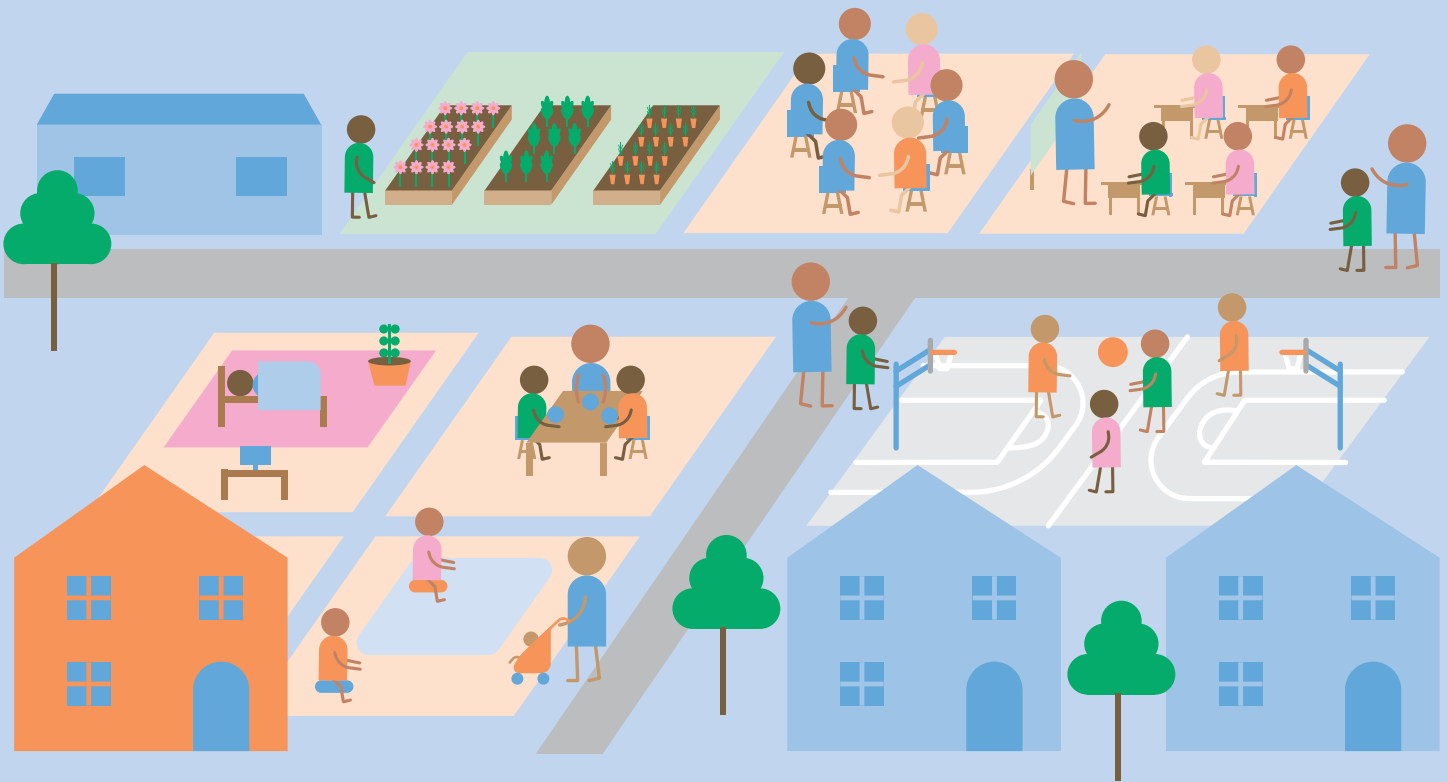


# Los Angeles County: Youth Justice Reimagined



## Recommendations of the Los Angeles County Youth Justice Work Group

W. Haywood Burns Institute  
October 2020

# Dedication

The Youth Justice Work Group of Los Angeles County adopts this artwork as its logo in memory and appreciation of Redin Cubas, whom we lost in October 2019. After participating in Street Poets Inc. at the Dorothy Kirby Center (a Juvenile Probation facility), Redin received the Advocacy and Policy Fellowship from Arts for Healing and Justice Network (AHJN) and began attending meetings of the Los Angeles Youth Uprising Coalition (LAYUP) to transform juvenile systems. He was also part of a group of youth leaders who worked with the office of Youth Diversion and Development to plan the 2019 Los Angeles County Youth Development Summit.

In July 2019, Redin and several other youth organizers from AHJN, the Youth Justice Coalition, Youth Passageways and LAYUP took a road trip to learn and work alongside the Northern Cheyenne Native community in Lame Deer, Montana. It was there that he was inspired to paint this piece.

**“Redin Cubas was a force of nature in the truest sense. He was unstoppable, determined and courageous. He was a tremendously sensitive and empathic person and he channeled all of what he felt and experienced in his art and life. Redin was an artist. He was a son and an older brother. He was a comrade, a fighter and an advocate.”**

—Zoe, Arts for Healing and Justice Network

**“Redin’s life is meaningful to youth justice and youth development because Redin was a youth that really wanted to advocate for the youth that were locked up. He was able to relate to the way the youth in jail were being treated and the pain it is to be away from their families. He also believed in developing alternatives for the youth that are in the system, so instead of locking them up in a cell, they could go to a program where youth are engaged with the community or doing things for the community.”**

—Mainor, Arts for Healing and Justice Network Youth Advocate

**“This trip was to make sure all young people knew they were not alone, that their roots were strong and deep, and their connections were powerful and wide.”**

—Kruti Parekh, Los Angeles Youth Uprising Coalition Coordinator



The Youth Justice Work Group of Los Angeles County adopts this artwork as its logo in memory and appreciation of Redin Cubas.

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements and Process</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Youth Statement</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Key</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>History and Context</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Breadth of Report</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Infrastructure and Feasibility Considerations: Department of Youth Development</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Key Data and Research to Support Youth Justice Reimagined</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Overview of Youth Justice Reimagined</b>	<b>35</b>
Long-Term Vision for YJR	36
Core Values Guiding YJR	36
Foundational Components of YJR	42
<b>Transformed Pathways in Youth Justice Reimagined</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Case Study Flow</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Plan for Phased Implementation</b>	<b>60</b>
Phased Implementation Chart	64
Functions Under the DYD Compared to Juvenile Probation in Each Phase	66
Draft Organizational Chart for the DYD	67
<b>Workforce and Budget Implications of a New Youth Justice Model</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Legal Questions and Implications of Youth Justice Reimagined</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Conclusion and Onward</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Appendix: Subcommittee Recommendations</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>102</b>



# Acknowledgements and Process

With the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' unanimous August 2019 motion to establish the Youth Justice Work Group (YJWG), Los Angeles County affirmed its commitment to reimagining a youth justice system rooted in healing and wellbeing, racial equity and Youth Development.

The YJWG convened in January 2020, meeting twice in person before moving to virtual meetings due to Covid-19 safety guidelines. Each month, approximately 150 participants joined these meetings, including youth leaders, community organizations, youth-serving government agencies and justice partners. Three YJWG subcommittees also met monthly to concentrate on key themes within the youth justice system continuum: 1) Youth Development and Diversion, 2) Youth Formally Processed in the Legal System and 3) Addressing Needs for Alternatives to Detention, Placement and Incarceration. The YJWG gained further perspectives into its enormous task through additional stakeholder engagements, including Listening Sessions (focus groups for 10-15 people), Learning Exchanges (peer-learning opportunities with other jurisdictions), one-on-ones (meetings with key stakeholders) and surveys.

YJWG members were given opportunities to provide input, share ideas and raise concerns along the way, including co-designing questionnaires and offering feedback in revising draft recommendations. Driven by the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors' mandate, the YJWG facilitated a process whereby participants had various opportunities and spaces to lean in with integrity and the courage of their convictions. Diverse stakeholders struggled and reasoned together through healthy tensions and disagreements, ranging from outright opposition to design concepts to disappointment in their placement within the implementation plan. Some believed the model, Youth Justice Reimagined(YJR), should go further, while others considered it too transformative. Change is inevitably difficult. The mandate was neither to appease everyone, nor to tinker around the edges of system reform. Our goal was to develop collaborative recommendations that reflect and build upon areas of agreement among our group; offer clarity based on analyses of quantitative and qualitative data from Los Angeles County and beyond; and create the infrastructure needed to support continued learning and collaborative planning where more work is needed.

As the Covid-19 pandemic and uprisings against racial injustice and police brutality stirred our nation, YJWG members remained vigilant and dedicated. We extend our deepest gratitude to the members for their concentrated, compassionate and collaborative efforts.

We acknowledge and thank the youth leaders, many currently and formerly involved in the youth justice system, who participated in the YJWG, offering insight, personal stories and recommendations so that future youth will benefit from responses rooted in healing and support. Their participation took courage and emotional stamina, and we are humbled and inspired by their vision, resilience and dedication.

We also acknowledge and appreciate the YJWG's dedicated representatives from the County's justice system, including the Juvenile Court, District Attorney's Office, Defense Offices, and Probation. We are grateful for the many justice partners who brought their courage and commitment to improving the lives of youth to this complicated process. Please know that concerns about the current system are not critiques of hard-working and compassionate people but of a structure largely incapable of innovation and responsiveness.

Additionally, we would like to thank each participating organization, institution and government agency (listed below) for helping envision a youth support system unlike anything currently implemented in the nation.

## Participating Organizations and Institutions

- ACLU
- AFSCME Local 685
- Alma Family Services
- Alternative Public Defender's Office
- AMAAD Institute
- Anti-Recidivism Coalition
- Arts for Healing and Justice Network
- Asian Youth Center
- BAM Youth Guidance
- Brotherhood Crusade
- Brothers Sons Selves Coalition
- Cal State LA
- California Conference for Equality and Justice
- CCPOA Health
- Centinela Youth Services
- Champions in Services
- Children's Defense Fund
- Children's Law Center
- Coalition for Engaged Education
- Community Coalition
- Everychild Foundation
- Flintridge Center
- Homies Unidos
- Impact Justice
- Independent Juvenile Defense Program
- Inner City Struggle
- Jenesse Center
- LAUSD intern
- Los Angeles Youth Uprising Coalition
- Loyola Law Center for Juvenile Law and Policy
- Loyola Marymount Center for Urban Resilience
- Lyft
- New Earth
- Professional Community Intervention Training Institute (PCITI)
- Professional Managers Association
- Public Counsel
- Reissa Foundation
- Rhythm Arts Alliance
- SEIU Local 721
- Social Justice Learning Institute
- Soledad Enrichment Action
- The Actor's Gang
- Tia Chucha's Cultural Center
- UCLA Bunche Center
- UCLA School of Law Criminal Justice Program
- Urban Peace Institute
- USC Children's Data Network
- USC School of Social Work
- Wellnest
- Youth Justice Coalition

## Participating Government Agencies

- Alternate Public Defender's Office
- Board of Supervisors
- Chief Executive Office
- Commission for Children and Families
- County Counsel
- Department of Arts and Culture
- Department of Children and Family Services
- Department of Health Services
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- Department of Public Health
- Department of Public Social Services
- District Attorney's Office
- Division of Youth Diversion and Development
- Los Angeles County Libraries
- Los Angeles County Office of Education
- Los Angeles County Police Chiefs Association
- Los Angeles Mayor's office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development
- Los Angeles Police Department
- Los Angeles School Police Department
- Office of Child Protection
- Office of Rep. Tony Cardenas
- Probation Commission
- Probation Department
- Probation Reform Implementation Team
- Public Defender's Office
- Sheriff's Department
- Superior Court
- Workforce Development Aging and Community Services

A special thanks to elected officials and their staff members.

We are grateful for the support and thought partnership of the Youth Justice Funders Group, a collective of several local foundations leading in the child welfare and justice space.

- Ballmer Group
- California Community Foundation
- California Wellness Foundation
- Liberty Hill Foundation
- Reissa Foundation
- The California Endowment
- Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
- LA 84 Foundation
- LA Dodgers Foundation
- Michelson Foundation
- The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation
- Roy and Patricia Disney Family Foundation

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## Youth Statement

From the beginning, the YJWG included and centered youth voices and youth participation in every aspect of the process of reimagining a new system. Multiple Listening Sessions engaged youth from throughout Los Angeles County and interfaced variously with community-based, youth-serving organizations. These efforts were crucial in informing this report and its final recommendations.

Directly impacted youth possess a certain expertise about the system, understanding the depths of its problems as well as the nuanced solutions needed. In recognition of this expertise, space has been provided within this report for a statement from youth leaders. We would like to thank them for courageously sharing their stories, providing their analyses and solutions, and for continuously grounding us all in cultural practices and the principles of Youth Development. Several YJWG youth leaders came together to draft the following statement:





As the County envisions a new model for youth, it is important that we are at the table guiding the discussion and the decisions that will affect our futures. Our experiences, our analyses and our solutions matter. Throughout our lives we have felt the harmful impact and enormous burden of the juvenile justice system on us and our families. Right now in Los Angeles County, there are more than 500 youth locked in a cell away from their families, while a deadly pandemic rips through our communities. There are thousands more under probation supervision who are just one small mistake away from being separated from their families and thrown into one of those cells. Many of us have lived through this pain and still carry it. Some of us are dealing with the weight of the juvenile justice system right now. This is the very reason why we needed to be not just included but centered in the YJWG process. We know the pain. We know the issues. We have the solutions. For years we have organized to transform the system into one that cares and respects youth. We have defended our dignity and fought for ourselves and other youth by speaking out at Board meetings, holding press conferences, marching in the streets and holding healing spaces for each other since the current model fails to do so.

We are outraged that the current system takes vital resources from our communities and uses them to incarcerate us and trap us in a cycle of punishment and poverty. As youth diversion expands and youth incarceration levels continue to dramatically decrease, the Juvenile Probation Department's budget keeps growing. If our best interest was in mind, the funding that goes to locking us up and keeping us under probation supervision would go into building stronger support for us in schools, equitably resourcing Peacebuilders<sup>i</sup> and mentors, creating youth jobs and pathways to careers and comprehensive reentry services for youth coming home from the halls and camps. More than 90% of youth incarcerated in Los Angeles County are Black or Brown. That is a result of our communities being targeted for generations. Now is the time for Los Angeles County to change the way our communities are treated and lead the way into a positive future for youth. The only way to get us there is to divest from the current system and use those resources to establish a new Youth Development department rooted in the community.

All youth deserve multiple chances. Some get them. Others do not. Whether you end up incarcerated or in college should not be based on where you live, the color of your skin or how much money your family makes. Some communities have Youth Development while others have containment and suppression. We are a product of those communities that are over-policed and disinvested in. We are more likely to make police contact, not based on our behavior, but how our public resources are spent.

Our statement is not an attack on Juvenile Probation, but a challenge to all of us to do the right thing. Los Angeles County is in an historic position to end a system that does not serve our needs and invest in one that does—that cuts to the root of youth incarceration and provides for our safety and wellbeing.

We would like to offer our deepest gratitude to the YJWG for engaging us throughout the entire process. We sincerely appreciate the efforts to make space for our voices and provide us with the resources to adapt to the pandemic and transition to online meetings. We would also like to thank the Board of Supervisors for creating the YJWG and allowing the community to participate in the design of a new youth justice system. Decisions about youth should never be made without centering the voices and experiences of the youth they will affect. We are honored to have participated in this process and thank everybody involved. We look forward to continuing working with the County to realize a better world for us all.

## How to read this report

The body of this report focuses on the context, rationale, structure and core recommendations of YJR based on the work of all three subcommittees and the full YJWG, as well as data and research. In the appendix, additional information and recommendations of each subcommittee should be read as a supplement and elaboration of the initial thinking to build upon and further discuss in the next phase of planning. All of these should guide ongoing planning and implementation.

## Key to Commonly used abbreviations

BIPOC = Black, Indigenous and People of Color

CBO = community-based organization

DYD = Department of Youth Development

JJCC = Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council

JJCPA = Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act

RED = racial and ethnic disparities

RJ = restorative justice

TJ = transformative justice

WIC = Welfare and Institutions Code Section

YCC = Youth and Community Center

YDD = Youth Diversion and Development

YDLC = Youth Development Learning Collaborative

YDN = Youth Development Network

YES Teams = Youth Empowerment and Support Teams

YJR = Youth Justice Reimagined

YJWG = Youth Justice Work Group

# Executive Summary

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors tasked the Office of Diversion and Reentry's Division of Youth Diversion and Development (YDD) and the Chief Executive Office with establishing the Youth Justice Work Group (YJWG) to "explore the transitioning of the Los Angeles County's juvenile justice system out of the Probation Department into another agency, with the goal of creating a rehabilitative, health-focused and care-first system."

The Chief Executive's Office hired the W. Haywood Burns Institute (BI) to lead the consultant team. Nationally recognized for expertise in convening and engaging community and system stakeholders to address structural racism within the administration of justice, BI contracted five experienced consultants from Los Angeles: Patricia Soung, Dr. Danielle Dupuy, Isaac Bryan, Kent Mendoza and Anthony Robles. Together, the team launched the YJWG whose approximately 150 members included youth, community, justice partners and government stakeholders.

Community voices, particularly youth with first-hand experience with the justice system, were intentionally centered as equal members throughout the process. These youth sat at tables with and worked alongside decision-makers involved in their cases. This level of community and youth engagement was possible due to the support of several private foundations that, notably, increased support such that YJWG members could continue participating virtually in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The nation is watching Los Angeles County with great anticipation and for good reason. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has set an ambitious and strategic agenda for youth justice focusing on health and equity, and with each step the County itself is engaging in a transformation. In particular, the YJWG is building upon the historic achievements of the Office of Diversion and Reentry, YDD, the Probation Reform and Implementation Team, the Probation Governance Study, the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council, Office of Violence Prevention, Office of Child Protection, Youth Commission, Probation Oversight Commission, Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative, the Anti-Racism Initiative, the Dual Status Workgroup, and projects to repurpose now-closed camps. All of these bodies have affirmed the need for investing in equitable, effective youth and community development alternatives to punishment approaches and systems.

The YJWG's goal was to design a restorative, health-focused, care-first youth justice system that would be "meaningfully different in operations and outcomes from the current system." Informed by local, national and international evidence, the YJWG developed recommendations that reflect the following key considerations:

1. Equitable reduction in the size and scope of the youth justice system can improve both youth outcomes and public safety.
2. Resources dedicated to youth incarceration and supervision should be reallocated based on analyses of current data and should reflect values of healing, restorative justice (RJ) and Youth Development as functions of Juvenile Probation fully transition to a new structure over time.
3. Continuation of diverse collaborative planning for implementation and further research and work in key areas is needed.
4. An initial investment in youth-specific infrastructure is required in order to build capacity to implement a new healing-centered system in phases over the next five years.
5. With continued focus on equity, this phased transition can effectively improve staff wellbeing, including a plan to support Juvenile Probation staff transition that mitigates workforce disruption.

The YJWG proposes the next step in this legacy of transformation in Los Angeles County: Youth Justice Reimagined (YJR), a comprehensive approach to transform and improve the operation and outcomes of Los Angeles County's youth justice system that prioritizes equity and accountability, recognizes the need for healing-informed responses along the continuum of youth justice system involvement, and provides coordination to further expand Youth Development across the County.

**YJR includes the following core values and foundational components:**

#### **Core Values**

1. Racial and Ethnic Equity
2. Centering Community
3. Youth Development
4. Public Safety Achieved Through Wellbeing
5. Wellbeing Achieved by Addressing Social Determinants of Health
6. Restorative Justice (RJ) and Transformative Justice (TJ)
7. Transparency and Accountability
8. Evidence-Informed Design
9. Power-Sharing, Coordination and Collaboration

#### **Foundational Components**

1. Provide truly improved coordination for youth and partners and build capacity for effective responses across youth-serving systems.
2. Resource and cultivate a Countywide Youth Development Network (YDN), including Youth and Community Centers (YCCs) connected to 24-hour crisis response.
3. Expand the Youth Development and Diversion model, investing in the increase of Youth Development opportunities in communities and diversion eligibility and available restorative responses in lieu of justice system involvement, with a commitment to continued protections against net-widening.
4. Support community-driven input in decision-making along the youth justice continuum with Youth Empowerment and Support (YES) Teams.
5. Establish Safe and Secure Healing Centers: small, community-based therapeutic housing, with a range of security, to serve as alternatives to juvenile halls and camps as comprehensive reentry services for youth removed from home for their safety or the safety of others.
6. Enhance and resource a workforce anchored in Youth Development that provides culturally rooted support and care coordination, including healing-centered support for schools and other youth-serving systems.
7. Adopt transparency and accountability mechanisms involving youth and community in program, policy and budgetary decision-making.



The YJWG carefully explored the feasibility of transitioning the youth justice system out of the Probation Department and into another agency. As a result of working sessions with the YJWG, the consultant team assessed the opportunities and challenges involved in several different potential structures. These included keeping functions in the Probation Department, moving transformed functions into existing structures in the Department of Health Services or other health-focused agency, establishing a new Commission or other non-Departmental structure, or establishing new infrastructure at the level of a County Department.

In the end, the consultant team determined that to truly transform operations and outcomes for justice-involved youth would require a phased transitioning away from the Juvenile Probation structure. An investment in a youth-specific Department-level infrastructure that can build upon the successes and address limitations of YDD is essential to equitably right-size the youth justice system. This conclusion was based on lessons from prior reform efforts; analyses of limited available data; and dialogue with local, national and international experts.

The YJWG proposes a phased approach to implementation with the critical first step involving the creation and funding of the Department of Youth Development (DYD) that is capable of building on the success of efforts like YDD and Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group while continuing to facilitate collaborative planning focused on implementation details that were not finalized this year. In order to reflect the values and goals outlined in this report, DYD will rely on innovative, high-level leadership; restorative, healing-centered, and development-oriented organizational culture; the autonomy and authority to provide Countywide leadership for equitable funding and capacity-building structures; and strong transparency and accountability mechanisms.

DYD will be the vehicle for YJR, specifically designed to build capacity for transformed responses to youth across County systems. This includes further developing the vast YDN needed for an equitable reduction in the size and scope of the population of justice-involved youth. The Department will also be able to provide the critical functions of ongoing collaborative planning and training, multidisciplinary decision-making support and coordination through YES Teams, implementation of Safe and Secure Healing Centers and Countywide capacity-building for community-rooted supports, reentry and restorative practices to improve public safety, promote public health and repair harm.

YJR seeks to improve community safety by supporting the growth and wellbeing of youth and dismantling the structural racism entrenched in the administration of justice by building structural solutions. The approach reflects design concepts that replace the current functions of Juvenile Probation. These design concepts begin with an investment in Youth Development and an expansion of diversion. When circumstances require youth to be processed through the legal system, YES Teams collaborate in decision-making along the continuum. If a secure placement is required, it will be a small home-like residence with healing and restorative practices embedded into its structure and operations and a focus on supported reentry whenever possible. A County-run secure facility will be a last resort for youth who require the utmost security for their own safety and the safety of those around them.

Based on the cost needed to fully expand youth diversion and development, provide initial staff to support expansion and early transition planning, and support consultants to facilitate ongoing planning, Phase 1 proposes a budget of approximately \$75 million. Preliminary analyses of Probation's budget and other potential funding sources indicate that these funds could come from the Probation Department's unrealized cost savings but recognize that the Chief Executive Office will need to conduct additional analyses to determine exact funding sources for Phase 1 and future phases.

The proposed YJR takes into consideration impacts on the current workforce. No layoffs are being proposed. These recommendations consider the need for additional analyses to address key labor, legal and legislative issues. Specifically, the County will need a detailed legal analysis that outlines local ordinance and state legislative changes to produce a legal roadmap for the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report. The County should also explore whether additional measures are needed to protect youth rights under a new system, including through comprehensive accountability mechanisms.

Certainly, many details of YJR will require more planning, analyses and thoughtful deliberation. It will require dedicated staff and capacity to engage the full range of stakeholders involved in the YJWG and other key groups (including additional youth leadership, representatives from schools and other youth-serving systems, justice partners and victims who have been harmed by violence or crime). This report recommends that first YDD and then the new Department of Youth Development continue to facilitate collaborative planning and oversight in the coming years to implement the key components of this work in three phases:

#### **Summary of Recommendations for Phase 1: Establishing Infrastructure and Initial Administrative, Program and Planning Capacity to Bring YJR to Life (18 months)**

1. Reallocate at least \$75 million of Probation funds to establish DYD with initial leadership positions, administer contracts and grants to YDN providers as well as provide transition resources for Probation staff.
2. Expand YDD's pre-arrest diversion network Countywide, including school referrals, with the goal of transitioning YDD into DYD as soon as possible.
3. First YDD and then DYD continue facilitating collaborative planning for the implementation of an improved alternatives to the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Safe and Secure Healing Centers and 24-hour Youth and Community Centers (YCCs).
4. First YDD and then DYD develop a Youth Development Learning Collaborative (YDLC) to facilitate shared learning and capacity-building for Youth Development among youth-serving agencies in collaboration with youth leadership; community stakeholders; representatives from schools, child welfare and other youth-serving systems; and justice partners.
5. Begin collaborative planning to enhance and expand reentry support for youth in juvenile halls and camps, working with Probation to increase access to CBOs.

#### **Summary of Recommendations for Phase 2: Transitioning Transformed Functions to YJR and Capacity-building (18 months)**

1. Reallocate additional Probation funds to DYD for continued development of the YDN, additional contracts and grants to providers as well as continued support for workforce training and transition planning for Probation staff.
2. Establish an initial cohort of 24-hour YCCs, launching pre- and post-adjudication YES Teams at each center and building capacity for youth services and restorative practices.
3. Transfer facilities to DYD and expand the Safe and Secure Healing Centers model.

4. Coordinate a comprehensive continuum of reentry services for youth exiting detention and incarceration.

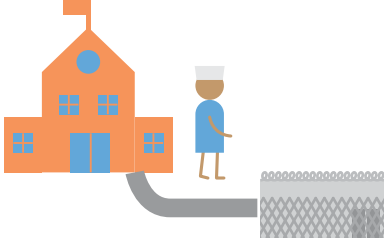
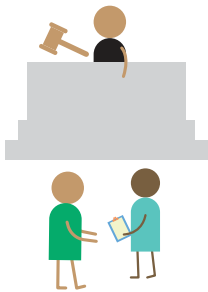
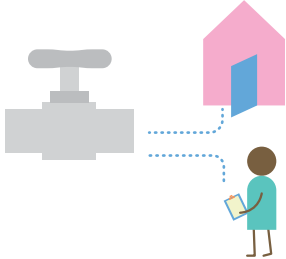


### Summary of Recommendations for Phase 3: Full Transition to YJR (18 months)

1. Reallocate additional Probation funds to the DYD for continued development of the YDN, including additional resources to providers and training and transition support for Probation staff.
2. Advance Countywide Youth Development Priorities informed by YDLC.
3. Continue expanding the 24-hour network crisis response connected to YCCs.
4. Fully fund restorative alternatives to supervision and integrate YES Team input at all key decision points.
5. Close remaining halls and camps as Safe and Secure Healing Centers expand.

**This report proposes that the Division of Youth Diversion and Development and the Chief Executive Office oversee initial transition planning in collaboration with the YJWG. The YJWG should continue to be engaged at least through Phase 1 of implementation to ensure steps are taken in alignment with the intent of the collaborative. This should include more detailed planning in smaller groups focused on specific topics such as data and information sharing, reentry services, partnerships with schools and other systems, Youth Empowerment and Support Teams, and Safe and Secure Healing Centers.**

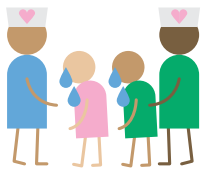
YJR embodies the best practices of community-based prevention and interventions while boldly moving to an innovative approach to youth justice. This design rejects the framework of custody, suppression and control. Instead, YJR relies on implementing large-scale, multiform interventions linked to trusted relationships rooted in cultural and community resources.

# Youth Justice Reimagined

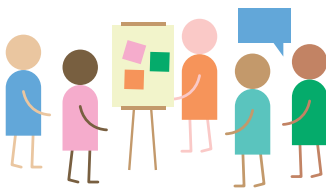
	Juvenile Probation serves important functions	
In-School Services	 <p>In some schools, school-based probation officers conduct supervision and provide referrals to resources for probation-involved youth, but there was a connection to the prison pipeline.</p>	
Figuring out what happened and deciding what to do	 <p>Conducts assessment and investigation, providing Pre-Plea reports and recommendations to the Juvenile Court.</p>	
Services in the community	 <p>In the community, probation officers conduct field supervision and provide referrals to resources for probation-involved youth.</p>	
Secure Housing	 <p>Operates secure juvenile halls and camp facilities where youth who cannot return home are detained or incarcerated.</p>	
Destributing Resources	 <p>Probation receives and administers Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act funding, including funds for capacity-building, youth development, and prevention programs.</p>	



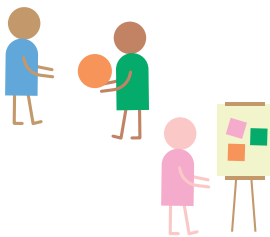
## Here's how Youth Justice Reimagined will transform and improve them



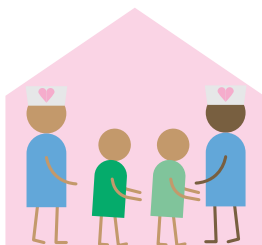
Schools are supported by dedicated youth development workers who can respond to conflict, make sure harm is repaired and mentor youth to help them grow.



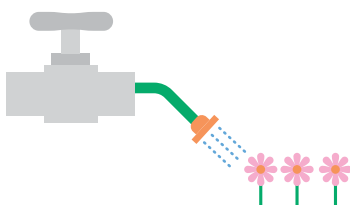
Collaborative YES Team works to figure out what happened, find the best options for youth and advocate for them in the system.



24-hour Youth and Community Centers with youth programming, restorative processes and YES Teams connecting youth to additional community-rooted supports.



Safe and Secure Healing Centers create spaces for youth to receive trauma-responsive services in small, residential, home-like centers close to their families.



Data-driven and transparent funding mechanisms direct resources to community-based services that help youth thrive and reduce justice system involvement.

# History and Context

The 2019 Los Angeles Board of Supervisors' motion to address the County's philosophy, structure and performance regarding youth in the care of its Probation Department states:

**If the County is to meet its obligation of adequately addressing the rehabilitative needs of the youth in its care, it must acknowledge that the juvenile camps and halls model is fundamentally flawed, and that housing supervision and services within an agency with a Law Enforcement orientation may be counterproductive. Shifting towards a rehabilitative, care-first model is not just ideal, it is needed, and likely requires a different structure and framework to achieve.**

Neither circumspect nor vague, this language affirms the fundamental understanding that the State has a responsibility to treat children in their care differently than adults. The seminal Supreme Court ruling in *Ex Parte Crouse*<sup>ii</sup> (1838) granted the State authority over the interests and safety of children brought to its attention (and into its care), but it would take until 1899 for the nation to see the establishment of its first youth court. Due to the advocacy and diligence of Chicago community members Julia Lathrop and Lucy Flower to create it, Cook County's youth court sought to address "the child's *need* and not the *deed*"<sup>iii</sup>—a mandate that Los Angeles County youth courts and their partner agencies (District Attorney, law enforcement and Probation) have today.

