



JJDPC Quarterly Inter-Agency Meeting
Minutes

July 11, 2024

Location: Rustin Conference Center (Entrance 1)
2085 Rustin Ave., Riverside, CA 92507

IN ATTENDANCE (In-Person): Christopher Collopy, Paul Parker, Laurel Cook, Pam Torres, Daniel Castaneda, Elisa Judy, Joshua Angell, Cari Shepherd, Roxana Alcon, Allison Donahoe-Beggs, Michael Belknapp, Sofia Alvarenga, Michael Griggs, Genesi Ramirez, Rhyann Miller, Rebecca Acevedo, Joe Doty, Bruce Fordon, Melanie Thomas, Cynthia Magill, Deanna McCarty, Norma Biegel, Shawn Johnson, Lynette Jones, Kim Taylor, Ernesto Rodriguez, Kathleen Rodriguez, Lucy Brito, Natasha Dunlap, Bridgette Hernandez, Dana Young, Michelle Irving, Patricia Watson

Unexcused / Excused Absence: Amanda Wade (**Excused**), Chris Collopy (**Excused**).

Applicants:

1. Welcome / Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

- a. All participants were welcomed by Commission Chair Christopher Collopy.
 - i. With the presence of the quorum, the meeting was initiated at 1:37 pm.
 - ii. Commissioner Mike Belknapp led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call / Announcements

- a. Roll call of organizations and commissioners.
 - i. Chair Collopy extended invited each attendee to introduce themselves along with their respective organizations. He also highlighted the significance of the commissioners introducing themselves, ensuring that everyone has the chance to meet them and understand their backgrounds, especially given that there are several newly appointed commissioners.
 - ii. Chair Collopy emphasized the significance of the JJDPC Quarterly Inter-Agency meeting for new participants, highlighting the need for sharing programmatic updates, addressing challenges, and securing advocacy support. Furthermore, he urged attendees to express any legislative concerns affecting their organizations.

3. Approval of: October 10, 2024, 2024, Agenda

- i. Motion to approve agenda made by V.C. Paul Parker, seconded by Commissioner Patricia Watson.
- ii. Chair Collopy confirmed the affirmative vote: The ayes have it and the motion accepted.

4. Approval of: July 11, 2024, Quarterly Meeting Minutes

- i. Motion to approve minutes made by Patricia Watson, seconded by Commissioner Mike Belknapp.
- ii. Chair Collopy confirmed the affirmative vote: The ayes have it and the motion accepted.

5. Presentation: Project Rebound CSUSB - Program Coordinator, Michael Griggs and Outreach Coordinator, Sofia Alvarenga

a. Overview and Highlights:

- i. Project Rebound is a program designed to support formerly incarcerated individuals in pursuing their academic goals, facilitating their reintegration into society.
- ii. The program offers academic advising, career development services, and reentry support, emphasizing the power of education in reducing recidivism and promoting social justice.
- iii. Services include internships, tutoring, mentorship, financial assistance, and special admission policies for students coming directly out of incarceration. Rolling admissions and special admissions are available for students who don't meet traditional timelines, allowing them to enter college quickly after release.
- iv. A focus is placed on offering a structured educational experience to help reduce recidivism. Statistics show that those with higher education, such as bachelor's or master's degrees, have significantly lower recidivism rates (close to 0% for master's degree holders).

b. Key Statistics:

- i. Mr. Griggs highlighted that Project Rebound has a retention rate of 93.7%, which greatly exceeds the overall CSU rate of 84%. Furthermore, the program has a low recidivism rate of just 1%, compared to California's average of 46%. With 283 graduates across 19 campuses and plans for continued expansion, California is acknowledged as a national exemplar in facilitating the transition of students from incarceration to higher education.

c. Questions and Responses:

- i. Mr. Griggs addressed inquiries regarding Project Rebound, confirming that 283 graduates had been supported over nine years across 19 CSU campuses, with plans to expand to all 23, noting that not all participating universities are in Southern California.
- ii. He noted the 7% dropout rate is influenced by various factors, including family, housing, and work pressures. Housing, employment, and technology access are key barriers for students, with housing being the most critical.
- iii. Despite challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, Project Rebound maintained a 93.7% retention rate, and continued to actively re-engaging students who may have dropped out.
- iv. Additionally, he noted that while most students are aged 31 to 60, there is a growing number of younger students, including three from the juvenile system, and Project Rebound aims to provide enhanced support for these individuals, creating a pathway from juvenile hall to university.



d. Financial Aid and Housing Support:

- i. Mr. Griggs addressed inquiries from the commission and participants regarding financial aid and housing support, specifically focusing on the housing assistance options available for students.
- ii. In his responses, Mr. Griggs highlighted that housing insecurity poses a significant challenge for many students who have been formerly incarcerated. He noted that while Project Rebound provides emergency housing vouchers, it does not offer long-term housing solutions for these students. A proposal for transitional housing tailored for justice-involved students has been submitted to the Chancellor's Office, aiming to establish such facilities within a 10-mile radius of the campus.
- iii. Regarding the types of housing assistance available, Mr. Griggs mentioned that emergency housing support is accessible in certain situations. Students are referred to FAFSA, the Office of Basic Needs, and various financial resources to help address their housing and related issues.

e. Program Growth:

