



JJDPC Quarterly Inter-Agency Meeting
Minutes

October 10, 2024

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Paul Parker, Laurel Cook, Michael Belknapp, Amanda Wade, Pam Torres, Alida Torres, Patricia Watson, Joshua Angell, Cari Shepherd, Rachel Ligtenberg, Roxana Alcon, Joelle Moore, Allison Donahoe-Beggs, Carolina Ayala, Bruce Fordon, Melanie Thomas, Cynthia Magill, Deanna McCarty, Kristin Brooks, Janine Moore, Norma Biegel, Ernesto Rodriguez, Kathleen Rodriguez, Natasha Dunlap

Unexcused / Excused Absence: Christopher Collopy (Excused), Georgia Hussein (Excused)

Applicants: Jay Franklin, Bobby Wheeler, Brian Ortiz, Daniel Marmolejo

1. Welcome / Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

- a. The meeting began with welcoming remarks from Commission Vice Chair Paul Parker.
 - o V.C Parker welcomed participants and invited introductions.
 - o The meeting started at 1:37 PM with a quorum present.
 - o Commissioner Torres led the Pledge of Allegiance.
 - o Commissioner Torres introduced her sister, Alida, who has 48 years of experience in architecture, particularly in schools. Alida expressed admiration for Commissioner Torres's work and interest in contributing.

2. Public Comment

- a. V. C. Parker invited public comments. No comments were made.

3. Approval of: October 10, 2025, Agenda

- o Commissioner Pam Torres made a motion to approve the agenda, which was seconded by Commissioner Patricia Watson. V. C. Parker confirmed the affirmative vote: The ayes have it and the motion was accepted.

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

- o Motion to approve agenda made by Commissioner Pam Torres, seconded by Commissioner Patricia Watson. V. C. Parker confirmed the affirmative vote: The ayes have it and the motion accepted.

5. Presentation: Kindful Restoration - Co-Executive Director, Ernesto Rodriguez and Co-Executive Director, Kathleen Rodriguez

- a. Overview and Highlights:
- b. Ernesto Rodriguez gave a detailed update on Kindful Restoration's current programs and initiatives. Kindful Restoration is a grassroots nonprofit located in Riverside, operating under the Community-Based Organization (CBO) initiative. The organization began with programs for incarcerated individuals and has since expanded its services.
 - o The program structure includes three main pillars. The first pillar focuses on foundational programs, which emphasize Mindful Kindness, education on domestic violence, and awareness of electronic contraband. The second pillar is the Peer Mentor Leadership Program, which employs the Cultures of Collaboration model, allowing participants to lead and connect with staff and those who are incarcerated. This leadership encourages positive cultural changes within facilities. The third pillar involves certifying individuals as Peer Support Specialists, equipping them for meaningful jobs after release and supporting their personal growth and change.
 - o Kindful Restoration is currently collaborating with CDPO Daniel Castaneda to apply their youth program model in three juvenile facilities. This process comprises three approval phases and ongoing workshops that adapt the program for unique institutional environments. The youth program aims to combat gang involvement and raises awareness of gang-related issues, reflecting insights gained through their work with youth affected by the system.
 - o Programs and services are available for adults and youth, including substance abuse counseling, anger management, education on domestic violence, digital literacy, financial literacy, and community health worker services. Kindful Restoration uses a grassroots, relational approach to build trust with participants, addressing personal and behavioral issues. The organization works closely with youth and their parents to tackle the root causes of problematic behavior. An example includes a youth whose attendance at school improved significantly due to collaborative efforts, leading to additional services like tattoo removal and firefighter training enrollment. Programs are inclusive and embrace a diverse range of cultures, genders, and ethnicities.
 - o The staffing consists of six core members with various qualifications such as Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist certifications and community health worker credentials. Technical support from DHCS ensures adherence to policies and procedures, emphasizing the importance of lived experience in the effectiveness of the staff and volunteers. The team includes several advisory members who provide additional expertise.
 - o Kindful Restoration actively engages in community advocacy, attending Sacramento meetings and grassroots events to strengthen partnerships and enhance youth programs. All services are free, funded through Medi-Cal



billing, grants, and support from the Kinder Foundation. They adopt innovative funding strategies to ensure accessibility for those in financial need. The organization is also integrating technology, using Slack for consistent engagement with youth, tracking their progress, and promoting peer mentorship.