Since its inception, "need" over "deed" has faced significant challenges from segments of civil society with an impulse for retribution and punishment. This very impulse intensified during the 1980s, when issues of racialized fear of crime and violence, notably the myth of the "super predator," promoted by Professor John Dilulio of Princeton University, compounded to persuade media and many in the general public that the Black or Brown face of this "new breed" of super predator—"fatherless, Godless...radically impulsive, brutally

remorseless youngsters"—would soon terrorize all of society.<sup>iv</sup>

The onslaught of menacing images from the media, coupled with the academy's explicit approval, tapped into unwritten notions of white supremacy and constituted direct assaults on youth of color that emboldened elected officials to give the youth justice sector carte blanche in prioritizing "deed" at the expense of "need": lowering the age of youth responsibility, increasing sentences and building jail-like institutions and equipment, while using incarceration and strict supervision to address youthful misbehavior. Los Angeles County, like most counties throughout the nation, adopted this approach to youth justice by relying on large, congregate facilities and investing in custody and control, even over youth who had poor grades and had not violated the law. That approach led to the mass incarceration of Black, Indigenous and youth of color at levels that cannot be attributed to crime alone.

Now, more than a generation later, elected officials are acting on local community demands and are interrogating the efficacy of this approach. For its part, over the last five years, Los Angeles County has been examining the best way to achieve appropriate developmental responses to youthful law violations. In 2017, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion to establish an ad hoc committee within the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee tasked with developing a strategic plan for building a youth diversion model in Los Angeles County. The committee's final recommendations laid the groundwork for the creation of YDD (housed within the County's Office of Diversion and Reentry) and established a network of community-based service providers to intercept and divert youth from formal youth justice system involvement or processing in lieu of citation or arrest.<sup>v</sup>

Also, in 2017, the County of Los Angeles inaugurated the "LA Model" at the newly constructed Campus Kilpatrick facility. The LA

Model was designed as a youth-centered, small group model centering care over control for youth overseen by the County's Probation Department.<sup>vi</sup> While implementation of the LA Model has drawn scrutiny by both system stakeholders and third-party evaluators, its Youth Development principles have given us something to build upon.

In 2018, the Board of Supervisors voted to support passing SB 439 to end prosecution and detention of children under 12 years old except in the most serious cases, acknowledging that any arrest and system involvement can be harmful to youth. The Board passed subsequent motions to further reduce the County's reliance on youth detention, especially for youth with mental health challenges and youth especially susceptible during the Covid-19 pandemic. With the Board's support, half of the 12 juvenile camps and one juvenile hall closed between 2017 and 2019.

From 2016 to the present, the Board simultaneously conducted repeated inquiries and a series of 16 hearings about the Probation Department's structure, approach, spending and oversight on the heels of seven County audit reports released throughout 2015. These unrelenting efforts paved the way for both a serious reconsideration of the entire youth justice system and an investment in building transformative alternatives. The Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC), Probation Reform Implementation Team (PRIT), and Probation Oversight Commission (POC) are three important examples.

Reforms and transformations of Los Angeles County's youth justice system over the past several years have not happened in isolation. The County of Los Angeles has been on a pathway toward reimagining its entire criminal legal system. In a historic decision just last year, the Board of Supervisors voted to cancel a nearly \$2 billion-dollar contract previously signed to build a new jail. That decision was attributed to a growing call to more closely examine the human and fiscal impacts of incarceration in Los Angeles, facing up to the fact that people of all ages who come into conflict with the law have a deeper need for

accountability rooted in care rather than punishment. To continue thinking beyond traditional institutions of punishment and confinement, the Board of Supervisors launched the Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group with a motion passed in February 2019. The work group's final report called for developing comprehensive interventions rooted in care, health and opportunity rather than continuing the overutilization of the County jail infrastructure as the primary site for mental health and other service delivery.<sup>vii</sup>

The last five years of reform thinking and policy creation have brought Los Angeles County to this moment. To meet it, this report offers holistic recommendations for YJR. As mentioned above, the Board Resolution required this document to "shift toward a rehabilitative care-first model." In fulfilling that mandate the YJWG proposes ideas steeped in positive Youth Development, which can be disquieting for those who equate punishment with safety. Nevertheless, research has well documented the negative impacts of incarceration on behavior change and life outcomes. This is not to suggest that restriction of movement is unnecessary but to examine the possibilities of supervision in settings that are not carceral.

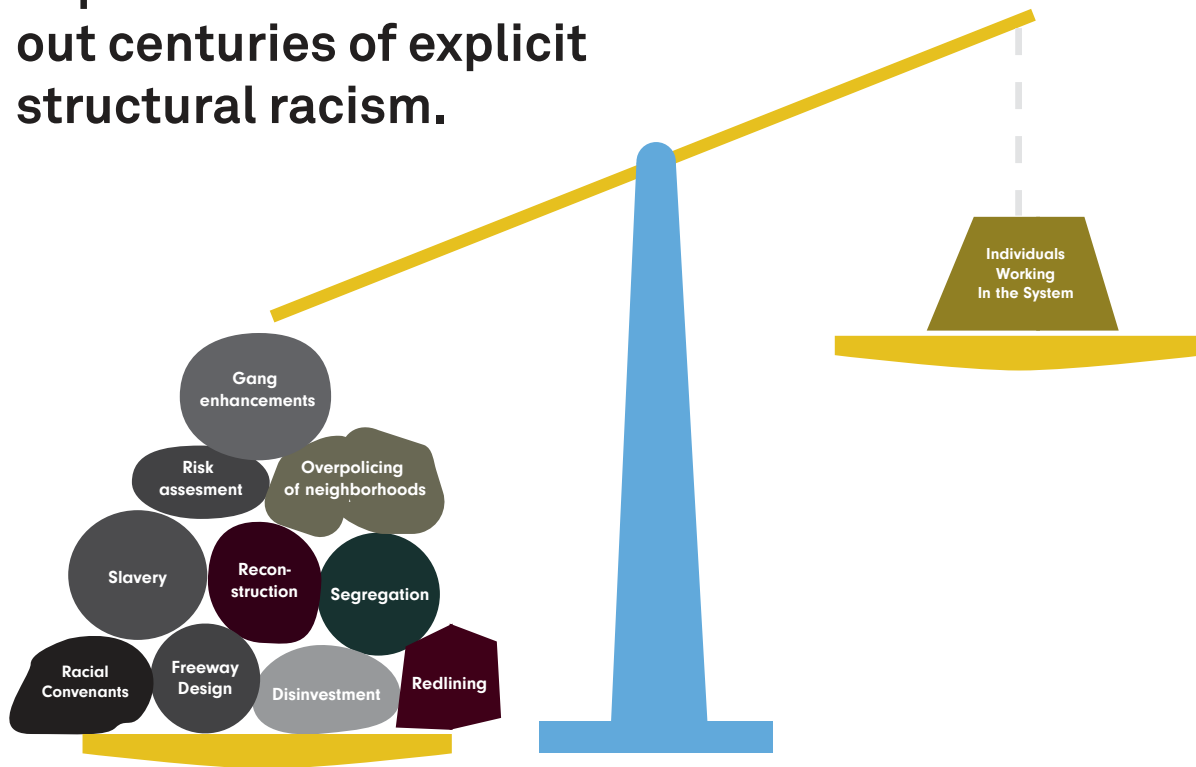
Turning away from the framework of custody, suppression and control to examine different approaches is relatively new. Three decades ago, jurisdictions across the country were anxious about community safety with the emergence of reforms promoting alternatives to pre-adjudication detention. Today, the impact of community-based programming as an alternative to pre-adjudication detention is well-documented and the status quo. Many of the programs have already demonstrated evidence of achieving more favorable life outcomes, including sense of connection, trusted relationships and access to resources and opportunities, while serving as interventions and alternatives within current system reform efforts. YJR illustrates a vision that looks to build upon the successes of investments in community-based, culturally rooted programming at a scale that has never been attempted before but is clearly called for in this moment.

### Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED)

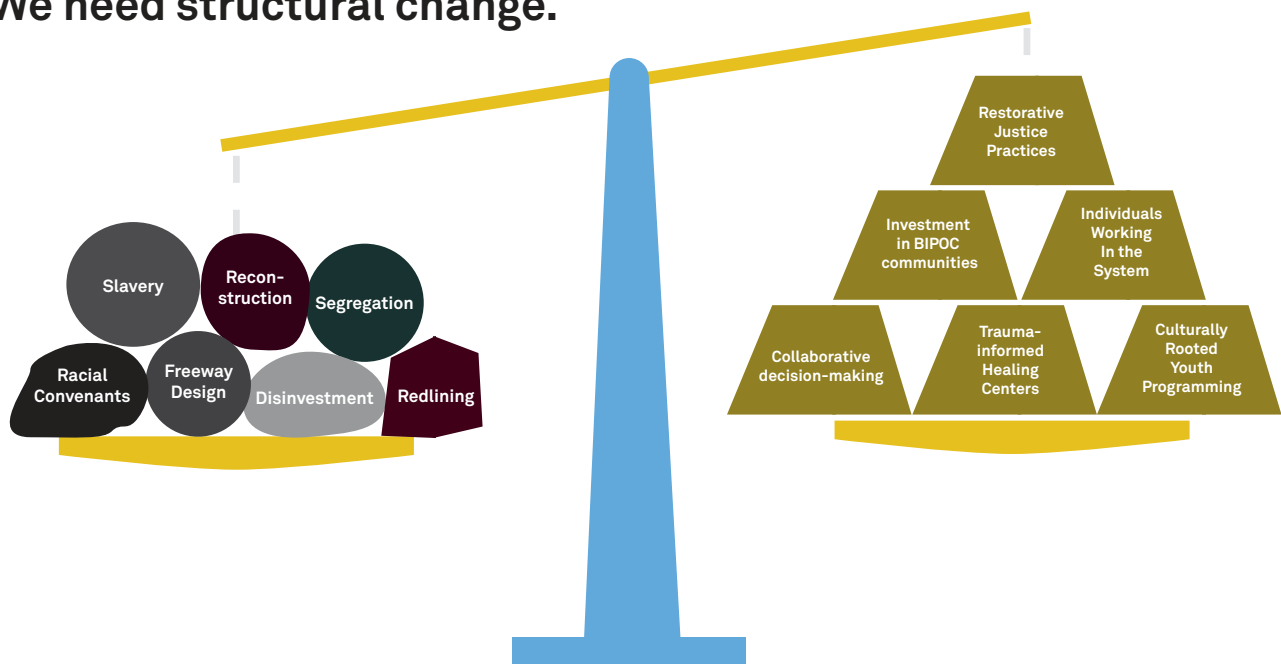
Youth of color are significantly overrepresented in the Los Angeles County justice system. Black youth are nearly fifteen times as likely as white youth to be referred to Probation and twenty-two times as likely as white youth to be securely detained pre-adjudication. Latino youth are more than three times as likely as white youth to be referred to Probation and are nearly four times as likely to be detained pre-adjudication. These disparities grow as youth penetrate the justice system in Los Angeles and serve as further validation for the need to fundamentally reimagine youth justice.



Individuals working to fight implicit bias can't balance out centuries of explicit structural racism.



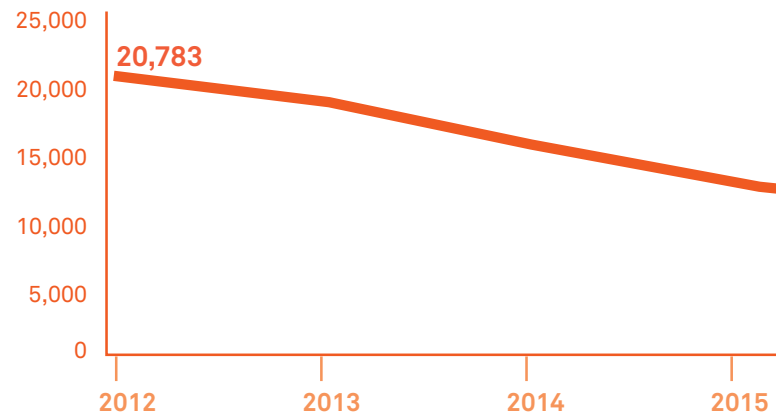
We need structural change.



# Youth Justice Transformation in LA County

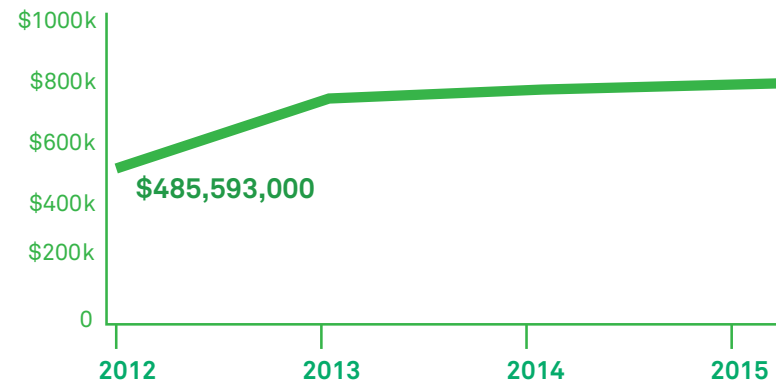
LA County's referrals to probation have shrunk by more than half in the last eight years.

\* CA DOJ data for referrals through 2018 and then Probation's 2019 probation referral data



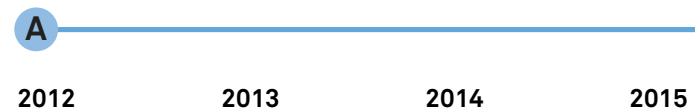
Meanwhile the County's probation **budget** has increased by \$300 million.

\* Auditor Controller, 2015; Los Angeles County Budget, 2019-2020



The State and the County have made **many proactive steps** to get to this point.

\* Adapted from Children's Defense Fund – California timeline updated in January 2020



**A**

The School Attendance Task Force releases report on "A Comprehensive Approach to Improving Student Attendance in Los Angeles County"

**B**

Proposition 57 eliminates direct file of youth in adult court

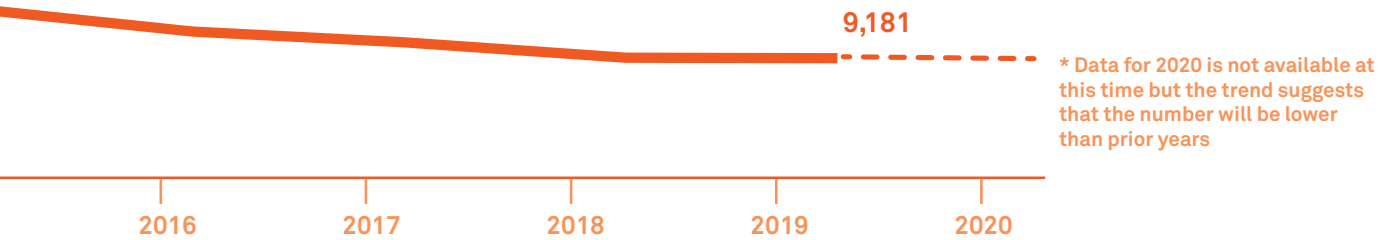
**C**

BOS passes motions for the study of Probation oversight and governance

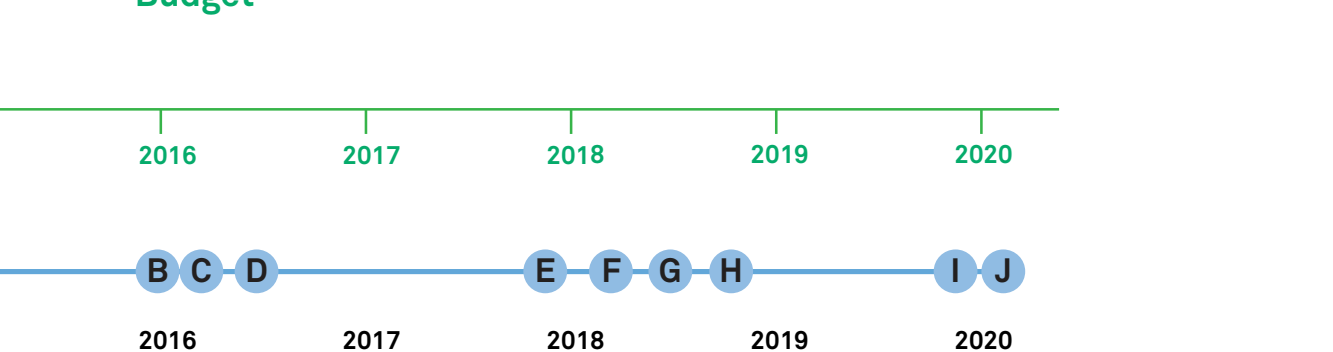
**D**

BOS adopts the collaboratively designed "Roadmap for Advancing Youth Diversion in Los Angeles County," establishing a Division of Youth Diversion and Development in the Department of Health Services

## Referrals to Probation



## Budget



**E**

SB 439 ends the prosecution of children under the age of 12, with exceptions

**F**

SB 1391 ends the transfer of 14- and 15-year olds to adult court

**G**

BOS approves 10 new community representatives to the JJCC; Probation eliminates JJCC-funded WIC 236 and recommends multiyear \$12 million allocation to YDD for initial implementation as YDD is tasked with leading implementation of SB 439

**H**

BOS passes motions to phase out OC spray in juvenile halls and camps, improve the treatment of justice-involved youth with mental health needs, and establish a Youth Justice Work Group to explore the feasibility of transitioning to a new health-focused model of youth justice

**I**

SB 823: closes DJJ

**J**

BOS passes motions tasking YDD and Probation with developing a plan for maintaining the decreased population of incarcerated youth after Covid-19 decreases in juvenile hall and camp populations and tasking the Youth Justice Work Group with developing a plan to address the closure of DJJ

## Breadth of Report

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' unanimous vote in August 2019 to convene the YJWG was a request to restructure, not reform. The charge was to design a *new structure* exemplifying the principles of equity and Youth Development, to reimagine an approach to youth justice without a controlling, punitive and carceral system that harms youth, worsens their outcomes and fails to make communities safer. While the Motion focused on examining Probation's current functions and structures as a starting point, the final design recognizes that achieving improved practices and outcomes requires structural transformation that is not limited to the current functions of Juvenile Probation. This report reflects a much broader scope to enumerate the myriad efforts needed for YJR, a transformed and restorative care-first model. To accomplish this, we had to use multiple lenses on multiple sectors within the system.

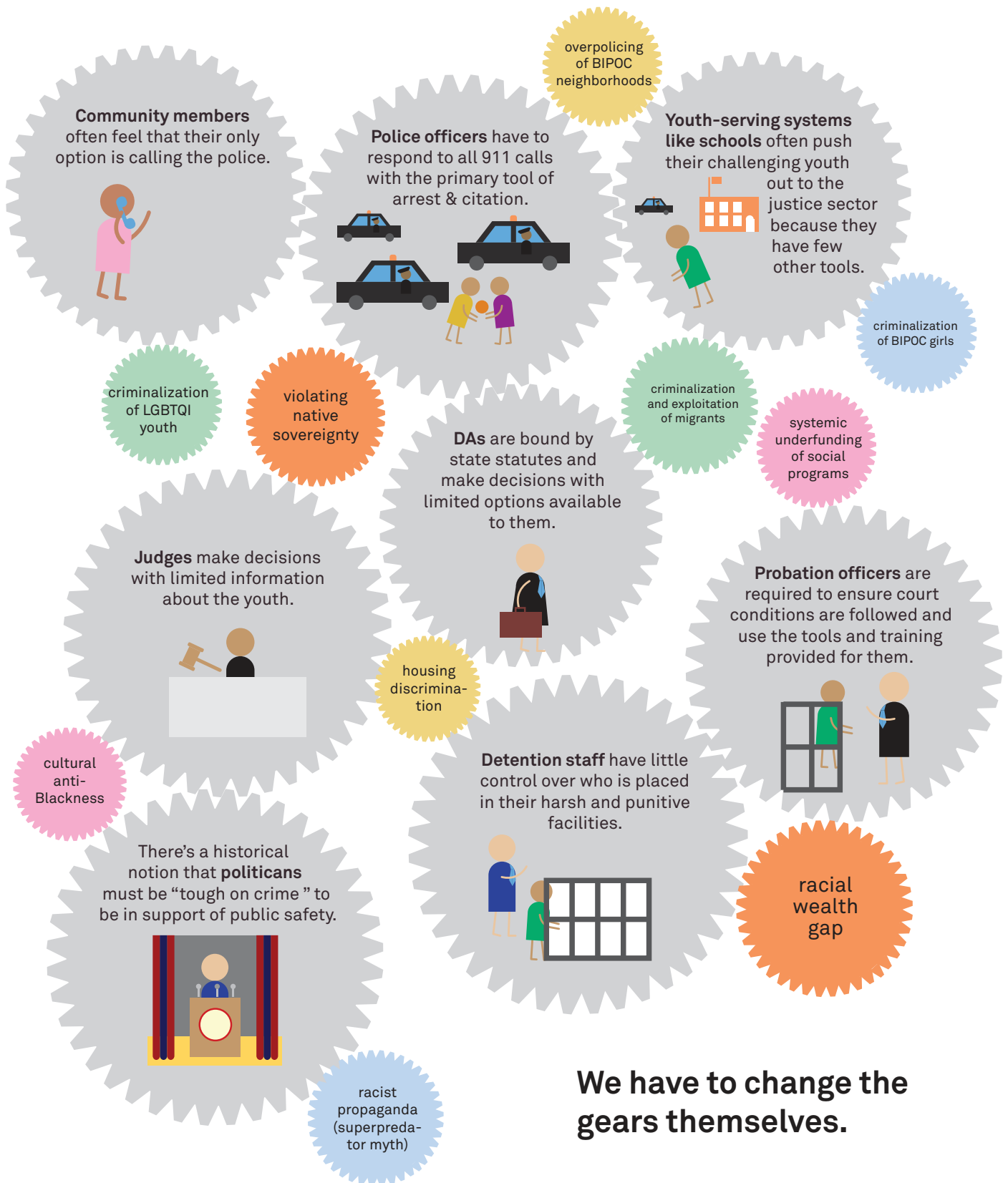
The justice sector is not a unified system but a group of ever-expanding, semi-autonomous power centers. And while addressing even one of the sectors may slightly reduce harm perpetrated against communities, any attempt to only do so likely proves insufficient and *destabilizing*. Since probation is one of four legs of the "table" of justice, (law enforcement, the courts, probation and prosecution), any alteration to it alone leaves the entire system unstable. Each part of the justice system is also dependent on other public and community systems focused on health, education, housing, jobs and welfare that are adequately resourced, accountable and effective. Only a structural, unified, cross-sector approach that prioritizes the community can create a system that advances healing and growth—essentials for improving youth wellbeing. As such, the YJWG sought to focus on designing a new justice model while also flagging the need for reforms in other sectors for youth and their communities to ultimately achieve safety and wellbeing—chief among these is the public education system.

Over the last several years, on-the-ground analyses of various reforms have revealed the inextricable links between inequity and the administration of justice. Inequity is *built into the system*—which is why topical, isolated and siloed adjustments have little impact on eradicating the very *systemic* procedures and protocols that perpetuate harm to youth of color. Because it operates on a continuum, we trace the legal process in its entirety, starting with initial contact with law enforcement, then moving through the decision-making and role(s) of the District Attorney, Defense, and Juvenile Court. In YJR, restorative responses and collaborative decision-making—with the *active participation of the impacted community*—create structural change capable of achieving improved equity, wellbeing for youth and staff, and community health and safety in lieu of punishment, custody and control.

Undertaking this work required nothing less than aiming for a thoroughly well-informed, deftly designed and strategically adaptable model, the breadth of which will no doubt disconcert some and signal exciting change for others. By balancing our charge with pragmatism and the aspirational, both of which require dedicated attention and nurturing, we believe YJR meets our mandate to propose a care-first model promising restorative and transformative change.



# The current system operates like a machine and no one person can change it alone.



We have to change the gears themselves.

# Infrastructure and Feasibility Considerations: Department of Youth Development

YJR has a breadth of focus that builds upon the historic investment in Youth Development, diversion, probation reform and oversight, and Alternatives to Incarceration that Los Angeles County has made in recent years and that is needed to meet our mandate to shift to a care-first system for youth and communities Countywide. This effort will require nurturing to bring a transformed system to life, and many of these components will be part of a phased implementation plan. **This includes an initial infrastructure investment** to support the continued facilitation of collaborative planning developed by the YJWG.

The capacities required of YJR include:

- Fully resourcing and building the capacities of a continuum of comprehensive Youth Development support in communities prior to and throughout justice system involvement, including Safe and Secure Healing Centers.
- Using and sharing research, including both quantitative and qualitative data analyses, to improve operations and outcomes of the youth justice system.
- Facilitating youth and community-led oversight and accountability mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of YJR.

**The consultant team explored several options and recommended that effectively and equitably transforming the youth justice system in Los Angeles County requires the scale, authority and leadership of a new County Department.**

The options that were evaluated and the resulting conclusions are as follows:

- 1. Making changes to the current model but remaining in Juvenile Probation, either within the current Probation Department or as a separate Juvenile Probation Department.** Though we recognize the important

efforts of Juvenile Probation leadership in recent years to adopt and champion reforms to improve practices and reduce the population of incarcerated youth, there is no evidence that keeping the youth justice system under Probation's leadership would address the significant structural barriers to achieving improved youth outcomes. Specifically, barriers related to data infrastructure, contracting infrastructure, training and hiring, physical environment, high and increasing costs per youth, and persistent orientations toward containment, compliance and control approaches were determined to be structurally incompatible with the goals and values of YJR—insurmountable under any configuration of the existing Probation Department. Several board motions have summarized a consistent history of reform failures under the Juvenile Probation Department. These motions, along with a thorough review of previous analyses and efforts to reform Juvenile Probation, suggest that Probation does not have the capacity to continue overseeing the youth justice system. Core considerations include:

- a.** Despite well-intentioned, incremental reforms which lead to significant population reductions, there has been a failure to transform the culture and orientation of the agency and shift it from outdated punitive approaches shown ineffective and harmful, especially in juvenile facilities; and facilitate quality community-based services and genuine community engagement.
- b.** The high and increasing costs of probation, especially incarceration, despite the decrease in numbers of youth arrested, detained and prosecuted, illustrate a core frustration with probation reform that can be a repurposed initial investment for YJR.

- c. The relative promise of recent County efforts to implement values and strategies of collaborative, decentralized community-based alternatives to the traditional justice system.
  - d. Consistent findings from qualitative research conducted with justice-involved youth, community-based service providers and Probation staff that the current system's structure does not support youth or staff wellbeing.
  - e. The inability of Probation to provide meaningful data or adapt to meet research and evaluation needs. Lack of access to real time data from Probation regarding youth impacted by the justice system hindered the work of the YJWG and its subcommittees.
  - f. In the limited data that does exist, clear patterns of structural inequity and an increasingly disproportionate burden on youth of color and on Black youth in particular.
- 2. Moving YJR into an existing Department, Office or Division.** Options explored in this category included existing structures in the Department of Health Services, Department of Public Health, and Department of Mental Health. Among all possible options, the Department of Health Services (DHS) Division of Youth Diversion and Development (YDD) was most promising. YDD has shown promise in its alignment with the goals and values of YJR and the supportive leadership of DHS and ODR in the initial implementation. Moving YJR to YDD would have an initial advantage of building upon existing organizational structure and relationships. Ultimately, however, this option raised serious concerns about the lack of scale and autonomy needed to effectively and equitably assume transformed functions of Juvenile Probation, serve the needs of youth across the size of Los Angeles County or have an empowered seat at the table with other youth-serving departments. In the case of YDD, the

supportive structure of DHS and ODR mean that the majority of contracts and grants and administrative and technical resources focus on adult populations, which may recreate similar challenges over time to those experienced by Juvenile Probation.<sup>viii</sup> YDD has experienced significant structural limitations and struggled to overcome bureaucratic barriers to developing a tailored data system, a training and capacity-building platform, or the hiring flexibility needed to successfully assume the additional work beyond pre-arrest diversion. Currently, YDD has six full-time staff. If it were to attempt to effectively assume the responsibilities required by a transformation of Los Angeles County's youth justice system, this existing structure would require more senior leadership and significantly more staff to effectively facilitate the expansion of scope from youth diversion to Youth Development services, youth housing and reentry, research and innovation, and administrative support (including dedicated contracts, fiscal and technical staff).

**"We can do a better job. [My hope is] that the changes are positive and really improve outcomes for youth in LA County. Change is a good thing."**  
—Probation Staff

- 3. Establishing a new Commission or other non-Departmental structure.** This option raised concern about the lack of authority and capacity needed to accomplish this task. Additional consideration of this option also led to the determination that a non-Departmental structure would struggle to accomplish the core goals of YJR, especially the ability to coordinate shared learning and build capacity among other youth-serving departments; the ability to implement innovative structures for funding and evaluation; and the ability to coordinate a comprehensive continuum of care for youth in order to effectively and equitably improve safety and wellbeing.

**4. Establishing the Department of Youth Development (DYD).** The YJWG sought to explore the feasibility of transitioning responsibility of justice-involved youth away from the Probation Department to a new agency and **determined that such a transition was indeed feasible** if conducted over time with a clear, evidence-informed plan and ongoing collaborative planning and oversight. Though the YJWG considered the potential challenges related to feasibility, bureaucracy, increased time and cost, we saw a clear need for a standalone structure whose scale, capacity, authority, autonomy and leadership reflected the importance and complexity of the task at hand. The County's recent leadership in establishing and assigning increasing responsibilities to YDD, the Office of Diversion and Reentry, Department of Arts and Culture, Office of Violence Prevention, Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group, and Youth Commission have paved the way for a new Department with a dedicated mission of supporting and overseeing services for all youth, with a focus on serving the needs of justice-involved youth and preventing future justice involvement, through holistic policy development, service coordination, funding, evaluation and oversight. Department-level infrastructure would be able to better coordinate efforts

to advance Youth Development and reduce violence and harmful incidents within and across County agencies, school districts and community initiatives.