- i. Mr. Griggs emphasized the significant growth of the Project Rebounds Program. From 2020 to 2021, the program had 24 enrolled students, resulting in 14 bachelor's degree graduates and 11 master's degree graduates. At that time, there were also 6 pipeline students, with 13 earning bachelor's degrees and 4 obtaining master's degrees.
- ii. Currently, enrollment has surged to 71 students, with 50 pursuing bachelor's degrees and 20 working towards master's degrees. The program now includes 50 pipeline students.
- iii. This year, Project Rebound achieved a milestone by graduating 25 students, the highest number in the program's history. Furthermore, two students from the program have been awarded paid fellowships at Yale, where they are actively engaged in research.
- iv. In addressing inquiries from participants, Mr. Griggs noted that Project Rebound is not specific to Riverside County. Instead, the initiative encompasses the entire Inland Empire, with Cal State San Bernardino serving a pivotal role, and noted there is no detailed demographic information available specifically for Riverside County residents; the data shared pertains to the program.

f. Credible Messengers:

- i. Mr. Griggs' emphasized that the individuals participating in these initiatives are recognized as credible messengers, whether they are interacting with youth in the community or engaging in systemic efforts. These individuals have firsthand experience with the system and are actively pursuing higher education, including bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Their lived experiences enable them to establish genuine connections with those they aim to assist, offering relatable guidance and mentorship.
- ii. The impact of sharing personal stories is profound for the youth. At first, participants may seem distracted or disengaged, but as credible messengers begin to share their own journeys, they swiftly capture the attention of the youth. This connection is crucial, as it illustrates to the youth that the messengers truly understand their struggles, fostering a strong sense of trust and enhancing their engagement.
- iii. In response to questions from participants, Mr. Griggs emphasized the challenges faced by Project Rebound's credible messengers, including difficulties in securing access to facilities for youth counseling due to restrictions, and the fact that most courses have been conducted online. However, Riverside Probation is in the process of developing new policies to allow credible messengers into facilities, with implementation expected in the near future.
- iv. CDPO Joe Doty confirmed that Riverside Probation is updating its procedures to facilitate access for credible messengers, with changes anticipated to be put into effect soon.

g. Partnerships:

- i. The initiatives undertaken by Project Rebound concerning youth education, particularly within juvenile facilities, highlighting the advancements achieved over the past two and a half years. Encompass collaborations with the Prison Education Project, Riverside City College, and the Anti-Recidivism Coalition.
- ii. Mr. Griggs addressed participant questions about Project Rebound, focusing on its operations and initiatives. Currently, the program is not active in San Bernardino juvenile facilities, but discussions are ongoing to potentially offer college courses and support services there in the future. Ernesto from Kindful Restoration praised the program for its impact, sharing his personal journey of obtaining a master's degree with its support.
- iii. Mr. Griggs explained that some students are referred to Project Rebound by the Department of Rehabilitation, while others find the program through online searches or recommendations. Initially funded by the Michaelson Foundation, the program is now supported by the state legislature, with efforts to secure funding for transitional housing for justice-involved college students.
- iv. Despite challenges faced by credible messengers in accessing facilities, progress is being made, with Riverside Probation updating its policies to allow their entry. CDPO Joe Doty confirmed these changes are expected soon.
- v. Chair Collopy commended the program for its success in reducing recidivism and supporting educational opportunities for justice-involved individuals, encouraging continued collaboration with Project Rebound.



6. Kindful Restoration - Co-Executive Director's, Ernesto Rodriguez, and Kathleen Rodriguez

a. Overview:

- i. Kindful Restoration focuses on supporting formerly incarcerated individuals with a holistic approach to rehabilitation and is aimed at equipping participants with valuable skills and certifications that will help them reintegrate into society and reduce recidivism rates.

b. New Initiative - Peer Support Certification:

- i. Project Rebound, is working to add a Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist certification for participants who complete the program and become peer mentor leaders.
- ii. This initiative is supported by a CCR (California Code of Regulations) grant and will provide participants with a head start in their career development upon release, particularly in the field of credible messengers with lived experience who can offer guidance and support in community reintegration.
- iii. Mr. Rodriguez emphasized the effectiveness of combining lived experience with education and certification, making it a powerful tool for recidivism reduction and successful reintegration into society.

c. Approval of Drug and Alcohol Program:

- i. Kindful Restoration recently received approval from the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to operate a drug and alcohol counseling program as part of their reentry efforts.
- ii. In addition to existing services like anger management, domestic violence counseling, parenting classes, life skills, and digital literacy, they are now able to add drug and alcohol counseling and community healthcare worker service programs.
- iii. Mr. Rodriguez expressed excitement about the expansion of services and the opportunity to make a greater impact on the community.

d. Partnership with the Judiciary:

- i. Mr. Rodriguez provided an update on a recent development facilitated through Elisa, where a judge expressed interest in referring youth to participate in Kindful Restoration's 4, 6, 8, and 10-hour drug education programs.
- ii. Mr. Rodriguez mentioned that Project Rebound sees this as an opportunity to incorporate their prison project into the community service requirement. The idea is to have the youth participate in community service while Project Rebound focuses on teaching them responsibility. One aspect of this would involve peer leaders from the prison project writing letters to the youth, sharing their personal stories and experiences. These letters would be read by the youth as part of their program, with the hope that these narratives provide alternative perspectives and serve as a diversion from negative influences.
- iii. Mr. Rodriguez emphasized that the entire process will be closely monitored by Project Rebound. The letters will be carefully reviewed to ensure that the content is appropriate and aligns with the program's objectives.
- iv. Mr. Rodriguez emphasized the organization's commitment to showing kindness in their work, sharing that, "people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." This philosophy remains central to the mission of Kindful Restoration as they seek to support individuals in their journey of rehabilitation and reintegration.

