

OVERCROWDING

In
Juvenile Detention
Facilities and Methods
to
Relieve Its Adverse Effects

93376a

July, 1983

State of California

DEPARTMENT OF THE YOUTH AUTHORITY
PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS BRANCH

Department Of The Youth Authority

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FOREWORD

The overcrowding of local detention facilities and state correctional institutions is becoming one of the leading problems facing all probation and state correctional administrators in California and throughout the nation. Overcrowding impacts institutional programming and continued overcrowding that is not dealt with in a satisfactory manner can affect the safety of staff and detainees.

I sincerely hope that this publication serves as a catalyst for discussion and continued action that is aimed at dealing with the causes and effects of overcrowding.

This publication is the result of a collaborative and cooperative effort that has involved Youth Authority staff, several chief probation officers, the Youth Authority's External Fact-Finding Committee on Juvenile Hall Overcrowding, and the Juvenile Hall Task Force. My special thanks to the Los Angeles County Probation Department and to the Youth Authority staff in the Prevention and Community Corrections Branch, the Preston School and the Southern Reception Center-Clinic.

I hope the material in the publication is helpful. Please feel free to call on the Youth Authority for additional information and assistance.

James Rowland, Director

June 23, 1983

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ACQUISITIONS

INTRODUCTION

In response to concerns expressed by Chief Probation Officers and Youth Authority staff about juvenile hall overcrowding, the Director of the Youth Authority appointed a 22-member "External Fact-Finding Committee on Juvenile Hall Overcrowding and Related Issues." The committee was composed of leaders of the juvenile justice system, the judiciary, juvenile justice and delinquency prevention commissions, and professional associations from all areas of California.

The committee identified a number of recent changes in juvenile detention that contribute to juvenile hall overcrowding, including increased commitments to juvenile hall, prolonged detention of Section 707 W&IC cases, delays in transferring minors to disposition programs, population growth, and lengthy court continuances. The committee pointed out that new juvenile hall construction is not affordable in many counties.

In July 1982, the committee made 22 recommendations that can be grouped into four general areas:

- Allow more flexibility in the Youth Authority's policy of finding juvenile halls unsuitable for being overcrowded, provided that all health and safety standards are met.
- Retain the existing minimum space requirements in the juvenile hall standards.
- Develop information on alternative programs to reduce juvenile hall detention.
- Study the effects of overcrowding and recommend ways to reduce its bad effects on minors and juvenile hall programs.

It was in response to the fourth recommendation that a task force was assembled to study the effects of overcrowding and to seek possible remedies to its bad effects. Task force members interviewed juvenile hall and Youth Authority administrators and line staff throughout the State and reviewed the literature to gain knowledge and ideas from the work of others.

Members of the task force included:

Edward J. Harrington, Chairman	Regional Administrator Division of Field Services Youth Authority
Anthony M. Bukwich	Probation Services Manager Solano County Juvenile Hall
Donald G. Farmer	Chief Probation Officer Monterey County
Henry Reynolds	Assistant Director of Institutions San Francisco County Juvenile Hall
C. Marsden Smith	Assistant Probation Division Director Riverside County Juvenile Hall

Robert E. Keldgord	Chief Probation Officer Sacramento County
Fred Clifton	Superintendent, Stanislaus County Juvenile Hall
Ulysses Birt	Consultant Division of Field Services (Glendale) Youth Authority
Rich Rose	Consultant Division of Field Services (Oakland) Youth Authority
Jerry Darling	Consultant Division of Support Services Youth Authority

This report is a result of the task force's work. It is divided into three chapters:

1. A Literature Search of Overcrowding and Its Effects.
2. Court Decisions on Overcrowding.
3. Interviews with Juvenile Facility Administrators and Staff on Overcrowding.

The report recommends methods to reduce the adverse effects of overcrowding in juvenile halls. The methods may be desirable regardless of whether the juvenile hall is near or exceeds its rated capacity. The value of the recommendations is that they can be implemented by inexpensive structural modifications, adjustments in staff usage, and program alternatives rather than major remodeling or new construction. We hope the report will prompt juvenile hall managers and line staff to analyze their facilities and consider whether the recommendations have value to their programs. It is through this type of appraisal that staff can offset some of the effects of overcrowding and provide a healthier and safer environment for the minors in detention and staff.