**“Probably 10 years ago in my career, I thought reform was possible, but I do not believe it at all any more. I do not believe that it’s possible to create a Probation Department that does not have a problematic power dynamic in the community. And I don’t think it should be replaced with youth programs that are full of social workers either. We can’t over-professionalize youth support and we can’t over-pathologize our youth either. So it’s more about creating a front-end investment and ensuring the proper opportunities and support for youth and families.”**

—Community-Based Provider

### Youth Development and Diversion

The YDD model was assessed to analyze whether it reflected the YJWG's values of transparency and collaboration, advancing equity, improving wellbeing and increasing safety compared to other youth diversion models. YDD publishes quarterly public data dashboards and, among youth who have been enrolled, YDD has an 87% rate of engagement with the majority of youth still actively participating in their program and on track to successfully complete their goals. While some diversion models fail to engage Black youth in particular (Probation's New Directions program serves 0% Black youth), YDD's population includes 20-30% Black youth. Though newer than other models, YDD also shares promising youth self-reported program satisfaction and improvement in protective factors data. And though some analyses of recidivism rates for youth participating in Probation-led diversion models show reductions in recidivism for participants, the findings are neither consistent across studies nor sufficient without considerations of equity and qualitative experience.

## Probation Motions

Probation has had a long history of noted issues. In recent years, the County has repeatedly called for reform:

Throughout 2015 and into 2016, the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller released a series of seven reports detailing the problems across the Probation Department, including its compliance with a federal lawsuit's settlement agreement regarding its juvenile camps, contracting, information technology, budget and hiring and grants administration.

In 2015, a Probation Outcomes Study largely finding Probation lacked comprehensive data collection and analyses of youth probation outcomes led to a Board motion to establish an interagency workgroup to support Probation in its ongoing development and implementation of best practices in youth justice.

In 2016, a Board motion initiated a "probation governance study" of the Probation Department's mission, structure, culture and practices, noting that changes in youth and criminal justice and the sheer size of the Department "raised questions of whether the current structure permits the optimal service-delivery model for serving its clients"; and that "the Department has struggled over the years to fulfill its responsibilities."

Another Board motion in 2016 instructed a workgroup to make recommendations for a comprehensive investigative and monitoring structure to oversee the Probation Department, noting the high turnover of five Probation Chiefs in 10 years, lawsuits and investigations into its affairs, and other challenges.

A 2017 motion established a taskforce to actualize Probation oversight and reform plans, noting again: "For decades, [the Probation Department] has been challenged to fulfill its mandate of rehabilitating youth and adults under its care. From excessive uses of force, federal monitoring and class action lawsuits, the mismanagement of funds allocated for community support, and the lack of continuity due to a steady change in administration, there are myriad concerns that have needed core correction."

Probation had not prioritized implementing recommendations developed to solve its history of challenges. This same 2017 motion cited a report observing "too often workgroups, consultants or departments have identified problems and offered solutions, but issues remain unresolved." By 2018,

the Board continued its efforts to create comprehensive Probation oversight and develop implementation plans for the multitude of reform recommendations in creating the Probation Reform and Implementation Team (PRIT).

Throughout 2018 and 2019, the PRIT held a series of public hearings about Probation reforms and oversight needs.

Additionally, the Office of the Inspector General released three reports throughout 2019, investigating the use of chemical spray and other force within juvenile halls and camps, after the use of OC spray increased between 192-338% over two years at its three halls. The initial report concluded that "lack of adequate training, supervision, accountability systems, and policies, which may be exacerbated by an apparent lack of resources, likely contribute to out-of-policy use of and over-reliance on spray."

The Department of Mental Health followed suit in 2019 to issue a report concluding "The County's juvenile justice system is the product of a juvenile incarceration model that is flawed and fundamentally fails to adequately meet the current developmental needs and mental health needs of youth and their families." Shortly thereafter, the Board passed a motion to create a plan for increasing diversion of youth from juvenile halls.

The PRIT issued its final reports for probation reform and oversight in June and August 2019, noting that "one of the most egregious problems facing Probation is its juvenile facilities," including "poor physical conditions, inadequacy of staffing and training, lack of sufficient structured time and meaningful activities for youth, excessive use of force, the unavailability of meaningful grievance processes, the need for greater partnerships with community-based service providers to serve youth while in halls and camps, and the absence of validated assessment tools and inadequate data collection reflect the breadth of obstacles to rehabilitation in the juvenile justice system." The PRIT backed calls by advocates to remove youth from the Probation Department's purview.

The August 2019 motion leading to this report states "consultants to the RDA have indicated that the Department still struggles to create a true agency model to ensure developmentally appropriate treatment of the populations it serves."



# Key Data and Research to Support Youth Justice Reimagined

The YJWG relied on available data and research to reimagine youth justice in Los Angeles County.<sup>ix</sup> These key data and research were used to inform strategies most likely to help youth grow and to truly account for the long and unconscionable history of inequity in the current justice system. As YJR emerged, data reinforced the need to protect the right to childhood for youth of color by transforming the system in ways that strive for structural racial equity.

Reviewing historical national youth justice data, it is clear that the current structure leads to persistent inequity for youth of color at every stage.<sup>x</sup> To design a system that is “meaningfully different in operations and outcomes from the current system,” history shows us we must meaningfully address structural inequity.

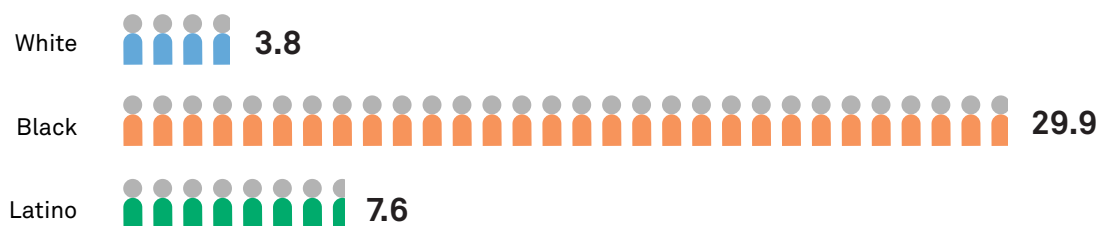
## 1. Youth of color are more likely than white youth to have their adolescent development derailed by criminalization and arrest.

For youth of color, adolescence and the journey along the path of opportunity and toward self-sufficiency is too frequently derailed by criminalization, arrest and incarceration. Though adolescence is a time of risk-taking for all youth, white youth are less likely to be criminalized for the same behavior and more likely to be given access to supportive alternatives than youth of color.<sup>xi</sup>

Research affirms the significant overrepresentation of youth of color in arrests nationwide, and these patterns re-occur in Los Angeles County. In 2019, Black youth in Los Angeles County were nearly 8 times as likely as white youth to be arrested and Latino youth twice as likely. Together, Black and Latino youth represent 70% of all youth in Los Angeles County (8% and 62% respectively) but almost 90% (27% and 60%, respectively) of youth arrests.<sup>xii, xiii</sup>

Even a first-time arrest increases a youth’s risk for negative outcomes that decrease health and wellbeing such as high school drop-out.<sup>xiv</sup>

Figure 1: Rate of Arrest per 1,000 Youth in Los Angeles County (2019)



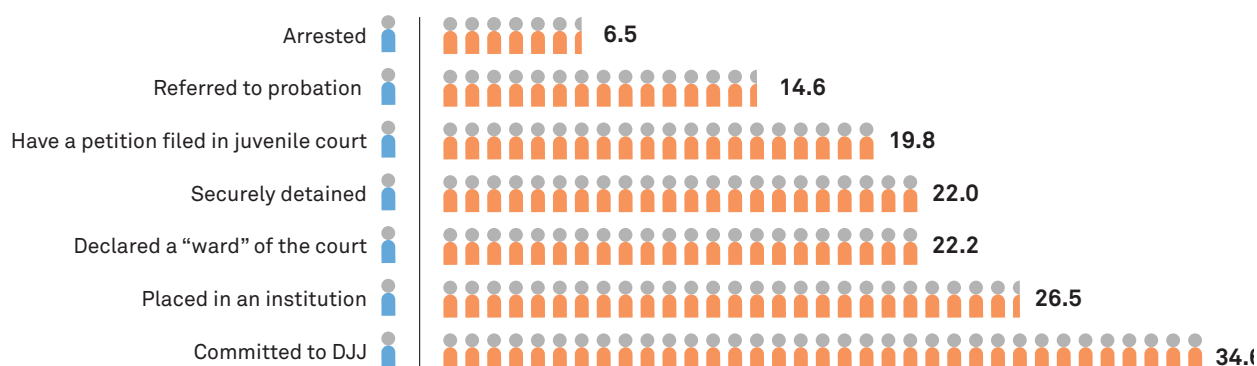


## 2. Despite incremental reforms to improve practices and facilities, the justice system in Los Angeles County continues to disproportionately harm youth of color at every stage.

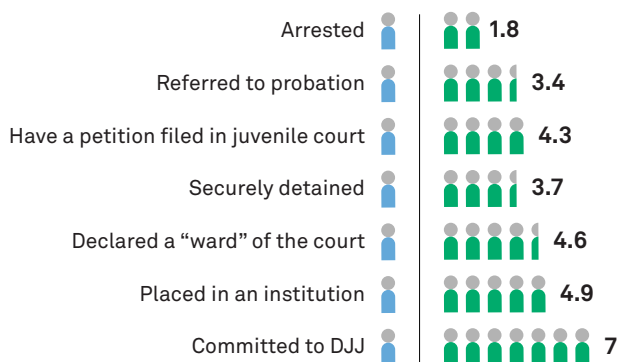
Youth of color bear the brunt of justice system involvement at every decision-making point in the justice system in Los Angeles County. The relative likelihood of justice system involvement for youth of color increases at each stage of the youth justice system.<sup>xv</sup>

**Figure 2: Cumulative Disparities for Black and Latino Youth (2018)**

For every white Youth (ages 10-17) in LA County, this many Black Youth are more likely to be...



For every white Youth (ages 10-17) in LA County, this many Latino Youth are more likely to be...



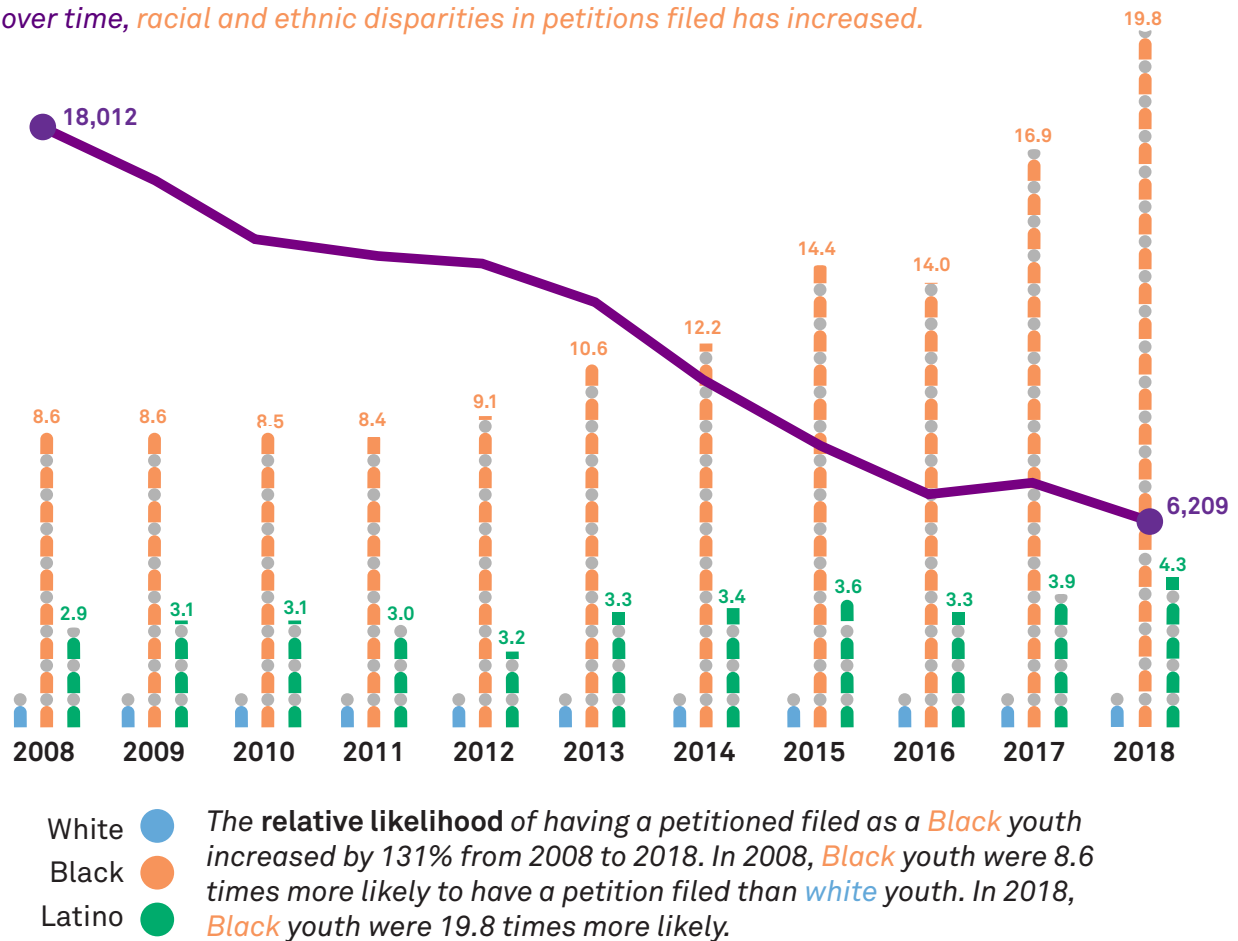
### 3. As the number of youth involved in the justice system decreases, disparities increase.

Over the last decade, reforms at every stage of the justice system have reduced overall numbers of youth involved in the justice system but have increased racial disparity over time, especially for Black youth.<sup>xvi</sup> For example, the number of petitions filed in juvenile court in Los Angeles County decreased from 18,012 in

2008 to 6,209 in 2018, a 66% increase. At the same time, the disparity or relative likelihood of having a petition as a Black youth increased by 131% from 2008-2018. In 2008, Black youth were 8.6 times more likely than white youth to have a petition filed; in 2018, Black youth were 19.8 times more likely.

**Figure 3: Trends in Total Petitions Filed and Disparity Gap in Petitions Filed for Black and Latino youth (2008-2018)**

*While the number of petitions filed overall has decreased significantly over time, racial and ethnic disparities in petitions filed has increased.*



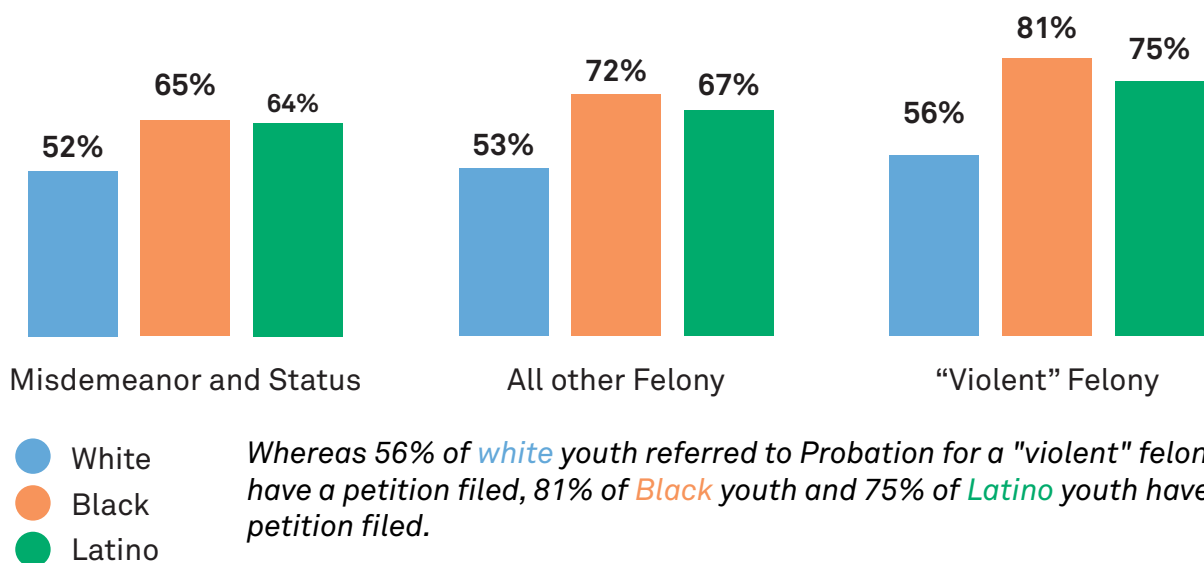
#### 4. Racial and ethnic disparities persist across offense categories and are most stark for youth with more serious offenses.

Disparities at key decision points in the justice system persist within offense categories. Black and Latino youth referred to Probation are more likely than white youth referred to Probation to have a petition filed for every category of offense, but the disparity is most stark for youth referred to Probation for “violent” felony offenses.<sup>xvii</sup> Whereas only 56% of white youth referred to Probation for an offense categorized as a violent felony had a petition filed, 81% of Black youth and 75% of Latino youth referred for a violent felony had a petition filed.

#### 5. Promoting Equity Requires Countywide Expansion of Diversion Combined with Structural Solutions to Support Decision-Making along the Youth Justice Continuum.

The persistent RED across youth justice decision-making in Los Angeles County make clear that to reduce disparities, dramatic changes in system decision-making are needed at each stage. Justice system exposure that disparately impacts youth of color is not benign. Mere exposure to the justice system leads to negative outcomes for youth, including removal from school, decreased likelihood of graduation, shame and trauma.<sup>xviii</sup>

**Figure 4: Percent of Referrals to Probation that have a Petition Filed in Los Angeles County (2018)**



Increasingly, evidence indicates that most youth—including youth with serious charges—are healthier, less likely to have future contact with the justice system and more likely to repair harm when the response to their behavior is restorative, not punitive. Likewise, a growing body of research indicates that community-based strategies can equitably reduce exposure to the justice system and increase public safety.<sup>xix</sup> YJR relies on this research and envisions community-based solutions that provide holistic, individualized plans for youth with the greatest needs; keep youth in their communities whenever possible; and provide healing, skill-building environments for youth who cannot return home.

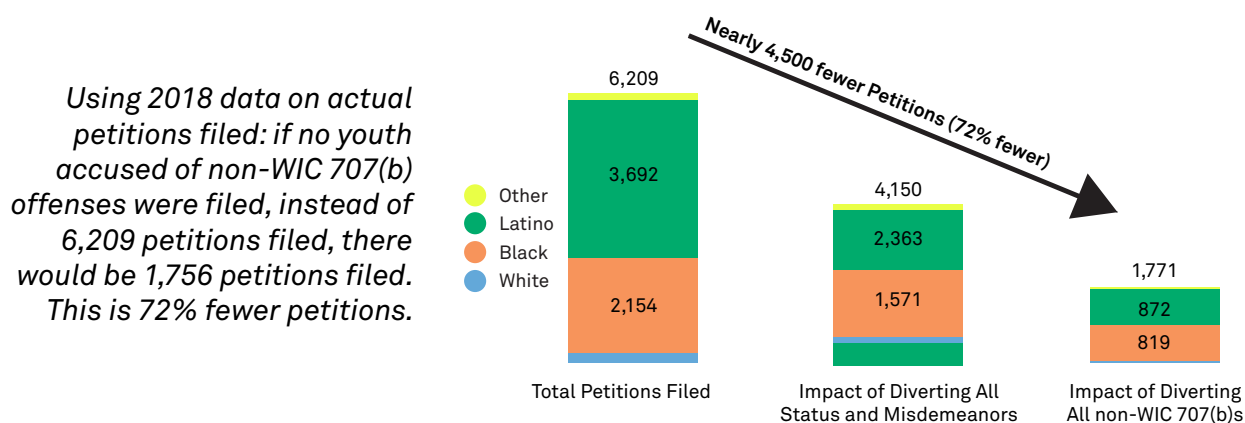
Increasing community-based solutions also provides greater efficiencies. Given the size of Los Angeles County, equitably eliminating unnecessary contact with the front end of the system would allow the District Attorney, Public Defender and Court to focus their time and resources on a much smaller number of youth who need more intensive intervention. Phase 1 of YJR recommends expansion of YDD’s pre-arrest diversion network Countywide. The expansion includes adequate resources to support equitable access to high-quality alternatives to citation and arrest for youth in every community in Los Angeles County.

Phase I of YJR recommends establishing a Countywide policy or agreement for presumptive diversion for all first-time misdemeanors and non-707(b) felony offenses with 707(b) offenses eligible. This structural solution is an important step toward increasing the effectiveness and equity of our responses to youth in crisis. This strategy would build upon the promising practices of YDD but also reflect lessons learned about challenges to implementing youth diversion equitably without structural support to ensure law enforcement utilize options effectively.

As Figure 5 illustrates, if such a policy were in place in 2018 and consistently implemented, as many as 4,500 youth referred to the justice system for non-707(b)<sup>xx</sup> charges in Los Angeles County may have been connected to community-based diversion and development alternatives better suited to meet their needs and prevented from future contact with the justice system. Instead of 6,209 petitions, 1,756 petitions would have been filed, a 72% reduction.

Implementing this policy under YJR would allow justice stakeholders to focus earlier, more effectively and more equitably on youth that the court eventually determined needed more significant supports.

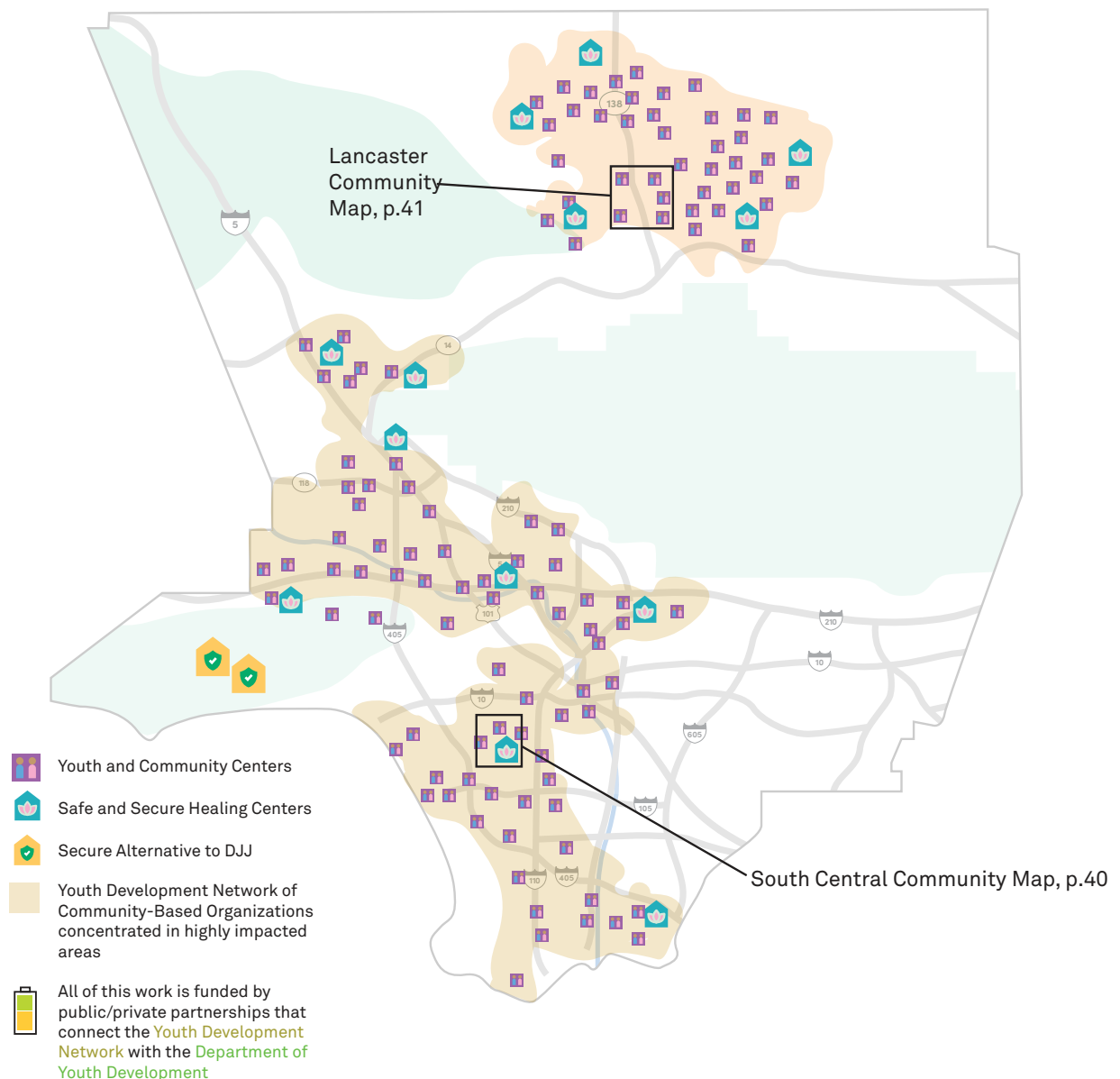
**Figure 5: Potential Impact on Number of Petitions filed using Three Diversion Strategies (2018 Data)**



## Overview of Youth Justice Reimagined

The YJWG's recommendations have been synthesized here as a proposed model for YJR, a comprehensive approach to transform and improve the operations and outcomes of Los Angeles County's youth justice system that prioritizes equity and accountability; recognizes the need for healing-informed responses along the continuum of youth justice system involvement; and provides coordination to further expand Youth Development across the County.

## A Vision for Youth Justice Reimagined Across Los Angeles County



# Long-Term Vision for YJR

By 2030, through an intentional focus on equitable investments in Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and their communities, all youth in Los Angeles County have access to Youth Development resources and opportunities promoting their wellbeing and safety and that of their families and communities. In every community, systems are accountable to the people they impact, address the root causes of conflict and harm and empower youth to develop accountability and responsibility to repair harm.

## Core Values Guiding YJR

**1. Racial and Ethnic Equity.** RED in mass incarceration result from long-held structural investments in custody, control and punishment purported to achieve public safety. These investments perpetuate a structural system of racial inequity ingrained in our country's history, culture and institutions. To achieve equity and wellbeing for BIPOC communities, today's context of administering justice must build upon at least three decades of justice reform regarding issues of race, ethnicity and equity. This means laying bare this system of racial hierarchy, understanding and acknowledging its current constructs and interrogating them. It additionally requires an intersectional approach, tackling the unique ways that the justice system has impacted marginalized identities existing at the intersection of race, sexual orientation and gender identity. The design concepts for YJR were equipped with the capacity to locate and enumerate the tools of racial hierarchy and their multiform impacts on the administration of justice—to name what is hidden in plain sight.

These tools function within a racial hierarchy predicated upon a white and Black binary, a social construction of division based on appearance. Fashioned from historical paradigms of white supremacy and patriarchy associated with public safety, these attitudes and practices are enforced and normalized through customs and traditions across generations. We silence BIPOC communities and *conceal* privilege whenever we fail to face the ways white supremacy and patriarchy have operated

in the administration of justice and directly imperiled communities. Racial and ethnic equity demands we dismantle not only the structural pillars of inequity but also the white supremacist ideology perpetuating the punishment industry—this is only possible through the other core values of centering community, promoting wellbeing to achieve safety, shrinking and reinvesting resources into a health-focused system, and ensuring transparency and accountability.

**“I feel like they need to give us help in the areas that got us into the juvenile system and to give us resources that actually work. We need support and guidance. We need a voice and a chance to be something.”**

**—System-involved Young Woman**

**2. Centering Community.** Integral to achieving equity and wellbeing is centering the communities most impacted by the justice system. Vital to community wellbeing are safe and thriving neighborhoods. Those impacted by the justice system and those impacted by crime and violence are often the same people and communities, and they should all play meaningful roles in defining what safety looks like. Centering community reflects a commitment to authentic inclusion, power-sharing and the valuing of impacted communities' experience and expertise to drive solutions for achieving equity and eliminating RED. This entails designing change with, not for, impacted BIPOC communities.



**“What we are doing now is not working, it has not been working. It doesn’t serve the folks that have been harmed, it doesn’t serve the folks that may be committing harm and so really being able to invest in positive Youth Development that we know works as an alternative to incarceration, as an alternative to surveillance, as an alternative to criminalization is really important.”**  
—Youth Leader

- 3. Youth Development.** Youth experience decision-making, risk-taking and trauma differently than adults and require intentional investment in building their strengths and relationships to others in order to thrive.<sup>xxi</sup>,<sup>xxii</sup> The Youth Development framework brings a positive, strengths-based and social justice orientation to working with youth, families and communities, characterized by opportunities that promote a sense of belonging, usefulness and power by helping youth develop competencies enabling them to grow and lead healthy, responsible and caring lives.<sup>xxiii</sup> Youth Development is a framework that, wherever possible, provides opportunities for growth and development prior to and outside of any diversion or justice system response.
- 4. Public Safety Achieved Through a Focus on Wellbeing.** The Board of Supervisors’ motion requires the YJWG to design a youth probation system “centered on healing and growth essential for improving the wellbeing of young people” that is not “overly punitive.” This is an approach to youthful law violations and misbehaviors focused on wellbeing metrics for all concerned. Informed by a growing body of research and the efforts of the Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative, this work recognizes that a health-focused system is “essential for improving the wellbeing of young people” and achieving improved community safety.<sup>xxiv</sup>,<sup>xxv</sup> As the Motion suggests, too often we equate punishment with safety. Our

approach balances Youth Development and appropriate responses to harm. This value rejects the “do the crime, do the time” ethos and embraces a structure that builds accountability through support, healing and connection rather than punishment and isolation. This includes diverting as many youth and resources as possible from formal justice system involvement and into community-based RJ and TJ programs, significantly downsizing the reimagined youth justice system.

- 5. Wellbeing Achieved by Addressing Social Determinants of Health.** To improve outcomes, a health-focused system should prioritize strategies addressing the social determinants of health or “conditions in the environments in which people live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes.”<sup>xxvi</sup> Promoted through physical and mental health services and other support, healing and wellbeing are determined by education and employment, economic conditions, housing instability, access to activities and services that promote health, discrimination and structural inequity, and justice system involvement.
- 6. Restorative Justice (RJ) and Transformative Justice (TJ).** Youth justice must prioritize efforts to strengthen interpersonal relationships and social connections within communities. RJ and TJ effectively cultivate accountability, with RJ focusing on people and TJ on systems. RJ works to repair harm by providing healing and support for those harmed as well as those who have caused harm, recognizing that people oftentimes exist simultaneously in both realities. TJ directly addresses structural barriers and inequities that contribute to and perpetuate system involvement, and therefore, cannot effectively occur within any law enforcement contact or response. While it is impossible to fully embrace RJ and TJ within the current structure of the system, the aim of YJR is to authentically incorporate these approaches wherever possible while moving toward a more complete transformation.

**7. Transparency and Accountability.** A transparent and accountable system uses quantitative and qualitative data to address the root causes of system involvement and makes the data and evaluation outcomes publicly available. YJR will prioritize transparency and accountability mechanisms for itself and its partners through collaborative oversight; youth and community involvement in program, policy and budgetary decision-making; and meaningful data, research and support for participatory evaluation.

