



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
PROBATION OVERSIGHT COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT

poc.lacounty.gov

2022-23

Roster

Esché Jackson, Commission Chair

Milinda Kakani, Commission Vice Chair, Second Supervisorial District

Cyn Yamashiro, Former Commissioner, Second Supervisorial District

Sean Garcia-Leys, Commission Secretary

Franky Carrillo, Commissioner, First Supervisorial District

Samuel Lewis, Commissioner, Third Supervisorial District

Dolores Canales, Commissioner, Fourth Supervisorial District

Donald D. Meredith, Commissioner, Fifth Supervisorial District

Eduardo Mundo, Commissioner, Board of Supervisors At-Large

Dr. Diane Terry, Commissioner, Board of Supervisors At-Large

Wendelyn Julien, Executive Director

Danielle Dupuy, Former Commissioner

Dominique Nong, Former Commissioner



FRANKY CARRILLO
COMMISSIONER
FIRST SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT



MILINDA KAKANI, ESQ.
VICE CHAIR
SECOND SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT



SAMUEL LEWIS
COMMISSIONER
THIRD SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT



DOLORES CANALES
COMMISSIONER
FOURTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT



LT. DONALD D. MEREDITH
COMMISSIONER
FIFTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT



ESCHE JACKSON
CHAIR
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AT-LARGE



SEAN GARCIA-LEYS, ESQ.
SECRETARY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AT-LARGE



EDUARDO MUNDO
COMMISSIONER
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AT-LARGE



DR. DIANE TERRY
COMMISSIONER
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AT-LARGE



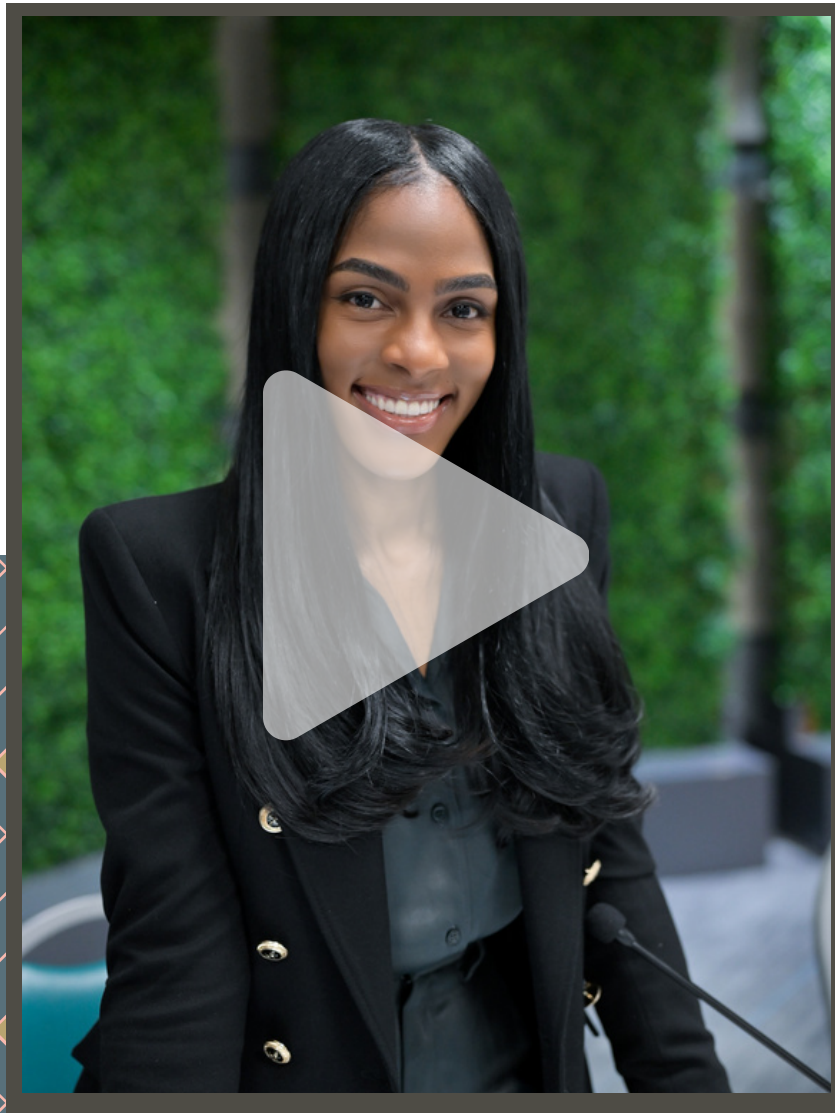
WENDELYN JULIEN, ESQ.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
PROBATION OVERSIGHT COMMISSION**

