REPORT BY THE

AUDITOR GENERAL

OF CALIFORNIA

A FOLLOW-UP REVIEW OF THE PLACEMENT OF DELINQUENT MINORS IN THE VISIONQUEST PROGRAM

P-780

FEBRUARY 1989

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Acting Auditor General

February 2, 1989 P-780

Honorable Elihu M. Harris, Chairman
Members, Joint Legislative
Audit Committee
State Capitol, Room 2148
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members:

The Office of the Auditor General presents a report prepared under contract by Arthur Young concerning a follow-up review of the placement of delinquent minors in the VisionQuest program.

Respectfully submitted,

KURT R. SJOBERG
Acting Auditor General

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ARTHUR YOUNG

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SUMMARY

RESULTS IN BRIEF

In June, 1986 the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) completed a report, *California Needs Better Control Over The Out–Of–State Placement of Delinquent Minors*, that reviewed California's procedures for placing delinquent minors in out–of–state facilities, including VisionQuest National Ltd. (VisionQuest). This report is a follow–up to that previous report. In addition, we reviewed information on the recidivism of California youths placed in VisionQuest. We have found that the state has improved its control over out–of–state placements to VisionQuest since the last report, but that the following two problem areas still exist requiring further action by the Department of Social Services to clarify the eligibility of minors in VisionQuest for Aid to Families with Dependent Children–Foster Care (AFDC–FC) funds:

- The license status of mobile interstate programs remains unclear; and
- Guidelines for determining AFDC–FC eligibility of youths over age 18 have not been distributed to all counties.

BACKGROUND

VisionQuest is an Arizona–based program for juvenile delinquents that operates group homes, wilderness camps, and wagon trains. Through FY 1987–88, California counties have spent approximately $25 million over seven years, through FY 1987–88, for placing approximately 780 minors in VisionQuest. Over ninety percent of these funds were provided by the state through the AFDC–FC program. The Department of Social Services (the Department) administers the AFDC–FC program, including the establishment

of eligibility requirements. Counties must verify that their placements meet AFDC–FC eligibility requirements to receive partial reimbursement for placement costs from the state. In addition, counties and the Department must follow Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children procedures for placements into all out–of–state facilities, such as VisionQuest.

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

The License Status of Mobile Interstate Programs Remains Unclear

The OAG's 1986 report on VisionQuest found that the Department had paid AFDC–FC funds for minors in either unlicensed or not clearly licensed VisionQuest facilities located outside California. State law stipulates that AFDC–FC can support a delinquent minor placed in a group home only if that group home is licensed. The Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (AAICPC) regulates the interstate placement of minors. Since the 1986 report the Department has implemented AAICPC regulations that should ensure AFDC–FC payments do not support minors in unlicensed VisionQuest facilities. However, the license status of mobile interstate programs remains unclear. As a result, youths may not be eligible for AFDC–FC support when VisionQuest programs travel outside Arizona.

The Department of Social Services Has Not Distributed Guidelines to All Counties for Determining AFDC–FC Eligibility of Youths Over Age 18

The OAG's 1986 report found four cases in which minors did not meet eligibility requirements for AFDC–FC support after age 18. The OAG recommended that the Department clarify guidelines for counties to use in evaluating

AFDC–FC eligibility requirements in this area. Since the 1986 report the Department has clarified AFDC–FC eligibility requirements for only one county (Alameda) and this improved its control over AFDC–FC expenditures. However, other counties may be violating the Department's regulations and claiming AFDC–FC support for ineligible youths. In our seven case audits from Alameda and San Diego Counties we found no instance of AFDC–FC support for ineligible youths over age 18, however, four of those cases were from the county that had the benefit of the Department's clarification of its regulations.

The Department of Social Services Has Implemented Other Recommendations from the 1986 Report

The OAG's 1986 report contained three recommendations that the Department has adequately implemented. First, the OAG recommended that the Department define "California Youth Authority alternative." The Department issued an All County Letter which included clarification of the case documentation requirements for verifying that an out–of–state placement is an alternative to the California Youth Authority. Second, the OAG recommended that the Department audit VisionQuest rates. The Department responded that it is not cost–effective to audit rates of out–of–state facilities. However, the Department is required to audit VisionQuest's rates within the next two years as a result of recent state legislation. Third, the OAG recommended that the Department establish standards to ensure that minors placed out of state have the same protections as minors placed in state. The Department is in the final process of adopting regulations that will afford the same personal rights to out–of–state placements that are currently available to in–state placements.

Recidivism of VisionQuest Youth from California

Recidivism is the tendency to return to criminal behavior after placement in a rehabilitation program. To measure the recidivism of California youths after placement in VisionQuest, we compiled the criminal records of 462 youths who had been released from VisionQuest for at least six months. We found that 143 (31%) of the total sample were arrested at least once within six months following release, and 45 (10%) were incarcerated in state prison or the Youth Authority during that time. The total sample also included 64 youths who had been released from the program between two and three years. Of that group, 10 (17%) were convicted of a violent crime or robbery. These results are understated by an unknown amount due to difficulties in construction of complete criminal histories from various data sources, and the fact that this study did not include research of criminal histories out-of-state or local police department arrests which may not have been included in central county juvenile files. Also, we did not attempt to compare the recidivism of California youths placed in VisionQuest with youths placed in other programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Social Services should take the following actions:

- The Department should clarify AFDC–FC eligibility requirements regarding the license status of mobile interstate programs such as the VisionQuest wagon trains.
- The Department should implement all recommended AAICPC procedures to ensure

adequate monitoring of VisionQuest programs traveling interstate.

- The Department should notify all counties of its clarification of AFDC–FC eligibility requirements for youths over age 18.

AGENCY COMMENTS

The Department of Social Services agrees that AFDC-FC eligibility requirements regarding the status of mobile interstate programs need clarification. The Department also agrees that all recommended AAICPC procedures should be implemented to ensure adequate monitoring of VisionQuest programs traveling interstate. Finally, the Department agrees that it should notify all counties regarding its clarification of AFDC-FC eligibility requirements for youths over eighteen placed out-of-state. The Department is planning corrective actions in all three of these areas.

The Arizona Department of Economic Security filed a response which clarified its position that (1) VisionQuest is properly licensed in Arizona, and (2) that VisionQuest wagon trains must comply with Arizona's mobile program licensing standards while in other states. The response does not specifically address the other related study issue regarding a need to clarify the licensing status (in California) of mobile interstate programs. The Arizona DES also clarified how VisionQuest rates are negotiated in Arizona, and the text of this final report has been amended to include this clarification.

VisionQuest's response also commented on its current licensure status in Arizona and promised cooperation in any efforts to clarify the status of its out-of-state mobile program. VisionQuest also states its cooperation with required AAICPC procedures to ensure adequate monitoring of mobile programs traveling interstate.

The Alameda County Probation Department was provided with a copy of the draft study report but declined to issue a formal response.

The San Diego County Department of Probation disagrees with the study results for one of the recidivism criteria used, i.e., elapsed time between release from the VisionQuest program and first arrest. Using more extensive records searches than were employed in this study, San Diego reported a higher rate of recidivism for the first 100 of 322 San Diego youths assigned to VisionQuest as compared to the Arthur Young rates. Applying this information to the total study population, San Diego estimates that the study results for time to first arrest are understated by "at least 23 percent" for only the San Diego County population. Arthur Young agrees that some understatement of the study results exists for this specific criteria, but does not agree that it is as high as 23 percent in this county. Information on the San Diego results of more extensive data searches is provided in Section IV of the report.

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile Court Process

If a minor in California violates laws that define a crime, the court may adjudge the minor a ward of the court and make reasonable orders for his or her care, supervision, custody, and support. The judge may, for example, remove the minor from the custody of his or her parents. In addition, the judge may order the minor placed in a residential care facility such as a group home or juvenile ranch. VisionQuest National, Ltd. (VisionQuest) is a type of residential care facility in which the judge may place delinquent minors.

Juvenile court proceedings include a county probation officer who is responsible for preparing a study of the minor with information pertinent to the disposition of the case. The probation officer also makes recommendations to the judge regarding disposition of the case. After disposition, the probation officer supervises the minor's care, ensures that the court's orders are followed, and makes subsequent recommendations as necessary to the court to provide the minor with the most appropriate care. To fulfill his or her supervisory responsibilities, the probation officer must make at least one visit every six months to VisionQuest to make personal contact with minors in their care.

Department of Social Services and
Residential Care Facilities

The California Community Care Facilities Act, enacted in 1973, gives the Department of Social Services (the Department) responsibility to license, inspect, and set rates for residential care facilities serving minors in California. To be licensed a facility must meet established health and safety standards. To protect the health and safety of minors, the Department can initiate administrative action against facilities that fail to meet licensing laws and regulations. In addition, the Department sets rates for each California facility based on allowable costs as defined by the act.

Except for one group home facility in Oakland, VisionQuest facilities for California youths are located in Arizona. As a result, the Department neither licenses nor sets rates for these Arizona VisionQuest facilities because they are located out–of–state. The Department does license and set rates for the VisionQuest group home in Oakland.

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) (Part 3, Title 4, of the California Civil Code) contains the provisions that regulate the placement of minors in out–of–state facilities. The ICPC is an agreement among states that have enacted similar laws to ensure that minors placed outside their home state are placed in appropriate facilities and are properly supervised. The Department administers the ICPC for California.

The Department also administers the Aid to Families with Dependent Children–Foster Care (AFDC–FC) program. AFDC–FC provides funding for minors who have been removed from their parent's custody and placed in residential care facilities. The Department controls AFDC–FC expenditures by establishing and interpreting eligibility requirements. Based on these requirements, each county department of social services is responsible for determining AFDC–FC eligibility for a particular minor based on an application submitted by the county probation department. AFDC–FC eligibility requirements are distinct and separate from the Department's licensing, rate setting, and out–of-state placement regulations discussed previously.

The VisionQuest Program

VisionQuest National, Ltd., founded in 1973, is a private, for–profit corporation that contracts with various public agencies throughout the United States to provide services to troubled youths. The VisionQuest program targets male and female youths age ten to twenty–one who generally have a history of adjustment problems in relation to family, school, and peer groups. Most, but not all, VisionQuest youths have been adjudicated delinquents and have had prior placements in other residential care facilities.