The work of the task force and the writing of this report could not have been done without the help of many people. Special thanks are due to Richard Oren, Superintendent, Central Juvenile Hall; Hervie Lowery, Superintendent and Ruben Villagrana, Director, San Fernando Valley Juvenile Hall; Calvin Hopkinson, Superintendent, Los Padriños Juvenile Hall, Los Angeles County; Youth Authority Assistant Superintendents Al Lawson, Preston School of Industry, and George McKinney, Southern Reception Center and Clinic; and especially to the counseling staff working in these programs who were so willing to share their experiences and ideas for the benefit of others. Their invaluable contribution to this publication is greatly appreciated.

Chapter 1

A LITERATURE SEARCH OF OVERCROWDING AND ITS EFFECTS

In recent years, overcrowding in adult prisons and jails and in juvenile detention facilities has drawn considerable attention from the public, correctional administrators and the courts. It has become the most pressing problem facing prison and jail administrators. More inmates have been added to the prisons and jails, while few new facilities have been built. Some prison administrators have resorted to double and triple celling, tents, converting warehouses into dormitories and have even thought about using abandoned aircraft carriers. As an outgrowth, facility administrators, courts, special study groups, and researchers have given special attention to the effects of overcrowding on the inmate population. Because the major overcrowding is in adult facilities, most studies on its effects have occurred in these settings. To compare juvenile hall overcrowding to prison overcrowding can be misleading, as obviously they are quite dissimilar programs and the degree of overcrowding in juvenile halls is not as great. Some of the findings, however, with modifications and interpretation, can be applied to the juvenile detention setting.

This chapter summarizes eleven recent studies of institutional overcrowding.

The Impact of Density in a Juvenile Correctional Institution (Ray and Wandersman) (1981)

In a study of a Tennessee Juvenile Correctional Institution experiencing a sudden increase in population (from 252 to 392 in 36 weeks), Ray and Wandersman found that residents were more likely to show hostility and anger towards staff and residents during high population density. Treatment programs were seriously impaired, if not totally useless, during times of crowding.

For the smaller dorm, crowding effects appeared at the 30- to 35-resident level and became severe somewhere in the 35- to 40-resident range. They recommended that small or single cell units not be overcrowded. They concluded that physical design, programming, staffing patterns, use of space, and access to the out-of-doors can enhance or exacerbate the effects of overcrowding. They felt that just having to deal with so many people seems to cause a great deal of stress. In addition, they recommended:

1. A limit of 25-30 residents to a dorm.
2. The largest dorm should be overcrowded first, when the number of residents increases.
3. Partitioning dormitories to allow some privacy, smaller and more manageable groups.
4. Residents with stress-related medical problems, or respiratory problems (asthma, hay fever) should not be housed in crowded dormitories.

They observed that an increase in the number of residents may cause

staff to take less action on disciplinary problems. Ray and Wandersman also questioned the value of increasing staff in an already socially-dense setting.

The Relationship of Offender Classification to the Problems of Prison Overcrowding (Clements) (1982)

In an article prepared by Alabama Associate Professor Clements, at the request of the National Institute of Mental Health Center for Studies in Crime and Delinquency, it was noted that overcrowding can play havoc with classification procedures. He found that classification systems can become distorted or even abandoned in times of overcrowding. Clements observed that overcrowding has three types of effects:

1. There is less of everything to go around.
2. Overcrowding creates certain stresses.
3. The inability of residents to turn off unwanted interaction changes individual behavior to less desirable methods of coping.

It was further found that there is a tendency to overclassify in terms of security requirements, and quite often classification systems that are already in place are abandoned in favor of assigning inmates according to where space is available. Residents are classified, assigned to units, and programmed to accommodate the facility rather than to meet individual needs. Operating from a "space available" model tends to increase management and control problems and place some inmates in jeopardy, thus increasing stress on the inmates.

