had already occurred and that the second transfer was to occur that day. Based upon the notifications, Office of Inspector General staff were present for only three of the four days of transfers, two days for transfers from CJH and one day for transfers from BJNJH. Probation Department officials also failed to notify the DOJ of the first day of transfer of youths from BJNJH, but DOJ staff members were present for the transfers during the same three days that Office of Inspector General staff were on scene.

Given recent assurances by the Probation Department that the Office of Inspector General would be timely informed of the Probation Department's scheduled plan to transfer the youths, it is unclear what caused the failure to properly notify the entities responsible for oversight of the Probation Department. The failure to provide notification of the transfer of the first group of youths from BJNJH to LPJH was brought to the attention of Interim Chief Viera Rosa who promised to investigate the failure to notify the entities overseeing the movement of youths.

Transfer of Youths from CJH to LPJH

On Wednesday, July 12, 2023, the Probation Department transferred the first group of 87 youths from CJH to LPJH and transferred a second group of 86 youths the following day. During both transfers, no observed or reported uses of force occurred. However, during the transfer on July 13, 2023, the Probation Department reported that a youth attempted to kick open the door of the transportation vehicle as it was traveling from CJH to LPJH. Probation Department staff stopped the vehicle to prevent the youth from kicking the door open and returned the youths to CJH because of a concern that the door's locking mechanism might fail. Once at CJH, a replacement vehicle was obtained and used to complete the transfer of those youths to LPJH. The Office of Inspector General is not aware of any other incidents during the transfer of the youths from CJH.

Transfer of Youths from BJNJH to LPJH

On July 18, 2023, the Probation Department transferred the first group of 46 youths from BJNJH to LPJH and transferred a second group of 63 youths the following day. Because of the Probation Department's failure to provide the promised notification of

the transfer, the Office of Inspector General cannot provide a report for the first day of the transfer of youths. There were no observed or reported uses of force on the second day of the transfer of youths.

Discovery of Firearm at LPJH

On Friday, July 21st, a firearm was found at LPJH. Although Office of Inspector General staff observed searches of the youths and their personal belongings during the transfer, there was no indication that individual staff or their boxes coming from either CJH or BJNJH were searched in the move to LPJH, or whether any searches were conducted at LPJH prior to the move. Following the discovery of the firearm, the entire LPJH facility was searched by Probation Department Special Enforcement Operations officers and no other contraband was found. While the firearm may not have been brought to LPJH during the move, its discovery and the lack of screening of staff and staff belongings raises continuing concerns regarding the introduction of contraband into the County's juvenile facilities. The Probation Department reported that it referred a criminal investigation regarding the firearm to the local law enforcement agency.

Assessment of the Transfers

For the three days that Office of Inspector General staff was on scene, there were no observed incidents in the transfers. In general, the movement of youth to LPJH was smooth. There were no uses of force observed by or reported to the Office of Inspector General. The Probation Department and the Office of the Ombudsman indicated that neither received any complaints or grievances related to the transfer of the youths. The Probation Department utilized a large group of Probation Department management staff from all over the county to assist the youths with boarding as well as settling into their assigned rooms at LPJH. The collective experience of the staff members at each facility undoubtedly assisted with the orderly transfer of the youths. The Probation Department reported that the transfer of the youths did not negatively impact education and programming as the transfers from both halls were started after the youths' classes ended. The Probation Department also indicated that all parents or guardians were notified of the transfer of the youths.

Despite the successful transfer of the youths, the Probation Department must continue to work on communications with the Office of Inspector General and the DOJ to ensure that both agencies are afforded the opportunity to monitor and report on Probation

Department activities and to ensure that Probation Department staff fulfill their obligations to ensure the safety of the youth in its care.

MH:sf

c: Guillermo Viera Rosa, Interim Chief Probation Officer
 Fesia Davenport, Chief Executive Officer
 Celia Zavala, Executive Officer
 Wendelyn Julien, Executive Director, Probation Oversight Commission
 Probation Oversight Commission