

Report to the Legislature of the  
State of California

**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA YOUTH CENTER  
VISITOR CENTER**

**INTERIM REPORT**

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Department of the Youth Authority  
Research Division

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INTERIM REPORT  
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## SUMMARY

This is an evaluation of the Northern California Youth Center (NCYC) Visitor Center Program in response to the authorizing legislation (Statutes of 1987, Chapter 1269, Filante & Johnston, and Statutes of 1989, Chapter 1350, Filante). (Chapter 1269 was repealed on January 1, 1989, and has been replaced with related legislation (Chapter 1350) which is operative until January 1, 1992.)

The Visitor Center exists for the three institutions of the NCYC complex--Karl Holton, O.H. Close, and Dewitt Nelson. It consists of a trailer parked close to the Northern California Institution for Women, a California Department of Corrections (CDC) facility adjacent to the NCYC complex. The program operates through a contract with Centerforce, a private, non-profit organization providing a network of visitor hospitality centers at state prisons in California. The initial contract, which was operative for a one-year period between NCYC and Centerforce, included a project budget of \$55,000. Since that time, the visitor center has been providing services under the operating budget of NCYC at an annual cost of \$55,000. The program staff consists of Centerforce employees and volunteers. There are no Youth Authority employees included in the project budget. The program staff includes a Program Director, an instructor who conducts parent education classes for wards in the NCYC institutions on weekdays, and a van driver who provides transportation services.

The center was established to provide visitor services to families of wards housed at the three institutions. The program's major services included: outreach programs to wards' families; transportation for visitors between public transit terminals and NCYC; emergency clothing exchange for inappropriately dressed visitors; family counseling; information

on visiting regulations and processes; and referral to other agencies and services. Due to budget and site constraints, child care services provided for in Chapter 1269 were discontinued and replaced with parent education classes. The center officially opened on October 1, 1988. Between October 1988 and July 1989, 2,015 wards from the three NCYC institutions received visits.

This report focused primarily on the extent to which the program met its legislatively-mandated objectives. These three objectives were as follows: (1) Doubling the number of wards receiving visits from their families by the end of the final year of the contract, (2) improving institutional ward-performance and behavior, resulting in reduced time spent by wards in institutions, and (3) improving ward parole performance, reducing recidivism by 10 percent a year. Therefore, the evaluation assessed the operation of the center in terms of its impact on visiting and on ward/institutional and parole performance and behavior. The analysis on parole performance is preliminary because not enough time has elapsed to obtain sufficient parole follow-up data.

The evaluation suggested that the Visitor Center had little apparent impact on the number of visits and on the institutional performance of wards. Moreover, DDMS (Disciplinary Decision-Making System) data on the sample of wards receiving visits demonstrated no consistent direct correlation between number of visits and number of disciplinary incidents. That is, an increased number of visits did not reduce the number of disciplinary incidents in the institutions. Rather, contrary to what was earlier predicted, increased visiting was associated with more disciplinary incidents. Whether the visits triggered the incidents, or partly resulted from them, or whether there is any causal relationship between these variables, is unknown.

Based on preliminary parole follow-up data on the sample of wards receiving visits, the Visitor Center does not appear to have any relationship on the parole performance of wards. No statistically significant difference was found in the parole violation rate of wards who received the most visits compared with that for wards who received the least visits.

The evaluation concluded that the possible benefits of the program were not reflected in the extent to which the program met its legislatively mandated objectives.



**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA YOUTH CENTER  
VISITOR CENTER: INTERIM REPORT**

**Introduction**

The onsite Visitor Center at the Northern California Youth Center (NCYC) provides visitor services to families of wards housed at the three institutions of the NCYC complex--Karl Holton, O.H. Close, and Dewitt Nelson. The center officially opened on October 1, 1988.

The aim of this report is to provide an interim evaluation of the Visitor Center as a follow-up to the initial authorizing legislation (Statutes of 1987, Chapter 1269, Filante & Johnston), and more recent legislation (Statutes of 1989, Chapter 1350, Filante). This evaluation covers the period October 1, 1988, through July 31, 1989. However, this report's analysis of parole performance includes a follow-up of wards released to parole prior to October 1, 1989. This evaluation was preceded by a Progress Report for the period July 1, 1988, through December 15, 1988, as required by the legislation. The progress report included descriptions of barriers to visiting, services rendered by the center, and community resources used by the center. (See References). Excluded was a description of the center's impact on visiting. The latter information was not included in the progress report because the center had not been operating long enough to determine changes in visiting trends.

This interim evaluation assesses the impact of the center on visiting and on ward institutional and parole performance and behavior. It focuses only on the extent to which the program

meets its objectives stated in Statutes of 1987, Chapter 1269 as follows:

(1) Doubling the number of wards receiving visits from their families by the end of the final year of the contract, thus establishing positive family relationships;

(2) Improvement of ward institutional performance and behavior, resulting in reduced time spent by wards in institutions; and

(3) Improvement of ward parole performance, resulting in a reduction of recidivism of 10 percent a year.

The present evaluation's analysis of the program impact on recidivism is preliminary because more elapsed time is needed to obtain adequate post-release outcome data.

#### **Nature of the Program**

This onsite Visitor Center, together with its related facilities and services, was established in 1988 at the Northern California Youth Center (NCYC). Only one center exists for the three NCYC institutions. This pilot program (called the Gateway Hospitality Visitors Center) was designed to provide visitor services to families of wards from the three NCYC institutions. As stated in Chapter 1269, this center provides the following services: outreach programs to wards' families; transportation for visitors between public transit terminals and the Northern California Youth Center; emergency clothing exchange for inappropriately dressed visitors; parent education classes to wards in the three institutions; family counseling; referral to other agencies and services; and information on visiting regulations and processes. Due to budget and site constraints, child care services provided for in Chapter 1269 were discontinued and replaced with parent education classes for

wards.

The program operates through a contract with Centerforce, a private, non-profit organization providing a network of visitor hospitality centers at state prisons in California. The initial contract, which was operative for a one-year period between NCYC and Centerforce, included a project budget of \$55,000. Since that time, the visitor center has been providing services under the operating budget of NCYC at an annual cost of \$55,000. The Visitor Center consists of a trailer parked close to the Northern California Institution for Women, a California Department of Corrections (CDC) facility adjacent to the NCYC complex. Intended for use by wards' visitors who are waiting before or after visits, the center is opened to NCYC visitors during regular visiting days at the institutions--Saturdays, Sundays, and certain holidays. While the visiting hours in the institutions begin at 9:00 A.M. at the earliest (Karl Holton) and uniformly end at 3:30 P.M., the center's hours are from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. The center's longer operating hours enable ward families to use the trailer's lounging area and bathroom facilities before or after their institutional visits.

