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CLICK HERE FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION'S REPORT DATED SEPTEMBER 11, 2018

CLICK HERE FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION'S REPORT DATED APRIL 30, 2021

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION

KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 383
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012
(213) 893-2010

JUDGE MICHAEL NASH (RET.)
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

HILDA L. SOLIS
MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
SHEILA KUEHL
JANICE HAHN
KATHYRN BARGER

September 11, 2018

To: Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Judge Michael Nash (Ret.)
Executive Director, Office of Child Protection

OCP RESPONSE TO DUAL-STATUS YOUTH MOTION

On March 20, 2018, the Board of Supervisors instructed the Director of the Office of Child Protection (OCP), in collaboration with the Juvenile Courts, the directors of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Mental Health (DMH), and Office of Diversion and Re-Entry, the Chief Probation Officer, County Counsel, Interim Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender, District Attorney, Superintendent of Schools, the Acting Executive Director of the Office of Immigrant Affairs, and others to report back to the Board in 180 days on a countywide plan for dual-status youth that includes, among other things:

- An understanding of the population and the funding streams available to them
- Addressing ongoing cross-sector coordination and consistency
- Best practices from other jurisdictions
- Building on efforts of the County and the Juvenile Courts
- Addressing gaps and recommendations on:
  - Prevention
  - Improving the treatment of dual-status youth
  - Strengthening data-tracking and evaluation
  - Consideration of LGBTQ youth
  - Steps to provide juvenile criminal record expungement
- Any necessary policy changes, supports, and funding to achieve the Countywide plan

The following is an update on the ongoing efforts to meet the Board's directives.

Initially, the OCP had separate meetings with DCFS Director Bobby Cagle, Chief Probation Officer Terri McDonald, and Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Michael

Levanas. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss Los Angeles County's historical efforts and current practices with regard to dual-status youth.

Following those meetings, the OCP exercised its delegated contracting authority authorized by the Board to contract with Dr. Denise Herz, a professor at the California State University Los Angeles (CSULA) School of Criminal Justice and Criminalistics. Since 2005, Dr. Herz has worked extensively with the Juvenile Court, DCFS, Probation, DMH, and others on Los Angeles County's dual-status protocols. She was the primary architect of the current Welfare and Institutions Code section 241.1 joint assessment and has done extensive evaluation and research in this field. In addition, Dr. Herz has worked in this area on a national level, primarily with Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform. Given her extensive experience with dual-status issues on both the local and national levels, she is the ideal consultant to assist the OCP with this ongoing collaborative effort.

On June 11, 2018, the first meeting of the workgroup for the Countywide Plan for Dual-Status Youth was convened. It consisted of representatives from the Juvenile Court, DCFS, Probation, DMH, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), the Office of Diversion and Re-entry, County Counsel, the Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender, the OCP, the Commission for Children and Families, Children's Law Center, the Center for Strategic Public-Private Partnerships, Children's Data Network, CSULA, the Probation Commission, Court-Appointed Special Advocates of Los Angeles (CASA–LA), the University of California Los Angeles School of Law, Loyola Law School, the Alliance for Children's Rights, the Association of Community Human Services Agencies (ACHSA), Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services, private foundations, and others.

At the June 11 meeting, Judge Michael Nash (ret.) provided an overview of the Board's March 20 motion and a historical perspective on Los Angeles County's previous dual-status efforts. In addition, Dr. Herz gave an overview of national crossover efforts (Attachment 1) and Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey from the University of Southern California's Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and the Children's Data Network provided an overview of the data and research on Los Angeles County crossover youth (Attachment 2). Following those presentations, the first in a series of listening sessions on the topic occurred.

At the June 25, 2018, meeting, Dr. Herz presented overviews of the Welfare and Institutions Code section 241.1 multi-disciplinary team (MDT) process and the MDT data-collection process, as well as data collected through 2017 (Attachment 3).

On July 27, 2018, a comprehensive plan for the workgroup was presented (Attachment 4). The plan contemplates dividing the workgroup into two main subcommittees.

- The Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee will focus on four levels of prevention—preventing entry into the child-welfare system, preventing delinquency by youth in child welfare, preventing youth in child welfare from entering the juvenile-justice system, and preventing greater penetration into the juvenile-justice system by youth with child welfare cases. This subcommittee will coordinate with the OCP's preven-

tion work and with the Youth Diversion and Development Steering Committee to prevent child-welfare youth from entering the juvenile-justice system.

- The second subcommittee is the 241.1 MDT Subcommittee, which will focus on the process and protocols that occur when youth do, in fact, become involved with both systems. This includes the 241.1 joint assessment process, the court process, the joint supervision process by DCFS and Probation, and more. As part of this subcommittee, Dr. Herz will also work closely with the agencies to formulate a plan to ensure consistent and comprehensive data collection to inform our ongoing work in this area.

In addition to leading the work in these subcommittees, we will coordinate efforts (where appropriate) with the OCP prevention plan (*Paving the Road to Safety for Our Children*) and with the Youth Diversion and Development Foster Care Youth Identification and Inclusion Workgroup.

It is anticipated that coordination with other existing related efforts plus the work of the two subcommittees described above will generate recommendations to improve existing processes and protocols in these areas, recommendations to enhance training, and, to the extent necessary, recommendations for additional resources.

Through its quarterly updates to the Board, the OCP will keep the Board informed of the progress of these workgroups in developing recommendations in the areas outlined by the motion, and will also issue a comprehensive report every six months until a plan is complete and fully implemented.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (213) 893-1152 or by email at mnash@ocp.lacounty.gov, or your staff may contact Carrie Miller at (213) 893-0862 or by email at cmiller@ocp.lacounty.gov.

MN:CDM:eih

c: Chief Executive Office
Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
Alternate Public Defender
Children and Family Services
County Counsel
District Attorney
Juvenile Court
Los Angeles County Office of Education
Mental Health
Office of Diversion and Re-Entry, Department of Health Services
Office of Immigrant Affairs, Department of Consumer and Business Affairs
Probation
Public Defender

ATTACHMENT 1

CAL STATE LA

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES

The OJJDP Dual Systems Study

Crossover Youth Motion Workgroup Presentation

June 11, 2018

Principal Investigators:

Denise Herz, Ph.D., Professor

Carly B. Dierkhising, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

California State University, Los Angeles

School of Criminal Justice & Criminalistics

Study Overview

- OJJDP initiated Dual Systems Design Study in October 2015*
- Goals
  - To propose a method to generate a national estimate of dual system youth, their trajectories leading to multiple system involvement, and the key characteristics/trajectories of this population.
    - *Led by Linked Administrative Data Subcommittee*
  - To identify the successes and challenges associated with cross-system collaboration and data integration in jurisdictions and design a method by which to collect and report such information in a consistent and representative way nationwide.
    - *Led by Jurisdictional Case Studies Subcommittee*

*This project was supported by Grant #2015-CV-BX-0001 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

Core Study Partners

Linked Administrative Data Subcommittee

Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development

JACK, JOSEPH AND MORTON MANDEL SCHOOL OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES
CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence

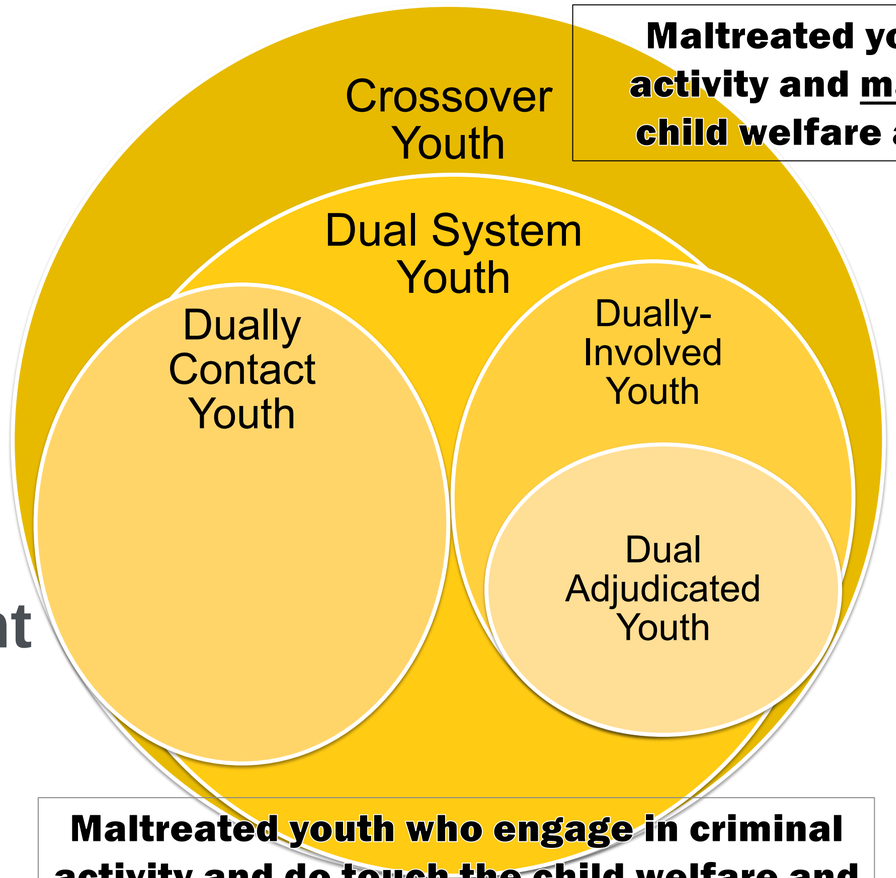
Jurisdiction Case Study Subcommittee

Center for Juvenile Justice Reform
• working across systems of care • georgetown university •

Children's Law Center of Los Angeles
Chief Probation Officer, State of Florida
Los Angeles County Juvenile Court Judge
Juvenile Court Judge, Broward County Florida
Magistrate, Mahoning County, Ohio
Director, Maricopa County Education Service Agency

Categories of Crossover Youth

Non-Concurrent System Involvement

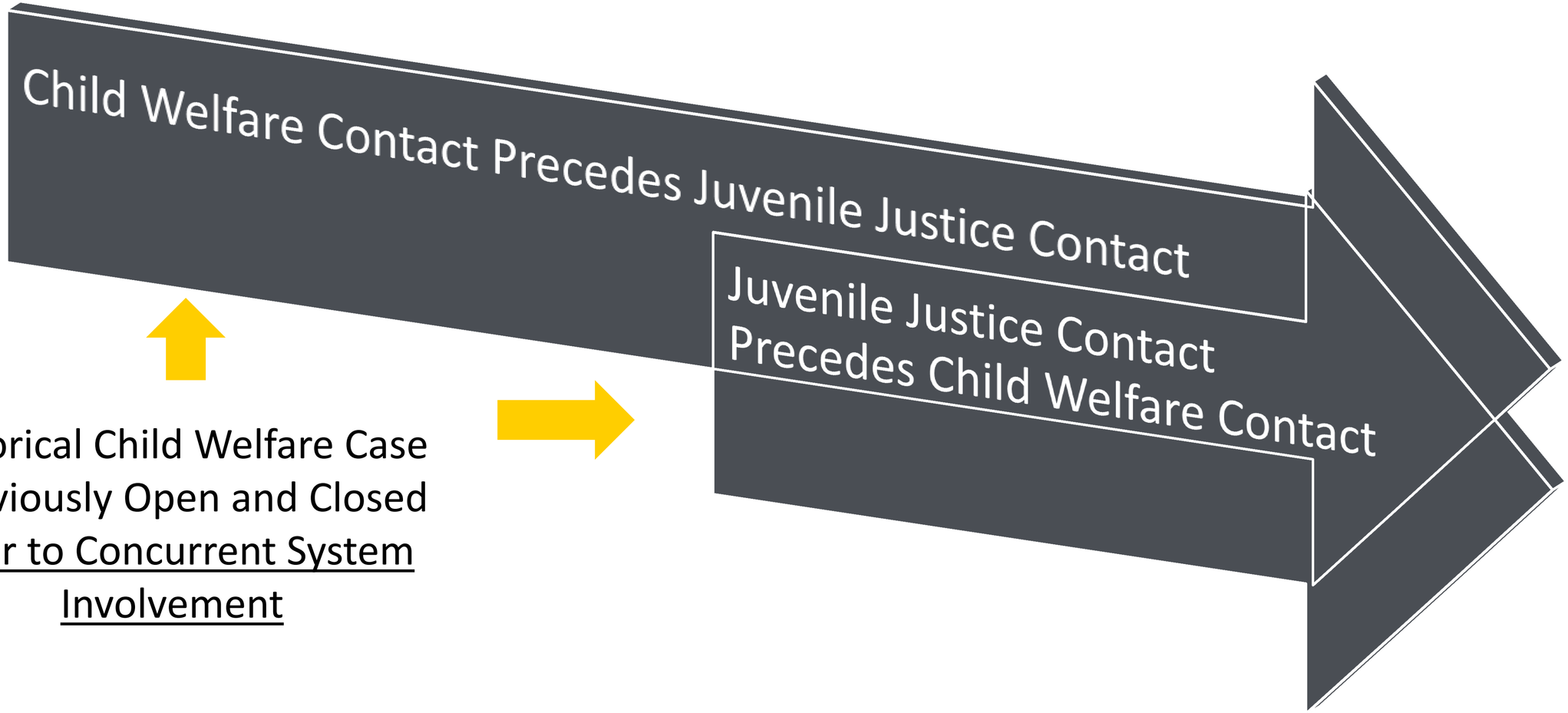


Maltreated youth who engage in criminal activity and <u>may or may not</u> touch both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems

Maltreated youth who engage in criminal activity and <u>do touch</u> the child welfare and the juvenile justice systems

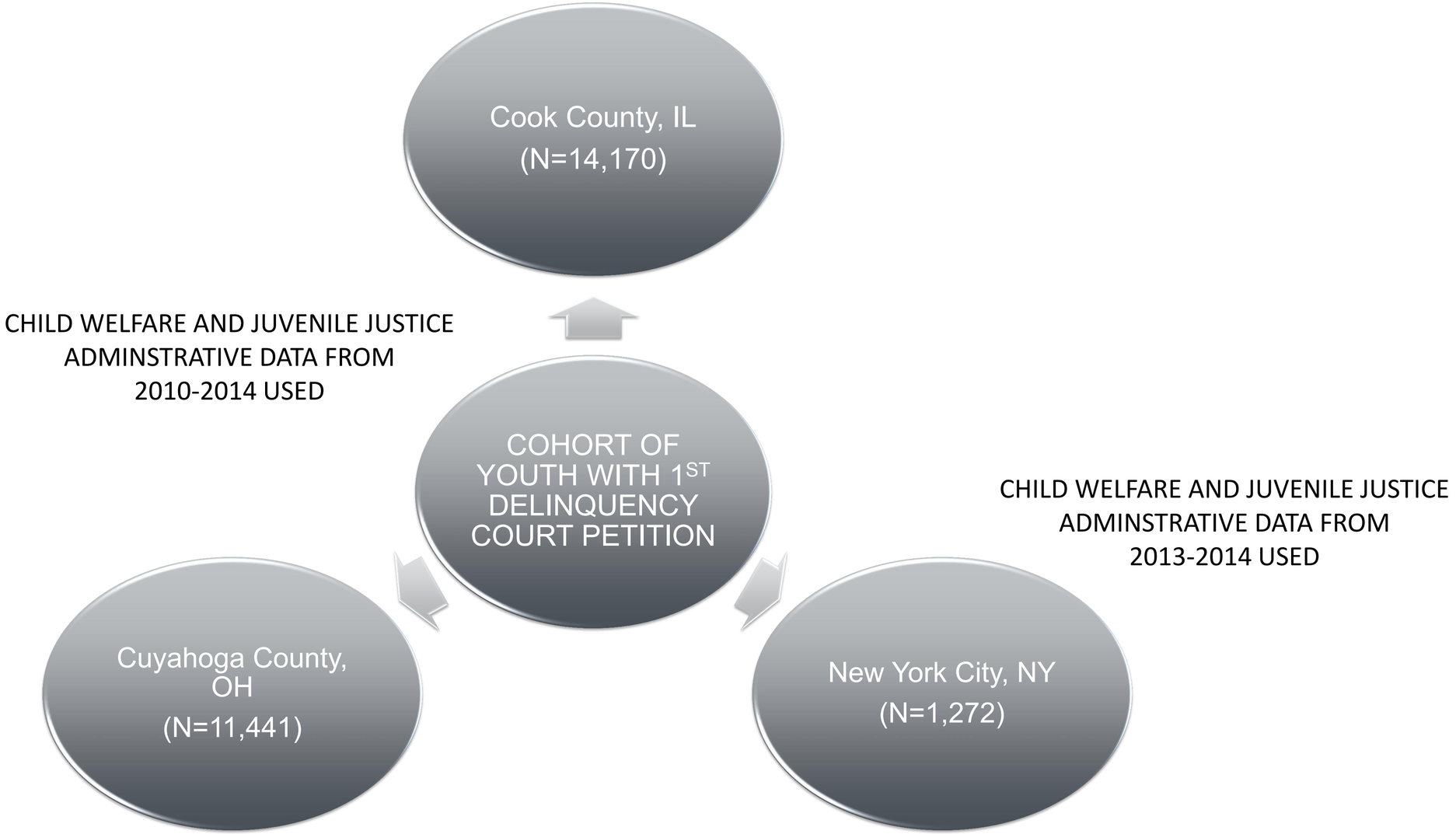
Concurrent System Involvement

Pathways to Dual System Involvement

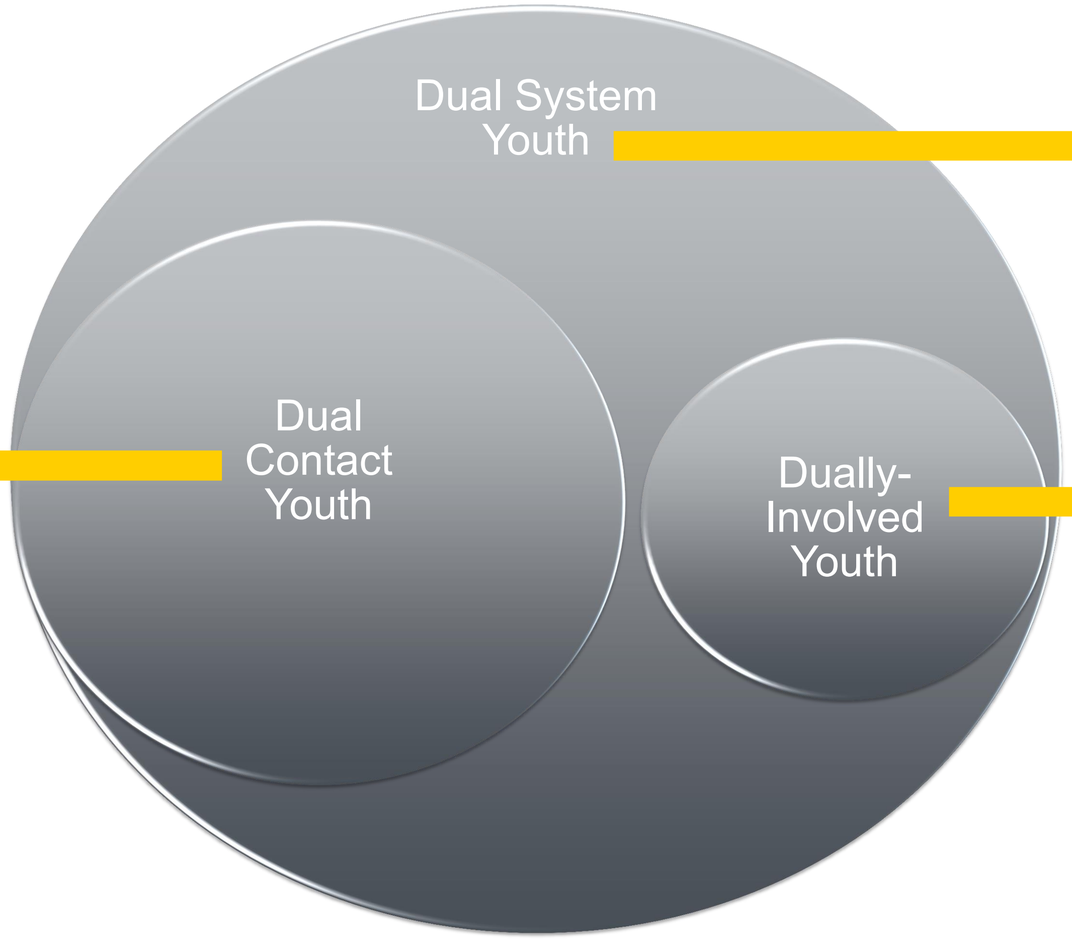


Historical Child Welfare Case (Previously Open and Closed <u>Prior to Concurrent System Involvement</u>

Linking the Administrative Data Using a 1st JJ Petition Cohort



Incidence of Dual System Youth across Sites



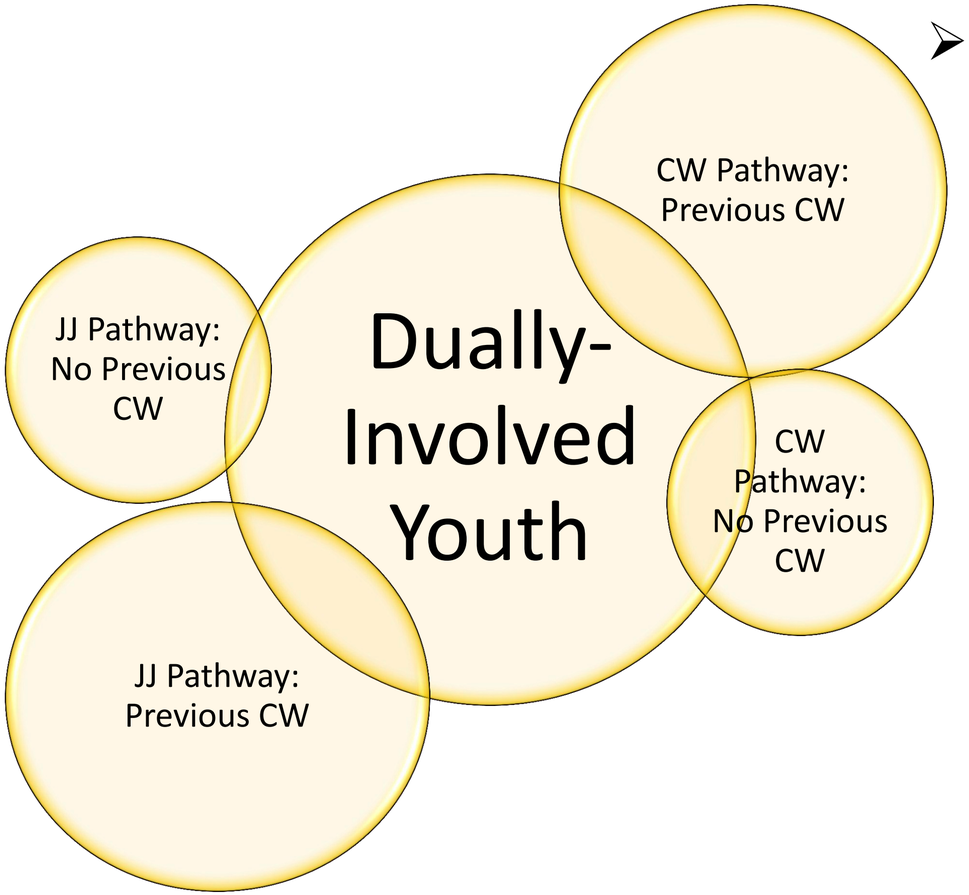
*Approximately **two-thirds** of all youth in the petition cohort touched both systems.*

*Of all dual system youth, approximately **one half** were dual contact youth*

*Of all dual system youth, approximately **one-third** were dually-involved*

A Deeper Look at Dually-Involved Youth

- Almost all of DI youth on CW Pathway had a previous, but closed, CW case



- Nearly all DI youth on JJ Pathway had a previous, but closed, CW case

Brief Overview of Characteristics: Dual Contact Youth v. Dually-Involved

Dual Contact Youth	Dually- Involved Youth
Male	Male but females=30-50%
African-American	African-American
Average of 2 CW referrals	Average of 2-3 CW referrals
First investigation at 7; last at 9	First investigation at 4; last at 16
Involved with CW on average for 14-24 mos.	Involved with CW on average for 1-12 years
Up to 22% placed out of home—average of 3 placements	16-91% placement out of home—average of 5-9 placements
About 1/3 detained after charge	28-57% detained after charge

Brief Overview of Characteristics: Dually-Involved Youth with a Previous CW Case v. Dually-Involved with No Previous Case

Dually-Involved Youth With A Previous CW Case

- Male but females=30-50%
- African-American
- Average of 3 CW referrals
- First investigation at 4; last at 9
- Involved with CW on average for 4-12 years
- 48-91% placement out of home—average of 5-9 placements
- 28-57% detained after charge

Dually- Involved Youth With No Previous CW

- Male but females=30%
- African-American
- Average of 2 CW referrals
- First investigation at 15; last at 16
- Involved with CW on average for 1-12 years
- 16-52% placement out of home—average of 4-5 placements
- 41-63% detained after charge

Jurisdictional Case Studies Subcommittee

Development of the Best Practices Rubric

Best Practices Rubric for Dual System Youth

JCS developed the Best Practices Rubric to capture the level of cross systems work on 11 key domains

1. Interagency collaboration
2. Judicial leadership
3. Information sharing
4. Data collection
5. Training
6. Identification of dual system youth
7. Assessment process
8. Case planning and management
9. Permanency, and transition plans
10. Placement planning
11. Service provision and tracking

Judicial Leadership

	Practice Not in Place	Initial Efforts in Place	Emerging Practice	Developed Practice	Highly Developed Practice
Judicial Leadership	No judicial support or leadership. Or, there is active judicial opposition.	No active opposition. Some judicial support but not very involved nor leadership in the work.	Active judicial support for collaboration. Attends meetings but may not take a leadership role	Active judicial support. Regularly attends cross-system meetings and trainings; provides leadership but in a limited capacity	Active judicial support and leadership. Convenes and leads cross-system meetings, drives the work, and provides accountability

Interagency Collaboration

	Practice Not in Place	Initial Efforts in Place	Emerging Practice	Developed Practice	Highly Developed Practice
Interagency Collaboration	Cross-system teams/committees have not been established and key stakeholders have not been engaged.	Potential cross-system teams/committees and key stakeholders have been identified but not engaged.	Cross-system teams/committees and key stakeholders have been engaged in the work but do not meet regularly.	Cross-system teams/committees are established and meet regularly. Key stakeholders are engaged but not in a consistent manner.	Cross-system teams/committees are established and meet regularly. Key stakeholders are consistently engaged and participate in ongoing review of the work.