Chair's Message

Esché Jackson, Commission Chair



Lived Experience is Expertise: The POC as a Model for the Nation

By Wendelyn Julien, POC Executive Director

From the earliest conversations about the development of the Probation Oversight Commission (POC), the framers understood the need to include people on the commission who “have lived experience within the Probation system as either an adult or juvenile to properly understand the work to be done.”[1] This makes sense, since many of the people involved in the Probation Reform Implementation Team (PRIT) had lived experience themselves and others clearly understood that the POC needed to take a different approach than prior efforts in order to successfully steward the Probation Department toward achieving the 93 reform priorities set by the PRIT. In the end, the ordinance creating the POC formally reflects the requirement, mandating that the POC consist of nine members, “with at least one member who is formerly justice-system involved, [and] at least one member who is a family member of someone who is currently or formerly justice-involved....” [2].

When the original nine commissioners were selected, the Board went beyond their own mandate. They selected three commissioners with lived experience and others with family members who are or have been incarcerated.

Franky Carrillo was wrongfully convicted of murder and spent 20 years in prison fighting for justice before being exonerated with the help of The Innocence Project. Since his exoneration, Franky started a family and has been an advocate for justice reform.

He’s one of four Probation Oversight Commissioners with lived experience.

When an opening came up later in the first year, the Board appointed a fourth commissioner who is formerly justice involved. When the commissioners sought to select their leaders, in the first round they elected commissioners with lived experience as the Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. The second term, they again elected a Chair with lived experience.

In addition to service on the Commission, the POC built outreach and participation strategies to encourage and welcome people impacted by Probation to participate in the meetings, both as panelists and through robust opportunities for public comment.

What is lived experience?

So what does “lived experience” mean beyond being a buzzword that folks use when talking about inclusive governance and decision-making? Perhaps the best definition I found comes, not surprisingly, from an article written by an author with lived experience. Victor Saucedo, with Code for America, defines it as follows:



“Put simply, lived experience means that a person has lived through the problem that is going to be solved. People who have been closest to the problem have the most experience with it, can elevate real concerns, devise the most pointed solutions, and engage community support. ... Lived experience, when it pertains to the criminal legal system, can mean that a person has been arrested, convicted, or incarcerated for any length of time.”[3]

What has become clear over the initial two and a half years of the Probation Oversight Commission is that there is also a very simple definition of what “lived experience” means: Expertise. The leaders of the commission and the people who have shared their experiences and recommendations with the commission have demonstrated profound understanding of the nuances and complications of the criminal justice system and the Probation Department. They have studied, researched, and listened to all parties and made suggestions to the Board of Supervisors and the Probation Department that have been adopted through motions and policy and practice changes.

There is another word that describes the leadership by folks with lived experience on the POC: Courage. During challenging discussions, they have shared personal stories about their experiences that have served to bring the commission, and ultimately the Board, to better decisions. They have related deeply painful stories to show solidarity with young people currently in the system and to continually keep human dignity at the center of the POC’s discussions. They have maintained their composure and bravely marched on when they have been wrongly, and at times dangerously attacked in the public setting. Their focus on the greater goal, even in the face of these challenges, serves as an example for their colleagues.

The incorporation of so many people with lived experience into the POC has been a lesson in true and participatory Leadership. One thing people with lived experience are not is unanimous. They represent a diversity of experiences and opinions and have often found themselves on opposite sides of issues. Yet, they have created a culture in this new commission of respect, compromise, and collaboration.

Probation Oversight Commission Chair, Esché Jackson discussing suggestions for Probation reform with an attendee at a POC meeting.



One difficult topic that has arisen multiple times is a Probation staff member insisting that they represent people with lived experience and, because many grew up in the same communities and similar situations to the young people who are incarcerated and adults on probation, can serve as credible messengers. Without discounting their personal experiences, the commissioners listened to their suggestions, holding a number of townhalls for employees only to listen to their concerns. The commissioners worked to explain that there exists a crucial distinction between having proximity to or understanding of the impact of being incarcerated and having actual lived experience. They continued to center the needs and stories of people impacted by the systems. Yet while maintaining this important distinction, the commissioners this year further diversified the POC, selecting a new at-large commissioner who spent three decades as a Probation officer.