VisionQuest uses residential group homes, wilderness camps, and wagon trains to care for minors. Minors are usually placed in a

wilderness camp upon arriving at VisionQuest and stay there for three to six months. A central element of wilderness camp activities is preparing for and completing a "quest" – a physically challenging trip lasting up to three weeks that typically involves wilderness travel on foot.

After completing the wilderness camp most youths join a wagon train for approximately three to four months. Youths and counselors travel throughout several western states using horses and approximately five to eleven covered wagons pulled by mules. Each wagon train also has a complement of support vehicles. Youths learn to care for the animals and maintain the wagon train equipment.

In both the wilderness camps and on the wagon trains, minors live with staff house parents in tents called "tipis." Much of the group and individual counseling takes place in the tipi family. In addition, the wilderness camps and wagon trains include an educational component for all youths to improve their scholastic abilities.

Minors finish their commitment to VisionQuest in one of the program's residential group homes. Live–in staff counsel each youth and help prepare them to leave VisionQuest. Most minors have been in the program approximately twelve months by the time they leave.

Participation by Counties in VisionQuest

During fiscal years 1981–82 through 1987–88, eleven California Counties placed 780 minors in VisionQuest. Table 1 summarizes the number of California minors placed in VisionQuest.

Table 1

CALIFORNIA PLACEMENTS IN VISIONQUEST

	Fiscal Year							
County	81–82	82–83	83–84	84–85	85–86	86–87	87–88	Total
Alameda	–	–	13	42	42	46	39	182
San Diego (a)	79	93	61	20	56	77	80	466
Other (b)	3	–	3	2	11	22	91	132
Total	82	93	77	64	109	145	210	780

(a) Includes one placement made May 16, 1981.
(b) Includes Butte, El Dorado, Lake, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, Sonoma, Sutter, and Yolo Counties.

Source: County probation departments and VisionQuest.

Counties have placed minors in VisionQuest at a total cost over a seven–year period of approximately $25 million. Under state AFDC–FC program regulations, the state reimburses counties for 95% of the direct costs of VisionQuest and other for–profit group homes.[1] The AFDC–FC

[1] VisionQuest is only eligible for state AFDC–FC funds and is not eligible for federal AFDC–FC funds because it operates for–profit. Non–profit programs are eligible for

program does not reimburse counties for incidental placement costs, including clothing, travel to and from the program, and medical expenses. As a result, counties pay slightly more than 5% of total placement costs. Table 2 summarizes total placement costs for California youths placed in VisionQuest.

Table 2

CALIFORNIA STATE AND COUNTY FUNDS PAID TO VISIONQUEST

County Funding Source	Fiscal Year 81–82	82–83	83–84	84–85	85–86	86–87	87–88	Total
	(Thousands of Dollars)							
Alameda								
State	–	–	–	1,140	1,239	1,862	1,473	5,714
County	–	–	1	66	70	104	83	324
Total	–	–	1	1,206	1,309	1,966	1,556	6,038
San Diego								
State	998	2,557	2,561	1,939	966	2,732	2,956	14,709
County	93	147	147	109	72	230	241	1,039
Total	1,091	2,704	2,708	2,048	1,038	2,962	3,197	15,748
Other (a)								
State	5	84	59	98	165	441	1,971	2,823
County	<1	4	5	10	11	30	192	252
Total	5	88	64	108	176	471	2,163	3,075
Total								
State	1,003	2,640	2,620	3,177	2,370	5,035	6,401	23,246
County	93	152	153	185	153	364	515	1,615
Grand Total	1,096	2,792	2,773	3,362	2,523	5,399	6,916	24,861

(a) Includes Butte, El Dorado, Lake, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, Sonoma, Sutter, and Yolo Counties.

Source: County departments of social services.

federal funds and receive 50%, 47.5%, and 2.5% of direct program costs from the federal, state, and county government, respectively.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

In June, 1986, the Office of the Auditor General issued a report titled *California Needs Better Control Over The Out–Of–State Placement of Delinquent Minors*, (P–535). The report concluded that the Department should improve its control over expenditures of AFDC–FC funds for out–of–state placements, and do a better job of ensuring the health and safety of minors placed in facilities outside California. This report is a follow–up to the previous OAG report. The objective here was to evaluate the Department's actions in response to the prior report. In addition, we reviewed information on the recidivism of California youths placed in VisionQuest.

To evaluate the Department's actions taken as a result of the 1986 OAG report we reviewed the Department's two written responses to the OAG, submitted six months and one year following the report. We interviewed Department officials and reviewed Department records to verify and update information contained in the responses. Our review of the Department included the Foster Care Branch that administers the AFDC–FC program, and the Interstate Placement Bureau that administers the ICPC.

We conducted ten case audits each from Alameda and San Diego Counties to verify actions taken by the Department since the previous report. The case audits were chosen randomly from a list of all minors

placed in the program after June 1, 1987, to allow the Department one year following the OAG report to implement the report's recommendations. At least three cases from each county were chosen in which the youth was over eighteen years old while in VisionQuest to test for compliance with AFDC–FC eligibility requirements for such youth. In addition, we interviewed Alameda and San Diego officials in probation and social services departments to review issues related to the report and to collect fiscal data.

We contacted Arizona's Departments of Economic Security, Department of Education, and Supreme Court to verify the status of VisionQuest's licenses, review Arizona funding eligibility requirements, and review Arizona's ICPC procedures.

We contacted VisionQuest officials to review their screening procedures and educational standards, including any changes to their program since the OAG report. We also verified VisionQuest's involvement in ICPC procedures.

The intent of our recidivism study was to report on the criminal activity of California youths placed in VisionQuest after release from the program. The recidivism study sample included all California youths released from VisionQuest before December 31, 1987, a total of 462 youths.

Limiting the sample in this manner ensured that we had at least a six month follow–up period to measure criminal activity after discharge from the program.

To measure recidivism, we used juvenile criminal history records from the counties, and adult criminal history records from the state Department of Justice (DOJ). The DOJ records do not include criminal activity that occurred outside California, and only in rare instances do county records include such data. In addition the DOJ estimates that they receive 75% to 85% of all reportable adult arrests from local law enforcement agencies. As a result, our recidivism results are understated by an unknown amount to the extent the youths in the sample engaged in criminal activity that was outside of the state, or that was not represented in the juvenile and DOJ files that we examined. Section IV includes an estimation of the bias in our results based on a more detailed study of a sub–sample of VisionQuest youths from San Diego.

We did not attempt to measure the relative effectiveness of the VisionQuest program or to compare the recidivism of California youths from VisionQuest with youths from other programs. The results of such comparisons would be difficult to interpret because of differences in the demographic, social, and criminal history characteristics of youths placed in VisionQuest versus youths placed in other programs. In Appendix B, we provide information on other recidivism studies of VisionQuest youth.

AUDIT RESULTS

I

THE LICENSE STATUS OF MOBILE INTERSTATE PROGRAMS REMAINS UNCLEAR

The Office of the Auditor General's 1986 report, *California Needs Better Control Over the Out–Of–State Placement of Delinquent Minors*, found that the Department of Social Services had paid AFDC–FC funds for minors in either unlicensed or not clearly licensed VisionQuest facilities located outside California. State law stipulates that AFDC–FC can support a delinquent minor placed in a group home only if that group home is licensed. The Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children regulates the interstate placement of minors. Since the report the Department has implemented AAICPC regulations that should ensure AFDC–FC payments do not support minors in unlicensed VisionQuest facilities. However, the license status of mobile interstate programs remains unclear. As a result, youths may not be eligible for AFDC–FC support when VisionQuest programs travel outside Arizona.

All VisionQuest Programs in Arizona or California are Currently Licensed

In sum, the Arizona Departments of Economic Security (DES) and Health Services have issued VisionQuest seventeen licenses for five types of facilities and programs. In addition, the California Department of Social Services has issued VisionQuest one license for one type of facility. Each license issued by both states is valid for one year. Table 3, below, summarizes VisionQuest's current Arizona and California licenses.

TABLE 3

VISIONQUEST LICENSES CURRENTLY APPROVED BY ARIZONA AND CALIFORNIA

Type of License	Number of Licenses
Arizona Licenses	
Group Care Agency	1
Mobile Program Agency	3
Satellite Home	7
Behavioral Health Services Agency	4
Unclassified Health Care Institution	2
Total	17
California Licenses	
Group Home	1

Source: Arizona Department of Economic Security, California Department of Social Services, and VisionQuest.

The wilderness camp and the two wagon trains operate under mobile program agency licensing regulations which were first adopted by DES in January, 1985. VisionQuest's California group home license is valid from June 28, 1988 to June 27, 1989. The home is located in Oakland and is licensed for up to six youths.

Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children Procedures

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) regulates the placement of minors in out–of–state programs such as VisionQuest. The ICPC requires that each member state appoint a compact administrator to coordinate compact activities within their jurisdiction. In California the compact administrator supervises the Interstate Placement Bureau (IPB), part of the Department of Social Services.

In March, 1986, the Department began requiring that county probation departments wishing to place a child outside the state must apply for approval through the IPB before the placement can be made. The IPB submits the application to the compact administrator in the appropriate receiving state. The receiving state compact administrator can grant approval only if the proposed placement does not appear contrary to the best interests of the child. The placement must also comply with all applicable

laws of the receiving state. Based on the decision of the receiving state, the IPB notifies the probation department if the proposed placement can proceed.

The Arizona compact administrator is located in the Arizona DES. Under Arizona law the Arizona compact administrator cannot approve a placement into an unlicensed facility. Upon receiving an ICPC application for a placement into Arizona, the compact administrator forwards the application to the licensing division of DES for a recommendation regarding the placement. The compact administrator reviews the licensing division's recommendation and ensures that ICPC placements into Arizona are made only to licensed facilities in compliance with Arizona law.

As part of our report we reviewed ten cases each from Alameda and San Diego Counties of VisionQuest placements. In every case audited we found that the Arizona compact administrator had approved and signed the appropriate ICPC form (form 100A) approving the placement. Based on our review of ICPC procedures and our case audits, the Department is able to reasonably ensure that California minors will only be placed in licensed VisionQuest facilities in Arizona.