Prison Standards: Some Pertinent Data on Crowding (Paulus, McCain, Cox) (1981)

In a LEAA-funded research project of ten prisons conducted by the Psychology Department, University of Texas at Arlington, it was concluded that solutions to overcrowding lie not only in increasing available living space, but also in reducing the influences of the number of people in living areas.

The authors found there were increased rates of disciplinary infractions, recidivism, escape attempts, and violence in overcrowded facilities. Stress increases as social contacts with uncertain outcomes increase.

Considerable reduction in overcrowding effects can be achieved by reducing the number of people in multiple-occupant open housing. In other words, they believe that increasing the living space in open dormitories is less effective than dividing existing space into cubicles, even though the space per person may remain unchanged or even decline.

Another noteworthy finding is that when a group becomes too large to form a cohesive organization or when new individuals are introduced into the group, thereby causing a higher turnover and changes in housing assignment, it causes a greater problem in a dormitory than in single rooms.

Summary of Recent Youth Authority Research on Reduced Living Unit Size (Department of the Youth Authority, Parole and Institutions Research Section) (1980)

Two recent research projects within the Youth Authority have focused on the effects on institution living units of reducing ward population. Both studies demonstrated that reducing ward population in a living unit (to an average of about 38 beds) reduced major disciplinary incidents, violent behavior, escapes, time adds, and improved ward/staff relationships and social climate. It was also found that decreased living unit population plays a more important role in lowering tension than does enriched staffing.

Population Density and Inmate Misconduct Rates in the Federal Prison System (Nacci, Teitelbaum and Prather) (1977)

Data were gathered for this study from 37 institutions in the federal prison system. The authors are senior research analysts in the Research Office of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The following is an extract of their report relating to *reducing perceived density*:

"Crowding is a perceptual phenomenon that can be modified. To say that density is perceived as crowded means that density levels have been compared with preestablished beliefs, expectations, norms, standards and that the comparison is seen as unfavorable. Norms, beliefs, and standards are developed slowly through the process of socialization and are particularly difficult to modify.

"A more reasonable alternative is to modify the physical environment so that it is not perceived as dense. There are minor structural or procedural modifications that have been shown to reduce perceived density. The table shown below presents social, environmental, and temporal qualities that tend to be associated with low density. These relationships have been established in experiments in social ecology and are well documented. (See Rapport, "Toward a Definition of Density," *Environment and Behavior*, 70, 1975.) Some elements are counterproductive when combined unjudiciously. For example, decreasing noise levels by keeping inmates silent in a dining hall is also a restriction of individual freedom. Sound deadening material might be more appropriate. Some modifications are incompatible with custodial functions and might better be instituted at minimum security or camp facilities. For example, fewer lights, fences or doors could compromise security. Other modifications are compatible with security. Few intricate spaces, low noise levels, simple spaces and good ventilation increase security and reduce perceived density at the same time.

"Security-related alterations in a correctional institution will require great consideration and more documentation than is available from this one study. Nevertheless, future research

may establish the wisdom of integrating low density cues with security; and certainly security restrictions are a large contributor to perceptions of high density. Accordingly, planners and architects currently are designing buildings that meld security procedures and devices with elements that reduce perceived density."

Table: Reducing Perceived Density

Physical-Environmental

1. Few people visible (or their traces)
2. Few signs
3. Low noise levels
4. Partitioned dormitories
5. Few doors
6. Few intricate spaces
7. Few lights and low artificial light levels
8. Ceiling neither too high or too low
9. Few man-made smells
10. Mostly natural (greenery)
11. Few cars—low traffic density
12. Open spaces
13. Simple spaces
14. Gardens
15. Low levels of attractive stimuli
16. Few fences, courtyards, compounds if these are seen as controlling social interactions
17. Presence of adjacent areas for small group meetings

Temporal

1. Slow rhythm of activity
2. Activities that fractionate time

Social

1. Low levels of social interaction
2. Feeling of control over environment
3. Freedom to control social interactions
4. Freedom to be alone
5. Social homogeneity
(Nacci, and others)