7. Riverside County Counsel: Bruce Fordon, Deputy County Counsel

a. Updates:

- i. Mr. Fordon provided an update from County Counsel, noting that there are no significant developments to report at this time. However, he highlighted an interesting initiative related to Service Integration, which is gaining momentum across various departments.

b. Service Integration Initiative:

- i. Mr. Fordon explained that the goal is to create a "one-stop shop" approach for various county services, where information is shared across departments more seamlessly. This would allow individuals to receive comprehensive assistance from multiple agencies without needing to repeat their situations to different departments.
- ii. Mr. Fordon emphasized that this initiative is making significant progress and is close to full implementation.

8. Community Care Licensing (CCL) - Ray Pennington (Community Care Licensing, Childcare Division), Stephanie Hudak (Regional Manager, Riverside Childcare SE Program), Kim Taylor (Assistant Program Administrator, CCL), Natasha Dunlap (Regional Manager, CCL, Riverside South Children's Residential Program).

a. Introduction of Community Care Licensing, Childcare Division:

- i. Chair Collopy welcomed the Community Care Licensing team, acknowledging their attendance in response to previous requests.
- ii. Ray Pennington, from the Childcare Division, gave an overview of their role, which includes licensing childcare homes (with a capacity of 8-14 children) and childcare centers such as infant, preschool, and school-age programs.
- iii. Ms. Hudak highlighted their focus on monitoring and evaluating daycare providers who offer less than 24-hour care for working parents.
- iv. Ms. Taylor suggested that the childcare programs may not need to attend future meetings, as their focus is different from residential care programs.



b. Applications / Licensing Updates:

- i. Ms. Dunlap noted that there have been 3 applications for STRTPs, and 2 group homes are pending. One group home needs fire clearance, while another had a pre-licensing inspection. Each facility has a capacity of 6, except one group home with 4 and one STRTP with 72. Applications are in Riverside County.
- ii. Ms. Dunlap will provide monthly updates to the JJDP Commission regarding the status of pending applications and any advancements related to residential program inspections in the future.

c. Local Youth Placements:

- i. Chair Collopy opened the discussion by noting that one of the commission's primary concerns is that Riverside County youth are frequently placed in out-of-county facilities. This has been an ongoing issue raised by partners such as Probation and DPSS. He highlighted the significance of having local facilities available to house these youth, emphasizing that it is critical to focus on creating or maintaining capacity within Riverside County. This approach would ensure that youth can remain closer to their communities, support systems, and services.
- ii. During the discussion, CCL addressed inquiries about trends in application types, ownership patterns, and placement authority for youth in licensed facilities.
- iii. CCL stated that applications are received from both nonprofit and corporate sectors with no discernible trend. Some organizations own and manage multiple facilities under a single license.
- iv. Private and county placements are possible, with providers needing to consent before placements can occur. DPSS and Probation make placement decisions, providers must agree to accept youth placements. The facility's licensing is necessary before placements can be made, and providers play a critical role in the process.
- v. CCL clarified that it does not manage placements, as this responsibility lies with county agencies like DPSS or Probation.
- vi. While specific information on facilities designated for private placements was not available at the time, CCL committed to providing it later.

d. Outreach:

- i. CDPO Judy inquired about providers for youth on probation and the outreach efforts of CCL. Ms. Taylor stated that the Systems of Care Branch is responsible for providing outreach and support to counties. CCL places emphasis on monitoring and applications for providers, noting that they can assist with linking to Probation with their Systems of Care Branch for a presentation and will provide necessary follow-up.

e. Education's Role in Supporting Foster Youth:

- i. Deanna McCarty (Executive Director, RCOE): Ms. McCarty commented that education is taking a more vested role in supporting foster youth, noting that Doctor Gomez is making this a priority in the district. She expressed interest in hosting an outreach event to raise awareness and increase community engagement in opening foster homes.

f. Narcan Availability in Group Homes:

- i. Chair Collopy started the discussion regarding the accessibility and presence of Narcan in group residences. Confusion within group homes has persisted about whether they are permitted to utilize Narcan and are properly licensed, and these concerns have been observed by the Commission during inspections in recent years.
- ii. Commissioner Parker discussed the findings from visits conducted between late 2022 and early 2023, highlighting that numerous employees at group homes were unfamiliar with Narcan and there was a lack of uniform training. He stressed the importance of being clear and implied that the county had not adequately conveyed the significance of Narcan in group homes.
- iii. Ms. Taylor recognized that providers hesitate to use Narcan due to liability concerns, even with Good Samaritan Laws in place. She verified that Narcan was mentioned in quarterly provider meetings but acknowledged that providers may still be hesitant. Ms. Taylor suggested adding Narcan to the agenda for future meetings and emphasized that CCL has revised the policy to expand the availability of Narcan in group homes.
- iv. Ms. Dunlap observed that at the quarterly provider meetings, hundreds of providers typically attend, with approximately 80% actively participating. Providers who do not attend these meetings still get the information via email, such as FAQs and updates.
- v. Concerns were raised about the accessibility of Narcan in group homes due to staff members potentially missing critical emails. Commissioner Parker stressed the importance of highlighting Narcan's life-saving properties and ensuring easy accessibility.
- vi. Ms. Taylor agreed and mentioned that CCL would offer technical assistance to group homes.
- vii. Chair Collopy suggested advocating to the Legislature for a law mandating Narcan availability in group homes.
- viii. Ms. Taylor shared that the Narcan policy had been revised for better accessibility and offered to provide the updated version to the commission.
- ix. Ms. Donahoe-Beggs recommended discussing Narcan at the upcoming Joint Provider Meeting in August to explain the new policy and engage in a Q&A session with providers.

g. Final Remarks and Acknowledgments:

- i. **Commissioner** Parker noted he appreciated the ongoing efforts to improve Narcan access and emphasized the importance of continued follow-up to ensure all group homes are informed and prepared.



