

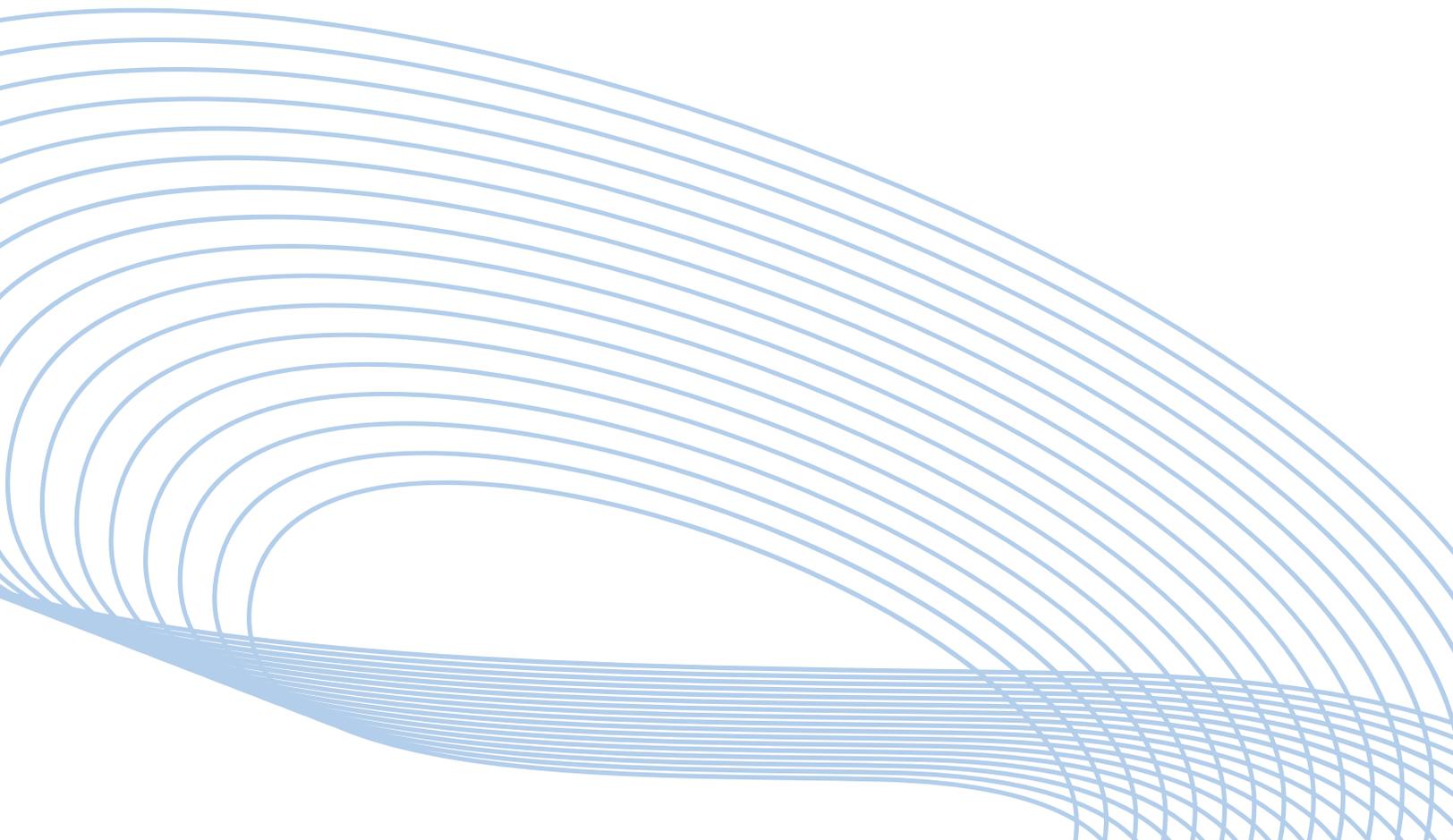


CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS
OF CALIFORNIA

FEBRUARY 2026

CALIFORNIA PROBATION'S APPROACH TO SAFETY: *Accountability with Purpose, Safety with Vision*

