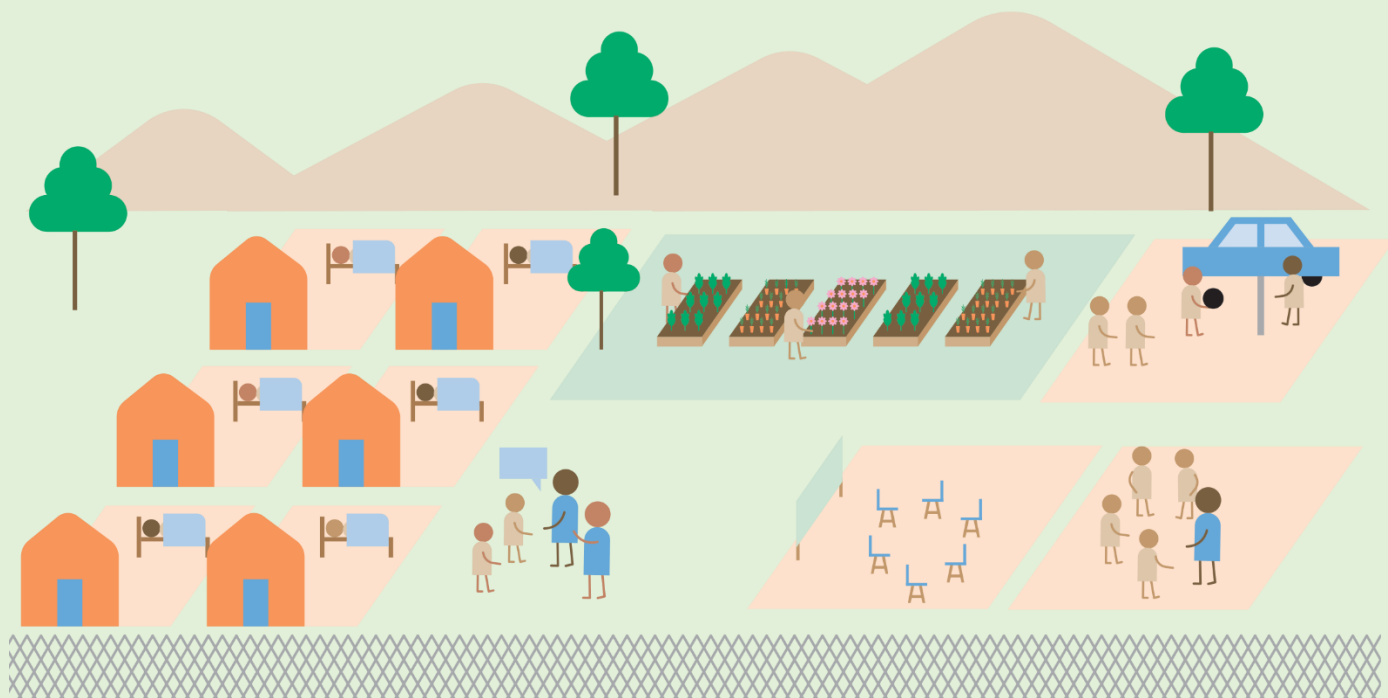


Los Angeles County:  
**Youth Justice  
Reimagined**



Recommendations of the  
Youth Justice Work Group  
**DJJ Transition Team**

W. Haywood Burns Institute  
December 2020

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## Executive Summary

In August 2019, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (BOS) passed a motion tasking the Office of Diversion and Reentry's Division of Youth Diversion and Development (YDD) and the Chief Executive Office (CEO) with establishing the Youth Justice Work Group (YJWG) to "explore the transitioning of the Los Angeles County's juvenile justice system out of the Probation Department into another agency, with the goal of creating a rehabilitative, health-focused and care-first system." The CEO hired the W. Haywood Burns Institute (BI) to lead the consultant team. Nationally recognized for expertise in convening and engaging community and system stakeholders to address structural racism within the administration of justice, BI contracted five experienced consultants from Los Angeles: Patricia Soung, Dr. Danielle Dupuy, Isaac Bryan, Kent Mendoza and Anthony Robles. Together, the team launched the YJWG whose approximately 150 members included youth, community, justice partners and government stakeholders.

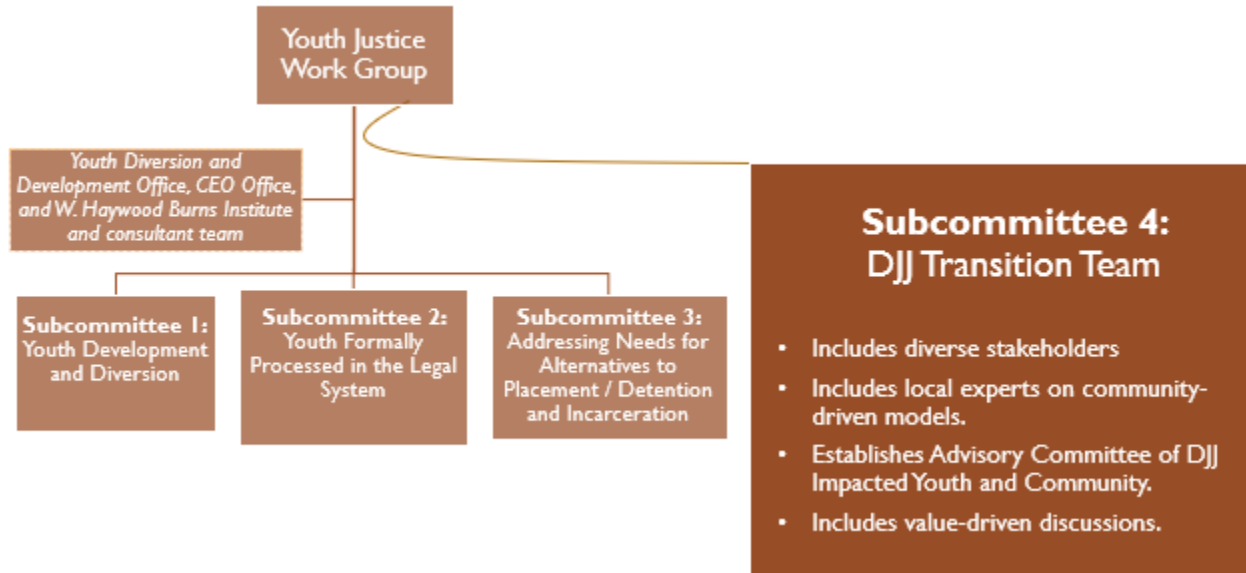
In January 2020, the YJWG began the work of reimagining youth justice. YJWG established three subcommittees focusing on distinct areas: 1) expanding youth development support in the community; 2) rethinking the approach to youth formally processed in the legal system such that it is more restorative and transformative; and 3) addressing needs for alternatives to placement, detention and incarceration.

As the YJWG convened to reimagine youth justice, on May 14, 2020, Governor Newsom announced the intention to close California's Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) addressed in his revised budget. On May 26, 2020, the BOS passed a motion directing the YJWG to help lead the first phase of planning for DJJ Closure. The motion named the YJWG as best equipped to plan for DJJ Closure "in a way that is consistent with and informed by ongoing work to reimagine the juvenile justice system in the County and improve treatment for youth in the County's care."

### **The motion directed the DJJ subcommittee to develop recommendations that consider:**

1. An analysis of how the new DJJ population may be incorporated into the model and plan under development by the Youth Justice Work Group for all justice-involved youth in the County, including youth committed to DJJ who are currently held in the County due to the DJJ's COVID-19 related moratorium on new admissions;
2. Strategies to prevent more youth from being tried as adults under the new system;
3. Strategies to increase community-based alternatives to detention options for youth who would have previously been sent to DJJ;
4. The status and capacity of the County's current juvenile facilities to adequately serve the needs of DJJ-committed youth justice populations, reserving any consideration of re-opening closed facilities, only as a last resort;
5. Preventing punitive practices that were previously eliminated or are being phased out from being reinstated;
6. Ensuring comprehensive oversight of the treatment of this new population as well as the DJJ reentry population currently being supervised by the County; and

7. Any budgetary, legal or legislative implications or changes needed to create the best system possible, including the potential of raising the age of jurisdiction in the County’s juvenile justice system to align with DJJ’s age limit, and ensuring the County receives sufficient funding from the State to fund the rehabilitative programs and services needed to serve this population.



In June 2020, the YJWG established an additional subcommittee to focus on promoting alternatives to DJJ that align with the ongoing YJWG’s progress. The subcommittee includes diverse representation and was led by Laura Ridolfi and Tshaka Barrows of BI and consultants Kent Mendoza and Patricia Soung. In addition, the DJJ Transition Team established an Advisory Committee of youth directly impacted by DJJ to guide the Transition Team and provide critical feedback to inform the work.

The DJJ Transition Team embraced the opportunity to challenge commonly held notions of justice for youth accused of more serious offenses. There was much discussion about the opportunity to shift away from a failed punishment approach focused on custody, suppression and control and to instead embrace an enlightened approach to the administration of justice, one centered in racial and ethnic equity, anchored in principles of youth development and focused on healing and rehabilitation of youth aligned with Youth Justice Reimagined.

Black, brown and indigenous youth bear the brunt of all justice system decision-making in Los Angeles County but particularly the most punitive and harmful decisions. In 2019, 100% of the youth that were tried as adults and all but two of the youth committed to DJJ youth of color. The inequities that exist today are evidence of structural, institutional and historical racism that stain any notion of the legal system as just and fair. The DJJ Transition Team had the opportunity to question why the most punitive sanctions are reserved for youth of color, to challenge traditional notions of justice that rely on punishment, suppression and control, and to reimagine an approach to justice that honors youths’ humanity, sees their potential and focuses on their healing.

The DJJ Transition Team benefited from various outreach efforts including an impactful meeting with Judge Greg Davis from New Zealand, who shared powerful insights regarding their efforts to keep youth

in the community rather than institutions. In addition, facilitators reached out to DJJ Director Heather Bowlds, Psy.D and Michael Farmer to gain insights on programs to consider in establishing local options. The facilitation team also held a meeting with probation leadership to ensure their perspectives were heard. Facilitators also reached out to Rising Scholars to discuss future collaboration to promote involvement of community colleges and higher education in DJJ alternatives. Finally, there was a powerful learning exchange hosted by Healing Dialogues in Action, which focused on the importance of connection and healing through modalities outside the traditional punishment system that benefit both those who survive crime as well as those who commit crime. The discussion highlighted ways to center restorative practices within the new alternative, including focusing on the needs of youth for connection, safety, trust, and redefining accountability in terms of healing.

On October 21, 2020, BI submitted to the offices of the CEO and YDD "Youth Justice Reimagined," a report outlining a care-first approach and calling for a Department of Youth Development (DYD) to resource and build a countywide Youth Development Network of CBOs providing support services and community development as well as responding to issues that arise.

On November 24, the LA County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a motion to move forward with initial components of Youth Justice Reimagined (YJR). The motion establishes a Youth Justice Transition Advisory Group (YJTAG) to "inform continued planning and implementation of the recommendations of the YJWG." The motion calls for a proposal that reflects an objective of making an initial investment of \$75 million in Fiscal Year 2021-2022 toward establishing the DYD. The framework of YJR was considered and built upon in the recommendations of the DJJ Transition Team.

On December 7, 2020, District Attorney elect George Gascón was sworn into office and announced as part of his directives that the office would no longer prosecute youth as adults. Based on this policy, the implementation of DJJ alternatives should assume that most youth otherwise subject to adult court prosecution will be served by a local DJJ alternative.

### **Summary of Recommendations (detailed Recommendations found on page 31).**

- 1.** Build upon Core Values of Youth Justice Reimagined by creating a plan to phase the transition of probation operations of Secure Alternatives to DJJ to DYD as soon as DYD has capacity.
- 2.** Establish and fund a DJJ Youth Advisory Body to ensure the experience of youth impacted by DJJ remains centered in the implementation of SB 823.
- 3.** Create a subcommittee of the multiagency Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) to immediately follow up on recommendations included in this report, designating four seats to community members, promoting continuity in representatives that participated in the DJJ Transition Team, and establishing a policy for no fewer than one annual convening to review programs and interventions serving as DJJ alternatives.
- 4.** Develop a plan for immediate repurposing of Campus Kilpatrick to serve as a first Secure Alternative to DJJ by July 2021, a pod within either Campus Kilpatrick or Dorothy Kirby Center to serve girls and youth with acute mental health needs who would otherwise be subject to DJJ and, if deemed necessary, Camp Gonzales by February 2022.