The center's program staff consists of Centerforce employees and volunteers. There are no Youth Authority employees included in the project budget. The program staff includes a Program Director, an instructor who conducts parent education classes for wards in the NCYC institutions on weekdays, and a van driver who provides transportation services. The Program Director works closely with the institutional Chiefs of Security during visiting days and coordinates with the Institutional Parole Agents for parent education classes. In addition to the three regular program staff members, two volunteers assist program staff during special activities or events organized for visiting families.

From October 1988 through July 1989, the center averaged 61 visitors in a given month, or an estimated eight visitors on a visiting day. According to the center's Program Director, the most common program services availed by visitors were (1) transportation between public terminals and NCYC, and (2) use of the trailer's facilities before and after visits. These were services not provided to visitors by NCYC institutional staff. Referral services offered by the center were seldom used, if at all, by visitors.

Program proponents of the Visitor Center hypothesized that enhancing visitor services in the Youth Authority institutions would increase the frequency and quality of visits. Additionally, proponents believed that enhanced visitor services would provide wards with strong family support and that this could have a stabilizing influence on the institution as well as benefit wards, staff, and the community and that this in turn would discourage violent ward activity. Lastly, proponents hypothesized that a relationship exists between parole success and strong family ties in the institutions. They believed that increased visiting relates to improved ward parole performance.

## Evaluation Methodology

The extent to which the program achieved its legislatively-mandated objectives translates into major outcome measures of program effectiveness. These objectives are listed individually and briefly discussed:

- (1\*) Doubling the number of wards receiving visits from their families by the end of the final year of the contract.

The Chief of Security in each of the three NCYC institutions determined that this objective could not be achieved, given the current state of resources for visiting. If the number of wards receiving visitors were to double by the end of the contract term as stated in the objective, the NCYC institutions would be unable to accommodate them, unless the visiting time of families was further reduced. Given this limitation, this original objective of the program was operationalized by NCYC and Institutions and Camps (I & C) Branch administrators to reflect an increase in visiting that would be attainable without any changes to the capacity limits of each institution's visiting area.

This original objective (stated above in 1\*) from the authorizing legislation (Chapter 1269, 1987) was operationalized as follows.

- (1) By the end of the final year of the contract, increase the number of wards receiving visits from their families in order to attain the visiting-area capacity-limits of each institution.

To determine whether the program increased visits, a study cohort, comprised of all wards who received visits at O.H.

Close, Karl Holton, and Dewitt Nelson starting October 1, 1988, (official opening date of the visitor center) through July 31, 1989, was identified. The California Youth Authority (CYA) Research Division maintained records of the study cohort, including information on the number of visits wards received, the number of visitors per ward, and the number of day passes issued. A comparison group was established to serve as a baseline against which to compare the study cohort. The baseline population consisted of all wards who received visits during the period October 1, 1987, through July 31, 1988.

This objective was evaluated by examining the visitation rate of the study- and baseline-populations for a given period. The number of visits per average monthly population for the study population was estimated at the end of each month and compared with that for the baseline population.

In addition, a second rate difference between the study- and the baseline-populations was examined. This rate involved the number of visitors per average monthly population.

After visitation rates in each of the three institutions were examined for changes during the post-period (October 1988 through July 1989), each institution's visiting area capacity limit was analyzed. This information was obtained through interviews conducted with administrators and institutional staff.

(2) Improving institutional ward-performance and behavior, resulting in reduced time spent by wards in institutions.

To determine if institutional ward-performance and behavior improved among individuals in the study cohort, a before-after research design was used. First, an estimate was made of the aggregate DDMS (Disciplinary Decision-Making System) incident rate for each institution (total number of DDMSs per average monthly population) for the period starting October 1, 1987, through July 31, 1988, and this rate was then compared with that for the period October 1, 1988, through July 31, 1989. This

information is available from data collected by Youth Authority's Information Systems Bureau.

As it turned out, the aggregate DDMS data collected for both pre- and post-periods were unreliable and therefore could not be used for the present analysis. This data inadequacy is due to a change in DDMS reporting: Effective April 1987, a new DDMS hearing policy that directly affected the number of DDMS cases reported was adopted by the Youthful Offender Parole Board. As a result of this policy, there has been a lot of flexibility among institutions in determining what would be reported as a DDMS incident. DDMS data have not been uniformly reported across institutions since April 1987.

In lieu of using aggregate DDMS data, interviews were conducted with each institution's DDMS investigator to determine if institutional ward-performance improved in conjunction with the Visitor Center program.

Second, individual DDMS records of wards receiving visits during the study period were examined. For this analysis, information on the identity of all wards included in the study cohort was necessary. Once these wards were identified, they were grouped according to the number of visits they had received from their families during the study period. Wards were categorized either as receiving a) a low number of visits (1-9 visits) b) a medium number of visits (10-19 visits) or c) a high number of visits (20 or more visits). Of the 2,015 wards in the study cohort, there were 1,497 wards or 74% with low visits, 317 or 16% with medium visits, and 201 or 10% with high visits.

After wards were categorized, the number of disciplinary infractions (DDMS) of a sample of the highest and lowest of the number of visits categories were estimated as follows using OBITS information: A subgroup of 30 wards was randomly selected from the highest category; this subgroup was then proportionately matched to a subgroup from the lowest category. Wards from the highest category were then individually matched to those in the

lowest category on age at admission, ethnicity, admission status, court of commitment, and commitment offense. The DDMS rate (number of DDMSs per average monthly population) for the wards in each subgroup during the pre-October 1, 1988 period was compared to the DDMS rate for the post-October 1, 1988 period. To allow for at least three months exposure prior to the introduction of the center, the DDMS data were used only for wards with an admission date to any of the three NCYC institutions prior to July 1, 1988, or at least three months prior to the program's start.

Using a sample to estimate the DDMS rate represented a slight modification of the method proposed in the evaluation plan. In retrospect, this plan initially provided for an analysis of the disciplinary infractions (DDMSs) of the entire study population by number-of-visit categories, not of a sample. However, extracting DDMS information from OBITS for the entire population would have been cumbersome and very expensive.

Since too little time has elapsed to obtain reliable length of stay (LOS) information on wards, this report cannot determine whether improved institutional performance was associated with reduced time spent by wards in the institutions.

Deriving from the program proponents' hypothesis that enhanced visiting would provide strong family support for wards and in turn would discourage violent activity, the following hypothesis could be inferred: Relative to other group, wards receiving the most visits will show the largest improvement in institutional performance during the study period. Using before-after data, this group should have the largest decrease in DDMSs after October 1, 1988. Among groups, it should also have the shortest LOS. A corollary, of course, is that wards who received the least visits from their families will show the least improvement in institutional performance and will have the longest LOS.



(3) Improving ward parole performance and a reduction of recidivism of 10 percent a year.

Program proponents claim a positive relationship exists between maintaining family ties and recidivism. On this basis, the violation rates for releases to parole in the study cohort were examined to determine if parole performance relates to the number of visits. For this analysis, the rates of parole revocations were compared between the lowest and the highest visitor subgroups. This information was obtained from OBITS data. However, the analysis of parole performance in this report is preliminary because too little time has elapsed to obtain sufficient post-release outcome information.