The License Status of VisionQuest Programs that Travel Outside Arizona is Unclear and Monitoring is Inadequate

To receive AFDC–FC support, California state law requires that minors be placed in licensed programs. The OAG's 1986 report found that VisionQuest programs traveling outside Arizona were not licensed and therefore minors in those programs were not eligible for AFDC–FC support while traveling outside Arizona. Moreover, an unlicensed program raises the concern that the program is not properly monitored by and does not meet the standards of a licensing authority. The Department has neither clarified the license status of VisionQuest programs traveling interstate for the purposes of AFDC–FC eligibility, nor has it implemented all AAICPC reporting procedures to monitor these VisionQuest programs.

At the time of the OAG's 1986 report, the Arizona compact administrator was attaching the following statement to all ICPC approvals of placements to VisionQuest indicating that wagon trains were neither licensed nor monitored while those programs operate outside Arizona:

> The sending state acknowledges that while the State of Arizona may approve the Interstate compact of the placement of a child, the child may reside and/or travel outside Arizona for significant periods of time while participating in the VisionQuest high impact programs

> including, but not limited to, the Wilderness Experience, the Wagon Train and/or OceanQuest.
>
> Arizona does not supervise, monitor, nor license these programs while they are outside Arizona state boundaries.

Since the 1986 report, the Arizona compact administrator has deleted the last paragraph of the above statement and substituted the following:

> Arizona supervises, monitors and licenses all programs only while they are inside state boundaries. Interstate Compact Administrators are notified prior to any interstate travel and all out of state program travel is subject to Interstate Compact regulations.

Under ICPC statutes, the AAICPC has the authority to promulgate rules and regulations to implement the ICPC. The only applicable regulations issued by the AAICPC that we found regarding VisionQuest programs that travel interstate were guidelines contained in a letter from the AAICPC to VisionQuest dated May 8, 1985. The letter stated that VisionQuest should notify the compact administrator in the sending agency's state prior to a child embarking on a wagon train. The advance notice should include the intended route and duration of the journey.

The Department noted in its six–month response to the OAG's 1986 report that the IPB had implemented this reporting procedure. The Department also noted that it had implemented two other reporting procedures to improve the monitoring of VisionQuest youths. First, VisionQuest had to send copies of quarterly progress reports on each youth to the compact administrator. (The Department's regulations require that all group homes submit these reports to the sending agency, e.g. the county probation department.). Second, VisionQuest had to send monthly rosters of California youths indicating which program they are currently placed in, such as wilderness camp, wagon train, or residential.

In our review of IPB files we found that VisionQuest began providing quarterly reports and a monthly roster to the IPB in November, 1986. However, we found no evidence that VisionQuest provides advance notification to the IPB of California youths embarking on wagon trains. As a result, the Department is not monitoring California VisionQuest youth that travel interstate in accordance with guidelines established by both the AAICPC and itself.

Moreover, the license status of VisionQuest's wagon train programs with regard to AFDC–FC eligibility requirements remains ambiguous. AAICPC guidelines allow acceptance of the receiving state's standards for the purposes of determining AFDC–FC eligibility. However, Arizona does not apply consistent procedures in this area, as explained below.

Arizona law requires that for delinquent minors to receive state support they must be placed in a licensed program. In addition, emotionally handicapped youths may receive state support for education if they are in an approved education program. In either case, the applicable Arizona state agency can only license or approve VisionQuest programs while those programs operate within state boundaries.

The Arizona agency that provides financial support to Arizona youths in VisionQuest, the Administrative Office of the Courts of the Arizona Supreme Court, considers wagon trains licensed for the purposes of meeting their eligibility requirements when that program travels out–of–state. However, the Arizona Department of Education does not pay for education programs for youths that it supports while those youths are traveling outside Arizona on VisionQuest wagon trains. The department does not consider those programs approved under state laws and regulations while they operate outside Arizona.

The OAG's 1986 report found that California youths were not eligible for AFDC–FC support while those youths were on wagon trains traveling outside Arizona because the program was not licensed. We found no evidence that the Department has clarified the license status of VisionQuest programs traveling interstate since that report. Therefore, the Department still appears to be violating AFDC–FC eligibility requirements with regard to California youths on wagon trains traveling outside Arizona.

CONCLUSION

The Department has implemented ICPC procedures to ensure that California minors are placed only in licensed VisionQuest facilities in Arizona. In addition, the Department has improved monitoring of VisionQuest programs that travel interstate. However, the Department has neither clarified the license status of wagon trains for the purposes of AFDC–FC eligibility nor implemented all AAICPC procedures to monitor youths on wagon trains. As a result, California youths in VisionQuest may be ineligible for AFDC–FC and may not be adequately monitored by the Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department should clarify the AFDC–FC eligibility requirements regarding the license status of mobile interstate programs such as the VisionQuest wagon trains. In addition, the Department should implement all recommended AAICPC procedures to ensure adequate monitoring of VisionQuest programs traveling interstate.

II

THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES HAS NOT DISTRIBUTED GUIDELINES TO ALL COUNTIES FOR DETERMINING AFDC–FC ELIGIBILITY OF YOUTHS OVER AGE 18

The OAG's 1986 report found four cases in which minors did not meet eligibility requirements for AFDC–FC support after age 18. The OAG recommended that the Department clarify guidelines for counties to use in evaluating AFDC–FC eligibility requirements in this area. Since the 1986 report the Department has clarified AFDC–FC eligibility requirements for only one county (Alameda) and this improved its control over AFDC–FC expenditures. However, other counties may be violating the Department's regulations and claiming AFDC–FC support for ineligible youths. In our seven case audits from Alameda and San Diego Counties we found no instance of AFDC–FC support for ineligible youths over age 18, however, four of those cases were from the county that had the benefit of the Department's clarification of its regulations.

The 1986 OAG Report Found That DSS Lacked Control of AFDC–FC Funds for Youths Over Age 18

Section 11403 of the Welfare and Institutions Code states that minors who are in placement and receiving AFDC–FC funds at age 18 may continue to do so until age 19 under certain conditions. In part those

conditions require that youths must be attending a high school or vocational program full–time when they turn 18, and must remain enrolled full–time in a high school or vocational program that they can complete by age 19. The applicable regulations in this area, contained in sections 42–101.2 and 45–200.111 of the Department's manual of policy and procedures, state that full–time enrollment shall be defined by the school. The regulations do not specify how a county should determine if a youth reasonably can be expected to complete a high school or vocational program by age 19.

The 1986 report found four cases out of a sample of twenty–five in which youths received but were ineligible for AFDC–FC support after their eighteenth birthday. In each case the youth was not enrolled in a high school or vocational program that he reasonably could be expected to complete by age 19. In one case the youth's math and reading abilities were below the level necessary to pass the general educational development (GED) test and qualify for a high school certificate of equivalency. In the three other cases the OAG found no school or vocational program attendance records in the case file.

The 1986 report concluded that DSS lacked control over AFDC–FC funds for youths over age 18 because the Department had not provided guidelines for the counties to use when determining AFDC–FC eligibility or enrollment verification requirements. As a result the OAG recommended that the Department clarify guidelines for counties to use in evaluating AFDC–FC eligibility requirements for youths over age 18.

In its six–month response to the OAG's 1986 report the Department stated that it saw no reason to clarify guidelines for AFDC–FC support. The Department justified its position on the basis that existing regulations were clear enough. In addition, the Department noted that federal AFDC–FC case audits have not identified this area of regulation as a problem, indicating that the OAG's findings were isolated occurrences.

We reviewed the federal AFDC–FC case audit process in interviews with Department officials. Federal audits include a review of AFDC–FC eligibility for youths over 18 using the same standards as the Department's. However, the federal audit sampling process would never include a VisionQuest case because VisionQuest is a for–profit corporation and therefore ineligible for federal AFDC–FC funds. VisionQuest only receives state AFDC–FC funds as explained in the Introduction.

DSS Has Determined Not to Adjust Claims for the Four Cases Cited in the OAG's 1986 Report

In the Department's one year response to the OAG's report it stated that it had reviewed the four cases of ineligible AFDC–FC support cited by the OAG's report and found no evidence to refute the OAG's findings. In a letter dated December 12, 1987, the Department notified the county responsible for the cases to adjust its claim to reflect the ineligibility of the four cases.

The county responded in a letter to the Department dated February 25, 1988, that its case file documentation was consistent with the Department's policy. The county interpreted that policy to require that the program (VisionQuest) provide the county with written verification that each youth over age 18 meets AFDC–FC eligibility requirements. The county accepted the verification as proof that each youth was enrolled full–time in a educational or vocational program that the youth reasonably could be expected to complete by age 19. Upon reviewing the case files for a second time, the Department accepted the county's position. The Department did not make any adjustment to the county's AFDC–FC reimbursement claim.

DSS Has Clarified AFDC–FC Eligibility Requirements for Youths Over Age 18 for Alameda County

In our interviews with officials from the departments of social services in Alameda and San Diego Counties we found one instance since the OAG's 1986 report in which the Department had clarified its AFDC–FC regulations for youths over age 18. The clarification was contained in a letter from the Department to the Alameda County Department of Social Services (ACDSS) dated July 22, 1987. The letter was written in response to a request from Alameda County for clarification of the regulations. In the letter the Department stated that completion of a program requires a diploma or appropriate certificate of completion. In addition, the letter

stated that the program must be sanctioned by the state department of education in the state where the youth is residing.

As a result of the clarification by the Department, ACDSS requested that VisionQuest operate GED programs sanctioned by the Arizona Department of Education. VisionQuest responded by instituting GED classes administered by local community colleges with teachers certified for adult education by the State of Arizona. The GED classes were fully operational in all VisionQuest programs, including the wagon trains, by January 4, 1988.

We found no evidence that the Department had clarified AFDC–FC eligibility requirements for youths over age 18 to any other county besides Alameda. As a result, other counties placing youths in VisionQuest may be violating the Department's regulations as interpreted by its July 22, 1987, letter to Alameda County, thereby claiming AFDC–FC support for ineligible youths. This concern is magnified by the fact that San Bernardino and San Joaquin Counties have since 1987 begun to place significant numbers of youths in VisionQuest for the first time. Moreover, interviews with officials from the San Diego County Departments of Social Services indicated that they continue to operate without guidelines to determine how to "reasonably expect" that a youth over age 18 will receive a certificate of completion before age 19.