5. Direct Probation to immediately conduct a safety and security assessment of any facility or pod under consideration to serve as a Secure Alternative to DJJ and to immediately request an onsite Title 24 compliance assessment of Camp Gonzales by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC).
6. Continue efforts to reduce the number of youth committed to camp aligned with YJR and ensure all youth committed to camp benefit from a care-first, healing-centered approach across all facilities.
7. Direct Probation to collaborate with YDD and the Youth Justice Transition Advisory Group (YJTAG) to develop a plan to ensure initial staffing of Secure Alternatives to DJJ prioritizes backgrounds in social work, cultural healing, and youth development practices, and an initial cohort of Credible Messengers are hired and trained to work at Secure Alternatives to DJJ.
8. Develop a policy around dispositional decision-making to (i) involve recommendations from Youth Empowerment and Support (YES) Teams, (ii) when dispositions result in youth commitment to Secure Alternatives to DJJ, ensure regular and frequent court reviews to evaluate youths' progress with insight from the YES Teams; and (iii) create a process for "Step Down" to less restrictive settings as soon as permissible by law.
9. Direct Probation, YDD and the YJTAG to develop a plan for augmenting existing therapeutic programming at the Secure Alternatives to DJJ, including partnering with CBOs to provide youth development services.
10. Establish a practice of regular collection and reporting of key data regarding youth eligible for and committed to Secure Alternative to DJJ and youth subject to adult court prosecution disaggregated by race/ethnicity, age and gender and most serious adjudicated offense.

## Implications of Senate Bill 823

On September 30, 2020, Governor Newsom signed Senate Bill 823 which legislates a plan for closing the DJJ by transferring the responsibility for the custody, treatment and supervision of youth currently subject to DJJ to the counties. Per SB 823, DJJ intake will end beginning July 1, 2021 (with exception outlined below), but SB 823 provides no final closure date. It provides funding—estimated at \$225,000 per youth per year—to counties to provide services and improve facilities in order to increase local capacity to serve youth otherwise subject to DJJ. SB 823 increases local court jurisdiction and age of confinement in local youth facilities to align with the current upper age of confinement at DJJ.

### SB 823 includes important protections against the adult court prosecution of youth:

- 1. Intent for new dispositional track.** SB 823 codifies the Legislature’s intent to establish by March 1, 2021 a special dispositional track for “higher-need” youth to be used as an alternative to DJJ and adult court prosecution. The framework referenced by the legislature’s intent language identifies Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTF) as a commitment option for select youth otherwise subject to DJJ. The framework referenced by the legislature’s intent language puts limits youth who would be subject to this track, restricting eligibility to youth adjudicated of a 707(b) offense who was 14 years or older when the offense was committed and for whom the 707(b) offense was the most recent offense for which the youth was adjudicated. Under the framework, the court must then make a determination on the record that a less restrictive disposition is unsuitable after considering the severity of offense(s), including youth’s role and harm that may have been done; youth’s offense and commitment history; whether programming offered and provided at the SYTF is appropriate to meet treatment and security needs of youth; and whether the goals of rehabilitation and community safety can be met by assigning youth to an alternative, less restrictive disposition available to the court.

Under the framework, commitment to an SYTF would be accompanied by an individual treatment plan developed in concert with a multidisciplinary team of youth-serving experts and counsel for the youth. Commitment to an SYTF would trigger a baseline term of confinement with regular progress review hearings to evaluate youths’ progress and to determine whether the baseline term should be modified.

- 2. Extension of Juvenile Court Jurisdiction.** SB 823 extends the age of local juvenile court jurisdiction for youth adjudicated of offenses in WIC 707(b) to age 23 and to age 25 for youth adjudicated of offense in WIC 707(b) and who would face a sentence of seven years or more in the adult system.
- 3. Extension of Age of Local Confinement.** Under SB 823, youth whose case originated in juvenile court will remain in a local youth facility pending disposition of their cases until age 21, unless the probation department petitions the court to transfer a youth age 19 or older and a judge decides according to criteria to move the youth to an adult facility. Youth adjudicated guilty for serious and

violent offense and committed to a post-disposition program in a local juvenile facility can remain housed in a juvenile facility up to age 25, similar to court jurisdiction above.

**4. Extension of DJJ Intake for Transfer Cases.** SB 823 closes intake for new youth commitments to DJJ on July 1, 2021. However, youth otherwise eligible for DJJ in whose case a motion for transfer was filed may still be committed to DJJ until final its closure. Youth committed to DJJ will remain in the state system until discharged, released, or otherwise moved to an authorized facility. Any of these youth committed to DJJ after July 1, 2021, counties will be required to pay the state \$125,000 until the youth turns age 23.

SB 823 creates a Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant (JJRBG) administered by the state for counties to develop a local continuum of care that ranges from nonresidential community-based services to local or regional residential treatment facilities for youth. The Board of Supervisors in each county will make local funding allocations based on plans created by the counties.

Counties will receive funding based on a funding formula that includes various factors, including a county's youth population and number of youths adjudicated for DJJ eligible offenses. The by-county allocation during fiscal years 2021-2024 will be based on the following formula:

- 30% of the per-county percentage of the average number of youth committed to DJJ;
- 50% of the by-county distribution of youth adjudicated for certain violent felony offenses according to DOJ data; and
- 20% based on by-county distribution of youth population, ages 10-17.

The first funding allocation for counties eligible to receive JJRBG will be made by September 1, 2021 and each September 1 annually thereafter. Governor Newsom's DJJ Realignment Bill Summary estimates that by fiscal year 2023/24, Los Angeles County will receive \$40,725,895 per year to work with youth otherwise subject to DJJ.

To be eligible for JJRBG funding, counties must create a subcommittee of the multiagency Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) to develop and submit a plan to the newly established Office of Youth and Community Corrections describing the facilities and placements, programs and services, and reentry and supervision strategies developed to provide appropriate rehabilitation and supervision services for youth treated locally.

The JJCC subcommittee must comprise the chief probation officer, as chair, and one representative from the district attorney's office, the public defender's office, the department of social services, the department of mental health, the county office of education or a school district, and a representative from the court. The subcommittee must also include no fewer than three community members with experience providing community-based youth services, youth justice advocates, or people with direct experience in the juvenile justice system.

The plans created by the JJCC subcommittee must describe programs and interventions supported by grant funds, any regional agreements or arrangements to be supported by the block grant, how the plan



will incentivize or facilitate the retention of realigned youth in the juvenile system, how data will be collected on the youth served, and outcome measures to determine the results of local programs.

In addition, SB 823 establishes a state agency, the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR), to provide meaningful oversight of youth justice and to administer state youth justice funding programs. The first plan regarding JJRBG funding and strategies to serve youth otherwise subject to DJJ at the local level must be submitted to OYCR by January 1, 2022. The plans submitted by the JJCC subcommittee must be approved by the new OYCR to ensure it contains all necessary elements. OYCR will provide support and guidance to local systems to implement evidence-based, health-centered approaches to serving high-needs youth, and to prevent transfers of youth to the adult system.

Finally, SB 823 directs the Department of Justice (DOJ) to develop a plan for updating and improving the state's outdated juvenile justice data collection system.

***Note on Terminology: Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTF) and Secure Alternative to DJJ***

Throughout this report, the terms Secure Alternative to DJJ and Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF) are used interchangeably. SB 823 includes intent language that references SYTF as a facility designated for a limited number of "higher need" youth to serve as an alternative to DJJ and adult court prosecution. In our meetings, the DJJ Transition Team described the facilities as Secure Alternatives to DJJ.

## Alternatives to DJJ Rooted in Core Values

The BI and consultant team first worked to ground the planning process in shared values, understanding that stakeholders hold different views and strong beliefs about how best to administer justice and promote healing and rehabilitation for youth accused of more serious offenses. It was important to take the time to identify values shared across the group, to build cohesion, engender trust and build a solid foundation for the planning process.

From these discussions the facilitation team identified themes which became the Core Values of the DJJ Transition Team:

1. Youth should be addressed through a holistic, trauma-informed approach. Responses to youth should focus on rehabilitation, healing, enhancing public safety and restorative justice.
2. Youth's family and community should be active participants in their healing.
3. Any form of out-of-home placement should promote healing in a therapeutic environment. Youth should not be warehoused in punitive, institutionalized settings.
4. Comprehensive educational and vocational opportunities should be provided.
5. Voices of victims and survivors should be heard and perspectives considered.
6. Facility staffing should prioritize backgrounds in social work, healing, restorative and transformative justice.
7. Justice system should make intentional investment in CBOs rooted in directly impacted neighborhoods to provide support services for youth in and out of custody.
8. Reentry support with connection to the community is critical and should begin right away.
9. A model focused on punishment and retribution will undermine the progress achieved thus far in LA County.

### Challenging the Notion of Whether Secure Custody Time Equates to Accountability

It is important to acknowledge points of tension within the DJJ Transition Team—key among them being the connection between custody time, rehabilitation, accountability and public safety. While all participants valued the goals of rehabilitation, accountability and public safety, their beliefs diverged in how longer or shorter lengths of confinement facilitate such goals. Specifically, conflicting opinions existed on whether shorter lengths of stay in secure facilities and stepping youth down into more homelike settings at the earliest, safe point possible would mean the new model lacks accountability and threatens public safety.

Commitments to DJJ Alternatives designated as secure youth treatment facilities will likely be subject to minimum confinement times defined by state law. As a result, the DJJ Transition Team has little authority to weigh in on custody time. However, there is ample discretion among juvenile courts with the input of multidisciplinary teams to conduct periodic reviews of youth's progress in secure confinement, adjust commitment times and consider step-downs to less restrictive residential settings or release.

The discussion about custody time will likely continue throughout implementation and as the details of the secure dispositional track and the designation of Secure Youth Treatment Facilities or other designated Secure Alternative to DJJ contemplated in SB 823 is codified. As decisions are made about the overall approach and in individual cases, research about custody time should be considered. Research<sup>1</sup> establishes that: 1) when youth need to be removed from their home, incarceration as we know it is ineffective and too often harmful; it is most effective when "time away" is healing-focused, close to home, and focused on youth development; 2) more time away has diminishing returns, regardless of whether the environment is therapeutic; and 3) incarceration and removal from home disproportionately impacts youth of color.

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Lovins, B. (2013). "Putting Wayward Kids Behind Bars: The Impact of Length of Stay in a Custodial Setting on Recidivism" (PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, 2013); Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (2015). "Guidelines for Determining the Length of Stay (LOS) of Juveniles Indeterminately Committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)." Walker, S. C., & Bishop, A. S. (2016). "Length of stay, therapeutic change, and recidivism for incarcerated juvenile offenders." *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 355–376; Winokur, K.E., Smith, A., Bontrager, S., Blankenship, J., (2008). "Juvenile Recidivism and Length of Stay," *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 126-137; Gonzalez, T., (2017). "Youth Incarceration, Health, and Length of Stay," *Fordham Urban Law Journal*; Mulvey, E. Schubert, C and Piquero, A., (2014). "Pathways to Desistance: A study of serious adolescent offenders as they transition to adulthood and out of crime," U.S. Department of Justice; Justice Policy Institute and The National Center for Victims of Crime. (2018) "Smart, Safe, and Fair: Strategies to Prevent Youth Violence, Heal Victims of Crime, and Reduce Racial Inequality."

## DJJ Youth Advisory Board: Youth Perspective and Youth Statement

To ensure that the DJJ Transition Team centered youth voice and leadership in reimagining an alternative to DJJ, a DJJ Youth Advisory Board was created and facilitated by consultant Kent Mendoza. Over the course of two months, the YJWG facilitated a series of nine virtual youth listening sessions with youth who are formerly and currently incarcerated at DJJ facilities; specifically, 14 former DJJ youth (13 males and 1 female) and 4 currently incarcerated youth at Ventura Youth Correctional Facility (3 males and 1 female) participated in these sessions.

This group had two goals: 1) to discuss and develop recommendations based on their own experience and 2) to highlight and bring to light concerns or issues in response to the DJJ Transition Team's discussions and brainstorming. These sessions and youths' insight were crucial in informing the recommendations in this report. Below are summaries of what youth with first-hand experience of DJJ shared about how DJJ failed and what an ideal system should include.

### DJJ Youth Advisory Board's Perspective on Failures of DJJ:

- 1. Large size.** The large size of DJJ prisons made youth unsafe and de-individualized.
- 2. Unsupportive staff and staff culture.** With some exceptions, too many staff were uncaring, unsupportive or encouraged and instigated gang culture and negative behavior.
- 3. Lack of mentorship inside.** Mostly youth found mentorship opportunities in people and CBOs who came into and did not work for DJJ.
- 4. Dehumanizing procedures.** Procedures like strip searches, or undignified shower protocols made youth feel less than human.
- 5. Programming that doesn't work.** Much of the programming within DJJ, like the substance abuse/addiction programs, felt ineffective.
- 6. Disconnection and distance.** The long distances to DJJ facilities contributed to disconnection from familial support and community-based services.
- 7. Lack of trust.** Youth struggled to trust other youth, as well as staff.
- 8. Lack of hope and opportunity.** Especially when someone had been committed for a long term and had difficulty in seeing the end in sight, feelings of hopelessness were common, a challenge and even a danger, whether it contributed to depression or aggression. Hopelessness to the youth is contrary to safety inside and outside of the facilities.
- 9. Lack of safety and violence.** The overall environment inside DJJ felt unsafe, especially with the kind of gang environment and political divisions that exist and are perpetuated.
- 10. Lack of fairness in accountability.** Youth believed that rule enforcement was inconsistent or unfair. For instance, petty reasons were used to issue unnecessary write-ups against youth and served little, meaningful purpose.
- 11. Lack of consistency.** The movement of youth from facility to facility (hall to DJJ, and among DJJ facilities) is disruptive to the programming, relationships and overall stability of youth.

