

To the BOCC:

I am writing this in regards to the discussion of closing the Okanogan County Juvenile Corrections Center (OCJCC). As qualified, educated and devoted Juvenile Staff, we strive to meet our vision for our community, *a juvenile system in our community that strengthens and protects our youth and our future*. The Board of Commissioners are considering to destroy this vision for our community by closing our local detention in order to contract with a state juvenile prison located in Medical Lake, approximately 150 miles away. Before making such a punitive decision, it is important that we look deeper into why relocation is not in our vision!

- 1 The OCJCC personnel realize each family is unique and we make efforts to learn their history, cultures, social behaviors, values and more. This is important when dealing with families who are raising children with mental health, behavioral and emotional issues or experimenting with or abusing drugs. By connecting with our families, we create a welcoming environment that help put these families at ease and helps them gain trust.
- 2 The OCJCC personnel respond to community involvement strengthening every child's educational and mental health needs. Whether it be a teacher, school counselor, social worker, probation officer, attorneys or program facilitators, these partners are at our fingertips with a large amount of knowledge and support. It creates a collaborative team approach. It is critical we maintain these relationships to be fully prepared when youth transition back into our community.
- 3 OCJCC provides evidence based programs such as, Aggression Replacement Training, Functional Family Therapy, and Educational Alternative Programs. Evidence based practices are program services that improve outcomes for youth, maintain public safety, reduce recidivism and help with unwarranted racial/ethnic disparities. All trainers/facilitators are professionally trained and highly competent.

It is clear we are accomplishing our vision by reducing juvenile offender recidivism, providing adequate juvenile justice facilities, building partnerships with community agencies, providing adequate juvenile services in all areas of our county, developing adequate and sustainable funding for juvenile services, developing and maintaining a professional staff training program, and advocating for the best interest of the juveniles we serve. Please don't blur our vision!

Sincerely,  
Darla Ehrhard  
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Aggression Replacement Training Program Facilitator  
Okanogan County Juvenile