Filling the POC with people with lived experience has led to unprecedented public participation, collaboration, and positive results in the quest for Probation reform. These commissioners bring lived experience, and also professionalism to work cohesively with people from all backgrounds and experiences in order to arrive at the best outcomes for people on probation. A civilian oversight commission filled with people who personally understand the impact the system has on people makes for a more effective body. They are courageous leaders and experts. It's not a way to check a box, it is a way to reach better outcomes for the people impacted by Probation and to promote accountability and transparency.



[1] <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/122501.pdf>

[2] https://library.municode.com/ca/los_angeles_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT3ADCOCO_CH3.80PROVCO

[3] <https://codeforamerica.org/news/the-power-of-lived-experience/>.



Four of the nine POC commissioners bring valuable lived experience to the commission. Commissioner Dolores Canales (second from left) notes her appreciation for all the commissioners, saying that she finds the combination of "everyone's value, expertise, and understanding to be what makes our team so effective." (Commissioner Sam Lewis not pictured)

Ushering Leadership Changes

On February 11, 2023, the Probation Oversight Commission (POC) learned of a profoundly disturbing use of force incident that happened at Camp Kilpatrick in Malibu in October 2020. The incident was outlined in a [report by the L.A. Times](#), highlighted by a distressing video of the assault. The video showcases a probation supervisor forcefully restraining a 17-year-old youth, violently bending his leg in the process. The report revealed that in mid 2021 an internal disciplinary roundtable recommended the termination of the probation supervisor who carried out the aggression. However, Probation Chief Gonzales overrode the recommendations of the disciplinary advisors and allowed the probation supervisor to keep his job.

Following the publication of the report, the POC moved swiftly to agendize the use of force incident for the February 23rd commission meeting. At that meeting, after a lengthy discussion and after substantial public engagement, the commission voted to ask for the resignation of Chief Gonzales and the termination of Chief Deputy Karen Fletcher.



The L.A. Times reported on the POC's recommendations for the changes at with Probation leadership via an opinion piece published on [February 28](#). A week later, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors voted to [dismiss Probation Chief Adolfo Gonzales](#).

History of leadership instability at L.A. County Probation

The L.A. County Probation Department has a long history of volatility at the top. Over the past two decades, there have been ten permanent and interim department directors.

Chief Deputy Karen Fletcher was given the interim position after the dismissal of Chief Gonzales. Her tenure would last only 9 weeks.

POC's commitment to collaboration

The L.A. County Board of Supervisors selected Guillermo Viera Rosa as Probation's Interim Chief on May 12, 2023. A month later, the POC held a 90-minute Virtual Town Hall with Interim Chief Viera Rosa and POC chair Esché Jackson.

During the collaborative discussion, the POC learned about Interim Chief Viera Rosa's vision for the department and opportunities for cooperation and growth. The Interim Chief shared his vision for the Department with staff and the public and outlined his plans to address pressing issues.



Areas of progress, transparency, and accountability

Interim Chief Viera Rosa's tenure has brought significant changes in the areas of accountability and transparency, measurable by the sharing of data and information and the candor of presentations at the POC by him and his leadership team.