### DJJ Youth Advisory Board's Perspective on Ideal Components for a DJJ Alternative:

1. **Supportive, relatable staff**, especially those with lived experience similar to the youth
2. **Campus-like environment** with teachers, counselors, mentors on site throughout the weekdays
3. **Education, skills and vocational programs, opportunities and equipment** (books, laptops, internet, etc.) that expose youth to new learning and ways of thinking
4. **Fair rules applied to all youth** that avoid favoritism
5. **Access to community and relationship-building** off-site and through CBOs
6. **A positive incentive-based system**, especially the opportunity to step-down from more restrictive to less restrictive housing.
7. **Dignity and privacy**. For instance, bedrooms that have basic amenities like a good bed and allow for some privacy and individuality.
8. **Security through a sense of safety**. While programming, youth feel safe with their peers and staff; there is security overall in the environment.

### The DJJ Youth Advisory Board also discussed specific facility options, honing in on two models as the most viable to them:

1. **Campus Kilpatrick**. Youth believed that Campus Kilpatrick sounded like the nicest County facility option but expressed concern that the staffing and the description of the facility did not live up to the positive ideals of the LA Model.<sup>2</sup>
2. They believed a DJJ alternative would need to include better implementation of the LA Model, with a focus on education and vocational programming, as well as different, more credible staffing.
3. **Transitional Housing like those of the Anti-Recidivism Coalition in California and Alternative Rehabilitation Communities in Pennsylvania**. Many youth who have been released from DJJ have transitioned through supportive housing and believe these housing settings should be part of the continuum of placement options for DJJ youth, either immediately or gradually after progressing from more restrictive facilities. The youth believed that the onsite staffing (including coaches, therapists and other mentors) created a safe and hopeful environment.

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<sup>2</sup> The LA Model as was developed through a multi-stakeholder process as a vision for juvenile facilities to provide "supportive and collaborative learning environments where youth develop interpersonal, educational, career technical and life skills; create healthy and supportive relationships with adults and peers; and discover their true potential. A culture of healing and thriving is nurtured, focusing on positive community reintegration and forged through a safe, open, and holistic partnership involving all staff, families, and communities." The County began to implement the LA Model at Campus Kilpatrick in 2017. Korman, H. et al, "A Culture of Care for All: Envisioning the LA Model" (May 2017), available at <https://probation.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/LA-Model-A-Culture-of-Care-for-All-2.pdf>.

## DJJ Youth Statements

The DJJ Transition Team process was supported by an additional group of youth with direct experience in DJJ and local facilities. These young leaders demonstrated courage for sharing their deeply personal stories and commitment to the process by holding their own meetings to discuss important issues of safety, programming and staffing needs for the new DJJ alternative. Directly impacted youth possess a certain expertise about the system, understanding the depths of its problems as well as the nuanced solutions needed. In recognition of this expertise, space has been provided within this report for a statement from youth leaders. The DJJ Transition Team was grateful to these youth leaders for courageously sharing their stories, providing their analyses and solutions, and for continuously grounding the Team in cultural practices and the principles of Youth Development.

### Several youth leaders came together to draft the following statements:

**For far too long** we have deemed a juvenile prison adequate to rehabilitate and transform our youth into the individuals they were destined to be. Decades of trauma, pain and emotional scars have been inflicted on the minds of entire generations without a single attempt of truly recreating and innovating this 'fundamentally flawed system'. Youth Justice Reimagined and an alternative to DJJ rooted in youth development is the solution to reversing the punitive measures of defunct rhetoric.

In this new model we envision creating a new culture, where staff and youth build meaningful relationships, trust, accountability and support. We encourage autonomy, building youth's identities and allow them to make decisions for themselves. Communication is key, as is positive reinforcement. We do not bring youths' self-esteem down or treat them as not worthy. We see the individual for who they are. We promote growth and do not hinder the imaginations of our youth. We no longer create walls and barriers that hold them back. We allow them to grow wings and soar. Education of mind, body and soul are fundamental for our youth. With a strong foundation all buildings stand tall. Let us build our youth strong and tall.

We support this vision because the entirety of this new model is grounded and rooted in youth development core values, education/vocational training and creating an environment where youth can become autonomous. The biggest disservice the current system in place does to our youth is make them solely dependent on the system. Their identities are stripped away, and all decisions are made for them. This leads to complacency which then turns into an inability for youth to think and act for themselves.

We serve as testaments to youth who have overcome the adversities of the system. Take heed to the knowledge we possess because it is paramount for the new one.

*"I remember going through these systems trying to rehabilitate myself. I realized there are many things our system lacks and believe that's why change is crucially needed. I ask myself: what things did my community need to have in place so that I, as a youngster, could have been supported in my growth and leadership? For myself and my peers being given the opportunity to step up into leadership has been an important role in our everyday lives. While learning the tools for success I can pass this knowledge to my peers so they can have the ability to ultimately be the better version of themselves. I envision a model where youth would have the opportunity to step into the power*

*of being a leader with the determination to test themselves to go past their limit and learn new skills, they never thought they could achieve in life."*

**—Ezekiel Nishiyama, Youth Advocate**

*"After being incarcerated for a total of 7 years and being released from DJJ less than a year ago, I strongly believe the punishment model needs to be replaced with a healing approach. The system has invested in the tools of punishment like pepper spray, rubber bullets guns, batons, tasers, tear gas and other lethal weapons that have no place in a care- first model. The people who will work with these youth should not have to use violence and harsh punitive practices to de-escalate or respond to any situation. These staff must have empathy, understanding, and real-life connection with the youth in order to work together. The system should invest in people who have the ability to elevate and mentor youth."*

**—Kenzo Sohoue, Youth Advocate**

*"As a female that was incarcerated for 3 years and who is now a 24-year-old youth advocate, the reason I believe we must not recreate DJJ and the bad things from it but rather something better because I personally do not want other young girls to end up in prison like I once did. It is important that when creating this new model, we give youth the ability to communicate with the staff in a real way. When I was incarcerated, I wanted someone to guide me and support me on my way to reentry and after getting out. Youth in our current system don't receive this, instead we put them on lockdown and in cells where we are hurt and traumatized. We have to create a place where we are helping youth build self-esteem, confidence, and leadership. Youth need people like me that can relate to them to help them. Especially young women and girls."*

**—Alexia Cina, Youth Advocate**

*"I spent 10 years incarcerated in both the juvenile and adult justice systems, the last one being DJJ where I spent 2 years until coming home less than a year ago. This new model must not look or feel like a prison for youth. It should be designed to look like a real fun camp or school that provides high-level resources and opportunities. There should be incentives that can provide real hopes for a step-down process. This can be done by allowing youth to partake in educational and/or trade courses that teach them about the important things they need to know about the real world and how to navigate it. Keeping in mind that male and female youth are different, we must ensure they are both treated equally. Ensuring each youth's needs are met before and upon reentry is important."*

**—Sophia Cristo, Youth Advocate**

*"The entirety of this new model is grounded and rooted in youth development core values, education/vocational training and creating an environment where youth can become autonomous. The biggest disservice the current system in place does to our youth is make them solely dependent on the system. Their identities are stripped away, and all decisions are made for them. This leads to complacency which then turns into an inability for youth to think and act for themselves."*

*Our new system is what brings humanity to our youth, nurtures our growth and encourages us to dream. As someone who was in juvenile hall until the age of 21, I was lucky to be able to positively influence youth who were younger than me as they saw me accomplish the things I did. I unfortunately had been incarcerated for a few years and the younger kids who were considered to be 'troublemakers' respected and took heed to my advice. This too I believe can be implemented for this model. The older youth serve as testament to what can be accomplished if the younger youth strive to better themselves."*

**—Ronaldo Villeda, Youth Advocate**

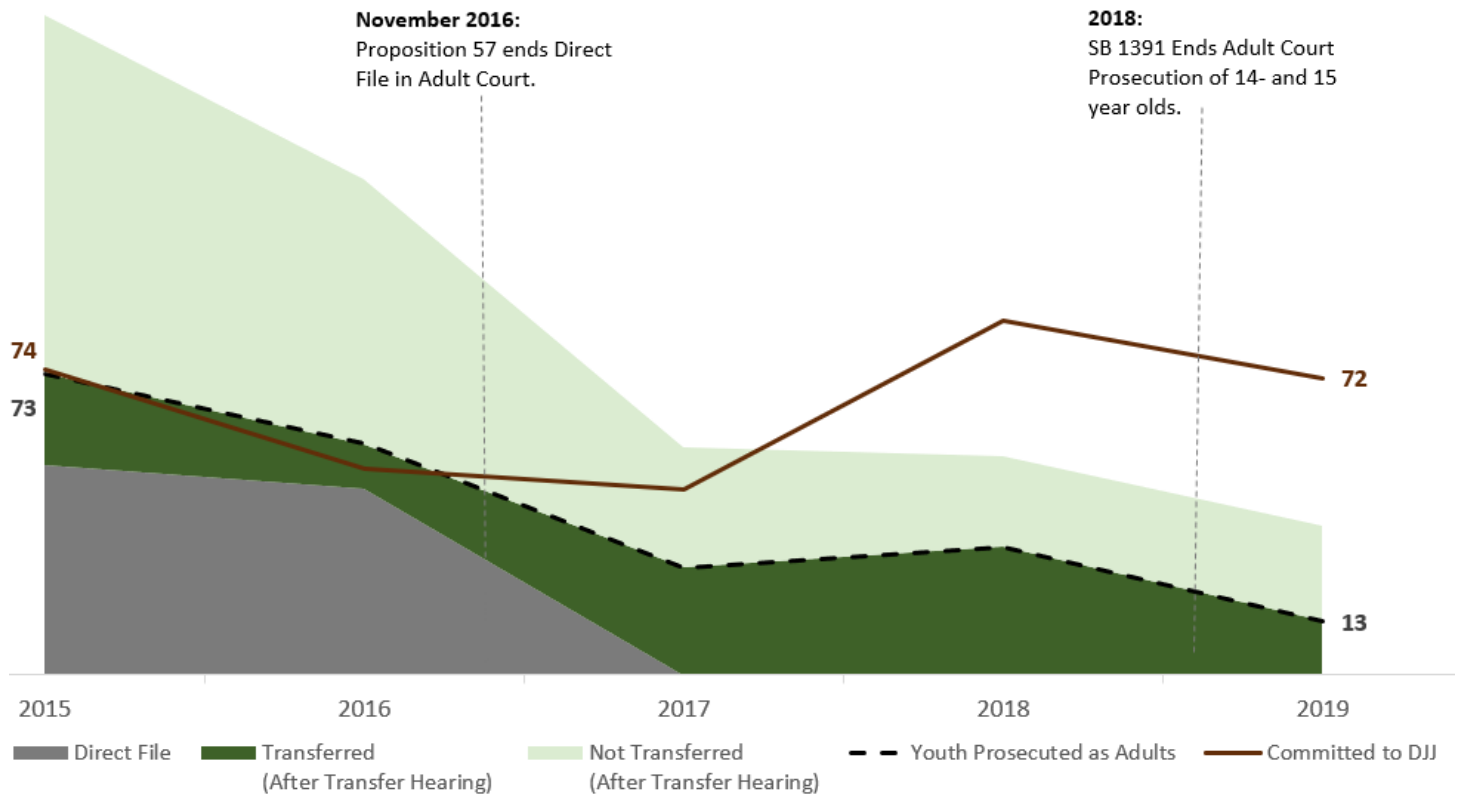
## Key Data Related to Los Angeles County DJJ Commitments

To advance the work of the DJJ Transition Team, on May 27, 2020, BI requested data from the Probation Department and the District Attorney’s Office. Analysis of these data were shared with the DJJ Transition Team in early meetings and served as a foundation for the Team’s work. Key data included:

### 1. Los Angeles County DJJ Commitment and Adult Court Prosecution Trends (2016-2019).

From 2015 to 2019, adult court prosecutions decreased by 82%, from 73 youth prosecuted as adults in 2015 to 13 youth prosecuted as adults in 2019. Commitments to DJJ decreased 39% from 2015 (74 commitments) to 2017 (45 commitments) but then increased by 60% between 2017 and 2019 (72 commitments). The reduction in adult court prosecutions and increase in youth committed to DJJ may be attributed to the changes in law that limited adult court prosecution of youth. In 2016, Proposition 57 ended the direct file of young people in adult court. In 2018, SB 1391 ended the adult court prosecution of 14- and 15-year olds. At the same time, DJJ increased the age of confinement to 23 in certain circumstances and 25 in other circumstances.