Information Sharing

	Practice Not in Place	Initial Efforts in Place	Emerging Practice	Developed Practice	Highly Developed Practice
Information Sharing	There is not a protocol in place and/or an MOU/MOA that supports or allows information sharing between CW and JJ systems.	An MOU/MOA or a protocol is in the process of being developed that allows information sharing between JJ and CW systems.	An MOU/MOA or a protocol is in place that allows information sharing between JJ and CW systems, but information is never exchanged or only shared under special circumstances (e.g., challenging case, emergencies, etc.).	An MOU/MOA or a protocol is in place that allows information sharing between JJ and CW systems, but information is not consistently shared.	An MOU/MOA or a protocol is in place that allows information sharing between JJ and CW systems and information is regularly shared between systems in a structured and collaborative manner.

Potential Practice Implications of the Rubric

Access to Los Angeles 241 and Probation Reports:

www.juvenilejusticeresearch.com/projects

241.1 MDT Evaluation Reports

Probation Outcomes Study, Part I & Part II

CAL STATE LA

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES

Contact Us

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ATTACHMENT 2

Los Angeles County Probation Youth with Previous Referrals to Child Protective Services

Children's Data Network

JACQUELYN MCCROSKEY, DSW
DENISE HERZ, PHD
EMILY PUTNAM-HORNSTEIN, PHD

“THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM HAS LONG OVERLAPPED WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM, BUT THIS TOPIC HAS YET TO RECEIVE THE ATTENTION IT DESERVES.”

—JOHN LAUB, FUTURE OF CHILDREN, SPRING 2018

overview

What share of youth with [intensive] probation involvement had earlier come to the attention of child protective services?

Universe

387 Los Angeles County Probation youth exiting suitable placement or camp in 2015
[a subset of the 806 youth in the Probation Outcomes Study]

Analysis

A retrospective study of the timing and degree of previous involvement with child protective services.

What are the implications for serving youth in probation placements?

Are there touch points when prevention-oriented family support and strengthening could have been delivered?

RECORD LINKAGE

1

Probation records extracted, encrypted, and transmitted

2

Records standardized and prepared for linkage

3

Records linked using probabilistic matching algorithms

4

Clerical review of record pairs, final assignment of matches, and removal of identifying information

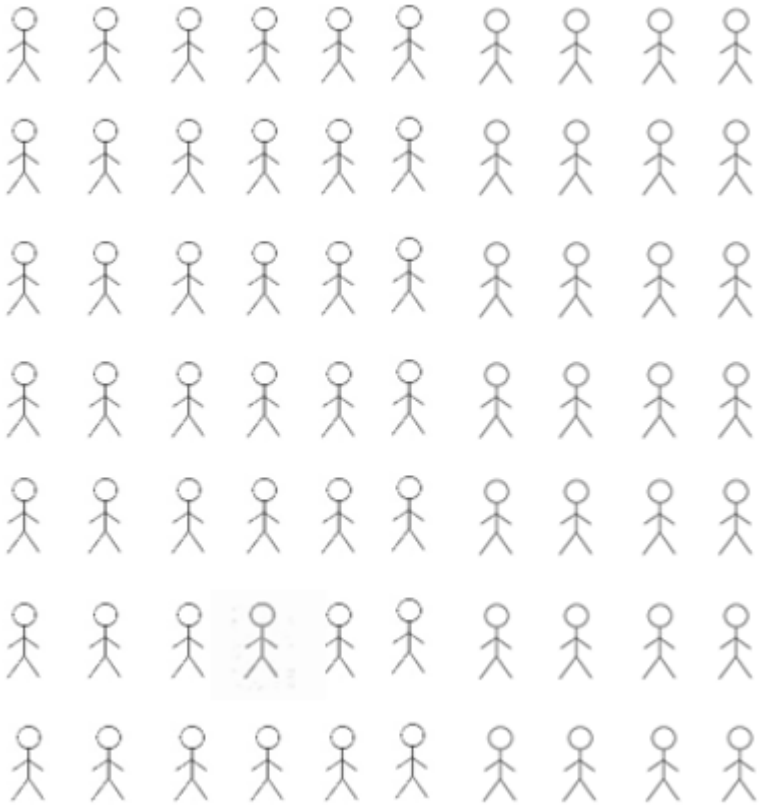
5

Analysis of restricted research dataset on secure server

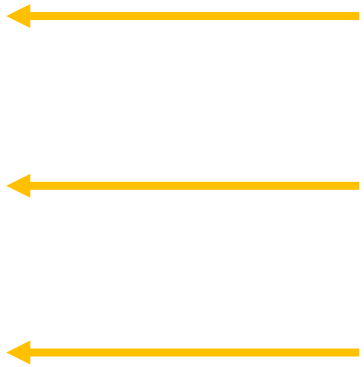
answerable questions

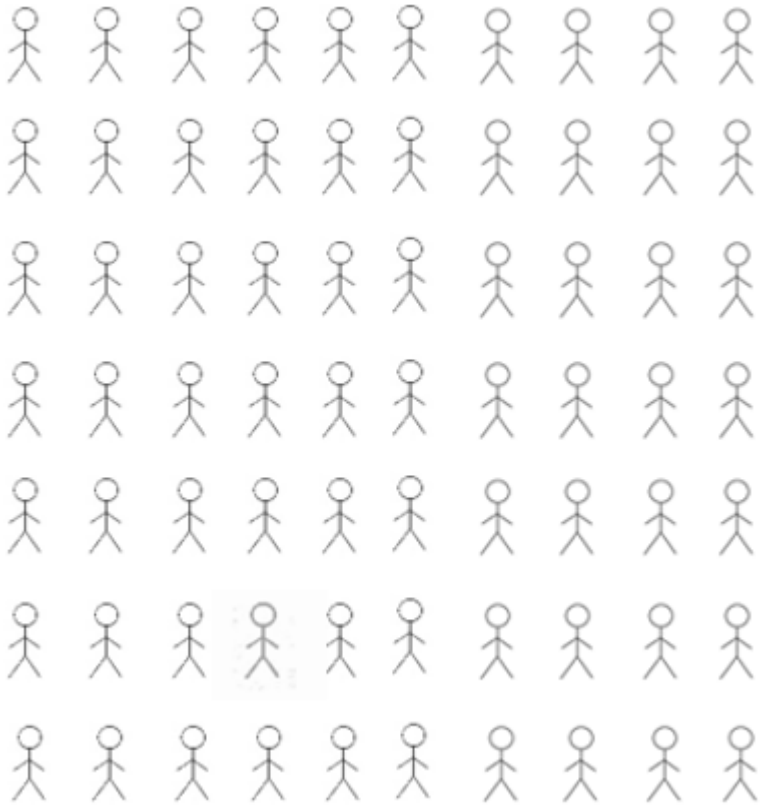
~~How many children reported for maltreatment and/or in foster care later become involved with LA County Probation?~~

How many probation youth exiting suitable placement or camp in 2015 have a history of child protection involvement?



Statewide / California Child Welfare Records





LA County Probation Records

1

4 out of 5 referred

70% before age 10

43% before age 5

5.6 referrals

6.7 years of age

neglect

physical

OF THE 387 YOUTH IN THE 2015 SUITABLE PLACEMENT AND CAMP COHORTS WHO HAD EXITED[3]:

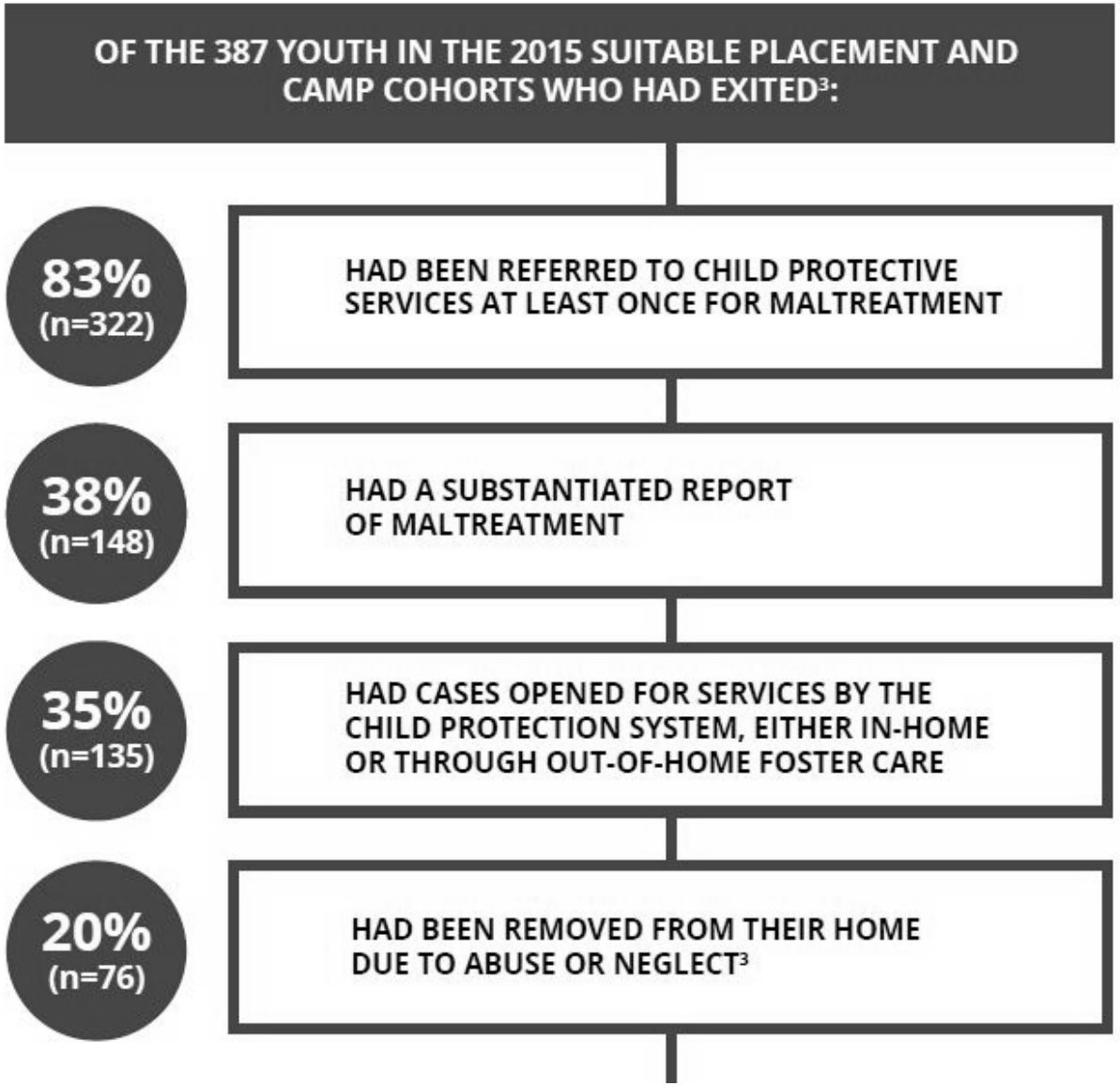
- **83% (n=322)** HAD BEEN REFERRED TO CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES AT LEAST ONCE FOR MALTREATMENT
- **38% (n=148)** HAD A SUBSTANTIATED REPORT OF MALTREATMENT
- **35% (n=135)** HAD CASES OPENED FOR SERVICES BY THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM, EITHER IN-HOME OR THROUGH OUT-OF-HOME FOSTER CARE
- **20% (n=76)** HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM THEIR HOME DUE TO ABUSE OR NEGLECT[3]

2

1 out of 3 substantiated

before age 5

7.7 years



3

91% of those substantiated

1 out of 3 case opened

45% before age 5

OF THE 387 YOUTH IN THE 2015 SUITABLE PLACEMENT AND CAMP COHORTS WHO HAD EXITED[3]:

- **83% (n=322)** — HAD BEEN REFERRED TO CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES AT LEAST ONCE FOR MALTREATMENT
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- **20% (n=76)** — HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM THEIR HOME DUE TO ABUSE OR NEGLECT[3]

4

43% before age 5

1 out of 5 placed

OF THE 387 YOUTH IN THE 2015 SUITABLE PLACEMENT AND CAMP COHORTS WHO HAD EXITED[3]:

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findings

Significant differences ($p<.05$)

gender
(m vs. f)

Prevalence of past involvement was higher among female probation youth (at all levels)

race / ethnicity
(black vs. Hispanic vs. white)

Prevalence of past involvement was higher among black youth than Hispanic and white youth (at all levels)

Young women at L.A. County's Central Juvenile Hall. Photo credit: Celeste Fremon

EVIDENCE

What family strengthening, support, and service interventions are most effective in decreasing longer-term involvement with the child protection and delinquency systems?