An Overview by the Chief Probation Officers of California



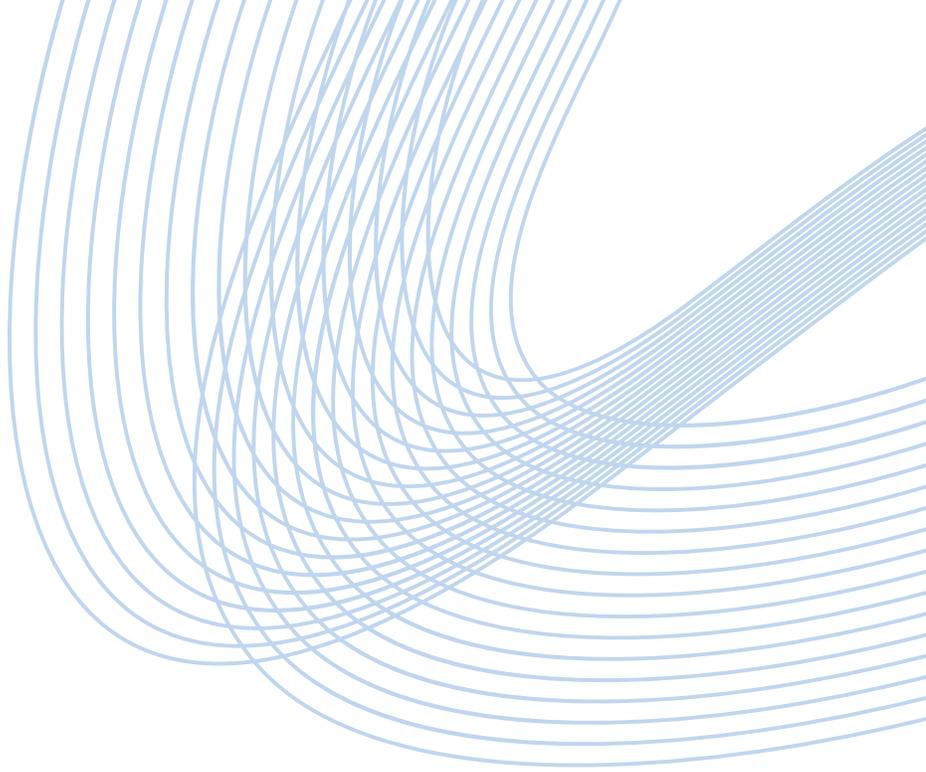


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THE ROLE OF PROBATION

Probation protects communities, supports the court system, assists victims, and helps rehabilitate justice-involved individuals. Probation serves a critical role as a connector in the justice system, linking courts, system partners, supervision, and rehabilitation services to address risk, support accountability, and meet the needs of individuals on probation. Simply put, probation promotes public safety by helping people ready to change, and protecting communities from those who are not. No other system does both.

Probation Departments play a unique and unduplicated role in California because the probation infrastructure creates the critical connections between California courts, the communities we serve, and both state and local services. Probation Departments are part of local county government, yet they serve the state court system directly, creating opportunities for advancing the hallmarks of probation - innovation, local responsiveness, and targeted community engagement.

Probation officers, who are California peace officers pursuant to Penal Code Section 830.5, are primarily responsible for:

- **enforcement of court orders**
- **assessing offender risks and needs**
- **supervising individuals' post-conviction (adults) or adjudication (juveniles)**
- **managing correctional alternatives to jail/prison**
- **operating juvenile detention facilities**
- **reducing recidivism through rehabilitation**
- **ensuring compliance with court ordered conditions**

Probation provides a multifaceted, integrated public safety model that combines evidence-based supervision with meaningful accountability to reduce risk, prevent reoffending, and protect communities. Through structured oversight and timely intervention, probation officers actively monitor compliance while addressing the underlying behaviors that threaten community safety. This approach links individuals to critical programs and services, including workforce development, substance use treatment, mental health services, family engagement, and education.

This balance of accountability and rehabilitative programs strengthens stability, promotes behavior change, and enhances safety for victims, families, the community, and individuals in the justice system themselves.