Health and High Density Confinement in Jails and Prisons (Wahler and Gordon) (1980)

In an article appearing in *Federal Probation*, Wahler and Gordon, staff to the Occupational Safety and Health Administrator, U.S. Department of Labor, discuss the influences of high population density in prisons and jails on health and space allocation. The authors noted that each person admitted to a detention facility is a possible carrier of potentially hazardous bacteria or viruses to which his roommate(s) and the correctional worker may be susceptible. Bringing together persons from many communities and confining them to *crowded* areas greatly

increases the probability of spreading and the actual outbreaks of disease.

Excessive crowding not only impacts on the plumbing system and toilet facilities, but also reduces the effectiveness of the ventilation system—air movement, temperature regulation, removal of contaminants and body odors—all of which may adversely affect the health of the inmates.

Room Size, Group Size, and Density: Behavior Patterns in a Children's Psychiatric Facility (Maxine Wolfe) (1975)

This study reviewed the findings of various researchers on the general subject of density and the author's observations in a children's psychiatric hospital. Highlights of their findings are as follows:

"In any specific institution, the type, number, and arrangements of bedrooms must be considered in terms of the specific therapeutic goals of the institution, the overall design of the institution, and the availability of spaces for varieties of activities and types of interactions." In addition:

- 1) Potential density should not be the main basis for the allotment of space in residential programming. While a minimum amount of space per person is necessary, it is not a sufficient basis for design decisions. The space allotted for particular types of uses must be viewed in terms of the behavior it facilitates or inhibits in a given environment with given group sizes.
- 2) Private rooms should be used most often (with the qualification that if they are too large, they may be frightening, especially for younger children and may produce a reactive rather than an active pattern of behavior).
- 3) As the number of children assigned to a room increases, the use of the room by each child will decrease and, when used, interactive behaviors will decrease (tendency to sleep, lay awake, sit alone).
- 4) The unique properties (emotional dependence of each child on the other) of the two-child group seem to require that a two-child bedroom have a larger amount of space than simply double that of a one-child room in order to be viable for each child.
- 5) Isolated passive behavior in bedrooms is not necessarily negative when viewed in the context of days which are filled with programmed activity taking place in the presence of others. The smaller private room or a substantially larger two-person room would seem to support such passive behavior under these circumstances.

The Relationship Between Illness Complaints and Degree of Crowding in a Prison Environment (McCain, Cox, Paulus) (1976)

Illness complaint data were gathered from 247 prison inmates covering a period of six months and from 885 jail inmates. The data suggest that

Chapter 2

COURT DECISIONS ON OVERCROWDING

These court cases, in various stages of litigation, specifically address the issue of overcrowded correctional facilities. They are included to acquaint the reader with some of the conditions of overcrowding the courts have weighed in making their decisions. If further information is needed, case review is recommended.

Smith v. Flarman, 528 F. Supp. 186, C.D. III, 1981

The court noted that in Rhodes (Rhodes v. Chapman, 101 S. Ct. 2392, 1981), it was made clear that prisoners need not be free of discomfort. However, the court said, deplorable and sordid conditions cannot be tolerated. The court ordered an end to the practice of placing two inmates in a cell designed years ago to house only one person, because of markedly worse conditions, e.g., old and noisy facility, smaller cell size, time in cell.

Lareau v. Mason, 651 F. 2d 96, 2nd Cir., 1981

The court restricted double-bunking in cells originally designed for one person because it was shown that overcrowding subjected the detainee to genuine deprivation and hardship over an extended period of time. Use of glass enclosed dayroom for sleeping areas, mattresses on floor, and assignment of healthy inmate to medical cells were prohibited.

Length of incarceration of detainee was considered. The court found that conditions unacceptable for weeks or months might be tolerable for a few days. Double-celling was acceptable for sentenced inmates detained no more than 30 days.

The court also ordered that medical examination be given all newly-admitted inmates within 48 hours of admission.

Capps v. Ailyeh, 495 F. Supp. 802, D. Oregon, 1980

Using mattresses on the floor was prohibited.