CONNECTIONS

How can we ensure families referred to the child protection system are properly connected and engaged in community-based services when cases are not opened?

ACTION

Are there regions or communities where gaps between community needs and service capacity are especially challenging? How do we ensure service slots map to family needs?

Questions?

ehornste@usc.edu

ATTACHMENT 3

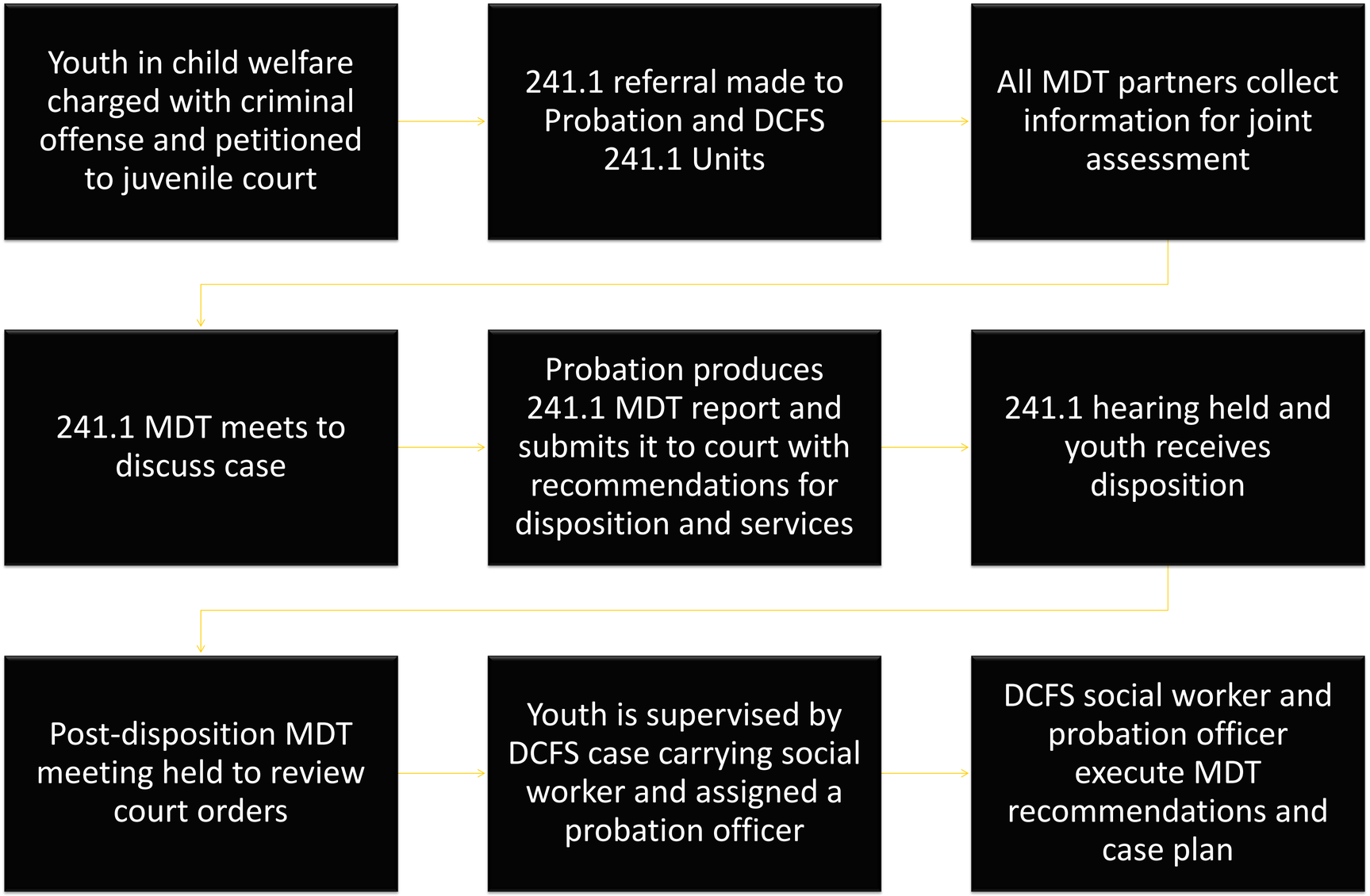
Los Angeles County 241.1 MDT Data

Denise C. Herz, Ph.D.

School of Criminal Justice & Criminalistics

dherz@calstatela.edu

241.1 MDT Process



Overview of Data & Methods

Data Collection Launches

Oct. 2013

NOTE: 2014 Data is presented in the Overview slides. The 2015 MDT data shows similar patterns and can be accessed at www.juvenilejusticeresearch.com/projects

Initial Data

All 241.1 Referrals
"Initial Data" =
Characteristics at Time of Arrest & 241.1 Referral

Initial Data Entered By:

- 241.1 DCFS Unit
- 241.1 Probation Unit
- DCFS Education Section & Consultants
- DMH

Tracking Data

Up to 30 241.1 youth who received a disposition each month starting in October
"Tracking Data"

Tracking Data Entered By:

- 241.1 DCFS Unit
- 241.1 Probation Unit
- DMH (Service data only)

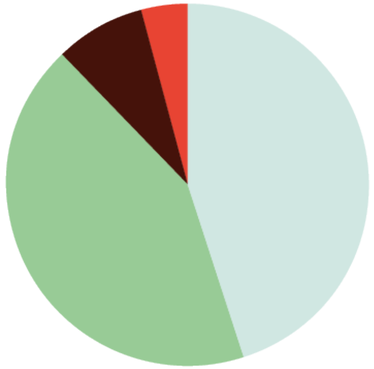
241.1 CWS/CMS Web-Based Application

Who were the 241.1 referrals?

Limited to Unique Individuals with a Declared 300 Case & a Pending Delinquency Petition (N=402)

37% FEMALE

63% MALE



45% African-American

43% Latino

8% Caucasian

4% Other

Average Age

16

Years Old

• AT TIME OF THEIR **ARREST**

Family had been referred to DCFS **10** **times** (on average).

→

Youth had spent **5** **years** in DCFS care (on average) consecutive and non-consecutive.

→

32% **were living in group homes**

17% at Home
17% with Relative

→

Dependency Representation
Children's Law Center
33% Unit 1
23% Unit 2
21% Unit 3

School Status & Academic Performance

AT TIME OF ASSESSMENT

40% Did not have an identifiable **Education Rights Holder**

70% were Enrolled in School

21% Attended Regularly
18% Doing Well/Average
49% Credit Deficient

31% were receiving Special Education Services

16% needed an Assessment for Special Education

Behavioral Health Status

AT TIME OF ASSESSMENT

74% had Mental Health Diagnosis

59% had Pattern of Drug Use or Abuse/Dependency Diagnosis

23% **Experienced Suicidal Ideation**

27% **Were Prescribed Medication**

What were their offenses & how did they move through the juvenile justice system?

Limited to Unique Individuals with a Declared 300 Case & a Pending Delinquency Petition (N=402)

76% of these offenses were **assault-related**

40% VIOLENT OFFENSE

35% PROPERTY OFFENSE

28% OTHER OFFENSE

29% of Charges were Related to Living Situation

15% of Charges were Related to School

35% were Detained at Time of Arrest

23% had prior criminal charges

18% had prior referrals for status offenses

A Summary of MDT 241.1 Referrals for 2016 & 2017
Presented by Denise Herz, Ph.D
Crossover Workgroup--June 25, 2018

Table 1: Summary of WIC 241.1 Referrals for 2016 and 2017

	2016		2017	
	n	%	n	%
Total Referrals	972		923	
Total Accepted Referrals	864	89	782	85
Of Total Accepted Referrals…				
300 Youth with a Pending 602 Petition	277	32	240	31
Pending 602 Petition with pending DCFS case, VFM	137	16	122	16
Reassessment--New Arrest	136	16	122	16
Reassessment--Probation Violation	51	6	78	10
Reassessment--Court Request	221	26	159	20
A Declared 602 Youth with an Open ER Referral	23	3	32	4
Reverse 241.1 (AB 212)	6	1	3	<1
Missing	13	2	26	3

Table 2: Summary of Characteristics for WIC 241.1 Referrals with Open 300 Cases

	2016		2017	
Gender	n	%	n	%
Female	103	37	102	43
Male	174	63	138	58
Race/Ethnicity				
African-American	112	40	96	40
Latino/a	137	49	99	41
Caucasian	23	8	30	13
Other/Missing	5	<1	15	6
Pre-Adjudication Detention				
Detained Post Arrest	126	45	115	48

Table 3: MDT Recommendations and Delinquency Court Dispositions for Open 300 Cases ONLY by Year Including Missing Information

Type of Disposition	2016				2017			
	MDT Recommendations		Court Dispositions		MDT Recommendations		Court Dispositions	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Dismissed	0	0	15	5	0	0	10	4
WIC 654.2	37	13	35	13	35	15	34	14
WIC 725(A)	66	24	40	14	42	18	27	11
WIC 790	41	15	14	5	49	20	11	5
WIC 300/602 Home on Probation	13	5	16	6	8	3	9	4
WIC 300/602 Suitable Placement	86	31	60	22	72	30	52	22
WIC 300/602 Camp Placement	11	4	5	2	15	6	9	4
WIC 602 (HOP, SP, CCP)	6	2	12	4	4	2	6	3
Other	10	4	6	2	3	1	4	2
Missing Disposition	7	3	74	27	12	5	78	33

Table 4: MDT Recommendations and Delinquency Court Dispositions for Open 300 Cases ONLY by Year Excluding Missing Information

Type of Disposition	2016				2017			
	MDT Recommendations		Court Dispositions		MDT Recommendations		Court Dispositions	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Dismissed	0	0	15	7	0	0	10	6
WIC 654.2	37	14	35	17	35	15	34	21
WIC 725(A)	66	24	40	20	42	18	27	17
WIC 790	41	15	14	7	49	21	11	7
WIC 300/602 Home on Probation	13	5	16	8	8	4	9	6
WIC 300/602 Suitable Placement	86	32	60	30	72	32	52	32
WIC 300/602 Camp Placement	11	4	5	2	15	7	9	6
WIC 602 (HOP, SP, CCP)	6	2	12	6	4	2	6	4
Other	10	4	6	3	3	1	4	2

Table 5: MDT Recommendations and Delinquency Court Dispositions by Year in Collapsed Categories (Missing Data Excluded)

	2016		2017	
	MDT Rec	Dispo	MDT Rec	Dispo
	%	%	%	%
Dismissed	0	7	0	6
Formal Diversion Combined (654.2,725,790)	53	44	55	44
Dual Status Combined (300/602)	41	40	42	43
WIC 602 (HOP, SP, CCP)	2	6	2	4
Other	4	3	1	2

Table 6: Delinquency Court Dispositions by Year in Collapsed Categories (Missing Data Excluded in 2016 & 2017)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	%	%	%	%	%
Dismissed	3	4	7	7	6
Formal Diversion Combined (654.2,725,790)	47	42	48	44	44
Dual Status Combined (300/602)	14	33	32	40	43
WIC 602 (HOP, SP, CCP)	9	3	4	6	4
Other	27	17	8	3	2