**8. Evidence-Informed Design.** Policies and practices should be guided by qualitative and quantitative evidence. This includes using data to inform further reductions to supervision, detention and incarceration and shift investment from the current system to historically underfunded community-based systems and communities.<sup>xxvii</sup>

**9. Power-sharing, Coordination and Collaboration.** Improve power-sharing, coordination and collaboration across systems and between systems, youth and community. Support partnership and collaboration between County agencies, CBOs, youth and families impacted by the youth justice system, and survivors of violence and harm.<sup>xxviii</sup>,  
xxix

### A Youth Development Framework for Los Angeles County

Building upon the 150-year history of Youth Development and the Youth Development competencies established by the field of youth work in the 1990s, expanded upon by the Youth Justice Coalition.

Adopting a social justice approach to supporting and investing significantly and consistently in a comprehensive infrastructure for community and school-based Youth Development.

Reducing contact between youth and the justice system.

Ensuring that public agencies and systems are trained in and embrace the Youth Development Principles and that every interaction a youth has with the legal system is rooted in these principles, from contact with law enforcement to the experience inside the courtroom.

Promoting a set of competencies that all youth should be supported to meet through quality, multiculturally and linguistically appropriate community and school-based resources, programs and opportunities.

Ensuring equity and access to all resources and opportunities regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, zip code, immigration status, housing status, physical or cognitive ability or justice system involvement.

## Youth Development Principles

**Health Competence.** Good current health status as well as knowledge, attitude and behaviors that ensure future health, including access to trauma-informed physical, emotional and mental health services and healing, substance use services, and nutrition, sports and recreation services.

**Social Competence.** Skills for understanding and appreciation of self, one's own culture, language, history and contributions as well as appreciation for others, including self-discipline and decision-making; ability to work and communicate with others; develop financial literacy; technological access and skills; parental skills; empathy for others and the ability to solve problems without domination, retribution or violence—restorative and transformative justice.

**Environmental Competence.** Skills for understanding and appreciating environmental health, justice and sustainability; also includes built environment, environmental racism and access to housing and resources oriented toward personal wellbeing and the policies, laws and regulations that impact one's healthy development; access to and knowledge about green jobs, urban farming and environmentally sustainable agricultural, housing and urban development.

**Cognitive/Creative Competence.** Knowledge and ability to appreciate and participate in areas of healing-centered, creative expression for all of the ways people experience their worlds, including access to quality education, critical thinking, critical pedagogy, analysis and problem solving; literacy, academic support and college preparation; self-expression and empowerment through the arts; ability to examine and address systemic oppression and root causes of inequity and awareness of power, privilege, prejudice and social justice.

**Vocational Competence.** Understanding and skills of life planning and a diverse range of career choices, work options, work-life balance, life planning and steps to act on those choices, including exploration of interests and gifts; job preparation, education and training; seeking mentorship and support navigating career pathways; employment and career exploration; and goal-setting and financial literacy. Access to support and services (e.g., childcare, food, transportation assistance) needed to engage in apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, employment, job and career training.

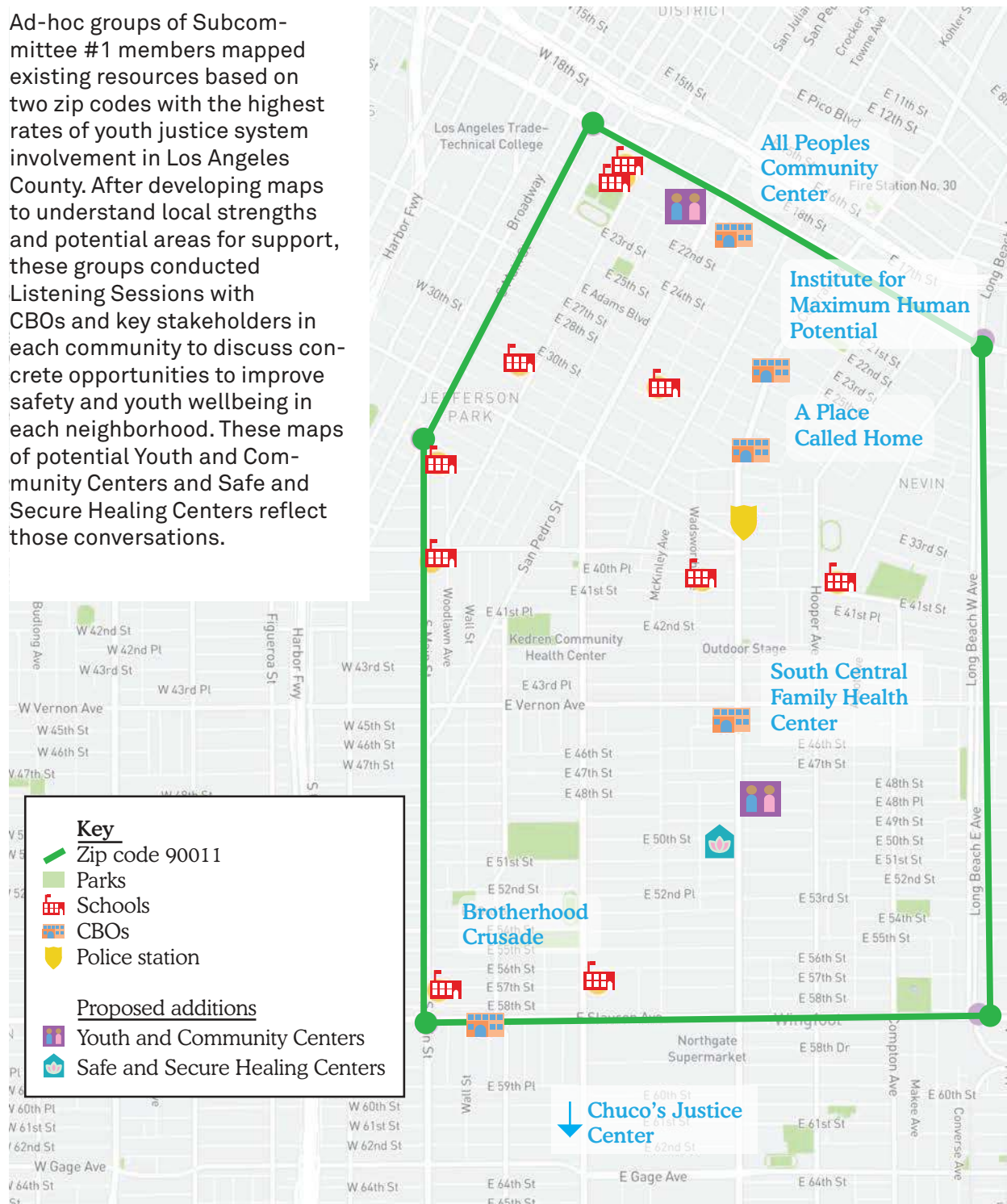
**Leadership Competence.** Understanding and skills of personal values, moral and ethical decision-making and participation in efforts contributing to the greater good, including the right to speak out, organize and to both serve and change one's school, community and society, including leadership pipelines, advisory groups, County commissions and board memberships.

**“Some community organizations are doing political education. I would like to see that expanded because we are over-policed. More Know Your Rights trainings combined with movement history.”**

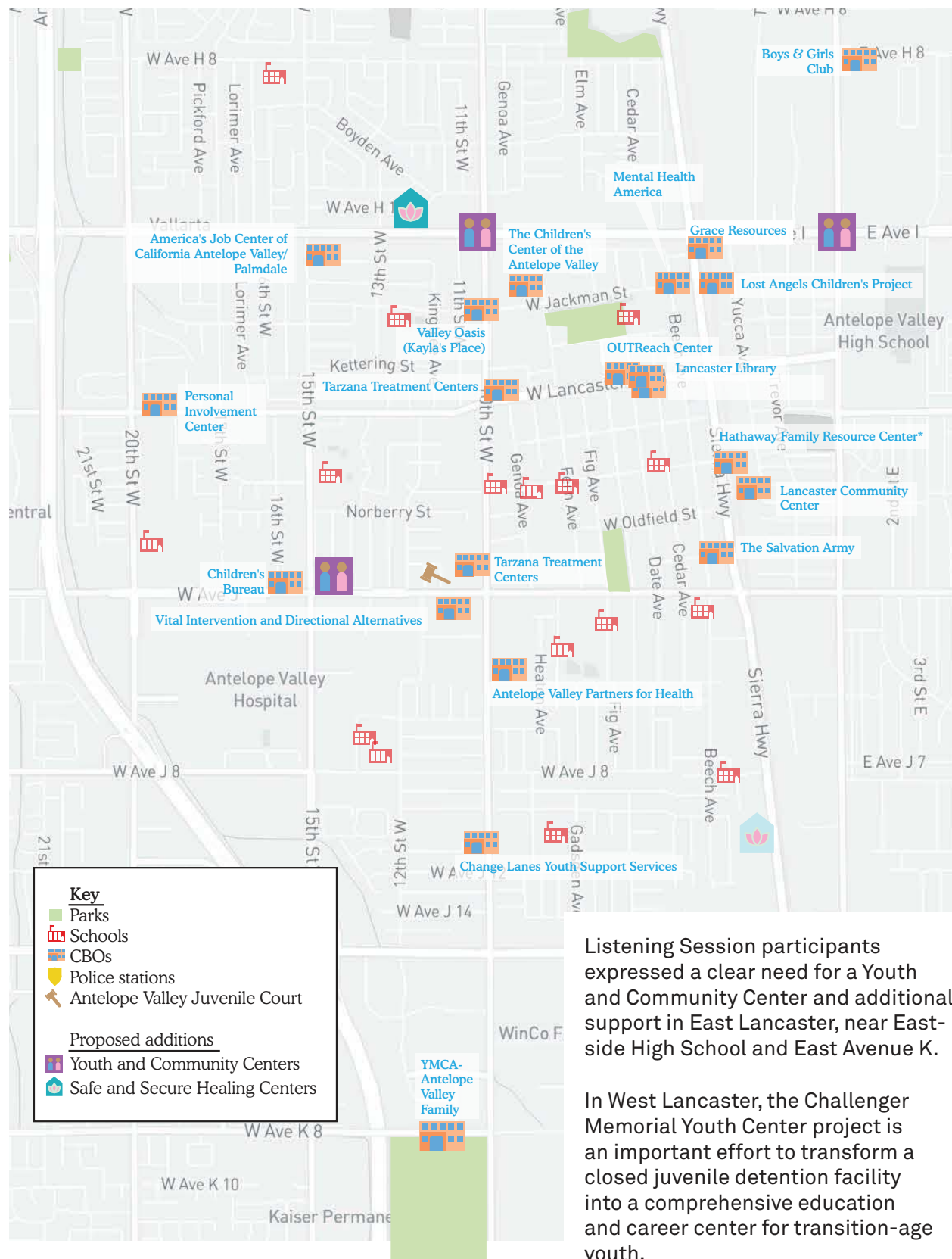
**—Youth Justice Coalition Youth Organizer**

# Youth Justice Reimagined: Examples at the neighborhood level— South Central

Ad-hoc groups of Subcommittee #1 members mapped existing resources based on two zip codes with the highest rates of youth justice system involvement in Los Angeles County. After developing maps to understand local strengths and potential areas for support, these groups conducted Listening Sessions with CBOs and key stakeholders in each community to discuss concrete opportunities to improve safety and youth wellbeing in each neighborhood. These maps of potential Youth and Community Centers and Safe and Secure Healing Centers reflect those conversations.



# Lancaster



Listening Session participants expressed a clear need for a Youth and Community Center and additional support in East Lancaster, near East-side High School and East Avenue K.

In West Lancaster, the Challenger Memorial Youth Center project is an important effort to transform a closed juvenile detention facility into a comprehensive education and career center for transition-age youth.



# Foundational Components of YJR

With a phased transition that includes ongoing planning for implementation details, YJR includes implementing these foundational components through a new department:

- 1. Countywide Coordination and Capacity-Building.** YJR recognizes that Juvenile Probation currently serves a wide range of service-coordinating and information sharing functions connected to other youth-serving systems, including schools, Child Welfare, Mental Health, and the Juvenile Court. To improve operations and outcomes, many of these functions will need to transform and transition to DYD and YDN for improved Youth Justice coordination as well as capacity-building for effective, equitable and innovative responses to youth across youth-serving systems.

**“What if we had a big center that had resources for food, housing, and mental health? Like a hub of opportunities. Like a mall for resources for youth and families.”**

—Youth from CBO in South Central

- 2. Youth Development Network (YDN).** Investing as much as possible in a thriving community-based network to support youth prior to any system contact is the foundation of YJR. With the support and coordination from DYD, this network gives youth access to 24-hour YCCs with high-quality activities and services in their communities that support their health, social, cognitive and creative, vocational, environmental and leadership competencies. These competencies help youth thrive and protect against justice system involvement.

- 3. Investment in Diversion Expansion.**

To achieve wellbeing and advance the life opportunities of those most vulnerable to traditional justice involvement, YJR exponentially expands the capacity and reach

of the County’s collaboratively-designed Youth Diversion and Development model. This critical interruption is fundamentally different from Probation diversion and reduces the footprint of the legal system. It envisions a restorative, cultural and community-centered approach, with a commitment to continued protections against net-widening or unnecessary diversion.

- 4. Youth Empowerment and Support Teams.** A critical component of the YDN is YES Teams. YES Teams shift to and embody an opportunity to contribute to effective team decision-making along the continuum of the youth legal system, helping to inform decision-making through collaborative input to justice partners. This diverse network of partners will establish authentic and deep relationships with youth, families and communities, and be resourced to bring a community lens to decision-making. The relationships and connections uniquely position YES Team members to influence decisions ensuring racial, cultural and restorative responses reflecting Youth Development principles.

**“We should give youth more information about the process, and have MDTs right from the beginning.”**

—Probation Staff

- 5. Home-like, Community-Based Therapeutic Housing and Reentry.** YJR moves away from institutionalized detention and incarceration in dehumanizing facilities to provide therapeutic supportive housing and reentry services, including a new community-based, small, home-like model that provides restorative, healing environments with a range of security levels and holistic services, opportunities for youth to step down to lower security settings, and improved reentry support for youth unable to return home or be served in their communities.



- 6. Supportive Youth Development Services and Credible Messengers.** Rather than supervision focusing on compliance, DYD will resource the YDN to provide intensive community-based support, including care coordination and restorative processes. This will be accomplished by supporting and growing a Youth Development workforce which includes hiring Credible Messengers and peer navigators who will provide healing-centered support for youth along the continuum of youth justice system involvement.
- 7. Transparency and Accountability Mechanisms.** YJR requires a comprehensive transparency and accountability mechanism connecting, streamlining and building upon the existing work of oversight and advisory bodies and involving youth and community in program, policy and budgetary decision-making. This requires strong and flexible data systems, skilled facilitation of collaborative processes and a culture of transparency and accountability.

“We have to work within the communities that our young people go into... we create an artificial, unrealistic environment [in camps] in which they are encouraged, supported.”  
—Probation Staff

## Youth Empowerment and Support (YES) Teams

The Ad Hoc committee that conceptualized the functions of the YES Teams comprised system-impacted youth, community leaders, RJ/TJ practitioners, County leaders from DCFS, District Attorney's Office, judges, lawyers, cultural workers, youth workers and advocates.

Youth Empowerment and Support (YES) Teams are a significant change to youth justice under YJR. Below are the initial designs proposed by an ad hoc subcommittee of the YJWG. During the first phase of implementation, further design and planning will be critical to piloting and implementing YES Teams.

Operating from each 24-hour YCC, these multidisciplinary and intergenerational groups collaboratively examine and consider incidents, assess accountability requirements and develop care plans for youth in the aftermath of a harmful incident. Teams include Youth Development professionals, medical professionals, youth advocates, legal experts, crisis interventionists, RJ and

TJ practitioners, system-impacted youth, family members, respected elders, educators, Peacebuilders and other specialists.

It is important to note that a YES Team will also be assigned to the person(s) harmed if and when they choose to participate. The YES Team will provide appropriate support, including restorative responses and assistance in navigating the legal system.

Replacing many of Probation's current functions and responsibilities, YES Teams comprise three subteams—first responders, resource and accountability facilitators and legal advocates—that investigate and resolve harm at each stage of the process, while closely engaging the youth and their families/community. A designated YES Team member coordinates subteams and serves as the youth's primary contact throughout the process. The number of team members assigned depends on the incident and the circumstances of the youth's life and development.

## Principles and Values

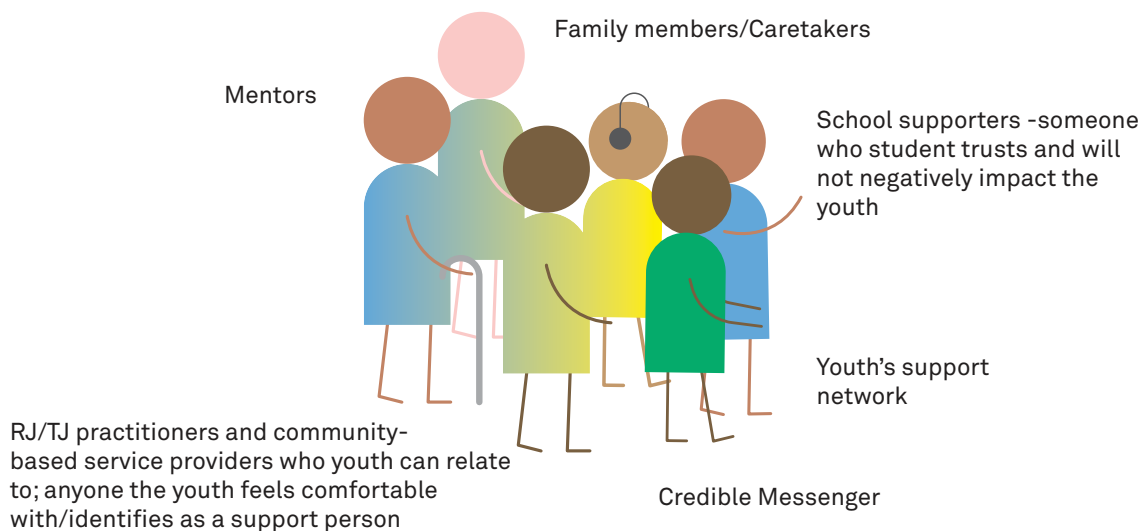
- Youth and community-led
- Center youth healing and goals
- Shift power to empower youth and families
- Identify people closest to the youth to optimize support
- Support accountability
- Focus on Youth Development principles
- Resources are needed to succeed
- Allow for failure
- Foster healthy relationships
- Listen and encourage
- Center purpose
- Transparency concerning immunity
- Build and foster trust
- Power *with* as opposed to power *over*
- Non-punitive, strengths-based approach
- Value lived experience
- Uplift cultural connections between YES Team members and youth
- Wisdom of collaboration and community
- Aspire to a culture of RJ and TJ

## YES Subteam Members:

Below is a list of potential members of each YES Subteam but may vary depending on the youth and their particular situation.

Subteam Member	Team A First/Emergency/ Crisis Responders	Team B Resource and Accountability Facilitators	Team C Legal Advocacy Support
Care Coordinator	x	x	x
Peacebuilder (a violence prevention and intervention partner who knows the street culture that youth must navigate)	x		
Community Member	x	x	x
RJ and TJ Practitioners	x	x	x
Behavioral Health Practitioner	x	x	x
Counselor	x	x	x
Family Member		x	x
Peer Advocate		x	x
Credible Messenger	x	x	x
Medic	x		
Justice Partners		x	x
Other Legal Advocates			x

## Who should be a part of youth's YES Team?



## YES Team Operations

YES Teams center Youth Development principles and seek to minimize potential trauma. Members dress in “civilian” clothing and are without a gun and badge. Team vehicles will have labels such as “Community Peacebuilder.”

Organizations that operate within and embody Youth Development principles and restorative responses should lead the YES Team workforce. Probation staff could apply for these newly created positions.

Developing confidentiality agreements is critical for YES Teams to safeguard the youth’s due process and ensure that Youth Development principles constitute the core of the legal process. To ensure youth voice and trauma-informed responses in the development of care and disposition plans, comprehensive confidentiality protocols must be established.

## YES Team Key Responsibilities

**Team A** responds to an incident either with law enforcement or in lieu of law enforcement and makes an initial assessment such as identifying the parties involved and the nature of the harm.

**Team B**, alongside the youth, develops the care plan addressing the youth’s needs and provides accountability. This could include diversion programming and/or a RJ/TJ process. All programming would be referred to a CBO. Key team members would follow the youth through the model, whether that be diversion programming or the legal system.

For those youth that proceed through the legal system, Team B provides input and recommendations to justice partners, coordinates referrals to community-rooted support or placement in a small homelike setting post-adjudication. This team also develops progress reports in partnership with the referred CBO or other placement.

**Team C** collaborates with the District Attorney’s Office to provide input on the type of offense and action (dismissal, diversion, filing a petition) when possible.

Further discussion about the role of the YES Team, community members and law enforcement in investigation is needed.

## Safe and Secure Healing Centers

**Staffing.** YJR imagines recruiting staff from different training backgrounds (youth and community development, jobs development, arts, recreation, social work) to provide therapeutic support and create opportunities for youth to succeed, including in school and careers. Staff with personal experience with the justice system that is relatable to youth is critical. Staffing backgrounds and approaches are an essential part of security—when staff help youth feel more safe and secure, the overall environment is safer and more secure for everyone. Youth feel more safe and secure when they feel cared for, respected and inspired to learn and grow.

**Facility Attributes.** Safe and Secure Healing Centers should be family-based settings (e.g., a relative, a nonrelative extended family member, and foster care placements) whenever possible, or as home-like as possible. Physical plant and geography are key. It is difficult or impossible to implement a small group model at any of the current facilities. Alternative housing should be embedded in communities. Having a facility far from a youth's community makes it more difficult to engage community support and families. The locations should not be stigmatizing. Where appropriate, youth may elect to reside in a community environment more distant from their home, while working to support reentry into their home and communities.

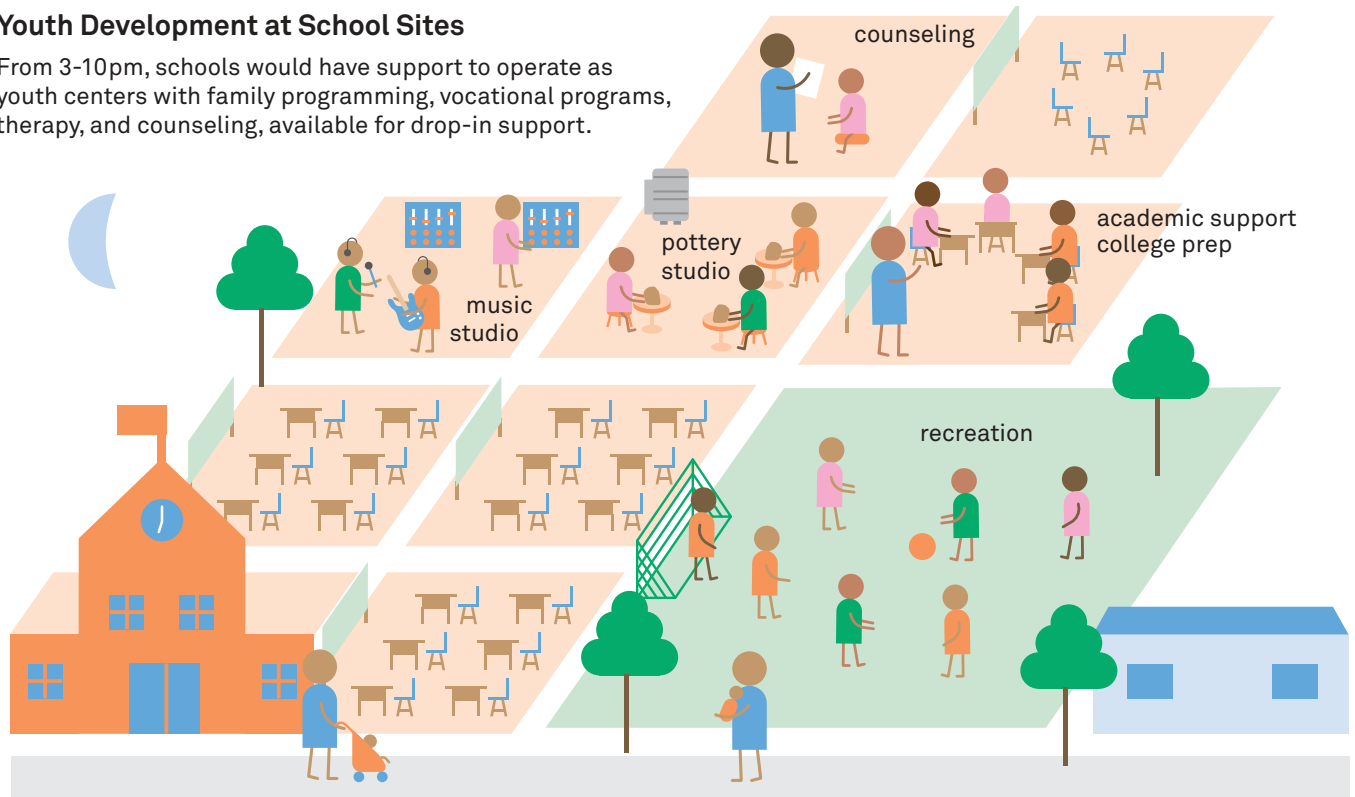
**Security.** Safe and Secure Healing Centers should include a range of security levels, from more physically secure and restricted to “staff-secured” to protect both safety within and outside of the alternative housing. All alternatives must be built or adapted to: 1) minimize the feeling of institutionalization and the harmful impacts of institutionalization and removal from home, and 2) weigh the needs of youth and public safety. Physically secure facilities should use less stigmatizing security measures that are “hidden” or “invisible.” Some youth in “staff-secured” Safe and Secure Heal-

ing Centers may only remain at the facility during the night, allowing the youth to stay engaged with school and employment while getting support and housing at the Healing Center.

# Youth Development Facilities

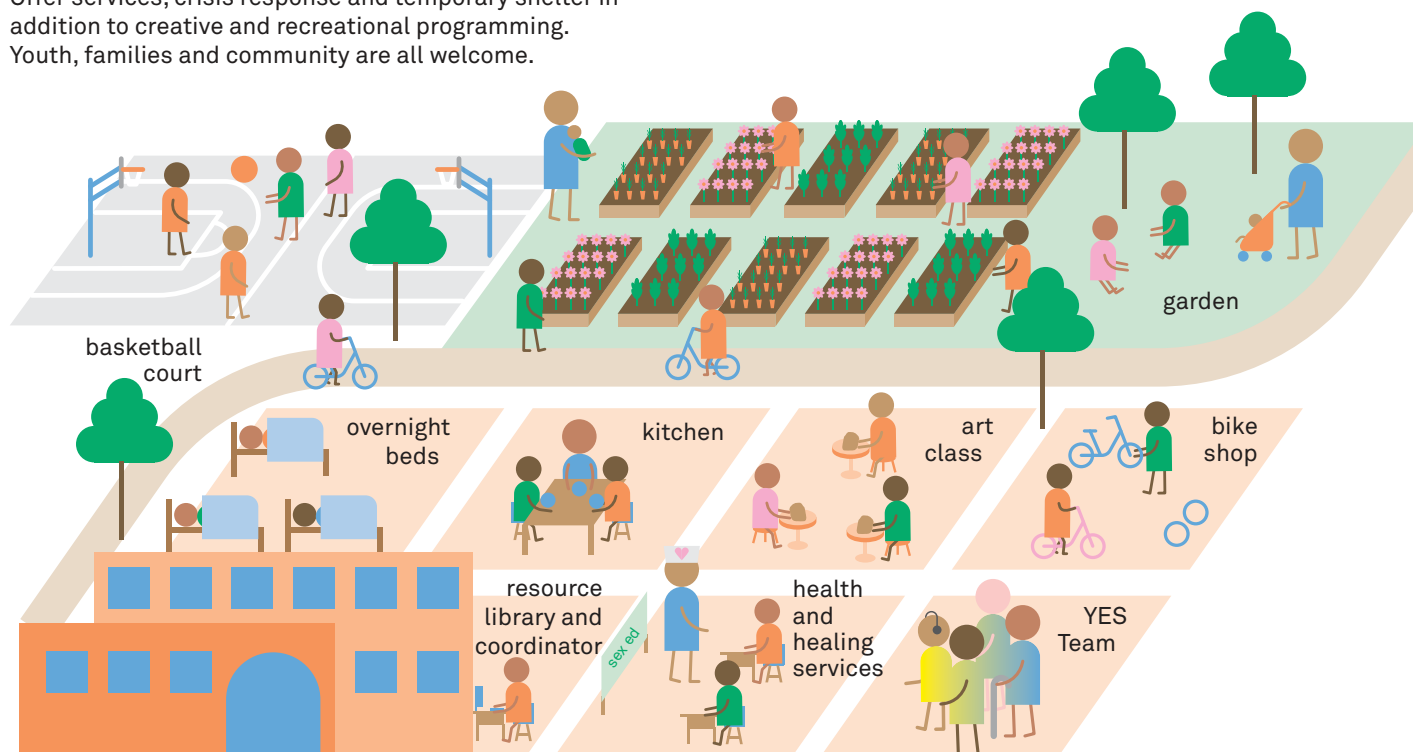
## Youth Development at School Sites

From 3-10pm, schools would have support to operate as youth centers with family programming, vocational programs, therapy, and counseling, available for drop-in support.