**Figure 1: Trends in DJJ Commitments and Adult Court Prosecutions.**



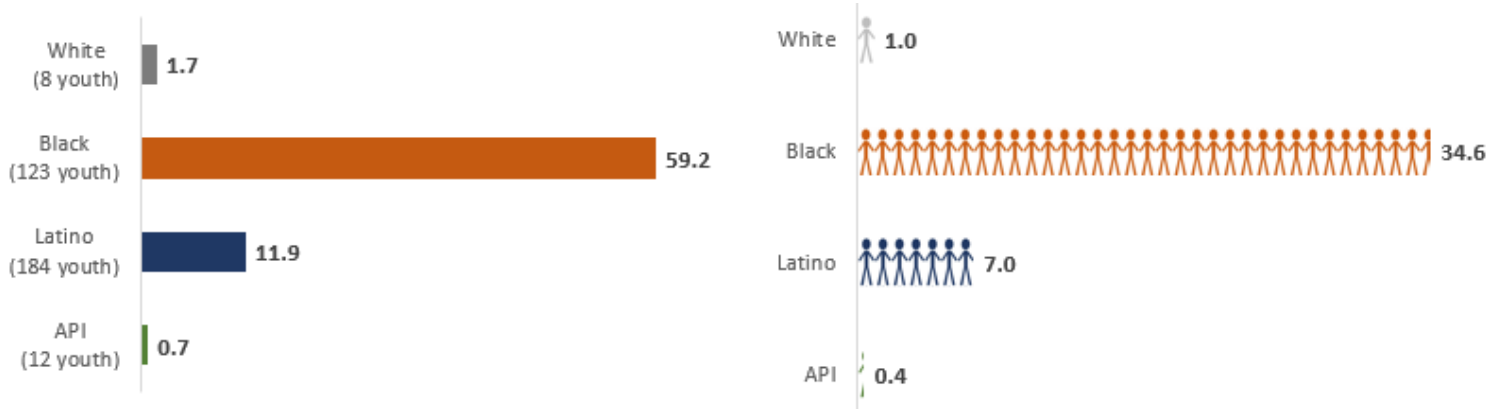
**Source:** Los Angeles County Probation Department; Los Angeles County District Attorney



## 2. Significant Racial and Ethnic Disparity in Persist in DJJ Commitments.

Over the last five years, youth of color in Los Angeles County are significantly more likely than white youth to be committed to DJJ. For every 100,000 white youth in the County, fewer than two were committed to DJJ; for every 100,000 Black youth, nearly 60 were committed; for every 100,000 Latino youth, nearly 12 were committed. Compared to white youth, Black youth are nearly 35 times more likely to be committed to DJJ, and Latino youth are 7 times more likely.

**Figure 2: Rate of DJJ Commitments per 100,000 youth ages 13-17 in Los Angeles County (Average 2015-2019).**

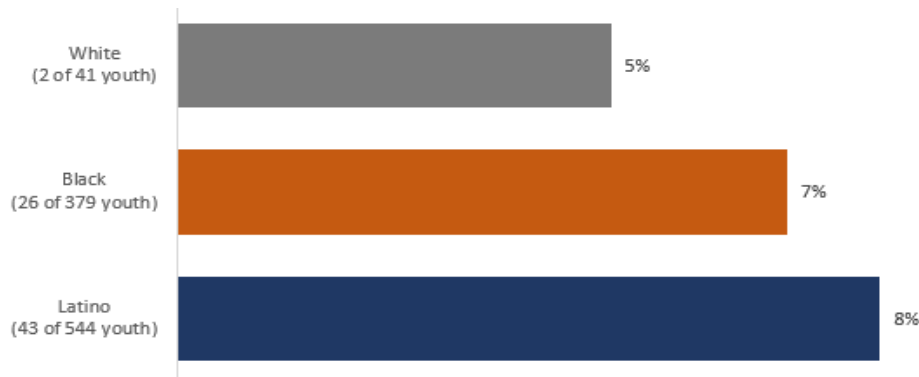


**Source:** Los Angeles County Probation Department

## 3. Youth of Color with Eligible Offenses are More Likely to be Committed DJJ.

Only youth adjudicated of an offense listed within Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 707(b) or Penal Code (PC) 290.008 may be committed to DJJ. In 2019, the vast majority of Los Angeles County youth who were eligible for DJJ based on their most serious sustained adjudication were kept local. Overall, 7% of youth adjudicated of DJJ eligible offenses were committed to DJJ. Youth of color who were adjudicated of eligible offenses were more likely than white youth to be committed. Whereas five 5% of eligible white youth were committed, 7% of eligible Black youth and 8% of Latino youth were committed.

**Figure 3: Percent of Youth Eligible for DJJ who were Committed to DJJ (2019).**

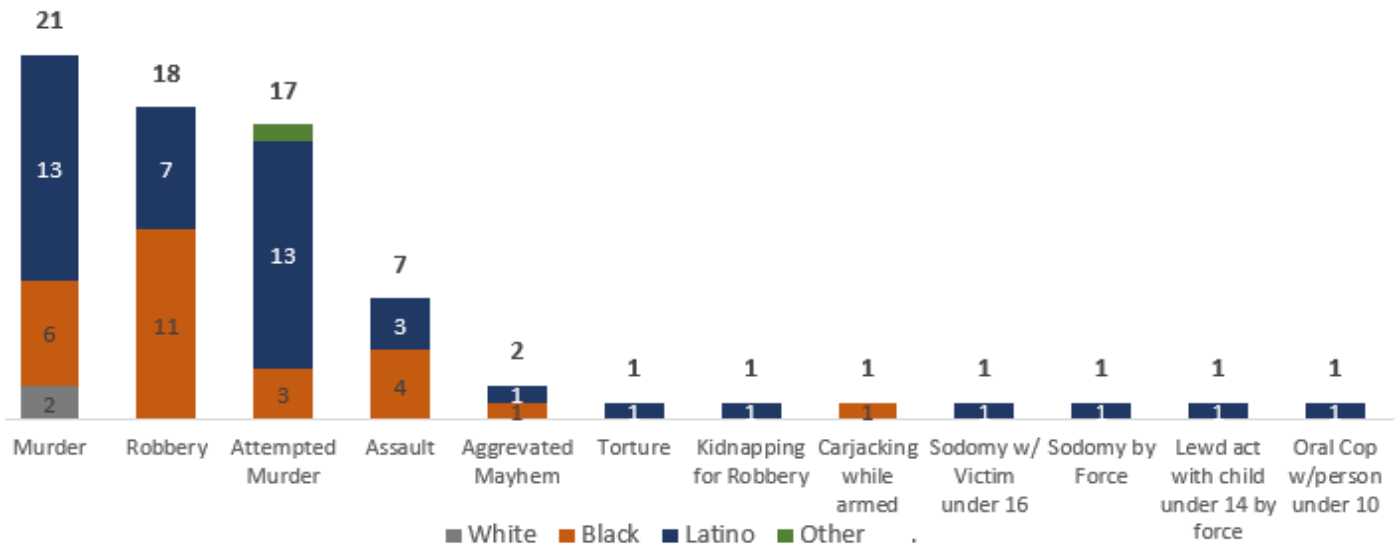


**Source:** Los Angeles County Probation Department.

#### 4. Most Serious Offense Sustained that is Associated with DJJ Commitments.

In 2019, the most frequent offense associated with DJJ commitments included murder, robbery and attempted murder. Together, these offenses accounted for 78% of commitments to DJJ. Importantly, additional details regarding youth committed to DJJ, including the youth’s role in the offense, were not unavailable.

**Figure 4: Youth Committed to DJJ: Most Serious Offense Sustained (2019).**

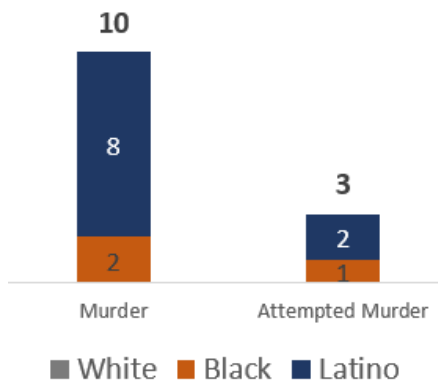


**Source:** Los Angeles County Probation Department

#### 5. Most Serious Offenses Associated with Adult Court Transfers.

In 2019, the most frequent offense associated with transfer to adult court were murder and attempted murder. Again, additional details regarding youth prosecuted as adults, including the youth’s role in the offense, were unavailable.

**Figure 5: Youth Committed to DJJ: Most Serious Offense Sustained (2019).**



**Source:** Los Angeles County Probation Department.

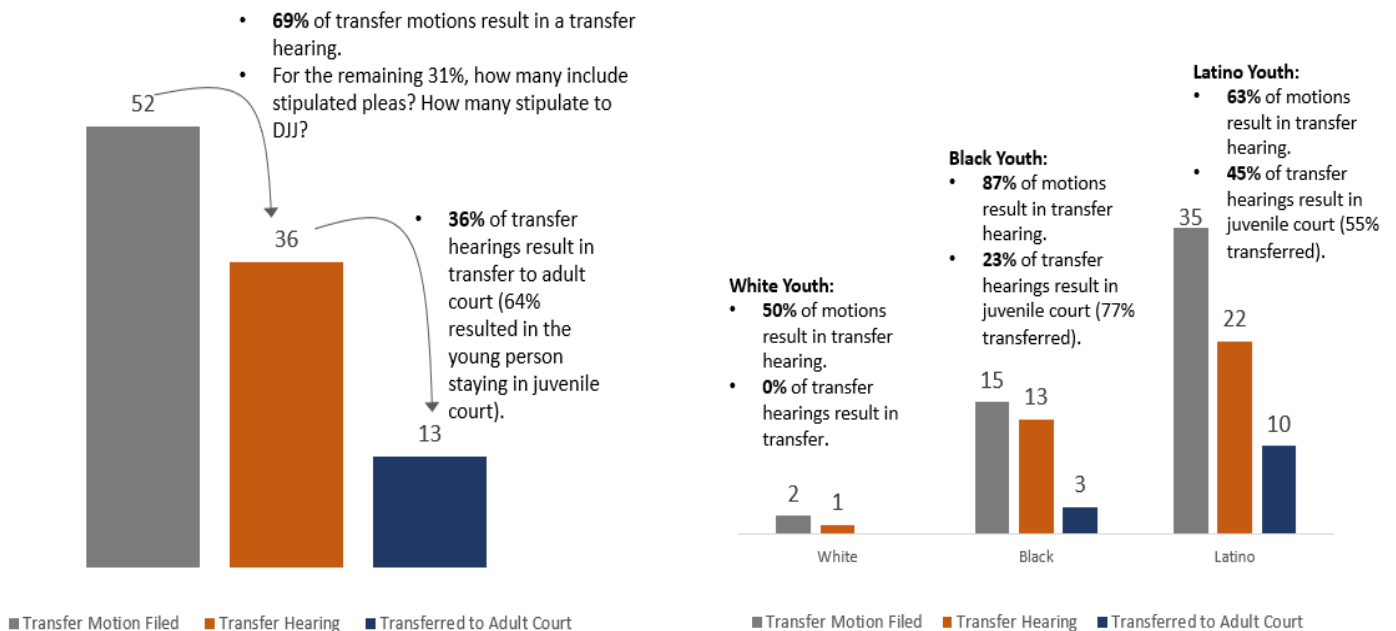
## 6. Adult Court Transfer Motions Compared to Adult Court Transfers.

The DJJ Transition Team reviewed not only cases in which youth were transferred to adult court, but also the series of decisions leading up to transfer including: (i) Number of youth who had a motion for transfer filed; (ii) Number of motions that resulted in a hearing; and (iii) Number of hearings that resulted in transferring the youth to adult court.

As illustrated in Figure 6 below, in 2019, 52 youth had a motion for transfer filed. Of those, 69% (36 youth) went on to have a transfer hearing. Of those who had a transfer hearing, 36% (13 youth) were transferred to adult court. Youth of color comprise 100% of youth transferred to adult court in 2019. There were only two motions for transfer filed on white youth—only one white youth had a transfer hearing and that hearing resulted in the youth remaining in juvenile court. Of the 15 Black youth for whom a transfer motion was filed, 13 had a transfer hearing and 3 were ultimately transferred. Of the 35 Latino youth for whom a transfer motion was filed, 22 had a transfer hearing and 10 were ultimately transferred.