- Success stories highlight positive outcomes, such as a former incarcerated individual now working as a case manager, showing the lasting impact of their reentry programs. Future goals include expanding staff numbers from six to fifteen within six months and initiating Enhanced Care Management (ECM) services in partnership with several health networks, eliminating the need for external referrals. Mr. Rodriguez informed the group that he has recently been appointed as District 1 Representative for the JJCC.
- Commissioners expressed gratitude for Kindful Restoration's contributions and invited them for further updates.

6. Department of Behavioral Health - Deputy Director, Children's Services, Janine Moore

- a. Updates / Highlights:
- b. Deputy Director Janine Moore introduced herself and expressed gratitude for attending. She mentioned that there were no specific updates on current Behavioral Health initiatives, but affirmed that the department is involved in ongoing activities and is open to collaboration.
 - She commended Kindful Restoration for achieving Medi-Cal certification, highlighting it as a significant achievement. Deputy Director Moore discussed potential collaboration on services for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated youth and adults, stressing the importance of peer support roles.
 - She plans to connect individuals in the Behavioral Health system with Kindful Restoration to consider collaboration and resource sharing. Additionally, she will arrange visits to Kindful Restoration programs.
 - V.C. Parker remarked on the value of such meetings for creating connections that might not happen otherwise.

7. Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE) - Dr. Deanna McCarty, Executive Director Alternative Education

- a. Updates / Highlights / Data Report:
- b. Dr. Deanna McCarty introduced Dr. Kristin Brooks, who has a long history in education, including roles as a speech pathologist and Director of Special Education. Dr. Brooks has worked with the California Department of Education on a statewide inclusion grant. Dr. McCarty updated attendees on RCOE data focusing on court schools, with no data included from community schools or the Desert Edge School jail program, to promote transparency regarding court schools.
 - RCOE has launched a new semester of dual enrollment with the University of California, Riverside, offering courses in cybersecurity and ethnic studies. Work is ongoing to develop more options related to the Pathways to Success program, although there are challenges in gathering data due to issues with platform management outside RCOE's control.
 - In terms of course passage rates, last academic year, students had a 96% passage rate in courses that met A-G requirements, ensuring they remain eligible for further education.
 - A new education code, AB 2181, effective January 1st, removes the reduced credit track for juvenile court students. Graduating students must now earn 200 credits, which opens up more opportunities for Career and Technical Education (CTE) electives and better prepares them for college and careers. Legislatively, the original reduced credit tracks aimed to help students avoid credit deficiencies but led to early graduations, complicating programming for probation and support services to meet student needs.
 - Anticipated trends include higher enrollment as students will take longer to meet traditional credit requirements. This increase will not increase the number of adjudicated or incarcerated students but will decrease early graduations. Enrollment data will be tracked to see the effects of these changes, which are expected to improve educational options and align better with probation needs.
 - In social-emotional learning, results from the Panorama Screener highlighted emotional regulation, growth mindset, self-efficacy, and social awareness, revealing areas that need improvement. Growth mindset scores were around 51% at AMC-YTEC, 45% at L. Smith, and 43% at SW, while the national average for social awareness is about 67%.
 - Lastly, updates on student interventions focused on enhancing support for behavioral, academic, and English language development, especially for English language learners, to address barriers and ensure continued support.
- c. Discussion Topic: Incident Reporting on School Property
 - V.C. Parker asked about a concern from Commissioner Colby regarding school resource officers not reporting certain incidents to improve public perception.



- Dr. McCarty mentioned difficulty in finding the specific interview mentioned. She explained her efforts to investigate by checking sheriff interviews and consulting the public liaison. Dr. McCarty requested more details to identify the source and noted no definitive information was found despite communication with the superintendent's office. She clarified that law enforcement decides on charges related to school incidents, not schools.
- V. C. Parker acknowledged Dr. McCarty's detailed presentation and thanked her for the clarification. He invited final questions, and hearing none, he concluded the discussion.