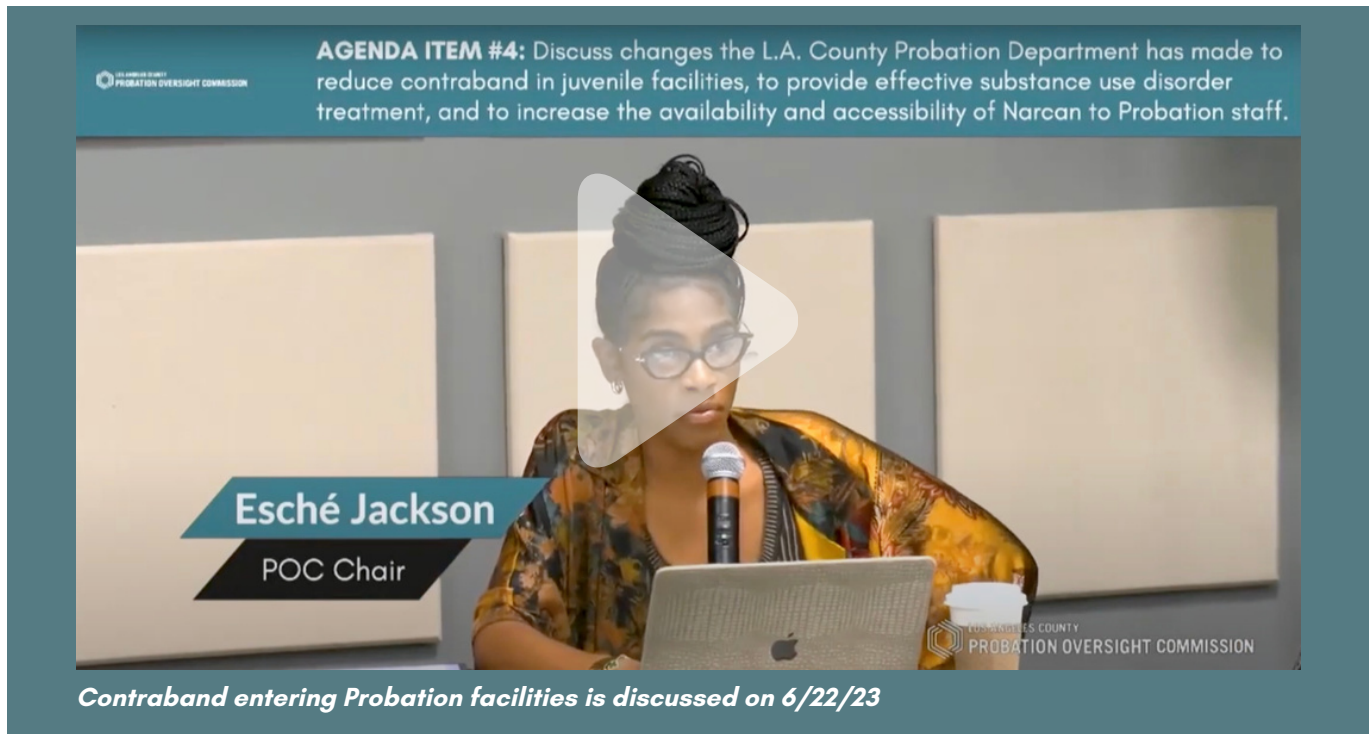
Prior to Interim Chief Viera Rosa's arrival, the POC had nearly a dozen outstanding requests for data and information, the oldest request stemming from over a year prior to his arrival.

Since he took the helm, Probation has significantly improved their process for sharing data with the POC nearly all of the new and outstanding requests have been received. The requests remaining outstanding mostly relate to Probation's antiquated and sometimes ineffective data collection systems, and not to an unwillingness to share the information. This newfound cooperation will make it easier to build sustainable information sharing practices and to build trust between the POC and the Probation Department.



Contraband, Substance Abuse, and Programming

On Tuesday, May 9, 2023, our worst fear became a reality. That morning, we learned that a teenager under the care of L.A. County Probation lost his life from a drug overdose. His name was Bryan Diaz and his death is an abject failure by Probation and all of those entrusted with the care of young people in Probation's custody. Bryan's death should never have happened and the tragedy of his passing is one that must be used as a catalyst for reform.



Annual Inspection Leads to Urgency

Contraband and substance use were at the forefront of discussion for the POC during 2023 in large part due to the annual inspections that took place during the summer and fall of 2022. The POC's [Annual Inspections Report](#) highlighted concerns about contraband, mentioning contraband 36 times and expressing dire concerns for youth well-being brought forth by POC commissioners, Probation staff, partner agency staff, and youth.