It is unknown how many of the youth with a transfer motion filed and later withdrawn had a stipulated plea that resulted in a DJJ disposition. It is also unknown how many transfer hearing decisions resulting in juvenile court relied in part on the possibility of DJJ as a court disposition<sup>2</sup>. Based on recent court experience, DJJ Transition Team members speculate that it is a high proportion and underscore the need to ensure the DJJ alternative is considered a credible alternative to adult court prosecution.

**Figure 6: Tracking Adult Court Transfer Motions, Hearings, and Transfers (2019).**



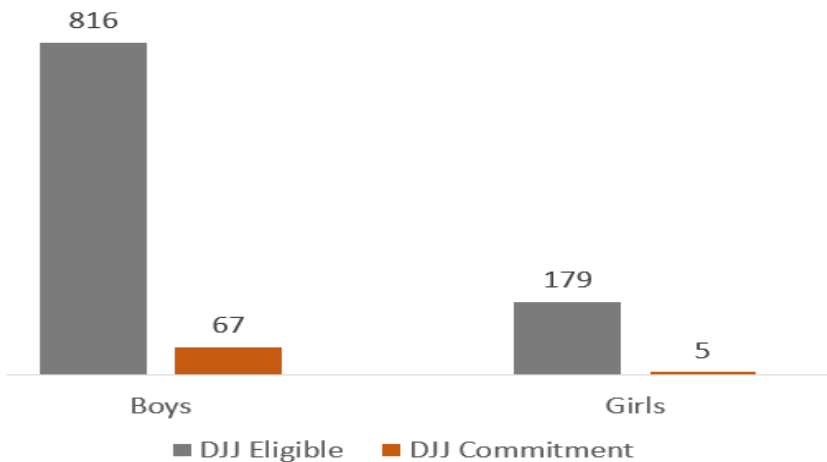
Source: Los Angeles County Probation Department

<sup>2</sup> Under WIC 707(a)(3), in a transfer hearing, the court must consider several factors, including whether the young person “can be rehabilitated prior to the expiration of juvenile court’s jurisdiction.” Under existing law, age of confinement for youth committed to DJJ extends to age 23 and in some cases 25, which may compel judicial officers that there is sufficient time for rehabilitation prior to the expiration of juvenile court jurisdiction if the youth’s case is maintained in juvenile court.

### 7. Special Populations: Girls and Youth Accused of Sex Offenses.

In 2019, girls comprise only seven 7% of the youth committed to DJJ by Los Angeles County. Further girls eligible for DJJ are less likely than boys eligible for DJJ to be committed. Whereas eight 8% of eligible boys were committed to DJJ (67 commitments out of 816 boys eligible), only 3% of eligible girls were committed (5 commitments out of 179 girls eligible). The five girls committed to DJJ in 2019 were adjudicated of murder, robbery, attempted murder and assault.

**Figure 7: Gender Breakdown of youth Eligible for DJJ and DJJ Commitments (2019).**



**Source:** Los Angeles County Probation Department.

In 2019, there were 4 youth committed to DJJ by Los Angeles County whose most serious adjudicated offense was sex-related. Youth accused of sex-related offenses who are committed to DJJ may be assigned to a specialized program at DJJ, the “Sexual Behavior Treatment Program.” Data regarding the number of youth from Los Angeles County who participated in the Sexual Behavior Treatment Program were unavailable to the Transition Team.

**Figure 8: Youth Committed to DJJ for Sex-Related Offenses (2019).**

Top Offenses of Youth Committed to DJJ (2019)	Total
PC187(A) - (Murder)	21
PC211 - (Robbery)	18
664/187(A) - Attempted Murder	17
PC245(A)(1); PC245(A)(2); PC245(A)(4) – Assault	7
PC205 - Aggravated Mayhem	2
PC206 – Torture	1
PC209(B)(1) - Kidnapping for Robbery	1
PC215(A) - Carjacking while armed	1
Sodomy w/ Victim under 16	1
PC286(C )(2)(A) - Sodomy by Force	1
PC288(B)(1) - Lewd act with child under 14 by force	1
PC288(C )(1) - Oral Cop w/person under 10	1

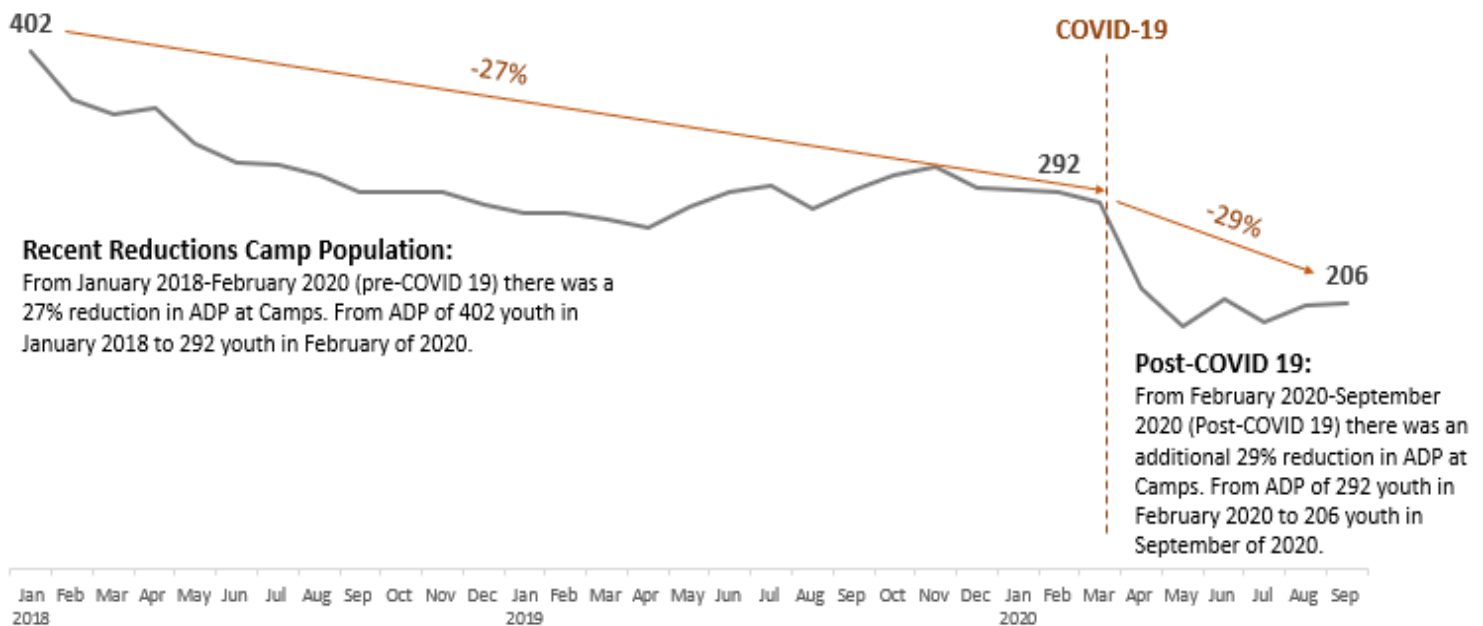
Not all youth adjudicated of a sex-related offense are in the sex offender treatment program, but in 2019, there were **4 youth** who had an offense that was sex-related.

**Source:** Los Angeles County Probation Department

### 8. Reduction in Camp Population.

As the result of numerous reform initiatives focused on alternatives to incarceration, the number of youth who are committed to local camps has decreased dramatically over the past decade and have declined significantly in recent months. Policies and practices instituted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have affected the number of youth in Camps in recent months, but prior to COVID-19, the number of youth detained in Camps was already decreasing. The average number of youth in Camps in February 2020, just prior to COVID-19, was 292 youth, down 27% from 402 youth in January 2018. From February 2020 to September 2020 (Post-COVID-19) there was an additional 29% reduction in the average daily population (ADP) at Camps. From an ADP of 292 youth in February 2020 to 206 youth in September 2020.

**Figure 9: Recent Reduction in Average Daily Population (ADP) of Camps (2018-2020).**

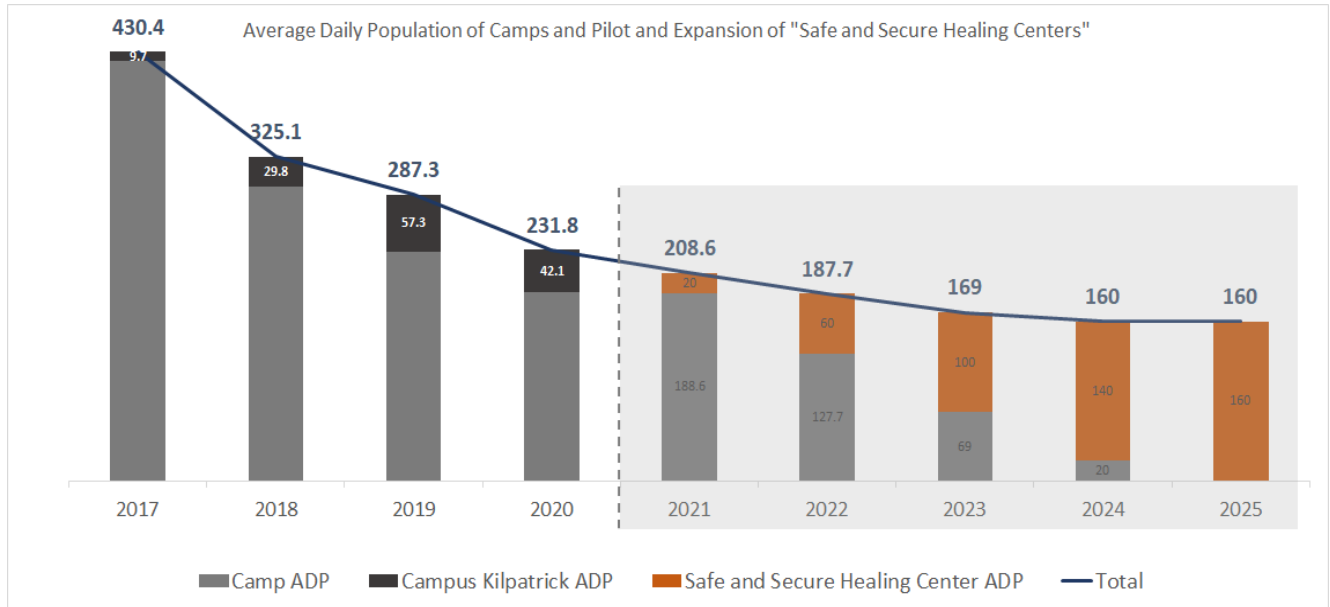


**Source: Los Angeles County Probation Department**

The piloting and expansion of Safe and Secure Healing Centers as recommended will diminish the need for the already decreased use of camps. As illustrated in Figure 10, commitments to Camp have decreased by between 12-24% annually from 2017-2020<sup>3</sup>. As is anticipated with YJR, if commitments continue to decrease (conservatively projected at a 10% reduction annually), the need for Camps or Safe and Secure Healing Centers that may serve as alternatives to camp will continue to decline. As is illustrated in Figure 10, YJR anticipates the piloting of Safe and Secure Healing Centers in Phase 1, and for the expansion of Safe and Secure Healing Centers in Phases 2 and full replacement of Camps in Phase 3.

<sup>3</sup> The average daily population (ADP) in Camps decreased from 430 in 2017 to 325 in 2018, a 24 percent reduction; from 325 in 2018 to 287 in 2019, a 12 percent reduction, and from 287 in 2019 to 232 in 2020, a 19% reduction

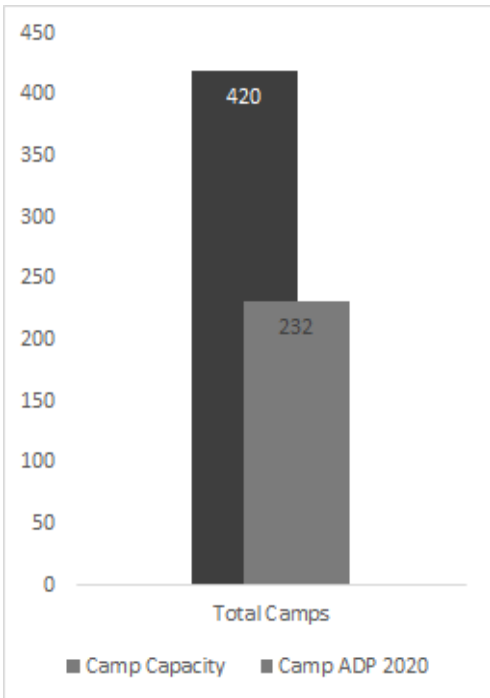
**Figure 10: Average Daily Population (ADP) of Camps and Projected Pilot and Expansion of "Safe and Secure Healing Centers."**



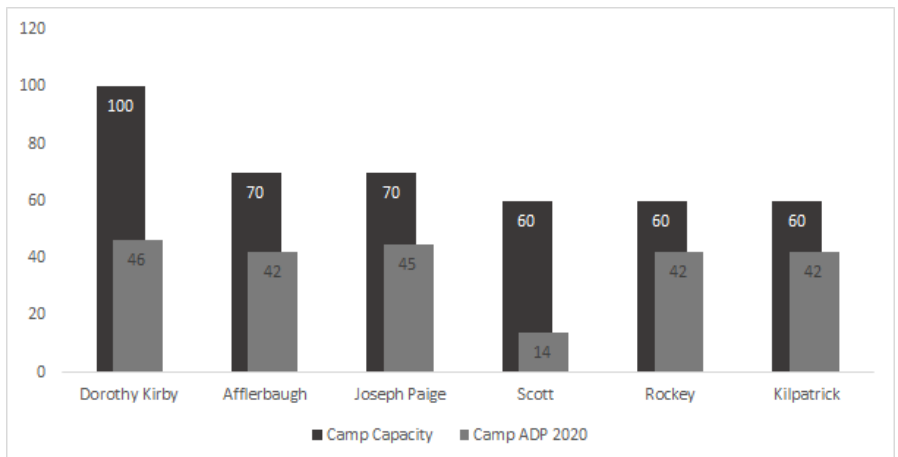
**Source:** ADP—Los Angeles County Probation Department; Projections, based on 10% decrease in commitments and phased expansion of Safe and Secure Healing Centers.