DSS Has Improved Control Over AFDC–FC
Funds for Youths Over Age 18

The Department indicated in its July 22, 1987, letter to Alameda County that educational and vocational programs for youths over age 18 must be sanctioned by the state department of education in which the youth is residing. Since January, 1988, VisionQuest has operated GED classes administered by local community colleges that appear to be in accordance with this requirement. Officials from VisionQuest and departments of social services in Alameda and San Diego Counties indicated in interviews that all youths are placed in these GED classes by their eighteenth birthday.

As an indication of improved control by the Department over AFDC–FC expenditures, we found no evidence in our case audits of AFDC–FC support for ineligible youths over age 18. We examined the files of four youths from Alameda County and three youths from San Diego County that entered the program after June, 1987, and remained in the program after age 18. We found no case in which a youth either did not receive a high school diploma or a certificate of high school equivalency, or was not reasonably expected to have received such a certificate of completion by age 19. Of course Alameda was able to determine AFDC–FC eligibility with the benefit of the Department's clarification of its regulations from its letter of July 22, 1987.

CONCLUSION

The Department has clarified AFDC–FC eligibility requirements and improved its control over AFDC–FC expenditures for youths over age 18. However, the Department has made these improvements by clarifying its regulations to only one county. Therefore other counties may be violating the Department's regulations and claiming AFDC–FC support for ineligible youths.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department should notify all counties to ensure that all agencies sending youths to VisionQuest are aware of the Department's clarification of its AFDC–FC eligibility requirements for youths over age 18.

III

THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES HAS IMPLEMENTED OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OAG'S 1986 REPORT

The OAG's 1986 report contained three recommendations that the Department has implemented adequately. First, the OAG recommended that the Department define "California Youth Authority alternative." The Department issued an All County Letter which included clarification of the case documentation requirements for verifying that an out–of–state placement is an alternative to the California Youth Authority. Second, the OAG recommended that the Department audit VisionQuest rates. The Department responded that it is not cost–effective to audit rates of out–of–state facilities. However, the Department is required to audit VisionQuest's rates within the next two years as a result of recent state legislation. Third, the OAG recommended that the Department establish standards to ensure that minors placed out–of–state have the same protections as minors placed in–state. The Department is in the final process of adopting regulations that will afford the same personal rights to out–of–state placements that are currently available to in–state placements.

The Department Issued Guidelines to All Counties for Determining California Youth Authority Alternatives

Welfare and Institutions (W & I) Code Section 11462.1(a) provides that for a youth placed in an out–of–state group home, the county may pay the rate established by the state in which the group home is located if the youth otherwise would have been placed in the California Youth Authority (CYA). In the case of Arizona and VisionQuest, this rate is established through a negotiating and contracting process between the Administrative Office of the Arizona Supreme Court and VisionQuest. If the youth would not have been placed in CYA, then the county must verify that the group home's rates include only allowable costs under W & I Section 11462.

The OAG's 1986 report found that it was not clear how counties determine which youths qualified for designation as a CYA alternative and, therefore, could be placed without verifying that the group home rate only includes allowable costs. As a result, the OAG recommended that the Department define "Youth Authority alternative".

To implement this recommendation, the Department issued an All County Letter dated May 5, 1987. The letter stated the requirements found in W & I Code section 11462.1(a). The letter also required that the court order effecting the placement include documentation that the minor is committed to CYA and that the commitment is suspended pending placement in the named out–of–state facility.

All twenty cases that we audited included a court order that the placement was an alternative to a suspended CYA placement. Based on these case audits and interviews with county probation department officials, we found no indication of any placements to VisionQuest by Alameda and San Diego Counties who were not Youth Authority alternatives. As a result, it appears that for all placements counties accept the VisionQuest rate established by Arizona without determining if the rate includes only allowable costs as defined by California law.

Recent State Legislation Requires the Department to Audit Rates of Certain Out–of–State Group Homes including VisionQuest.

The OAG's 1986 report found that the Department had not exercised its authority to audit out–of–state facilities such as VisionQuest that receive AFDC–FC funds for California minors. The Department had not audited VisionQuest in spite of the fact that California had spent over $12.5 million on the program through February, 1986. In addition, the OAG's report noted that the Department cannot set rates for out–of-state facilities because those facilities are outside the Department's jurisdiction.

The OAG recommended that the Department audit out–of–state facilities such as VisionQuest to determine if the facilities comply with AFDC–FC eligibility requirements and to determine if the rates are reasonable. If the rates are not reasonable, the OAG recommended that the

Department seek to amend California law to allow the Department to set rates for minors placed in out–of–state facilities.

In the Department's one–year response to the 1986 report, it stated that auditing out–of–state facilities would not be cost effective. The Department stated the state would have to recover a minimum of $20,000 to justify the cost of the audit. In addition, the Department stated that approximately 2.5 percent of all group home placements are in out–of–state facilities, further indicating that the Department's limited audit resources would be applied better elsewhere.

W & I Code section 11462.1(b) was amended by Chapter 1212, statutes of 1987, following the OAG's 1986 report. The amendment requires that the Department audit out–of–state providers that receive five or more AFDC–FC minors, if at least one minor is defined as a Youth Authority alternative. The Department must audit each out–of–state facility subject to this requirement at least once every three years. As a result, the Department is currently developing a list of out–of–state facilities that must be audited and a set of procedures to conduct the audits. VisionQuest will be one of the facilities audited under this statute.

The Department is Promulgating
Regulations to Increase the Personal Rights
of Youths Placed Out of State

The OAG's 1986 report found that minors placed in out–of–state facilities are not protected by the same standards as minors placed in in–state facilities. The primary reason for the discrepancy is that the Department, which licenses community care facilities in California, does not have jurisdiction to license facilities outside the state. As a result, the OAG recommended that the Department establish standards to be incorporated into contracts between county probation departments and out–of–state facilities to afford out–of–state placements the same protections as in–state placements.

All in–state facilities for delinquent minors must conform to California licensing standards as mandated by the Community Care Facilities Act (Health and Safety Code Section 1500 et seq.) and administered by the Department. The Department's general licensing requirements (MPP Section 80000 et seq.[2]) includes standards for the protection of personal rights (Section 80072). This section requires, for example, that each youth in a licensed facility must be accorded dignity and safe accommodations, be free to leave the facility at any time, and not be placed in a restraining device except a supportive restraint approved in advance by the Department.

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2 Department of Social Services manual of policies and procedures.

To implement the OAG's recommendation, the Department is promulgating new regulations that will limit AFDC–FC funding to those facilities that protect the personal rights of minors to the same extent currently required by the state's licensing standards. The regulations will incorporate the California licensing standards for personal rights from MPP Section 80072 into the AFDC–FC eligibility requirements for both the federal and state–funded AFDC–FC programs (MPP Sections 45–202.517 and 45–203.417). Therefore, an out–of–state facility such as VisionQuest will not be eligible for AFDC–FC funds unless the facility conforms to the same personal rights afforded to all placements within California.

CONCLUSION

The Department has implemented three recommendations from the OAG's 1986 report. First, the Department defined "California Youth Authority alternative" by issuing an All County Letter establishing guidelines for documenting this status through a court order. Second, the Department stated in its response to the OAG report that an audit of VisionQuest's rates would not be cost–effective. However, the Department must now audit VisionQuest's every three years because of new statutory requirements. Third, the Department is in the final process of promulgating regulations that will afford the same personal rights to out–of–state placements that are currently available to in–state placements.

IV

RECIDIVISM OF VISIONQUEST YOUTH FROM CALIFORNIA

Recidivism is broadly defined as the tendency to return to criminal behavior after release from a rehabilitation program. However, it can be defined more specifically by many different quantitative measures. Each measure has its own strengths and weaknesses to capture the tendency of an individual to return to criminal behavior, and there is little consensus in the criminal justice literature as to which is the best measure of recidivism. This lack of a uniform definition of recidivism must be taken into account when considering the results of our VisionQuest study, and when comparing these results with the results of other studies.

To measure the recidivism of California youths after placement in VisionQuest, we compiled the criminal records of 462 youths who had been released from VisionQuest for at least six months. We found that 143 (31%) of the total sample were arrested at least once within six months following release, and 45 (10%) were incarcerated in state prison or the Youth Authority during that time. The total sample also included 64 youths that had been released from the program between two and three years. Of that group, 10 (17%) were convicted of a violent crime or robbery. We did not attempt to compare the recidivism of California youths placed in VisionQuest with youths placed in other programs.

Types of Recidivism Measures

Our research included a review of recidivism literature and interviews with administrators from the California Youth Authority, State Departments of Corrections and Justice, VisionQuest, and San Diego and Alameda County Probation Departments. From this research, we found the most commonly used measures of recidivism to be arrests, convictions, and incarcerations.

An arrest is defined as an apprehension of an individual on suspicion of committing a crime. This measurement gives us the most comprehensive picture of criminal involvement in that it accounts for an individual's potential criminal activity even if the case against the individual is subsequently dropped. The weakness of arrests as a measure of recidivism is that it presumes that the individual is guilty of criminal behavior prior to being proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law. The arrest measure is also limited because local law enforcement agencies have different criteria for recording arrests which makes comparison among counties problematic.

A conviction is defined as a guilty finding against an individual charged with a criminal offense. Convictions are a more selective measure of recidivism than arrests because they only measure criminal activity proven in court. Another advantage of convictions is that, unlike arrests, they are recorded similarly by all courts throughout the state. The

disadvantage of a conviction recidivism measure is that it is not as comprehensive as an arrest measure. Many cases are dropped prior to going to trial due to plea bargaining, insufficient evidence, improper searches, or other legal considerations not necessarily associated with the probability that the individual is guilty.