8. Department of Public Social Services (DPSS): Deputy Director Children's Services, Allison Donahoe-Beggs

- a. Updates / Highlights / Data Report:
- b. Deputy Director Allison Donahoe-Beggs shared data on child welfare referrals for the last three months.
 - Referrals typically drop in summer when schools are closed. In September 2024, there were 3,600 hotline referrals; August had 2,964, and July had 2,273. Compared to 2023, there is a slight year-over-year increase in referrals. Response priorities include immediate reactions within 24 hours and mid-responses within 5-10 days, while non-abuse or neglect cases are screened out.
 - Abuse is categorized into physical, emotional, neglect, sexual abuse, and "other" (e.g., sibling at risk), with neglect being the most reported. In September 2024, 97 youth exited placements through adoption, reunification, or emancipation. There are currently 2,000 youth in in-county placements and 871 in out-of-county placements. Summer 2024 saw five CSEC referrals in June, four in July, and seven in August, with a total of 143 identified CSEC youth. Current STRTP placements dropped to 91 youth, with stays longer than six months needing Deputy Director approval, and there are over 1,000 youth in relative placements and 1,500 in resource homes, with ongoing efforts to increase relative placements.
- c. Harmony Haven Updates
- d. Summer 2024 Data:
 - Location: Beaumont; former Childhelp campus.
 - Purpose: Transitional shelter for youth awaiting permanent placement (e.g., foster homes, relative placements, STRTPs).
 - Current Census: 32 youth, with some placed in alternative settings (e.g., hotels) due to behavioral challenges.
- e. Staffing and Training Enhancements:
 - Residential Care Workers have been reclassified from Social Services Assistants. Staff receive Pro-ACT training focusing on de-escalation and crisis communication. Radios and codes aid communication. Shift Pass-Down Meetings occur 2-3 times daily. Hiring for Social Worker IIIs continues while monitoring caseloads.
- f. Partnerships and Resources:
 - Beaumont Unified School District: New MOU for on-site educational programs.
 - Behavioral health support includes on-site therapy from Monday to Thursday, monthly therapy dog visits, and a drug prevention program with activities for youth on Friday nights. The DPSS Office of Wellness provides on-site coaching for staff and youth twice a month.
 - Quarterly meetings with probation will focus on better collaboration and addressing issues, including those related to Harmony Haven. The next meeting is on November 13, 2024.
 - Additional resources include CPI Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training, noted by Division Director Rachel Lichtenberg as helpful for staff managing youth in crisis.
- g. Discussions and Q&A:
 - Extended Stays at Harmony Haven: Commissioner Wade asked about youth staying more than five days. Deputy Director Donahoe-Beggs responded that about 20-25 out of 30 youth often stay longer than three days due to behavioral challenges or placement delays.
 - Youth Returning to Harmony Haven: V.C. Parker inquired if youth frequently return after placements. Donahoe-Beggs noted that recidivism is common and stated that efforts are being made to stabilize placements by ensuring services are available and holding regular provider meetings.
 - Incident Reporting and STRTP Protocols: V.C. Parker expressed concerns about delays in reporting violent incidents, specifically about Harvest Safe Haven. Donahoe-Beggs explained that facilities must file Special Incident Reports (SIRs) promptly and notify DPSS of serious injuries or risks, involving police or paramedics as needed. CCL Manager Natasha Dunlap added that proper emergency intervention and de-escalation procedures help manage incidents.



- STRTP Capacity Limits: V.C. Parker noted concerns about STRTPs being limited to six residents, which Deputy Director Donahoe-Beggs clarified as true for individual homes, but larger agencies may operate several homes with this cap. V.C. Parker inquired about a facility with 72 residents identified it as Oak Grove, now classified as a group home. Natasha Dunlap stated that some STRTPs, like Father's Heart Ranch, can accommodate 16 residents.
- V.C. Parker commended DPSS for their dedication to supporting youth and highlighted the need for continued collaboration and effective communication in addressing challenges to further improve service delivery and ensure youth safety and well-being.