As illustrated in Figure 11, Camps in Los Angeles County continues to decline, signaling a reduced reliance on incarceration.

**Figure 11: Average Daily Population (ADP) of Camps and Camp Capacity.**



Reductions in the number of youth committed to Camps signals the County's commitment to decarceration strategies overall and reinforce the viability of a movement to continue to close Camps and shift to Safe and Secure Healing Centers.



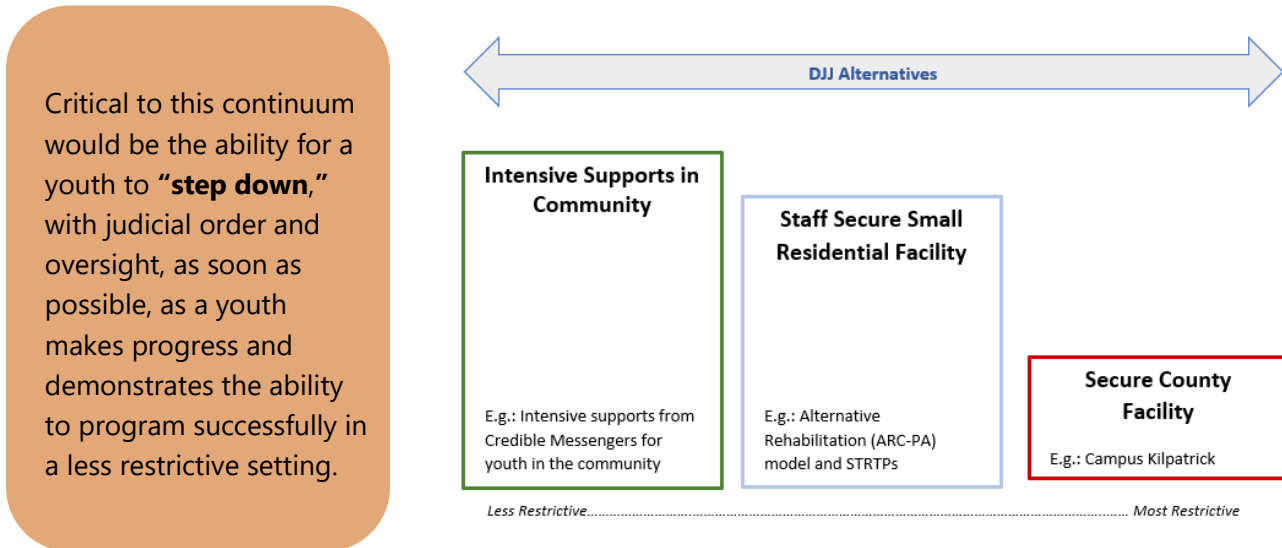
## Considerations for DJJ Alternatives

The DJJ Transition Team identified a number of key considerations for DJJ Alternatives to align with the described values. Chief among these considerations were: 1) continuum of responses that align with YJWG recommendations; 2) security and staffing; 3) facility attributes; 4) the perspectives of victims and survivors; 5) dispositional decision-making; and 6) programming.

### 1. Continuum of Responses that Align with YJWG Recommendations

The DJJ Transition Team discussed the need for a continuum of responses to the closure of DJJ that align with the overall YJWG’s principles rooted in youth development and racial equity, and that range from least to more restrictive, including:

- Intensive supports through community-based service providers;
- Small home-like residential facilities with a range of security; and
- Secure facilities.



The DJJ Transition Team examined an inventory of current facilities in Los Angeles to explore opportunities to leverage, build on and improve existing resources. Among the existing, small, home-like and staff-secured settings discussed were Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs and housing administered by Anti-Recidivism Coalition and A New Way of Life in Los Angeles and Alternative Rehabilitation Communities (ARC) in Pennsylvania.

Many felt like expanding and strengthening such small home-like settings are the ideal—such that some youth could be immediately sent to such settings, and others could progress to them from more restrictive settings. Some stakeholders felt strongly this would pose a public safety risk while others believed that for these settings to be viable as an alternative, at least some would need to be secure and locked; others think such settings can be viable and safe with proper monitoring, staffing, programming and locations.

At the other end of the continuum, the DJJ Transition Team discussed Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall in Sylmar as the most restrictive option available for a DJJ alternative. Through informal polling and further discussion, the subcommittee dismissed Sylmar Juvenile Hall as a viable Secure Alternative to DJJ.

The DJJ Transition Team discussed numerous available facilities that could serve as a viable Secure Alternative to DJJ. Facility attributes and other considerations were discussed for each of the following facilities: Barry J. Nidorf; Other Camps; Dorothy Kirby Center; Campus Kilpatrick; Camp Gonzales; Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPS) and new, small and home-like models akin to Alternative Rehabilitation Communities (ARC), in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. For each facility, the DJJ Transition Team noted where attributes either aligned or conflicted with identified values.

**The facility attributes discussed included:**

- Security;
- Capacity for vocational and educational training ;
- Therapeutic environment;
- Institutional/ Non-prison like; and
- Availability of vast outdoor green space.

**Other considerations discussed included:**

- Benefits to facility being used as a Secure Alternative to DJJ;
- Concerns regarding facility being used as a Secure Alternative to DJJ; and
- Renovations needed to align the facility with core values.

**The DJJ Transition Team largely agreed to focus its most restrictive options on:**

- **Campus Kilpatrick (Location—Malibu Hills; capacity— 60 youth).** Kilpatrick is a locked, fenced camp facility that was renovated and reopened in 2017 for the implementation of the “LA Model” focused on a therapeutic milieu. Despite critiques and real challenges with adhering to the LA Model, Kilpatrick continues to hold promise for many stakeholders as the newest, most conducive to healing option among facilities in LA County.  
Concerns for using Campus Kilpatrick as a Secure Alternative to DJJ include its remote location contributing to disconnection from families and community, its large size and displacing the current camp population to less healing-focused facility options.
- **Camp Gonzalez (Location—Malibu Hills; Capacity— 60 youth).** Camp Gonzales has been undergoing a repurposing since June 2017 and involves a partnership between a CBO and Probation, with an ultimate plan for the facility to be run by a CBO for non-detention services. The County is currently looking for a CBO partner on programming and also recalibrating budgets based on the current economic climate. Current target populations for the repurposed facility are: transition-age males (ages 18-25); at-risk of/or experiencing homelessness or juvenile justice involvement; system-involved from Probation and Children and Family Services; exposed to trauma; underserved ethnic and cultural populations. The intended programming for the new facility focuses on two vocational tracks— construction and culinary training through LA Trade Tech, based on assessment of employment trends.



Concerns for using Camp Gonzalez as a DJJ alternative include its remote location and the potential need for significant renovations for it to become a secure alternative because recent investments were made to repurpose the facility as a non-secure residential center.

- **Dorothy Kirby Center (Location—Commerce; Capacity—100 youth).** Dorothy Kirby Center (DKC) is a locked, fenced secure facility focused on providing youth with intensive mental health supports. Over time, staffing has shifted so that 50% of the staffing and management of Kirby comprises workers from the Department of Mental Health.

Support for the use of DKC as a Secure Alternative to DJJ includes that it is closer geographically and more of a treatment model. Others believe it is not secure enough and will displace current camp populations.

As Los Angeles County considers and implements the recommendations for both alternatives to DJJ and the YJWG's Safe and Secure Healing Centers, it should ensure that the overall reliance on existing camps continues to decrease, and current and new placement options have capacity to serve all justice-involved youth consistent with the values of the YJWG.

## 2. Security and Staffing

Security is an essential priority to youth and staff—inside any alternative DJJ facility, and outside for community safety. Youth who are currently or formerly incarcerated in DJJ provided critical insight into two particular questions that the DJJ Transition Team discussed as well: 1) What would make it safe inside a facility for you? and 2) What would make you stay and not try to run? For youth who grow up in communities familiar with crime and violence, and who enter detention settings that can also pose such threats, they of course care deeply about such notions as safety and security for themselves and the broader community.

Like many probation staff and youth surveyed through the YJWG, the DJJ youth underscored first and foremost the interconnection between staffing, and their safety and sense of security. This emphasis on cultivating trust, support, motivation and opportunity through staff as well as programming is consistent with a core tenet of the LA Model in Los Angeles County—that psychological and physical safety inside a facility are a priority for everyone, and are “promoted through a variety of positive mechanisms integrated into daily interactions and activities.” Diverse stakeholders agree that the security of staff flows from the security of youth—when youth feel safe, stable and secure, staff are more so too. Thus, discussion explored how facility staffing should shift away from staff with corrections backgrounds to backgrounds in social work and healing.

In keeping with the overall YJWG principles, there was also strong alignment that staff with personal experience going through the justice system and who are relatable to youth (called “Credible Messengers” for the purposes of this work) are critical and an essential part of security. The Credible Messenger movement has emerged based on a core belief that communities have within them transformative resources to lift up justice-involved people in a comprehensive and positive way. It works from the inside out: justice-involved/at-risk youth who have a higher risk of future justice system contact are matched with specially trained adults with relevant life experiences (often previously incarcerated, Returned Citizens) called Credible Messengers, who share their background.

Beyond staffing, many subcommittee members also believe that the ultimate security of the community and sometimes for youth themselves requires some measure of physical restrictions. Brainstorms generated and focused on ideas of physical restraints that, importantly, avoid an appearance and sense of institutionalization as much as possible. Most agreed that for Secure Alternatives to DJJ, the perimeter must be secure, but beyond that, the space inside should allow for considerable freedom of movement. Ideas included invisible bars, hidden cameras, high walls, gated grounds with security officers and remoteness from communities. During DJJ Transition Team meetings, Probation and other DJJ Transition Team members expressed the need to assess whether Campus Kilpatrick, Camp Gonzales, and the Dorothy Kirby Center have adequate security to serve youth otherwise subject to DJJ.

DJJ Transition Team members discussed concerns regarding whether contemplated facilities comply with relevant Title 24 Regulations. According to a subsequent conversation with staff from the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), the version of Title 24 regulations that applies to secure County facilities depends on the year the facility was built. Facilities remain under the requirements of Title 24 under the year they were built unless significant changes to the facility trigger compliance with more recent standards. The version of Title 24 that applies to the recently closed Camp Gonzales is contingent on an inspection of BSCC where several factors will be considered, including but not limited to: 1) condition of facility when closed; 2) how long ago facility was closed; 3) whether County maintained fire and life safety inspections of the facility when closed; and 4) the type of infrastructure changes have been made since closure.

### 3. Facility Attributes of Secure Alternative to DJJ

The DJJ Transition Team further discussed the attributes of an alternative to DJJ that would avoid a prison-like environment and feeling of institutionalization.

#### Specifically, facilities would require:

- A more **therapeutic, home-like environment**;
- **Vast, outdoor green spaces**; and
- Capacity for **vocational/ed training**;
- Healing space to **accommodate family visits**.

#### Additional emphasis was placed on:

- **Programming and staffing** as part of a therapeutic approach. Staffing and programming facilitate rehabilitation and development of youth, as well overall security for youth, staff and community.
- **Family Transportation**, especially for any remote facility, is vital to ensure ongoing contact, connection and relationship-building between youth and their families—contributing to their overall wellbeing during and after commitments.
- **Specialization** in programming—there is a need to consider specialized, separate programming based on offense types and youth needs, including for those accused of sex-related offenses.