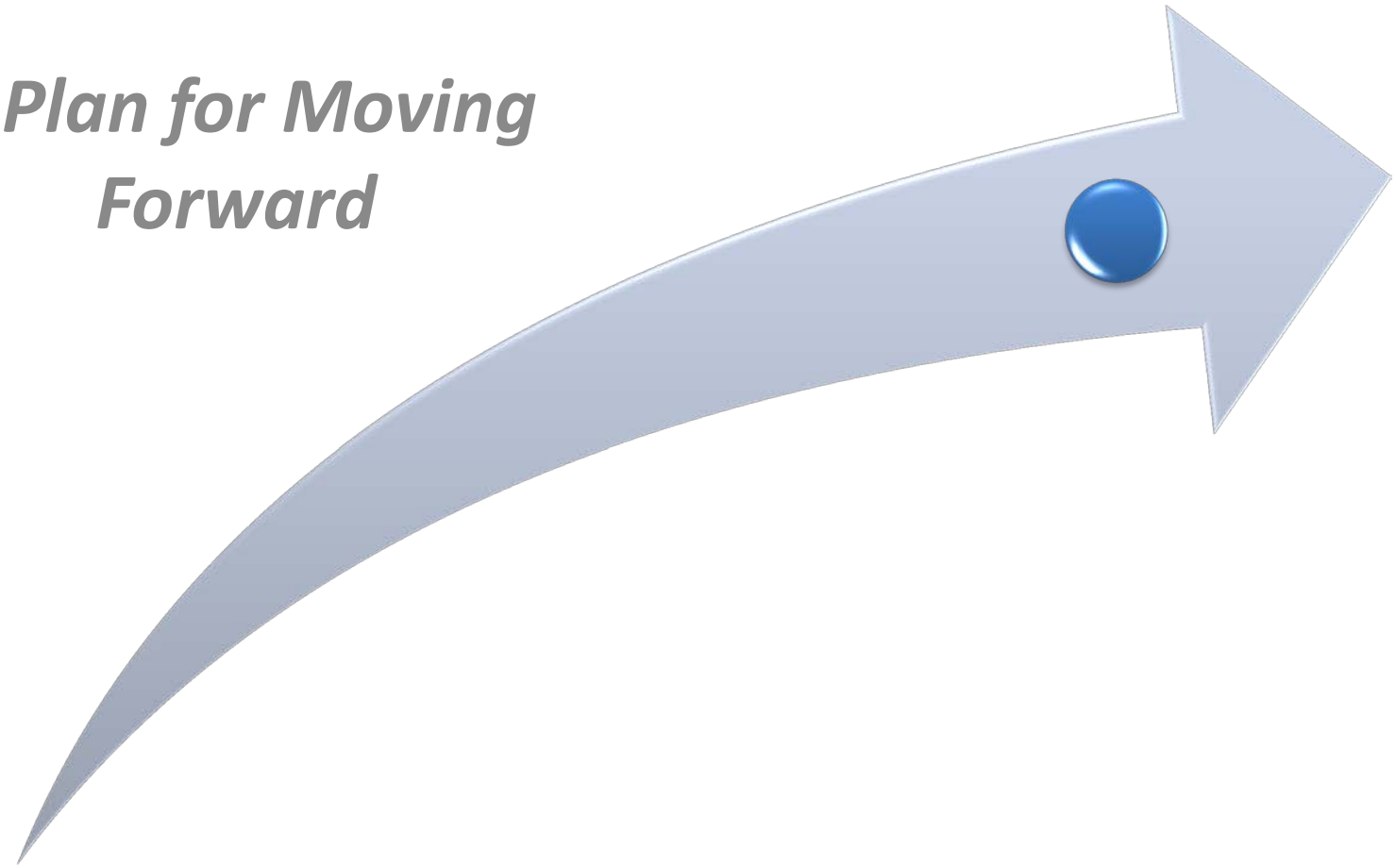
Table 7: Delinquency Court Dispositions by Year in Collapsed Categories (Missing Data Included)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	%	%	%	%	%
Dismissed	3	4	7	5	4
Formal Diversion Combined (654.2,725,790)	47	42	48	32	30
Dual Status Combined (300/602)	14	33	32	29	29
WIC 602 (HOP, SP, CCP)	9	3	4	4	3
Other	27	17	8	29	35

ATTACHMENT 4

Los Angeles County Crossover Workgroup

A Plan for Moving Forward



Different Levels of Prevention

- Preventing Entry into Child Welfare
- Preventing Delinquency by Youth in Child Welfare
- Preventing Youth in Child Welfare from Entering the Juvenile Justice System
- Preventing Further Penetration of the JJS for Youth with Child Welfare Cases

Preventing Entry into Child Welfare

Target:

- Reducing risk for abuse/neglect before it begins and/or escalates
- Increasing resources for families prior to formally entering the child welfare system

Data:

- In development as part of Countywide Prevention Strategy

Lead:

- Office of Child Protection is focused on this level of prevention

Preventing Delinquency by Youth in Child Welfare

Target:

- Identifying and reducing risk for delinquency before it occurs
- Addressing the system-based factors that contribute to delinquency (e.g., use of placements)
- Matching youth and families to appropriate services to address underlying issues related to delinquency (e.g., poor school performance, unmet educational needs)

Data:

- Limited but insightful data from the Delinquency Prevention Project piloted by DCFS
- Results from larger literature
- Needs to be developed by tracking information currently collected by agencies in LA County

Lead:

- Crossover Workgroup

Preventing Youth in Child Welfare from Entering the Juvenile Justice System

Target:

- Identifying youth with child welfare cases when contacted by law enforcement
- Ensuring access to diversionary program that will prevent youth in child welfare from entering the juvenile justice system
- Coordinating programming across the family, DCFS, and the diversion program to address underlying issues related to delinquency

Data:

- Under consideration as part of larger work being completed by Youth Diversion and Development Workgroup
- Raises question of the role of Court data to identify these youth
- Raises question of the role of Probation data as part of their intake decisions related to diversion

Lead:

- Coordinated effort between Crossover Workgroup & Youth Diversion and Development (YDD) Steering Committee

Preventing Further Penetration of the JJS for Youth with Child Welfare Cases

Target:

- Improving and augmenting (where appropriate) 241.1 MDT processes and procedures
- Improving access to appropriate referrals for services
- Improving the implementation of a coordinated supervision plan across DCFS and Probation

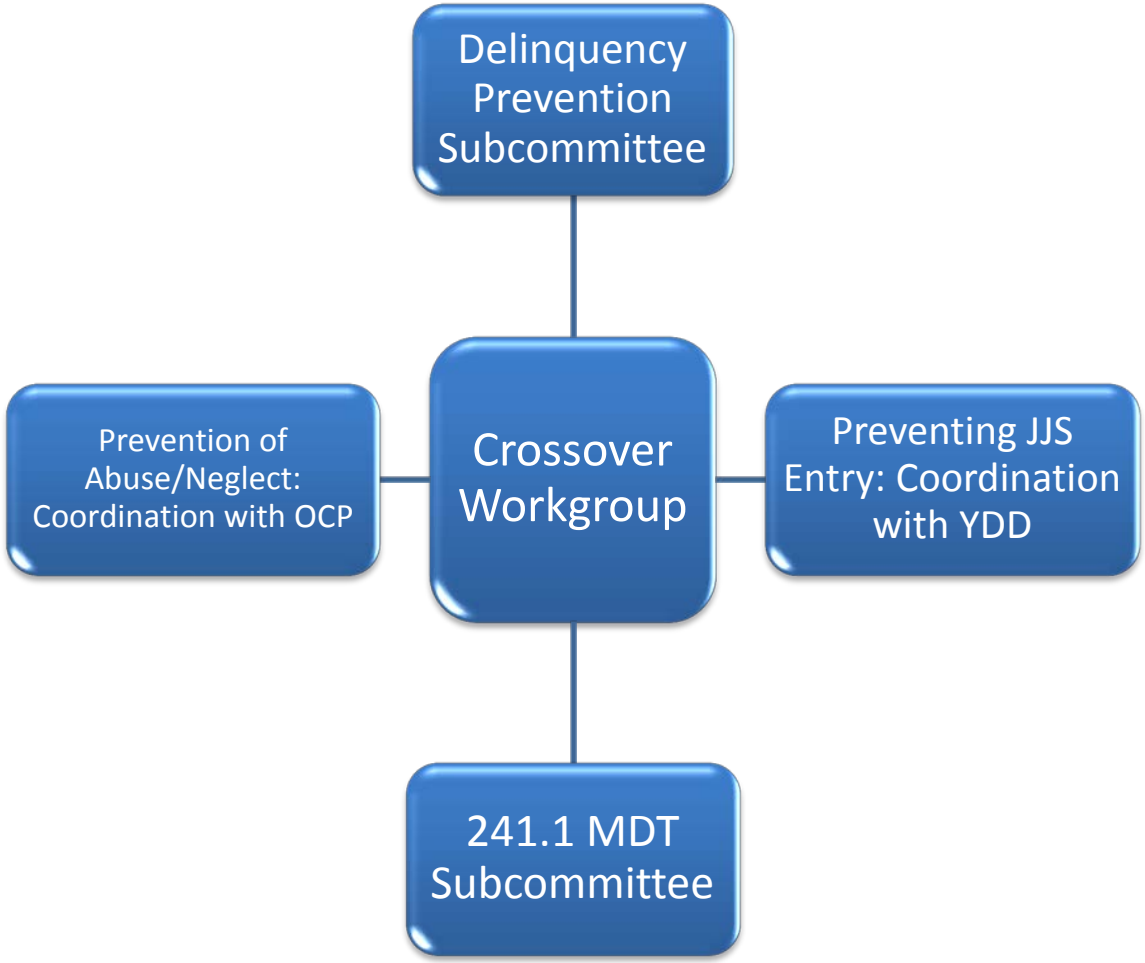
Data:

- 241.1 MDT database

Lead:

- Crossover Workgroup

Plan to Move Forward



Pre-Adjudication Data Collection

Data Collected Pre-Adjudication

241.1 Referral Received=DCFS 241.1 Unit Completes Intake Form

- Identifying information
- Demographics
- Referral Date
- Pre-adjudication detention status
- Court location (both dependency and delinquency)
- Type of referral
- Reason for WIC 300 case
- Charge code and type of charge
- Whether case was continued
- Disposition date
- MDT recommendation
- Lead agency
- Court disposition
- Probation and DCFS worker names

DCFS completes Child Welfare Background Information Form

- # of family referrals
- Type of services (court vs. VFM)
- Length of time in the child welfare system
- # of placements during stay in child welfare
- Previous 241.1 referrals and if so, # of referrals
- Living situation
- AWOL at time of referral
- Permanency plan at time of arrest
- Type of dependency counsel

Probation completes referral information, and background information, and disposition

- Current charges
- Place where current offense occurred (home or school)
- Any prior arrests (and #)
- Status offenses (and #)
- New arrests between original arrest and pre-pleas report
- New referrals between original arrest and pre-plea report STAR Court referral
- Delinquency court #
- Interviewed by probation office
- Type of delinquency representation
- MDT Recommendation
- MDT Disposition

DMH completes Mental Health History Form

- Was DMH interviewed authorized
- History of psychiatric hospitalization
- Receiving MH services when arrested?
- History of suicide ideation
- History of suicide attempts
- Family history of mental illness
- Family history of substance abuse
- Did youth have mental health diagnoses at time of referral?
- If so, what were the current diagnoses?
- Did youth have history of substance use/abuse?
- If so, what drugs?
- What services was youth receiving at time of the referral (limited list)
- Was youth prescribed psychotropic medication?
- Was youth taking medication
- Was youth a regional center client?