Probation's multi-dimensional approach to community safety includes:



Holding clients accountable through community supervision



Preventing crime and recidivism by connecting offenders to transformative rehabilitation



Objectively assessing the law and facts for individuals coming before the Court



Restoring victims and preventing future victimization



Rehabilitating our clients with evidence-based strategies that change behavior

ADULT PROBATION SERVICES

Probation is a term of community supervision that a defendant can agree to serve in lieu of incarceration, if eligible. Conditions of supervision are set forth by the sentencing court. Probation utilizes an integrated services model in supervising individuals for compliance with court orders and providing rehabilitative services to individuals to address identified criminogenic needs. There are several jurisdictional types of supervision. With the exception of some specific misdemeanor cases such as domestic violence or DUI, most active probation supervision is related to felony offenses.

PRETRIAL

Probation departments are working in collaboration with courts to implement SB 129 (2021) through local pretrial programs to operationalize the *In re Humphrey* decision which requires California courts to consider a person's ability to pay and non-monetary conditions of release. Activities are focused on supporting individuals in the court process, including court reminders and providing referrals to programs and services. This monitoring takes place prior to adjudication. Unfortunately, funding for pretrial programming was significantly cut in the 2025 budget, while at the same time counties saw dramatic increases in pretrial demands and an additional influx due to the passage of Proposition 36.

FELONY PROBATION

Probation is a sentence ordered by the court in lieu of incarceration and includes conditions of supervision determined by the court. Probation officers hold people convicted of crimes accountable, coupled with intentional work to move people out of the system, by overseeing rehabilitation using evidence-based strategies. Probation promotes public safety by helping people who are ready to change while protecting communities from those who are not.

MANDATORY SUPERVISION

As part of the 2011 Public Safety Realignment, probation is responsible for supervising individuals convicted of felony offenses who, prior to realignment, would have been eligible for a sentence to state prison. Under Penal Code §1170(h)(5), courts may order these individuals to serve a portion of their sentence in county jail, followed by a period of community supervision by the probation department.

Commonly referred to as a *split sentence*, it gives courts the ability to balance accountability and public safety with structured oversight in the community. When a court determines that a full community-based sentence is not appropriate, a split sentence allows part of the sentence to be served in custody, with the remaining portion served under mandatory supervision. During this supervision period, probation provides supervision and targeted interventions, connecting individuals to programs and services designed to reduce reoffending and support successful reentry, while maintaining community safety.

POST-RELEASE COMMUNITY SUPERVISION

With 2011 Public Safety Realignment, probation is responsible for individuals released from state prison onto Post-Release Community Supervision (PRCS). Prior to 2011, these individuals would have been supervised by state parole. This is a post-incarceration supervision, different from supervision in lieu of incarceration, which is known as felony probation. These populations often need a high level of service and interventions to address acute needs and risk factors as they re-enter communities after prison terms.

REENTRY

Reentry services are a critical component provided by probation departments to support an individual's release from custody for all the populations described above. Housing, employment, violence prevention strategies and behavioral health/substance use resources are particularly critical to help an individual meet their rehabilitative goals which has a direct impact on public safety. Linkages between the detention entity (jails or prison) and the rehabilitation programming offered during incarceration must be coordinated to provide seamless re-entry that supports not only public safety but also successful and sustainable transition to life outside of the criminal justice system. Identifying, treating, and providing stabilization for justice-involved adults with mental health and substance use related issues, is critical to helping individuals address factors that contribute to their rehabilitation.



CPD

THIS IS CALIFORNIA PROBATION

CPD

Who are Probation Officers?

51% of probation officers are **FEMALE**

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
Latino	41.3%
White	26.8%
Black or African American	21.7%
Asian/API	6.8%
Two or more races	3%
American Indian and Native Alaskan	.6%

*Totals do not equal 100% remaining identified as Other.
**Data reported from all 58 counties as of January 2021.

- ✓ Majority with 4-year college degrees
- ✓ Many probation departments employ former system-involved individuals
- ✓ 350 hours of training in first two years; at least 40 hours annually thereafter. Additional training includes:
 - trauma-informed care
 - cognitive behavioral therapy
 - therapeutic and strength-based care
 - emotional intelligence

Probation is trained to safely connect system-involved individuals to the supports they need