- ii. **Chair Collopy:** Chair Collopy thanked the CCL team for their updates and participation in the meeting, acknowledging the valuable information shared and the continued focus on improving group home safety.

9. Riverside County Probation (Field Services) - Chief Deputy Probation Officers (CDPO), Elisa Judy

a. Overview / Highlights:

- i. CDPO Elisa Judy discussed the upcoming Probation and Correctional Officers Week, urging members to thank officers for their hard work. She also promoted attendance at the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council meeting, which will include updates on department initiatives.
- ii. CDPO Judy highlighted two open Requests for Proposals under JJCPA funding for community programs and announced a bidders' conference for the Community-Led Diversion initiative. The RFPs will remain open for 60 days, and the conference is scheduled for next Thursday. Judy emphasized the importance of community involvement in juvenile justice and encouraged participation in these opportunities.
- iii. CDPO Judy also noted that a bidders' conference for the Community-Led Diversion initiative would take place next Thursday. She encouraged those interested to attend.
- iv. Comment: Chair Collopy added that Joshua, the youth commissioner, would be joining him at the next ad hoc meeting for exposure and learning purposes.
- v. Chair Collopy inquired if there were any additional questions or comments from the commission. Upon receiving no responses, he expressed his gratitude to CDPO Judy for the information provided today.

10. Probation Report: Special Services Division (Field Services) - Assistant Director, Cari Shepard

a. Youth Report:

- i. Cari Shepard presented current foster care statistics. 28 youth are in STRTP, 3 in probation-led dual-status cases, 19 in DPSS-led dual-status cases, 1 in extended foster care, and 1 in a resource family home.
- ii. Chair Collopy inquired if there were any additional questions or comments from the commission. Upon receiving no responses, Chair Collopy thanked Ms. Shepard for the report.

11. Voices for Children – Advocacy Supervisor, Melanie Thomas

a. Highlights / Updates:

- i. Melanie Thomas submitted a report detailing the advocacy efforts of Voices for Children, highlighting the program's aim to enhance integration within the Juvenile Justice (JJ) community.
- ii. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Outcome: The objective for the fiscal year concluding on June 30, 2024, was to assist 550 dependent youth through direct advocacy. Melanie proudly announced that the organization surpassed this target, ultimately reaching 586 children.
- iii. Institutional Collaboration: Recently, the management team of Voices for Children toured the Youth Treatment and Education Center (YTEC) and held discussions with administration, including the Chief Probation Officer for institutions, Judge Petersen, and representatives from the Public Defender's Office. These conversations focused on enhancing their efforts to support dual-status youth, who are involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- iv. Programmatic Adjustments: Melanie indicated that, following these recent discussions, the program's new priority will be to increase support for dual-status youth. For the time being, the program will only accommodate up to 600 youth who are exclusively in the juvenile justice system on an exception basis. Currently, they are serving one such youth at the request of the youth's attorney, which is aiding in the development of future program strategies.
- v. Chair Collopy expressed gratitude to Melanie for her update and inquired if there were any questions from the commissioners. No questions were posed by the commissioners.

12. Neighborhood College - Rebecca Acevedo

a. Highlights / Updates:

- i. Rebecca Acevedo, representing Neighborhood College, provided an update on the organization's advocacy efforts for families impacted by the juvenile justice system in Riverside County. She explained that Neighborhood College represents 36 nonprofit organizations in the region, all of which are focused on delivering essential services to families involved with the juvenile justice system.
- ii. Ms. Acevedo expressed her enthusiasm about the inclusion of a youth representative on the Juvenile Community Coordinating Council (JCCC) and emphasized the importance of uplifting community-based organizations (CBOs) and nonprofits that are active within Riverside County. She urged the Commission to prioritize organizations providing direct services to youth and families affected by the system.
- iii. Ms. Acevedo raised the issue of diversifying the Commission, requesting more representation from individuals and organizations that have experience providing services for system-impacted families. She highlighted the need for commissioners who can directly relate to and understand the challenges faced by these communities.
- iv. Ms. Acevedo indicated that Neighborhood College and its partner organizations would be more than willing to assist the Commission in creating a more comprehensive directory of diversion services throughout the county. She mentioned that past efforts to compile such a directory had not come to fruition and noted that many families struggle to navigate the current referral systems, including services like 211.
- v. Ms. Acevedo pointed out that families, particularly those directly impacted by the juvenile justice system, often find it difficult to access resources and services. She expressed a desire for Neighborhood College to serve as a conduit for



these families, helping them navigate the complexities of the system and linking them to the resources they need. She shared a personal anecdote about the difficulties even she faced when trying to make a simple orthodontist appointment for her teenage sons, underscoring the challenges families encounter daily.

- vi. Commissioner Laurel Cook shared past efforts to create a directory of diversion services and explained that while the Commission had sought to keep such a directory updated, they were told it was being compiled by another agency.
- vii. Commissioner Cook acknowledged the frustration parents and caretakers feel when trying to access services. She mentioned that calls to the Commission requesting resources from caretakers had initially inspired the effort to develop the directory.
- viii. Ms. Acevedo reiterated Neighborhood College's willingness to help with this initiative.
- ix. Chair Collopy closed the discussion by thanking Acevedo again for her valuable input and contribution to the ongoing dialogue about how the Commission can better serve system-impacted families.

13. Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Inland Empire - Family Resource Specialist, Lucy Brito

a. Overview / Highlights / Updates:

- i. Lucy Brito, Family Resource Specialist at Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Inland Empire, outlined the organization's focus on foster youth, juvenile justice system-involved youth, and low-income families. Big Brothers Big Sisters operates in Riverside County and San Bernardino County, serving 180 youth through the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act. Each youth receives support from a case manager and college/career specialist to facilitate their path to internships, college, or trade schools.

b. Program Highlights:

- i. Ms. Brito shared about the Youth Support program, which pairs youth with mentors to provide consistent guidance and support to both children and their families. She also highlighted a success story of a mentor-child relationship that lasted from second grade through high school, with the mentee now on the path to college, showcasing the program's lasting impact.
- ii. Ms. Brito's role as a **Family Resource Specialist** involves connecting families to relevant services and resources. She emphasized that it's not just about giving families vague recommendations but ensuring they are fully supported through the process. Ms. Brito also follows up with families to hear about their experiences and improve services as needed.
- iii. Chair Collopy provided clarification on why Big Brothers Big Sisters was invited to the meeting. He explained that Commissioner Wade had suggested the invitation to explore potential connections between Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Probation department, highlighting the services that could be offered. Additionally, Chair Collopy recounted his own involvement with the organization, having served as a Big Brother for two decades, and praised it as an exceptional program. He also shared an inspiring success story about one of his two "Little Brothers," who achieved recognition as a New York Times best-selling author. He expressed his gratitude for the impact Big Brothers Big Sisters had on both of their lives.
- iv. Ms. Brito thanked Collopy for his comments and acknowledged the importance of creating long-term connections with youth.

14. Operation SafeHouse, Inc. - Norma Biegel, and Shawn Johnson

a. Updates:

- i. Norma Biegel and Shawn Johnson shared an update on Operation SafeHouse, Inc., which manages youth shelters in Riverside and Thousand Palms. In the recent period, 78 young individuals used their emergency shelters. Services include housing, meals, and support for those under 18.
- ii. Key stats include 2,000 meals provided, 688 nights of accommodation, and 328 hours of individual services. 25 families also received support. Safe exits reached 93% success.
- iii. Norma detailed some major challenges encountered at the Desert Shelter in Thousand Palms: including broken power lines causing outages and air conditioning damage. Units overheated, risking fires on a 117-degree day, requiring motor replacements. The fire alarm panel malfunctioned, prompting collaboration for repairs with the Fire Marshal and monitoring company. 17 to 20 youth were temporarily moved to Riverside for inspections and repairs.
- iv. Repairs are ongoing between IID and the shelter's air conditioning service provider, with a claim filed to recover costs.
- v. Staff were reassigned to ensure safety during extreme weather for both youth and staff.
- vi. The commission sought clarification regarding the age range of the youth participating in the program. Norma indicated that this specific initiative caters to individuals aged 11 to 17. Additionally, she mentioned that there are other programs available for youth aged 18 to 25.
- vii. Chair Collopy expressed gratitude to Norma and Shawn for their thorough update.

15. Department of Public Social Services (DPSS): Deputy Director, Dana Young

a. Updates / Staffing / Highlights / Data Report:

- i. Ms. Young provided a comprehensive report regarding the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS).
- ii. DPSS received 1605 referrals for June. This was a notable decrease from May, when the department had 3697 total referrals. Dana explained that after removing referrals classified as "evaluate out" (those that do not meet the criteria for follow-up), the actual number of referrals in May was 2473. She attributed the decrease of 868 referral in June to the



the closure of schools for the summer.

- iii. Geographical Breakdown of Referrals: Ms. Young provided a review of the geographical breakdown of the types of referrals investigated. The specifics of breakdown were included in the provided report and was verbally detailed during the meeting.
- iv. Ms. Young reported that there are approximately 6,000 young individuals currently in care, with 3,072 of them placed in out-of-home settings. Among these, 100 youth are receiving support in Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs). The largest segment, comprising 1,217 youth, is living with relatives, while 1,467 children are in resource homes, mainly through Foster Family Agencies (FFA). In total, 2,231 youth are located within the county, while 841 are placed outside its borders. Furthermore, in June, 83 children transitioned out of the foster care system, with reasons for their exit including adoption, family reunification, emancipation, or entering guardianship.
- v. The commission sought information regarding the capacity to manage approximately 83 serious cases daily. Ms. Young clarified that DPSS employs around 210 investigative social workers and 200 support social workers to address these cases.

b. Harmony Haven Updates:

- i. The current census at Harmony Haven consists of 30 youth, with an additional 30 youth pending placement. The center offers various activities, including Friday Night Live, in collaboration with RUHS, designed to promote positive and healthy development among the youth. The event will take place on July 16th.
- ii. In terms of behavioral health support, youth have access to on-site services that encompass substance abuse prevention, crisis intervention, and group therapy. Additionally, youth partners and Wrap services deliver specialized support tailored to individual needs.
- iii. Commissioner Torres commented on a recent visit to Harmony Haven with Commissioner Wade. She commended Ms. Young's efforts, noting that the facility was beautiful and had significant potential. He acknowledged the challenges faced by DPSS and expressed confidence in the future growth and improvement of Harmony Haven.
- iv. Ms. Young expressed gratitude for the commissioners' visit and feedback, emphasizing that the department is continuously working to improve the facility.
- v. Chair Collopy asked if there were any additional questions or comments from the commissioners. Hearing none, he thanked Ms. Young for attending and providing a thorough update on DPSS programs and activities.