DCFS Education Liaison completes Education Information Form

- Educational rights holder
- # of school placements in past four years
- # of school placements in past nine months
- Was youth enrolled at time of assessment?
- Type of school attending
- Youth's attendance in past nine months
- Credit deficiency
- Status of current grades, on average
- Behavioral issues in the past nine months
- Behavioral issues at the time of the referral
- Types of general education services receiving at time of referral (limited list)
- Receiving special education services at time of assessment
- Reason for eligibility
- Type of special education services receiving

DCFS Unit records attendance at MDT Assessment meeting

- The Youth
- The Youth's Parents/Caregivers
- 241 Unit CSW
- Youth's Case Carrying Social Worker (CSW)
- 241 Unit DPO
- DMH PSW
- DCFS Ed Consultant
- Alliance for Children's Rights
- Public Counsel
- CLC Attorney
- Panel Attorney for Dependency
- Youth Advocate(Name)
- Other Representative (Name)

Post-Disposition Data Collection

Data Collected Post-Adjudication

- Date of the Post-Disposition Meeting
- Attendance at Post-Disposition Meeting
  - The Youth
  - The Youth's Parents/Caregivers
  - 241 Unit CSW
  - Youth's Case Carrying Social Worker (CSW)
  - 241 Unit DPO
  - Supervising DPO
  - DMH PSW
  - Mental Health Provider Agency: (Name)
  - DCFS Ed Consultant
  - Alliance for Children's Rights
  - Public Counsel
  - CLC Attorney
  - Panel Attorney for Dependency
  - Panel Attorney for Delinquency
  - Public Defender Youth Advocate: (Name)
  - Private Attorney for Delinquency
  - DPH Representative
  - Substance Abuse Treatment Provider Agency: (Name)
  - Group Home Staff Agency: (Name)
  - Youth Advocate(s) Who: (Name)
  - Other Representative: (Name)

Capturing the Relationship between MDT Plan & Court Orders

The following is coded for all assessments (as appropriate) listed below:

MDT Plan	Court Ordered	Agency(s) Responsible for This Referral/Service If in the MDT Plan and/or Court Ordered
☐ No ☐Ref. ☐ In Progress ☐Ref. Needed ☐Comp	☒ No ☐ Yes	☐Prob ☐DCFS ☐DMH ☐DPH ☐School ☐Attorney ☐Caretaker

FURTHER ASSESSMENTS
☐ 730 WIC Evaluation
☐ Contact CSAT
☐ Voluntary CRAFFT
☐ Alcohol/Drug Assessment
☐ Assistive Tech Assessment
☐ Medical Evaluation
☐ Neurological Assess/Testing
☐ Out Patient M/H Assessment
☐ Psych Consult for Meds
☐ Psycho-Educational Assess
☐ Psych Testing
☐ Speech & Lang Assess
☐ Other: _____

The following is coded for all services listed below:

MDT Plan	Court Ordered	Agency(s) Responsible for This Referral/Service
☐ N/A ☐Continue ☐Ref In Process ☐Ref Needed	☐ No ☐ Yes	☐Prob ☐DCFS ☐DMH ☐DPH ☐School ☐Attorney ☐Caretaker

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
☐ Cognitive Behavior Therapy
☐ Eating Disorder Tx
☐ Family Tx
☐ Full Service Partnership
☐ Functional Family Therapy
☐ Group Tx
☐ Individual Tx
☐ Medication Monitoring
☐ Strengthening Family Prog
☐ Trauma Informed Care
☐ Therapeutic Behavioral Svcs
☐ Wrap Around Services
☐ STAR Court/CSEC
☐ Other:

SUBSTANCE ABUSE
☐ Alcohol/Drug Education
☐ Alcohol/Drug Outpatient Tx
☐ Alcohol/Drug Inpatient Tx
☐ Other:

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
☐ Anger Management (Not ART)
☐ Anger Replacement Therapy
☐ Community Service
☐ Community Detention Program
☐ Gang Prevention/Intervention
☐ Independent Living
☐ JAWS
☐ Life Skills/Social Skills
☐ Mentoring
☐ Pro-Social Comm Activities
☐ Transitional Housing
☐ Vocational Programming
☐ Other: _____

EDUCATION
☐ Appt. w/ School Counseling
☐ 317(e) Referral
☐ AB 167 Appropriate
☐ Behavioral Support Services
☐ Career Survey
☐ CAHSEE Prep
☐ Credit Recovery Program
☐ Daily Attendance Monitoring
☐ Weekly Attendance Mon.
☐ Enroll Youth in School
☐ ERMHS
☐ FAA/FBA
☐ Graduation Check
☐ IEP Team Meeting
☐ One-to-One Aide
☐ Regional Center Referral
☐ Responsible Adult for Ed Rgts
☐ Section 504 Plan
☐ SST
☐ Tutoring
☐ Other: _____

Tracking Data Collection

6 months after disposition, DCFS provides tracking data

- Was dependency case still open or terminated?
- Was youth re-referred to DCFS during this period
- Permanency Plan at the beginning and end of this period
- # of contacts between supervising social worker and youth (by type)
- Living situation—beginning and end of this period
- Did youth's placement change? If so, where was youth living at end of this period?
- Enrolled in school at end of this period
- Type of school attending
- Attendance level at the end of this period
- Current grades at the end of this period
- School discipline issues during this period
- Behavioral issues during this period

6 months after disposition, Probation provides tracking data

- Was delinquency still open or terminated?
- # of contacts between supervising DPO and youth (by type)
- New citations during this period
- Court ordered violations during this period
- Violations (WIC 777) during this period
- New arrests during this period
- Sustained petitions during this period
- Did youth receive a reassessment
- Did youth's disposition change
- Living situation—beginning and end of this period
- Did youth's placement change? If so, where was youth living at end of this period?
- Enrolled in school at end of this period
- Type of school attending
- Attendance level at the end of this period
- Current grades at the end of this period
- School discipline issues during this period
- Behavioral issues during this period

Tracking Services: The Service GRID

DCFS, Probation, and DMH complete the Service GRID to capture the status of referrals/services during this period.

The following is answered for all Probation Conditions ordered by the Court:

☐No Longer Applies ☐Adhered ☐Violated ☐Completed

The following is answered for all assessments and services listed earlier (most recent status for any particular assessment/service is coded):

Status of Referral/Service	Agency(s) Responsible for This Referral/Service
☒Referral In Prog ☐Referral Needed ☐Youth Refused ☐Completed	☐Prob ☐DCFS ☐DMH ☐DPH ☐School ☐Attorney ☐Caretaker

Next Steps

- Identify members for subcommittees
- Work with OCP Prevention Workgroup and YDD Steering Committee to identify how to coordinate efforts
- Schedule meetings for subcommittees

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION

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JUDGE MICHAEL NASH (RET.)
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April 30, 2021

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Judge Michael Nash (Ret.)
Executive Director, Office of Child Protection

DELINQUENCY PREVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS, AN OCP RESPONSE TO THE BOARD'S 2018 DUAL-STATUS YOUTH MOTION

On March 20, 2018, the Board of Supervisors instructed the Director of the Office of Child Protection (OCP), in collaboration with the Juvenile Courts, the directors of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Mental Health (DMH), and Office of Diversion and Re-Entry, the Chief Probation Officer, County Counsel, Interim Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender, District Attorney, Superintendent of Schools, the Acting Executive Director of the Office of Immigrant Affairs, and others to report back to the Board in 180 days on a countywide plan for dual-status youth. That report was filed on September 11, 2018, and your Board has been apprised of the workgroup's subsequent endeavors quarterly thereafter through the OCP's regular progress updates.

The Dual-Status Workgroup initially met in June 2018 and by July had broken into two subcommittees: Delinquency Prevention, focused on suggestions for preventing delinquency and system crossover, and the 241.1 MDT [Multidisciplinary Team] Subcommittee, focused on the process that occurs when youth do become involved with both systems. (This latter group submitted a complete redraft of the Welfare and Institutions Code §241.1 protocol to the Juvenile Court's Presiding Judge, Victor Greenberg, in February 2020. To date the protocol has not been approved or implemented by the court, and further action is being awaited.)

Youth involved in both the child-welfare and juvenile-justice systems have been a County concern for decades, but narrowing that set of children only to those in both systems at the same time is a missed opportunity. Recent research shows that the *majority* of youth adjudicated in the juvenile-justice system have had contact with child welfare, often as young children, and experienced some level of maltreatment.

Clearly, a delinquency-prevention continuum of care within the County's departmental and contracting structure is needed to address this, and the attached report, ***Delinquency Prevention Recommendations for the County of Los Angeles***, presents a detailed plan for strengthening what already exists and cross-pollinating to fill gaps.

Participants in the Dual-Status Workgroup's subcommittees included representatives from a host of interested stakeholders, and many were regular attendees at nearly three years of meetings and feedback sessions. Their names and affiliations are listed beginning on page 59 of the attached report, and the OCP extends its sincere appreciation for their individual and collective diligence, thoughtfulness, and tenacity in this work.

Thanks also go to Dr. Denise Herz, a professor at the California State University Los Angeles (CSULA) School of Criminal Justice and Criminalistics, with whom the OCP contracted to help manage these groups. Since 2005, Dr. Herz has worked extensively with the Juvenile Court, DCFS, Probation, DMH, and others on Los Angeles County's dual-status protocols. She was the primary architect of the current Welfare and Institutions Code §241.1 joint assessment and has done extensive evaluation and research in this field. In addition, Dr. Herz has worked in this area on a national level, primarily with Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform. Given her extensive experience with dual-status issues on both the local and national levels, she was and is the ideal consultant to assist the OCP with this ongoing collaborative effort.

If you have any questions, please contact me by email at mnash@ocp.lacounty.gov, or your staff may contact Carrie Miller at cmiller@ocp.lacounty.gov.

MN:eih

c: Chief Executive Office
Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
Alternate Public Defender
Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative, Chief Executive Office
Children and Family Services
Commission for Children and Families
County Counsel
District Attorney
Juvenile Court
Los Angeles County Office of Education
Mental Health
Office of Diversion and Re-Entry, Department of Health Services
Office of Immigrant Affairs, Department of Consumer and Business Affairs
Probation
Probation Oversight Commission
Public Defender
Youth Commission

Delinquency Prevention Recommendations
for the County of Los Angeles

from the
Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee
of the
Dual-Status Workgroup

convened by the
Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection

prepared by
Denise C. Herz, Ph.D.
School of Criminal Justice & Criminalistics
California State University, Los Angeles

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April 30, 2021

Executive Summary

An Overview of the Dual-Status Workgroup and Dual System Involvement in Los Angeles County

In 2018, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion instructing the Office of Child Protection (OCP) to work with other County departments and relevant stakeholders to form a Dual-Status Workgroup. This Workgroup was tasked with making policy and practice recommendations to support child welfare–involved young people from crossing into delinquency, and, for those who do enter the juvenile justice system, to improve access to appropriate services and reduce the time they spend there.

The Dual-Status Workgroup began meeting in June 2018 and soon divided its work into two subcommittees. The Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee was responsible for discussing and developing recommendations for preventing delinquency and system crossover, and the 241.1 MDT Subcommittee worked on revising the 241.1 multidisciplinary team (MDT) protocol. OCP invited specific agencies and stakeholders to join both subcommittees, and meetings were also open to any stakeholders who asked to attend (see page 59, "List of Workgroup and Subcommittee Members"). Both groups were co-led by Judge Michael Nash, Executive Director of the OCP, and Denise Herz, Ph.D., Professor, California State University, Los Angeles.

The Intersection of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice in Los Angeles County

In Los Angeles County, youth who fall under the jurisdiction of both the child protection system and the juvenile justice system are often referred to as "dual status" youth. Court processing for these youth is prescribed by Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) §241.1, which requires that the Department of Children and Family Services and the Probation Department conduct a joint assessment of the youth through a multidisciplinary team and file it with the juvenile court, which then determines the youth's appropriate legal status—dependent pursuant to WIC §300, ward pursuant to WIC §602, or both—and orders an appropriate disposition plan. Although the majority of 241.1 referrals in Los Angeles County involve open child welfare cases with a pending delinquency petition, it is important to note that this process also applies to youth who are currently wards of the delinquency court under WIC §602 who subsequently have a WIC §300 petition filed in the dependency court (i.e., "reverse referrals").

Numbers of 241.1 multidisciplinary team referrals are typically used to document numbers of dual status youth—no other data are available for this purpose. When 241.1 MDT referral data are compared to the number of petitions during 2014 to 2016, dual status referrals represented approximately 13% of adjudications in delinquency court.[1] More recently, however, the *Los Angeles*

[1] Herz, Eastman, McCroskey, Guo, and Putnam-Hornstein, 2021

County Dual System Youth Study funded by the Reissa Foundation (key findings from which are included as an Appendix following page 65 of the full report) found that 64% of first-juvenile-justice-petition youth between 2014 and 2016 had contact with the child welfare system.[2]

These varying rates of system crossover in Los Angeles County—13% vs. 64%—are a result of definitional differences between dual *status* and dual *system* involvement. "Dual status youth" captures only youth who have an active child welfare case at the time they enter the juvenile justice system. "Dual system youth" refers to child welfare contact at any point in the child's life; thus, dual *status* youth are a subset of dual *system* youth. ***Based on the* Los Angeles County Dual System Youth Study*, the majority of youth adjudicated in the juvenile justice system had contact with the child welfare system and experienced some level of maltreatment.***

Preventing Delinquency and Dual System Involvement

Delinquency is a manifestation of missed opportunities to address trauma and create healthy, productive family relationships, living situations, and educational connections; thus, effective prevention requires the development of a comprehensive, community-based continuum of care to strengthen the resiliency and well-being of families. Preventing dual system contact requires an investment in delinquency prevention both before and after children and youth are involved with the child welfare system. Prevention early in children's lives can reduce their offending in adolescence and interrupt dual system pathways. Prevention within the community can divert families from system involvement; when diversion is not possible, prevention efforts should continue within the child welfare system to reduce the likelihood of youth offending and entering the juvenile justice system.

The delivery of prevention services for delinquency falls along three levels, all of which serve as a foundation for the plan developed by the OCP, *Paving the Road to Safety for Our Children: A Prevention Plan for Los Angeles County*.