Campbell v. Cauthron, 623 F. 2d 503, 8th Cir., 1980

The court ruled on overcrowding and lack of exercise. The court ordered that one hour exercise be provided to any inmate who spends at least 16 hours in a cell on any given day.

Rhodes v. Chapman, U.S. Supreme Court, No. 80-332, 49 Law Week, 4677, 6-15-81

The court found that the evidence did not support a conclusion that the Eighth Amendment was violated. The majority said:

The double-celling made necessary by the unanticipated increase in prison population did not lead to deprivations of

essential food, medical care or sanitation. Nor did it increase violence among inmates or create other conditions intolerable for prison confinement. Although job and educational opportunities diminished marginally as a result of double-celling, limited work hours and delay before receiving education do not inflict pain, much less unnecessary and wanton pain; deprivations of this kind simply are not punishment.

The court also listed factors which would be considered in ruling on overcrowded conditions. These conditions are:

Physical Plant Conditions:

Lighting, heat, plumbing, ventilation, living space, noise levels, and recreation space.

Sanitation:

Control of vermin and insects, food preparation, medical facilities, lavatories and showers, clean place to eat, sleep and work.

Safety:

Protection from violent, deranged or diseased inmates, fire protection, and emergency evacuation.

Inmate Needs and Services:

Clothing; nutrition; bedding; medical, dental and mental health care; visitation time; exercise and recreation; educational and rehabilitative programming.

Staffing:

Trained and adequate staff.

Note: Double-celling should be kept at a minimum.

Rutherford v. Pitchess, 80 Daily Journal, D.A.R. 2307, 9th Cir., August 1980

Court ordered: Cease "overflow" sleeping on mattresses on floor; 2½ hours per week recreation (work toward one hour per day). Also ordered, 15 minutes for meals, clean laundry twice weekly, reinstall windows in cells.

Manney v. Cabell, CV75-3305, R., U.S. District Court, Central District of California, April 1979

Court ordered: No juvenile shall be required to sleep, rest, or stay on the floor; allow showering at least once each day; ensure privacy during showers; and immediate access to toilets. Prior to admission, each minor shall be given a medical screening. Emergency medical care shall be provided. Conduct sick call daily. Provisions for special diets were required.

Chapter 3

INTERVIEWS WITH JUVENILE FACILITY ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF ON OVERCROWDING

This summary provides a beginning and sharing of experiences and techniques of concerned staff who work in these facilities during periods of overcrowding. There was a recurring description of certain adversities that parallel the literature very closely. There were a number of common solutions cited by staff at each institution. With these points in mind, we will look at the effects of overcrowding and solutions as reported by staff on physical environment, supervision, program, staff and administration.

Overcrowding causes an increase in supervisory needs and staff fatigue, fewer resources, and higher anxiety/tension levels in residents and staff. However, in light of the research and variables, any exact threshold for when such adverse effects are present is difficult to establish. An exact formula or, if you wish, the number of residents cannot be clearly delineated. Overcrowding is a perceptual and experiential phenomenon. What may be perceived as overcrowding in one institution may not be viewed similarly nor trouble staff in another. Staff will be influenced by what they are accustomed to and by preestablished standards and comparisons.

It also became clear that resources available within the facility, size and configuration of housing units (dormitories vs. single rooms), program resources, staff employed, as well as more subjective elements, such as administrative support, staff morale and assignment, and feeling of safety of residents and staff, greatly affect the impact of institutional population overcrowding.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Program Space

Overcrowding will result in multiple use of the same space, e.g., dayrooms used as sleeping rooms and larger groups to supervise in these limited spaces. This may cause curtailment of some activities. This in turn will increase tension, boredom, and supervision needs. With tension levels high—"touchy", "risky" situation—restriction and problems escalate, thus the vicious circle effect.

"Sleepers" versus Double-Occupancy

A major issue is where to sleep minors in excess of capacity. Most staff prefer to sleep minors on the floor in dayrooms for direct observation and supervision. Double-occupancy, it is argued, invites sex play, assault and intimidation, plotting of escape, etc. The rationale of line staff is a preference of risking misconduct to self-destructive behavior which is more likely to occur in doubled rooms. Six to eight minors on the floor is manageable.

