

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
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March 20, 2018

Dual Status Youth: Prevention and Coordinated Care

Los Angeles County’s (County) dual status youth, often called “crossover youth” and defined as youth who fall under the jurisdiction of both the dependency and delinquency systems, are an especially vulnerable population. A 2011 report by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation documented dual status youths’ dismal outcomes in education, employment, health, mental health, and in criminal justice-system involvement. The report also found a high percentage of these young people rely on public services, with 82% receiving public welfare benefits during early adulthood. Ensuring this population receives coordinated, effective services is important to breaking the cycle of negative outcomes.

Additionally, preventing youth in the dependency system from being arrested or having contact with the Probation Department is imperative. Recent data from the University of Southern California’s Children’s Data Network, in partnership with California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA), shows that four out of five incarcerated probation youth in the County had previously touched the child welfare system as well. Inequities must also be addressed; certain youth in the foster care system continue to be at disproportionate risk of justice-involvement, including African American youth (representing nearly half of the County’s dual status cases) and young women (who are only 20% of the probation population, yet 40% of dual status cases).

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The County has a strong history of leadership on dual status youth issues; in fact, Los Angeles was one of the first counties in the state to allow youth to remain in both the dependency and delinquency courts to improve service delivery (under Welfare and Institutions Code 241.1). Moreover, on September 4, 2012 and March 12, 2013, the Board approved two motions by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas aimed at strengthening County efforts to prevent Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)-involved youth and transition-aged youth, from crossing over to the delinquency system, as well as enhancing services to dual status youth, identifying additional funding for services, and improving data and research. Additionally, programs like the Children's Law Center's CARE (Crossover Advocacy and Resource Effort) Unit represent innovative partnership models with specialized case management for dual status youth.

In recent years, however, Countywide cross-system collaboration has waned and challenges have emerged. The County unexpectedly ended its DCFS-led Delinquency Prevention Pilot, intended to identify high-risk factors that if not addressed could lead to foster youth touching the justice system. Due to a range of issues including a lack of funding, the annual reports and evaluations conducted by Dr. Denise Herz from CSULA since 2013 are no longer occurring. Additionally, access to needed support services for dual status youth remains limited. In addition, other challenges have emerged in serving this population; for example, the recruitment of resource families for dual status youth has been very difficult, compounding the lack of appropriate placements for these young people.

The Juvenile Courts (Courts) have begun some promising new efforts around dual status youth, including reviewing the 241.1 protocol and piloting an innovative dual status court to hear cases in one courtroom. The County should explore building on the Courts' new efforts while reexamining and revamping its own approaches to dual status youth. This is especially critical in light of significant federal and state policy and funding changes on the horizon that may impact this population. The Office of Child Protection, created in 2015 and focused on improving communication, coordination and accountability across County child-serving agencies, is well-positioned to play this role.

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WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Instruct the Director of the Office of Child Protection (OCP), in collaboration with the Juvenile Courts, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Probation Department, Department of Mental Health, Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR), County Counsel, Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender, District Attorney, County Office of Education, Office of Immigrant Affairs, legal and justice advocates, community-based organizations and stakeholders, researchers, and any other relevant partners, to report back to the Board of Supervisors in writing in 180 days on a Countywide plan for dual status youth that is informed by an understanding of this population and the funding streams available to serve them, addresses ongoing cross-sector coordination and consistency, incorporates best practices from other jurisdictions, builds on efforts of the County and Juvenile Courts, addresses gaps, and includes at a minimum recommendations on:

1. Preventing youth in the dependency system from crossing over to the delinquency system, including:
 - a. Determining the feasibility of incorporating delinquency prevention into DCFS practice, the Core Practice Model, and trainings;
 - b. Alignment with the OCP's prevention plan and ODR's Division on Youth Diversion and Development;
 - c. The development of a coordinated care system to address the needs of youth identified as high-risk for crossing over into the delinquency system;
 - d. Strategies to address and minimize the most common ways youth cross over, including consideration of restorative justice alternatives; and
 - e. Strategies to reduce disproportionalities in which youth cross over.
2. Improving treatment of youth who are dual status, including:
 - a. Enhancing coordination between the two lead agencies, DCFS and the Probation Department, including ensuring access to foster care status

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- for youth under delinquency supervision when appropriate;
- b. Enhancing referrals and access to appropriate and high-quality health, mental health, substance abuse, housing, education, and employment services for youth and their families; and
 - c. Ensuring stable and appropriate placements, while minimizing placements in the juvenile halls and probation camps.
3. Strengthening data tracking and evaluation, including:
- a. Improving and sustaining the interagency 241.1 Multi-Disciplinary Team database; and
 - b. Research partnerships to measure trends and outcomes.
4. Any necessary policy changes, supports, and funding to achieve the Countywide plan and above objectives.

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