



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PROBATION COMMISSION  
9150 EAST IMPERIAL HIGHWAY  
DOWNEY, CALIFORNIA 90242  
(562) 940-2754**



November 19, 2017

Terri L. McDonald  
Chief Probation Officer  
County of Los Angeles Probation Department  
9150 E. Imperial Hwy.  
Downey, CA 90242

Dear Chief McDonald,

We are writing you regarding our camp facilities and recent developments associated with the recurring sexual abuse of a female minor in one of our camp facilities. Without a doubt, we know you and your leadership staff share concern about these revelations just as the Board of Supervisors and members of the Probation Commission does.

As you know, the Los Angeles County Probation Commission has a duty to serve as an advisory oversight body the Chief Probation Officer and the Probation Department under Article IV, Section 14 of the Los Angeles County Charter. We are fulfilling our duty through this official correspondence to address the conditions that have precipitated the abuse. As this still may be an on-going criminal investigation, we will refrain from seeking information about the individuals involved. We would like to focus on four areas: culture, line supervision, failures to report and physical environmental issues.

There has been a recurring, systemic cultural problem that has existed long before you took leadership of the Department. The Commission has been witnesses to accounts repeatedly demonstrating a lack of engagement by supervisors and line officers. Apathy and failures to report or properly supervise were at the core of the serial criminal activity by this perpetrator and others who have abused minors in our camps and facilities. We know you and your leadership staff are aware of the problem. Hopefully you and your executive staff are working diligently to implement training programs on ethics and supervision. We know it will take time and consistency to reach all levels of the Department. The Probation Commission supports your efforts to improve the culture of the Department. One would hope all staff will instill the values of service and ethical behavior which includes the requirement to report activity and offenses without the fear of retribution.

Clearly, one supervisor failed to meet their duty and obligation to thoroughly report allegations of abuse. The underlying issue is the mindset of the supervisor who indicated friendship was more important than doing the job of supervisor.

**Commissioners**

Joe Gardner-President,

Hon. Jan Levine (Ret)-1st Vice President, Daniel Seaver-2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Donald Meredith-Sergeant at Arms,  
Azael Martinez-Sonoqui, Cyn Yamashiro, Esq., Jacqueline Caster, Esq. Jo Kaplan, Esq. Olivia E. Mitchell, Peter Shutan,  
Zachary Hoover, Hon. Betsy Butler (Ret.), Hon.Alex Saab, Esq.

***Rebuild Lives and Provide for Healthier and Safer Communities***



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Moreover, the number of Probation employees who witnessed suspicious behavior, and received information about the sexual abuse of a child, yet failed to report the conduct to law enforcement, speaks volumes to the need for enhanced training on mandatory reporting.

Many Probation Commissioners have heard Department representatives explain away misconduct with statements like "it is a training issue." We hope these allegations cause the leadership to look deeper into the culture of the Department and not limit the inquiry to superficial band-aids like "training." This terrible series of incidents suggests the Department needs a wholesale review of its hiring, discipline, and internal investigation processes.

We ask that greater consideration and attention be made to require all line supervisors be trained on professional relationships in the workplace, how to investigate personnel issues, identifying risk management issues, and be cognizant of the liability to the organization for failing to act.

Finally, we ask you to consider reviewing the "Al Jones" reward system. We have noticed during inspections that the structures used as stores are detached and placed in isolated areas of our facilities. We would urge you to consider moving them to prominent areas where employees and supervisors can closely monitor them. We also ask that no minor ever be left alone with a single staff member.

Please plan to have the heads of these departments prepare a briefing for our commission before March 2018.

We would like to thank you in advance for reviewing this letter of concern and recommendations to improve the Department. We know you and your staff may have already considered many of these issues and are working on implementing programs to resolve them. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss any of these issues and recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Gardner, 5<sup>th</sup> District Commissioner and President

Betsy Butler, 1<sup>st</sup> District Commissioner

Cyn Yamashiro, 2<sup>nd</sup> District Commissioner

c: Board of Supervisors, Probation Commission

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