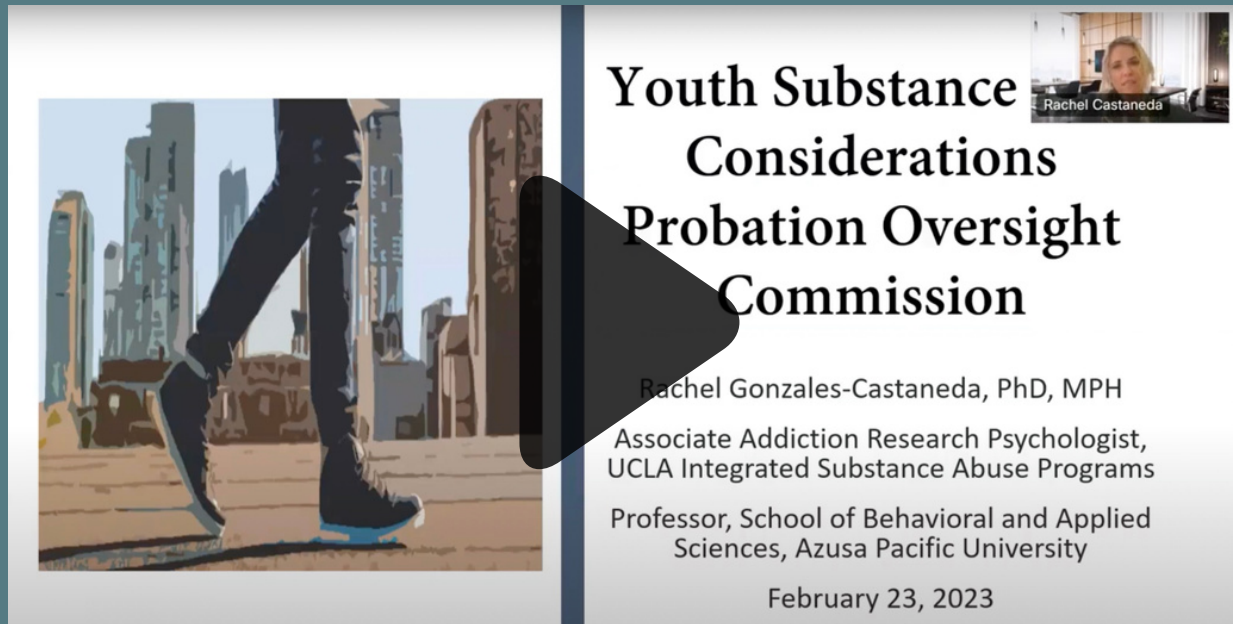
As a result, the POC included discussion of contraband and substance use at five POC meetings from January to June of 2023.

In January, the commission moved to require the Probation Department to formulate a concrete plan to address contraband including to:

- Describe preventative measures taken at each facility to mitigate the entry and risk of contraband;
- Identify resources allocated to address the problem including the accessibility of rehabilitative and trauma-informed programming consistent with the Youth Justice Re-Imagined approach as well as the types of services and supports being offered to youth around substance use and addiction issues;

- Share details about the training, policies, and procedures staff members receive and steps to be followed when finding or witnessing contraband;
- Provide an inventory of contraband found during searches including descriptions on how contraband is coming in.

While this data was pending, the POC hosted a panel of Substance Use Disorder Treatment experts at the February 23, 2023 commission meeting, to shed light on substance use disorder and harm prevention services available inside Probation halls and camps.



Substance Abuse Panel at 2/23/23 POC Meeting

Following this meeting, on March 7, 2023, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors passed a [motion](#) addressing the issue of illicit substances and contraband entering Probation's juvenile facilities.

