

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT
JUVENILE JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL MEETING
January 13, 2025, AT 2:00 P.M.**

MEETING MINUTES

Host Location: Rustin Conference Center, 2085 Rustin Avenue, Conference Room 1055, Riverside

1. Call to Order – Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Chief Probation Officer Christopher Wright at 2:00 p.m.

Roll call of the members was taken. The following representatives were present:

Christopher Wright, Chief Probation Officer, Chairperson
Charity Douglas, Department of Public Social Services
Dr. Kristin Brooks, Riverside County Office of Education
Joelle Moore, Supervising Deputy Public Defender, Public Defender's Office
Michael Cabral, Assistant District Attorney, District Attorney's Office
Judge Mark Mandio, Riverside Superior Court
Caryn Marsella, Riverside Art Museum (RAM)
Dr. Johnie Drawn, Communities for Children
Caren Terry, Living Advantage
Zach Bell, California Family Life Center
Pete Serbantes, Camino Real Family Services
Ernesto Rodriguez, Kindful Restoration
Daniel Castillo, Reach Out
Rick Saldivar, Chance Initiative

2. Approval of Minutes from the November 18, 2024, Meeting

Christopher Wright presented the minutes from the November 18, 2024, JJCC meeting (handout). Christopher Wright made a motion for the JJCC to approve the meeting minutes. Motion was seconded by Caryn Marsella. Minutes were approved.

Oppositions: None

Abstained: None

3. RFP Updates

Chief Deputy LaToya Thomas provided a brief update.

a) Evaluation of Services/Gap Analysis

- a. The item is going before the County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, for approval of contract award.

b) Community-Led Diversion

The County Purchasing Department aims to have the evaluation committee complete its scoring phase by January 23, 2025. It also aims to complete the next phase of the process (score tabulation) by the end of the month.

c) Supportive Community Services

- a. The County Purchasing Department needs to resume reviewing submitted packages; it is anticipated the evaluation committee will conduct its review of responsive bids in early February. There will be an update provided at our next meeting.

Comments:

Ernesto Rodriguez asked how many packages were received. LaToya said she is not at liberty to disclose at this time.

4. CBO Alliance Meeting

Chief Deputy LaToya Thomas and CBO Alliance Chair Ramon Ramos provided a brief update. The CBO Alliance Townhall meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 20, 2025, at the Ysmael Villegas Community Center at Villegas Park in Riverside. LaToya noted that this will mark the second segment of the Transforming Juvenile Probation (TJP) local briefings, as members of the Casey Foundation team will be in attendance to share information with our CBOs, aligned to what has been shared with Probation staff and the TJP CORE team.

Ramon Ramos invited everyone to attend the first CBO Alliance Town Hall meeting, the theme is Transforming Youth Justice. The event will feature an incredible lineup of distinguished presenters who are leading efforts in the field of youth justice, including Yumari Martinez and Mahsa Jafarian of Catalyze Justice, Dr. Diana Quintana of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Chief Christopher Wright and Assistant Chief Natalie Rivera of Riverside County Probation, Supervisor V. Manuel Perez of the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, and Frankie Guzman of National Center for Youth Law. Youth Justice has been a cornerstone of the CBO Alliance since its inception and continues to be a driving force in its mission. This is a real milestone for the CBO Alliance as it will mark its first anniversary. Probation will email the flyer with details and registration information by the end of the week.

5. Fiscal Year 25/26 Program Proposals**a) District Attorney's Office**

Regional Manager of Victim Services, Katie Gilbertson gave a brief presentation (handout). The Crime Prevention Unit (CPU) was established in 2015; the year 2025 marks CPU's tenth year of service to the community. Their goal is to improve school attendance among truant youth, provide prevention education to youth, and direct intervention for youth and their families to improve quality of life and deter entry into the criminal justice system. One of their objectives is to provide prevention education in local schools, educate schools on what the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) is, and implement best practices with school districts. They work with SAFE Family Justice Centers (a co-located non-profit) and provide case management services. CPU has referrals partnerships with government organizations, and partner with all 23 school districts in the county. The program also works to establish youth's access to pro-social learning services, fieldtrips and activities that offer youth with experiences to enhance their sense of community connection and broaden their exposure to different activities. They are on their third year of offering Camp Highlander, a program run by UCR. Additionally, SFJC serves as a long-term program support option for youth via their evidence-based social emotional learning groups, including a teen leadership program called iLead, developed by the renowned leadership expert John Maxwell.

Comments

Ernesto Rodriguez asked how the process of building trust and rapport with youth is carried out so that they open up. Katie recommended keeping in constant contact with them.

Ramon Ramos noted that partnering with people who can relate to youth and their families is not being emphasized. He suggested strengthening that partnership piece to ensure everyone

works together to make collaboration more effective. Katie noted that there is always more that can be done to continue to involve everyone and suggested that those who have lived experience should not hesitate to reach out to the District Attorney's office. She went on to share that the Violence Prevention Council meets every two months; everyone is welcome to attend.

b) Public Defender's Office

Deputy Public Defender Joelle Moore gave a brief presentation (handout).