As in the institutional ward-performance analysis, extracting parole follow-up information from OBITS for the entire population would have been cumbersome and very expensive. Therefore, only the parole performance of the sample of the highest and lowest visitor subgroups is presented in this report. This sample was the same subgroup of randomly selected and proportionately matched wards selected for the evaluation of the program's second objective. The follow-up period was 12 months. From the program proponents' hypothesis that maintaining family ties has a positive relationship with ward parole performance resulting in a reduction of recidivism of 10 percent a year, the following hypothesis could be derived: The violation rate of wards who received the most visits during the study period will be 10% percent lower compared with that for wards who received the least visits.

Another follow-up evaluation to be completed by January 1, 1992, will examine the rates of parole revocations of a larger study sample of wards in the lowest and highest visitor subgroups. Because more program time will have elapsed, the follow-up period will be for 12 months and 24 months.

## Findings

### Program Impact on Visiting

A total of 2,015 wards from the three NCYC institutions received visits from the establishment of the Visitor Center in October 1, 1988, through July 31, 1989. Whether this post-program figure represents an increase in the number of wards receiving visits was not determined because no corresponding baseline data were available for comparative purposes.

TABLE 1  
Monthly Average Number of Visits, Number of Visitors  
and Average Daily Population

Institution	Before Oct 1987 - July 1988	After Oct 1988 - July 1989
<u>O.H. Close</u>		
Monthly No. of Visits	514	543
Monthly No. of Visitors	*	1325
Ave. Daily Pop (ADP)	544	541
<u>Karl Holton</u>		
Monthly No. of Visits	542	648
Monthly No. of Visitors	1206	1519
Ave. Daily Pop (ADP)	541	534
<u>Dewitt Nelson</u>		
Monthly No. of Visits	498	509
Monthly No. of Visitors	1103	1080
Ave. Daily Pop (ADP)	620	604

\* Data not available.

Table 1 shows the overall monthly number of visits, monthly number of visitors, and average daily population for each institution during the pre- and the post-program periods. Appendix A-1 and A-2 shows the detailed number of visits, number of visitors and average daily population for each month for the pre and post-program time periods.

Using the data in Appendix A-1 and A-2, the visitation rates of the study- and baseline-populations were estimated and examined. Tables 2, 3, and 4 compare rates for the entire baseline population prior to the existence of the Visitor Center with rates for the entire study-population after the center was established. Except for O.H. Close, which lacked complete visitor data, these tables present visitation rates based on (1) number of visits (Tables 2A, 3A, and 4A) and (2) number of visitors (Tables 3B and 4B). Pre-program rates reflect estimates for the period October 1987 through July 1988; post-program rates cover October 1988 through July 1989.

TABLE 2A  
Monthly Visitation Rates at O.H. Close  
Based on Number of Visits

Rate per 100 Wards Before Oct 1987 - July 1988		Rate per 100 Wards After Oct 1988 - July 1989	
Oct	74		114
Nov	119		97
Dec	95		95
Jan	88		104
Mar	77		95
Apr	97		116
Jun	88		97
Jul	117		111
Overall Avg.		94	100

Chart 2A  
Monthly Visitation Rates at O.H. Close--  
Number of Visits

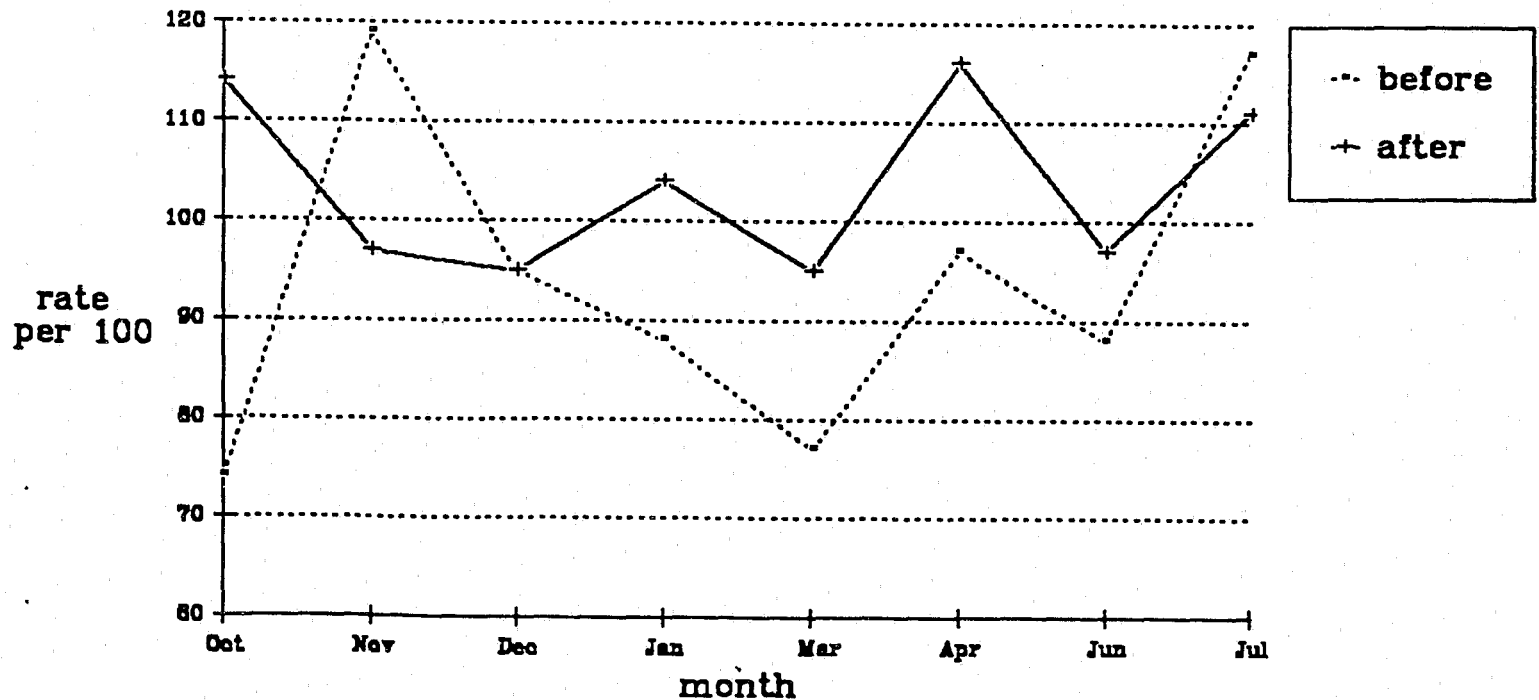


TABLE 3A  
Monthly Visitation Rates at Karl Holton  
Based on Number of Visits

	Rate per 100 wards Before (Oct 1987 - July 1988)	Rate per 100 wards After (Oct 1988 - July 1989)
Oct	*	134
Nov	103	123
Dec	123	125
Jan	97	128
Feb	94	108
Mar	80	113
Apr	82	121
May	82	104
Jun	104	111
Jul	138	145
Overall Avg.	100	121

\* Data not available.

