

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS AND
JANICE HAHN**

November 7, 2017

Implementing a Countywide Approach to Youth Diversion

Research shows that involvement with the juvenile justice system can have considerable negative consequences for youth. Arrest, probation supervision and out-of-home placement can be stigmatizing, interrupt positive development, and lead to an increased risk for dropping out of high school, unemployment, trauma, and homelessness. Collateral consequences from involvement with the juvenile justice system follow a young person into adulthood, including reduced earnings, increased family disruption, and increased risk of adult incarceration.

Moreover, even as the number of youth arrests and incarceration continue to decline throughout Los Angeles County (County), racial disparities have grown. Youth of color continue to be disproportionately impacted at all stages of the juvenile justice system when controlling for offense, and represent 95% of youth in the County’s probation camps and juvenile halls.

Keeping young people out of the justice system and keeping families whole is a promising strategy for improving social, academic, economic and health outcomes. Diversion is also cost-effective, and aligned with improving public safety. The cost per youth per year in a County probation camp is estimated at over \$247,000, with a recidivism rate (as defined by re-arrest within one year) of approximately 33% (Juvenile Probation Outcome Study, 2017). Comparatively, Centinela Youth Service’s restorative justice diversion program costs on average \$4,000 or less per youth, with a recidivism rate of 8-11%. Serving youth in the community is a better investment.

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In order to give every young person the opportunity to succeed, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a motion by Supervisors Ridley-Thomas and Hahn on January 24, 2017 to advance a comprehensive Countywide approach to diverting young people from the juvenile and criminal justice systems. To implement the recommendations in the motion, over the last nine months a Youth Diversion Subcommittee (Subcommittee) of the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee (CCJCC), comprised of a range of County departments, law enforcement agencies, community-based organizations, youth with lived experience, and a national criminal justice consultant, met nearly a dozen times to develop a plan focused on diversion at the earliest point of contact.

In its report entitled A Roadmap for Advancing Youth Diversion in Los Angeles County, the Subcommittee recommended community-based diversion in lieu of arrest or citation, with support from a central coordinating office. This central office would provide the coordination and contracting needed to standardize effective practices for youth diversion while also supporting partnerships among law enforcement agencies and community-based providers through training, technical assistance, and communication. Additionally, the central office would collect data on youth arrests and assess other key indicators on an ongoing basis at both the program and County levels to monitor public safety and youth well-being.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has further recommended that this central office be a division of the Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR). Since its establishment two years ago within the Department of Health Services (DHS), ODR has become the County hub for diverting adults from jail and supporting successful reentry. For example, the ODR has diverted over 1,300 adults from the County jails under the Misdemeanor Incompetent to Stand Trial (MIST) program and housing program. ODR is also launching the County's first Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion program to divert adults with substance use disorders at the point of arrest for drug or prostitution charges (Solis and Ridley-Thomas motion, July 12, 2016), and is leading the County's Prop 47 community reinvestment work.

With the adult diversion work gaining momentum, the County would benefit from a similar entity focused on youth diversion. Establishing a division on Youth Diversion and Development (YDD) within the ODR is intended to address a current gap and complement

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the County's existing efforts on diversion to allow for a continuum of services. Moreover, the YDD's name signals both its primary function as the coordinating hub for youth diversion efforts Countywide and its secondary and aspirational function to coordinate and expand youth development work. The ultimate goal is to connect youth with services such as education, employment, health services, housing, and the arts so they can thrive.

Work is already underway to identify critical activities including but not limited to office build-out, staffing, and community and law enforcement engagement that need to occur as part of a phased implementation of youth diversion efforts. The CEO has also identified County funding to support youth diversion. Additionally, a number of local community-based organizations and foundations with a long history of justice reform have partnered in this work and are invested in ensuring that programming, capacity-building, technical assistance, and evaluation are incorporated. Board action is now necessary to guarantee youth have access to supportive services instead of arrest and incarceration, which is morally imperative and fiscally responsible.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Accept the recommendations and strategies contained in the report entitled A Roadmap For Advancing Youth Diversion in Los Angeles County (Roadmap for Youth Diversion Report) submitted to the Board of Supervisors (Board) on October 30, 2017.
2. In order to improve coordination, expansion and implementation of youth diversion efforts throughout Los Angeles County, direct the Department of Health Services (DHS) in conjunction with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and County Counsel, as appropriate, to:
 - a. Establish a division within the Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR), entitled Youth Diversion and Development (YDD);
 - b. Allocate four new positions to YDD by approving interim ordinance authority, pursuant to Section 6.06.020 of the County Code, that shall include expertise in youth development, mental and social health, and legal/justice issues, subject to allocation by the CEO, Classification Division; and

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- c. Establish a steering committee that is convened regularly by ODR's division on YDD and comprised of membership from the previously established Youth Diversion Subcommittee, with adjustments made as needed. The purpose of this steering committee is to provide ongoing communication and guidance around implementation, systemic challenges, data and evaluation, and future efforts aimed at supporting youth diversion, development and wellbeing.
3. Direct the CEO to report back in writing within two weeks with potential funding sources available within the CEO, Department of Probation and Department of Mental Health and an appropriation adjustment to implement the recommendations reflected in the Roadmap for Youth Diversion Report.
4. Direct ODR's division of YDD to report back orally and in writing within 180 days on how the implementation of youth diversion efforts are progressing Countywide and any recommended updates on the budget; and thereafter provide bi-annual reports to the Board detailing this work, including information on youth arrest and demographic data countywide, the development of a digital diversion referral system, identification of additional funding, and opportunities to further coordinate and enhance youth diversion at different stages of the justice system as well as youth development.

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(MN/DJJ)