What Youth Say About SYTF and LRPs: Lessons from Sonoma County's Participant Voice Evaluation

RDA CONSULTING

SONOMA COUNTY PROBATION

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Agenda

Where We Started & Why We Did This

Haunani Pakaki, Program Planning Evaluation Analyst

What We Did & Learned

Tyeisha Fordham, Consultant

Where We Are Now & What We're Doing About It

Brandon Bannister, Deputy Probation Officer IV

Lawrence Walin, Supervising Probation Corrections Officer

Closing & Key Considerations for Other Counties

Tyeisha Fordham, Consultant

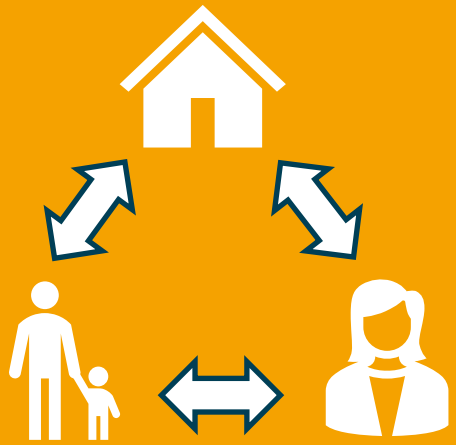
Where We Started & Why We Did This

Haunani Pakaki, Program Planning Evaluation Analyst

Where We Started

- Sonoma is a medium-sized County, with a reasonably new facility, and a strong desire to serve youths close to home
- Preceding passage of Senate Bill (SB) 823, Sonoma placed very few youths at the Division of Juvenile Justice
- Community safety is the priority
- Working to ensure SYTF and LRPs work for youths and their families



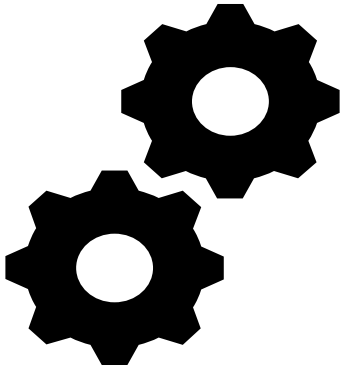


Where We Started

Key Perspectives took center-stage:

- Facilities
  - Capacity, housing, visitation
- Organizational
  - Staffing, programming, Less Restrictive Programs
- Engagement
  - Youths, families, and partners

Early Changes to the Structure



- Housing and program decisions made and timely communicated
- Facility modifications to accommodate longer commitments and COVID protocols
- Dedicated SYTF Supervisor and Probation Officer positions created

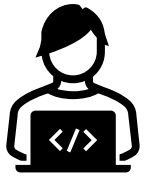
Early Changes to the Structure



Case planning centered around IRPs, Child and Family Teams (CFTs), and 90-day Multi-disciplinary Team (MDT) youth presentations, and transition plan checklist



Consistent engagement between units, justice partners, and community-based organizations



Focus on online college education as a bridge to community transition



Why We Did This

- LRP grant provided evaluation funding
- Most meaningful to hear from those experiencing and implementing the changes. Includes youths released *before* LRPs
- Other evaluations can be conducted in the future, as the program matures

What We Did & Learned

Tyeisha Fordham, Consultant

The evaluation prioritized participant voice. Findings describe implementation & participant experiences, *not causal program impact*.



Evaluation Activities



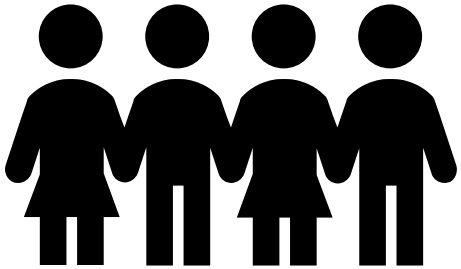
18 Focus Groups & Interviews

4 Observations, including:

- Two multidisciplinary team meetings
- Tours of Juvenile Hall & Community-based Service Provider

3 Data Co-interpretation Sessions

Participants



- Youth in the SYTF, LRPs, & community
- Family members & support networks
- Juvenile Hall & Juvenile Services staff
- Service providers
- Juvenile justice system partners