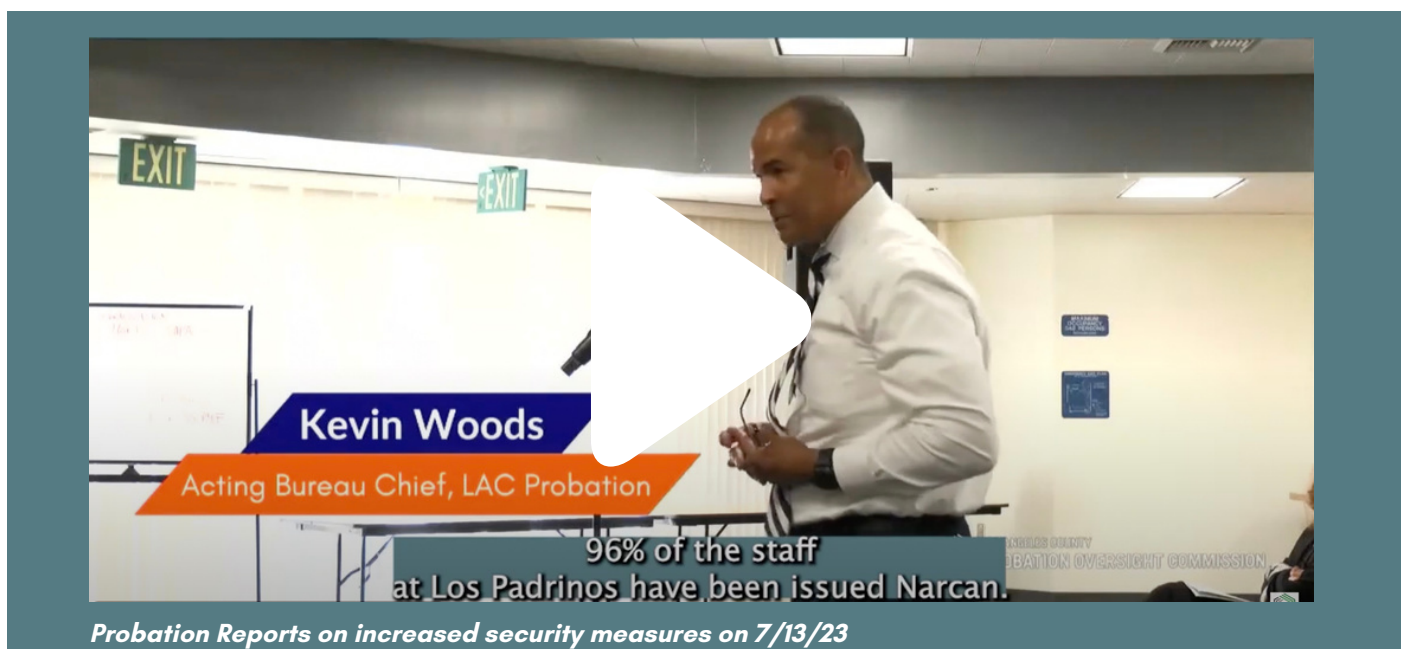


BOS Motions addressing contraband entering Probation Juvenile Halls , 3/7/23

Narcan and Security Improvements

In support of the Board's decisive action, the POC voted to support the motion further by calling on Probation to swiftly improve adherence to security practices, immediately train Probation staff in the use of Narcan and distribute it to staff, and most importantly provide an immediate implementation plan for programs centered on reducing the use of substances by youth.

The POC confirmed the progress at subsequent POC meetings, hearing reports about the implementation of a clear bag policy for visitors and staff and cell phone bans. The POC asked challenging questions about staff training and distribution of Narcan, a lifesaving opioid reversal medication. Probation reported at a meeting in the spring that only 42% of staff had been trained and distribution had not begun to Probation staff. However, the regular oversight and Probation's diligence resulted in rates of training and issuance of the medication being increased to 96% and 92% of all staff at Los Padrinos and Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Halls, respectively.



Looking Forward

While the POC and the Board have continued to move the department toward accountability, and there is recognition that Probation has made significant improvements, further improvements are still needed. The POC is actively working to establish new protocols for receiving regular access to data and information to support an assessment of programs and services addressing substance use disorders and harm reduction within Probation's facilities. Commissioners called on the POC staff to assess what is currently available, and to learn from the experts themselves, the youth, to find what they believe works best for them to reduce the risk of substance-related harm in detention and beyond.

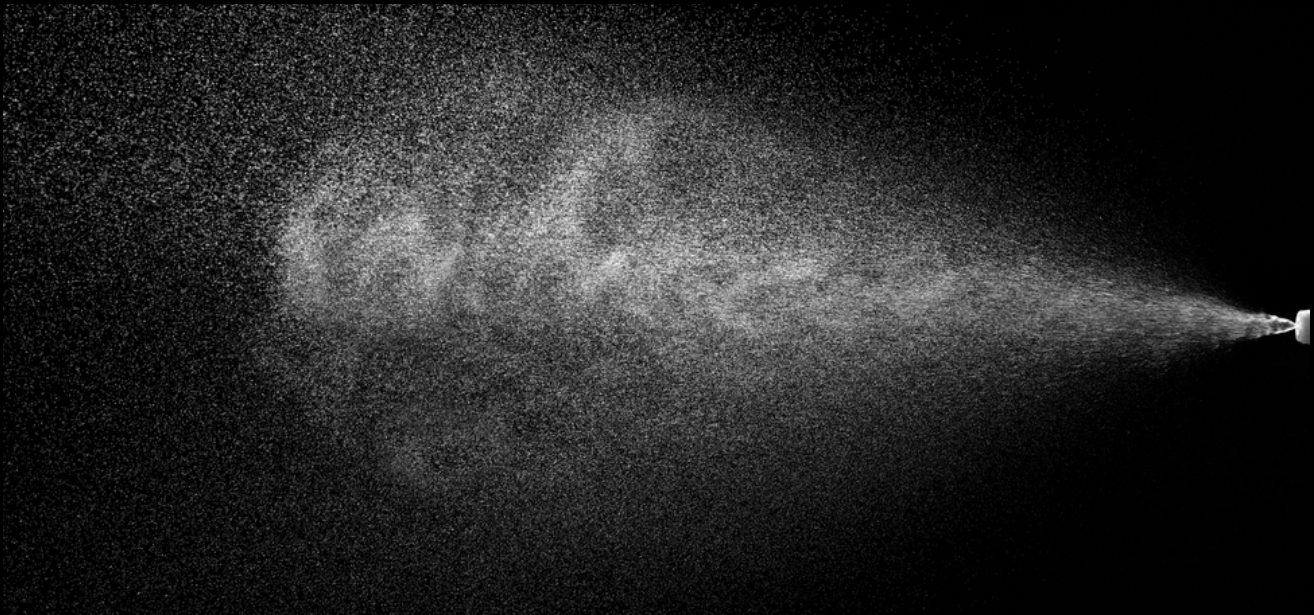
The POC intends to use this data, coupled with research, to report on outcomes, advocate for any needed changes, and to support the department in making data-informed services and programming decisions.

