

CALIFORNIA POST

California quietly housing violent juvenile offenders in unregulated homes — costing taxpayers millions

By Benjamin Brown

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California's most violent youth offenders are being housed in loosely regulated "less restrictive programs" — non-secure facilities that can operate in residential neighborhoods near schools and parks with little oversight and no background checks for operators.

"It could be anything, anywhere," one county probation chief told The California Post, saying some facilities charge up to \$30,000 a month per youth.

Multiple probation chiefs, speaking anonymously, claim counties often don't even know where the programs are located or who runs them until operators appear in court seeking to take house the offenders.

"These programs are popping up with basically zero regulation," another chief said, adding courts are often forcing probation departments to place youths there before officials believe they are ready.

That means juveniles convicted of crimes including murder, rape, and aggravated assault are sometimes being released back into communities before completing treatment programs and placed in homes run by people with little rehabilitation training.

"We have maybe one place that we know, it's vetted and we have a strong contract with, and then there's places that choose to call themselves that [LRPs] but we don't know anything about them," a probation chief told The Post.

Less restrictive programs (LRPs) began expanding across California after Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 823, which led to the official closure of the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) in 2023 and shifted responsibility to the counties.

The law created a legal framework for LRP's under the Welfare and Institutions Code, and the state later established the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) to oversee the transition away from state-run youth facilities — including shaping policy, supporting counties, and providing oversight for the system.

OYCR's own guidance states that there is no special license or requirement to operate an LRP for youth 18 or older — meaning essentially, anyone can open and run an LRP at practically any location.

OYCR told The Post there is no available statewide list of LRPs, and said registering or vetting is a city and county level issue.

Despite multiple attempts, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors failed to respond to The Post's questions about the registration process, eligibility requirements, and existing oversight or monitoring.

But county probation chiefs told The Post there is none.

"No licensing, no screening, no screening for the staff that work there, which to me is really troubling," one Chief said. "We're talking about murderers, attempted murderers, robberies, rapes, kidnapping, arson, sex offenders, and other very serious violent felonies."

For example, an LRP housing sex offenders could be right next to a school and no one in the area would know, the chief warned.

In a statement to The Post, LA County Probation Department communications director Vicky Waters said, “there are no specific state or local requirements mandating notification to neighboring residents, schools, or law enforcement when a LRP is established in a community,” but emphasized youth placed in these facilities still remain under court supervision.

Los Angeles Room & Board operates an LRP called The Opportunity House, located on Sorority Row on UCLA’s campus, but advertises itself as offering affordable transitional housing for students looking to attend college — nowhere on the website does it mention it also is a program for adult youth adjudicated for serious crimes.

Sam Prater, the founder of Los Angeles Room & Board, told The Post that “the program serves students who have experienced homelessness, housing instability, foster care involvement, and other significant barriers to educational success,” adding that some of the “residents also participate through Los Angeles County’s Less Restrictive Placement (LRP) continuum.”

“We understand that community members may have questions whenever a supportive housing program serves individuals with complex histories,” Prater said in a statement. “Those questions are reasonable and deserve thoughtful, fact-based discussion. If our collective goal is safer communities, then creating pathways for successful rehabilitation, reintegration, and educational opportunity must be part of that conversation.”

In the two years Los Angeles Room & Board has operated its “Court to College” program on UCLA’s campus, Prater said there hasn’t been been a “single incident affecting UCLA students, neighboring residents, or the surrounding community.”

LA Room & Board received \$1.2 million last year to house 9 adult youth, and has received \$742,000 so far in 2026, according to LA County’s court ordered payment summary for LRPs obtained through a public information request.

California Democratic State Senator Bob Archuleta started looking into the situation early last year, telling The Post he feels like he’s “opened Pandora’s Box,” discovering a system that lacks any real structure or guidelines when dealing with some of the state’s most serious offenders.

“There was no thinking, because the demand to get the young people out the door from the juvenile detention centers was forcing this situation,” Archuleta said. “I mean, it’s so logical that if we’re going to put young people in a setting, the people in charge should be vetted and [have] a background check.”

Archuleta introduced Senate Bill 1157, which aims to set a framework of regulations, including background checks and creating a central database around LRP’s that brings the state, county and cities all under one umbrella.

The bill passed on the Senate floor this week, and is now headed to the Assembly.

“We want them to be welcomed,” he said. “The way to do that is to disclose and notify the city, the county, and the community that these young people will be there, but housed in a professional manner.”

Los Angeles County Probation only has contracts with 3 LRPs—Boys Republic, Amity, and Ramp—to provide housing and services for adult youth transitioning from Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTF).

As of 2026, 61 total adult youth were transferred to those three facilities, having been paid roughly \$3.4 million but with contracts totaling \$11.2 million, according to LA County’s court-ordered payment summary.

However, 107 additional adult youth were transferred to LRPs that are not under contract, with the county paying out roughly \$6 million dollars as of March 27, 2026.

“The real crisis that I think is going to happen, if they have uncontrolled rates, then others pop up, they convert to whatever the highest bed rate is — so one day you could be a sober living that is based on AA, but you find out that if you call yourself an LRP, then tomorrow you get paid \$30,000 a month,” a county probation chief said.

One of those LRPs that is not under contract by the county but has received \$18,000 to house one adult youth appears to double as a sober living home, called Pacific Transitional Sober Living Foundation, LLC.

The LRP is in a crime-ridden neighborhood, with assaults 4% above the national average, according to DoorProfit data.

"They're literally like these random kind of Pied Pipers that just pop up in court some days," one county probation chief told The Post, recounting a recent incident when a group operating an LRP showed up to court trying to advocate to the judge to send kids to their program.

The county probation chiefs told The Post that this push for placing youth in LRPs is troubling not only from a safety standpoint for the kid and the community, but it fails to adequately prepare them for reentering society and is a blatant waste of tax dollars.

"It's just one more example of a long line of really bad decisions," a chief said, underscoring that there is no data to support that LRPs are actually rehabilitating anyone.

"I don't even know what they're trying to accomplish because it doesn't help anybody. If they think this is helping the youth in the program, they are very, very sadly mistaken."

<https://nypost.com/2026/05/30/us-news/californias-violent-youth-offenders-housed-in-unregulated-programs-near-schools-parks/>