Chart 3A  
Monthly Visitation Rates at Karl Holton--  
Number of Visits

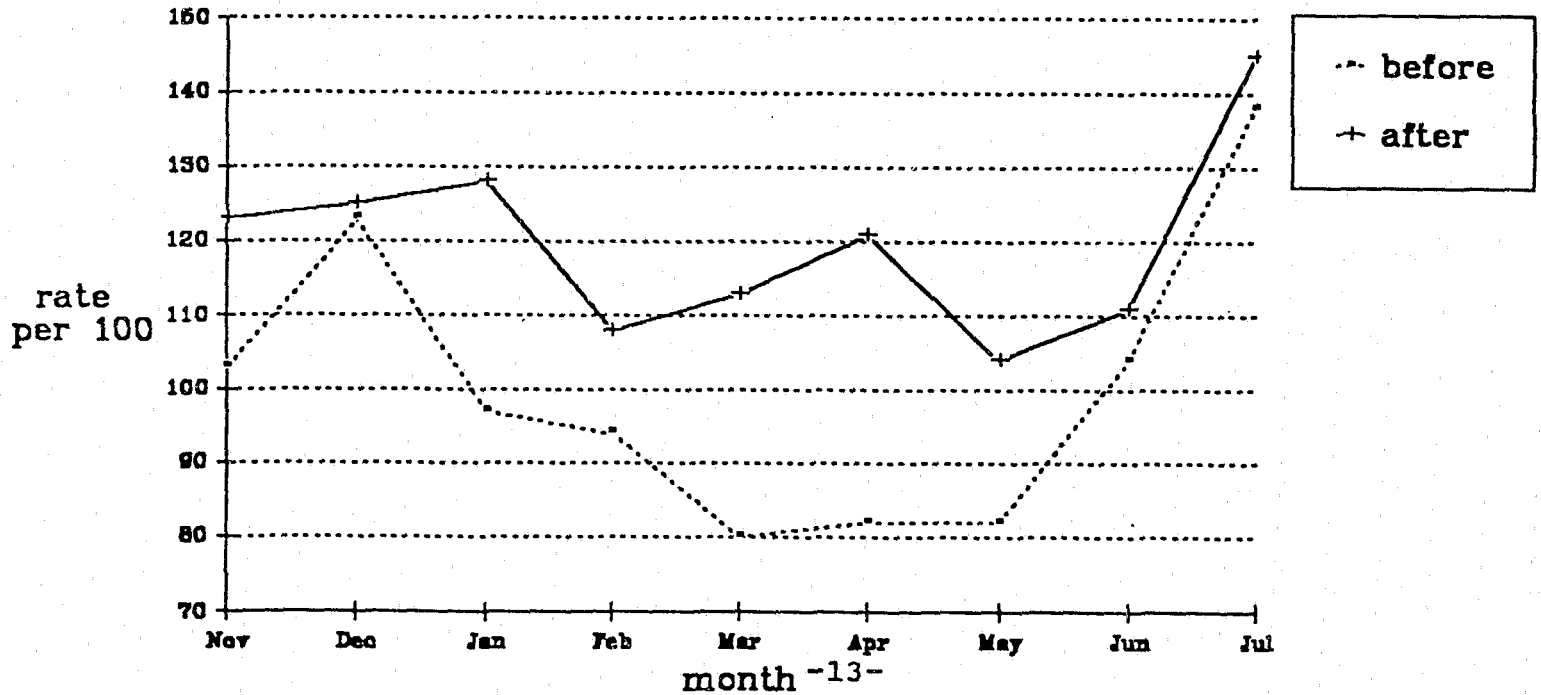


TABLE 3B  
Monthly Visitation Rates at Karl Holton  
Based on Number of Visitors

Rate per 100 wards Before (Oct 1987 - Jul 1988)		Rate per 100 wards After (Oct 1988 - Jul 1989)
Oct	*	289
Nov	234	286
Dec	272	303
Jan	212	292
Feb	209	241
Mar	189	270
Apr	194	287
May	170	255
Jun	235	270
Jul	296	351
Overall Avg.	223	285 *

