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Los Angeles County Division of Juvenile Justice Transition Plan

Los Angeles County has taken bold steps over the last several years to transform its youth justice system, through the creation of the Youth Justice Workgroup composed of a diverse group of youth leaders, community advocates, service providers, and County representatives. The County subsequently adopted that body's vision for Youth Justice Reimagined that embraces a "care first" youth development approach to youth justice.

Senate Bill 823 (legislation was clarified in SB 92) realigns supervision of youth ordered to the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to counties. Counties will now create Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTF) to provide safe and secure housing for youth previously ordered to DJJ. SB 823 realigns funding to counties and establishes the Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant (JJRBG) subcommittee. The subcommittee is comprised of appointees from each Supervisorial district, the Public Defender's office, District Attorney, Los Angeles County Office of Education, and Department of Mental Health.

Developing and implementing local alternatives to DJJ includes strengthening and better utilizing a continuum of care, from community-based supports to out-of-home settings (both non-secure and secure) and reserving secure confinement of youth as a last resort of the shortest duration possible.

Vision and Values Guiding SB 823 Implementation

The vision for local alternatives to DJJ – as is the overriding vision for youth justice generally – is to improve youth and family wellness and community safety by increasing access to opportunities to strengthen resiliency and reduce delinquency. To advance that vision and strengthen work towards Youth Justice Reimagined, planning and implementation of those alternatives should be guided by the following values:

- Holistic, trauma-informed youth development approach
- Therapeutic, home-like environments
- Further reducing reliance on detention
- Countywide Systems Coordination
- Family and community engagement
- Periodic court reviews and collaborative decision-making
- Transparency and Accountability, Centering Impacted Voices
- Evaluation and System Improvement
- Racial Equity

Youth Population

The youth ordered to SYTF have committed serious offenses. Most of these youth have mental health needs, and many have had contact with the child welfare system. Los Angeles County continues to decrease the number of youth in detention, which has resulted in a population with

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higher risks and higher needs. All youth in Probation Juvenile Camps have committed serious offenses. Most DJJ youth had prior Juvenile Court ordered delinquency wardship prior to their DJJ disposition.

Evaluation of Permanent Sites

The JJRBG engaged with an architecture firm, The DLR Group (DLR) to evaluate all existing halls and camps to determine which site(s) would be the most feasible permanent location for DJJ youth. DLR has vast experience transforming custodial settings with an emphasis on healing, equity, and transformation for the individual and community. Sites were evaluated based on a list of objective criteria that included, but was not limited to:

- Capacity - Single room capacity or open dorm
- Availability of administrative space for community-based and county partners
- Proximity to emergency services
- Environment concerns – flood and fire zones

The JJRBG considered the evaluation in our discussion and decision-making. We also considered the current use of some of the facilities that were highly rated. We did not want to disrupt current or proposed programming at those sites (Challenger Memorial Youth Center, Camp Gonzales, Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall).

The JJRBG narrowed feasible sites to Camp Paige, Afflerbaugh, Scott, Campus Kilpatrick, and Dorothy Kirby Center for young women. All youth will be assessed for participation in programming at the permanent SYTF.

The permanent site will undergo significant security upgrades that may include anti-climbing fencing, roller barriers, security cameras, and additional security to surveil the perimeter of the facility.

Staffing and Programming

The JJRBG proposes Credible Messengers as a transformative staffing, programming, and reentry model to overlay existing staffing and programs. A Credible Messenger program brings highly trained community members into secure facilities to provide transformative mentoring to the residents via a series of programs and activities. Credible Messengers work in conjunction with facility programmatic, clinical treatment staff to provide a holistic set of supports to the youth.

Individual Rehabilitation Plan and Assessment

Youth will begin their programming at Barry J Nidorf Juvenile Hall while they await an order to SYTF. Within 30 days of making an order of commitment to a secure youth treatment facility, the court shall receive, review, and approve an Individual Rehabilitation Plan (IRP). The IRP will be developed in consultation with a multidisciplinary team of youth service, mental and behavioral health, education, counsel for the ward, and other treatment providers.

An IRP will identify the youth's needs in relation to treatment, education, and development. The IRP will describe the programming, treatment, and education to be provided to the youth in relation to the identified needs during the commitment period. The IRP will reflect, and be consistent with, the principles of trauma-informed, evidence-based, and culturally responsive care.

Youth must be prepared to engage in programming, education, and services prior to placement in the SYTF. The IRP and multi-disciplinary team will determine the youth's readiness to move on from Barry J. Nidorf to a permanent SYTF.

The JJRBG continues to meet regularly to develop comprehensive programming and a continuum of services to meet the complex needs of the SYTF population. Probation is engaging with labor unions to ensure that the appropriate staff are identified, trained, and selected to work at each SYTF site. The JJRBG will continue to collaborate with County and community partners to ensure that a continuum of care is developed for Los Angeles County youth in secure and non-secure settings.