



COUNTY OF YOLO

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Probation Department Management and Business Practice Review Underway

(Woodland, CA) – This week, Yolo County received a Grand Jury report concerning the Probation Department’s management of contracts for risk assessment software and training.

“We value the oversight process offered by grand juries and certainly find the issues highlighted in this report troubling,” said Yolo County Administrator Patrick Blacklock. “To the extent our policies and procedures need strengthening; we will apply the most modern practices accordingly.”

The contracts in question were entered into with Assessments.com in March of 2010, as part of ongoing implementation of evidence-based programming to develop and maintain a risk screening and needs assessment system for the management, supervision and treatment of offenders, as well as evaluation of the system’s efficacy. A non-competitive bid process was utilized, under provisions allowed for in the law, and based on Yolo County’s past experiences and the experiences of others in the field throughout the state and nation. At the time, there were very few alternative firms that produced such risk screening and needs assessment tools, and Assessments.com was a recognized leader and innovator in the industry. As a result, many counties in California contracted with Assessments.com, including the Northern Consortium of 15 counties.

With the advent of Assembly Bill 109 (public safety realignment) in 2011, and more firms entering the field of risk screening and needs assessment, there is now a greater opportunity to cast a broader net and use a competitive bid process in contracting for these tools and services going forward.

Meanwhile, upon resignation of former Chief Probation Officer Marjorie Rist in July 2012, Yolo County contracted with retired Calaveras County Chief Probation Officer Michael Krietich to review the organizational climate in the Probation Department and advise the county on leadership qualities needed in the next Chief Probation Officer. At the same time, Interim Chief Probation Officer Marlon Yarber was appointed.

As part of an overall review of the Probation Department’s management and business practices, including contract procedures, Interim Chief Probation Officer Yarber recently asked the Auditor-Controller to audit payroll practices, another area highlighted in the Grand Jury’s report. Additionally, County Administrator Blacklock has requested that the audit be expanded to ensure appropriate procurement and contract administration practices are in place.

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