SPARK team members work collaboratively, using evidence-based practices, to assist in identifying unaddressed academic and mental health needs, as well as other barriers to successful transition into adulthood, and link youth to appropriate resources through coordinated community partnerships. Legal consultations, advocacy and referrals are also provided, as well as information sharing and trainings for partnering agencies, school districts, and community-based organizations. SPARK's volume of new clients receiving direct services has increased steadily since the first full reporting year in 2022 from 306 to 510 new clients in 2024. In addition, in 2024, preliminary data shows new services requested by category (955 total) were provided with a 95.6% completion rate, with only 4.4% being closed out for reasons such as a conflict, lack of response, or unwillingness to participate. Estimated 500 direct-service clients to be served, this number does not include presentation and resource fair audiences, or participating family/guardians of direct service clients. With respect to education outcomes, direct SPARK representation in school discipline matters contributed to better outcomes in over 90% of the cases. Moreover, approximately 34 clients/students received new or added special education services, and 14 clients/students were certified for an AB216 path to graduation. Referrals can be made from within the Public Defender's Office, by other County Agencies, School Districts or Community Based Organizations, as well as by the clients and/or families directly.

Comments

Rick Saldivar mentioned that he was happy to see that the Public Defender's office had the SPARK program. He shared that he walked into College of the Desert for a faculty meeting and Joelle's team was there. From the CBO's perspective, it demonstrated that they were in the right place and had the right intention to support the youth.

Johnny Drawn mentioned that it is a great concept, however, he believes it is a duplication of services. He expressed concern about the possible budget request and suggested fiscal prudence. He would like the public sector to look at the private sector, CBOs and grassroots organizations with the same concept of solid funding so they might develop capacity. This would be in hopes of creating something like that of public organizations and spend more directly on services to teach youth and customer service.

Joelle noted that their goal has always been to bolster what can be provided within the community as much as possible so that the youth they serve minimize or eliminate contact with the juvenile system. They, however, do not provide those services directly. The Public Defender's office in that capacity is streaming those resources to the community. They differ in that they provide direct advocacy for special education and discipline; they have ease of access to youth records. Additionally, they have a partnership with Inland County Legal Services (ICLS) and the ACLU to provide representation in more complex matters. As for the budget, it is an estimate at this point, the county has not released projections for FY 25/26 for

the county. It is unknown what the benefit costs will be, they want to do what they can to help boost the community with supportive services RFPs.

Ernesto Rodriguez highlighted the work that was done last year with the RFP and noted that lifting the budget cap is a process. He is one of the CBOs that requested and applied for the RFPs, and just started them to ensure that there is funding available for the work they do.

SPARK ensures they do everything they can to make sure that there is ongoing communication between SPARK, Probation, youth and their family.

Pete Serbantes asked if the staff who refer people to special education situations are certified in Special Education (SPED). Joelle mentioned staff are not certified in special education in terms of credentials. They do not make a direct referral to SPED, but rather they gather the records, review them, interview the youth and family. Their assessment is used as well as legal perspective based on what they know about special education services and available support that can be included in the youth's individualized education plan. This is followed by a conversation with the family and education rights holder about if they want to see if they are eligible for special education services. They help the family begin the process of putting in writing to the school to initiate a special education assessment.

Pete Serbantes asked about SPARK's database, who they work with, and how it works; how they get a more precise view and how to move from one point to another. Joelle noted they generally provide lot of trainings in the community, training individuals to advocate for their family and how to start the process. Pete expressed interest in the next training. As for their database, it is constantly evolving; they do follow-up and research.

Lynnette Jones thanked Johnny Drawn for speaking on behalf of CBOs. She thanked Joelle on behalf of the KIK program, for the staff that she has and the staff that her program has been allowed to work with, they are very compassionate and willing to work with them.

Ramon Ramos thanked everyone for their leadership. He mentioned he has worked with Joelle and her staff and knows there is a genuine concern for the youth they serve. He thanked Joelle and noted that her staff is a reflection of her and all of her efforts.

c) Probation

Division Director Olivia Serna gave a brief presentation (handout).

Successful Short-Term Supervision (SSTS) is a supervision model for youth ages 12 to 18 who have been granted informal probation pursuant to 654.2 and 790 WIC. The overall goal of the program is to work with the youth and their parents with improvement in school attendance/performance, abstinence from alcohol/substance abuse, participation in appropriate counseling, and positive community involvement through community service and/or participation in pro-social activities. The number one goal of the program is to assist the youth with successful completion of probation by the youth's first review hearing. The objectives are to offer SSTS to all applicable youth and maximize case management, intervention strategies with an emphasis on school performance, sobriety and pro-social engagement for successful outcomes. Per the March 2024 West Ed report, in calendar year 2023, SSTS served 455 youth. By December 31, 2023, 45% of youth participants were still actively participating in the program. Of the 55% of youth who had completed the program, 83% were successfully terminated. For the next twelve months, the goal is to serve 700 youth

in this program, with a 75% successful completion rate, or higher, by the first Review Hearing, and recidivism rate below 8% for successful participants.

