

PRISON LAW OFFICE –January 31, 2005
PRESS RELEASE ON REFORM OF CALIFORNIA YOUTH AUTHORITY

The California Youth Authority (CYA) and the Prison Law Office today reached a historic agreement on a schedule to put the juvenile justice system in this state on the road to reform by the end of this year and create a system that is rehabilitative and provides a therapeutic environment for the juvenile offenders committed by the courts.

Both parties agreed that because the CYA “has committed to transforming California’s juvenile system” and the Remedial Plans are dependent on that new system they cannot be submitted by the deadline set forth in the Consent Degree.

Under the conditions of the agreement, (see the attached document) the CYA agrees to meet several specific deadlines for delivering various remedial plans to the court beginning on February 4 and concluding November 30 of this year. The plans will address several areas including medical care, educational services, mental health care, disability services, sex offender treatment, and ward safety and welfare (formerly General Corrections).

“With this historic agreement we are moving California’s juvenile justice system forward to better serve the people of this state by making our institutions better and safer and ultimately our communities and neighborhoods safer,” said Walt Allen, Director of the CYA.

“We’re thrilled to be part of this exciting move forward as we work to develop a system that provide the treatment and rehabilitation the juvenile offenders need and which makes all of us safer,” said Sara Norman, staff attorney for the Prison Law Office.

In addition to providing the remedial plans to the court, the CYA also agrees to implement several immediate changes in its operations including implementing an “open programming model” at N.A. Chaderjian Youth Correctional Facility and at Heman G. Stark Youth Correctional Facility by March 1 with full implementation of the plan by June 1. This plan will “restore safe general population programming to ensure that wards are out of their rooms/cells daily for educational, vocational, and treatment programming as well as meals and recreation.” This open programming model will be extended to all other institutions by May 2.

Several other changes are also outlined in the court agreement including modifying the department’s lockdown protocols, provision of services to wards in Special Management Programs, elimination of temporary detention as punishment for behavior.

With the approval of the plaintiff’s attorneys, the Department will also hire an expert consultant in the area of custodial treatment of juvenile offenders. This expert along with the Special Master, the plaintiff’s attorneys and the department will lead process for changing the California Youth Authority into the rehabilitative model all parties are working to create.

