

MOTION BY CHAIR HILDA L. SOLIS AND SUPERVISOR SHEILA KUEHL

May 3, 2016

Ending Juvenile Solitary Confinement in Los Angeles County

Los Angeles County oversees the largest juvenile justice system in the State and the United States. The County has undertaken regular measures to become a leader in California by fundamentally changing the way safety is provided and maintained in its three juvenile halls and thirteen juvenile camps, which hold approximately 1,200 youth.

As voluminous scientific studies have established, solitary confinement can be psychologically and physically harmful to young people. It runs counter to the goal of rehabilitation in the juvenile justice system.

In 2017, the County will reopen Campus Kilpatrick as a new secure residential setting utilizing the "LA Model." Focused on therapeutic, holistic, and small-group treatment, this ~~This~~ model is projected to spread to all of the county juvenile detention facilities in the future and does not include solitary confinement or any Special Housing Unit (SHU).

Earlier this year, President Barack Obama took a similar step, banning restrictive housing for juveniles in the federal prison system except in very rare situations. Rather than using solitary confinement to deal with behavioral adjustments or conflict, Los Angeles County should achieve safety through relationship-building, trauma-informed care, positive youth development, small and therapeutic group settings, high-quality education, a relational approach to supervision, and an integrated group treatment model.

WE, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board:

Direct the Chief Executive Office and the Probation Department to end the practice of placing juveniles in restrictive housing, in accordance with the recommendations issued

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RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

KUEHL _____

KNABE _____

ANTONOVICH _____

SOLIS _____

by the United States Department of Justice. In very rare situations, after all other interventions have been exhausted, a juvenile may be separated from others as a temporary response to behavior that poses a serious and immediate risk of physical harm to any person. Even in such cases, the placement should be brief, designed as a “cool down” period, and done only in consultation with a mental health professional.

We further instruct the CEO, Department of Mental Health, and Probation Department to create new policies, procedures, enforcement mechanisms (including oversight by the Probation Oversight Commission currently being developed), and—reporting structures, and data release processes necessary to implement this change with full fidelity to the “LA Model” philosophy. This change shall be fully implemented at Central Juvenile Hall, Camp McNair, and Camp Scott by May 30, 2016 and at all remaining juvenile facilities by September 30, 2016. Extensive staff training should precede full implementation so as to prepare and support line staff in making this change.

We finally instruct the Probation Department and Internal Services Department to immediately begin repurposing or reconfiguring all Special Handling Housing Units (SHU) to alternative purposes, one of which could be the ~~use of some space to create~~ creation of “cool down” areas, which should be rarely used only under the circumstances described above, and ~~should~~ would be developed in consultation with on-site technical assistance from the Center for Coordinated Assistance to States. These “cool down rooms” need not be located in former SHU units, and the Department is encouraged to identify the most conducive space available for this purpose.

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