

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**San Joaquin County Juvenile Hall Agrees to Reforms***Continued Success in Effort to Improve Conditions in California Juvenile Halls*

(June 18, 2008) – In another success in the ongoing effort to improve conditions in California juvenile halls, San Joaquin County’s hall has agreed to comprehensive reforms to end two years of litigation.

In a Consent Decree approved by the County’s Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, June 17, and to be presented to the County Superior Court today, the San Joaquin hall agrees to reforms in essentially all facets of its operations.

“California law expressly requires that a juvenile hall not be treated as a penal institution but rather be ‘a safe and supportive homelike environment,’” said Richard Ulmer, a partner at Latham & Watkins. “But many juvenile halls fall far short of their legal obligations.” Added Ulmer: “We appreciate San Joaquin County’s willingness to face up to the problems in its juvenile hall and to make necessary changes to comply with the law.”

“The reforms to San Joaquin County’s juvenile hall will benefit everyone,” said Donald Specter of the Prison Law Office. “Youth will feel safe, which will make it more likely that they will benefit from the rehabilitative programs offered by the County.”

Among reforms agreed to by the San Joaquin County Juvenile Hall are:

- Permanent closure of the “Administrative Segregation” unit, where teen-agers were held in isolation for 23 or more hours a day.
- Creation of a rehabilitation program to lower recidivism rates.
- Installation of video cameras to monitor how Hall staff treat juveniles.
- Training in alternative intervention to lessen staff use of physical force, pepper spray and handcuffs.
- Assurance that juveniles who are taking psychotropic medications in the community continue receiving them in the Hall – and that parental consents are sought.
- Assurance that medical needs are promptly attended to.
- A mandatory school attendance policy.
- Improvements in the Hall’s heating, air-conditioning and hot water availability.

- Continuation of a new grievance policy.

The settlement with San Joaquin County is part of an ongoing effort begun in 2000 to improve conditions for teen-agers incarcerated in California's troubled juvenile justice system. In 2005, litigation forced the state to sign a consent decree agreeing to transform the California Youth Authority into the kind of rehabilitative model that has dramatically lowered recidivism rates in other states.

During the CYA litigation, legal advocates learned that conditions in many California county juvenile halls were as bad as those in the CYA. Earlier this year, the Corrections Standards Authority – the state agency charged with investigating county juvenile halls – agreed to a permanent injunction compelling the CSA to uphold statutory deadlines. Those deadlines require juvenile halls to comply with state laws governing conditions of confinement.

Lawyers from Latham & Watkins, the Prison Law Office, Chavez & Gertler, and Bingham McCutchen also have a pending lawsuit against the Sacramento County Juvenile Hall, and contemplate further actions against other juvenile halls around the state.

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