Elimination of OC Spray in Juvenile Halls

Throughout FY22-23, the POC took action to address the stalled phase out of Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) Spray that the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved in the February 2019 motion: Phasing Out the Use of Oleoresin Capsicum Spray In County Juvenile Facilities.

Most Vulnerable at Risk

The POC followed through with tracking Probation reports of OC spray use in the facilities, which culminated into a report published in November 2022, Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) Spray Deployment Summary, which uncovered a troubling trend of increased use of spray at Central Juvenile Hall from June 1st to September 20th, 2022. There were specific concerns about the use of the chemical intervention on units housing girls and gender expansive youth, as well as youth with documented developmental disabilities, histories of Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSEC), and Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) involvement. This report highlighted the disproportionate use of spray between Central and Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Halls, and the Board took quick action in its unanimously approved December 20, 2022 motion: Phase Out of Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) Spray at Central Juvenile Hall, which required a phase out of spray on units primarily housing vulnerable youth within 45 days and the submission of a renewed plan to phase out across all units.



Progress Made

Probation eliminated OC in every unit designated to house youth with the demographics listed above at Central by February 27, 2023. Probation took further precaution to collect OC from staff with permanent work assignments in the intake and medical isolation unit that was known to periodically house especially vulnerable youth. Focus on maintaining full staffing of individuals who volunteered to work without spray reportedly eased the transition to make the units a spray-free environment. Many staff reported that they had turned in their spray prior to the phase out timelines because it was an intervention they had little interest in using.

The Department put forth a plan to fully eliminate OC at both juvenile hall facilities which outlined a phase out in one or more units monthly. The POC monitored progress via regular visits to the facilities and analysis of Probation reports. It was quickly discovered that progress was not continuing as outlined in the department's plan, and after the units above phased out, communication to other units slated for phase out did not occur.

Issues with data

The POC closely tracked Probation's OC reporting and found multiple issues with gathering and disseminating accurate data. Reports regularly state that video has not been reviewed and that determinations of whether decontamination was within policy is "pending." The POC continues to push the Department toward full elimination of OC spray.

The Probation Department struggles to gather and disseminate reliable data, particularly related to youth injuries and decontamination from OC spray.

Work To Be Done

As months passed, elimination stalled until the pending re-opening of Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall prompted a commitment from newly appointed Probation leadership that the chemical intervention would not be brought into the facility.

The elimination of OC spray, the most severe use of force intervention according to Probation policy, is long overdue. The POC anticipates the need for continued pursuit of phase out plans from the department in the next fiscal year with recognition that plans must support the safety and well-being needs of all inside of the detention facilities.



Mission Statement

"The mission of the Probation Oversight Commission is to re-imagine probation services in the County of Los Angeles to achieve accountability, transparency, and healing of the people served by and working for the Probation Department."

History



Ordinance



Other Probation Oversight Commission

Initiatives in '22-'23

Public Safety

- L.A. County Probation Department's involvement with auctioning firearms.
- Community Detention Program and electronic monitoring (EM) of youth within L.A. Probation.
- L.A. Probation's Special Enforcement Operations Unit (SEO) taser usage policy and training plans.
- Decarceration of girls in L.A. County.
- OIG investigation regarding the Probation Department's involvement with Justin Flores, accused of killing two El Monte Police Officers in June 2022.