16. Riverside County Probation (Institutions) - Chief Deputy Probation Officer (CDPO), Joe Doty

a. Updates / Overview / Highlights:

- i. CDPO Joe Doty provided an update on his return to the institutions after a six-month absence. He shared insights into the ongoing assessment of the current situation with fellow managers, particularly regarding the organization of youth populations across different facilities, including YTEC, Indio Juvenile Hall, and Southwest Juvenile Hall.

b. Transportation Issues:

- i. CDPO Doty highlighted that all youth in the Pathways to Success (PTS) program are currently located at YTEC for their treatment programs.
- ii. He also mentioned that there are no male detainees housed in Riverside, leading to transportation difficulties. This scenario creates considerable logistical hurdles when moving youth from Indio and Murrieta to Riverside for court hearings.
- iii. The transportation logistics have been particularly challenging due to inconsistent traffic patterns. He highlighted that over fifty percent of the detained youth come from Riverside, which intensifies the strain on staffing resources required for court transfers.

c. Opening of 20-Bed Detention Unit:

- i. A 20-bed detention unit will be opened at YTEC by the end of August.
- ii. Pathways to Success (PTS) Units: One of the PTS units at YTEC will be moved to Indio Juvenile Hall, effectively flip-flopping units between Indio and Riverside. This transition will allow for smaller units in Indio, consisting of a 14-bed unit and a 10-bed unit, compared to the 20-bed unit currently in YTEC.

d. Waitlist:

- i. **Pathways Waitlist:** Currently, there are 8 youth pending placement in Pathways. 3 youth will be admitted by the end of this month, and 3 more will be admitted after the transition in August, bringing the waitlist down to 2 youth.
- ii. **YTEC Waitlist:** Currently, 12 youth are pending placement at YTEC. The plan is to admit 6 youth by the end of July, reducing the waitlist by half.
- iii. **Short-Term Goal:** Reduce the waitlist for youth to less than 60 days.
- iv. **Long-Term Goal:** By **December**, reduce the waitlist to less than 30 days, depending on available capacity.

e. Female Youth Housing Adjustments:

- i. The transitional living unit at YTEC currently houses 6 female youth in treatment, plus 1 female youth in Pathways. This unit was initially designed for temporary accommodation for youth transitioning to work or college.
- ii. **New Plan for Female Youth:** All female youth will be moved to Southwest Juvenile Hall, where they will occupy a single unit with separate programming opportunities.



- iii. This will result in a total of 11 female youth being accommodated in one unit. The design of Southwest Juvenile Hall allows for programming them separately, with additional space available to accommodate separate programs as needed.
- iv. Long-term Goal: Eventually, the female youth will be separated into two units once staffing levels increase. The current staff levels are not sufficient to implement separate units for female youth in Southwest Juvenile Hall immediately.

f. Unit 6 at YTEC:

- i. The plan is to utilize Unit 6, YTEC, the transitional living unit, as a relief option for PTS youth and those YTEC youth who are progressing well in the program. Eligible individuals who are ready to transition off rounds will be accommodated there, with a capacity to house up to 20 residents. This initiative will enhance the capacity for both programs, effectively reducing the lengthy waitlists we have experienced. The unit is expected to be operational by December.

g. Questions and Responses:

- i. CDPO Doty addressed inquiries on the placement of youth in Indio and their assignment process. The long-term strategy includes starting Pathways youth in Indio and transitioning them to YTEC for phases three and four.
- ii. Currently, there is an excess of individuals in phases one and two, requiring a mix of youth from Riverside and Indio for safety and separation.
- iii. Criteria for separation consider factors like gang affiliations and criminal histories.
- iv. The goal is to establish smaller units in Indio for phases one and two, ensuring a pathway to YTEC as youth progress through the program.

h. Staffing and Hiring Update:

- i. The CDPO addressed staffing inquiries from the commission and participants, stating that fourteen officers were hired in May and June, with another fourteen planned for July and August.
- ii. Thirty staff are in CORE training, with twenty more starting in November. By September 2024, thirty more trained staff will be added. A new training program at the College of the Desert is open to community members for correctional officer recruitment.
- iii. Chair Collopy thanked CDPO Doty's detailed report on institutional matters, concluding the discussion.

17. Riverside County Probation (Institutions) - Chief Deputy Probation Officer (CDPO), Daniel Castaneda

a. Updates / Overview / Highlights:

- i. CDPO Castaneda presented comprehensive statistics on the youth population in custody as of July 1, 2024. The total number of youths in custody stands at 169, which includes 97 individuals in detention (93 males and 4 females), 40 at YTEC Camp (34 males and 6 females), and 32 participating in the Pathways Program (31 males and 1 female in a less restrictive setting).

b. Fights and Incidents:

- i. CDPO Castaneda noted a reduction in fights across all facilities. Only one fight occurred at the largest facility (YTEC) in the last month, with three fights at Indio Juvenile Hall, and seven fights at Southwest Juvenile Hall. CDPO Castaneda noted that Southwest has a higher number of fights as it serves youth from all three regions of Riverside County. However, staff interventions have successfully prevented many potential incidents.
- ii. CDPO Castaneda expressed a desire to better capture the number of fights prevented, noting that staff often mediate and de-escalate situations before they turn into physical altercations.
- iii. Zero suicide and escape attempts reported as of July 1, 2024.

c. Projects and Facility Updates:

- i. Fire Alarm System: The fire alarm system in the desert facility was recently completed, meeting safety regulations and providing additional protection for both youth and staff.
- ii. Camera Systems: The camera systems across all facilities are being upgraded. CDPO Castaneda explained that although cameras were already in place, they were outdated. The new cameras are more modern, and the upgrade project is nearly complete.
- iii. Safety Check System: The current system is being replaced with the new Guardian RFID system, expected to be implemented within the next six months. The new Guardian RFID system includes smartphones capable of recording incidents. This system is expected to be more accessible and improve incident response.
- iv. Air Conditioning Systems: The air conditioning systems are under ongoing evaluation. Several air handlers have already been replaced, and CDPO Castaneda noted that 3 or 4 units were recently updated to ensure they can handle the extreme desert heat.
- v. Southwest Juvenile Hall - Kitchen Flooring Replacement: Ongoing replacement of 20–23-year-old kitchen flooring.

d. Vocational Expansion at YTEC:

- i. The welding lab project is progressing, with 50% of construction drawings completed. The facility is expected to break ground in the first or second quarter of 2025. The expansion will include Auto lab, HVAC training, welding area, indoor basketball court, and visiting space.

e. Questions and Dialogue:

- i. CDPO answered a variety of questions about institutions posed by the commissioners and participants.
- ii. Chair Collopy remarked on the decrease in altercations compared to the previous month and inquired about the status of an officer who had sustained injuries earlier.