Incarceration is defined as a commitment to jail of an individual who has been convicted of a crime. In our study of VisionQuest youth, incarceration applies to both state prison and the Youth Authority. Both institutions represent the most serious type of disposition for a crime, depending on whether the individual is an adult or a juvenile. Incarceration is the most selective measure of recidivism because it captures only the most serious crimes attributed to an individual after a fact–finding process in court. However, incarceration is the least comprehensive measure of recidivism because it does not include a range of less serious criminal behavior which does not lead to imprisonment.

Other Factors Affecting Recidivism

Comparisons of recidivism between individuals and between programs must account for differences in factors that affect the likelihood of an individual to recidivate. Without correcting for differences in these factors, the results of program comparisons may not accurately reflect the effect of the program on the individual or group. For example:

- Those who reside in areas of high unemployment after release tend to recidivate more than those residing in low unemployment areas.
- The older a juvenile is upon entering a rehabilitation program the less likely he or she will recidivate after release.
- Males are twice as likely to recidivate as females.
- Individuals who are academically deficient or mentally ill are also inclined to recidivate.
- A rehabilitation program's effect on an individual decreases over time as other factors begin to have a greater influence on the likelihood of an individual to recidivate.

Recidivism of California VisionQuest Youth

The study sample included all California youths released from VisionQuest prior to January 1, 1988, a total of 462 youths. Limiting the sample in this manner ensured at least a six month follow–up period to measure each youth's criminal activity after his or her release from VisionQuest. Characteristics of the sample included:

- 92% were male
- Average arrest rate during the two years prior to entering the program was 2.0 arrests per year

- 43% had committed a violent crime before entering the program
- Average age upon entry was 16.2 years
- Average age upon exit was 17.3 years
- Average length of stay in the program was 1.1 years.

To measure criminal activity, we used juvenile case files from the county probation departments and criminal history records ("rap sheets") from the state Department of Justice (DOJ). The rap sheets are the outputs of a statewide reporting system and capture adult criminal activity. For all the counties studied except Alameda, juvenile criminal histories were obtained from files maintained by the probation officer responsible for the youth. For Alameda County, juvenile criminal histories were obtained from a computer database dedicated to juvenile records.

The criminal history data was used to calculate the following recidivism measures: arrests per year, time to first arrest, most serious convicted offense, number of convicted offenses, and number of incarcerations. The following comments and tables summarize our results. (See Appendix A for a reporting of all results from our study, and Appendix B for a summary of other recidivism studies of VisionQuest youth.)

Arrest rate is a measure of recidivism that is independent of the length of time that the individual has been released from the program. The

average arrest rate for violent charged offenses was 0.21 arrests per year. The rate increased to 0.49 arrests per year when both violent and property–related offenses were considered. The arrest rate further increased to 0.86 arrests per year for all offenses except status offenses.[3]

The other measures of recidivism that we included in our study are dependent upon the length of time since release from the program, or follow–up period. In other words, it would be misleading to compare the number of incarcerations for youths who have been released only six months with those that have been released over two years. The follow–up period was the time between discharge from the program until June 30, 1988. Tables 4 and 5, on the following page, summarizes recidivism measures for youths with follow–up periods ranging from six months to three years.

[3] Status offenses are offenses that would not be considered an offense if committed by an adult, such as running away, truancy, and curfew violations.

Table 4

Recidivism Measures for Youths With Six-Month or Two-Year Follow-Up Periods

Recidivism Measure	Percent of Youths With Recidivism Occurrence Within Six Months After Release (a)	Two Years After Release (b)
Arrested (c)	143 (31%)	182 (60%)
Incarcerated (c)	45 (10%)	77 (25%)

(a) Includes all youths released before January 1, 1988 (Sample size = 462)

(b) Includes all youths released before July 1, 1986. (Sample size = 302)

(c) Status offenses not included.

Table 5

Recidivism Measures for Youths with Six to Twelve Month or Two to Three Year Follow-Up Periods

Recidivism Measure	Percent of Youths With Recidivism Occurrence Six to Twelve Month Sample (a)	Two to Three Year Sample (b)
Convicted of Violent Offense (c)	7 (10%)	10 (16%)
Convicted of Violent or Property–Related Offense (d)	17 (24%)	28 (44%)

(a) Only includes youths released between July 1, 1987 and December 31, 1987 (Sample size equals 70).

(b) Only includes youths released between July 1, 1985 and June 30, 1986 (Sample size equals 64).

(c) Violent offenses includes robbery.

(d) Property–related offenses included burglary and theft.

Neither the juvenile case files nor the DOJ rap sheets that we used to calculate recidivism are entirely complete records of an individual's criminal history. Neither record includes out–of–state criminal records, for instance. Moreover, juvenile case files may not include out–of–county records of criminal activity. Furthermore, DOJ receives only about 75% to 85% of all reportable adult arrests and dispositions from local law enforcement agencies, according to DOJ officials. DOJ records also do not include offenses for which incarceration is not a possible punishment such as most traffic offenses and local ordinance violations. Finally, the DOJ may not have properly matched our request for a rap sheet with an existing criminal record because of variations in names and birth dates reported to the DOJ's database system.

We estimated the effect on our study's results caused by incomplete records by supplementing our data with additional data collected by the San Diego County Probation Department (SDPD). For a sample of VisionQuest youths from San Diego, SDPD staff searched all available local data sources for the first arrest committed following VisionQuest, including district attorney, municipal court, marshall, and sheriff computer files. The search also included Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) records for out–of–state arrests. The sample included all of the first 100 youths committed to VisionQuest from San Diego. The sample also included 38 youths in the next group of 113 committed to VisionQuest from that county. The 38 youths that were chosen were those

that our records did not show any arrests for following their release from VisionQuest.

Based on this sample of 213 San Diego youths (the first 100 plus the next 113), approximately 31% were arrested within six months of their release from VisionQuest. In addition, approximately 83% were arrested within three years of release. The comparable results for the sample of all California youths with the same three-year follow-up period reported in Appendix A are 31% and 65%, respectively. The higher levels of recidivism in this San Diego County sample are primarily due to the incorporation of: 1) FBI records for out–of–state arrests, and 2) local records of arrests that were not reported to the DOJ. It must be emphasized that these San Diego recidivism results are not meant to be used to reinterpret the results of the other counties due to the different data collection methods used by each of the counties. Table 6 summarizes our results.

Table 6

Time to First Arrest

for 213 San Diego County Youths

0-6 Mos.	%	0-12 Mos.	%	0-24 Mos.	%	0-36 Mos.	%	Total	%
66	31%	111	52%	150	70%	176	83%	213	100%

CONCLUSION

Recidivism measures were compiled for 462 California youths placed in VisionQuest. The measures included arrest rate, time to first arrest, most serious convicted offense, and incarcerations. There are many legitimate methods for determining recidivism. In addition, other factors independent of the rehabilitation program being studied can have a significant effect on recidivism results. Therefore, caution must be taken when comparing results of this study with results of other studies.

APPENDIX A

RECIDIVISM STUDY RESULTS AND METHODOLOGY

Criminal history data was collected from juvenile case files and Department of Justice records for 462 VisionQuest youths from California. This sample represented nearly every youth that had been released from the program by December 31, 1987. Approximately eight youths were not included because their records were not available.

For each youth, the date of all arrests up to June 30, 1988, were coded onto forms. The time period of the arrest was recorded that divided arrests into those that occurred before or after release from VisionQuest. If there was a conviction related to the charge, it was also recorded. If the youth was arrested on more than one charge or found guilty on more than one conviction, then only the most serious charge or conviction was recorded. Table 2, on the next page, lists the offense categories used to determine seriousness. The final disposition of each arrest was also recorded to distinguish between incarceration and non–incarceration dispositions. Probation violations and warrant arrests were entered only if a new offense had been committed besides the violation or warrant charge itself.

Table 1 is a breakdown of the sample by cohort group. A cohort group is comprised of those placements with the same follow-up period. The follow-up period was calculated by subtracting each placement's release date from June 30, 1988. Tables 3 through 24, following Table 2, present complete results from the study.

Table 1

VisionQuest Cohort Groups

	Length of Time Since Release from Program									
	6–12		1–2		2–3		>3			
County	Mos.	%	Yrs.	%	Yrs.	%	Yrs.	%	Total	%
San Diego	36	11%	44	14%	21	7%	221	69%	322	100%
Alameda	25	21%	40	34%	38	32%	14	12%	117	100%
Other	9	39%	6	26%	5	22%	3	13%	23	100%
Total	70	15%	90	19%	64	14%	238	52%	462	100%

Table 2

Offense Categories Listed by Seriousness

The following list of offense categories was used to determine which charge or conviction to code when a youth was charged with or convicted of more than one offense resulting from the same arrest. In such cases, only the most serious offense was coded.

8 = Violent Offenses

Includes manslaughter, murder, rape, kidnap, assault, battery, hit and run–personal injury, poisoning.

7 = Robbery

Only includes Penal Code 211 and extortion.

6 = Burglary

Includes burglary, arson and unlawful fire.

5 = Theft

Includes auto theft, grand theft, forgery, fraud, vandalism, petty theft, receiving stolen property, taking vehicle for temporary use.

4 = Weapons and sex offenses

Includes carrying a concealed weapon, possession of burglary tools, possession of loaded weapon in public, sodomy, indecent liberties, indecent exposure, possession of dangerous weapon.

3 = Drugs

Includes sale and possession of marijuana and other drugs, inhalation of tuolene, under influence of controlled substance, forge prescription. This category does not contain any alcohol-related offenses (see category 2).

2 = Other

Includes drunk and disorderly, trespassing, possession of alcohol by minor, obstructing/resisting a police officer, criminal conspiracy, hit and run–property damage, drunk driving, reckless driving, disturbing the peace, tampering with auto, false report, malicious mischief, municipal code violations.

1 = Status

Includes runaway, curfew violations, 602/777 and 871 charges. Also includes escape (4532 PC).

ARREST RATES

The following tables list averages of the number of post-VisionQuest arrests per year per youth for specified offenses.

TABLE 3

Arrest Rate for Violent Charged Offenses (a)

	County			Total
	San Diego	Alameda	Other	Sample
Arrests Per Year After Program	0.23	0.21	0.01	0.21

(a) See Table 2 for definition of violent offenses (categories 8 and 7).