#### 4. Victims and survivors' voices

At the outset, various subcommittee members and coordinators agreed that a victim or survivor's voice was central to include and consider in developing DJJ alternatives. In response, the facilitation team took the following steps:

- Outreach to Javier Stauring, director of Healing Dialogues and Action (HDA), to join the DJJ Transition Team as well as to conduct a learning exchange with HDA. HDA is an organization of family survivors of homicide, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, and communities affected by violent crime that creates healing spaces and advocacy opportunities. The learning exchange featured both formerly incarcerated individuals who were sentenced as youth, and survivors—challenging the adversarial divide and definitions of “victim” and “offender,” as many formerly incarcerated individuals were also subjects of violence and harm.
- Continued outreach efforts were made to other victim and survivor rights organizations including Crime Victims Assistance Network and Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice but were unsuccessful.
- Several stakeholders were concerned that the voice of victims and survivors were not adequately heard. This came up on several occasions, and each time, the facilitators requested DJJ Transition Team members provide contacts to solicit insight from victims or victims' rights organizations to offer that perspective. All DJJ Transition Team participants agreed that additional outreach will be required to ensure that a broad perspective from victims are included in implementation.

#### **The Learning Exchange with HDA underscored the following themes:**

**Needs.** Youth who become justice-involved, including at the deepest end, have fundamental, universal needs, including the need for connection, safety, trust.

**Prior traumas.** The childhood conditions of the panelists who were sentenced to lengthy terms highlight the trauma/harms that existed prior to and were related to their system involvement. In many instances, they were victims/survivors too.

**Need for healing and “accountability.”** There is a shared need for healing and investment in the healing of individuals, families and whole communities. Accountability is possible when a person who inflicted harm reaches healing.

**Spaces and supports for connection and healing in a safe environment.** The spaces (whether through courses, therapy, individual mentorships and relationships) that allowed individuals to explore who they are and how they felt were the most conducive to healing. There is a scarcity of safety, care and supports inside prisons to facilitate connection and healing.

**Time.** Panelists proposed that we should be able to allow for this healing (and thus accountability) without caging people the way we do and for the amount of time that we do.

**Healing of survivors and connection.** The healing of survivors who lost someone is tied to the healing of the person who took that life. Without true healing and connection, harm and pain can cycle and generate further harm and pain.

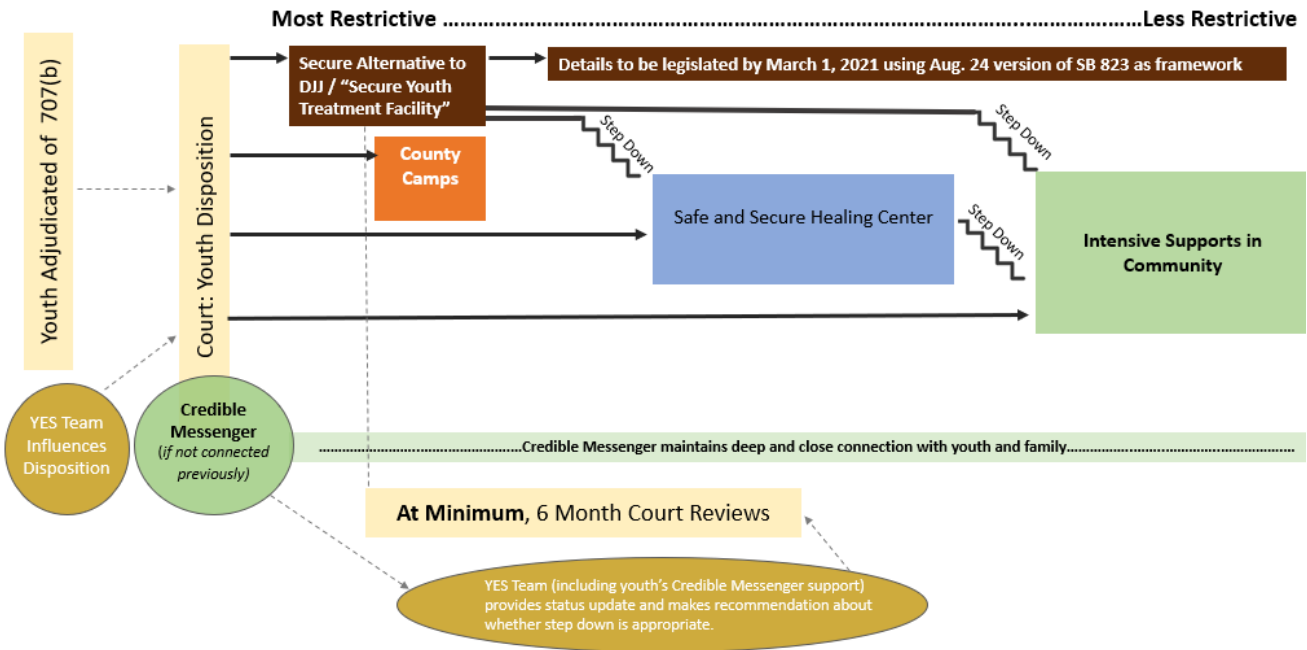
## 5. YES Teams Influence Dispositional Decision-Making

A foundational component of Youth Justice Reimagined (YJR) includes community-driven input in decision-making along the youth justice continuum with Youth Empowerment and Support (YES) Teams. As described in YJR, YES Teams focus on providing healing, repairing and support in equal measure to those who have caused harm and those who have been harmed—as a paradigm shift from a system of punishment, suppression and control. YES Teams shift to and embody an opportunity to contribute to effective team decision-making. The YES Teams will establish authentic and deep relationships with youth, families and communities, and be resourced to bring a community lens to decision-making. The relationships and connections uniquely position YES Team members to influence decisions ensuring racial, cultural and restorative responses reflecting Youth Development principles.

### The DJJ Transition Team discussed the influence of YES Teams in four primary ways:

- **Court Disposition.** With their deep knowledge of the young person, including their strengths and needs, YES Teams will be well-positioned to recommend an appropriate disposition for youth adjudicated of an offense enumerated in WIC 707 (b), drawing on the range of dispositional options available to youth, from the most restrictive option of the Secure Alternative to DJJ to less restrictive options including Safe and Secure Healing Centers as they are developed and intensive supports in a community-based setting.
- **Individual Treatment Plan for Youth Committed to a Secure Alternative to DJJ.** As noted, the version of SB 823 that serves as a framework for developing the dispositional track for “higher needs” youth (to be established by March 1, 2021), indicates that a commitment to a Secure Youth Treatment Facility must be accompanied by an individual treatment plan developed with a multidisciplinary team of youth-serving experts and counsel for the youth. The DJJ Transition Team discussed how YES Teams may be well-positioned to fulfill this function.
- **Progress Reports for Youth Committed to a Secure Alternative to DJJ.** Another requirement included in legislation that serves as a framework for the dispositional track for “higher needs” youth is that the court schedule and hold a progress review hearing for youth committed to Secure Youth Treatment Facilities not less frequently than once every six months. At this hearing, the court would consider recommendations from a broad array of stakeholders who maintain relevant information regarding the youth’s healing and progress in programming. The DJJ Transition Team reinforced the importance of ensuring progress reviews be periodic and non-adversarial and focus on the youth’s treatment plan and progress in programming. Recommendations at review hearings should focus on enhancing or expanding programs that promote youth’s healing. Again, the DJJ Transition Team discussed the YES Teams as being well-positioned to serve this function.
- **Reentry.** Drawing upon the experience of youth recently released from DJJ, the DJJ Transition Team discussed the need for YES Teams to begin reentry planning upon entry into a Secure Alternative to DJJ.

**Figure 12: Dispositional Decision-Making Schematic Discussed during DJJ Transition Team Meetings.**



## 6. Programming

The DJJ Transition Team and the DJJ Youth Advisory Board discussed the importance of ensuring programming be culturally rooted and trauma-informed. In addition, the Team discussed the need to ensure programming in Secure Alternatives to DJJ promote healing and education, inspire creativity and offer a range of opportunities that uphold the principles of youth development.

The DJJ Youth Advisory Board shared a common notion that peer-to-peer support should be included in various programming models. They discussed the importance of mentors to support the development of emotional intelligence and help youth to stay on the right track and find their way back when they stumble. They emphasized the urgent need for access to services both while in the Secure Alternative to DJJ but also in the community, as a component of reentry. They identified the need for connection to a support network with paths and access to opportunities.

Building on prior efforts to develop more holistic and effective programming for justice system involved youth through a youth development approach, the following list reflects the range of programming discussed within the process:

- Secondary Education - GED
- Post-Secondary Education
- Law Library Access
- Food Service and Chef Training
- Plant/Agriculture Program
- Technology Program
- Music-Production
- Dog Training
- Furloughs
- Job Internships
- Programming that incorporates frequent visits with family and friends
- Assistance with SS cards/IDs
- Training in Professional Trades including: Carpentry, Welding, Plumbing, Construction etc.
- Advocacy, Social Justice and Non-Profit Development
- Sports, exercise and physical health
- Small Business Development and Management
- Parenting and Family Support
- Personal Nutrition and Health
- Emotional Intelligence and Wellness

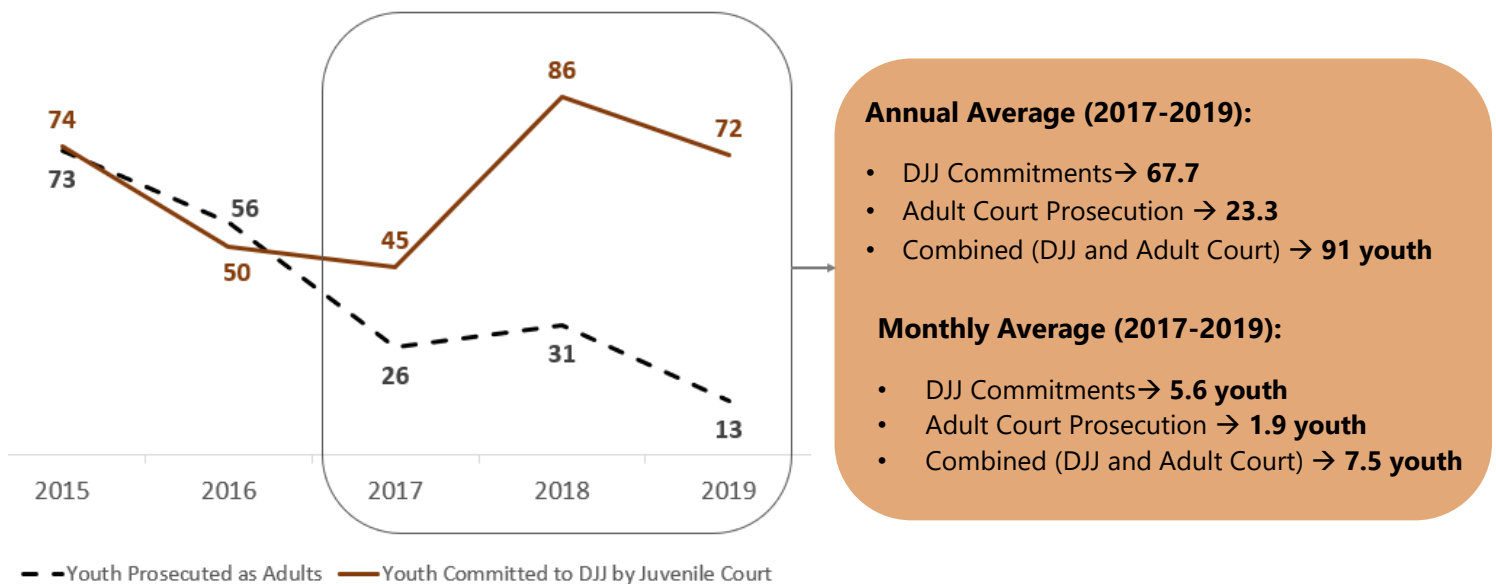
## Capacity and Facilities

YJR anticipates a dramatic decrease in the number of youth subject to justice system involvement. Despite the anticipated reductions, for the purposes of planning for capacity needs when DJJ intake closes on July 1, 2021, the DJJ Transition Team reviewed recent trends in youth committed to DJJ and prosecuted as adults to make conservative estimates on local capacity needs for a “higher need” dispositional track and to serve as “Secure Youth Treatment Facilities.”

### Using averages of data for the last three years (2017-2019), analysis revealed:

- An average of **5.6 youth** are committed to DJJ by the juvenile court per month.
- An average of **1.9 youth** are transferred to adult court per month.