Key Findings & Lessons Learned



More individualized & age-responsive services



Stronger communication & coordination



Clearer transition & reentry pathways



Expanded education, employment, technology, & practical skill opportunities



Greater continuity of support after release

Incorporating Participant Voice



“Collaboration” Means Everyone

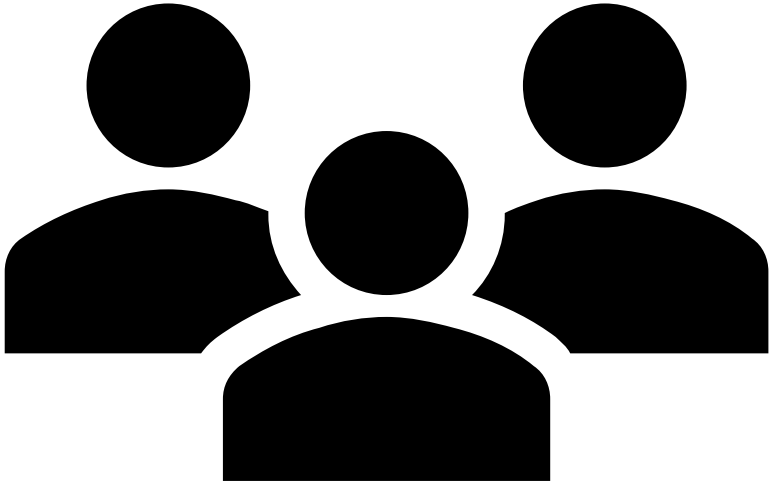


Participants appreciated the opportunity to provide **direct input** during the evaluation

Incorporating Participant Voice

- **Include participants** in data collection tool development
  - Use *Slido*, *Poll Everywhere*, & other tools to solicit feedback
- **Review findings with participants** prior to final report or presentation refinement





Voice

- The Youth Evaluation Committee (YEC) (2 Sessions)
- Data Co-Interpretation (3 Sessions)



Planning Data Co-Interpretation

- Start planning early & be intentional with scheduling.
- Provide opportunities for virtual & in-person collaboration.
- Make it clear to participants why their input matters & send materials ahead of time.

Considerations

- **Time & Flexibility:** Including participants in evaluation processes is an iterative process. Be sure to build in time & accessible formats for thoughtful partnership.

- **Power Dynamics & Ethics:** Recognize power imbalances. Consider the ethics of involving participants in certain activities and provide meaningful debriefs or follow-up discussions.





More Considerations

- **Data & Identity Protection:** Ask participants only to use their first name & to limit sharing personal information.
- **Participant Rights:** Allow participants to join remotely, do not require cameras to be on, & do not record sessions. Respect if participants do not want to respond to questions.
- **Support Participant Safety:** Do not allow participants to share screen on virtual calls & use the waiting room feature to ensure only invited participants attend.

Where We Are Now & What We're Doing About It

Brandon Bannister, Deputy Probation Officer IV
Lawrence Walin, Supervising Probation Corrections Officer

What the County Has Done



- ✓**Development of individualized LRP's**, including Camp Singer, partnerships on college campuses, Pinegrove, intensive case management (ICM), & various unique LRP opportunities.
- ✓**Development of Compass Academy**, a structured process for furloughs that allow for community-based skill development & a gradual transition to the community.
- ✓**Expanded in-custody programing**, including in person college classes, life skills curriculum in high school, expanded trauma counseling, a culinary program, ad additional staff led CBI based programing.
- ✓**Recurring Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) staff meetings** between probation services & juvenile hall caseworkers, & shared access to a single case plan/IRP.
- ✓**Improved family and community communication**, better structured CFT process, Compass flyer, and more community engagement e.g. CASA and New Hope mentors

What the County Will Do



- ❑ **Youth Advisory Board**
- ❑ **Continue to expand LRPs** (pending contract with local transitional housing program, or THP)
- ❑ **Expand Career & Technical Education** (CTE) (e.g., Culinary, Welding, Barber, etc.)
- ❑ **Expand coordination of furloughs** (e.g., youth driving themselves to employment, utilizing skills developed during in custody programing)
- ❑ **Expand community vocational training**
- ❑ **Improve family connection opportunities** with structured communication activities during in-custody & community visits

Closing & Key Considerations for Other Counties

Tyeisha Fordham, Consultant



Considerations for Your County

- Incorporate participants' voice when possible and early on
- Work with evaluators to identify relevant participants & partners
- Provide participants with equal opportunity to participate
- Remain flexible & recognize when shifts need to happen
- When possible & appropriate, provide compensation

Q&A

We welcome you to share your questions and thoughts!



Thank You!

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