An enclosed control center and back-up staff are necessary for security when minors are sleeping in an open area such as a dayroom. The use of audio-visual monitoring equipment was also cited as helpful in providing supervision of minors. One staff voiced objections to sleeping minors on the floor because of their susceptibility to colds, sleep interruption, and dirty floor conditions. The cleaning of mattresses and bedding, storage, and lack of comfort (beds) are problems. On the other hand, minors will frequently volunteer to sleep on the floor.

Noise

Noise is damaging. Noise levels will increase if minors feel threatened. Multiple noises caused by too many people and too many activities in the same space, e.g., television, weights, games, ping-pong, talking and radios, will cause confusion, tension, short tempers and interference. Multiple noises and escalated levels of noise are a major environmental issue. One manager observed that staff seem to adjust somewhat to high noise levels. Another pointed out that noise gives clues to unit unrest and potential trouble.

Visiting

Visiting space becomes crowded. Potentially this may reduce the length of the visit or number of persons allowed to visit.

Outdoor Area

Exposure to outdoor areas helps relieve effects of overcrowdedness for minors and staff. Spacious outdoor area and mountains give feelings of roominess. Also, movement in courtyard and field area to school, etc., helps. Sleeping rooms that have large windows with a view of the field area and surrounding mountains neutralizes institutional feeling of crowdedness/density. (San Fernando Juvenile Hall, Los Angeles County).





Dining

Meal time is an extremely important part of the program. Overcrowding will either require more minors to be fed at one time or reduce the time allowed to eat. To avoid interfering with other activities the time for feeding in shifts may be shortened. Feeding some minors in their rooms was also reported as a means of reducing the size of the group in a common dining area.

Dayroom

Most group management difficulties will occur in the dayroom. It becomes the center of activity, noise, confusion, idleness and a place to wait. Overcrowding causes too many activities to take place in the same space. Some dayrooms and auxiliary support areas absorb overcrowded conditions more readily than others (e.g. layout, visibility, size.). Contrary to literature search, staff do not support use of partitions in dayrooms to reduce group size or to break up activities (supervision "blind spots").

Equipment and Materials

Overcrowding is viewed mostly as a *space* issue. However, shortage of equipment and materials can be as much of a problem. When resources are in short supply or simply not available, competition escalates and disgruntlement sets in, both in staff and residents.

Weather

Adverse weather conditions are more likely to heighten tension during overcrowded conditions than during normal circumstances. There is lack of opportunity for large muscle activities. Room dampness, adverse weather conditions, mood effects, and limited outdoor movement/activities will reduce the illusion of spaciousness. One manager commented that the "long, wet winters" can be more dangerous than the "long, hot summers."

Personal Space

Individual private/personal space needs will vary according to sex, age, socio-economic level, race, etc. Line staff reported that privacy is more of an issue with girls than it is with boys. Preventing theft of personal items will prevent a lot of trouble. Some staff felt that privacy and personal space needs may vary by socio-economic level or ethnic culture. A reduction in shower time was frequently mentioned as an effect of overcrowding. The longer a person is permitted to shower, the better he will feel. There is relief—less tension. A shortage of hot water and long lines of minors waiting their turn will tend to require shortening of the shower time.

Solutions

The following recommendations offer methods to relieve the adverse effects of overcrowding, specifically as they relate to space:

- Prefer "sleepers" in dayroom for direct supervision to double-bunking single occupancy rooms.*
- Limit "sleepers" to 6-8 minors in an open area.**
- Secure control centers and back-up staff are essential.
- Allow minors outside view and movement.
- Protect minors' property.
- Install night lights for better observation to and from units and activity buildings at night.
- Partition dining space to feed in smaller groups thus increasing control.
- Allow short night visits to supplement regular visiting days. Parents may not object to shorter visiting periods at night compared to Sunday visits.
- Develop multiple use of available space.
- Administration should develop a plan for the facility to handle overcrowding.
- Inventory space to ensure optimum usage.
- Increase budget by formula, i.e., for clothing, food, recreation equipment, supplies and bedding, to accommodate anticipated population increases.