TABLE 4

Arrest Rate for Violent and Property Charged Offenses (a)

	County			Total
	San Diego	Alameda	Other	Sample
Arrests Per Year After Program	0.44	0.67	0.24	0.49

(a) See Table 2 for definition of violent and property offenses (categories 8, 7, 6, and 5).

TABLE 5

Arrest Rate for All Non-Status Charged Offenses (a)

	County			Total
	San Diego	Alameda	Other	Sample
Arrests Per Year After Program	0.77	1.18	0.48	0.86

(a) See Table 2 for definition of non-status offenses (all categories except 1).

CONVICTION RATES

The following tables list averages of the number of post-VisionQuest convictions per year per youth for specified offenses.

TABLE 6

Conviction Rate for Violent Offenses (a)

	County			Total
	San Diego	Alameda	Other	Sample
Convictions Per Year After Program	0.14	0.11	0.01	0.13

(a) See Table 2 for definition of violent offenses (categories 8 and 7).

TABLE 7

Conviction Rate for Violent and Property Offenses (a)

	County			Total
	San Diego	Alameda	Other	Sample
Convictions Per Year After Program	0.23	0.27	0.21	0.24

(a) See Table 2 for definition of violent and property offenses (categories 8, 7, 6, and 5).

TABLE 8

Conviction Rate for All Non-Status Offenses (a)

	County			Total
	San Diego	Alameda	Other	Sample
Convictions Per Year After Program	0.38	0.48	0.30	0.40

(a) See Table 2 for definition of non-status offenses (all categories except 1).

TIME TO FIRST ARREST *

The following tables list the number and percentage of youths of specified cohort groups based on the time of their first arrest after their release from VisionQuest.

TABLE 9

All Cohorts
All Offenses Except Status Offenses (a)

County	Individuals Arrested During Period 0-6 Months	%	Total Cohorts	%
San Diego	90	28%	322	100%
Alameda	47	40%	117	100%
Other	6	26%	23	100%
Total	143	31%	462	100%

TABLE 10

Cohorts with Follow-up Period > 12 Months
All Offenses Except Status Offenses (a)

County	Individuals Arrested During Period 0-6 Months	%	6-12 Months	%	0-12 Months	%	Total Cohorts	%
San Diego	80	28%	50	17%	130	45%	286	100%
Alameda	33	36%	19	21%	52	57%	92	100%
Other	3	21%	1	7%	4	29%	14	100%
Total	116	30%	70	18%	186	47%	392	100%

TABLE 11

Cohorts with Follow-up Period > 24 Months
All Offenses Except Status Offenses (a)

County	Individuals Arrested During Period 0-6 Months	%	6-12 Months	%	12-18 Months	%	18-24 Months	%	0-24 Months	%	Total Cohorts	%
San Diego	69	29%	45	19%	24	10%	6	2%	144	60%	242	100%
Alameda	21	40%	7	13%	3	6%	4	8%	35	67%	52	100%
Other	2	25%	0	0%	1	13%	0	0%	3	38%	8	100%
Total	92	30%	52	17%	28	9%	10	3%	182	60%	302	100%

TABLE 12

Cohorts with Follow-up Period > 36 Months
All Offenses Except Status Offenses (a)

County	Individuals Arrested During Period 0-6 Months	%	6-12 Months	%	12-18 Months	%	18-24 Months	%	24-30 Months	%	30-36 Months	%	0-36 Months	%	Total Cohorts	%
San Diego	65	29%	39	18%	20	9%	4	2%	5	2%	12	5%	145	66%	221	100%
Alameda	7	50%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%	1	7%	0	0%	9	64%	14	100%
Other	1	33%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	33%	3	100%
Total	73	31%	40	17%	20	8%	4	2%	6	3%	12	5%	155	65%	238	100%

(a) See Table 2 for definition of non-status offenses (all categories except 1).

* This analysis does not incorporate the additional data collected by the San Diego County Probation Department. Please see Section IV, pages 40-41, for additional San Diego County recidivism results.

MOST SERIOUS CONVICTED OFFENSE

The following tables list the number and percentage of youths of specified cohort groups who were convicted of an offense committed after their release from VisionQuest. In the case of a youth who was convicted of more than one offense, these tables include only the most serious conviction.

TABLE 13

Cohorts with Follow-up Period 6 - 12 Months
All Counties

Individuals with Most Serious Offense	Offense Category															
	Violent	%	Robbery	%	Bur-glary	%	Theft	%	All Other	%	No Offenses	%	Total	%
After Program	3	4%	4	6%	3	4%	7	10%	9	13%	44	63%	70	100%

TABLE 14

Cohorts with Follow-up Period 12 - 24 Months
All Counties

Individuals with Most Serious Offense	Offense Category															
	Violent	%	Robbery	%	Bur-glary	%	Theft	%	All Other	%	No Offenses	%	Total	%
After Program	2	2%	2	2%	7	8%	7	8%	15	17%	57	63%	90	100%

TABLE 15

Cohorts with Follow-up Period 24 - 36 Months
All Counties

Individuals with Most Serious Offense	Offense Category															
	Violent	%	Robbery	%	Bur-glary	%	Theft	%	All Other	%	No Offenses	%	Total	%
After Program	7	11%	3	5%	7	11%	11	17%	8	13%	28	44%	64	100%

TABLE 16

Cohorts with Follow-up Period > 36 Months
All Counties

Individuals with Most Serious Offense	Offense Category															
	Violent	%	Robbery	%	Bur-glary	%	Theft	%	All Other	%	No Offenses	%	Total	%
After Program	27	11%	14	6%	40	17%	37	16%	24	10%	96	40%	238	100%

TOTAL CONVICTED OFFENSES

The following tables list the number and percentage of youths of specified cohort groups who were convicted of an offense committed after their release from VisionQuest. In the case of a youth who was convicted of more than one offense, these tables include each conviction.

TABLE 17

Cohorts with Follow-up Period 6 - 12 Months
All Counties

Individuals with Any Convicted Offenses	Offense Category														Total Convicted Offenses	
	Violent	%	Robbery	%	Bur-glary	%	Theft	%	Sex & Weapons	%	Drugs	%	All Other	%		
After Program	2	7%	4	15%	3	11%	8	30%	1	4%	5	19%	4	15%	27	100%

TABLE 18

Cohorts with Follow-up Period 12 - 24 Months
All Counties

Individuals with Any Convicted Offenses	Offense Category														Total Convicted Offenses	
	Violent	%	Robbery	%	Bur-glary	%	Theft	%	Sex & Weapons	%	Drugs	%	All Other	%		
After Program	2	5%	2	5%	7	17%	9	21%	3	7%	16	38%	3	7%	42	100%

TABLE 19

Cohorts with Follow-up Period 24 - 36 Months
All Counties

Individuals with Any Convicted Offenses	Offense Category														Total Convicted Offenses	
	Violent	%	Robbery	%	Bur-glary	%	Theft	%	Sex & Weapons	%	Drugs	%	All Other	%		
After Program	7	13%	3	5%	8	14%	15	27%	4	7%	11	20%	8	14%	56	100%

TABLE 20

Cohorts with Follow-up Period > 36 Months
All Counties

Individuals with Any Convicted Offenses	Offense Category														Total Convicted Offenses	
	Violent	%	Robbery	%	Bur-glary	%	Theft	%	Sex & Weapons	%	Drugs	%	All Other	%		
After Program	27	11%	15	6%	50	20%	70	28%	13	5%	40	16%	37	15%	252	100%

INCARCERATIONS

The following tables list the number and percentage of youths of specified cohort groups who were incarcerated, as well as those who were not incarcerated, during specified time periods after their release from VisionQuest. Incarceration refers to placement in either state prison or Youth Authority.

TABLE 21

Incarceration in <= 6 Months
All Cohorts

County	Incar-cerated	%	Not Incar-cerated	%	Total	%
San Diego	32	10%	290	90%	322	100%
Alameda	11	9%	106	91%	117	100%
Other	2	9%	21	91%	23	100%
Total	45	10%	417	90%	462	100%

TABLE 22

Incarceration in <= 12 Months
Cohorts with Follow-up Periods > 12 Months

County	Incar-cerated	%	Not Incar-cerated	%	Total	%
San Diego	50	17%	236	83%	286	100%
Alameda	14	15%	78	85%	92	100%
Other	1	7%	13	93%	14	100%
Total	65	17%	327	83%	392	100%

TABLE 23

Incarceration in <= 24 Months
Cohorts with Follow-up Periods > 24 Months

County	Incar-cerated	%	Not Incar-cerated	%	Total	%
San Diego	61	25%	181	75%	242	100%
Alameda	15	29%	37	71%	52	100%
Other	1	13%	7	88%	8	100%
Total	77	25%	225	75%	302	100%

TABLE 24

Incarceration in <= 36 Months
Cohorts with Follow-up Periods > 36 Months

County	Incar-cerated	%	Not Incar-cerated	%	Total	%
San Diego	70	32%	151	68%	221	100%
Alameda	3	21%	11	79%	14	100%
Other	0	0%	3	100%	3	100%
Total	73	31%	165	69%	238	100%

APPENDIX B

SUMMARIES OF PREVIOUS RECIDIVISM STUDIES OF VISIONQUEST YOUTH

The following is a brief summary of ten studies on recidivism of VisionQuest youths. It is provided for information purposes only. We do not attest to the accuracy of these studies or attempt to compare our results with the results of these studies. For further information, we suggest you contact the authors.

A Study of the Impact of Ten Pennsylvania Residential Placements on Juvenile Recidivism, Lynne Goodstein, Ph.D. and Henry Sontheimer, The Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research, Shippensburg University, September 1987.

> The study examined recidivism among male juveniles released from ten selected residential placements in Pennsylvania, including VisionQuest facilities located in that state. The study included 527 cases, including 52 cases from VisionQuest, that had been sent to one of the facilities in 1984. The follow–up period ranged from six to 40 months.
>
> For the total sample, 48% were arrested and 28% were convicted during the first twelve months. The study found no significant differences between placements on recidivism measures.
>
> Of the VisionQuest cases, the most serious convicted offense after release was burglary for approximately 15%, theft for approximately 11%, and robbery for approximately 6%. VisionQuest youth had an average arrest rate of 0.57 arrests per year, and averaged 0.62 arrests during the first twelve months.