\* Significant at the  $p < .01$  level of significance

Chart 3B  
Monthly Visitation Rates at Karl Holton--  
Number of Visitors

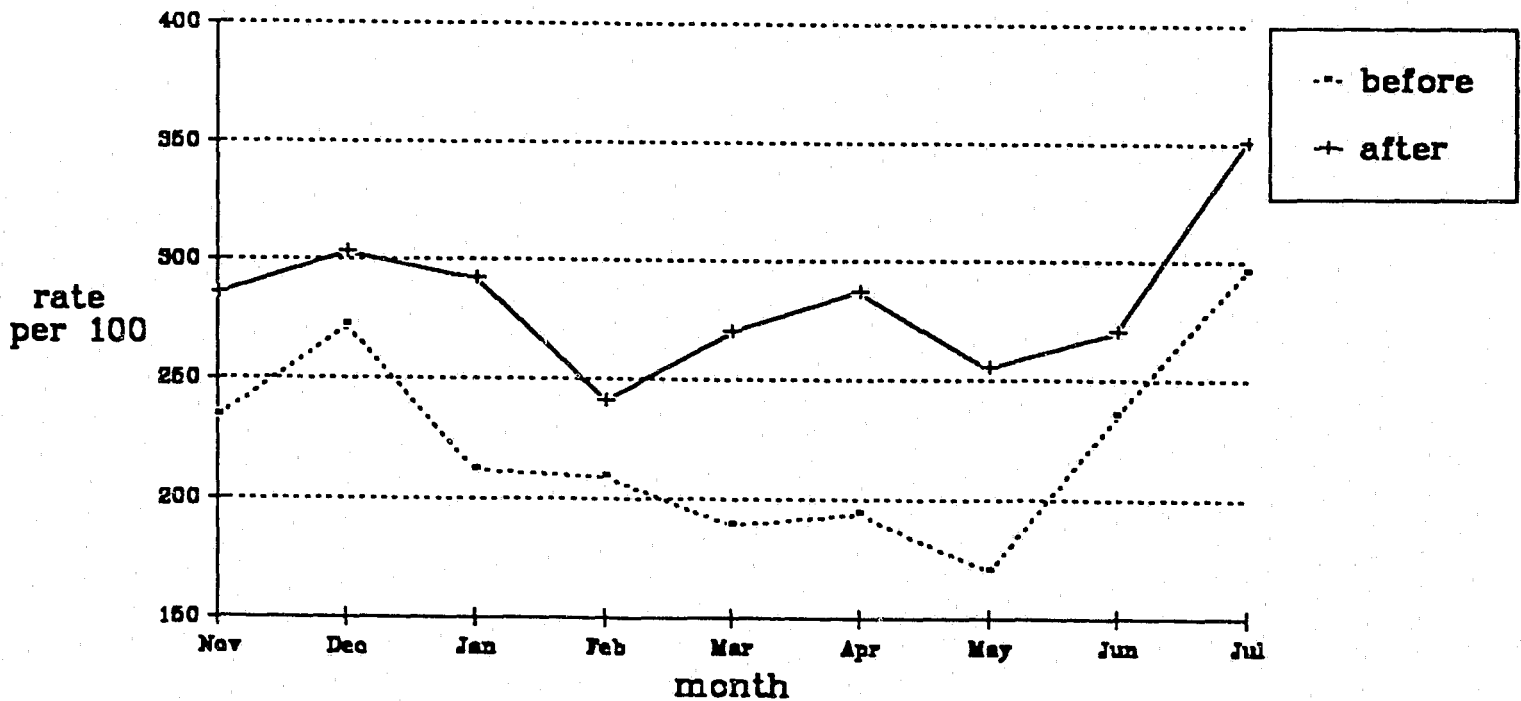


TABLE 4A  
Monthly Visitation Rates at Dewitt Nelson  
Based on Number of Visits

	Rate per 100 wards Before (Oct 1987 - July 1988)	Rate per 100 wards After (Oct 1988 - July 1989)
Oct	72	112
Nov	66	83
Dec	75	79
Jan	77	87
Feb	64	75
Mar	69	77
Apr	81	96
May	99	70
Jun	86	72
Jul	114	91
Overall Avg.	80	84

Chart 4A  
Monthly Visitation Rates at Dewitt Nelson--  
Number of Visits

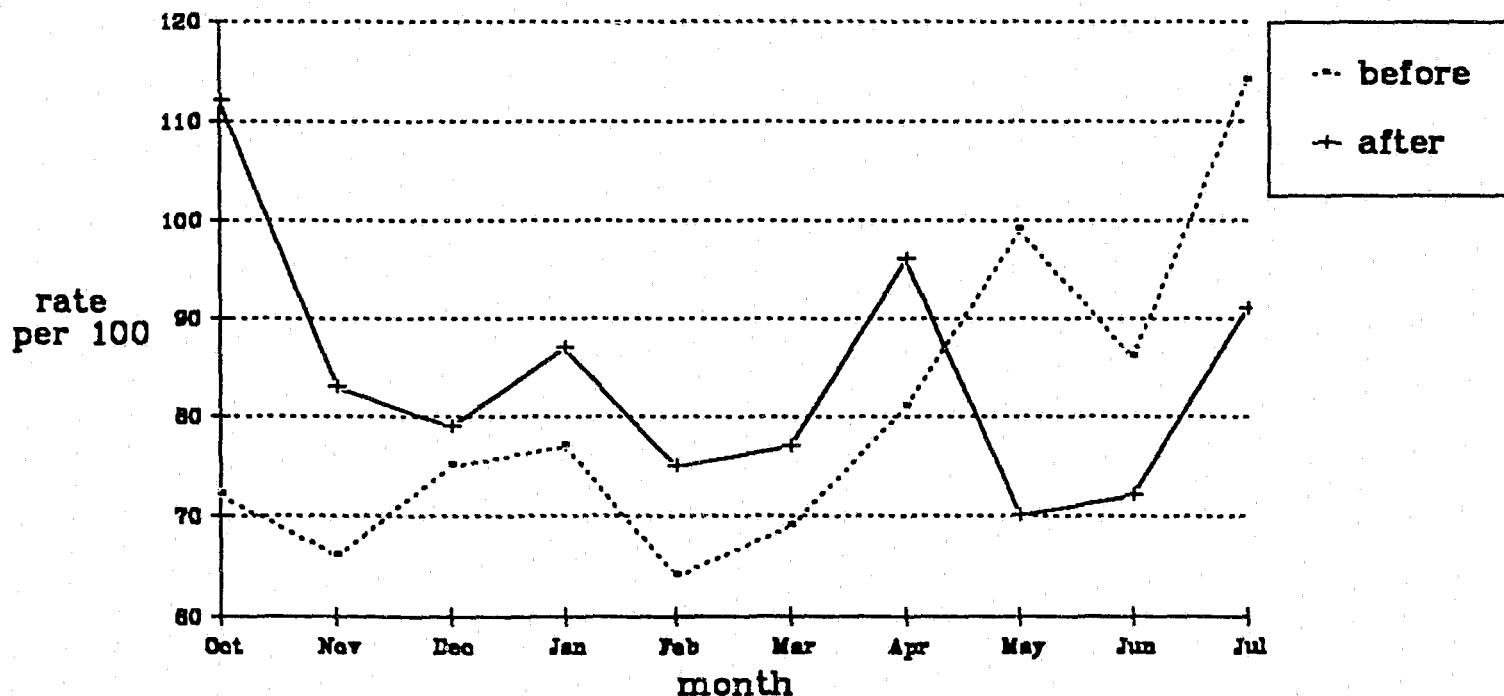
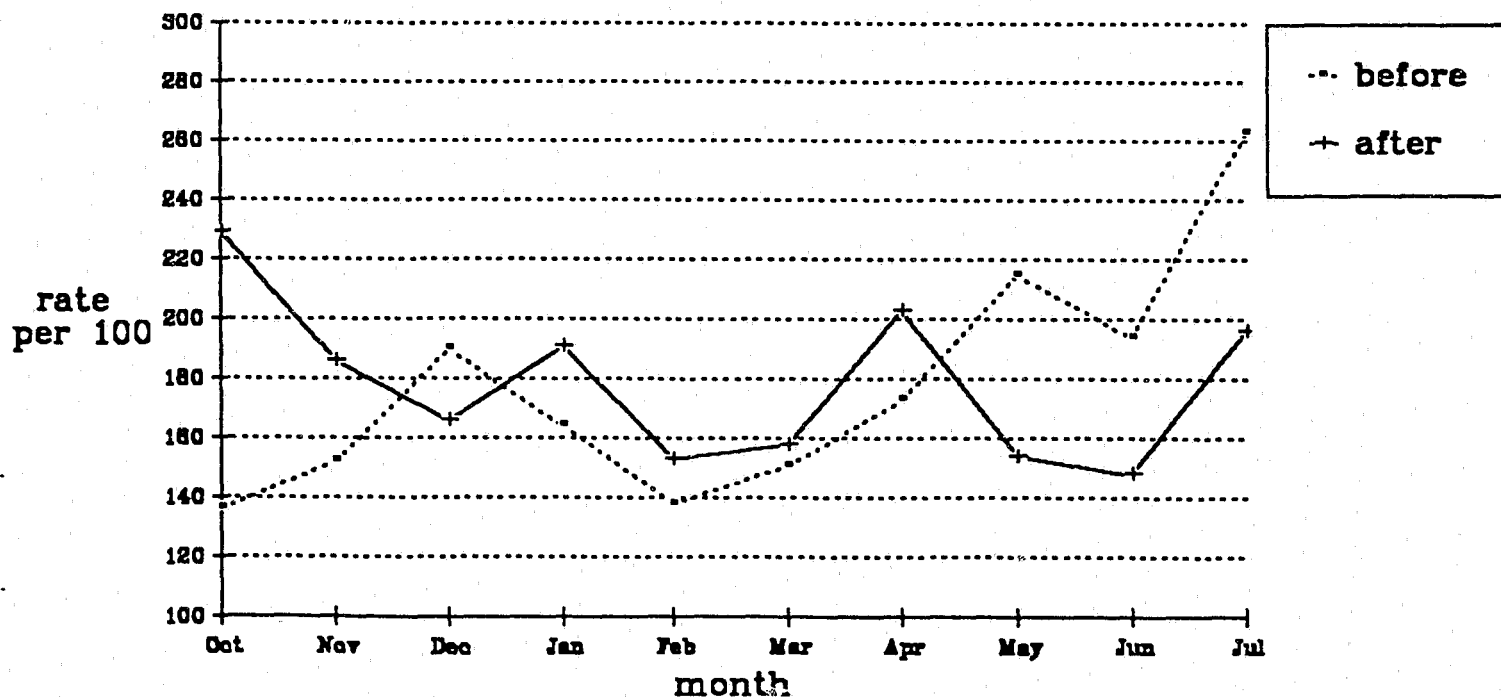