- iii. CDPO Castaneda noted that Southwest Juvenile Hall consistently reports the highest incidence of fights among all facilities. Nevertheless, the proactive measures taken by the staff have successfully averted many potential conflicts from escalating into physical confrontations.
- iv. Regarding the injured officer, CDPO Castaneda indicated that the officer has resumed duty but is not yet fully prepared for all responsibilities. He has been assigned to a role that aligns with his current capabilities and is expected to return to field operations soon.
- v. There was an inquiry about possibly incorporating microphones into the enhanced camera systems.
- vi. CDPO Castaneda stated that currently, only video recording is being used, which is in line with the typical procedures followed by many counties. Nonetheless, he indicated a readiness to contemplate the addition of audio recording. Joe Doty also mentioned that each building will have several smartphones with recording abilities included in the updated Guardian RFID system, allowing employees to record incidents as they happen.
- vii. Chair Collopy subsequently asked if the commissioners had any additional questions or comments. With no further responses, he expressed his gratitude to the CDPO Castaneda for the comprehensive institutional report he provided.

18. Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE) - Executive Director, Deanna McCarty

a. Updates / Overview / Highlights:

- i. Deanna McCarty provided a positive update on the recent graduation season within RCOE's alternative education programs. A total of 221 students successfully graduated from the community court program, which primarily serves students involved in the juvenile justice system. Ms. McCarty proudly reported the high success rate, emphasizing that this program serves students facing significant challenges, including those with criminal justice involvement.
- ii. Additionally, RCOE celebrated graduations at the Day Reporting Center, which serves adult learners. Ms. McCarty expressed enthusiasm for the program's role in helping adult students reintegrate into society by completing their high school equivalency diplomas.

b. Summer Camps and Projects:

- i. RCOE's summer camps in collaboration with the University of UCR cater to students who are incarcerated and adjudicated, operating in a hybrid format. For a minimum of three days, these students participate in the summer camp activities.
- ii. Additionally, RCOE is concentrating on tiny house initiative aimed at promoting sustainability and addressing the needs of the unhoused population, while also striving to create a positive social impact. The project received a very positive response from the students.

c. Current Enrollment and Population:

- i. McCarty reported that across the three main RCOE sites—YTEC, Indio, and Southwest—there were 114 students enrolled at the time of the meeting. She highlighted that the largest demographic group was 11th-grade students, and there was a significant population of special education students. This data underscores the need for specialized support services for this group of students, many of whom are navigating both academic and behavioral challenges.

d. Focus on Foster Youth:

- i. A key priority for RCOE is its focus on improving support for foster youth. Ms. McCarty explained that RCOE is currently exploring ways to offer better assistance, both internally and through partnerships with local school districts. She mentioned the creation of a special task force dedicated to developing nationally recognized programs for foster youth, with the goal of addressing the systemic challenges these students face. Ms. McCarty encouraged attendees to share creative ideas or suggestions that could help RCOE build a model that can be implemented across the state, and eventually, the nation.

e. Comments and Discussion:

- i. Chair Collopy brought up an issue about preventing school violence, mentioning that one of the goals of the Commission is to address school violence problems through a prevention approach focused on preventing delinquency.
- ii. Chair Collopy mentioned a comment from the Sheriff in an interview, indicating that school resource officers were told not to report incidents on school property to keep data clean and decrease suspension/expulsion rates.
- iii. Chair Collopy inquired whether Ms. McCarty could bring this issue back to RCOE and if a response could be given later.
- iv. Ms. McCarty clarified that the legal process of filing charges does not determine if a student will face suspension or expulsion. School districts must document all disciplinary incidents even if charges are not filed, as mandated by the OCR. Expulsion rates have increased this year in county schools despite expectations of a decrease. Research shows that expulsion may not deter criminal behavior effectively and could hinder academic progress. It is vital to explore alternative disciplinary approaches and assess factors influencing suspension rates accurately.
- v. Furthermore, Ms. McCarty acknowledged the raised concerns over the data shared by the Sheriff's office and proposed that some interpretations of the data correlation could be inaccurate in certain cases. Ms. McCarty also recognized the concerns regarding the data provided by the Sheriff's office and suggested that some interpretations of the data correlation might be misleading in specific instances. This is not necessarily due to any malicious intent, but rather because certain assumptions are occasionally made.

f. Discipline and Expulsion Trends Discussion:

- i. Ms. McCarty noted RCOE has observed a decrease in expulsions over time; still, RCOE has seen an increase in both suspensions and expulsions in the past year. Ms. McCarty mentioned that kicking students out of school may not be a



successful way to stop them from committing crimes in the future, as research shows that taking them away from the learning environment can hurt their academic growth. RCOE has been actively promoting alternative disciplinary approaches and social-emotional learning through thorough training for both students and educators.