Recidivism Among Juveniles Released from Three Secure Placements in Pennsylvania, Lynne Goodstein, Ph.D. and Henry Sontheimer, The Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research, Shippensburg University, July 28, 1988.

> The study was a follow–up study to the September, 1987, study *A Study of the Impact of Ten Pennsylvania*

Residential Placements on Juvenile Recidivism. Pooling cases with the sample from the first study, this study compiled recidivism data on 303 cases from three placements including 99 cases from VisionQuest. Sixty–three percent of the sample had a follow–up period of less than 18 months. The average follow–up period was 17 months.

Without controlling for length of follow–up or other variables, 64% of the entire sample was arrested, 34% convicted, and 25% incarcerated. The average number of arrests, convictions, and incarcerations per individual for the VisionQuest sample was approximately 1.3, 0.40, and 0.25, respectively. In addition, the VisionQuest sample had an average arrest rate of approximately 1.1 arrests per year. The study concluded that there was no consistent evidence that any placement was more effective than another in reducing recidivism.

The VisionQuest Program: An Evaluation, Peter W. Greenwood and Susan Turner, The RAND Corporation, November, 1987.

The study compared recidivism primarily between 90 male VisionQuest graduates placed by San Diego County, and 257 male youths placed at a San Diego County probation camp. The major differences between the two groups were seriousness of offender at time of placement and length of stay in the program. VisionQuest youths had more serious criminal records at time of placement compared to the probation camp sample.Youths stayed at the probation camp an average of 111 days and at VisionQuest an average of 398 days.

All the following results refer to a follow–up period of one year: Seventy–one percent of the probation camp graduates and 55% of the VisionQuest graduates were rearrested. For violent and major property–related offenses, 18% of the probation camp sample and 13% of the VisionQuest sample were convicted. Eleven percent of the probation camp sample versus 15% of the VisionQuest sample were incarcerated.

The average arrest rate was 1.6 arrests per year for probation camp graduates versus 1.2 arrests per year for

VisionQuest graduates. The study concluded that although VisionQuest graduates were more serious offenders prior to placement, they had fewer arrests after placement compared to the probation camp sample.

VisionQuest "100", Tim Geisler, San Diego County Probation Department, memorandum, October 27, 1987.

The memorandum presented the current results of San Diego Probation Department's ongoing tracking of the first 100 youths placed by the County in VisionQuest. The first placement was in 1981. At the time of this study, 90% of the sample had been arrested at least once since release from VisionQuest. In addition, the study noted that 37% of the sample had been incarcerated.

VisionQuest Follow-Up Study on San Diego County Placements, (no author cited),VisionQuest National Ltd., July, 1984.

The study analyzed the recidivist behavior of 139 former VisionQuest placements who on average had a follow-up period of approximately eleven months, with a range of 2 months to 25 months. Of these youths, 32% were convicted, and 20% were reinstitutionalized in placements such a CYA, jail, prison, or a second VisionQuest placement.

VisionQuest: A Study of the First 100 Youth Placed by San Diego County, Kathleen M. Armogida, M.S.W. and Robert A. Roos, J.D., D.S.W., Delta Institute, December 1983

The study provides an extensive profile of 100 youths who were placed in VisionQuest over a two year period by San Diego County. Follow–up periods ranged from recently released to one year with an average of six months. The study also analyzed the program's management control systems. The study determined that 20% of the sample had been arrested at least once since release from the program.

Evaluation of VisionQuest Placements From San Diego County, (no author cited), VisionQuest National Ltd., March 1, 1983

> The study provides pre–program data of criminal activity for 110 youths from San Diego enrolled in VisionQuest at the time of the study. The study also analyses the pre– and post–program data of 30 youths who had completed the program and 8 who had been discharged before completing the program. The average follow–up period for the 30 graduates was 3.3 months. Narrative profiles of the 30 graduates and the 8 discharged youths are also provided. The report determined that of the 30 graduates, 2 (7%) had been arrested after release from the program and none had been incarcerated.

VisionQuest Recidivism Rate, Paul Green, Alameda County Probation Department, memorandum to Judge Wilmont Sweeney, August 25, 1987.

> The study analyzed criminal records of the first 90 youths placed in VisionQuest by Alameda County that were discharged by July 10, 1987. Follow–up periods were not stated, though the study notes that the first placement was made in March, 1984. The study determines that 57% of the sample had committed an offense since release from the program.

Community Follow–Up Study of VisionQuest Youth Discharged from Pima and Cochise Counties, Behavioral Research Associates, Tuscon, Arizona, 1979.

> The study used telephone interviews with subjects or their family members to compile data on 148 youths discharged from the VisionQuest program in Pima and Cochise Counties in Arizona. Forty–five youths had been discharged less than one year and 103 had been discharged for more than one year. The average follow–up period for the former group was 25.8 months and for the latter group was 6.5 months.

Of the group with less than a one year follow–up period, 38% committed at least one offense. Forty–three percent of the group with a follow–up period greater than one year committed at least one offense.

VisionQuest Analysis of Pre–Placement History and Recidivism Based on Colorado Placements, Linda Breck, VisionQuest National Ltd., April 1, 1980.

The study analyzed pre–program recidivism data on 101 VisionQuest placements by Colorado. Follow–up periods varied from recently released to approximately two years. Recidivism data was compiled through personal contacts with each youth. Twenty–three percent of the sample were arrested after release from the program and 6% were incarcerated at the time of the study.

APPENDIX C

RESPONSES TO THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND WELFARE AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

January 17, 1989

Kurt R. Sjoberg, Chief Deputy
Auditor General
Office of the Auditor General
660 J Street, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Sjoberg:

Secretary Allenby has asked me to respond to your letter of January 9, 1989 transmitting the draft audit report entitled, "A Follow-up Review of the Placement of Delinquent Minors in the VisionQuest Program (P-780)" and requesting the State Department of Social Services' (SDSS) comments in response to the audit report.

Following are the SDSS' responses to each of the audit report recommendations.

AGO Recommendation 1: (page 18) The Department should clarify the Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care (AFDC-FC) eligibility requirements regarding the license status of mobile interstate programs such as the VisionQuest wagon trains.

SDSS Response: The SDSS concurs with this recommendation. The Department will issue an All-County Information Notice to all placing agencies which will clarify the licensing status of mobile interstate programs in relation to AFDC-FC eligibility.

AGO Recommendation 2: (page 18) The Department should implement all recommended Association of Administrators for the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (AAICPC) procedures to ensure adequate monitoring of VisionQuest programs traveling interstate.

SDSS Response: The SDSS concurs with this recommendation. The Interstate Placement Bureau (IPB) receives monthly listings of California children placed in VisionQuest. This is in addition to the normal Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) requests and reports on individual placements. The AAICPC procedures referenced in the audit report were suggestions from the AAICPC to VisionQuest on the operations of VisionQuest and should not be confused as ICPC regulations adopted by the AAICPC. Nonetheless, on December 13, 1988, the IPB wrote to VisionQuest and requested that they routinely send us, in advance, information on wagon train operations (see attachment). The first such report was received on December 27, 1988.

AGO Recommendation 3: (page 25) The Department should notify all Counties to ensure that all agencies sending youths to VisionQuest are aware of the Department's clarification of its AFDC-FC eligibility requirements for youths over age eighteen.

SDSS Response: The SDSS concurs with the recommendation that the Department should clarify the AFDC-FC eligibility requirements for youths over age eighteen placed out-of-state. The Department has already begun work to notify the placing agencies. An All-County Letter (ACL) is being developed based on information previously provided to individual Counties, such as the July 22, 1987 letter to the Alameda County Department of Social Services. The ACL will clarify the kinds of educational programs and the types of certification needed to meet the AFDC-FC eligibility requirements for youths over eighteen.

Thank you for providing this opportunity for the SDSS to comment prior to the finalization of your report.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (916) 445-2077 or have your staff contact Mr. Robert Horel, Deputy Director, Welfare Program Division, at (916) 322-2214.

Sincerely,

LINDA S. McMAHON
Director

Attachment

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, M/S 9-108
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 323-2923

December 13, 1988

State Treatment Director
VisionQuest
P.O. Box 5018
Tucson, Arizona 85703-0018

Attn: Ms. Ronda Frey

Dear Ms. Frey:

Thank you for the monthly VisionQuest Youth Roster of California youth. The Interstate Placement Bureau also needs to receive routine prior notice of all California youth on any out of Arizona VisionQuest program. This list must include the youth's name, placing authority and the detailed itinerary of the program in advance of any movement. This was a recommendation of the Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (AAICPC).

Please give me a call if you have any questions.
Sincerely,

[illegible]
GORDON V. SCOTT

Gordon V. Scott, Chief
Interstate Placement Bureau

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY
1717 West Jefferson • P.O. Box 6123 • Phoenix, Arizona 85005

Rose Mofford
Governor

Eddie F. Brown
Director

JAN 20 1989

CERTIFIED # P 242 452 859

Mr. Kurt R. Sjoberg
Chief Deputy Auditor General
Office of the Auditor General
660 J. Street, Suite 300
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Mr. Sjoberg:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Report by the Auditor General- A Follow-Up Review of the Placement of Delinquent Minors in the VisionQuest Program. Based on departmental purview, there are two major areas to which the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) would like to respond, as follows:

Licensure Status

VisionQuest is properly licensed in compliance with Arizona law. As specified in DES' response to the 1986 report, "...the VisionQuest wagon trains are licensed by DES as mobile programs and must comply with the mobile program licensing standards while in other states."

It must be noted that, while VisionQuest has been issued 17 Arizona licenses, DES has issued only 11 of those, including: one (1) Group Care Agency license, three (3) Mobile Program Agency licenses; and seven (7) Satellite Home licenses. All are effective January 20, 1989, and expire January 20, 1990. The other six (6) licenses were issued by the Behavioral Health Division of the Arizona Department of Health Services.

The text on page 11 should be edited to more accurately reflect this information.*

* The text of the final report was changed accordingly.