*Some task force members preferred double-bunking in single occupancy rooms based on physical plant layout, supervision and monitoring capability, space, etc.

**Suggestion of line staff.

SUPERVISION

Staff attention is more divided—there is more to watch; dayroom usage increases; problems are greater proportionally than the increase in population when overcrowding exists. There is a tendency to reduce the "free flow" of residents, restrict the asking of questions by minors during certain peak activity periods, increase room lockup, and generally

increase control and strictness during these times. Staff report less familiarity with the minors, and thus uncertainty as to potential problems. Rule enforcement must be stronger.

There can be a constant demand on staff with many things going on at the same time. Housekeeping needs increase because of increased population. Staff felt that supervision problems multiply in much greater proportion than the population.

Increased numbers of detainees require increased movement to and from court, interviews with probation staff and attorneys, doctors appointments, visiting area, etc. This was frequently mentioned by staff as an overcrowding problem. Unit staff must keep track of more minors being distributed about the facility while still overseeing the units' activities. Program routine may be disturbed, more time is spent waiting or standing around, or being late, and in some larger facilities a backlog of minors in the receiving area awaiting transfer to a unit, transportation, and processing.

One manager noted that staff may have a tendency to allow "things to slide" because of large group size and influence. It may be a choice of disturbing the entire group to deal with a minor infraction. Larger groups, especially if there is a shortage of staff, can be intimidating. Less staff interaction with minors, less familiarity, and stronger group pressure also contribute to the potential of staff intimidation and uncertainty.

Solutions

Specific to supervision during periods of overcrowding, the following recommendations were offered:

- Distribute residents throughout the facility to those units best equipped to handle population excesses.*
- Place the most tractable minor in the least controlled environment.
- Spread group in various activities—do not allow group to congregate in small areas.
- During peak periods allow less movement in dayroom, require some residents to be seated, e.g., T.V., table games.
- Slow things down; this does not mean "dawdling." Repeat yourself, be deliberate, make sure instructions are understood. Develop small groups within the larger group. This will reduce confusion.
- Defuse interpersonal conflicts quickly; do not allow conflict to spread.
- If possible, increase population gradually to become accustomed to new level of supervision needs.
- Talk to minors individually (allow special times) or in groups as much as possible. Circulate more—be accessible and visible; staff spend less time in control center.
- Be conscious of noise level.
- Expand receiving area or regulate those intakes which can be scheduled (weekenders, commitments) and rearrange appointments and interviews to the best advantage.

* Some task force members recommend housing the excess residents in a specific unit (or more if necessary), rather than distributing the minors throughout the facility. This would be less disruptive to the facility and also facilitate special programs and staffing.

STAFF

Worker performance is the key to successful program during periods of overcrowding. As one worker in Los Angeles Juvenile Hall explained, "Basically it's the same job, you just have to work harder, be alert and know what you are doing."

Morale and burnout is critical, according to reports. Staff can handle overcrowding without noticeable bad effects to a point. Being unable to see relief adds to staff morale problems. Extremely adverse conditions will inhibit staff from working extra hours for additional financial benefits. Fatigue can be monitored by staff attitude toward job, morale, absenteeism, tardiness, quarrels between staff, and less patience with the minors. Administration should be especially sensitive to this during overcrowded times.

The use of intermittent staff vs. overtime pay to regular employees was frequently mentioned as an issue in meeting coverage needs of an overcrowded institution. Aside from the pay differential factor, those interviewed favored use of trained intermittent staff. Shift hours may be varied to meet supervision and program needs such as coverage during evening activities, periods of increased movement of minors and special programs. A stabilized work force is essential during overcrowding.

Both line staff and management felt additional staff being placed in a living unit may not improve supervision. More staff watching the same areas in an already crowded situation may not significantly benefit the operation.