TABLE 4B  
Monthly Visitation Rates at Dewitt Nelson  
Based on Number of Visitors

	Rate per 100 wards Before (Oct 1987 - July 1988)	Rate per 100 wards After (Oct 1988 - July 1989)
Oct	136	229
Nov	152	186
Dec	190	166
Jan	164	191
Feb	138	153
Mar	151	158
Apr	173	203
May	215	154
Jun	194	148
Jul	263	196
Overall Avg.	178	179

Chart 4B  
Monthly Visitation Rates at Dewitt Nelson--  
Number of Visitors





Perusal of the five tables and charts reveal that visitation rates in all three institutions increased with the establishment of the Visitor's Center. However, except for Table 3B, these differences were statistically non-significant.

By comparison, Table 3B shows that the rate of 285 visitors per 100 wards per month at Karl Holton after the establishment of the Visitor Center was higher than the 223 before the program. This difference was statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ) -- i.e., not accounted for by chance alone. However, it is not known whether the Visitor's Center, or some other unmeasurable explanatory factors not examined by this analysis account for this observed difference in the visitation rates.

Of particular importance is the relationship between increased visiting and the visiting area capacity limits of an institution. As earlier mentioned, the Visitor Center's goal is to increase the number of visitors and wards receiving visits to attain the visiting area capacity limits of an institution. An institution's visiting area capacity is defined as the number of visitors allowed to visit with wards on any normal visiting day. Visits are permissible only in outdoor and/or indoor designated visiting areas within an institution but never allowed in the Visitor Center's trailer. However, the capacity of a visiting area in an institution has limits. This means that at any time the institutional Chief of Security could limit the space allowable for visiting for factors such as inclement weather or need for adequate security coverage. The three institutions combined could collectively accommodate a maximum of 720 persons (wards and visitors) during any peak-period visiting day. This figure represents the combined visiting area capacity of the three institutions.

To determine whether the visiting area capacity limits were attained with increased visiting, administrators and institutional staff in each of the three institutions were asked about their institution's visiting area capacity. Interviews by a Research staff member were conducted with the Superintendents or Assistant Superintendent (Karl Holton), Chiefs of Security, Treatment Team Supervisors, and Institutional Parole Agents from the three institutions. (See Appendix B-1 for list of interviewees in the institutions, and Appendix B-2 for staff interview questions.)

The interviews included questions concerning perceptions of the visiting area capacity limits in each institution. Administrators and staff were asked in the interview, "At this time, do you feel that the institution has attained its visiting area capacity limits?" In response, virtually all administrators and staff said that their institution had reached the limits beyond which it could not continue with the current level of visiting services delivered. They mentioned that the number of people who could be accommodated in indoor visiting areas was limited according to regulations imposed by the Fire Marshal. For instance, the indoor visiting area at Karl Holton is designated to house 149 persons at any given time. In contrast, however, a typical visiting day may average 280 persons (wards and visitors) in indoor and outdoor visiting areas. They also indicated that, in general, increased visiting requires additional security and supervision of the visiting area---services which the Visitor Center did not provide. Currently, each institution has only three staff to provide the necessary services during a given visiting day. Administrators and staff also mentioned that--given the current level of available services--any additional visiting might result in further restrictions in visiting regulations. These restrictions included (1) additional periods of split-visiting days, and (2) additional restrictions on the number of

visitors, visiting hours, and packages allowed per ward. (During split-visiting days, wards whose last names start with certain letters (e.g., A through L) receive visits on specified weekends; the remaining wards (e.g., M through Z) receive visits on alternate weekends.)

Related to the visiting area capacity limits in each institution were concerns expressed by all administrators and most staff regarding the program's primary objective of increased visiting. Most interviewees did not agree with this primary program goal. They felt that this program goal did not take into consideration the limited resources available in the institutions, including the limited space available for visiting and the required security staff who should be available during visiting days. Even before the Visitor Center was established, the Chiefs of Security at Dewitt Nelson and Karl Holton claimed that they were experiencing heavy visiting days, with periods of split-visiting days and restricted visiting hours. Also, with inclement weather, visiting spaces became limited as outside areas could not be used to accomodate visitors. Consequently, most interviewees indicated that as the program encouraged more visiting, the institution would ultimately provide more security staff to accomodate the influx of visitors.

### Program Impact on Institutional Performance

DDMS data of wards were analyzed to test the following hypothesis: Wards receiving the most visits will show the largest improvement in institutional performance, and wards receiving the least visits will show the least improvement in institutional performance.

A total of 2,015 wards from the 3 NCYC institutions received visits from October 1, 1988, through July 31, 1989. Of these wards, there were 1,497 wards with low visits, 317 with medium visits, and 201 with high visits. To test the hypothesis, DDMS records of wards receiving the most visits (or the high visit subgroup) and the least visits (or the low visit subgroup) were examined. DDMS records of wards receiving medium visits were excluded because this cohort could not be categorized in either of the groups referred to in the hypothesis.

From the universe population of 201 wards with high visits, a random sample of 30 wards was selected. Correspondingly, these wards were proportionately matched to a subgroup from the lowest category (universe population of 1,497 wards) on age at admission, ethnicity, admission status, court of commitment, and commitment offense.

Table 5 shows the DDMS rates for the sample of wards in highest and lowest subgroups from October 1987 through July 1988 and from October 1988 through July 1989. Due to the different DDMS reporting procedures used in each of the three institutions, the less serious DDMS incidents were excluded from the calculation. Instead, only the Level B or the most serious violent incidents were included in the analysis.