## 24-hour Youth and Community Centers

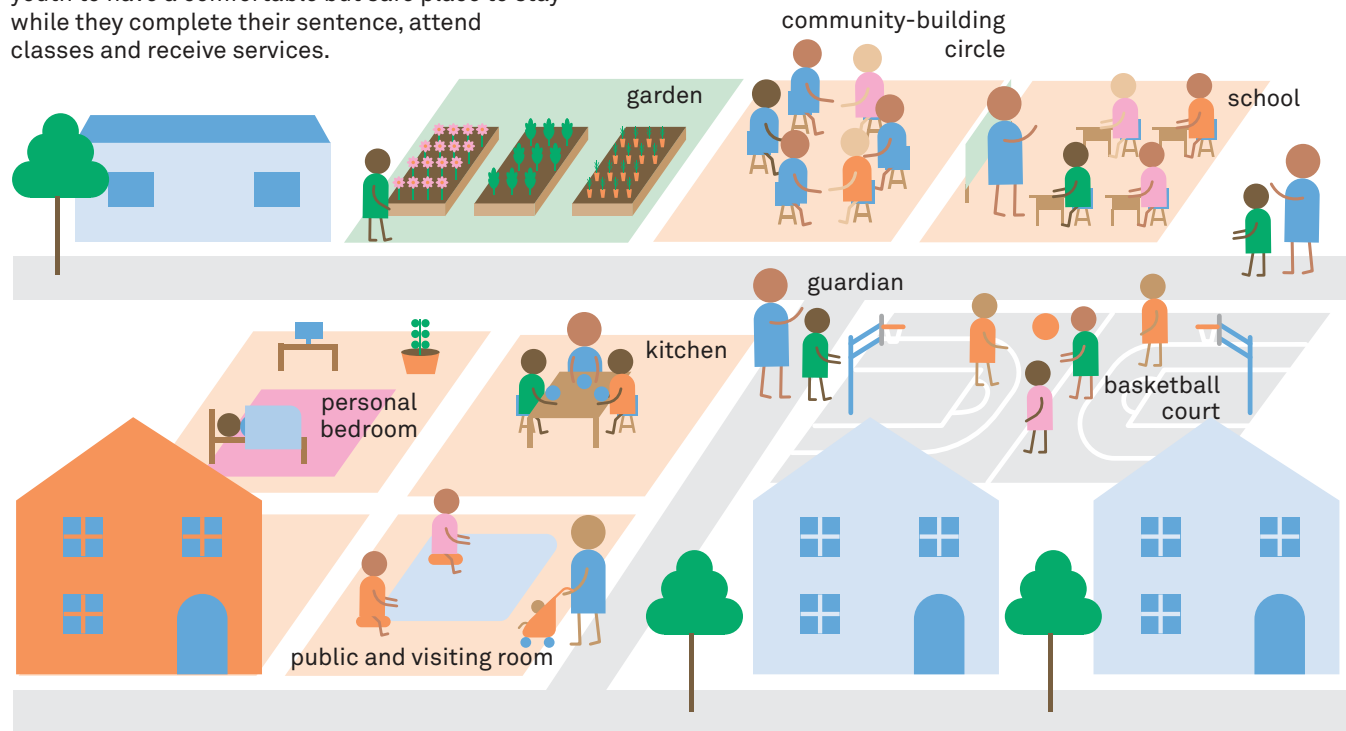
Offer services, crisis response and temporary shelter in addition to creative and recreational programming. Youth, families and community are all welcome.





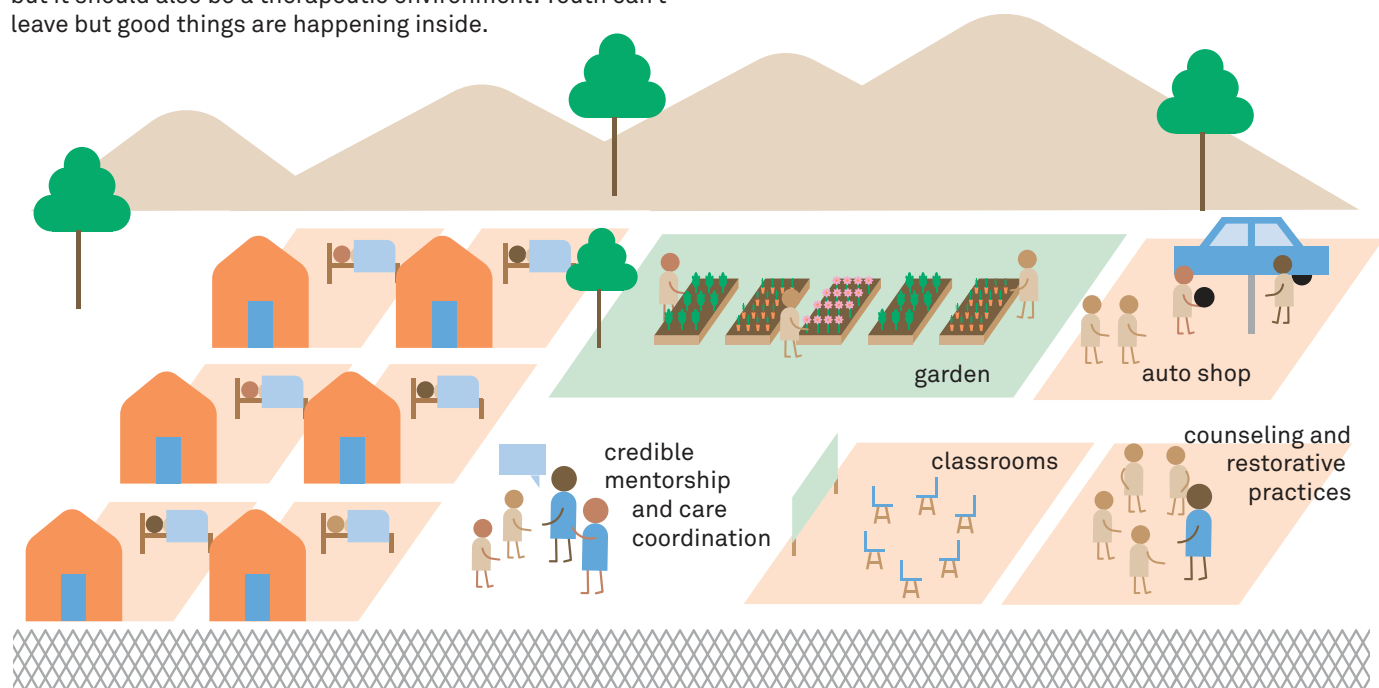
## Safe and Secure Healing Center

Small residential home option would allow most youth to have a comfortable but safe place to stay while they complete their sentence, attend classes and receive services.



## Secure County-run Alternative to DJJ

Some youth may still need a high-security facility - but it should also be a therapeutic environment. Youth can't leave but good things are happening inside.



# Transformed Pathways in Youth Justice Reimagined

Having just provided a high-level overview of YJR, here are the bedrock strategies that reduce the number of youth exposed to the justice system and reimagine responses to harm. These strategies require continued collaborative planning in the first phase of implementation in partnership with youth leaders, community, justice partners and other stakeholders.

## 1. Reducing the Need for Justice Responses

An expanded, comprehensive and County-wide investment in Youth Development and youth diversion is a critical part of YJR because it can effectively and equitably reduce the population of youth involved with the Juvenile Court and provide more equitable support and alternatives to law enforcement or legal responses for other youth-serving systems where possible. (For more detailed ideas to be further explored, see Appendix for Subcommittee #1 recommendations.)

**a. Proactive Investment in Community Safety.** YJR imagines that all youth have access to 24-hour YCCs with high-quality activities and services in their communities that support their health, social, cognitive and creative, vocational,

environmental and leadership competencies. These competencies help youth thrive and protect against justice system involvement. Youth also have equitable access to paid career development opportunities and are engaged in decision-making related to the new system of Youth Development and youth justice. When paired with effective and equitable crisis response and restorative and transformative practices, this investment in community wellbeing is a strategy informed by evidence of effective practices for equitably increasing long-term safety.

## b. Support for Schools and Other Systems.

Schools are supported in building their capacity for Youth Development and restorative practices. Rather than being arrested, harshly disciplined or excluded for a school-related incident, develop strategies to connect youth to community-building or RJ or TJ circles. Capacity-building efforts support schools and other youth-serving systems (e.g., Child Welfare) in building Youth Development and RJ and TJ skills and equitably utilizing alternatives to punitive practices, including citation or arrest. In order to

## Support for Other Systems

The YJWG recognizes the importance of integrating support for schools, child welfare and other youth-serving systems in YJR to reduce criminalization of youth and build capacity for youth development. Given the urgency and complexity of this task, we believe the details of how DYD should relate to and support other systems, including to promote restorative alternatives to school discipline and ensure access to quality education and school stability for justice-involved youth along the continuum of YJR, should be immediately addressed by a collaborative planning group focused on Educational Partnerships. This group should include youth, community, justice partners, representatives from youth-serving agencies, schools and other education stakeholders. The Youth Commission, Commission for Children and Families, Education Coordinating Council and LACOE Foster Youth Services should be engaged as partners to facilitate more nuanced discussion and planning focused on YJR's approach to education and child welfare. See Appendix for detailed proposals from Subcommittee #1 to be further explored by the Educational Partnerships planning collaborative.

improve practices and outcomes, YJR's relationship with schools and other youth-serving systems should include structures to incentivize ending biased approaches to discipline and criminalization.

**“We’re not used to traditional schools holding us accountable, they just exclude us; this is why people run away from their problems because schools do not help us address them or hold us accountable.”**

—Former FREE LA Student

**c. Crisis Response and Intervention.**

Reflecting proven and promising violence prevention and intervention practices, the goal of this crisis response model is to increase short- and long-term safety for the youth and anyone harmed, as well as the broader community. Crisis response includes supportive services provided by Peacebuilders, Credible Messengers and RJ practitioners who work to repair harm as a network of 24-hour crisis response and accountability connected to YCCs.

- 2. Responses to Harm.** A youth's path through Los Angeles County's YJR can involve several steps when a harmful incident is reported. “Off-ramps” that eliminate the need for the youth to interface with the courts are embedded in the process at multiple decision-making points. These off-ramps represent diversion opportunities that will be prioritized throughout the process. For the small number of youth that continue through the legal system, changes will be made so that the process is restorative and utilizes Youth Development principles. Throughout the continuum, responses to harm provide healing, repair and support in equal measure to those that have caused harm and those that have been harmed. Many of the concepts listed below are aspirational and require further development.

(For more detailed ideas to be further explored, see Appendix for Subcommittee #2 and #3 recommendations.)

- a. Initial Reporting and Response.** Relevant YES Team members may respond with or without law enforcement, depending on the situation. YES Team members work to provide de-escalation interventions in response to calls of a harmful incident involving youth.

- b. Youth and Community Safety.** The primary objective of the YES Team is ensuring the immediate safety and support of all parties, including the youth involved in the incident. Team members possess experience in de-escalation techniques, are Peacebuilders within YCCs and are resourced. The youth's safety and the circumstances/seriousness of the incident will determine whether the youth goes home, goes to a YCC or is taken to a pre-adjudication Safe and Secure Healing Center. Whenever possible, if a youth commits a first-time misdemeanor or low-level felony but does not present an immediate danger to themselves or others, they receive the presumptive opportunity for community-based diversion in lieu of arrest or citation, as the growing network of pre-arrest diversion programs is fully implemented Countywide.

- c. Care Plan and Coordination.** YES Team members work with youth to develop a personalized care plan that may include referrals to health, social and educational services. An additional YES Team also ensures the immediate safety and support of the person(s) harmed. The team members work with the person(s) harmed to commence the healing process, provide appropriate support, prepare for the restorative process and assist in navigating the legal process.

- d. Collaborative Review and Decision-Making.** Appropriate YES Team members collaborate to review the incident and decide about next steps. When the incident is serious (e.g., WIC

707b), this may include providing input to relevant justice partners to review the incident and make decisions along the legal continuum. Responses are relevant to the youth and time-limited. These may include accountability requirements through diversion programming, community-rooted support, RJ and TJ justice programming and placement in a Safe and Secure Healing Center. A case processing assessment will be conducted to identify and inform enhanced court efficiencies and equity. Policies, including confidentiality protocols and due process, will allow for restorative youth and YES-led care and adjudication plans. Court infrastructure provides for community-centered scheduling of court hearings and physical structure that adhere to Youth Development principles and cultural responsiveness.

- e. **Community-rooted Support.** Culturally responsive support rooted in community and Youth Development replaces the compliance paradigm of probation supervision for youth impacted by the legal system. Credible Messengers, committed, indigenous leaders and people with lived and shared experience, provide accountability through relationship and support the youth's self-realization. Credible Messengers will serve youth and families in the community and inside the Safe and Secure Healing Centers.

**“Formerly incarcerated life coaches (case managers) understand the youth.”**

—Formerly Incarcerated Member of the Anti-Recidivism Coalition

- f. **Safe and Secure Healing Centers.** For the small number of youth who require removal from their home either pre-adjudication or post-disposition, investment is needed to ensure the facilities are healing-centered and promote Youth Development principles. All Safe and Secure Healing Centers should be as home-like as possible and must be built or adapted to minimize the feeling of institutionalization and the harmful impacts of institutionalization. They should recruit staff from diverse training backgrounds, including staff with personal experience with the justice system as juvenile halls and camps continue to close over time.

- g. **Secure Alternative to the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ).** The small number of youth who would otherwise be subject to DJJ should be addressed through a holistic, trauma-informed approach focused on rehabilitation, healing, enhancing public safety and RJ. Facility staffing should shift away from staff with corrections backgrounds to those with backgrounds in social work and healing. Staff with personal experience with the justice system that is relatable to youth is critical and an essential part of security—when staff help youth feel more safe and secure, the overall environment is safer and more secure for everyone.

**“You have a lot of spectacular individuals in here [DJJ], basketball players, boxers, singers etc. We just haven’t been given the opportunity. Staff should see us for our talents. Staff should bring the best of us out, not the bad.”**

—Current DJJ Resident

## Case Study Flow

Based on a real incident (names and details have been changed to protect privacy), this case study was developed by members who volunteered from each of the three YJWG subcommittees. As previously acknowledged in this report, while the breadth of YJR reaches beyond the immediate technical aspects of the Motion, achieving improved practices and outcomes requires structural transformation that is not limited to the current functions of Juvenile Probation. Only a structural, unified, cross-sector approach that prioritizes the community can create a system that advances healing and growth—essentials for improving youth wellbeing. This case study is meant to demonstrate results from the current legal process and what could happen as YJR is meaningfully and collaboratively planned and implemented.

### Scenario

Anthony was placed in foster care as a baby because his biological mother tested positive for cocaine. He and his siblings were adopted by his foster mother and grew up in South LA. As a young child, he struggled with reading and writing, began smoking marijuana in elementary school and stopped attending classes in middle school. During all this, there were several unsubstantiated abuse and neglect investigations. When he was 13, he moved in with an extended family member because his adopted mother was suffering from dementia and could no longer care for him.

When he was 15, Anthony ran away with no money and nowhere to go. He met up with friends in his childhood neighborhood and on that very day committed a carjacking with a knife. Later that same day, the police pulled him over because he was driving erratically, and the car's license plate matched the stolen car. He was arrested.

Carmen was driving home from work and on her way to run some errands. At a stop light, a tall young man quickly approached her car door, pointed a pocket knife and yelled at her to get out. There were cars in front and behind her, so she was unable to escape. As she opened the door, he pushed her out of the car to get inside. She called 911 and waited for the

police. A few days later, the police called to say her car was at a tow yard. She discovered interior damages amounting to \$500 in repairs and had to pay an additional \$250 to get it released. On top of everything else, she experienced hardships for having been without a car for those few days.

### Current Legal Response

Anthony was charged with P.C. 215 felony carjacking and spent 5 months in juvenile hall while awaiting trial. After trial, the judge decided that the petition was true and sentenced Anthony to 5-7 months in a camp. He completed 5 months and was released into his uncle's care. He spent two weeks at his uncle's but failed to meet his probation conditions. He didn't enroll in school and didn't check in with probation. A family member called the police, and Anthony was detained and brought back to juvenile hall. He spent another two weeks in juvenile hall before the judge found him in violation and sent him back to camp for another 5-7-month commitment. During this second camp placement, his adopted mother passed away. Though he was permitted to attend the funeral, the probation officers in charge of transportation wouldn't allow him to change out of camp clothing and required he remain handcuffed. After finishing 5 months at camp, Anthony was released and placed at a probation group home.



## Youth Justice Reimagined Implementation Phase 2/3

The 911 call that brings the police to the scene also triggers a call to the YES Team, which includes a crisis response member. YES Team A is present for Anthony during his arrest. YES Team A may include a medic, Peacebuilder, community advocate and peer advocate, all of whom work out of the 24-hour Youth and Community Center (YCC). With the enhancement of the Youth Development Network (YDN), Anthony has existing familiarity with members of the YES Team.

Based on the nature of the incident, Anthony is accompanied by a YES Team member and transported to a pre-adjudication Safe and Secure Healing Center. An asset-based/culturally responsive approach has been developed to help make a collaborative admission decision.

The YES Team A member transitions Anthony to the YES Team B coordinator to create his long-term YES Team. Anthony decides that he would like his former teacher, the Peacebuilder he knows in the neighborhood and his cousin to be a part of his YES Team. As the YES Team coordinator gets to know Anthony, they also recommend a career mentor and a counselor to join Anthony's YES Team. Anthony has an opportunity to meet both and agrees for them to join his team. YES Team B, in partnership with Team C, will be the connective tissue as the case proceeds through the legal system, providing accountability and support. Additionally, the YES Team works with Anthony to find extended family who can support him with housing and care after the case is settled. Having established confidentiality and immunity protocols to ensure Anthony's due process rights, YES Team B begins the restorative process.

At the same time, a YES Team coordinator is also assigned to Carmen, the person harmed in this situation, to provide her with her own team for support in the healing process. Carmen selects her husband, sister and a therapist to be on her team. The Team meets

to discuss what happened and what kind of support Carmen needs. Carmen's YES Team assists in processing her emotions, providing a sense of safety, preparing her for the restorative process and assisting in tracking the legal process.

YES Team C collaborates with justice partners to determine if the case will proceed through the legal system. Dependent on progress in changes to statutory requirements, the case may be forwarded to the District Attorney. Team C, in collaboration with the District Attorney, reviews the case for the actual filing charges versus the arresting charges and provides input.

***If the District Attorney, with input from TEAM C, dismisses the case*** because Anthony has completed the RJ process, his YES Team supports him throughout the agreed-upon repairs.

***If the District Attorney, with input from Team C, reduces the charges to a non-707(b),*** his YES Team supports his connection to diversion and continues the RJ process as informed by all parties. Anthony continues to live in safe housing.

***If the District Attorney, with input from Team C, proceeds with the charges as 707(b),*** Anthony continues to be housed in a Safe and Secure Healing Center and a hybrid restorative process is implemented. Since this process is implemented within the current legal court procedures, it is not RJ within the integrity and true sense of RJ processes and practices.

At Anthony's detention hearing, a mitigation report is submitted to the court by the YES Team to provide information about him to help tell the whole story of his life and situation. Confidentiality protocols and agreements are developed for the mitigation reports. In addition to the defense counsel, Anthony has an advocate of his choice in court with him. The detention hearing is held within the statutory 48 hours but at a time convenient for family and advocate.



The YES Team and justice partners will collaborate to ensure safe conditions. Anthony will not be handcuffed or shackled while transported to court nor while in court. His support person of choice can accompany him during his transport in a regular vehicle, and he wears street clothes at each court hearing.

The 24-hour YCC's RJ facilitators work with the YES Team coordinators for Anthony and Carmen to participate in a RJ process (if both parties are ready). The RJ process is scheduled within one week when both Anthony and Carmen are able to attend. Carmen is nervous and hesitant, afraid of Anthony and unsure she will be able to forgive him. In response, the RJ facilitator confirmed with Anthony that he wants to make things better through the RJ process and then invites both Anthony and Carmen to bring members of the YES Teams to support the process. The RJ facilitator works to prepare all parties separately to ensure the process will be supportive and restorative. Once everyone is ready, the RJ facilitator convenes Anthony, Mr. Nelson (his teacher and supporter from the Boys and Girls Club), Carmen and her sister to talk.

The meeting addresses three components: 1) What happened, 2) How everyone has been affected and 3) What can be done to repair the harm and ensure it does not happen again. During their meeting, Carmen listens to the events that led up to Anthony committing the crime. This gives him an opportunity to take responsibility for his actions and to explain that he was trying to escape a bad living situation due to his mother's illness. Mr. Nelson shares that Anthony's actions were not a reflection of his true character. As Carmen listens to Anthony and learns he's still a young teenager, she begins to understand that the carjacking was not personal, and he was not trying to hurt her. This helps her feel safer in the room with him. Anthony hears from Carmen how terrified she was and the hardships she endured. Now she must get the interior of her car fixed and find a way to pay her rent since she spent \$250 on getting her car released from the tow yard. Anthony explains that he was panicking about his living situa-

tion and took desperate measures to get away. He recognizes how scary it must have been for her and acknowledges that what he did was wrong. Anthony apologizes and Carmen accepts his apology.

Anthony asks what he needs to do to make things right and how much money he owes her. Her cost of the hardship was a total of \$750. Anthony expresses he cannot afford to pay the total amount all at once so they agreed to an installment plan to give her three money orders for \$250 each over a three-month period. Anthony also agrees to volunteer for 25 community service hours at Mr. Nelson's Boys and Girls Club. Carmen is satisfied with this agreement as she and her sister attended a Boys and Girls Club when they were younger. Carmen says it was really important to her that no one ever have to go through that kind of ordeal again. Both parties sign the agreement and the facilitator follows up to confirm that all of the agreement points are met within three months. Carmen asks Anthony and his support team to ensure he is committed to informing her of his progress for the next three months. Anthony and his YES Team agree to Carmen's terms and everyone signs the agreement.

At the disposition of Anthony's legal process, conditions imposed by the court are tailored to the incident and/or needs of Anthony, including the Restorative Agreement, which Anthony and Carmen created and agreed to. By this point, court conditions may be limited up to six months. If determined by the court, Anthony is placed in a family-based setting (e.g., relative, nonrelative extended family member) or a post-adjudication Safe and Secure Healing Center, which includes counselors that assist in navigating the system and supportive services that build Anthony's strengths and address his needs. Elements of the disposition plan, including culturally and trauma-responsive therapeutic services, are provided in the out-of-home setting.

For the funeral of his adopted mother, Anthony is in street clothing, without handcuffs, and is accompanied by a member of his YES Team B.

Before Anthony is released from his placement, the Credible Messenger on his YES Team works with him on a reentry plan. Anthony is released with community-rooted supports (in lieu of probation supervision). The YES Team makes the referral for services as informed and led by Anthony and partially informed by the Restorative Agreement. A coordinator of Anthony's YES Team ensures follow-through on arrangements. Anthony's success in the community-based program will not be defined by traditional measures of "compliance or failure." Strong confidentiality agreements between Anthony and the program are in place.

Anthony's YES Team prepares status reports to the court and interfaces directly with the court in future incidents. Anthony benefits from the level of support he is granted and feels empowered to make better choices for his life. He is connected to mentors in a way that will help him stabilize his housing and family support to help him meet his basic financial needs. The support will help him make better choices and provide several people to reach out to when he is at a crossroads—this all helps him work toward his goals. When challenges come, he knows he has a team of people who will guide him in the right direction. Furthermore, he is getting the support that can help heal him from the traumas of his past when he was victimized, in a way that helps him not victimize another person. The healing that happens between Anthony and Carmen can lead to ripples of positive relationships, forgiveness, deeper compassion building and greater responsibility toward their community.

### Aspirational Future Phase

By this time, in each of the 24-hour YCCs, Peacebuilders/Credible Messengers are the first people that youth meet when they visit the site. Each 24-hour YCC has done extensive outreach and building with the local community and resources have been spread throughout the neighborhood. There is a growing network of Peacebuilders/Credible Messengers and community intervention workers that are coordinated, committed and consistent. The

Peacebuilders are proficient in RJ and TJ, and they are helping spread those practices in the streets. In time, these Peacebuilders are well known within the community.

Within the YDN, there are regularly scheduled trainings and skill-building for 911 dispatchers to determine which incidents would be better served by the YES Teams. These services are evaluated regularly for effectiveness. In addition, an alternative to 911 has been created and each 24-hour YCC is responsible for their own outreach efforts informing the community about the alternative and the type of support offered when called.

Youth and therapists strongly encourage the community intervention model. With the continual and thorough development of 24-hour YCCs, there can be safer responses, de-escalation plans and, ultimately, less violence and shootings.

When the carjacking case is reported, either through 911 or the call coming into the 24-hour YCC directly, the YES Team is activated. Anthony is transported to the 24-hour YCC. He meets with a YES Team member and an assessment begins. Similar to previous phases, he has assistance to create his own YES Team B.

Anthony is immediately assisted to find a secure place to live with the most committed and secure family member. In this case, it is his cousin and his father. Members of his YES Team schedule a meeting with him, his cousin and his father to establish family agreements and a support system in case issues arise.

This aspirational phase envisions a justice system fully anchored in RJ/TJ, including changes in local and state youth justice laws. Therefore, there is no need for a Team C in this case. The District Attorney and judges have agreed to hand over all juvenile cases (from 0-24 years of age) to the 24-hour YCCs, Peacebuilders and YES Teams.

As in previous phases, Carmen receives the support of a YES Team and the RJ process

unfolds as described in Phase 2/3. Anthony is connected to community-rooted support, staying connected to his YES Team while he completes the Restorative Agreement/CBO programming for as long as he needs/wants. The YES Team is responsible for documenting what happened, creating an internal document in case another incident occurs with Anthony or Carmen. The case remains open for 12 months under the care and coordination of the YES Team. If any additional issues occur with Anthony, the YES Team is responsible for responding. After he completes his 12-month commitment to Carmen, Anthony is invited to be a peer mentor for a youth in his neighborhood caught shoplifting. He agrees to be a part of the process and begins to support other youth in his neighborhood for years to come.

To help illustrate the system we need, let's look at two scenarios.

#### Incident:



What you might not know: This youth has had a long history of mental and physical abuse and recently lost their housing.

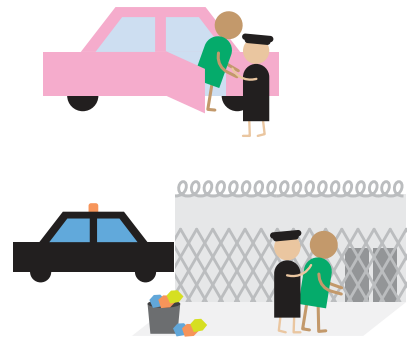


#### The system as it is:

Yes, 911, I'd like to report a crime.



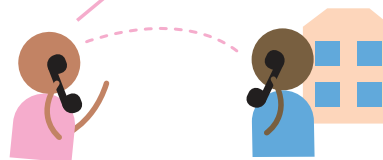
Law enforcement responds to 911 call.



Youth is arrested and/or brought to Juvenile Hall if youth diversion is not available.

#### As it could and should be:

Hello, I'd like to report a crime.

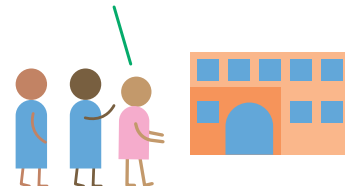


24-hour trauma-informed crisis response is available to youth, families, community, or law enforcement across the County.

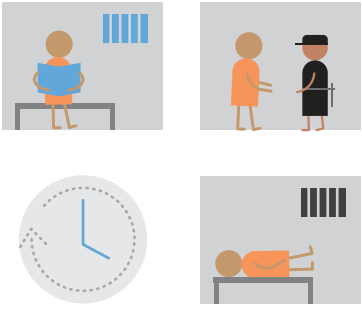


Youth Empowerment and Support (YES) Team may respond to crisis with law enforcement as needed, and either connects youth to diversion or brings youth to 24-hour Youth and Community Center for assessment, care coordination and temporary housing if needed.

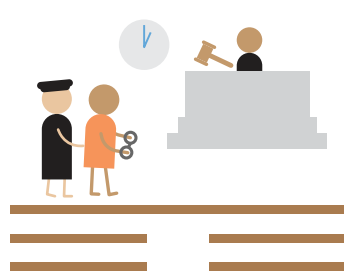
I need some support and healing to work through this event, too.



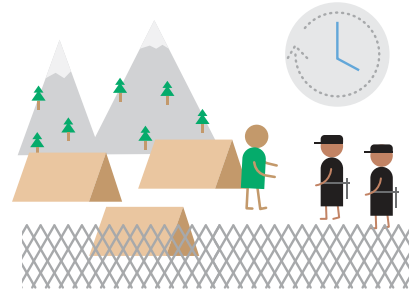
The person harmed also receives support through restorative practices.



If detained in juvenile hall, youth may attend basic high school classes and meet with a probation officer. They sleep in a cell and get limited resources while they wait for a hearing.

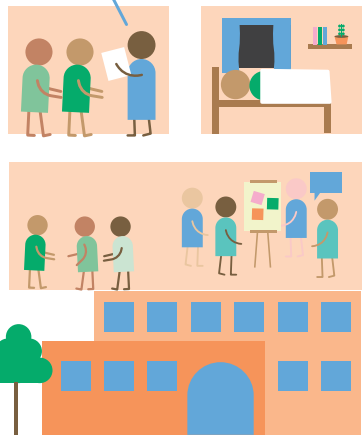


The court decides the youth's sentence with the limited information they have available to them and the youth and their family experience many structural barriers.



If sent to camp, youth attends high school classes, sees few people, and gets limited services.

*Let's make a plan together.*



YES Team recommends that the youth stay at a Safe and Secure Healing Center until their detention hearing, and then the judge determines they can stay with a relative before their adjudication hearing.



Meanwhile the YES Team begins supporting equitable decision-making with justice system partners.

*Knowing what I know about your life, and what the victim wants, I offer a restorative justice process.*

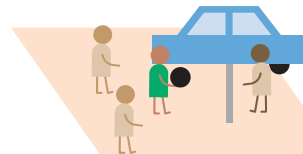


A YES Team helps the judge understand the full context of the case and together they decide that a restorative justice process would be a good outcome. The hearing is held at a time when friends and family can come and there could also be a non-court resolution.

*What you did really made me feel unsafe. I'd like you to get a job to make sure this never happens again.*



The person harmed, youth and their support networks meet and have an opportunity to repair the harm. If it isn't safe for the youth to be at home, they can stay at a Safe and Secure Healing Center until it is safe or they find permanent supportive housing.



The youth gets the support they need to get a job that actually supports their life goals as well.

# Plan for Phased Implementation

## Phase 1: Establishing Infrastructure and Initial Administrative, Program, and Planning Capacity to Bring the Reimagined Model to Life (18 Months)

**1. Establish the Department of Youth Development (DYD)** as well as new staff classifications to provide leadership for the transition to a transformed youth justice model, coordinate investments in Youth Development and capacity-building needed to equitably reduce justice system involvement for youth, and assume responsibility for the phased transition of Juvenile Probation functions over time with a commitment to fully transitioning functions of Juvenile Probation to DYD by the end of 2025. As soon as possible, DYD would have the capacity and authority to:

- a. Access and use existing data to **reallocate at least \$75 million previously invested in supervision, detention and incarceration to a comprehensive, community-based YDN** of CBOs in order to improve supports and outcomes of and outside of the youth justice system, from prevention and diversion through reentry.
- b. **Implement creative models for contracts and grants and provide capacity-building support** by connecting with existing capacity-building initiatives in the County and providing additional focused coaching and support to increase equitable access to and effective utilization of County resources.
- c. **Design and implement infrastructure** for improved contracts and grants, capacity-building, data and evaluation, oversight and accountability.
- d. **Build a comprehensive, well-protected and flexible research infrastructure and data system** that is user-friendly, adaptable and able to facilitate transparency and innovation by providing data for

comprehensive analyses and storytelling across the continuum of Youth Development and youth justice services, identifying opportunities to ensure existing data are leveraged and shared while maintaining strong protections for youth.