PROBATION

Why Probation Works

Probation is the alternative to incarceration	Probation is made up of trained experts prepared to successfully manage trauma and other needs of the adults and youth we serve	Probation connects service and need in order to enhance safety and restoration	Probation delivers sustainable collaborative community safety
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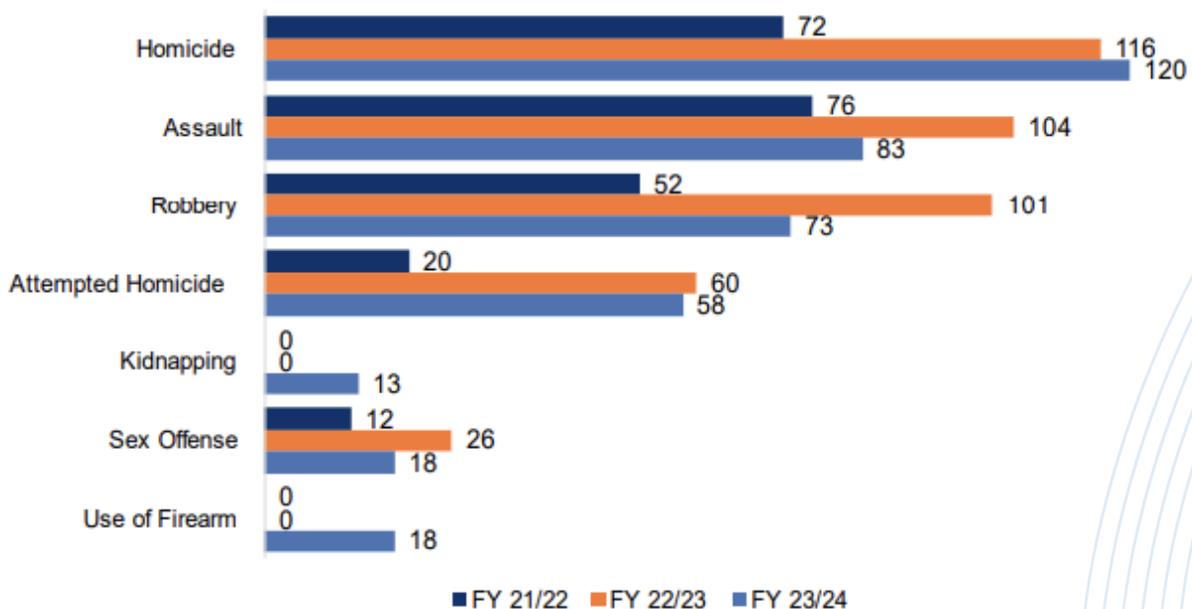
JUVENILE PROBATION SERVICES

After the state-run juvenile facilities were closed, County probation departments are responsible for the entire juvenile continuum. County probation departments manage youth and families from diversion, to working with youth in the community, to secure settings, and foster care. This complex system cannot be handled without key collaborations. Probation works closely as a connector with other community and county entities to coordinate and integrate youth and family support and rehabilitation. Access to strong behavioral health, education, skills development, and child welfare programs is critical to creating safe pathways in our communities for youth and young adults in the juvenile justice system.

As a result of SB 823 Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Realignment, the state abdicated responsibility and management of the custody continuum to probation departments. This change was done quickly, and probation adapted their current facilities to administer supervisory services for the former DJJ population, and those who are adjudicated of qualifying offenses at county juvenile halls, camps, and ranches as well as Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTFs). This change has resulted in skewing the average population to be older (up to age 25), higher need with higher risk, and have been adjudicated of the most serious and violent offenses including murder and registerable sex offenses than previously housed locally. Homicide, assaults and sex offenses makes up over 70% of the youth adjudicated to a SYTF, with over 40% being strictly homicide related.

Probation is responsible for the treatment and service needs of all justice-involved youth, providing them with skills, resources, and opportunities, while balancing significant safety considerations for both the youth and the community.

FIGURE 3. Offense Types of Youth Committed to SYTFs, by Fiscal Year





PREVENTION/DIVERSION

Probation develops, administers, and supports prevention and diversion programs when appropriate to address a youth's behavior. Probation departments provide a network of referrals as well as direct services to assist youth and their families. In 2023, of the 43,085 youth referred to probation, over 75% were diverted.

SUPERVISING AND SERVING YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY

Probation departments are engaging and supporting youth with around 90 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system being safely supervised in the community, not in a detention setting. Courts and probation continue to focus on the least restrictive settings within the juvenile justice continuum to meet safety and rehabilitation needs. Additionally, probation practices reflect individualized and trauma-informed approaches to serving youth.