- Primary prevention delivers information and resources to the entire population to increase knowledge about the conditions that contribute to maltreatment/delinquency and ways to prevent them.
- Secondary prevention serves youth and their families who have been identified as being at greater risk for experiencing maltreatment or engaging in delinquency.
- Tertiary prevention (or intervention) serves youth and their families who experience maltreatment and/or have engaged in delinquency, to reduce the reoccurrence of the maltreatment/delinquency.

[2] Herz et al., 2021

When these levels are applied to the prevention of dual system involvement, prevention can intervene in dual system trajectories in distinctive ways, as shown in the table below.

A Delinquency-Prevention Continuum | Primary Stakeholders Responsible for Connecting and Delivering Prevention Services to Children, Youth, and Their Families

Primary Prevention	**Secondary Prevention**				
			Tertiary Prevention (Intervention)		
Preventing Maltreatment and Delinquency		***Preventing Delinquency from Occurring***		***Diversion from Entering and/or Being Adjudicated in the Juvenile Justice System***	***Preventing Deeper Juvenile Justice Involvement***
Primary Prevention in the Community	*Secondary Prevention for At-Risk Families Before DCFS Contact*	*Secondary Prevention for Children/ Youth/Families After a DCFS Referral*	*Secondary Prevention/ Intervention for Children/Youth/ Families With DCFS Cases*	*Secondary Prevention/ Intervention for DCFS-Involved Youth With Law-Enforcement Contact*	*Intervention for DCFS-Involved Youth Who Enter the Juvenile Justice System*
PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS • The community • Parent/family • Child/youth • Schools • CBOs • DPSS	**PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS** • Parent/family • Child/youth • Schools • CBOs • DPSS • DMH	**PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS** • Parent/family • Child/youth • Schools • CBOs • DCFS • CLC • DPSS • DMH	**PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS** • Parent/family • Child/youth • Schools • CBOs • DCFS • CLC • CASA • DMH • DPSS	**PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS** • Parent/family • Legal guardian • Child/youth • Schools • CBOs • DCFS • CLC • CASA • DMH • DPH • DPSS • Foster family • Residential provider • Youth develop-ment and diver-sion efforts • Law enforcement	**PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS** • Parent/family • Legal guardian • Child/youth • Schools • CBOs • DCFS • CLC • CASA • DMH • DPH • DPSS • Foster family • Residential provider • Public Defender • District Attorney • Probation

KEY
CBO=Community-based organizations
CLC=Children's Law Center
CASA=Court Appointed Special Advocate
DCFS=Department of Children and Family Services
DMH=Department of Mental Health
DPSS=Department of Public Social Services
DPH=Department of Public Health

What Can the County Do to Reduce Delinquency and Dual System Contact?

Commitment to a delinquency-prevention continuum of care requires building a strong network of community-based support to help families *and* it requires addressing system practices. In the full report, we identify the system practices that need to be in place to foster wellness and resiliency in children, youth, and families. We recognize these as "Action Areas" because they serve as a blueprint to integrate delinquency prevention into the comprehensive system reform currently underway in Los Angeles County. Each Action Area describes key issues and offers insights into how secondary and tertiary delinquency prevention can be accomplished within systems and across key decision points. The Action Areas are:

Action Area #1: Case plans for children, youth, and families should be based on comprehensive assessments and should appropriately address their treatment needs while building on their strengths.

Action Area #2*: Keep children and youth with their families whenever possible.*

Action Area #3: When out-of-home care is necessary, ensure that out-of-home care decisions are informed by the child/youth and parent and result in the least restrictive setting appropriate to meet the child/youth's needs.

Action Item #4*: Provide a continuum of high-quality out-of-home care options to appropriately meet the needs of children/youth.*

Action Area #5: Build a consistent and effective oversight process to monitor placement changes to reduce out-of-home care instability.

Action Area #6*: Create and maintain stability in education when out-of-home care settings are changed.*

Action Area #7: Identify and appropriately address the educational needs of children and youth.

Action Area #8*: Provide ongoing support for student success.*

Action Area #9: Address mental health and substance-abuse needs swiftly and establish continuity in services.

Action Area #10*: Foster family connections and overall wellness.*

Action Area #11: Reduce contact with and involvement in law enforcement whenever possible.

Action Area #12*: When DCFS-involved youth enter the juvenile justice system, reduce their involvement in and the likelihood of their reentering this system.*

Action Area #13: Protect the confidentiality of children, youth, and families.

Action Area #14*: Support delinquency prevention across all Action Areas by developing and delivering consistent multidisciplinary training.*

Action Area #15: Hold systems and agencies accountable for delivering best practices and maintaining high standards of care for children/youth.

Current Opportunities to Prevent Delinquency—Promising Programs, Processes, and Practices

Many County programs, processes, and practices currently in place or under development align with these Action Areas and their related recommendations. The full report recognizes the County's importance to and potential for contributing to the overall well-being of the children, youth, and families served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. These examples also illustrate ways to leverage and expand opportunities to effectively prevent dual system involvement and reduce juvenile justice involvement when it occurs.

Conclusion

The majority of young people adjudicated in the Los Angeles County juvenile justice system have had contact with the child welfare system. Research unequivocally shows that this relationship is a culmination of maltreatment experiences and child welfare system experiences, which can create and exacerbate adversity over developmental stages. These findings further demonstrate the need to integrate maltreatment and delinquency-prevention efforts across a continuum, starting at birth in the community and expanding into schools and throughout the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

More specifically, we believe delinquency prevention is tied to virtually every current County initiative, including but not limited to:

- The OCP's *Paving the Road to Safety for Our Children: A Prevention Plan for Los Angeles County*
- The Department of Children and Family Services' *Invest LA* initiative
- The Thriving Families, Safer Children and Family First grant
- The County's recommendations for evidence-based practices in conjunction with the federal Family First Prevention Services Act
- The Alternatives to Incarceration initiative
- The *Youth Justice Reimagined* (2020) report calling for the replacement of the probation system for youth delinquency by a community-, healing-, restorative-based response system addressing factors that contribute to youth delinquency
- The November 2020 Board of Supervisors motion, Reimagining Safety Health and Human Services for the County's Children and Families, and its approved amendment, which together are designed to bring County departments together for prevention planning and a review of local and national best practices, along with the improved integration of persons with lived experience in the planning process

Los Angeles County is currently positioned to reframe how funding and services can best help young people, their families, and their communities thrive in a socially just and equitable way. This requires rethinking "business as usual."

This report is a call to action on behalf of the young people who experience the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and the consequences they bear because of that involvement. The opportunity to do better has presented itself, and we hope this report helps Los Angeles County embrace and live up to its fullest potential.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary i

An Overview of the Dual-Status Workgroup and Dual System Involvement in Los Angeles County i

The Intersection of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice in Los Angeles County i

Preventing Delinquency and Dual System Involvement ii

What Can the County Do to Reduce Delinquency and Dual System Contact? iv

Current Opportunities to Prevent Delinquency— Promising Programs, Processes, and Practices v

Conclusion v

Table of Contents 1

Chapter 1: An Overview of the Dual-Status Workgroup and Dual System Involvement in Los Angeles County 4

Dual-Status Workgroup Overview 4

The Intersection of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice in Los Angeles County 5

Dual Status Youth in Los Angeles County 6

Dual System Youth and Pathways in Los Angeles County 7

Why Do These Findings Matter? 8

Purpose of This Report 9

Chapter 2: Preventing Delinquency and Dual System Involvement 10

Recognizing the Connection between Child Welfare Involvement and Delinquency 11

Current Efforts to Directly Prevent Delinquency Among DCFS-Involved Youth 11

Diversion Guidelines for DCFS-Involved Youth 11

Past Efforts to Directly Prevent Delinquency Among DCFS-Involved Youth 12

The Start Taking Action Responsibly Today (START) Program 12

The Delinquency Prevention Project 12

A Tiered Approach to Delinquency Prevention 13

Risk and Protective Factors Related to Crossing into Delinquency 14

Integrating Delinquency Prevention into the County's Prevention Network 15

Chapter 3: What Can the County Do to Reduce Delinquency and Dual System Contact? ... 17

Action Areas for Secondary Prevention After System Involvement ... 18

Screening, Assessment, and Building Case Plans ... 18

Using Out-of-Home Care ... 20

Creating and Maintaining Stability for Children, Youth, and Families ... 22

Action Areas for Tertiary Prevention (Intervention) After Dual System Contact ... 34

Reduce the Likelihood of Entering and/or the Time Spent in the Juvenile Justice System ... 34

Build System Capacity to Better Serve Children, Youth, and Families and Prevent Delinquency ... 37

A New Vision ... 41

Chapter 4: Current Opportunities to Prevent Delinquency—Promising Programs, Processes, and Practices ... 42

Primary and Secondary Prevention to Divert Families from the Child Welfare System ... 42

Secondary Prevention After System Involvement ... 43

Comprehensive Screening and Assessment ... 43

Keep Families Together ... 45

Use Out-of-Home Care Only When Necessary and Appropriate ... 45

Address Educational Needs and Maintain Stability in Educational Plans ... 46

Address Mental Health and Substance Abuse Needs ... 49

Enhance Family Connections and Wellness ... 49

Tertiary Prevention (Intervention) after Dual System Contact ... 51

Reduce Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System ... 51

Building System Capacity to Improve Information-Sharing, Create Feedback Loops on Impact, and Hold Systems Accountable ... 53

Improve Information-Sharing ... 53

Assess Impact with Data Feedback Loops and Hold Agencies Accountable ... 53

Conclusion ... 55

List of Abbreviations ... 57

List of Workgroup and Subcommittee Members ... 59

References 64

Appendix ***The Intersection of Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice: Key Findings from the Los Angeles Dual System Youth Study*** 65

Chapter 1: An Overview of the Dual-Status Workgroup and Dual System Involvement in Los Angeles County

Dual-Status Workgroup Overview

In 2018, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion instructing the Office of Child Protection (OCP) to work with other County departments and relevant stakeholders to form a Dual-Status Workgroup. This Workgroup was tasked with making policy and practice recommendations to support the following objectives:

1. Prevent youth in the child welfare system from crossing into the delinquency system, and strengthen data systems and research partnerships to consistently identify and track youth who touch both Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and Probation.

2. Improve access to appropriate services while minimizing time in the juvenile justice system for youth adjudicated through the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) §241.1 process, and strengthen data systems and research partnerships to evaluate the 241.1 Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) process.

The Dual-Status Workgroup began meeting in June 2018 and soon divided its work into two subcommittees. The Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee was responsible for discussing and developing recommendations for preventing delinquency and system crossover, and the 241.1 MDT Subcommittee worked on revising the 241.1 MDT protocol. OCP invited specific agencies and stakeholders to join both subcommittees, and meetings were also open to any stakeholders who asked to attend (see page 59, “List of Workgroup and Subcommittee Members”). Both groups were co-led by Judge Michael Nash, Executive Director of the OCP, and Denise Herz, Ph.D., Professor, California State University, Los Angeles.

The committees met monthly and identified the following principles to guide their work:

- Delinquency prevention begins at infancy and continues through all stages of childhood and adolescent development.

- Investing in and developing well-being among children, youth, and families is fundamental to preventing delinquency from occurring or reoccurring.

- Recognizing and responding appropriately to trauma in the lives of children, youth, and families plays an essential role in interrupting pathways to delinquency.

- When children, youth, and families enter the child welfare system, comprehensive case plans should reinforce resilience, support stability, and reduce the length of time they spend in the system.

- Children and youth in the child welfare system should not be viewed as being at higher risk for delinquency or as less amenable to services simply because of their system involvement.

- Youth in the child welfare system should have access equal to that of non-system youth to programming that prevents their entry into the juvenile justice system and/or reduces their level of involvement in that system.
- Issues related to racial and gender equity should be prioritized and reflected in policy and practice recommendations to address the disproportionate representation of minorities generally and minority females specifically.
- If youth in the child welfare system enter the juvenile justice system, a multidisciplinary assessment using the WIC 241.1 MDT protocol is critical to presenting a holistic understanding of the youth's situation and needs to the delinquency court.
- The purpose of the 241.1 MDT protocol is to enhance public safety and youth well-being by facilitating communication and collaboration between DCFS and Probation to:
    - Jointly make recommendations to the court about the appropriate legal status for the youth
    - Jointly develop a case plan to serve the youth
    - Coordinate the services provided to youth (and their families) to limit their time as wards of the delinquency court
- As part of the 241.1 MDT assessment process, youth should be evaluated according to their strengths and specific treatment needs, while also considering the risks they may pose to the community.
- The 241.1 MDT should recommend comprehensive case plans that prevent youth from becoming wards of the delinquency court (i.e., WIC §602) whenever possible.
- In making recommendations, the 241.1 MDT should ensure that DCFS-involved youth are considered for any option that would otherwise be available to youth not involved in the child welfare system.
- If youth need to be placed outside of their homes, out-of-home care should be in the least restrictive environment appropriate and should address their specific needs.