YAT is a diversion program for youth and parents who choose to participate in this program, involving Juvenile Defense Panel attorneys to represent the youth, youth outreach counselors from a partnering CBO and Probation staff. This diversion program is available for applicable youth aged 12 to 17 for up to six months. The program is designed to assist youth with meeting case plan goals, address the underlying behavior resulting in the instant referrals, and introduce youth to a myriad of pro-social activities.

The 654.1 WIC program is a mandated diversion program for youth alleged to have driven under the influence. Case management is supplied by Probation, and Juvenile Defense panel attorneys provide representation for youth for up to six months. Youth are also referred to a treatment program for alcohol. Youth return to court once they complete their diversion program to have the matter heard in court, dismissed, and sealed.

YAT and 654.1 WIC objectives are to successfully divert all applicable youth into a program to emphasize and increase healthy family relationships, sobriety, and pro-social engagement, while addressing underlying negative behavior. YAT and 654.1 referrals come from law enforcement agencies. Per the March 2024 West Ed report, in calendar year 2023, YAT had one youth participate in the program, and 654.1 WIC had 15 youths participate. The one youth participant in YAT, successfully completed the program. Of the 15 youth participants in the 654.1 WIC program, 12 successfully completed by the end of the year, and three were still enrolled. The expectation is to serve a total of 25 youth in the year ahead for these populations. The expected outcome for YAT is a 75% successful completion rate, or higher, for participants. For 654.1 WIC, 80% successful completion rate for participants.

Comments

Pete Serbantes inquired why youth have the option of participating in the program or not. LaToya mentioned that the YAT model was revamped after a lawsuit the department received a few years ago, and the one of the factors was to specify that youth must voluntarily participate in the program. For youth who are applicable, after the internal assessment and eligibility for the program is determined, they are referred to the appropriate JDP attorney to establish contact, receive program information, and legal advisements, so they can make an informed decision about whether they want to participate in the program. Pete mentioned that a few years ago YAT had trained its deputies in the Parent Project and noted that it was a great idea. LaToya mentioned that she hopes that with the referrals established through the community-led diversion process, the CBO will have the direct connection to youth and families and parents and youth see that everyone is on their side.

Ernesto Rodriguez commented that in his experience working with youth, it is more effective when youth feel they can advocate for themselves; they feel included and are more likely to generate trust and rapport.

Martye Perkins said he was working with Corey Jackson when the lawsuit with YAT arose. His main job was to look after the youth. One of the things the lawsuit brought to light is that children should be able to fully express themselves. Unfortunately, it took a lawsuit to get there, but the good news is that it was fixed.

Yundra Thomas spoke from a parent's perspective about her own situation. She mentioned she did not know resources were available until she joined the CBO Alliance.

6. Raising the Future Event

CBO Alliance Chair Ramon Ramos provided a brief update.

Raising the Future event will be held on Saturday, March 22, 2025, at the Riverside City College. The budget as it stands is \$25, 649.81 for this event, of that amount, about \$10,000 has already been sponsored. RCC is sponsoring the event location, tables, chairs, projectors, screens, and sound. RCOE is sponsoring the stage, printing, flyers, posters, and signage. The CBO Alliance, The Exception, and Kindful Restoration are sponsoring some of the costs for guest speakers. Currently, there is still a shortfall of about \$16,000. Ramon requested the JJCC to sponsor \$5000 from the contingency fund to cover the cost of the canopy, tent, lunch, and refreshments.

Comments

Charity Douglas mentioned this is excellent, she is glad to see this event taking place, and for the speakers to engage the audience.

Pete Serbantes commended Ramon for the work he is doing with the JJCC. Pete suggested increasing the requested amount to \$6000. He was informed it is not feasible.

Rick Saldivar asked if something like this event would be brought to the 4th District, in the Coachella Desert Valley area. Ramon Ramos noted this was intended to be a pilot model; they have already been discussing what this would look like each year in different regions of the county.

Rick Saldivar asked about the audience this could be broadcast to. Ramon Ramos said it will be widely promoted in high schools, RCOE, colleges; it is open to the entire community.

Charity Douglas made a motion for the JJCC to sponsor \$5000 for the Raising the Future event. Motion seconded by Rick Saldivar. Motion passes.

Oppositions: None

Abstained: none

7. Public Comments

No public comments.

8. Council Comments

Pete Serbantes noted the point he was trying to make with his comment regarding why youth have a choice to participate in the YAT program was because as youth, they look to adults for answers, but youth have the right to choose and should be able to do so.

He mentioned that he attended YTEC for youth graduation and was impressed with youth and their parents who were there to support them.

He expects feedback or an update on the Community Service Plan by the first week of February.

9. Adjournment

Christopher Wright thanked everyone for attending. He reminded all council members to please be sure to submit in writing to Executive Secretary Leticia Haro, the name of their designee in the event they are unable to attend these meetings.

Next JJCC Meeting:

Date/Time: March 24, 2025, 2:00 p.m.

Location: Rustin Conference Center, Conference Room 1051

The meeting was adjourned at 3:36 p.m.

An attendance sheet was signed by all present and will be kept on file.

Meeting Minutes submitted by Probation Executive Secretary Leticia Haro