Rate Setting

There appears to be continuing confusion about "establishment" of rates in Arizona (p 28). Unlike the practice in California as cited on page 2, rate setting for residential facilities is not a licensing function in Arizona. Again, as specified in the response to the 1986 report, "The Department does not "establish" rates for agencies which provide care to children. Rates are negotiated as the result of a proposal and contracting process. Each agency has a different rate determined by their budgetary needs."

The Administrative Office of the Arizona Supreme Court, which, as noted on p 17, provides support to Arizona youth (adjudicated delinquent) and placed in VisionQuest, negotiates contract rates with VisionQuest on an annual basis. DES honors these rates when children in our care are court ordered to VisionQuest.*

Conclusion

From DES' perspective, VisionQuest is licensed to operate mobile programs in compliance with Arizona law.

If further information would be helpful, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Zigmond Maciekowich, Community Child Care Licensing Specialist, (602) 542-2374.

Sincerely,

Miryam J. Choca
Acting Program Administrator
Administration for Children, Youth and Families

MJC:eoc

* The text of the final report was changed to reflect this fact.

VisionQuest

P.O. Box 12906 • Tucson, Arizona 85732-2906 • (602) 881-3950

January 23, 1989

Kurt R. Sjoberg
Chief Deputy Auditor General
State of California
Office of the Auditor General
660 J Street, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Sjoberg:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the report, "A Follow-up Review of the Placement of Delinquent Minors in the VisionQuest Program."

As stated in your report, the Arizona Department of Economic Security licenses VisionQuest programs, including the Wagon Trains, on an annual basis. These licenses are issued after on-site inspections by the Department of Health, Fire Marshall and a comprehensive on-site review by the Licensing Specialist from the Arizona Department of Economic Security. We are licensed based on compliance with Arizona standards which, similar to California's, address health, safety, appropriate programming and the protection of personal rights. Our mobile programs must comply with these standards in Arizona and while in other states. We will assist in resolving any misunderstandings regarding the status of our wagon train licensure while out of state.

The report recommends implementation of all suggested Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (AAICPC) procedures to ensure adequate monitoring of VisionQuest programs traveling interstate. The specific procedure referenced is for the California Interstate Placement Bureau (IPB) to receive prior notice of all California youth traveling out of state on any VisionQuest program, including the itinerary. This out of state travel notice had previously been given to Arizona Department of Economic Security (Licensing Division and Deputy Interstate Compact Administrator) and VisionQuest began copying this notification to California IPB in December when requested.

VisionQuest will also continue sending the California IPB monthly rosters of all California youths in VisionQuest and their specific program assignments, as well as the individualized treatment plans and quarterly progress reports for all California youngsters in VisionQuest.

Finally, we commend your professional approach to the difficult task of defining and measuring recidivism. As you state, there are factors other than program which affect recidivism, such as the local unemployment. In order to maximize treatment gains made by youngsters during placement, VisionQuest nationally is focusing on family reunification and aftercare programming. Our first programs of intensive aftercare services are scheduled to begin in Pittsburgh and Erie, Pennsylvania, in March, 1989. We believe that these services will assist youngsters in successfully reintegrating into their home communities and look forward to providing similar programs in California.

We intend to continue working with the State of California to expand our program operations in-state and to resolve any problems regarding California placements in our Arizona-licensed programs.

Sincerely,

Steven R. Rogers
President, VisionQuest National, Ltd.

Alameda County's Response to the Auditor General's Report

The Alameda County Probation Department was provided with a copy of the draft report but did not file a written response.

CECIL H. STEPPE
CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER
(619) 694-4800

County of San Diego

DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION

POST OFFICE BOX 23596, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92123-0596

January 23, 1989

Kurt R. Sjoberg, Chief Deputy
Office of the Auditor General
660 J Street, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Sjoberg:

Thank you for the opportunity to review Report # P-780, A follow-up Review of the Placement of Delinquent Minors in the Vision Quest Program. We have shared the report with DSS and we have no problems with the first three sections.

Our major concern is with Section IV of this report, Recidivism of Vision Quest Youth from California, and what we believe to be are some serious problems with the collection and analysis of recidivism data. The report does include a caveat about the shortcomings of the data collection methodology (page 36) but it concludes with the statement that results are understated by some "unknown amount." That caveat is not, however, stated in the summary (page S-4) where recidivism findings are presented and highlighted as if they were definitive.

We believe that the "unknown amount" of understatement is significant enough to cause some misinterpretation of the results. By way of example, the following table compares our findings on the first 100 cases of the San Diego sample with the report findings.

% Arrested Within	6 Months	12 Months	24 Months	36 Months
San Diego Findings	39%	67%	82%	89%
Arthur Young Findings	28%	45%	60%	66%

We have every reason to believe that our percentages would hold true across the entire San Diego sample of 322 included in the report.

We were aware of this problem with the recidivism data since the inception of the study and discussed it with Mr. Spencer at great length. We agreed to assist him in determining the actual amount of underreporting and he agreed to include that information in the report. He was to provide us with a list of all San Diego cases for which he could find no subsequent arrest record in order for us to conduct the more extensive record search. We last discussed this by phone in early December at which time Mr. Spencer indicated he would

put the list in the mail. He did not do so and we did not hear from him again until after the arrival of your draft report.① *

We finally received Mr. Spencer's list of 116 names on 1/17/89. Due to the time constraints for the preparation of this response, we were only able to clear the first 67 names representing the first 215 cases (67%) of the total sample. In other words, of the first 215 cases examined, the researchers from Arthur Young found no subsequent arrest record on 67.

Our clearances of these 67 cases turned up at least 44 (66%) with subsequent records. Of these, 16 (24%) were found in either CII or Juvenile files, the two record sources accessed by the Arthur Young researchers. (There were even 3 cases found in both places.)② This is particularly disturbing in that these cases should have been found by the researchers since they did not come from files outside of the scope of the study.

Of the remaining 28 cases, 8 had FBI records for out-of-state arrests and 20 had local criminal records in District Attorney, Court or Sheriff's files. It was not expected that the researchers would find these records - our agreement was to provide them with an estimate of how many these might be. Based on our findings the arrest rates stated in the report are understated by at least 23%. Our results are summarized as follows:

Total number of cases in sample	215	
# researchers found with subsequent arrest	148	69%
# researchers should have found	164	76%
Actual # from all sources	192	89%

Verification of our findings has been sent to Mr. Spencer in the form of copies of all records we located and can be obtained from Arthur Young.③

We did not have the time to review any of the other recidivism variables such as offense types and convictions but since those variables come from arrest data, we can assume that they are equally as "understated."④

We are disappointed in the amount of data discrepancy we have discovered thus far but we recognize that there probably isn't sufficient time to re-analyze and re-write that section of the report. At the very least, however, we would request that 1. the Summary section on recidivism carry the data collection caveat found on page 36 of the body of the report⑤ and 2. that both the summary and the body of the report indicate that recidivism figures for San Diego County cases have been verified by Arthur Young to have been underestimated by at least 23%.⑥

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond to this report. Please call if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely

Doug Willingham

J. Douglas Willingham
Deputy Chief Probation Officer

JDW:MVR:qm

* Arthur Young's comments on specific points in the San Diego County response begin on page C–13 and are referenced by the circled numbers.

ARTHUR YOUNG'S COMMENTS ON THE RESPONSE OF THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION

(1) The San Diego Probation Department (SDPD) is correct in stating that both SDPD and Arthur Young were aware of the limitations of the San Diego County recidivism data, and that both parties discussed the communication of results prior to issuance of the final report. Upon release of the draft-final report, Arthur Young received initial comments from SDPD, and subsequently transmitted to SDPD the list of San Diego County youths for which no arrest records were found. Arthur Young appreciates the additional data on these youths provided by SDPD, and an analysis of the data is included in Section 4 of the final report.

(2) In ten of the cases, Arthur Young had previously requested but did not receive rap sheets from the Department of Justice. DOJ may not have matched our request for a rap sheet with an existing criminal record due to variations in names and birth dates reported to the DOJ's database system. In three cases, a juvenile record which was not located in the juvenile files by Arthur Young was located by SDPD. The process of extracting criminal histories from juvenile files requires interpretation of records from various documents within the files. SDPD did not send Arthur Young documentation of the arrest records for these three cases from the juvenile files. Therefore we cannot explain why, in reviewing the same files, SDPD identified arrests while Arthur Young did not. Arthur Young did in fact have records for the remaining three cases. These cases were mistakenly not entered into our database.

(3) Arthur Young has received verfication of arrests for the 44 cases referenced by SDPD. However, it has not received verification for the arrests found in the juvenile files. We have included the juvenile arrests in our analysis of SDPD data.

(4) Without conducting similar criminal history searches in the other six California counties that have sent youths to VisionQuest, we have no basis on which to estimate the bias in recidivism results in those counties based solely on the additional data provided by San Diego County. In addition, the different processes of collecting juvenile criminal histories across counties may lead to different results, making comparisons between counties

difficult. For example, Arthur Young collected Alameda County records from the county's centralized juvenile records database system, whereas San Diego County records were collected through a manual review of individual files. Moreover, time to first arrest was only one of six recidivism measures used in Arthur Young's report. Four of the other measures used data on convictions and incarcerations. These data are less likely to be under-reported compared to arrest records according to Department of Justice officials and other researchers we contacted during the design of the study. (Please see pages 33 and 34 of the report that describe the advantages and disadvantages of recidivism measures.)

(5) The final report reflects this comment.

(6) Section 4 includes a separate analysis of San Diego County data based on documentation verified by Arthur Young. The analysis includes three cases in which a juvenile arrest record was located by SDPD, but for which we did not receive verification. San Diego's assertion that the Arthur Young time to first arrest results for San Diego County are understated by 23 percent cannot be verified. Our conclusion is that any understated results in this county are less than 23 percent. In this regard, we also note that the Probation Department counted traffic-related arrests (e.g., traffic warrants) in its results, and the Arthur Young study excluded those types of minor offenses.

cc: Members of the Legislature
Office of the Governor
Office of the Lieutenant Governor
State Controller
Legislative Analyst
Assembly Office of Research
Senate Office of Research
Assembly Majority/Minority Consultants
Senate Majority/Minority Consultants
Capitol Press Corps