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State Awards \$17.5 Million for New County Juvenile Probation Center

The California Board of State and Community Corrections has awarded \$17.5 million to the County of Orange to build a multi-purpose rehabilitation facility at the Juvenile Hall and Youth Leadership Academy campus in Orange, including a visitation center, meeting rooms and a gymnasium.

The funding was the most received among eight counties splitting nearly \$80 million to improve housing and program space for youthful offenders.

The County is providing the land for the new center, as well as in-kind resources and cash, toward the total project cost of \$23.3 million. The amount has been budgeted in the County's strategic plans.

"We are working as a County to address the heart of the fact that the literature and academic studies show that kids have a better chance of turning around from mistakes like getting involved in drugs if their families are anchored in their rehabilitation," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Todd Spitzer, whose district includes Juvenile Hall. "Hopefully this project will assist families in helping their youth avoid a life of crime."

Juvenile Hall is operated by the Orange County Probation Department for youthful offenders aged 12 to 20. The Youth Leadership Academy is a 120-bed juvenile detention facility that shares a school, library, recreation fields and kitchen with Juvenile Hall.

The state funds will be used to replace the outdated Visiting Center, including access to free parking. The gymnasium will allow for large indoor exercise space. New program space will provide rooms to accommodate large family and community events, as well as offer a variety of vocational, recreational and social activities.

The new facility will be designed toward juvenile justice best practices, which encourages that facilities be close to youths' families and communities, be accessible for visiting and be designed to minimize the institutional feel as a way of encouraging positive behavior. Additional staff needs are not anticipated.

Other counties receiving funding for juvenile facility improvements included Riverside, San Diego, Santa Cruz, Tulare, El Dorado, Yuba and Kings.

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