Transparency and Accountability

- L.A. Probation sexual assault and misconduct allegations.
- Reporting processes L.A. Probation should implement when sharing information with the Board of Supervisors, the L.A. County Office of Inspector General (OIG), and the POC.
- L.A. Probation's hiring of a strategic planning consultant for the development of a strategic plan.
- L.A. Probation's progress on addressing the backlog on use of force investigations.
- L.A. Probation's Probation official policies and practices on grievances and complaints.
- California's Office of Youth and Community Restoration's (OYCR) purpose, ability to conduct inspections and receive complaints, and how OYCR connects with local complaint and grievances processes.
- Progress L.A. Probation has made towards compliance with the Department of Justice (DOJ) settlement agreement.

Improving Facility Conditions

- L.A. Probation's progress on reaching compliance for areas of noncompliance with Title 15 and Title 24 according to recent California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) inspections.
- Rules and regulations for staff, visitors, and providers entering L.A. County juvenile halls and camps.
- Rights of incarcerated youth, the implementation of Assembly Bill (AB) 2417 – Youth Bill of Rights.
- Probation's new Grievance system in the juvenile facilities.
- L.A. Probation's progress towards reaffirming and expanding the L.A. Model across all facilities pursuant to the September 21, 2021 Board of Supervisors' motion.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Commission meetings play a pivotal role in conveying vital information related to matters under the Commission's purview to our communities and a diverse range of stakeholders.

During the reporting period, we hosted thirteen virtual public meetings, with an impressive average attendance of 265 virtual participants across WebEx and YouTube Live. These meetings covered a wide spectrum of topics, including specialized sessions addressing issues such as SYTF, Probation's hiring freeze, inspections & grievances, OC Spray, and Probation's gun auction.

HYBRID MEETINGS

In addition to these virtual gatherings, we conducted eight hybrid meetings, offering the public both in-person and virtual participation options. These hybrid meetings consistently attracted an average of 30 RSVPs for in-person attendance per meeting, while simultaneously engaging an **average virtual audience exceeding 300 attendees** through the WebEx and YouTube Live platforms.



TOWN HALLS

We organized a series of town hall events tailored to specific audiences, including sessions dedicated to the Probation Managers Association and probation employees represented by SEIU Local 721. Additionally, we facilitated a public Virtual Listening session for Survivors and hosted a public virtual Meet & Greet with Interim Chief Guillermo Rosa Viera, ensuring accessibility and open dialogue.

HIGH VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

Our commitment to community engagement yielded significant results during this period. The POC expanded its email subscriber list from **12,000 to 15,000**, marking a notable 20% increase in subscribers. Additionally, we achieved an impressive milestone of **over 100,000** social media impressions, reflecting the growing reach and impact of our outreach initiatives.

Notably, our Commission meetings on YouTube garnered **over 3,500** hours of watch time, underscoring the sustained interest and engagement of our audience in Commission proceedings.



CORE VALUES

Inclusive Collaboration

We see each stakeholder as the expert of their experiences and believe the engagement and understanding of many voices can bring a clear direction for the changes that are needed. In practice we:

- Engage all stakeholders and the public
- Value all voices
- Hold space for voices of various viewpoints

Social Justice

We believe valuing people who have been marginalized and denied voice is imperative to reform work. We promote inclusion, equity, and access to systems and services. In practice we:

- Represent the interests of the most vulnerable and least represented individuals
- Acknowledge and work to dismantle racism and other disparities in the systems in which we work

Transparency

We believe robust and positive engagement with stakeholders and partners will ensure that changes are long-lasting, equitable, and applicable and that transparency builds trust. In practice we:

- Foster positive interactions and relationships
- Share information widely
- Keep lines of communication open and honest

Integrity

We believe operating with authenticity is necessary to inspire others to perform transformational work. In practice we:

- Fact check and fact share
- Communicate honestly and conduct our work thoroughly.



Compassion

We believe in compassion for all people. Compassion informs our work, validates, and supports everyone involved. We acknowledge injustice and validate and understand the human experience. In practice we:

- Understand trauma and its consequences
- Assume best intentions
- Act out of empathy and understanding

Knowledge

We believe knowledge leads to better decisions and reduces bias. Many people have lived and studied the work we are charged to do, and we want to efficiently incorporate ideas already shown to work. We can and must continually strive to learn, improve, and grow. In practice we:

- Are lifelong learners
- Constantly hone our skills and are open to new ideas
- Actively listen

Humility

We believe in staying grounded to the truths of injustice. Humility breeds accountability, keeps us objective, and allows for inclusive collaboration. In practice we:

- Prioritize the needs of the constituents we serve
- Practice humility and respect
- Share credit for wins and losses



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