9. Office of the Public Defender - Joelle Moore (SPARK Team)

- a. Updates / Highlights / Data Report:
- b. Ms. Joelle Moore, Supervising Deputy Public Defender, leads the Juvenile Unit and the countywide SPARK unit. She presented updates on SPARK's data report alongside Senior Paralegal Roxana Alcon.
 - SPARK client numbers are steady but showed a slight decrease in new clients during the summer when schools, a primary source of referrals, were closed. However, following the return to school, there has been an increase in cases involving school-related incidents. During the summer, social workers focused on housing and job opportunities for youth, successfully securing three housing vouchers in Coachella Valley.
 - Regarding case numbers, there have been 335 new cases in the Southwest region and 197 in Riverside, with more new clients in the Southwest. Referrals to social workers increased, but referrals for education services declined during summer breaks.
 - The SPARK team collaborates with various organizations and is working on a centralized resource platform for community access. They aim to strengthen connections with community organizations and explore expanding SPARK services into institutional settings. The team will participate in the Justice System Symposium and the Coachella Valley Behavioral Health Open House, which will feature a new facility for adolescents.
 - Operationally, SPARK resource attorneys attended two IEP meetings in one day and engaged in a board meeting to enhance service access for youth. Changes are being made to improve the outcome data collection system for better measurement of results. Detailed metrics from upcoming reports are expected by the end of the year.
- c. Discussions and Q&A:
 - Commissioner Wade asked about how accessible the resource list will be for law enforcement agencies and noted that some police departments do not have diversion references for youth interactions. Joelle Moore responded that the list is being compiled with probation and is nearing finalization, aiming for wide accessibility. She mentioned that it is linked to a recently closed RFP for a community-led diversion model.
 - Commissioner Wade expressed interest in using the list to help police departments guide youth conversations effectively. Ms. Moore agreed on the importance of sharing the list with law enforcement and highlighted efforts to improve access.
 - Ms. Moore thanked attendees and reaffirmed their commitment to supporting youth and building community connections, with further updates to follow.

10. Voices for Children – Advocacy Supervisor, Melanie Thomas

- a. Updates / Highlights:
- b. Melanie Thomas provided updates on Voices for Children's progress toward its 2024 goal of serving 625 children in dependency cases. By the end of the first quarter, the organization had achieved 68% of this goal, with the remaining 32% expected to be aided by dual-status cases and occasional straight 600 cases upon request.
 - Advocacy staffing is focusing on dual-status cases while addressing broader dependency case needs. Voices for Children is on track to meet its goals, and future updates will share more on progress and resource allocation.
 - V.C. Parker thanked Ms. Thomas for the updates.

11. The Happier Life Project - Executive Director, Carolina Ayala

- a. Updates / Highlights:
- b. Executive Director Carolina Ayala provided updates on originations activities and services.
 - The Happier Life Project has recently signed a contract with the Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP) to start a Community Health Worker (CHW) initiative. A CHW will work at the Lake Elsinore location to aid in project development.
 - The organization has also been approved as Enhanced Care Management (ECM) and Community Support providers, with implementation currently in progress.
 - They applied for the Community-Led Diversion RFP to bolster their efforts. Additionally, they are working through the updated three-page probation application for inclusion in the Pathways and Youth Treatment and Education Center to enhance participation of credible messengers.



- A successful Recovery Walk in San Jacinto highlighted their community engagement efforts. Ms. Ayala is optimistic about these new initiatives and partnerships, expecting them to improve their organizational impact and community support, and will provide future updates on program outcomes.

12. Riverside County Probation (Institutional Services) - Division Director, Rachel Ligtenberg

- a. Updates / Highlights / Data Report:
- b. Division Director Rachel Ligtenberg introduced herself and provided updates on the department's current status. She pointed out the high detention numbers as of September 30th, noting that Indio Juvenile Hall is at capacity. The department is working to optimize bed space across three facilities to manage new intakes effectively.
 - The Youth Treatment and Education Center (YTEC) has made progress in reducing its waiting list through a successful redistribution of youth, with help from Behavioral Health and the Riverside County Office of Education to enhance client flow. Reports show that the level of critical incidents in facilities is stable, but future statistics may rise due to population shifts. Partnerships among facilities are crucial to prevent conflicts among youth from different areas.
 - The department has improved the credible messenger program, allowing more service providers access to facilities. In terms of facility enhancements, YTEC is developing a vocational and training site with a \$30 million budget and additional funding from the state. Both Indio and Southwest Juvenile Halls are also undergoing construction improvements.
 - New transitional programs have been introduced, including expanded housing and less restrictive programming with new funding sources. The Pine Grove Fire Camp program has grown, with two youths currently enrolled and another soon to join. Success stories include a young woman who had previously been in the system and is now working, attending college, and living independently, as well as another youth who transitioned successfully through collaboration among various services.
 - Discussions included the relocation of all female youth to Southwest Juvenile Hall, where they are housed in the same unit but participate in separate programming. A new safety check system has been installed in the first facility, with full implementation expected by January 2025. Behavioral health services were also addressed, with a request from the commission for a 90-day report on statistics concerning drug education and family reunification.
 - Additionally, updates on construction projects were discussed, specifically regarding the vocational center at YTEC and improvements at other juvenile halls. There was an inquiry about the pool at Indio Juvenile Hall, which Division Director, Ligtenberg will follow up on. She highlighted the importance of partnerships in dealing with complex cases and expressed gratitude for collaboration with various departments and community organizations, reaffirming the department's commitment to tailored solutions for youth.
 - V.C. Parker thanked Rachel for her thorough updates.