WORKING WITH YOUTH IN SECURE SETTINGS

Probation departments are responsible for the safety, security, and care of youth when a judge determines that detention in a secure setting is necessary. This means probation must protect youth and address their rehabilitative needs across a wide range of risk levels, from lower-risk youth to those adjudicated for the most serious and violent offenses.

Prior to the major policy changes associated with the closure of DJJ and subsequent legislation, juvenile detention usage had declined by more than 60 percent between 2007 and 2016. However, as the state closed pathways to adult court and eliminated state-run juvenile facilities, local probation departments have become responsible for housing and treating a population that increasingly includes youth and young adults who have committed the most serious offenses and who may now remain in juvenile facilities until age 25.

FOSTER YOUTH

Through our work with foster youth, probation departments have been actively engaged in the implementation of the Continuum of Care Reform and the Family First Prevention Services Act. Whenever possible, probation seeks to maintain youth at risk of removal in their family homes when safe and appropriate, utilizing wraparound services and referrals to other programs as needed to avoid removal.

COURT SERVICES

PROBATION REPORTS FOR THE COURTS

Probation serves as a neutral party to the courts to provide the judge with the most current information pertaining to a juvenile petition or the filing of an adult criminal charge. Probation prepares pre-sentence investigation reports ordered by the judge to assist the sentencing court in criminal justice proceedings. Probation departments also work closely with the courts to provide targeted interventions and develop case plans for youth.

COLLABORATIVE COURTS

Probation departments work with courts on collaborative court programs to address specific needs of justice-involved individuals. Examples of collaborative courts include drug courts, veterans' courts, gender responsive courts, and homeless courts among others.

PRETRIAL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Probation departments are also working throughout the state to support Courts in implementing pretrial programs following the passage of SB 129 and following the *In re Humphrey* decision to maximize the safe release of defendants and return to court for accused individuals. As reliance on pretrial supervision has increased, caseloads and operational demands have grown significantly for probation and are no longer keeping pace with static pretrial funding, particularly following recent state cuts in 2025.

SB 678

Probation departments work closely with the judiciary in carrying out the goals set forth in SB 678 (2009) to increase the use of evidence-based practices and enhance public safety while reducing returns to prison. SB 678 has enabled probation and courts to integrate these practices throughout the criminal justice system and focus on approaches informed by research and data.

MAJOR STATE REFORMS IMPLEMENTED BY PROBATION

SB 678

The Community Corrections Performance Incentives Act of 2009 – Senate Bill 678 – transformed California’s probation system by providing resources for probation departments to reduce caseloads and invest in evidence-based supervision and treatment interventions. The legislation aligned county and state incentives toward the shared goals of maintaining public safety, reducing the size of the incarcerated population, and reducing correctional costs. Since inception, SB 678 is estimated to have saved over \$1 billion and resulted in reductions in revocation to prison by more than 23 percent in the first year.

2011 REALIGNMENT (AB 109)

In 2011, in response to a significant US Supreme Court decision which could have led to arbitrary early release of tens of thousands of prison inmates among other factors, California enacted historic changes to the criminal justice system pursuant to CPOC-supported AB 109. As part of 2011 Realignment, county probation departments assumed responsibility for two new populations – Post Release Community Supervision (PRCS) and Mandatory Supervision. Individuals on PRCS are eligible for local supervision if their most recent conviction was a non-violent, non-serious, and non-sex offense. It is important to note that while the PRCS population may not have a recent serious or violent offense, many are still assessed as high-risk to reoffend, could have a sex offense in their criminal history, and often have high needs and risk.

Additionally, there are individuals who, pursuant to AB 109, now serve their sentences in county jails, rather than state prison, and many will serve a portion of their local time under the supervision of the probation department on Mandatory Supervision.

PROPOSITION 57 (2016)

CPOC supported this policy specifically to improve implementing evidence-based rehabilitation programs in prisons and to incentivize people to participate in programs as well as to give the juvenile court judge the authority to determine when a juvenile case could be transferred to adult court. CPOC has remained consistent in the assertion that the focus should be on promoting an environment that fosters a demonstrated *readiness* for release, not simply the question of *when* a person is released from custody. It is paramount that implementation of Proposition 57 be done to fidelity. While CPOC supported the program framework, it is imperative that Proposition 57 be implemented in a way that ensures that state prison programs are evidence-based and that program *completion*, not just *participation* is required.