- e. **Participate in youth and community-led oversight and accountability mechanisms** to ensure that the phased transition and implementation occur with fidelity to the practices, vision and values recommended by the YJWG.
- f. **Facilitate shared learning and coordination among community-based providers and other County Departments** to develop and advance standards of practice, including Countywide standards for Youth Development activities and services, youth diversion services, RJ and TJ, housing and reentry, and peacebuilding and intervention.
- g. Plan and implement a Safe and Secure Healing Center model of **small home-like facilities, with a range of security levels for pre-and post-adjudication youth, alongside identified Secure Alternatives to DJJ. These alternatives may include a repurposing of Camp Gonzalez and/or Campus Kilpatrick.**

2. With the goal of transitioning all YDD work into DYD as soon as possible, begin planning to **expand the Department of Health Services' existing YDD infrastructure and allocate an initial percentage of the Juvenile Probation budget as well as surplus Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funds to the Countywide expansion of community-based alternatives** to suspension, expulsion, citation and arrest



to replace the functions of Probation's Citation Diversion Program Early Intervention and Prevention program, and School-Based programs.

- a. Identify and expand resources, services and legal support for youth who experience violence and trauma**, including youth involved in the child welfare system, to prevent them from "crossing over" into the justice system.
- b. Conduct outreach to schools and other youth-serving agencies**, including child welfare and public health, to identify opportunities to build capacity for Youth Development, restorative practices, and peacebuilding while developing incentive and assessment structures supporting community-based alternatives to suspension, expulsion, citation and arrest.
- c. Collaborate with the newly established Youth Commission** to engage youth in participatory budgeting, participatory hiring and participatory action research.
- d. Collaborate with the JCCC and Probation** to identify a plan for transitioning the administration of JJCPA funds.

**3. First YDD and then DYD facilitate ongoing collaborative planning to address unanswered questions and areas prioritized for future exploration** by hiring and establishing a Research, Innovation and Planning Team, including system-impacted people and youth, that will support the YJWG's next phase of implementation planning and focused assessments until DYD is up and running with staff who can continue this work, including support for schools and other systems, designing youth centers, collaborative decision-making processes, residential facilities, and workforce training pipelines. (For more detailed ideas to be further explored through ongoing collaborative planning in Phase 1, see Appendix for Subcommittee recommendations.)

**a. Facilitate a Youth Development Learning Collaborative** capable of advancing shared standards for youth services; provide educational resources and curricula, training and coaching for existing youth-serving departments and schools; and better understand gaps in capacity. In collaboration with the Youth Commission, the Youth Development Learning Collaborative should be a space to assess and identify opportunities to support and prioritize comprehensive youth centers specializing in Youth Development, education and career support in communities with the highest juvenile justice system involvement.

**b. Facilitate a Multidisciplinary Decision-Making Learning Collaborative** in alignment with the County's recommendations for maintaining the decreased population of incarcerated youth to further develop the YES Team model with a focus on centering youth and families, improving data collection and information sharing, and supporting collaboration and equitable decision-making. In collaboration with system-impacted youth and communities, justice partners and other youth-serving agencies, develop clear written protocols and pilot YES Team models, using quantitative and qualitative data to inform improvement and expansion.

**c. Collaborate with local artists, architects and organizations such as Designing Justice + Designing Spaces** to design physical spaces such as youth centers and courthouse/rooms to adhere to Youth Development principles and cultural responsiveness.

**d. Continue planning and identifying potential properties for Safe and Secure Healing Centers** (pre/post-adjudication).

**4. Building upon the recommendations outlined in the County's SB 439 Protocol and plan for maintaining the decreased population of incarcerated youth, first YDD and**

then DYD work with Probation to establish and implement an improved process for detention decision-making, including the elimination of deficit-based tools and development of clear protocol to prevent detention for bench warrants, technical violations, misdemeanors and offenses that are eligible for referral to diversion.

5. **Begin collaborative planning to enhance and expand reentry support** for youth in juvenile halls and camps, working with Probation and other key stakeholders to increase access to CBOs.
6. **Create a labor support and transition planning process engaging both community and Probation representatives**, including immediately sharing an inventory of vacant positions across County departments for current Probation staff to consider applying for, and engagement opportunities to collaborate in developing the job of a new Youth Development workforce; transferring resources accordingly as functions transition to DYD over time as YJR builds capacity and shows progress.
7. **Develop a framework for ensuring accountability** to youth, families and communities, including measures of success, an active oversight structure (and its connection to existing oversight bodies like the Probation Oversight Commission and Youth Commission) and participatory decision-making processes centering youth leadership and involving youth-serving organizations.
8. **Adopt legislative and local policy changes needed** to enable transfer of Juvenile Probation's functions to a new, health and development-focused Department.

“I know it would be safe for young people to not be in the Probation Department but to be in spaces that want to genuinely see young people thrive and genuinely want to support and uplift young people through different elements. I believe this is what should happen and that folks have the tools to make it happen. I don't think that the Youth Justice Work Group should be afraid to make that a demand, to truly move away from Probation and create the kind of Youth Development Department that you see in New York, in the Bay, in Chicago.”

—Youth Leader

## Future Phases: Continuing to Transition Functions and Build Upon Foundational Work Over Time (36 months)

1. **Expand training and professional development to build and support a strong Youth Development and Credible Messenger workforce** as supervisory functions transition from Juvenile Probation to DYD, including transition opportunities for Probation staff and support for youth employment. As new positions are established in DYD and when those positions are filled by Juvenile Probation Unit personnel, authorize the elimination of those positions in the Juvenile Probation Unit and the transfer of the underlying funding to DYD.
2. **Fully fund YCCs with 24-hour crisis response** in communities across the County as spaces for comprehensive resources and support to youth in their communities as well as connection and DJJ coordination for other youth-serving systems, providing real-time alternatives to arrest (e.g., school partnerships, co-located services, regular RJ and TJ and community-building circles, in-house multidisciplinary decision-making, educational and career centers). YCCs will be hubs for the growing Youth Development workforce and Peacebuilders who can support youth in their communities, schools, parks and homes.
3. Informed by the decision-making learning collaborative, **implement a new collaborative Youth Empowerment and Support Team model, coordinated by DYD** and located at YCCs, to provide input into decisions at various points of contact along the youth justice continuum.
4. **Resource, enhance and support a continuum of reentry services** for youth exiting detention and incarceration Countywide, with a focus on Credible Messengers, capacity-building for providers and identifying geographic and service areas needing additional investment and expansion. The Department should support a network of community-based reentry providers that build long-term relationships with youth in detention facilities, and long after their release, so they can support them throughout their reentry.
5. **Conduct case processing assessment to support improved court processes**, including reducing unnecessary court delays, exploring opportunities to limit the duration of court-mandated conditions and identifying physical changes to the court to reflect Youth Development principles and cultural responsiveness.
6. **Plan for a continuum of housing alternatives to juvenile halls and camps** that offer varying levels of security, restorative, healing environments and supportive services, with effective staffing and hiring would be informed by multidisciplinary input.
7. **Additional areas for planning and implementation in future phases include:**
  - a. **Develop a model of community-rooted support** with Credible Messengers and CBOs, rooted in Youth Development (not compliance) to replace the current strategies of supervision for youth (at least up to age 24).
  - b. **Transfer responsibility for and expand Safe and Secure Healing Centers, including for youth impacted by DJJ closure once DYD has built the necessary capacity to do so.**
  - c. **Advance Countywide Youth Development priorities** informed by the Youth Development Learning Collaborative.
  - d. **Pursue ongoing evaluation, improvement and innovation.**

## Phased Implementation Chart

	Fiscal and Administrative	Youth Development	Diversion and Restorative Practices	Housing and Reentry	Collaboration, Planning and Oversight
Phase 1 (18 months)	<b>Goals:</b> 1) Strengthen and increase development and diversion; 2) Further reduce numbers of court-involved youth; 3) Continue planning collaborative decision-making through Youth Empowerment and Support (YES) Teams that provide input across the continuum; 4) Work with Probation to launch pilot alternative to incarceration in response to DJJ closure; 5) Establish oversight mechanism and 6) Continue transition planning for next phases.				
	<p>Design new classifications for a Department of Youth Development.</p> <p>Use data to inform initial funding and first staff reallocated to DYD.</p> <p>Design and implement infrastructure for improved contracts and grants, capacity-building, data and evaluation, oversight and accountability.</p> <p>Design labor support and transition plan including engagement with both community and Probation representatives.</p>	<p>Launch Youth Development Learning Collaborative (YDLC) to facilitate shared learning with other youth-serving Departments and build Youth Development workforce and capacity in the County's existing youth services.</p> <p>Design and expand YDLC in partnership with youth, CBOs, schools, parks, child welfare, and justice partners.</p> <p>Collaborate with Youth Commission to inform participatory budgeting, hiring and action research processes.</p> <p>Build on existing Juvenile Court support and participatory defense models.</p>	<p>Expand YDD's pre-arrest diversion network Countywide, including resources to support schools and alternatives to suspension/expulsion, support youth who experience violence and trauma, and youth involved in the child welfare system.</p> <p>Support rebuttable presumptive diversion for first-time youth misdemeanors and non-WIC 707(b) felony offenses.</p> <p>Begin to end Probation's Citation Diversion and Early Intervention/Prevention programs and begin to replace School-based Supervision with community-based alternatives.</p>	<p>Work with Probation to support DJJ transition and plan Safe and Secure Healing Center models of alternatives to halls and camps.</p> <p>Establish and implement an improved process for detention decision-making, including protocol to prevent detention when relevant, and eliminating the use of deficit-based tools that perpetuate RED.</p> <p>Begin collaborative planning to enhance and expand reentry support for youth in juvenile halls and camps, working with Probation to increase access to CBOs and reentry planning and creating a community of practice for youth reentry services.</p>	<p>Continue working with YJWG and consultants for implementation planning, including 24-hour youth centers, YES Teams, Safe and Secure Healing Centers.</p> <p>Collaborate with the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council and Probation in identifying necessary changes to transition the administration of the JJCC.</p> <p>Adopt state and local amendments to existing laws to transition probation functions to the new Department.</p>

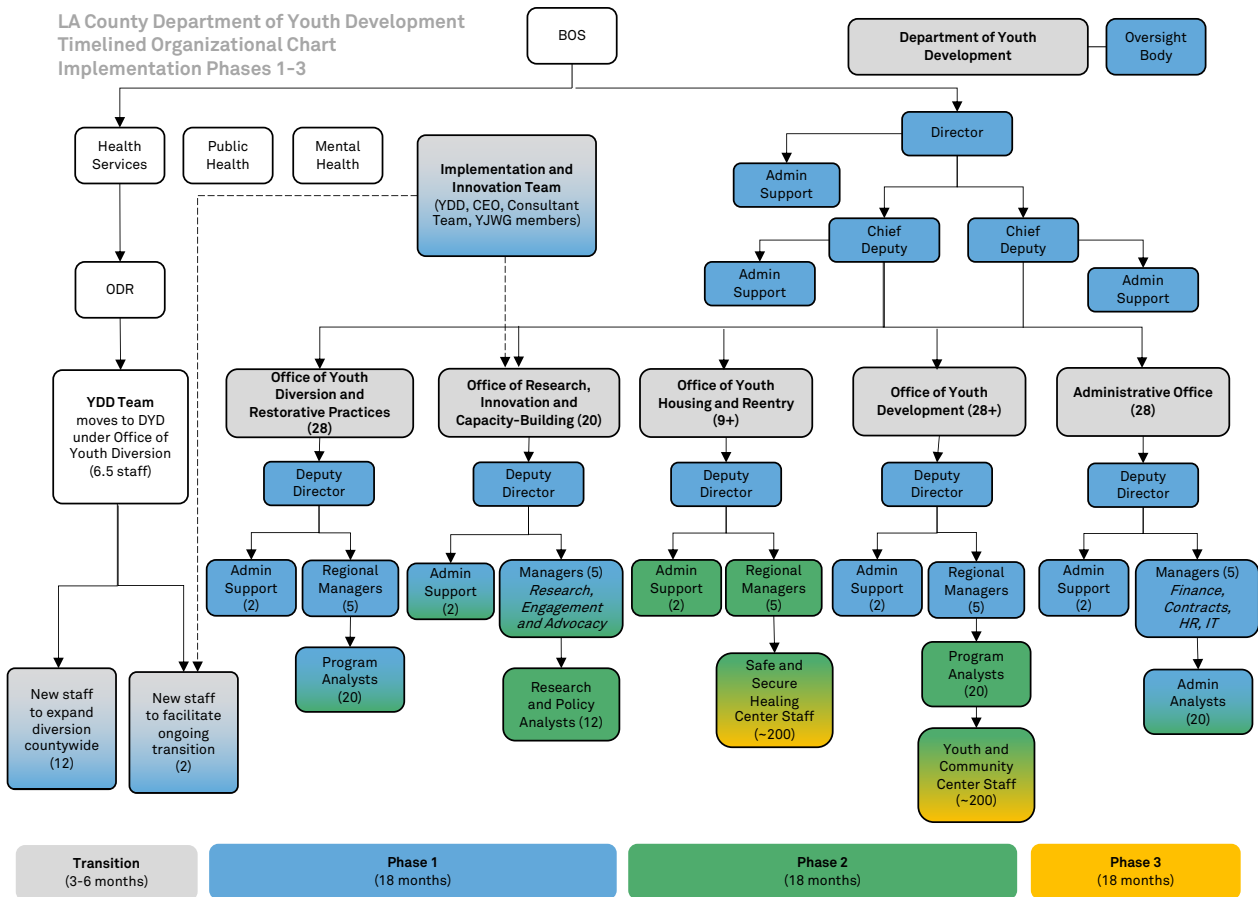
Fiscal and Administrative		Youth Development	Diversion and Restorative Practices	Housing and Reentry	Collaboration, Planning and Oversight
Phase 2 (18 months)	<b>Goals:</b> 1) Fully implement diversion countywide; 2) Expand development; 3) Launch YES Teams; 4) Assume responsibility for alternatives to detention and 5) continue planning for the next phase.				
	Expand staff training program as the youth services workforce expands and establishes sustainable structure to support youth employment.	Expand YDLC to coordinate Youth Development Workers trained in restorative practices at schools, parks, group homes. Support staff through training in safe passages, crisis response, and use of diversion from police contact, arrest, suspension, and expulsion.	Continue to expand and build capacity for diversion and restorative practices.  Select functions of field supervision transition to DYD as 24-hour YCCs expand and the court-involved population shrinks.	Transfer responsibility for and expand Safe and Secure Healing Center model and relationship with Juvenile Court to grow alternatives to halls and camps, including for youth impacted by DJJ closure.  Coordinate comprehensive approach to youth reentry services, including Credible Messengers.	Formalize a permanent accountability and oversight mechanism for the department and community-based partnerships.  Explore additional opportunities to equitably increase eligibility and access, including local or state policy changes, informed by data.  Continue building capacity and funding for Youth Development workforce.
	Continue phased reallocation of resources based on data.  Launch a public education and communications campaign.	Establish initial cohort of 24-hour YCCs, launching pre- and post-adjudication YES Teams at each center with co-located services and restorative and transformative practices, providing an alternative to transporting youth to police stations or juvenile halls whenever possible.			
Phase 3 (18 months)	<b>Goals:</b> 1) Continue to strengthen development, diversion and restorative practices; 2) Transfer supervision function to DYD and 3) transfer locked facilities to DYD and close remaining halls.				
	Continue phased reallocation of staff and resources based on data.  Continue generating data to inform improvements and policy change and publish findings.	Advance Countywide Youth Development Priorities informed by YDLC.  Continue expanding network of 24-hr crisis response connected to YCCs.  Fully implement incentives for schools and other youth-serving systems to transform punitive approaches to discipline and criminalization of youth in order to receive support from the County's Youth Development Network.	Fully fund restorative alternatives to supervision and integrate YES Teams at all key decision points.	Close remaining halls as Safe and Secure Healing Centers expand.  Fund/coordinate housing and reentry services for all court-involved youth.	Pursue ongoing evaluation, improvement and innovation.

## Functions Under the Department of Youth Development Compared to Juvenile Probation in Each Phase

Functions Under the new Department of Youth Development		Functions Under Juvenile Probation
<b>Phase 1</b> (18 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Fully implement youth diversion Countywide through the YDD model, ending Probation's Citation Diversion and Early Intervention/Prevention programs and begin to replace School-Based Supervision.</li> <li>→ Facilitate ongoing collaborative planning, with a focus on capacity-building for Youth Development, equitable decision-making, alternatives to detention, reentry, and workforce transition and support.</li> <li>→ Transition administration of the JJCC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Conduct current investigation and reporting functions with additional transparency and clarity regarding decision-making protocol.</li> <li>→ Conduct field supervision for youth currently under the jurisdiction of Probation and youth not eligible for expanded diversion.</li> <li>→ Operate juvenile halls and camps, including Secure Alternative to the DJJ, with additional support to equitably and safely maintain decreased population of incarcerated youth and improve reentry services.</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2</b> (18 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Establish an initial cohort of YCCs with 24-hour crisis response.</li> <li>→ Launch Youth Empowerment and Support (YES) Team multidisciplinary model to improve equity in decision-making.</li> <li>→ Transition select functions of field supervision, investigation and reporting as 24-hour crisis response and multidisciplinary team model expand and court-involved population continues to decrease.</li> <li>→ Begin to transition responsibility for Safe and Secure Healing Centers.</li> <li>→ Coordinate comprehensive reentry services for all youth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Conduct select investigation, reporting and field supervision functions not yet transitioned to a new model.</li> <li>→ Operate a reduced number of juvenile halls and Camps, with additional support to equitably and safely maintain decreased population of incarcerated youth and improve reentry services.</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 3</b> (18 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Expand YCCs with 24-hour crisis response Countywide, providing improved alternatives to arrest and detention whenever possible.</li> <li>→ Fully implement YES Teams to replace and improve previous functions of supervision, investigation and reporting.</li> <li>→ Fully implement Safe and Secure Healing Centers and Secure Alternatives to DJJ.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Close remaining juvenile halls.</li> <li>→ Transition all remaining Juvenile Probation functions to new model, including remaining Camps.</li> </ul>



## Draft Organizational Chart for the DYD



# Workforce and Budget Implications of a New Youth Justice Model

The YJWG proposes transitioning Los Angeles County's youth justice system out of the Probation Department and into DYD by transitioning and transforming current functions and resources of Juvenile Probation in phases.

The creation of DYD and reduction of juvenile services provided by Probation is likely to have significant labor implications. The relevant memoranda of understanding and state labor law make it clear that the decision to form new Departments and organize how services are delivered is within the County's prerogative and non-negotiable. However, foreseeable impacts of such decisions are likely negotiable and may result in protracted labor negotiations. Additionally, the memoranda of understanding of labor groups also require the County to engage in various measures in order to retain impacted employees within the County workforce prior to transferring their duties. The extent of these impacts and negotiations will be dependent on how the County intends to reduce the Probation workforce and build the workforce of the new department. Nevertheless, the consultant team and the YJWG engaged workforce and budget implications and now provide the following analyses and recommendations.

In order to accomplish this goal, **YJR will require data-driven investment and the reallocation of Juvenile Probation and other funds over time.** In future phases, the amount of resources to be reallocated should be informed by data analyses and ongoing collaborative planning and oversight.

In order to begin to improve practices and outcomes, **YJR will require an initial reallocation of at least \$75 million** that reflects the following initial elements of the County's transformed approach to youth justice:

1. Shrinking the existing footprint of Juvenile Probation by equitably reducing the need for judicial intervention.
  - a. Maximize pre-arrest diversion by establishing referral partnerships with every law enforcement agency in the County.
  - b. Transition responsibility for current Probation-led diversion efforts, including Probation's Citation Diversion Program and WIC 654 Diversion and begin to eliminate School-Based Probation Supervision and replace with appropriate, needed community-based supports.
2. Transition existing functions of Juvenile Probation that do not require legislative changes.
  - a. Transition the JJCC's administrative function to DYD.
  - b. Identify staff and corresponding funding from Juvenile Probation that will transition to DYD.

## Outline of Phase 1 Budget for Youth Justice Reimagined

Funding Need	Description	Cost
Staffing	Approximately 90 staff needed for diversion expansion and the DYD's initial infrastructure.	\$15,000,000
Community-Based Programming	Estimate of cost for full expansion of Countywide youth diversion and development programs, including all law enforcement agencies in Los Angeles County, school-based support, reentry support, Credible Messengers, and Peacebuilders, based on an adapted version of YDD's current funding model. This estimate would serve 6,500 youth at approximately \$650 per youth per month, representing full implementation of youth diversion and development programs in every law enforcement jurisdiction and referrals from schools and other youth-serving systems.	\$55,000,000
Consulting Services and Supplies	Consultation Services needed to support ongoing planning focused on YCCs, YES Teams, Safe and Secure Healing Centers, as well as supplies to support day-to-day activities and events.	\$5,000,000
Total Cost		\$75,000,000

Based on the above estimate of the cost needed to fully expand youth diversion and development programs, provide initial staff to support expansion and early transition planning, and support consultants to facilitate ongoing planning, Phase 1 proposes a budget of at least \$75 million. Preliminary analyses of Probation's budget and other potential funding sources indicate that these funds could come from the Probation Department's unrealized cost savings and continue to be reallocated as functions transition and positions become available. Funding should increase proportionately in future phases based on analyses of cost savings and need over time. Additional analyses will be needed to determine exact sources of funding for Phase 1 and future phases.

### Additional Workforce and Budget Implications

**"It takes a village, and probation is part of the village."**

—Probation Staff

**The YJWG discussed the myriad ways that reimagining youth justice would transform the function, job and work culture of Juvenile Probation officers in Los Angeles County.** The aforementioned quote reflects a fundamental belief and point of tension among many probation officers: they are a critical part of the justice system and the community. Based on survey and Listening Session feedback, some probation staff consider replacing youth probation antithetical to this belief, while others believe transformation could include and improve conditions for them as well as youth. Also evident are the differing viewpoints on how best to improve youth outcomes and public safety. Some probation staff see this accomplished through accountability in the form of containment and punishment tools (like pepper spray and room confinement). Others see promise in a multipronged approach: the structure and discipline of a detention setting; collaboration with more systems and community-based service providers, especially in schools; deeper investments in front-end support to prevent youth's system involvement in the first place; and shrinking probation officers' roles overall.

Despite passionate and experienced people, the system of Probation has repeatedly been found to be ineffective, punitive and, at times, harmful in its very design and culture.

Foundational to the YJWG recommendations is the position that **funding and staffing to implement YJR should result from the downsizing, transformation and transfer of existing Probation functions and funds to DYD and**

**community alternatives** equipped with the needed scale, capacity, authority, autonomy and leadership to achieve improved outcomes. Currently, the Juvenile unit of the Probation Department has approximately 3,400 employees across four major domains—Administrative Services, Detention Services, Residential Treatment Services and Juvenile Field Services—expending approximately \$504 million annually to fund this work.

Department Unit	Budget	Positions
Juvenile Detention and Institution Services	\$195,630,000	1,363
Juvenile Institutions - Residential Treatment Services	\$162,738,000	993
Probation Field Services	\$106,790,000	731
Juvenile Administrative/Institutional Support	\$38,329,000	326
TOTALS	\$503,487,000	3,413

From 2006 to 2019, the number of youth under field and placement supervision by Probation decreased by 76% (from 19,475 to 4,618). Similarly, from 2006 to FY 2019/20, the average number of youth in juvenile halls decreased by 70% (from 1,723 to 519) and decreased in probation camps by 84% (from 1,715 to 274).<sup>xxx</sup>

While there have been steady reductions in the number of youth in Probation's custody and under supervision, commensurate reductions are not reflected in the department's budget and staffing levels. The YJWG concludes that **it is possible to phase out Juvenile Probation (over an estimated five years)** through attrition, elimination of vacant positions, transfer of some staff to adult probation, and reallo-

cation over phases of funding and appropriate positions to DYD for its staffing, infrastructure and comprehensive network of community-based support. Current probation officers could apply to transition into such positions, with training, professional development and staff wellbeing support from DYD to ensure a diversity of staffing that is demonstrably improved from the current system.

A breakdown of the data using Probation budget figures for FY 2019/20 suggest that the average annual cost to the County for juvenile detention is more than \$376,000 per youth; for camps is more than \$593,000 per youth; and for field supervision is more than \$23,000 per youth. The following are further workforce and

Department Unit	Budget	ADP in Juvenile Hall (FY 19/20)	Average Annual Cost per Youth
Juvenile Detention and Institution Services	\$195,630,000	519 youth	\$376,936

Department Unit	Budget	ADP in Camps (FY 19/20)	Average Annual Cost per Youth
Juvenile Institutions - Residential Treatment Services	\$162,738,000	274	\$593,934

Department Unit	Budget	ADP in Juvenile Hall (FY 19/20)	Average Annual Cost per Youth
Probation Field Services	\$106,790,000	4,618	\$23,125

budget implications of transferring responsibility over justice-involved youth to a new department:

- 1. Redefinition of the primary job and job qualifications of a Youth Development workforce, and development of that workforce to provide care, compassion and safety within a youth justice system.** A starting point for any effective worker supporting any youth is a desire and passion for working with youth. This sentiment was strongly echoed by many current probation staff as well as by system-involved youth who said that they wanted, yet did not receive, consistent care, attention, compassion, support, guidance or inspiration from probation officers. Youth, in particular, as well as many probation staff defined youth and staff safety as interconnected. They also defined safety in terms of the respect, care and inspiration that youth say they crave. In short, if youth feel cared for by staff, they feel more secure, safe and amenable to receiving support and services. If they feel safe, staff and community are also secure. Staff, then, are at the heart of establishing safety and security for youth and themselves, more than any physical restraints meant to control and contain youth. And staff were clear in their consistent ask that they not do their job alone, but be able to work with families, effective community groups and other youth-serving agencies in meeting the needs of youth.

As such, Los Angeles County needs to create or recalibrate the job description of a worker supporting a system-involved youth. With the job description as a starting point, the orientation and skills among many probation officers can be fundamentally ill-suited to the needs of youth in a justice system. For example, the current job descriptions of a detention services officer in juvenile hall includes the following duties: “supervises detained youth”; “maintains order and control of a unit and takes appropriate action in connection with rule infractions or other disturbances”; “maintains institutional security and takes

appropriate action to prevent escapes”; “supervises the movement of probation youth within and outside the facility”; “controls and restrains combative or emotionally disturbed probation youth”; and “observes and records the behavior of probation youth and confers with the supervisor about problematic probation youth.”

These job descriptions say nothing about caring for and motivating youth. Similarly, a field officer’s “essential job functions” leads with “defend[ing] oneself with the help of others, against an attacking probationer or other individual or restrains with the help of others, a resisting or fleeing probationer” and “restrain[ing]...juveniles for the purpose of arrest and/or detention.”

Despite the job descriptions reflecting little about the need to communicate, connect with and support youth, many probation officers cite those abilities as the most important contributors to success on the job. Notably, repeated calls by the Probation Commission, the Probation Reform and Implementation Team, Probation Governance Study and Kilpatrick implementation team to revisit and overhaul our understanding and description of a Juvenile Probation officer’s role and responsibilities have led to no such changes.

A Youth Development workforce must be defined, developed and resourced to support youth in and outside of the justice system. Across the spectrum of YJWG perspectives, a key shared belief was that staffing must comprise Credible Messengers, Peacebuilders and other types of intervention workers who, though they may not have the degrees and credentials typical for a probation department, can relate and have credibility with youth based on their similar lived experiences.

- 2. Reductions in probation workforce and budget, and reinvestment in a Youth Development workforce and labor transitions and support.** Without the investment in and provision of basic care in families, commu-

nities, schools and other systems, the probation officer is “expected to be all things,” as one officer put it. Ample evidence shows that the probation system is over-relied upon, compensates for gaps and failures elsewhere and, in particular, exacerbates racial inequities. Being a youth’s mentor and jailer creates fundamental contradictions in the identity of and relationship with a probation officer so that—as a matter of design—the probation system has proven itself flawed and unworkable.

Many probation officers and other stakeholders believe that we must find the care and support youth need *primarily outside of any justice system response*. These stakeholders strongly emphasize that we must shift investments from the probation system to address the root causes of justice system involvement, such as failed schooling, poverty and divestment from communities of color, in addition to supporting youth who come in contact with a reimagined model for youth justice. A central tenet of this reinvestment agenda is that continuing to fund Juvenile Probation in the same or increasing amounts, especially as fewer youth are under its supervision and custody, prevents adequate, comprehensive investment in an alternative vision. The low number of youth formally supervised or housed by probation create opportunities to redirect and better use probation funding to support and expand community alternatives. This opportunity to reallocate funds, especially for community-based diversion and reentry supports, has grown as the department further reduced its juvenile hall and camp populations in response to the County’s desire to limit Covid-19 infections in those facilities.

A reimagined workforce model must simultaneously reduce the workforce and budget of probation, while redirecting those funds and positions into a Youth Development infrastructure and workforce transitions. To this end, Los Angeles County should act immediately to:

- Create a labor support and transition planning process, including immediately sharing an inventory of vacant positions across County departments for current probation staff to consider applying for, and engagement opportunities to collaborate in developing the job of a new youth development workforce as functions transition to DYD and YDN.

The YJWG recommends that current functions carried out by the Juvenile Probation Unit transition to community alternatives through DYD over a period of five years. As key functions shift to DYD and ultimately to community alternatives, funding and, where appropriate, positions should also transition to DYD. Specifically, an initial phase of implementation should include transferring the current YDD infrastructure over to a new department, and the following functions should be eliminated, or begin to be eliminated, and incorporated into services offered by DYD:

1. **Probation Department’s citation and diversion programs (costing over an estimated \$3.5 million).** With the closing of the informal juvenile traffic court, responsibility for the adjudication of certain low-level infractions were transferred to the Probation Department. Additionally, youth with low-level offenses are informally supervised under the authority of Welfare and Institutions Code Section 654. The YJWG recommends youth charged with these infractions and low-level offenses be more effectively served through an immediate end to these programs and an expanded Countywide diversion plan to address youth needs and challenges through a Youth Development framework.
2. **Administration of the JJCC (costing about \$1 million) and its responsibility over JJCPA funds to a Youth Development Department.** JJCC’s framework for allocating funds is based upon a Youth Development framework, and its funding focuses on community-based support for Youth Development and diversion efforts through foundation, County and city reganting mechanisms.



For many years, Los Angeles County has scrutinized and attempted to reform JJCC operations and the spending plan for JJCPA dollars. In those efforts, the County considered a model akin to San Diego whereby a youth-focused entity administers the multistakeholder decision-making body and the development and oversight over a JJCPA spending plan. The JJCC and its spending plan are more appropriately housed within a Youth Development infrastructure.

3. **School-based Probation (costing at least \$4.4 million).** An estimated 90 probation officers are assigned to supervise youth on school campuses with the intent of supporting youth in their community. While research in 2018 indicated that School-Based Probation showed better results than field-based probation, the YJWG recommends that school-based supports be delivered through a new Youth Development department and network of CBOs staffed by Credible Messengers and Peacebuilders, disassociated from a compliance framework and working in close partnership with schools. The practice of School-Based Supervision is not aligned with best practices or Youth Development principles, runs the risk of stigmatization and further involvement in the justice system, and is inconsistent with broader work to promote positive school climate, educational equity and alternatives to punitive discipline and arrest.