Solutions

Specific to staffing during periods of overcrowding, the following recommendations were offered:

- Preference is to use intermittent trained employees; limit overtime employee hours to protect against fatigue and "burnout."
- Schedule to meet program needs and peak periods of activity (recreation, movement, intake processing, special activities, visiting and meals).
- Develop special activities and programs (suggestions: contest, intramural sports, tournaments and holiday activities and volunteer programs).
- Special training in stress reduction/group supervision techniques through Standard and Training in Corrections (STC) including back-up staff.
- Plan for and define task of additional staff to ensure impact on overcrowded conditions.
- Administration should arrange staff days off as much to their liking as possible. This will help relieve pressure on staff. Also, limit work days to a 5-day work week; a 6-day work week is tough. Back-to-back shifts and calling staff back to work at odd hours causes fatigue.
- Administrative support is extremely important. Explain overcrowding trends, budget, plans for staffing, and special efforts to alleviate overcrowded conditions.

PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

Two major patterns of change influencing program and activities are: 1) the tendency to become more restrictive and highly regimented and 2) overburdening resources that may already be in short supply. As a result, programs may be reduced or even curtailed due to overcrowding pressures—at a time when they are most needed to diminish tension and adversity. In reviewing the comments of those interviewed, emphasis was placed on the need for increased control. Often this equated with “room time,” not new activities or programs. Some line staff felt alternatives were not built in to meet overcrowding and they were limited to a conventional program and schedule.

Classification

When overcrowded, the programming and housing of minors becomes an issue of where space is available rather than matching minors to resources and programs. Most agreed that a good classification system is essential when overcrowded conditions exist, e.g., separate violent from nonviolent, determine security levels, gang affiliations, special supervision needs.

Sick Call/Illness Complaints

Sick call or illness complaints will increase as tension on living units increases. It was mentioned that visits to the nurse may increase when the minors are seeking personalized attention because unit staff are too busy to give them the attention they want. A backlog of medical examinations may occur due to increased volume.

Orientation of New Admissions

Overcrowding may result in minors not being properly oriented as to program opportunities, rules, expectations, and a proper explanation of their status at a time when this is even *more* important to do.

Solutions

Recommendations relating specifically to program activities include the following:

- Develop an institutional program plan to relieve effects of overcrowding by rotating minors through various activities in classrooms, dayroom and activity areas, gymnasiums, field areas, and multiple purpose rooms.
- Design programs to dissipate energy and/or boredom.
- Expand evening program in outdoor field area or patio/yard adjacent to living unit.
- Balance need for control against program and activities. Limit activities only to level security requires.
- Design program to accommodate smaller groups.
- Make activities occur (schedule), e.g., recreation—especially important during periods of overcrowding.
- Suggested activities include contests, tournaments, special holiday activities, volunteer-sponsored activities and groups.
- Nurse visit units—staff supervision available and less movement and absence of staff from unit.



CONCLUSION

It should not be inferred that overcrowded conditions should become a way of life. Every effort should be expended to return the facility to within its population limits. Physical facilities, staff, and the youth suffer when overcrowding is allowed to grow and persist over a period of time. However, when overcrowding does occur, the effects must be recognized and steps taken to lessen tension and assure the health and safety of those detained and staff.

The results of both the literature search and field interviews do tend to corroborate each other. Certain themes do emerge. The solutions offered reflect actual experience of concerned administrators and staff.

We hope our study will be of help to you.

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Field Interviews

Preston School of Industry

Al Lawson, Assistant Superintendent
Paul Murphy, Program Administrator
Youth Counselor Staff, Fir Unit

Southern Reception Center and Clinic

George McKinney, Assistant Superintendent
Jim Wilke, Treatment Team Supervisor
James Xarhis, Head Group Supervisor
Youth Counselor Staff, Marshall Program

Los Angeles County Juvenile Hall

Richard Oren, Superintendent, Central Juvenile Hall
Calvin C. Hopkinson, Superintendent, Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall
Rubin Villagrana, Director, San Fernando Juvenile Hall
Youth Counselor Staff, Eight living units in the 3 facilities

END