**Figure 12: Annual Commitments to DJJ and Adult Court Prosecutions (2015-2019)**



**Source:** Los Angeles County Probation Department and Los Angeles County District Attorney

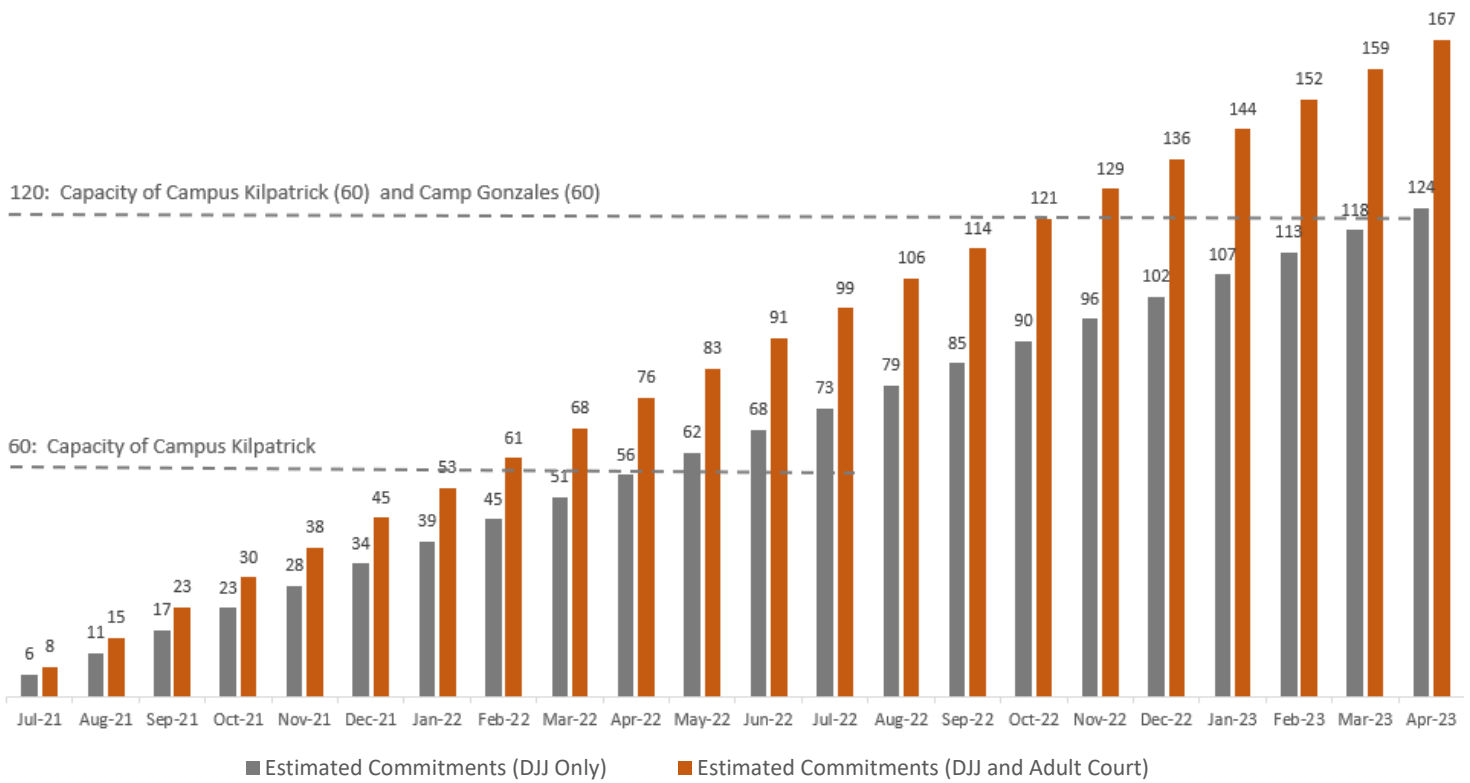
If these average monthly trends continue, and all youth who would have been committed to DJJ and, in line District Attorney Gascón’s recent policy directive- all youth previously transferred to adult court are instead committed to a Secure Alternative to DJJ, the County would need capacity for an average of **7.5 youth** per month (an average of 5.6 youth committed to DJJ per month plus an average of 1.9 youth transferred to adult court per month). DJJ Transition Team conversations identified both Campus Kilpatrick and Camp Gonzales as potential facilities that could offer a secure alternative to DJJ that would align with named values. Both facilities currently have a capacity of 60 youth. If one facility were used, with 7.5 youth committed per month (conservative estimate using average number youth committed to DJJ and transferred to adult court), the facility would reach capacity in February 2022.

If one facility were used, with **5.6 youth** committed per month (conservative estimate using average number of youth committed to DJJ only), the facility would reach capacity in May 2022. If both facilities

were used under current capacity, capacity would be reached in October 2022 or April 2023, at which point some youth committed in July 2021 would likely be released from custody.

Including Dorothy Kirby Center could offer an additional capacity of 100 youth. As the DJJ Transition Team continues to discuss viable options for special populations, including girls, youth with unique mental health needs, and youth in need of treatment for sex offenses, the capacity at Dorothy Kirby will be further explored.

**Figure 13: : Conservative Estimate of Monthly Commitments to Alternative to DJJ .**



**Source: Los Angeles County Probation, estimates based on average monthly commitments and adult court prosecution for 2017-2019**

## DJJ Transition Team Recommendations

### 1. Recommendations building on Youth Justice Reimagined

- a. Create a plan to phase the **transition of Probation operations of Secure Alternatives to DJJ to the new Department of Youth Development (DYD)** as soon as DYD has capacity.

### 2. Recommendation regarding DJJ Youth Advisory Body

- a. **Establish and fund a DJJ Youth Advisory Body** to ensure the experience of youth impacted by DJJ remains centered in the implementation of SB 823, to inform and provide comments on any plan established by the JJCC Subcommittee, and to provide recommendations regarding programming for Secure Alternatives to DJJ.

### 3. Recommendations regarding Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) Subcommittee

- a. **Create a subcommittee of the multiagency Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC)** to immediately follow up on recommendations included in this report and to develop a plan for the use of Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant Funds to be allocated to Los Angeles County.
- b. In line with the DJJ Transition Team's priority to center impacted youth voice and consistent with the motion from the Board of Supervisors in December 2017 to diversify and expand community representation the JJCC, **designate no fewer than four seats on the JJCC Subcommittee authorized by SB 823 to community members** with experience providing community-based youth services, youth justice advocates, or people with direct experience in the juvenile justice system.
- c. To promote continuity, **designate representatives who participated in the DJJ Transition Team** to the JJCC Subcommittee.
- d. Continue to utilize the services of experienced consultant(s) to support and provide facilitation of the planning process.
- e. **Add representative(s) from YDD and other relevant county agencies** relevant to the implementation of SB 823.
- f. **Establish a policy for no fewer than once annual convening of the JJCC Subcommittee** to review programs and interventions supported by JRBG funds, data on youth served on the continuum of DJJ alternatives, including the use of Secure Alternatives to DJJ, data on youth prosecuted as adults, available outcome measures data, to receive feedback from the DJJ Youth Advisory Board and to modify their plan as needed.



#### 4. Recommendations regarding facilities to serve as Secure Alternative to DJJ

- a. **Develop plan for immediate repurposing of the following existing County facilities to serve as Secure Alternative to DJJ, ensuring ideal facility attributes discussed by DJJ Transition Team are considered and implemented:**
  - i. Campus Kilpatrick by July 2021;
  - ii. A pod within either Campus Kilpatrick or Dorothy Kirby Center to serve girls and youth with acute mental health needs who would otherwise be subject to DJJ by July 2021; and
  - iii. Camp Gonzales by February 2022, if additional capacity is deemed necessary.
- b. **Develop a policy prohibiting the use of Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall** as a long-term post-dispositional track for any youth, including youth otherwise subject to DJJ.

#### 5. Recommendations regarding Facility Renovation

- a. **Direct Probation to immediately conduct a safety and security assessment** of any facility or pod under consideration to serve as a Secure Alternative to DJJ, contemplating the following considerations:
  - i. The existing or potential capacity of staff to establish safety and a sense of security within the facility through cultivating trust, communication and connection, a sense of belonging, and motivation among youth;
  - ii. The existing or potential capacity of programming to inspire and engage youth in opportunities for growth and learning; and
  - iii. The existing level of security versus the needed level of security through physical restraints that minimize the appearance and sense of institutionalization as much as possible; ideas included invisible bars, hidden cameras, high walls, gated grounds with security officers and remoteness from communities.
- b. **Direct Probation to request an onsite Title 24 compliance assessment** of Camp Gonzales by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC).
- c. **Direct Probation, YDD and the Youth Justice Transition Advisory Group (YJTAG) to develop a budget using existing funds or JJRBG funds** on any renovations necessary to establish Secure Alternatives to DJJ.

#### 6. Recommendations regarding Camps

- a. **Continue efforts that reduce the number of youth committed to camp**, including the recommendations in YJR to pilot and expand the use of Safe and Secure Healing Centers to serve as alternatives to Camp.
- b. **Direct Probation to implement elements of the LA Model<sup>4</sup> in existing camps**, ensuring that youth who previously benefited from any healing-based, care-first approach promoted at Campus Kilpatrick will receive the same benefits in other existing facilities.

## 7. Recommendations regarding staffing of secure alternatives to DJJ

- a. Direct Probation to collaborate with YDD and the YJTAG to immediately develop a plan and corresponding budget to submit to the JJCC subcommittee for **the initial recruitment and training of a cohort of Credible Messengers** to serve as staff at Secure Alternative to DJJ by July 2021 and to provide mentorship and reentry support for youth stepping down or exiting the facility.
- b. Direct Probation to collaborate with YDD and the YJTAG to **develop a plan to ensure staffing of Secure Alternatives to DJJ prioritizes backgrounds in social work and cultural healing practices.**
- c. Direct YDD and a new DYD, as it is erected, to **continue to expand Credible Messengers beyond an initial pilot as part of a core staffing** model of the continuum of DJJ alternatives, including Secure Alternatives to DJJ.

## 8. Recommendations regarding Youth Empowerment and Support Teams (YES) Teams and dispositional decision-making

- a. **Develop a plan to incorporate the influence of YES Teams** in:
  - i. Court Dispositions for youth adjudicated of offenses enumerated in W.I.C. 707(b)
  - ii. Individual Treatment Plans for youth committed to Secure Alternatives to DJJ
  - iii. Progress Reports for youth committed to Secure Alternatives to DJJ
  - iv. Reentry Planning
- b. **Create a process for Step Down**, as permissible by law, for youth committed to Secure Alternatives to DJJ, allowing youth to step down to home-like, therapeutic settings such as Safe and Secure Healing Centers or community-rooted supports and supervision as soon as a

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on The LA Mode, see Korman, H. et al, "A Culture of Care for All: Envisioning the LA Model" (May 2017), available at <https://probation.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/LA-Model-A-Culture-of-Care-for-All-2.pdf>.

youth makes progress and demonstrates the ability to program successfully in a less restrictive setting.

## 9. Recommendations regarding Programming

- a. Direct Probation, YDD, and the YJTAG along with the DJJ Youth Advisory Group to **further flesh out the programming to be provided within the DJJ Alternative and develop corresponding budget projections.**
- b. Direct Probation, YDD and the YJTAG to develop a plan, including a budget, to **ensure transportation for family visitation at the Secure Alternatives to DJJ** given their remote locations. Family visitation is vital to ensure ongoing contact, connection and relationship-building between youth and their families—contributing to their overall wellbeing during and after commitments.
- c. Direct Probation, YDD and the YJTAG in partnership with the JJCC to **identify and resource the needed specialization in programming** based on offense types and youth needs, including for girls and youth accused of sex-related offenses.

## 10. Recommendations regarding data collection

- a. To ensure that there are no net-widening effects in the implementation of Secure Alternative to DJJ and that the significant racial and ethnic disparities so pronounced in previous commitments to DJJ and adult court prosecutions in Los Angeles County are not replicated with the implementation local alternatives, **collect and make publicly available reports with data** disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and age at alleged offense and most serious adjudicated offense<sup>5</sup> regarding:
  - i. Youth eligible for Secure Alternative to DJJ
  - ii. Youth committed to Secure Alternative to DJJ
  - iii. Youth for whom a motion for transfer to adult court is filed
  - iv. Youth with a transfer hearing
  - v. Youth transferred to adult court

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<sup>5</sup> For youth committed to DJJ, data regarding the most serious offense adjudicated should be collected and reported. For youth with a motion for transfer to adult court, most serious offense alleged should be collected and reported.

- b. Collect and make publicly available data regarding dispositional outcomes for all youth adjudicated of offenses enumerated in WIC 707(b) disaggregated by disposition, race/ethnicity, gender and age at alleged offense.
- c. Collect and make publicly available data regarding sentences of youth prosecuted as adults disaggregated by most serious offense convicted, adult court disposition, race/ethnicity, gender, and age at alleged offense.
- d. Develop a strategy for collecting, analyzing and making publicly available key outcome data for youth served by the continuum of alternatives to DJJ, including Secure Alternatives to DJJ.