**The following requires ongoing discussion and decisions during the next phase of planning through a labor support and transition sub-committee:**

1. **Developing and allocating funding for a new Youth Development workforce and labor transitions** within both County entities and CBOs to grow and sustain a network of community-based support. It will be critical to address problems of parity, equity and sustainability across public and private labor sectors. This planning should specifically consider and calculate:
  - **The size of the workforce needed in a new Youth Development Department.** For instance, the most conservative estimate of the number of staff needed could be approximately 1,000, taking into account current youth populations in custody (about 700) and under supervision (about 5,100); a very generous 1:1 staff to youth ratio in any housing setting (though best practices suggest a 1:8 ratio)<sup>xxxi</sup>; and a reasonable youth caseload of up to 20 per staff for providing community-rooted support. If the numbers of youth ideally decreased in the justice system, including any housing setting, the number of staff needed in DYD could be significantly lower.
  - **The significance of public sector jobs for communities of color.** It will be critical to envision how roles are assigned to County agency staff and community-based provider staff. Public sector jobs hold historical significance for Black communities who faced pronounced discrimination and exclusion in the private sector to secure good wages and better quality of life. Whereas public sector workers comprise 12% of all County workers, Black public sector workers comprise 22% of Black workers in the County. In other words, over 1 in 5 Black workers work in the public sector, compared to just under 1 in 8 of all workers work in the public sector. Moreover, the “protective services” industry is the third top public sector employer of Black workers in Los Angeles County. Therefore, this project, alongside the County’s Anti-Racism Initiative, must address the structural economic inequities BIPOC communities face, including workplace discrimination and exclusion, ensure ample opportunities for them to secure stable, unionized jobs and upward mobility outside of sectors that surveil and contain them.
2. **The increasing costs of detention** as youth populations have plummeted over recent years, especially in 2020 (due to Covid-19 pandemic measures), as well as the amount of cost-savings available to reallocate to DYD for diversion and reentry support in lieu of detention.

**3. Having sufficient staffing** at other County agencies designated as collaborating with DYD.

In subsequent phases, and after additional planning, other functions (and corresponding funding and, where appropriate, positions) should continue to be transferred to DYD.

**1. Reimagining labor engagement and support.** DYD must address the concerns heard in Listening Sessions with Probation staff and community-based service providers, especially regarding inclusion in systems reform efforts, staff cohesion, training and ongoing support to reduce burnout to improve wellbeing and resilience. Notably, about 70% of Probation staff survey participants described having “very high stress levels” as a result of their work, and nearly 64% reported their stress levels affecting their physical and mental health; only about 11% described training and support as very sufficient, while about 46% considered them insufficient. Many confessed in survey and Listening Session responses feeling powerless within a bureaucracy and that staff can become part of the problem of an ill-functioning system. Nonprofit, community-based, organizational staff underscored the importance of having better paid, sustainable positions, and also wanting more resources and training on RJ/TJ approaches and skills to better facilitate the healing and development of youth, address harms caused and ensure system accountability as well. A healthy culture and practice of a new Department of Youth Development must prioritize worker wellbeing and efficacy.

**2. Streamlined County and funding bureaucracies with fewer strings attached.** To facilitate Youth Justice Reimagined rooted in community-based support and Credible Messengers, a comprehensive youth development infrastructure must relax its staffing restrictions related to age and criminal background checks and hire more diverse staffing. It must also streamline and strengthen its requirements and ability

to efficiently and timely regrant to support and partner with CBOs, especially smaller service providers that have been unable to navigate or comply with the onerous application and reporting requirements of county government. More general operating, multiyear funds are needed for organizations such as for daily administration and infrastructure, allowing for flexibly accepting referrals and providing services, as well as eliminating fee-for-service contracts requiring CBOs to endure unpredictable cash flow and grant amounts.

**3. Philanthropic partnerships to support programming and regranting.** Philanthropy has played a critical role in youth justice reform and issues related to the wellbeing of children. Its ability to develop and implement new and innovative programming can serve the DYD’s efforts. Developing a partnership between DYD and the philanthropic community is critical and should serve to identify shared opportunities to improve the outcomes of youth and their families.

# Legal Questions and Implications of Youth Justice Reimagined

While generating ideas to reimagine and replace Juvenile Probation, the YJWG also documented the legal questions and implications posed by existing laws (state, local and administrative) and contracts. An ad hoc group comprising the consultant team, County Counsel, CEO-Labor Relations, CEO-Public Safety, CEO-Service Integration and CEO-Legislative Affairs met periodically to review and discuss questions identified by the YJWG.

It will be critical for Los Angeles County to further research and answer such questions to identify the changes needed to reassign any authorities or duties over justice-involved youth from Probation to new entities as well as to enable other components of YJR. Specifically, the County will need a detailed legal analysis that outlines local ordinance and state legislative changes to produce a legal roadmap for the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report. The County should also explore whether additional measures are needed to protect youth rights under a new system, including through comprehensive accountability mechanisms.

Below are specific legal issues identified by the YJWG and consultant team as requiring further research and answer by the County:

## 1. Duties and authorities of Chief Probation Officers and probation officers

Under state statutes, many duties are assigned to the chief probation officer of each county, including community supervision of youth under wardship jurisdiction of juvenile delinquency courts and the operation of juvenile halls and camps (see Government Code § 27771). Section 27773 of the Government Code also provides that the probation department “shall not be consolidated with any other office, nor shall the services provided by the chief probation officer be integrated with or reorganized

into any other office or department of the county.”

The County should consider whether legislative changes are needed to enable another department or community-based service providers to assume any of the functions described under section 27771.

## 2. Relations with Labor Bargaining Units

The County should research how a restructuring of probation can comport with any contractual requirements of employees, including notice, and confer provisions providing staff an opportunity to discuss the impacts of YJR on their work. The County should also identify the new positions and classifications needed to support the work of DYD and develop mechanisms to facilitate personnel transfers to a new agency or other agencies through ample transition, education and training support for workers desiring new job opportunities inside the County.

## 3. Existing and Alternative Youth Facilities

To implement alternatives to juvenile halls and camps, which are currently the sole responsibility of the Probation Chief, the County should research the discretion and options under existing law to create and administer different housing, housing management and staffing for justice-involved youth. The YJWG noted that varying models for the staffing, management and programming of residences already exist, including the repurposed Camp Gonzalez and Challenger projects, Short-Term Residential Treatment Programs (STRTPs) and Dorothy Kirby. For instance, 50% of the staffing and management of Kirby comprises workers from the Department of Mental Health, and STRTPs are run by community-based service providers licensed through the County and

State. Further research is needed to understand the requirements of existing laws and what is permitted in implementing a variety of residential models and security levels outside of juvenile halls and camps.

#### 4. Shared Decision-making Body

The YJWG has recommended creating YES Teams that influence decisions across the youth justice process, advocating for strong collaboration with, consideration of and influence by YES Teams in decision-making—from pre-arrest through disposition and periodic reviews of lengthier commitments. YES Teams have been imagined to be new bodies, different from existing Multidisciplinary Teams (like Children and Family Teams that address placement removals) that have presented challenges, including inclusivity, communication and who bears the cost of placements and services.

Though the recommendation leaves intact the ultimate decision-making authorities for arrest, prosecution and detention with the police, prosecution and courts, the County should confirm whether current law allows the creation of YES Teams; whether statutory changes could help formalize and support the collaboration and role of YES Teams in decision-making; how to ensure adherence to state laws imposing certain requirements for the detention of youth 14 years old or older and accused of certain felonies and use of a firearm; and mandatory referrals for prosecution (see WIC §§ 625.3 and 653.5).

#### 5. Data and Information collection and sharing

Creating cross-system collaboration to better serve justice-involved youth raises the need to ensure comprehensive data and information collection while protecting sensitive, private and potentially harmful information. At a minimum, the County should research and ensure protocols and practices for data collection and sharing that conform to existing laws and protections under health, juvenile justice, educa-

tion and welfare state and federal codes. To ensure more comprehensive collaboration as well as protections for youth, the County should further research and pursue measures to strengthen the protocols and laws that govern data collection and sharing for diversion as well as other phases of the justice process (e.g., processes by which data can be shared about previous referrals to diversion while protecting the confidentiality of youth statements made during service provision). As mentioned in the report, data policies should be developed in collaboration with youth, community, justice partners and other youth-serving systems.

#### 6. Duration of system-involvement—detention and on court-ordered supervision

The YJWG discussed the need to address current maximum confinement times defined by adult penal code terms, indeterminate lengths of stay in juvenile hall and camps, and extensive probation conditions and lengthy terms. The County should research what statutory changes are needed to limit court-ordered terms and durations as well as the benefits and drawbacks of pursuing such changes.

#### 7. Diversion eligibility

The YJWG identified a need to promote increased, equitable and individualized diversion. Ensuring that the less serious, first-time offenses of youth are diverted as a default; and establishing quality control measures to prohibit net-widening. These efforts call for removing barriers in policies and laws that prevent diversion of more serious WIC 707(b) cases. The County should explore any legislative amendments that promote diversion toward these ends.

#### 8. Administration and Reallocation of Funding

Reimagining youth probation and creating DYD would require sufficient resources for effective alternatives for system-involved youth. It is imperative for the County to

identify primary sources for funding the staffing, infrastructure and community-based services of YJR, and whether and how the Juvenile Probation budget may be reallocated to a new department as its functions are transferred over.

California's JJCPA, which earmarks approximately \$30 to 50 million annually to provide funding for juvenile justice programs, is allocated by statute through the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council, a multis-takeholder, decision-making body chaired by the Probation Chief or a designee. The County should also confirm that state law permits transferring those funds to a new entity, or creating a new co-chair or position of co-chair for the JJCC as was imagined in the early years after the JJCC was created in 2001.

## 9. Accountability mechanisms

Accountability and transparency through data, research, evaluation and information-sharing mechanisms are needed whether justice functions reside in government or in CBOs. Creating a comprehensive accountability mechanism over a department and network of CBOs requires additional analyses and recommendations on building upon and/or connecting to relevant oversight entities—whether created under state statute (like the JJCC), by County ordinance (like the new Probation Oversight Commission), by County motion (Youth Commissions) or administrative bodies (Youth Diversion and Development Advisory Committee).

The above includes recommendations that may require changes in State statutes. CEO-Legislative Affairs reports that seeking changes to State laws is a one-year to multiyear process that would require extensive collaboration with the State Legislature and statewide stakeholders, including other local governments, that would or could be impacted by statutory changes.

## Conclusion and Onward

Los Angeles County's motivation and commitment to achieving wellbeing for all its residents is self-evident. The YJWG sought to create a cultural shift toward collaborative tables of meaningful inclusion—youth voice, people with lived experience, County government and justice partners, researchers, academics, social justice advocates and community activists. The Board of Supervisors' establishment of the YJWG provided the vehicle for an approach and process that promoted power-sharing, agency and the design of Youth Justice Reimagined that represents a structural shift from punishment toward wellbeing and a future where all youth have the opportunity to thrive. It was a process that valued designing with, not for, people most impacted by the youth justice system.

The results are the framing and recommendations for Youth Justice Reimagined in this final report. Youth Justice Reimagined is founded on the Principles of Youth Development and Racial and Ethnic Equity. Youth Justice that looks to decentralized systems, investment in positive Youth Development, reducing the footprint of law enforcement, healing and restorative responses, and collaborative decision-making rooted in equity. Turning this vision into reality will have immediate and lasting impacts on the lives of youth and families, particularly BIPOC impacted by the youth justice system and communities of concentrated disinvestment.

To achieve Youth Justice Reimagined we recommend adopting the phased approach proposed in this report. In particular, and after careful consideration, we recommend establishing DYD to build upon the work of YDD to assume the transformed functions of Juvenile Probation over the course of five years. This approach considers recommendations that can be immediately implemented and those that require legislative, policy and/or budgetary changes. We encourage the Board to further employ a collaborative approach to engage needed

short- and long-term implementation planning to further the transformation.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history." The visions and dreams of youth and community leaders coupled with the experience of visionary County leaders have forged Youth Justice Reimagined. With the support of the Board of Supervisors, this moment, this vision of Youth Justice Reimagined is history in the making—altering the structures of harm, punishment and accountability to provide for safe, healthy and thriving communities for generations to come.



# Appendix: Subcommittee Recommendations

## Draft Recommendations and Areas for Further Exploration

### YJWG Subcommittee #1: Youth Development and Diversion

#### Section 1. Core Values for Youth Justice Reimagined

1. **Center racial equity** by using quantitative and qualitative data to address the root causes of system involvement, using a social justice approach to Youth Development, family engagement and community investment such that all youth and families have equitable opportunities to thrive and reach their full potential.
2. **A system that leads to improved outcomes for youth and community safety and wellbeing** requires a continuum of support that reduces the size and scope of the reimagined youth justice system while minimizing any unnecessary, inappropriate system or service intervention and while providing strengths-based, social-ecological responses focusing on repairing harm and building accountability through support and connection rather than punishment and isolation. This reimagined system should respond with compassion and prioritize healing, acknowledging that youth may not succeed the first or second or third time and an effective, equitable system must be grounded in Youth Development principles with understanding and forgiveness. This includes diverting as many youth possible from formal justice system involvement and into community-based RJ/TJ programs, significantly downsizing the reimagined youth justice system.
3. Reflecting evidence of approaches needed to support youth and communities, **integrate the core competencies of Youth Development in all youth-serving initiatives across the County** through cross-agency collaboration, shared learning and strategic investment:
  - a. **Health Competence.** Good current health status as well as knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that will ensure future health, including access to physical and mental health services, substance use services, emotional healing, nutrition, sports and recreation.
  - b. **Social Competence.** Skills for understanding and appreciation of self, culture, language and history as well as appreciation for others, including self-discipline and decision-making; being able to work and communicate with others; develop financial literacy; technological access and skills; parental skills; empathy for others and the ability to solve problems without domination, retribution or violence—restorative and transformative justice.
  - c. **Environmental Competence.** Skills for understanding our connection to and dependency on the natural environment and appreciation of environmental health, justice and sustainability. This also includes our built environment, environmental racism, and access to housing and resources oriented toward wellbeing and the related policies, practices and procedures that impact healthy development.
  - d. **Cognitive and Creative Competence.** Knowledge and ability to appreciate and participate in areas of healing-centered creative expression for all of the ways people experience their worlds, including access to quality education, critical thinking, critical pedagogy, analysis and problem solving; literacy, academic support, and college preparation; and self-expression through the arts.

- e. **Vocational Competence.** Understanding and skills of life planning and a diverse range of career choices, work options, work-life balance, life planning, and steps to act on those choices, including exploration of interests and gifts; job preparation, education, and training; seeking mentorship and support navigating career pathways; employment and career exploration; goal-setting and financial literacy.
  - f. **Leadership Competence.** Understanding and formation of personal values, morals and ethical decision-making, including participation in efforts that contribute to the greater good of our schools and communities through access to organizing and the political process.
4. **Support and grow a network of community-based youth-serving providers** through learning collaboratives and capacity-building, with a focus on areas of the County that need the most resources and support.
  5. **Prioritize transparency, trustworthiness and the accountability of systems** through true involvement of youth and community in program, policy, and budgetary decision-making with a focus on data and research infrastructure with support for participatory evaluation.

## **Section 2. Key Recommendations for Phase 1**

1. **Youth Development Infrastructure: Establish DYD** in order to provide the coordination, capacity-building, and funding for the full range of youth services needed to significantly shrink the size and scope of the youth justice system and build capacity among a growing network of CBOs and other youth-serving County Departments delivering services addressing core Youth Development competencies.
  - a. This Department must have the capacity and authority to **fully resource and invest in a comprehensive Youth Development Network (YDN)** needed to improve operations and outcomes of the youth justice system by implementing creative models for contracts and grants, research and data infrastructure, communication and collaboration with youth, community partners, and other agencies, while minimizing administrative and bureaucratic barriers to supportive and transparent partnership. In the long-term, the scale of the YDN would support thousands of youth workers in hundreds of organizations across the County, reflecting the number of communities and schools Countywide.
  - b. A key early role of the Department should be **sharing data and evidence of promising practices** with providers and other agencies to develop and advance standards of practice, including Countywide standards for Youth Development activities and services, youth diversion, restorative and transformative justice, youth reentry, peacebuilding and intervention.
  - c. Another key early role of the Department should be to **provide capacity-building support, including financial management and technical assistance** (e.g., connections to existing capacity-building initiatives and focused coaching models), to increase equitable access to and effective utilization of County resources.
  - d. The Department should develop a **framework for ensuring long-term accountability to youth, families and communities**, including measures of success, an active oversight structure and participatory decision-making processes centering youth leadership and involving youth-serving organizations.
  - e. **The Department should also practice restorative and transformative justice** and ensure staff have access to training on Youth Development, facilitation, and systems change to support an internal culture of healing and transformation with a designated position dedi-

cated to the wellness and professional development of staff, including intentional support for youth hired through paid apprenticeships and a growing Youth Development workforce.

- 2. Funding and Capacity-Building:** Immediately and dramatically **reduce resources dedicated to youth incarceration and supervision and divert them to DYD** to support a community-based continuum of care for Youth Development and reentry focusing on capacity-building for providers and identifying geographic and service areas needing additional investment and expansion (see Section 5A for additional Funding and Capacity-building elements to further explore).
  - a. Fund the initial phase of implementing this plan through reinvesting funds to match decreased youth incarceration.**
  - b. Collaborate with the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC)** to identify legislative or policy steps needed to transition the Council's leadership to DYD. The JJCC allocates state funding from the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) for "delinquency prevention" that should go to building community capacity to provide Youth Development services. It is crucial to Youth Justice Reimagined that fund allocation and oversight is provided by youth and youth service providers connected through the Department of Youth Development.
  - c. Connect DYD to a network of private foundations and establish a system to manage the flow of resources required to sustain ongoing public-private partnerships to streamline capacity-building support and resources out to the community-based network**, informed by the lessons learned from the Ready to Rise Initiative and Center for Strategic Partnerships; and the capacity-building efforts of the Department of Arts and Culture, Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, Department of Children and Family Services and other relevant initiatives.
  - d. Create and utilize a participatory budgeting process centering youth and community** in the Department of Youth Development's budgetary decisions.
- 3. Youth-Centered Decision-Making: Collaborate with the soon-to-be established Youth Commission** to engage youth in decision-making during the first phase of implementation (e.g., involving the Youth Commission in initial hiring and contract application review for the Department), co-design a long-term structure for youth leadership and decision-making (e.g., regional Youth Development Councils), and establish Countywide Youth Development priorities.
  - a. Youth will help develop the job description and make public recommendations for the new agency's director and other key positions**, including establishing minimum qualifications, with a preference for hiring people engaged in local, community-based Youth Development work and directly impacted by the juvenile justice system.
  - b. The Department will support, compensate, and empower youth to participate in participatory budgeting and research opportunities aligning with their capacity**, including designing a long-term structure for youth leadership and decision-making and Countywide Youth Development priorities.
  - c. In particular, this collaboration may focus on connecting with the Child Welfare system to provide opportunities for cross-training and coordination in aligning with Youth Development and equity.**
- 4. Transitioning Existing Youth Diversion and Development Infrastructure.** With the goal of transitioning all development and diversion work into DYD as soon as possible, immediately build

upon the existing Division of Youth Diversion and Development (YDD) infrastructure to quickly and fully expand and assess referrals for youth in lieu of suspension, expulsion, citation, and arrest Countywide as the functions of Probation's Citation Diversion Program and School-Based Probation are replaced with supportive Youth Development and diversion services.

- a. In collaboration with the Youth Commission, **hire additional staff—including system-impacted youth—focused on expanding pre-arrest diversion Countywide** and facilitating the transition of YDD into the broader scope of DYD.
  - b. Identify and expand resources, services, legal support and cross-sector collaboration needed for youth who experience violence and trauma, including youth involved in the child welfare system, to **prevent youth “crossing over” into the justice system**.
  - c. **Dramatically expand the use of diversion and decrease youth arrest Countywide by exploring opportunities to ensure rebuttable presumptive diversion for first-time misdemeanors and non-WIC 707(b) offenses**, recognizing the promising impact of YDD's initial programming but also the need to reduce limitations to diversion as an initial investment in community safety and wellness by exploring incentive structures for referring partners; improved communication and protections for youth data and rights; flexibility in contracting to allow providers to serve youth with different levels of need; improving transparency and accountability to youth, families and people who have been harmed; increasing coordination with other youth-serving systems and services; and resources for training and capacity-building.
  - d. Hire and establish an **Educational Partnerships Management team to collaborate** with CBOs to conduct outreach to schools and other youth-serving systems and identify opportunities to build capacity for community-based Youth Development and restorative practices, while developing an incentives and assessment structure with the goal of expanding diversion and development services to all school sites Countywide.
  - e. Hire and establish a **Strategic Partnerships and Planning team to support the YJWG consultant's ongoing implementation planning** and assessment until the new infrastructure needed to support YJR for youth justice has initial staff who can continue this work, ensuring directly impacted people and youth are on this team.
5. **Data and Evaluation.** Metrics and evaluation practices should be co-designed with partners from the YDN, youth and community leadership, and partners from the justice system and other youth-serving systems through a Data Infrastructure and Assessment advisory committee supported by an external consultant team with expertise in data infrastructure, assessment and protection; should reflect YJR's values of Youth Development and wellbeing (e.g., focused on strengths and resilience rather than deficit and risk); and should include comprehensive participatory and qualitative methods.
- a. **Data Infrastructure and Assessment decisions should be informed by youth leadership and feedback from community-based providers.** The DYD's Data Infrastructure and Assessment advisory committee should collaborate with the Youth Commission, Office of Violence Prevention, the Office of Child Protection, Division of Youth Diversion and Development, Chief Information Officer, other County initiatives focused on equity and prevention metrics, Alternatives to Incarceration initiative, and Bold Vision initiative to review proposed measures of success, identify metrics to guide decision-making and improvement, and identify opportunities to ensure that existing data are leveraged and shared where possible while maintaining strong protections for youth data.
  - b. **The Department should have a designated Research Director and team** to support Data Infrastructure and Assessment decisions.

- c. In its first phase, the Department will need to **build a comprehensive, well-protected and highly flexible, up-to-date data system** that is user-friendly, adaptable and able to facilitate transparency and innovation by providing data for comprehensive analysis and storytelling across the continuum of Youth Development and youth justice services, identifying opportunities to ensure that existing data are utilized and shared routinely, while maintaining strong protections for youth data through:
  - i. Regular evaluation of process and outcome measures.
  - ii. Public dashboards/infrastructure to share data back with partners, with a specific focus on sharing data about the number and types of cases referred for pre-arrest diversion, and critical data regarding youth in probation custody and supervision.
  - iii. Research/data briefs for other youth-serving agencies and initiatives.
  - iv. Clear and publicly available policies detailing the Department's data system and what it shares with community organizations, other County departments, and law enforcement agencies, with a preference for limiting information shared with law enforcement.
  - v. Recidivism should be clearly defined and evaluated through a racial and ethnic lens to hold systems and programs accountable for decision-making and outcomes.
  - vi. Law enforcement agencies will not keep or collect sensitive or confidential forms of data from youth and their families who are referred for diversion programs such as medical or health information.
- 6. **Youth Development Learning Collaborative.** Launch a Youth Development learning collaborative that can advance a shared set of standards for youth services, provide educational resources and curricula, training and coaching for existing youth-serving departments and programs.
  - a. This Learning Collaborative should be a space for shared learning and capacity-building between both County and community partners, including CBOs providing Youth Development, diversion, intervention or reentry services, participating school sites and districts and all youth-serving County Departments.
  - b. The Learning Collaborative will also be a space of coordination and co-design, helping the Department develop a comprehensive, Countywide vision and implementation plan for Youth Development.
  - c. This should also be a space to coordinate evaluations and research projects aligned with Learning Collaborative priorities across County Departments, including requesting and sharing records and information, investigating barriers and grievances and reporting data and progress on key Youth Development indicators.
  - d. As this network grows, members of the learning collaborative will participate in YJR's multi-disciplinary teams.
- 7. Connect with existing and in-process efforts throughout the County to invest in peacebuilding, violence intervention and reentry services and resources as soon as possible (see peacebuilding and reentry recommendations in Phase 2 and 3).
  - a. Collaborate with the Office of Violence Prevention and GRYD to explore strategies to build a County workforce of Peacebuilders and Credible Messengers to fund at least 500 Peacebuilders and Credible Messengers employed by CBOs and capacity-building support from the Department.



## Section 2. Key Recommendations for Phases 2 and 3

1. Support an initial cohort of **24-hour crisis response** connected to YCCs across the County that provide resources and support to youth in their communities and operate as spaces of connection and coordination for other youth-serving systems, providing real-time alternatives to arrest while also responding to traumatic events in the community to provide support for youth who may have experienced or witnessed violence (e.g., partnerships with schools, co-located services, regular restorative and transformative justice and community-building circles, in-house MDTs).
2. **Establish funding/incentive structures for schools** and other agencies to **hire** Youth Development workers and **Credible Messengers** and provide ongoing training and capacity-building to youth-serving agencies, including CBOs and County Departments such as the Department of Mental Health and Department of Children and Family Services. This support should include a focus on violence prevention and intervention, RJ/TJ, mental health and trauma-responsive care and Youth Development.
3. **Develop strategies at the County and State level for reallocation** of resources previously dedicated to punitive approaches; support and expand community-based Youth Development and restorative practices that improve outcomes and increase public safety.
4. Continue to **expand Youth Development training and coaching** structures to support a growing workforce trained in Youth Development and restorative practices.
  - a. Launch training and education process for justice system staff who want to transition to the growing Youth Development workforce.
  - b. Invest in a workforce pipeline that trains formerly incarcerated and system-involved youth to place them in jobs with youth-serving organizations across the County.
  - c. Build a comprehensive youth employment structure to support youth in attaining jobs.
5. **Peacebuilding and Crisis Response.** Coordinate with the County Office of Violence Prevention, GRYD, validated violence prevention professionals and community partners to **advance a Countywide violence intervention infrastructure** and strategy that employs Credible Messengers to advance community-driven peacebuilding at the neighborhood level to reduce violence, engage youth and families in wraparound supportive case management services, promote school and park safety via safe passage and campus safety programs, and ensure that gang-impacted youth and communities are prioritized in Youth Development efforts.
  - a. Develop policies and programs to **support Credible Messengers**, including validated certification training and career pathways, a leadership role at decision-making tables, support for healing and self-care; connect services and initiatives that address root causes of violence; and coordinate across jurisdictions.
  - b. **Engage practitioners and community members most impacted by violence at decision-making** and policy tables to define what peacebuilding and public safety means to them and ensure that recommendations are translatable into practice and are replicable.
  - c. DYD will identify resources and staff needed to **support alternatives to punitive school discipline and arrest** so that schools are well-supported and can commit to removing probation officers/law enforcement from schools and replacing them with local restorative/



transformative justice practitioners and Peacebuilders/community intervention workers funded by DYD.

6. **Reentry Support and Services.** DYD should act as a backbone to **coordinate, resource, enhance and support reentry services** to all youth exiting detention in the County. The Department should support a network of community-based reentry providers that build long-term relationships with youth while they are in detention facilities and long after their release so they can support youth throughout their reentry journey.
  - a. Reentry services should be largely **staffed by people who themselves have had experience in the juvenile/criminal justice system**, to act as navigators who youth can relate to.
  - b. Reentry services should be **included as part of the 24-hour youth centers** to be opened Countywide in neighborhoods with the highest levels of justice system involvement. The Department should support providers in accessing space in other areas of high need, if youth centers are not present. The Department and other County actors should help promote these centers so community members are aware of them.
  - c. The Department should play a strong role in workforce development to support **successful reentry in two ways: 1) build partnerships with employers** in growing sectors with living-wage jobs such as tech (and to partner with tech for free technology), entertainment industry and the trades to help **train and place reentering youth in good jobs**; and 2) **invest in the development** (via scholarships, training, job placement, etc.) **of formerly incarcerated youth** to become reentry navigators and Youth Development/community health workers, for a comprehensive workforce that youth can relate to and draw inspiration from.
  - d. The Department should provide **flexible funding and resources to providers** so they are resourced to 1) work with youth in detention settings to build relationships and start support early on; 2) maintain long-term relationships with youth in their reentry process, understanding that it takes time and that people will make mistakes as part of the process; 3) receive referrals to provide services to youth within reentering youth's network who are not necessarily justice-involved (i.e., receive referrals for friends and family); and 4) provide needed resources such as housing, technology, clothing, transportation, etc. (see Section 5A). Mechanisms such as a public-private partnership should be explored to expedite funding to CBOs and create a supportive environment for capacity-building and a community of learning, as mentioned above.
7. Continue to work with community, County and state leadership to **comprehensively redesign other aspects of the administration of justice** that must be changed to achieve equitable community wellbeing. Additional priority elements to be further explored and implemented include:
  - a. Funding and Capacity-Building structures to prioritize equity in solicitation and awards, ensuring that funding is accessible to smaller organizations run and led by people of color, people with justice system involvement and those without 501(c)3 status. DYD should allow providers to inform contract requirements, possibly through a partnership with a youth leadership body that reviews and changes contracting requirements that are best for providers.
  - b. Youth Leadership and Decision-Making model developed in collaboration with the Youth Commission where youth and community representatives throughout the County develop localized processes to gather input from their communities in evaluating local programs, assessing/determining youth and community needs and making budgetary and policy decisions (informed by the SPA Council model).

- c. Policies and programs to ensure that youth have access to jobs and paid apprenticeships in DYD and YDN and that youth are not excluded based solely on their legal history. DYD should allocate at least 10% of its budget to these career development programs.

#### **Section 4. Measures of Success**

Data collected by DYD should be subject to a regular equity analysis examining the demographics of youth referred for diversion and type of programs they engage in with providers (e.g., diversion or Youth Development services) to ensure equitable access without net-widening as well as the successful completion of appropriate and reasonable program requirements.

