



Legislation Text

File #: 08-0781, **Version:** 2

Probation Department recommending approval of a 7% recruitment and retention stipend for only the following South Lake Tahoe Juvenile Treatment Center (JTC) positions: sworn positions limited to Deputy Probation Officer I/II-Institutions, Sr. Deputy Probation Officer- Institutions, Supervising Deputy Probation Officer-Institutions; and extra-help Deputy Probation Officer I/II-Institutions; assigned specifically to said center; noting this stipend will assist in resolving critical, long-term recruitment and retention issues.

FUNDING: No fiscal impact or change to Net County Cost for FY 07/08. Estimated cost for FY 08/09 approximately \$120,000.00.

Fiscal Impact/Change to Net County Cost:

No fiscal impact or change to Net County Cost for FY 07/08. Estimated cost for FY 08/09 approximately \$120,000.00.

Reason for Recommendation:

The Probation Department is experiencing continuous inability to recruit and retain adequate staffing for all levels of sworn probation positions in both the Probation Field and Court Services Division and the Juvenile Treatment Center in South Lake Tahoe. The South Lake Tahoe Region presents very difficult circumstances effecting recruitment and retention of qualified officers. Employees face difficult challenges related to prohibitive high costs in housing, transportation, and food and extreme weather conditions effecting commuters as well as those who do live in South Lake Tahoe. The result is that the majority of Probation Department staff working in South Lake Tahoe must commute from either the Carson Valley in Nevada or the West Slope areas of El Dorado County. These challenges have negatively affected the ability of the Probation Department to compete for qualified applicants.

Numerous recruitments have failed to produce adequate staffing levels for both of the effected South Lake Tahoe Probation Divisions. Officers who do accept employment as commuters often leave the job for positions in Nevada or transfer to positions on the West Slope of the County as soon as available. The recruitments have experienced high levels of withdrawals or failed background checks for the applicants that do apply.

During the past two years, the Probation Field and Court Services Office has had a change over of staff affecting management, supervisory and line probation officer positions. Of fifteen (15) FTE sworn line staff positions allocated to the SLT Probation Office, one-half of the staff members have served the Division less than two years. Three managers have been assigned to the one (1) FTE management allocation and four supervisors have been assigned to the two (2) FTE supervisor allocations during the past two years as well.

Staffing of the Juvenile Treatment Center has also been inadequate since the opening of the facility in September 2004. In spite of extensive recruiting efforts, the issue has not been resolved.

Recruiting efforts by JTC managers and staff have included ongoing attendance of job fairs at four college locations regionally, visits to college campuses during evening hours to meet and greet students, full day sessions at Lake Tahoe Community College handing out job interest flyers, and the provision of job fairs specifically for the JTC in the JTC lobby.

In addition to extensive recruiting efforts, the Board of Supervisors has supported efforts to address the circumstance at the JTC by increasing wages pursuant to compensation study conducted by Human Resources, raising extra-help hourly wages, and authorizing a permanent relief model which included adding four full time allocations to cover shift absences as the Probation Department has not been able to recruit and retain extra-help staff for this facility.

To date, the JTC has not been able to fully staff the facility as required by the California Code of Regulations Title 15, and the requirements of the grant funding acquired to fund the construction of the facility. Since opening in 2004, the JTC has had three Superintendents (one FTE allocation) assigned, and four supervisors have left their positions for other employment or other County positions. Each of the years of operation of the JTC have included replacing thirteen or more full time sworn officers with continuous vacancy rates in the range of 13% to 30%, more often at the upper range. During the past two years, the facility has averaged three staff on light duty or off duty due to medical absence. With the high vacancy rates, staff unavailable for full duty and no extra-help staff, coverage has been increasingly difficult, especially when attempting to achieve required peace officer training standards (six weeks of training for each new staff member during first year).

In order to attempt to achieve staffing for the facility, the Probation Department has worked with Human Resources management and lowered the minimal educational requirements for entry level sworn positions assigned to the JTC. Department staff and Human Resources staff have also implemented strategies to speed up the hiring process involved in qualifying peace officer applicants. Yet, all of these efforts have not resulted in the ability to adequately staff the facility.

At this time, of the eighteen hired line staff and senior line staff assigned to the facility, eleven of the staff are Deputy Probation Officer I - Institution staff, the entry level rank for first year employees. Of the five journey level Deputy Probation Officer II - Institutions staff, only two have worked at the facility longer than two years. The facility presently has a 50% vacancy rate for senior level officers and one supervisor vacancy. Since opening in September 2004, only three of the original staff members (all ranks) remain assigned to the facility, two supervisors, and one senior officer.

The continuous problems related to recruitment and retention of an adequate staff for this facility have affected the Department's ability to complete mission requirements and serve the community. All reasonable efforts have been made by the Probation Department to overcome this problem with inadequate levels of success.

At this time, with ongoing failed recruitments, the Department faces a potential staffing shortage of female officers that may result in regulatory and legal mandates to close the facility to female wards. If this does occur, a situation will result that will effect community safety as the Sheriff, Probation, CHP and South Lake Tahoe Police Departments will be required to once again travel to Placerville to book female minors when arrested in SLT. Additionally, female wards will be excluded from Challenge Program services in the JTC, possibly resulting in costly out of county commitments by the Juvenile Court and legal actions within the Courts resulting from unequal service levels for female wards. With such services no longer available locally within the JTC, families of detained female

wards will also experience reduced ability to visit their children during such crucial times and an inability to participate in counseling services.

Adequate coverage and specifically female staff coverage of the facility has been difficult since opening the facility. As all of the identified efforts listed above have not resulted in addressing this problem, additional action by the Board of Supervisors is recommended. Hiring and retention issues are directly related to the inability of Probation Department staff to afford to work in South Lake Tahoe. Additional compensation is required to overcome this problem. The El Dorado County Grand Jury, in the 2007/2008 Final Report, Part One, included findings and recommendations supporting the need for a study of Juvenile Treatment Center salaries to include possible "hardship" clauses in order to improve staffing.

The Probation Department is recommending the Board of Supervisors authorize a 7% Recruitment and Retention Stipend, as is implemented for the equivalent hiring problem the Sheriff's Department is experiencing, to assist in staffing Probation Department sworn positions and extra help at the SLT JTC. This stipend is requested for SLT JTC positions identified above.

Action to be taken following Board approval:

- 1) Board to authorize the Auditor-Controller's Office to apply stipend to identified positions beginning PP 2008-15.
- 2) Probation to work with Human Resources to Meet and Confer with affected labor organizations.
- 3) Probation to work with CAO to include costs in FY 08/09 budget.
- 4) Probation to work with Human Resources to update recruitment materials.

Contact:

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Concurrences:

Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury, Presiding Judge of Superior Court
Honorable James R. Wagoner, Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court
Juvenile Justice Commission