13. Riverside County Probation (Field Services) - Assistant Division Director, of Special Services, Cari Shepherd

- a. Overview / Highlights / Data Report:
- b. Assistant Division Director Cari Shepherd introduced herself as overseeing the Foster Care Resource Family Applicant Unit and the Aftercare Unit for youth transitioning from commitment settings. She noted that Shannon Crosby has been promoted to Chief Deputy Probation Officer, leaving the division with no current replacement. She additionally noted that many executives were also absent today due to attending the Desert Symposium.
 - As of the latest report, there are 24 youth in Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs), with 2 being probation-led and 19 DPSS-led. Additionally, 20 youth are in the Extended Foster Care Program, and more are expected to join soon.
 - The division is waiting for a new Division Director to be appointed. V.C. Parker inquired about contacts with the Rose Again Foundation in Temecula for foster programs, to which no one had direct connections. He plans to reach out for more information.

14. Operation SafeHouse, Inc. - Norma Biegel

- a. Updates / Highlights:
- b. Norma Biegel, representing Operation SafeHouse, provided updates on the organization's activities and the effects of its services on youth.
 - In the last three months, SafeHouse served 48 youth, provided 350 bed nights, and delivered over 200 counseling hours. Ms. Biegel shared letters from young people who benefited from the services. One participant expressed thankfulness for shelter during difficult times, preventing homelessness, while another described feeling a sense of belonging and receiving therapy. The stories highlighted the program's positive influence, including better communication, respect for family, and wise decision-making.



- Operation SafeHouse staff offer personalized support, including therapy and life skills training, alongside resources like meals and daily care to foster a nurturing environment. The organization works with families to restore trust and safety and helps youth understand their roles in family dynamics.
- Youth reported improved mental health and resilience, highlighting self-respect and respect for others. Ms. Biegel stressed that SafeHouse is more than a shelter; it's a place for youth to feel respected.
- Norma announced a Trunk or Treat event at SafeHouse next Thursday, with vendor spots still available for those interested.
- V.C. Parker praised Operation SafeHouse for its significant role in providing safety for vulnerable youth.

15. Community Care Licensing (CCL) - Regional Manager, Natasha Dunlap

a. Updates / Highlights / Data Report:

b. Natasha Dunlap, Regional Manager of Community Care Licensing (CCL), provided updates on facility licensing activities as of September 30th, including information on pending applications, program statements, and fire clearance statuses. She addressed questions from the last meeting about facilities that plan to accept probation youth.

- For STRTP and group home licensing updates: one STRTP that was pending fire clearance has now received it, with a pre-licensing visit scheduled for next Tuesday, and licensing expected by the month's end for this 6-bed facility.
- A new 6-bed group home application from September is being reviewed, and updates on probation youth placements should come by the end of the month. Another 6-bed facility has pending revisions while the analyst awaits updates.
- Two STRTPs completed pre-licensing inspections last Thursday, with program statements approved and licenses expected by Monday; both intend to accept probation youth. An additional group home application plans to submit program statement revisions by October 15th and does not plan to accept probation youth.
- Analysts are managing application reviews and inspections, and there is collaboration with probation to align facility licensing processes with youth placement needs.
- V.C. Parker thanked Ms. Dunlap for her detailed updates and responsiveness to questions.

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

a. Updates / Highlights:

- Mr. Fordon reported no updates from County Counsel at this time.

17. Adjournment:

- With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:40 PM. V.C. Parker thanked everyone and declared the meeting closed.

Next Qtly. Meeting: April 10, 2025 / Time: 1:30 pm

Location: Rustin Conference Center (Entrance 1) Room TBD

2085 Rustin Ave., Riverside, CA 92507