For all categories, overall objectives and goals should be defined and articulated (especially as they related to Youth Development/wellbeing), and measures should be directly tied to goals, including these examples:

1. For the New County Department: Accountability and Transparency
  - a. # and % of dollars invested in CBOs
  - b. # and % of contracts and/or grants funding smaller, grassroots CBOs led and run by people of color and people with justice system experience
  - c. Measures of accessibility and satisfaction with contracts, grants and capacity-building
  - d. # and type and quality of partnerships (including schools and law enforcement agencies)
  - e. # and type of workers trained in Youth Development theory and practice, including # and % of people trained and employed who are justice system-impacted
  - f. # and type of workers trained in restorative practices
  - g. Measures of trust and satisfaction by providers, partners and communities
  - h. Measures of collaborative decision-making
  - i. Measures of community safety (e.g., community/street level dynamics and mobilize resources for crisis interventions)
  - j. Measures of collaboration, coordination and impact of guidance for other youth-serving agencies
  - k. #, characteristics and experiences of youth who are diverted, arrested, detained and incarcerated, including demographic information, incident information, duration of delays or detention/incarceration, referrals to supportive services and any exit interview or outcomes information
  - l. In the long term, reduction in diversion and increase in Youth Development
2. For Community-Based Providers: Qualifications and Requirements for Funding
  - a. General Measures:
    - i. # and types of youth served
    - ii. Impact on youth served, quantitative and/or qualitative

- iii. At least two years' experience serving youth in community of focus
- iv. Familiarity with theories of holistic, social justice Youth Development
- v. Demonstrated ability to connect youth with at least one Youth Development competency, either in-house or in partnership
- vi. Staff who are representative of community of focus/local hiring
- b. Additional Measures for Providers of Secure and/or Non-secure Housing:
  - i. At least one year of experience providing housing services or participating in a capacity-building program
  - ii. Demonstrated ability to provide progress updates to the Juvenile Court
  - iii. Demonstrated ability to implement strong safety plan
- 3. For Youth and Families: Outcomes and Impact
  - a. Physical and mental wellbeing
  - b. Economic and environmental wellbeing
  - c. Connection to supportive services
    - i. For youth
    - ii. For families
  - d. Social support and community connectedness
  - e. School and vocational engagement
    - i. Job training programs
    - ii. Employment
    - iii. Education-specific outcomes (such as high school diploma, all levels of higher ed, defined by youth and families)
  - f. # and type of connections with systems (including community, schools, health, child welfare and law enforcement)
  - g. Future arrests, petitions filed, and petitions sustained (recidivism should be clearly defined and evaluated from a lens of systems and program accountability versus individualized accountability for the youth)
  - h. Agency and involvement in decision-making
    - i. Measures of healing
    - j. Measures of hope
    - k. Sense of safety in their community (or at home)
- 4. For law enforcement Agencies: Incentives for Equitable Improvement, quarterly/public to DYD (Phase 1)

- a. # and % referrals to diversion pre- and post-booking
- b. Proportion of referrals by age, gender, race/ethnicity, location of arrest (zip code and type of location?) compared to arrests
- c. # and type of eligible arrests not referred to diversion by alleged offense type
- d. Reasons for non-referral
- e. # of law enforcement partnerships and sustainable partnership agreements—referring to the total number of law enforcement agencies who are actively participating in partnerships/collaborations with dept. (for larger agencies, breakdown by region/station).
- f. Law enforcement agencies should not keep or collect sensitive or confidential forms of data from youth and their families referred for diversion programs such as medical or health information.

## YJWG Subcommittee #2: Youth Formally Processed in the Legal System

### Section 1. Key Considerations

1. For the small number of youth thrust into the legal system, enhance and/or eliminate responses, structures and policies experienced by those:
  - a. Arrested by law enforcement
  - b. Going through the legal court process
  - c. Declared a ward of the court and/or adjudicated on probation
  - d. Supervised by Probation

### Section 2. Core Values for Youth Justice Reimagined

1. Principles of Youth Development are the foundational principles for our charge to design a health-focused and care-first youth justice system. These principles include **Health Competence; Social Competence; Cognitive and Creative Competence; Vocational Competence; and Leadership Competence**, all embedded in equity and justice.
2. The fundamental and initial change that must happen, across systems and communities, is how justice is defined. Currently, the terms “justice” and “injustice” are generally contained within the dichotomy of “following the law” vs. “breaking the law.” It is from this basic dichotomy, shaped by white supremacy values, that the current racist and punitive “justice” systems emerge (e.g., law enforcement, probation, prosecution, incarceration and parole).
3. The paradigm shift that we should focus on before developing new processes/policies and procedures for a youth justice system is seeing injustice not as illegality or a legal affront on the State but as harm to oneself and others; and justice not as punishment for those that break laws, but as healing and support in equal measure for those that have caused harm and those that have been harmed, understanding that often times, many people may coexist simultaneously in both realities.
4. The creation of a new YJR must be based on Youth Development principles, not fear of worst-case scenarios. It must resist the culture of fear that currently exists, which prohibits institutional actors from taking a “chance” on youth. Youth Development principles as the foundation for the provision of services should not be limited to Probation but include to all sectors involved the administration of legal procedures and the provision of human services.
5. The design and development of YJR must acknowledge and address structural racism on the lives of Black and Brown people and white supremacist ideology; and the need to create specific processes, workforce descriptions and accountability structures working to mitigate and ultimately eliminate these existing forces. Those forces additionally include power, privilege, authority and suppression. This approach is inclusive of all sectors (e.g., schools, health/mental health, social services, etc.) that touch upon the lives of youth and families.

## **Section 3. Key Recommendations**

### **1. Establish YES Teams**

- a. YES Teams focus on providing healing, repairing and support** in equal measure to those that have caused harm and those that have been harmed—as a paradigm shift from a system of punishment, suppression and control. YES Teams are youth and community-centered and guided by principles and values established by the team. The functions of YES Teams will vary and work from a Collaborative/Collective Decision-Making model with relevant system stakeholders along the legal continuum. Collaborative decision-making input may include but are not limited to:
  - i. First responder along with and/or in lieu of law enforcement
  - ii. Team support for the person who has harmed, a youth's Pod
  - iii. Team support for the person or entity experiencing the harm
  - iv. Providing healing, RJ/TJ responses to the person harmed and complainant
  - v. Reentry planning upon entry to the facility, staff secure or otherwise
  - vi. Filing decisions
  - vii. Court disposition planning
  - viii. Reporting to the court, status reports, etc.
- b. YES Teams should be led by organizations that have made the culture shifts that operate within and embody the principles of Youth Development and restorative responses.** The workforce should be trained by those who have the experience in this culture shift. Probation staff could apply for these newly created positions that reflect the shift in culture and paradigm to public safety.

### **2. Confidentiality**

- a.** Confidentiality agreements will be enhanced and/or developed to apply along the legal continuum to ensure decisions are informed by youth/family voice and responses are based on Youth Development principles. This includes the development and implementation of restorative/transformational support plans; diversion; the development of mitigation, disposition and status reports.
- b.** Develop legislation providing for mandatory reciprocity of confidential agreements across all counties in California.

### **3. Secure Placement**

- a.** Develop an asset-based/culturally responsive approach to assist in objectively screening for admission to the facility, staff secure or otherwise.
- b.** Identify and establish opportunities to maintain or further reduce the decreased population of incarcerated youth, including assessment of bench warrants, technical probation violations, misdemeanors and all offenses eligible for diversion under state law.



- c. Develop metrics of accountability, including data systems to track outcomes for detention and other less-restrictive alternatives to detention to guide continued improvements.
- d. Any attempts by the bench to order the detention of a youth for violation of an alternative to detention will be referred to the MDT intake process.

#### **4. Filing of Petition/Charges**

- a. Establish a “Collaborative Referral Team” to work collaboratively with Probation (initial phases) to make the decision as to which discretionary referral cases are sent to the prosecutor. In the final phase, the “sorting/referral” team would be a subset of the YES Team, including RJ practitioners, all utilizing a lens of racial/ethnic social justice.
- b. Collaboratively plan for the referral to diversion cases that fall outside of 707(b), inclusive of misdemeanors and felonies.
- c. Actively work to make statutory changes that eliminate mandatory filing for 707(b) charges.
- d. Develop a Collaborative Review Team process that includes community representatives from impacted communities partnering with the District Attorney to provide input for filing decisions (initial phases). In the final phase, the Collaborative Review Team would be the YES Team. The Collaborative Review Team/YES Team will develop guiding principles to inform charges that rely on the Youth Development principles and of the least “restrictive charge.” For instance, if the charge is a wobbler, it will not be charged at the higher level, (e.g., felony over misdemeanor). Justification will be provided as to why the particular level of charge is filed. This includes whether the youth’s “needs” influenced the level of charges and an explanation as to all efforts made to meet those needs in a different way.
- e. Institute a mitigating bias system that redacts the race of the parties involved in the incident, scrubs the names of officers, witnesses and suspects, along with locations and neighborhoods that could suggest a person’s race.

#### **5. Court Process**

- a. Conduct a case processing assessment to inform strategies to reduce unnecessary delay through the court legal process. Move to implement reforms as informed by the assessment.
- b. As the case proceeds through the legal process, develop metrics of accountability ensuring that off-ramps back to the community are considered throughout the continuum.
- c. All court hearings are scheduled during times convenient for working families so as not to interfere with school attendance. Scheduling will include weekends and evenings.
- d. All hearings include a component on conditions of incarceration. Additionally, youth, through their attorney, can at any time request hearings on conditions of confinement. The burden is on the defense attorney to collect the info and ask on the behalf of youth; the objective is to minimize unfiltered information going to court directly from the youth.
- e. Physical space of courthouse/rooms are changed to adhere to Youth Development principles and cultural responsiveness. Resources include Designing Justice + Designing Spaces.

- f. Eliminate the use of handcuffs and shackling in transport and in court; eliminate the use of transportation in vans that are windowless/or in vehicles that dehumanize the youth's character to the public while being driven. Regular vehicles (vehicles you and I drive) are utilized for transportation. No detention/correctional letters on the transportation vehicles; allow for youth's support person of choice to accompany the youth in the vehicle; eliminate use of detention/correctional clothing for youth detained while going through the court process.
- g. Increase collaborative, non-adversarial processes in all courtrooms where diversion/alternate sentencing occurs, to enable better outcomes that are trauma-informed and respect individual care and rights.
- h. Improve and expand return-to-court support services to reduce failures to appear.
- i. Disposition Plans are developed in lieu of the Pre-plea report. The development of disposition plans is led by the youth or advocate of their choosing in partnership with their MDT/ Pod. Staff defender offices with social workers/mitigation specialists will work with the youth-led team developing the disposition plan.
- j. Status reports to the court are prepared by the youth's YES Team. The YES Team works with the defense attorney to present the progress report to the court. This function lives in the community hub/youth center.
- k. Conditions imposed by the court are tailored to the incident and/or needs of the youth.
- l. Explore opportunities and barriers to limiting court/probation conditions to six months with safety mechanisms that prohibit methods to circumvent the letter and intent of the legislation.

## **6. Community-rooted Support**

- a. Enhance, invest in and/or build capacity for alternatives to detention modeled on Youth Development principles and restoration that shift from the paradigm of punishment and control.
- b. The Youth Development Department will replace Field Supervision with community-rooted support. DYD will focus on youth mentoring and funding of prepared and well-equipped youth mentors to work with youth. Community-rooted support will be based on Youth Development principles; responsive and compassionate to communities of color; culturally and linguistically responsive; and rooted in social and transformative justice.
- c. Assess whether the Community Detention Program should be continued.
- d. The YES Team makes the referral for services to meet conditions of court, as informed and led by the youth-led disposition plan. The youth's YES Team ensures follow-through and coordinates needed support.
- e. The 24-hour Youth and Community Center has the authority to contract the services provided to youth. The principles for services and "supervision" are rooted in positive Youth Development, not in custody, suppression and control. Contracts will be made in line with CBOs that provide services aligned with principles of Youth Development and adolescent brain development and behavior; there will be no reject policies; indicators of success and outcomes are informed by the youth-led care and/or disposition plan; success will not be

defined as or conditioned upon “compliance or failure.” The youth will be stepped up or down as needed without needing the court’s approval or the need to report “non-compliance.”

- f. Immunity for youth is covered regarding statements made while in programming and while meeting conditions of the court.
- g. After the end of the conditions period, the youth will have continued access to services.
- h. There are CBOs currently embodying Youth Development and racial equity principles agreed upon by the YJWG. The workforce should be led, trained and organized by these organizations. A new staff classification, led by CBOs, would be created, and those best positioned to connect with, influence and mentor youth in the justice system should be considered.
- i. Replicate DC’s Department of Youth and Rehabilitative Services (DYRS) Credible Messenger program for youth on Community Supervision. Until legal challenges can be overcome, Probation will contract with CBOs who will hire Credible Messengers to partner with Probation to fulfill Community Supervision Components of engagement should include social media/connectivity, arts, education and job development.

## **7. Additional Recommendations**

- a. **Establish a cross-sector collaborative** that includes law enforcement, District Attorney, judges, schools, public/mental health and child services to implement policy changes toward comprehensive transformation, greater accountability, and equity in the administration of justice and provision of human services.

## **YJWG Subcommittee #3: Addressing Needs for Alternatives to Detention, Placement and Incarceration**

### **Section 1. Key Considerations**

- 1. Reduce the number of youth impacted by detention, placement and incarceration**
  - a. Identify strategies grounded in Youth Development principles to further reduce use of detention, placement and incarceration.
- 2. Pre-Adjudication Detention**
  - a. Assess the current population of youth securely detained pre-adjudication.
  - b. Identify an equitable decision-making process for the use of pre-adjudication confinement for a limited number of youth who are unable to return to their home or community pre-adjudication.
- 3. Post-Disposition Removal from Home**
  - a. Assess the current population of court ordered dispositions that currently result in a youth's removal from their home or community, including suitable placements, juvenile halls and camps.
  - b. Identify an equitable decision-making process for the use of out-of-home placements (non-secure and secure) for a limited number of youth who are unable to return home or community pre-adjudication.
- 4. Effective, Healing-Centered and Trauma-Informed Facilities**
  - a. Identify effective, healing-centered and trauma-informed out-of-home placements (secure and staff secure) for the small population of youth unable to return home pre-adjudication and post-disposition.

### **Section 2. Core Values for Youth Justice Reimagined**

- 1. Avoid system involvement** (both dependency and justice) whenever possible.
- 2. Avoid removing youth from their homes whenever possible.** Detention should be a last resort and for the shortest duration possible only to protect the youth and community.
- 3. Promote and expand youth development support** for both youth and families across a continuum of responses, including in any detention or out-of-home setting, as well as in and outside of dependency and justice systems to respond to harms.
- 4. Downsize the scope and role of the justice system.**
- 5. Close institutions and replace them with safe and secure healing centers.**
- 6. Transition functions of the justice system out of the Probation Department** in order for all other change to be meaningful.
- 7. Improve data collection/sharing** as well as protections, evaluation, training and all-around accountability.

8. **Engage youth and families at every stage of decision-making.**
9. **Capitalize on existing assets.** Improve coordination and collaboration across systems to better utilize existing, effective resources and efforts, especially community-based providers.
10. **Utilize a Youth Development framework.** Principles of Youth Development are the foundational principles for our charge to design a health focused care-first youth justice system. All components of a new model cultivate the core competencies of Youth Development from prevention/pre-police contact through disposition and reentry. These competencies include: **Health Competence; Social Competence; Environmental Competence; Cognitive and Creative Competence; Vocational Competence and Leadership Competence.**

### Section 3. Key Implications of Recommendations

1. Justice must be redefined through a restorative and transformative justice framework (see Subcommittee #2 definitions on justice and restorative and transformative practices).
2. Safety and security must be redefined, incorporating public health and healing of those who harmed and were harmed.
3. The justice process is informed by collaborative and inclusive input at every stage.
4. Many fewer youth are in out-of-home settings; many more are at home and in the community with the appropriate community-based Youth Development support.
5. A continuum of secure and staff-secure facilities will operate within a Youth Development framework and will exist as alternatives to juvenile halls, camps and other forms of youth incarceration.
6. Smaller, home-like community-based housing alternatives are funded and built.
  - a. Most housing alternatives are “staff secure” and defined as:
    - i. A “facility that maintains stricter security measures, such as higher staff to unaccompanied alien children ratio for supervision, than a shelter in order to control disruptive behavior and to prevent escape.”
    - ii. A residential setting “that provides treatment in a safe environment with an atmosphere of mutual respect between staff and residents without traditional obstacles to prevent escape. Traditional barriers include locked doors, barbed wire, electric gates. In a staff secure facility staff become the deterrent to escape by having an...approved plan for positioning themselves in such a way that residents are prevented from escaping.”
    - iii. A “non-architecturally secure residential facility with awake staff twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week.”
7. Juvenile halls and camps will close as alternatives for current hall and camp populations are built, strengthened and expanded.
8. Evaluation and a comprehensive accountability mechanism, which centers community leaders, is built into the design and implementation of YJR.

## **Section 4. Key Recommendations**

- 1. Adopt the core principles and ideas of the LA Model** to be implemented in a youth development system as a minimal baseline.

The vision of the LA Model was “supportive and collaborative learning environments where youth develop interpersonal, educational, career technical and life skills; create healthy and supportive relationships with adults and peers; and discover their true potential. A culture of healing and thriving is nurtured, focusing on positive community reintegration and forged through a safe, open, and holistic partnership involving all staff, families, and communities.”

The County began to implement the LA Model at Campus Kilpatrick, but Campus Kilpatrick itself does not represent and is not synonymous with the LA Model. Nor does the LA Model presume that the probation system operates it. In fact, there has been broad critique that the LA model was never fully or effectively implemented at Campus Kilpatrick for a range of reasons, including varying levels of buy-in and resistance among leadership and staff; challenges in implementing and giving access to community-based programming; and a fire in November 2018 that forced the relocation of all staff and youth to the Challenger camp site in Lancaster that is not designed to facilitate any version of the LA Model. Though there were failures of implementation that should guide the design of YJR, the Subcommittee agreed that the extensive recommendations of the LA Model—developed by over 100 stakeholders—should not be duplicated in the YJWG scope of work.

The Subcommittee affirmed the core principles of the LA Model, which describe a transformed system based on a “culture of care” and therapeutic environment focused on small residential hubs, education and community-based supports. Responses respect culture, family and community. The LA Model imagines recruiting staff from different training backgrounds (youth and community development, jobs development, arts, recreation and social work) to provide therapeutic support and create opportunities for youth to succeed, including in school and careers.

- a. 10 core principles of the LA Model that should be kept**, excerpted directly from the LA Model and noting key exceptions that would apply to recommendations from Subcommittee #3:
  - i.** Multidisciplinary team planning occurs with collaboration across agencies and at all levels.
  - ii.** Programming is engaging and meaningful for youth and staff with a focus on skill-building, mental health, healing, and personal growth. It consistently includes families and community members as critical partners.
  - iii.** Families are engaged early and often, treated with respect and seen as partners in the treatment and aftercare process.
  - iv.** Aftercare and reentry are the core drivers of case planning from the day of arrival, in order to build a continuum of care and to support stability when back in the community.
  - v.** The small-group care model includes cohort consistency, a focus on relationships, homelike living spaces and shared responsibility for daily activities, self-care and ordinary maintenance of shared spaces.



- vi. Safety, both psychological and physical, is a priority for staff and youth and is promoted through a variety of positive mechanisms integrated into daily interactions and activities.
  - vii. Academic achievement and engagement are critical to each youth's program, and input from education providers is a fundamental element of case and reentry planning.
  - viii. Probation and all other staff are mentors and are consistently integrated into program delivery. Support for staff mental health and wellness is provided as an integral component of the LA Model. **[\*Note that in the transformed system, shifting responsibility to a Youth Development system, probation officers would be replaced by Youth Development staff.]**
  - ix. Approach to programming is individualized, strengths-based and developmentally-appropriate, meeting youth where they are in the process of change and focusing on empowerment, problem-solving and the promotion of protective factors.
  - x. Data is continuously collected and analyzed to drive decision-making, guide case planning, support continuous improvement and evaluate implementation and effectiveness of activities/programming.
- b. Six components for success**, excerpted directly from the LA Model and noting key exceptions that would apply to recommendations from Subcommittee #3:
- i. The Juvenile Courts and stakeholders, including judges, District Attorneys and Juvenile Defenders, must be trained on the LA Model and its goals in rehabilitating youth. These stakeholders should be invested in the model so that they can be held accountable for maintaining its mission once it has been formalized and implemented.
  - ii. Prospective employees will have access to this document, as well as orientations and training, to have a baseline understanding of the LA Model and the expectations for staff.
  - iii. Budgeting for programming will contemplate the long-term cost savings of effective intervention.
  - iv. CBOs and partnerships, which can often provide high-quality services at a reduced cost, must be recognized and incorporated.
  - v. The Probation Chief, Superintendent of the Office of Education, Board of Supervisors, and other political stakeholders must endorse and advocate for the LA Model. The success of the model relies on ongoing public support. **[\*Note that in a transformed system, shifting responsibility to a Youth Development system, the Probation Chief would not be implicated here.]**
  - vi. As part of their continued involvement, experts and stakeholders from the subcommittees will provide consultation and feedback, including guidance in the selection and evaluation of providers.
- c. The additional recommendations of the LA Model are well-documented in the Culture of Care report. The following recommendations avoid duplicating any of those detailed recommendations and are based on two conclusions:**
- i. The design and implementation of the LA Model should be more transformative and operated outside of probation.

- ii. Comprehensive evaluation and accountability mechanisms are needed before, during and after implementation of any model.
- 2. Fund the establishment and repurposing of smaller, home-like community-based detention housing alternatives** to juvenile hall and camps with the following considerations.
- a. Home-like settings.** Out-of-home placements, whether pre-adjudication or post-disposition, should be family-based settings (e.g., relative, a nonrelative extended family member, and foster care placements) whenever possible, or else as home-like as possible.
    - i. Physical plant and geography are key. It is difficult or impossible to implement a small group model at any of the current facilities. For instance, the model cannot be implemented at a facility like Challenger, which is antithetical to many of the components of the model.
    - ii. The alternative housing should be embedded in communities. Having a facility far from a youth's community makes it more difficult to engage community support and families.
    - iii. The locations should not be stigmatizing. Those who have worked with youth as well as the youth themselves discussed the need or benefit for some youth to be out of their home and neighborhood environments. The model should account for and support youth electing to reside in a community environment that may be more distant from their home, while working to support reentry into their home and communities all along the way.
  - b. Security.** These alternatives should include a range of security levels from more physically secure and restricted to "staff-secured" to protect both safety within and outside of the alternative housing.
    - i. All alternatives must be built or adapted to: 1) minimize the feeling of institutionalization and the harmful impacts of institutionalization and removal from home, and 2) weigh the needs of youth and public safety.
    - i. Physically secure facilities should use secure measures that are less stigmatizing and as "hidden" or "invisible" as possible.
    - ii. Youth can be transferred from a higher to lower security home through demonstration of progress and achievement based on the court's approval. At higher security homes, youth should be able to work, go to school or visit family outside of the home with supervision as part of their reentry plan.
    - iii. Staffing backgrounds and approaches are an essential part of security. When staff help youth feel more safe and secure, the environment overall is safer and more secure for everyone. Youth feel more safe and secure when they feel cared about, respected and inspired to learn and grow.
    - iv. The number of more secure versus staff secure homes to suit the needs and number of youth in Los Angeles County's youth justice system requires further assessments and discussions.
  - c. Modifications to Short-term Residential Treatment Programs (STRTPS).** It was an important tenet of the YJWG to consider existing housing options that focused more on therapeutic programming, education, employment and other support. Based on the Subcommittee's discussion, additional consultations, a survey of select STRTPS and a review of other studies and literature, it is recommended that:

- i. STRTPs serve as suitable placements for youth adjudicated in delinquency court and have traditionally served youth adjudicated in a range of offenses. Though STRTPs were intended to serve the highest need youth, whether through the foster or justice system or both, STRTPs are not currently a viable alternative to juvenile halls, camps or DJJ. STRTPs that represent serving youth who have higher needs and risks also indicate that they do not accept youth who present “violent or aggressive behaviors, set fires, have gang qualifications” or otherwise post “significant security issues.” For justice-involved youth that STRTPs have accepted, additional reforms are needed to better serve them and ensure that STRTP practices do not contribute to deeper involvement in the justice system.
  - ii. STRTPs could possibly be reconfigured to serve higher needs youth in the justice system and become an alternative to juvenile halls, camps and DJJ through:
    - 1. Smaller numbers of youth at a home.
    - 2. A smaller staff-to-youth ratio such as 1:1.
    - 3. More effective and specialized programming, including for substance use.
    - 4. Increasing staff who have lived, first-hand experience relatable to youth in the justice system.
    - 5. Greater collaboration with other support systems, including CBOs, health and education.
  - iii. Accountability at the state and local levels over STRTPs for all justice-involved youth is weak and must be strengthened.
- d. Repurposing Closed Camps.** Two camps in Los Angeles County (Challenger and Gonzalez) were closed and are currently undergoing repurposing projects to serve older, transition-aged youth. Subcommittee 3 questions whether these facilities could be appropriately repurposed to meet the needs of youth under a Youth Development framework, particularly because of their size, remote locations and target populations. Many of the principles or plans for these facilities reflect the principles of YJR, and future discussions should include how a continuum of housing alternatives in the youth justice system connects to these residential programs. Furthermore, any repurposing projects must include the voice and input of the community and justice system-impacted youth and families.
- e. Closure of halls and camps.** Ultimately, as alternatives are strengthened and built, including alternative secure settings, all current juvenile hall and camp facilities would close.
- f. Specialization.** A continuum of alternatives to detention and existing out-of-home placements should include specializations such as for girls or CSEC (Commercially Sexually Exploited Children).
- g. Supporting Transitions**
- i. **Transition planning.** More planning is needed about transitioning youth from secure or staff secure housing back into their own homes or communities. Resources for supporting transitioning to 18 years old and over are essential.
  - ii. **Blended residential model.** Consider opening a facility only during the day or evenings, with a small set of those who have housing there. Also consider having phases, while in

residency, during which a youth may earn privileges of being at home or in the community.

- 3. Ensure that hiring and staffing are consistent with a Youth Development model.** Ensure worker wellbeing, rejuvenation and retraining.
  - a. Based on Subcommittee feedback in meetings, surveys and Listening Session feedback, there is a strong call for staff with first-hand experience relatable to youth in the justice system, or Credible Messengers. This requires an overhaul to job descriptions and qualifications and resolutions of job classifications with the County.
  - b. A facility could be administered by a cross-sector co-management model (a CBO in partnership with several agencies, including a new Youth Development Department, a school and a union).
- 4. Create multidisciplinary decision-making teams** called YES (Youth Empowerment and Support) Teams to inform decisions about pre- and post-adjudication detention, including those ultimately made by the judiciary. At every point, decisions should be informed by multidisciplinary points of view, inclusive of health, community and other partners, and should use a strengths- and need-based framework.
  - a. YES Teams operate with the following foundational principles:
    - i. They are strengths-based/asset-based, not deficit-based.
    - ii. They see families, culture and communities as essential.
    - iii. They plan with youth and families, not for them.
  - b. YES Teams can achieve objectives such as:
    - i. Facilitate collaboration and trust-building among various stakeholders, including youth and families themselves.
    - ii. Improve information along decision-making points.
    - iii. Improve ultimate outcomes for youth and community health and safety.
  - c. YES Teams should include, at a minimum, defense, dependency, health, education, youth and family representatives.
  - d. MOUs or changes to law are needed to facilitate information sharing among YES Teams, while also protecting the confidentiality, privacy and rights of youth.
  - e. Differing perspectives exist on:
    - i. Whether the District Attorney or other law enforcement should be included in a YES Team depending on the stage at which it is making decisions. On one hand, there is a belief that prosecutors and law enforcement should be included in collaborative decision-making to increase their investment in the youth's programming and success, and facilitate youth and families' learning about the roles of the prosecutor and law enforcement in ensuring that justice is served and that youth succeed. On the other hand, there is a belief that law enforcement is neither an appropriate nor safe presence in service-planning.
    - ii. Who should be conducting the investigation.

- iii. Who would be responsible for reporting to court any negative concerns regarding youth's progress, home or environmental risks, or new police contact/charges.
- iv. Further work needs to occur to propose how a YES Team operates at the different points of initial detention, a detention hearing and disposition, including on who should conduct intake.

There was discussion of the Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) or Child and Family Teams (CFTs) (that already exist at some decision-making points) to convene and jointly consider a decision to detain. For instance, placement removals generally happen as the result of a 14-day notice given by the provider based on major misbehaviors. A CFT must be convened and a Placement Preservation strategy must be developed to prevent the removal of a youth. An MDT process also exists for dual-status youth, which can be rife with challenges, including issues about who bears the cost of placements and services. Little is known about the extent and quality of youth participation in existing MDTs. The Subcommittee discussed the problems of these existing collaborative decision-making teams and how YES Teams would differ, including shifting from a "youth problem" framework to one asking how the system failed and can better respond to youth needs as the default.

- 5. Eliminate the use of deficit-based tools that perpetuate RED in justice system decision-making,** including the Los Angeles Detention Screen (LADS).
- 6. Ensure evaluation and an accountability mechanism** that centers community and other experts on implementation of any new model and system.
  - a. Evaluation of implementation and ensuring compliance and fidelity to models by staff are fundamental, as well as holistic evaluation of youth and staff impact.
    - i. Comprehensive data collection, data systems and protocols, including on data and information sharing, need to be built and centralized with one entity to inform system, program and service improvement.
    - ii. Regular data reports should be systematically generated and shared with all justice partners.
  - b. Accountability and evaluation mechanisms must be diverse and involve community. The mechanisms should hold accountable everyone from youth to staff to systems representatives, community-based service providers and survivors of crimes.
    - i. Evaluation must be participatory and involve the community, those with experience and those currently experiencing the new framework and their families.

# Endnotes

- i When referring to people who perform violence intervention and work with youth in their communities, out of respect, we use the terms “Peacebuilder,” “community intervention worker” and “Credible Messenger” interchangeably.
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- vii Los Angeles Alternatives to Incarceration Workgroup, *Care First, Jails Last: Health and Racial Justice Strategies for Safer Communities* (March 2020), available at <https://lacialternatives.org/reports/>.
- viii Probation Reform and Implementation Team, “Proposed Systemic Reform Plan for the Los Angeles County Probation Department” (August 9, 2019).
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- x Bell, J., “Repairing the Breach: A Brief History of Youth of Color in the Justice System” (Burns Institute, 2015), available at [www.burnsinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Repairing-the-Breach\\_BI.pdf](http://www.burnsinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Repairing-the-Breach_BI.pdf).
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- xii California Department of Justice, Juvenile Court and Probation Statistical System (retrieved 2020).
- xiii Data retrieved via public record request to the California Department of Justice (DOJ). DOJ collects data from Los Angeles County Probation via the Juvenile Court and Probation Statistical System (JCPSS). The JCPSS database is designed to collect, compile and report statistical data on the administration of juvenile justice in California. It provides information on a juvenile's process through from probation intake to final case disposition. See <https://oag.ca.gov/cjsc/databases>.
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- xvi Michaels, S., “Black Kids are Five Times Likelier Than White Kids to be Locked Up: And the Racial Disparity is Only Growing” (2017), available at <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/09/Black-kids-are-5-times-likelier-than-white-kids-to-be-locked-up/>; Leiber, M.J. and Fix, R., *Reflections on the Impact of Race and Ethnicity on Juvenile Court Outcomes and Efforts to Enact Change*, 44 Am J Crim Just 581 (2019).
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