- ii. Chair Collopy raised a concern that the effort to decrease expulsions may unintentionally promote a culture of acceptance towards violence within schools.
- iii. In reply, Ms. McCarty hoped that this would not happen, stating that every school follows set policies and the education code, outlining actions that can lead to expulsion. She emphasized that expulsion can no longer be based solely on disruptive or unruly behavior, especially for younger students, and pointed out recent updates to the education code that support this shift.
- iv. Ms. McCarty finished by mentioning that although she didn't have all the details of the Sheriff's interview, she would examine it and pass on any important information to Dr. Gomez, who has worked closely with the Sheriff on these issues.
- v. Chair Collopy thanked Ms. McCarty for her insights and asked her to communicate the concerns about school violence to RCOE for additional review.
- vi. Ms. McCarty concurred with this and assured that she would stay in touch.
- vii. Chair Collopy asked if there were any further questions or comments from the commissioners. Receiving no responses, he thanked Ms. McCarty for her insights and updates regarding RCOE.

19. Office of the Public Defender - Roxana Alcon (SPARK Team)

a. Updates / Overview / Review of Data / Highlights:

Roxana Alcon emphasized that the SPARK program consists of three teams: Riverside, Southwest, and Desert, and stressed that SPARK is adapting to meet growing demand for its services.

- i. SPARK had 158 new client referrals in the previous quarter. Breakdown by region: Riverside has 53, Southwest has 76, and Desert has 29.
- ii. The number of clients referred as of June 27, 2024, is 193. Roxana observed that customers could come back for a variety of factors, like shifts in family relationships or additional obstacles, even after their original requirements have been satisfied. SPARK's goal is to have a policy of welcoming clients and their families back for help as long as they continue to meet the program's requirements.

b. Educational Services Focus:

- i. The highest demand for services continues to be in education. Many justice-involved youth face educational barriers, and SPARK focuses on helping them overcome these challenges.
- ii. A total of 131 education referrals were made. Special Education Needs accounted for 57, School Discipline Needs for 13, and General Education Needs for 61.
- iii. Roxana detailed the services requested by category, including education, legal, and social worker services. The highest demand was noted in education services, particularly for youth facing unique barriers and obstacles.
- iv. Services are tailored to meet the individual needs of each youth, and the team dedicates significant time and resources to help them succeed.

c. Holistic Approach:

- i. SPARK takes a holistic approach to helping youth, focusing not just on their court involvement but also on their home environment, community engagement, and educational needs. The team works to build relationships and establish rapport with the youth and their families, identifying areas where they can offer support beyond the legal system.

d. Testimonial (Ernesto from Kindful Restoration):

- i. Ernesto shared his positive experience working with SPARK, noting that the program operates with heart and effectively manages challenging situations. He expressed gratitude for SPARK's approach, especially in supporting youth who may be turned away by other agencies due to their criminal history.

e. Questions and Responses / Dialogue:

- i. SPARK provided a variety of answers regarding SPARK SERVICES to both the commission and participants when addressing their inquiries. The conversation covered the following topics:
- ii. The commission inquired if SPARK checks if clients have utilized services from other community groups before working with SPARK.
- iii. SPARK stated that it currently does not monitor if clients have received services from other organizations. Even though they have collaborations with community-based organizations (CBOs), they are unable to verify if clients have previously used services from these organizations.
- iv. The commission asked SPARK about the possibility of duplication of services.
- v. SPARK recognized that although there may be some overlap in services, their offerings are separate from those of the Public Defender's Office. SPARK is usually recommended to clients by community organizations when there are specific needs that SPARK is well-equipped to handle.
- vi. Commissioner Cook asked for a list of the local organizations that work together with SPARK.
- vii. Roxana promised to work with her supervisors to put together a list of these organizations, understanding the significance of encouraging a thorough grasp of community services.



- viii. The commission also inquired about SPARK's focus on providing educational assistance to students who struggle academically.
- ix. SPARK stated that they take a comprehensive method to assess educational requirements, even if the initial referral is not education related. Education is frequently emphasized during the intake process because it is instrumental in steering youth towards positive results.
- x. Finally, it was asked whether SPARK is aware of any programs in the District Attorney's office that help young people with their education.
- xi. SPARK mentioned that although they are not familiar with all the programs in the DA's office, they do know about Project Graduate. This program assists foster youth by employing volunteer attorneys to ensure they stay on course for graduation.

f. Housing Assistance for Youth:

- i. SPARK is currently working with a youth who is facing housing insecurity. The youth, accepted to Cal State San Bernardino, needs housing near campus. Roxana asked if anyone in the room had connections or resources that could assist with housing.
- ii. Some commissioners suggested avenues to explore, and the conversation remained open for future collaboration.
- iii. Chair Collopy thanked Roxana and the SPARK team for their comprehensive report and noted the value of the information provided.

20. Meeting Adjournment:

- i. Announcement of Adjournment in Memory of Mike Burns: Chair Collopy announced that the meeting would adjourn in memory of Mike Burns, the founder of the Juvenile Defense Panel.
- ii. Acknowledgment of Legacy: Chair Collopy thanked Commissioner Cook for bringing this forward and expressed the Commission's condolences to Mike Burns' family. The Commission acknowledged Mike Burns' legacy and his contributions to juvenile defense, noting that today's adjournment would honor him.
- iii. Motion to Adjourn: Motion: A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Cook, seconded by Commissioner Parker.
- iv. Vote: All in Favor: The motion passed unanimously with all commissioners voting aye.
- v. With no further business, the meeting was officially adjourned at 4:26 PM.
- vi. Chair Collopy thanked everyone once again for their participation and declared the meeting closed.

Next Meeting: August 08, 2024 / Time: 1:30 pm

Location: Rustin Conference Center (Entrance 1) Room TBD
2085 Rustin Ave., Riverside, CA 92507