TABLE 5  
Overall Pre- and Post-Program DDMS Rates  
at NCYC Institutions

Wards by Number of Visits	Rate per 100 wards Before (Oct 1987-July 1988)	Rate per 100 wards After (Oct 1988-July 1989)
Low Number of Visits (1-9 Visits) n=30	50	40
High Number of Visits (20 or More Visits) n=30	23	47*

\* Significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

For each subgroup, the pre-program DDMS rate was compared to the post-program rate. In addition, wards belonging to the "highest number of visits" subgroup were compared to those from the lowest number group with respect to involvement in disciplinary incidents.

From October 1987 through July 1988, the overall DDMS rate for the lowest visit subgroup was 50 per 100 wards. From October 1988 through July 1989, it dropped to 40. This difference was not statistically significant. For wards belonging to the "highest visit subgroup" disciplinary incidents increased during the post-period (October 1988 through July 1989): The pre-program DDMS rate was 23 per 100 wards, and after the Visitor Center was established it was 47. This increase was statistically significant, and was in the direction opposite to that predicted. That is, the more visits, the more disciplinary incidents occurred. (Whether the visits triggered the incidents, or partly resulted from them, or whether there is no causal relationship between these variables, is unknown.)

TABLE 6  
Number of Wards with DDMS Incidents,  
by Number of Visits

Number of Wards	Low Number of Visits (1-9)		High Number of Visits (20 +)	
	n	%	n	%
<u>October 1987 through July 1988</u>				
Total	30	100.0	30	100.0
With Incidents	9	30.0	5	16.7
Without Incidents	21	70.0	25	83.3
<u>October 1988 through July 1989</u>				
Total	30	100.0	30	100.0
With Incidents	9	30.0	8	26.7
Without Incidents	21	70.0	22	73.3

From the sample of wards in the lowest and highest subgroups, Table 6 compares the number of wards with and without disciplinary incidents from October 1987 through July 1988 (pre-program period) and from October 1988 through July 1989 (post-program period). For the lowest visit subgroup, there was no difference in the proportions of wards with disciplinary incidents during the pre- and post-program periods. However, Table 6 shows that wards belonging to the "highest visit group" performed slightly worse during the post-program time period. That is, a higher proportion of wards during the post-program period (26.7%) had DDMS incidents compared to the pre-program period (16.7%). However, this increase was not statistically significant. Thus, Table 6 findings suggest that contrary to the hypothesis, wards receiving more visits performed slightly worse

in the institutions and wards having fewer visits showed no improvement in their institutional performance.

In addition to an analysis of DDMS records of the sample cohort, interviews were conducted with DDMS Investigators to determine whether institutional ward-performance improved in conjunction with the Visitor Center. A Research staff member interviewed the DDMS Investigator of each NCYC institution -- Karl Holton, O.H. Close, and Dewitt Nelson. DDMS investigators were asked about perceptions of improvement in institutional ward behavior prior to and after October 1988. (See Appendix C for DDMS Investigator interview questions.)

All three DDMS investigators independently responded that the number of visits did not appear to have any major impact on ward behavior in institutions. In fact, one DDMS investigator expressed reservations about a possible positive correlation between these two variables because he observed that certain wards involved in disciplinary incidents were those receiving regular visits from their families. All investigators also pointed out that ward behavior appears to be more related to other factors such as overall ward-tension on the living unit associated with added living population, gang affiliations, and peer pressures.

### Program Impact on Parole Performance

The violation rates of wards in the lowest and the highest visit subgroups were examined to test the following hypothesis: The violation rate of wards who received the most visits during the study period will be 10 percent lower than that of wards who received the least visits.

The parole performance of a sample of wards belonging to the lowest and the highest visit subgroups and who were available for a full-year follow-up was evaluated. The sample of wards for the parole follow-up was the same sample selected for the analysis of the program impact on institutional performance. Only wards in the lowest and the highest visit subgroup who were released to parole prior to October 1, 1989, were included in the follow-up. Wards paroled on or after October 1, 1989, could not be included, since they could not be followed for 12 months.

To determine the representativeness of the sample to the larger population, Table 7 presents the characteristics of all wards belonging to the lowest visit subgroup and of the sample of these wards. The table shows that the characteristics of all wards and the sample were comparable on four of the five background characteristics considered. They were similar on ethnicity, age at admission, admission status, and court of commitment. However, the sample of 30 had proportionately fewer property offenders and more person offenders.

Table 8 compares the characteristics of all wards belonging to the highest visit subgroup and of the sample of these wards. The table shows that there were relatively small, statistically non-significant differences between all wards and the sample on all characteristics.



TABLE 7  
Characteristics of All Wards Receiving Low Visits  
and of a Sample of these Wards

Characteristics	All Wards 1-9 Visits (n=1497) %/mean		Sample of Wards 1-9 Visits (n=30) %/mean	
<u>Ethnicity</u>				
White (%)	553	(37.0)	12	(40.0)
Hispanic (%)	419	(28.0)	8	(26.7)
Black (%)	439	(29.3)	8	(30.0)
Other (%)	86	( 5.7)	2	( 6.7)
<u>Age at last Admission</u>				
(mean)		17.2		16.9
<u>Admission Status</u>				
First Admission(%)	1280	(85.5)	28	(93.3)
Readmission (%)	217	(14.5)	2	( 6.7)
<u>Court of Commitment</u>				
Juvenile (%)	1452	(97.0)	30	(100.0)
Adult (%)	45	( 3.0)	-	
<u>Commitment Offense</u>				
Person/Sex (%)	570	(38.1)	14	(46.6)
Property (%)	694	(46.4)	11	(36.7)
Drugs/Alcohol (%)	172	(11.5)	4	(13.3)
Other (%)	61	( 4.1)	1	( 3.3)

TABLE 8  
Characteristics of All Wards Receiving High Visits  
and of a Sample of these Wards

Characteristics	All Wards 20+ Visits (n=201) %/mean		Sample of Wards 20+ Visits (n=30) %/mean	
<u>Ethnicity</u>				
White (%)	116	(57.7)	13	(43.3)
Hispanic (%)	43	(21.4)	8	(26.7)
Black (%)	29	(14.4)	7	(23.3)
Other (%)	13	( 6.5)	2	( 6.7)
<u>Age at Last Admission</u>				
(mean)	17.0		16.9	
<u>Admission Status</u>				
First Admission(%)	177	(88.0)	28	(93.3)
Readmission (%)	24	(12.0)	2	( 7.7)
<u>Court Commitment</u>				
Juvenile (%)	190	(94.5)	29	(96.7)
Adult (%)	11	( 5.5)	1	( 3.3)
<u>Commitment Offense</u>				
Person/Sex (%)	94	(46.8)	13	(43.3)
Property (%)	67	(33.3)	11	(36.7)
Drugs/Alcohol (%)	17	( 8.5)	3	(10.0)
Other (%)	23	(11.4)	3	(10.0)

TABLE 9  
Parole Violations for the Sample of Parole Releases  
during a 12-Month Follow-up

Parole Releases and Status	Total Parole Releases No.	Low Number of Visits (1-9) No.	High Number of Visits (20 +) No.
No. Released	28	13	15
Non-Violators/ Good Discharge	19	9	10
Violators/ Bad Discharge	9	4	5

From the sample of wards in the lowest and the highest visit subgroups who were available for a full-year follow-up, Table 9 compares the parole performance of the two subgroups. Of the 60 wards in the sample, only 28 had enough parole follow-up time for analysis. The remaining 32 wards in the sample were either (1) released to parole on or after October 1, 1989, (2) directly discharged from Youth Authority jurisdiction due to lack of confinement time, or (3) not yet released from a Youth Authority institution.