Unfortunately, following the passage of Proposition 57, several executive actions and statutory changes have gone beyond the original tenets of the initiative, undermining key safeguards and shifting implementation away from what voters were promised.

AB 1950: ADULT PROBATION TERMS

AB 1950 (2020) reduced the length of all felony probation terms to two years and misdemeanor probation terms to one year, except for limited offenses specified in statute. Research shows that working with individuals through evidence-based supervision, services, and supports within the first two years of their probation term—when front-loaded with intensive services and supervision—is the most effective way to change behavior and reduce recidivism. Evidence also shows that individualized, risk- and needs-based case plans that include flexibility in the length of the probation term are critical to meeting the rehabilitative and criminogenic needs of individuals on probation. **Accordingly, it is imperative that the reduction in probation term lengths be amended to provide additional flexibility and be aligned with a comprehensive approach that supports robust, sustainable programs and treatment during this period to address core criminogenic needs.**

PROPOSITION 36

Prop 36, which was approved by voters in 2024 with overwhelming support in every California county, has had significant impacts on probation. As the primary entity responsible for community supervision, probation departments are central to implementing Proposition 36 through court-ordered assessments, enforcement of supervision conditions, and coordination of treatment and services. In addition to supervision responsibilities, Proposition 36 has significantly increased the number of assessments probation conducts for the courts to determine eligibility, risk, and treatment needs for Proposition 36-eligible individuals. These assessment demands, combined with increased arrests associated with Proposition 36, have also contributed to significant growth in pretrial supervision caseloads.

PRETRIAL

Probation departments are working throughout the State to support the courts in their constitutional duties and implementation of SB 129 (2021) as well as the *In re Humphrey* decision. Probation serves the court as a neutral party, accountable to the courts and the public, to provide judicial officers with information prior to arraignment or earlier. This assistance allows the court to maximize the safe release of defendants and provides a level of accountability for the accused to return to court.

Probation's role as both a county department and as an arm of the court enables accountable, transparent, and efficient connection to the services a specific client needs to enhance safety. **Unfortunately, as pretrial cases were on the increase, funding for pretrial programming was significantly cut in the 2025 budget. In addition to the natural ongoing growth of pretrial caseloads, counties saw further dramatic increases in pretrial needs due to the passage of Proposition 36.**

SB 81: JUVENILE JUSTICE REALIGNMENT OF 2007

Juvenile Justice Realignment in 2007 shifted responsibility to counties for the care, treatment, and custody of all but the highest-need and highest-risk juveniles. Probation departments worked hard to divert youth from detention settings through a myriad of services and programs tailored for youth and/or their families and by partnering with community-based agencies and system partners. The result of successfully maximizing the diversion of youth from detention facilities means the youth who are sent to facilities are those who present the highest and most complex needs and present the most significant risk to public safety and/or to themselves.

FOSTER YOUTH CONTINUUM OF CARE

CPOC has been implementing the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) pursuant to AB 403 (2015), which emphasizes the importance of utilizing home-based family care when youth are placed into foster care and reserves placement into Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) in lieu of group homes. Further, it requires the creation of child and family teams in an effort to build lasting natural supports for the youth and family that will exist beyond the youth’s involvement with the juvenile justice system.

SHUTTERING OF DIVISION OF JUVENILE JUSTICE (DJJ)

SB 823 (2020) realigned the entirety of California’s juvenile justice system to counties. SB 92 (2021) established the Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF) track and set a DJJ closure date of June 30, 2023. Youth returning to counties following DJJ’s closure, as well as those ordered by the court to an SYTF, present with the most complex needs and highest risk factors. Homicide, assault, and sex offense cases account for more than 70 percent of youth adjudicated to an SYTF, with over 40 percent involving homicide-related offenses.

Many individuals in SYTFs require specialized sex behavior treatment and intensive behavioral health services. The older age of this population—up to age 25—creates distinct programming needs within secure settings and significantly impacts reentry planning for housing, education, and employment. Additionally, housing and treating young adults in juvenile facilities presents new operational and safety challenges, requiring enhanced staffing, supervision, and facility design to prevent negative influence or harm to younger youth whom the court has determined require juvenile detention. Despite these challenges probation is still working on providing good outcomes for the youth and young adults in the juvenile justice system.



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