



**JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION
ANNUAL INSPECTION
JUVENILE HALLS AND CAMPS
MARGARET J. KEMP CAMP – G.I.R.L.S. PROGRAM
2024-2025**

FACILITY NAME: Margaret J Kemp Camp – G.I.R.L.S Program

FACILITY TYPE: Girls Detention Camp

CAPACITY: 30

FACILITY ADDRESS: 400 Paul Scannell Drive, San Mateo, CA 94402

FACILITY PHONE NUMBER: 650-312-8970

INSPECTION PERIOD: July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

DATE OF LAST INSPECTION: August 6, 2024

FACILITY CLOSURE

The Margaret J. Kemp Camp G.I.R.L.S. residential program, also known as “Camp Kemp,” ceased operations on October 23, 2023. The facility remained closed throughout this inspection period.

BACKGROUND

The Margaret J. Kemp Camp G.I.R.L.S. Program was launched in 2001 as a gender-responsive residential program operated by the County’s Probation Department. Intended as an alternative to incarceration in juvenile hall, it incorporated restorative justice practices and structured programming to support treatment, accountability, and community reintegration for girls. Since this facility ceased operations in 2023, the Commission has made several formal recommendations regarding how the site could be repurposed to continue serving system-impacted youth and to fill existing gaps in services. The Commission remains deeply concerned that, two years after its closure, the Camp Kemp facility continues to sit vacant at an estimated cost to the County of \$154,209.67 per month and \$1,850,516.04 annually, while so many of our system-impacted youth are in crisis and lack adequate housing, substance abuse treatment, and mental health services.

This includes youth with long-term juvenile hall commitments who remain detained until their eighteenth birthday, at which point probation supervision and critical services are terminated. As a result, many youth exit custody without access to the treatment, programs, and supports required for successful reentry.



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In 2024, 80 percent of the youth whose probation was terminated upon their release from juvenile hall at or around their eighteenth birthday were in the County jail facing new adult charges within nine months of release. That figure has since risen to 100 percent, meaning every youth released under these circumstances has subsequently entered the adult criminal justice system.

PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2023-2024 inspection cycle, the Commission made formal recommendations for repurposing this facility. When formulating our recommendations, the Commission considered three primary factors:

- The current unmet needs of system-impacted and vulnerable youth in San Mateo County
- The location, layout, and existing amenities available at Camp Kemp
- How quickly and cost-effectively can the site be repurposed to benefit youth

Based on these criteria, the Commission continues to recommend that the facility be repurposed in one of the following ways:

- **Inpatient Substance Abuse Treatment Program for Youth:** San Mateo County does not currently have a single inpatient substance abuse treatment bed for youth, a critical gap that has persisted despite the ongoing opioid epidemic. The need for youth-specific treatment is urgent and profound.
- **Transitional Housing Program for Unhoused Youth:** With the closure of StarVista’s Daybreak program earlier this year, the County lost its only emergency housing option that was exclusively for youth. The number of unhoused young people continues to grow, with many sleeping in cars, on couches, or in the streets. A transitional housing program at Camp Kemp would provide immediate, safe, and stable housing for these youth.
- **Least Restrictive Program for Youth Committed to the Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF):** San Mateo County currently lacks a designated SYTF Least Restrictive Program, even as the SYTF population has grown at a higher rate than originally anticipated. Public safety demands a proactive, comprehensive approach that provides step-down and reentry opportunities for these youth to transition successfully back into the community.



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CURRENT STATUS

YOUTH CRISIS HEALING CAMPUS

On October 7, 2025, the Board of Supervisors approved a consent calendar resolution authorizing BHRS to apply for grant funding through the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program to develop a Youth Crisis Healing Campus at the former Camp Kemp facility. The resolution authorized submission of an application for up to 25 million dollars in state grant funds under the Behavioral Health Infrastructure Bond Act of 2024.

Additional details regarding the services to be offered at the proposed Healing Campus and the youth populations it will serve remain unclear. The Commission also notes that the Camp Kemp facility is located in a transportation desert, with no public transit options available. Should the project move forward, access for youth and families will be significantly limited unless transportation resources are integrated into the project plan.