Among the parole releases, wards were non-violators if (1) they were still on parole at the end of 12 months, or (2) they had been discharged without a violation within 12 months of parole exposure. The wards were considered to be violators if (1) they had their parole revoked or they were recommitted within the 12 months, or (2) they were discharged for either criminal law violations or because of commitment to a non-YA institution.

Table 9 shows that for the lowest visit subgroup, 4 of the 13 parole releases, or 30.8 percent, violated parole during the

12 months after being paroled. At the same time, 5 out of the 15, or 33.3 percent, of parole releases for the highest visit subgroup were reported as parole violators. This 2.5 percentage point difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, Table 9 findings suggest that contrary to the hypothesis, there is no significant difference in the violation rate of wards who received the most visits during the study period compared with that for wards who received the least visits. Increased visiting does not appear to be related to improved ward parole performance. Further, increased visiting does not indicate a reduction of recidivism of 10 percent a year.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the analysis reported above, a few general, albeit preliminary, statements can be made concerning the Visitor Center's impact.

Overall, visitation rates in all three institutions increased with the establishment of the Visitor Center; however two of the increases were statistically non-significant. (Karl Holton School did show a statistically significant increase.) The three institutions combined could collectively accommodate a maximum of 720 persons (wards and visitors) during any peak-period visiting day. This figure represents the combined visiting area capacity of the three institutions. Interviews with administrators and institutional staff revealed that each institution had currently reached its visiting area capacity limits, beyond which it could not sustain the current level of institutional visiting services delivered.

In general, DDMS data on the sample of wards receiving visits showed no direct relationship between number of visits and the number of disciplinary incidents. Increased visiting does not appear to reduce the number of disciplinary incidents in the institutions. In fact, contrary to what was earlier predicted, increased visiting (as shown by wards belonging to the high visit subgroup with 20 or more visits) was associated with more disciplinary incidents.

Preliminary parole follow-up data on the sample of wards receiving visits showed that the number of visits does not appear to be related to ward parole performance. There was no statistically significant difference in the parole violation rate of wards who received the most visits during the study period

compared with that for wards who received the least visits.

Summing up, the visitation, DDMS, and parole follow-up data presented are not encouraging indicators of early program success. In analysing the three objectives, staff views on program success were largely consistent with data presented. The Visitor Center had little apparent impact on amount of visiting on the institutional and parole performance of wards. And yet the question that mainly arises during the evaluation is that a program established primarily to assist visitors rather than increase their numbers in the institutions cannot, perhaps, be expected to have an impact on wards.

The possible program benefits are not reflected by the extent to which the program met its legislatively mandated objectives.

## References

Holt, Norman & Miller, Donald (January 1972). Explorations in Inmate-Family Relationships. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Corrections.

Institutions and Camps Branch (January 1989). Northern California Youth Center Visitor Center: Progress Report, July 1, 1988 through December 15, 1988, California Department of Youth Authority.

# APPENDIX A-1

## Pre- and Post Program Monthly Number of Visits and Visitors at NCYC Insitutions

Institution/ Month	No. of Visits		No. of Visitors	
	Before 10/87-7/88	After 10/88-7/89	Before 10/87-7/88	After 10/88-7/89
<u>O.H. Close</u>				
Oct	403	624	*	1501
Nov	640	523	*	1326
Dec	441	517	*	1309
Jan	478	567	*	1416
Feb	*	477	*	1125
Mar	424	512	*	1229
Apr	532	614	1269	1451
May	*	476	*	1155
Jun	479	529	1202	1272
Jul	641	586	1746	1463
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<u>Karl Holton</u>				
Oct	*	715	*	1544
Nov	544	658	1237	1532
Dec	652	671	1442	1628
Jan	517	687	1128	1560
Feb	510	583	1128	1299
Mar	433	600	1027	1437
Apr	446	652	1058	1541
May	398	543	828	1329
Jun	572	583	1287	1417
Jul	754	787	1620	1902
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<u>Dewitt Nelson</u>				
Oct	394	691	835	1418
Nov	412	508	942	1144
Dec	469	480	1191	1013
Jan	478	520	1022	1140
Feb	394	452	854	920
Mar	429	453	939	930
Apr	505	582	1077	1236
May	612	416	1330	914
Jun	527	436	1192	897
Jul	712	552	1637	1186
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\* No data available.



APPENDIX A-2  
Average Daily Population (ADP)  
at NCYC Institutions

Institution/ Month	Before 10/87 - 7/88	After 10/88 - 7/89
<u>O.H. Close</u>		
Oct	539	544
Nov	540	541
Dec	539	545
Jan	544	547
Feb	550	548
Mar	548	537
Apr	549	528
May	548	545
Jun	547	543
Jul	549	528
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<u>Karl Holton</u>		
Oct	524	535
Nov	528	535
Dec	531	537
Jan	533	535
Feb	541	538
Mar	544	532
Apr	546	537
May	548	521
Jun	548	524
Jul	548	542
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<u>Dewitt Nelson</u>		
Oct	616	619
Nov	620	614
Dec	625	611
Jan	622	596
Feb	620	601
Mar	621	588
Apr	622	608
May	619	595
Jun	614	606
Jul	623	604

Source : Information Systems Bureau, Department of Youth Authority

## APPENDIX B-1

### List of Interviewees at NCYC Institutions

- 2 Superintendents
- 1 Assistant Superintendent
- 3 Chiefs of Security
- 3 DDMS Investigators
- 3 Treatment Team Supervisors
- 3 Institutional Parole Agents

## APPENDIX B-2

### Interview Guide

(For all interviewees except DDMS Investigators)

1. At this time, do you think that your institution has attained its visiting area capacity limits? If yes, why?
2. In what ways do you think does the Visitor Center assist visitors and wards in the institutions. Do you think the establishment of the Center affects the ward population directly? If yes, how does the Center affect wards?
3. What suggestions do you have for improving the program?

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Guide for DDMS Investigators

1. After October 1, 1988, were there any changes in the number of DDMSs written up or in the general institutional behavior of wards ? If there were changes, how were these changes manifested?
2. If there was an improvement in ward institutional behavior do you think the establishment of the Visitor Center is the major factor which brought about this change?
3. Were there any changes in DDMS policies or were there other factors after October 1988 which may explain changes, if any in ward institutional performance?