The Intersection of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice in Los Angeles County

In Los Angeles County, youth who fall under the jurisdiction of both the child protection system and the juvenile justice system are often referred to as "dual status" youth. Court processing for these youth is prescribed by Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) §241.1, which requires that the Department of Children and Family Services and the Probation Department conduct a joint assessment of the youth through a multidisciplinary team and file it with the juvenile court, which then determines the youth's appropriate legal status—dependent pursuant to WIC §300, ward pursuant to WIC §602, or both—and orders an appropriate disposition plan.

Although the majority of 241.1 referrals in Los Angeles County involve open child welfare cases with a pending delinquency petition, it is important to note that this process also applies to youth who are currently wards of the delinquency court under WIC 602 who subsequently have a WIC 300 petition filed in the dependency court (i.e., "reverse referrals").

Until 2005, California was a separate jurisdiction state, which prevented formal cases from being open in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems simultaneously. With the passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 129, dual jurisdiction was allowed in counties with a signed inter-agency agreement between the juvenile court, the child welfare agency, and the probation department.

Los Angeles County "opted in" to dual jurisdiction and revised its WIC 241.1 protocol to include a multidisciplinary team process conducted by representatives from the DCFS 241.1 Unit, the Probation Dual Supervision Unit, Juvenile Court Mental Health Services, and an education advocate. The 241.1 MDT is responsible for preparing recommendations for Probation's joint assessment report to the delinquency court and initially coordinating case plans following a delinquency court disposition. This protocol was piloted from 2008 through 2011 in the Pasadena delinquency court and was subsequently expanded to all delinquency courts in 2012.

Dual Status Youth in Los Angeles County

Between 2014 and 2018, new 241.1 MDT referrals in the county declined slightly—from 493 to 355—with new referrals during this time averaging 416 annually.[3] Dispositions between 2014 and 2016 were relatively consistent, with just slightly more than one-half of youth receiving informal probation (WIC §§654.2, 725a, and 790). Just under half received dual supervision (WIC 300/602), with most of these youth placed in probation group homes. Less than 5% of 241.1 youth had their child welfare cases closed and became wards of the delinquency court (WIC 602).

These 241.1 MDT referrals are typically used to document the numbers of dual status youth because no other data is available for this purpose. When 241.1 MDT referral data are compared to the number of petitions during this time, dual status referrals represented approximately 13% of adjudications in delinquency court.[4] This rate reinforces the assumption that relatively few youth in the juvenile justice system are involved in the child welfare system, but recent research questions the accuracy of this assumption.

In 2016, the *Probation Outcome Study, Part II* found that 83% of youth exiting probation suitable placements and camps had contact with child protective services at some point in their lives.[5] A larger study—*The Dual System Youth Design Study* funded by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)—linked child welfare and juvenile justice administrative records for youth with a first-time juvenile justice petition between years 2010

[3] Herz, 2016
[4] Herz, Eastman, McCroskey, Guo, and Putnam-Hornstein, 2021
[5] Herz & Chan, 2017; McCroskey, Herz, & Putnam-Hornstein, 2017

and 2014 in Cook County, Illinois; Cuyahoga County, Ohio; and New York City, and reported dual system rates ranging from 44% to 70%.[6] More recently, the *Los Angeles County Dual System Youth Study* funded by the Reissa Foundation found that 64% of first-juvenile-justice-petition youth between 2014 and 2016 had contact with the child welfare system.[7] Key findings are presented in the Appendix to this report.

Dual System Youth and Pathways in Los Angeles County

Varying rates of system crossover in Los Angeles County—13% vs. 64%—are a result of definitional differences between dual *status* and dual *system* involvement. "Dual status youth" captures only youth who have an active child welfare case at the time they enter the juvenile justice system, whereas "dual system youth" refers to child welfare contact at any point in the child's life; thus, dual *status* youth are the subset of dual *system* youth.

The *Los Angeles Dual System Youth Study* used linked child welfare and probation administrative data to explore the rates of dual system youth, their pathways, and the relationship between those pathways and youth characteristics/experiences in Los Angeles County.

- Two-thirds of first juvenile justice petitions were identified as dual system youth (64%).
- Dual system youth are more likely to be female and Black compared with juvenile justice–only youth.
- The majority of dual system youth had contact with both systems at different, non-concurrent times (53%).
- Nearly all dual system youth had contact with the child welfare system before entering the juvenile justice system (94%).
- Dual system youth with non-concurrent contact were more likely to be male and Hispanic, whereas dual system youth with concurrent contact (e.g., dual-status youth) were more likely to be female and Black.
- Dual system youth with non-concurrent contact had less child welfare involvement than dual system youth with concurrent contact.
- Dual system youth with concurrent contact were more likely to be detained after their arrests, to be charged with violent offenses, and to have higher recidivism than dual system youth with non-concurrent contact and juvenile justice–only youth.

*The **majority** of youth adjudicated in the juvenile justice system had contact with the child welfare system and experienced some level of maltreatment.*

[6] Herz & Dierkhising, 2019
[7] Herz et al., 2021

But disregarding dual system involvement except for simultaneous contact (i.e., dual-status contact) can lead to a false understanding of the issue. In fact, the majority of youth adjudicated in the juvenile justice system had contact with the child welfare system and experienced some level of maltreatment in their lives. This knowledge presents a tremendous opportunity to build early prevention opportunities and to provide better, more effective intervention services by understanding the role that trauma, or cumulative adversity, may play in offending.

Why Do These Findings Matter?

The findings presented in the *Los Angeles Dual System Youth Study* are striking: More than two-thirds of all first-delinquency-petition youth—and almost all dual system youth—had contact with child protection services *before* they had contact with the juvenile justice system. Dual system involvement for youth in the juvenile justice system does *not* pertain simply to a small and specialized population in Los Angeles County.

These results challenge the County to redefine the way dual system involvement is understood and addressed. The County's historical focus on dual-status youth is important, but these youth are a subgroup of a much larger universe of youth who touch both systems at some point in their lives.

*Dual system involvement is more likely to have a negative effect on **young-adulthood outcomes** than involvement in only the child welfare or juvenile justice system.*

The impact of dual system contact is of particular concern given the findings from a growing body of literature examining long-term outcomes for dual system youth compared to youth involved in only one system.[8] All of these studies, including the Los Angeles County study, reach the same conclusion: Dual system involvement is more likely to have a negative effect on young-adulthood outcomes than involvement in only the child welfare or juvenile justice system.

These persistent findings underscore the necessity to integrate delinquency prevention into the County's maltreatment prevention networks, to recognize and address delinquency risk factors (including those that are systemic) for children and youth who enter the child welfare system, and to serve the needs of youth who *do* touch the juvenile justice system comprehensively and limit their involvement with that system as much as possible.

[8] Eastman & Putnam-Hornstein, 2017; Coulton, Crampton, Cho, & Kim, 2015; New York City Office of the Mayor, 2015; Culhane, Metraux, & Moreno, 2011

Purpose of This Report

The purpose of this report is to summarize the recommendations of the Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee.

- Chapter 2 outlines the key elements of a delinquency-prevention continuum of care and summarizes the steps needed to build and implement such a continuum in Los Angeles County.
- Chapter 3 presents "Action Areas" along the prevention continuum that the County can address now to prevent system crossover and reduce delinquency for youth in the juvenile justice system who have child welfare involvement.
- Chapter 4 highlights current efforts in the County that may help prevent delinquency, especially if delinquency prevention is embedded within their goals and implementation.

A separate report will summarize the 241.1 MDT Subcommittee findings and recommendations for improving the WIC 241.1 MDT process.

Chapter 2: Preventing Delinquency and Dual System Involvement

Delinquency is a manifestation of missed opportunities to address trauma and create healthy, productive family relationships, living situations, and educational connections. Prevention efforts should not and cannot be tailored to one behavior or consequence alone. Rather, effective prevention requires the development of a comprehensive, community-based continuum of care to strengthen the resiliency and well-being of families.

> *[Research stresses] the need to invest in delinquency prevention **both before and after** children and youth are involved with the child welfare system.*

Findings from the *Los Angeles County Dual System Youth Study* stress the need to invest in delinquency prevention both before and after children and youth are involved with the child welfare system. Prevention early in children's lives can reduce offending in adolescence and interrupt dual system pathways. Prevention within the community can divert families from system involvement; when diversion is not possible, prevention efforts should continue within the child welfare system to reduce the likelihood of youth offending and entering the juvenile justice system.

The high level of dual system contact documented in the *Los Angeles County Dual System Youth Study* makes it clear that preventing delinquency from occurring or reoccurring cannot be separated from:

- Experiences with maltreatment
- Experiences with the child welfare system
- The cumulative adversity children and youth may experience as a result of maltreatment and/or involvement in child protection services

Effective delinquency prevention across all levels requires a recognition of and commitment to:

- Connecting families in distress to a continuum of services in the community to prevent maltreatment from birth
- Extending the community-based continuum of prevention services into and throughout the child welfare system for children, youth, and families if they enter the child welfare system
- Providing appropriate services to stabilize family relationships, living situations, behavioral health issues, and educational performance as early in children's lives as possible

Building a delinquency-prevention continuum of care in Los Angeles County arguably requires three steps:

1. Recognizing the strong connection between child welfare involvement and delinquency in Los Angeles County

2. Identifying a tiered approach to delinquency prevention to reduce risk factors and build resiliency across developmental stages
3. Integrating delinquency prevention into the county's current and growing prevention network

Recognizing the Connection between Child Welfare Involvement and Delinquency

Attention to delinquency prevention for youth in the child welfare system in Los Angeles has historically been limited because agency efforts have focused largely on youth concurrently involved in both systems. Consequently, discussions about dual system youth and programming for them has been "siloed" and assigned to the DCFS 241.1 Unit and Probation's Dual Supervision Unit, which further perpetuates the idea that this is a small and special population rather than one widely represented in the larger juvenile justice population.

Recognizing dual system contact as a common factor for most youth entering the juvenile justice system is foundational to building an effective delinquency-prevention continuum. Research findings demonstrate that preventing delinquency or dual system involvement should be embedded into any effort intended to improve the resiliency and well-being of children, youth, and families. The services delivered throughout a developmental continuum can prevent maltreatment and delinquency from occurring and interrupt the cumulative consequences of these experiences by fostering resilience, connection, and overall well-being as early as possible. The cost of mounting parallel—rather than integrated—youth initiatives is a significant loss of opportunity to better serve youth and families.

> *Preventing delinquency or dual system involvement should be **embedded** into any effort intended to improve the resiliency and well-being of children, youth, and families.*

To date, very few efforts directly address the prevention of delinquency among DCFS-involved youth. In total, the Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee identified three, two of which are no longer in operation. Each effort is briefly described below.

Current Efforts to Directly Prevent Delinquency Among DCFS-Involved Youth

Diversion Guidelines for DCFS-Involved Youth

Diversion Guidelines for DCFS-Involved Youth, developed by the Dual-Status Workgroup's Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee, outline a process for making sure youth involved with DCFS are given equal access to diversion services and are provided with the supports to be successful in those programs. They were developed in partnership with the Office of Diversion

and Reentry's Youth Diversion and Development (YDD) for use in the countywide diversion program that began in eight areas in 2019 and continues to expand.

The guidelines were incorporated into the YDD protocol, and diversion providers were trained on how to use them. YDD provides regular updates to the Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee on the number of DCFS-involved youth participating in diversion programming and how many successfully complete it. This effort highlights the importance of integrating best practices across County initiatives serving similar youth or serving youth across different stages of system involvement.

Past Efforts to Directly Prevent Delinquency Among DCFS-Involved Youth

The Start Taking Action Responsibly Today (START) Program

The START program began in 1997 as a multidisciplinary team approach to address the needs of youth in the dependency court system who were at risk for delinquency; it was created based on the recommendations of a Children's Commission 300/600 Task Force formed by the Board of Supervisors.

The first START team was housed at the now-closed MacLaren Children's Center and included a psychologist, an educational liaison from the Los Angeles County Office of Education (up until 2003), a DCFS children's social worker, and a probation officer. The purpose of the START program was to provide comprehensive multi-agency assessments and intensive case-management services to those children and adolescents in the dependency system deemed "at risk" for delinquency, to provide stability at home and at school, and to prevent entry into the juvenile justice system. Although evaluation results were positive,[9] START was discontinued in 2007.

The Delinquency Prevention Project

Between 2010 and 2012, Los Angeles County participated in the Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform's Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM). As part of this work, DCFS provided funding to the National Center for Crime and Delinquency (NCCD)—now known as Evident Change—to develop a delinquency risk assessment tool using Structured Decision-Making™ data.[10] DCFS then piloted the Delinquency Prevention Project (DPP) to identify youth at risk for delinquency and alert their social workers so appropriate services could be identified with the help of a service linkage specialist.

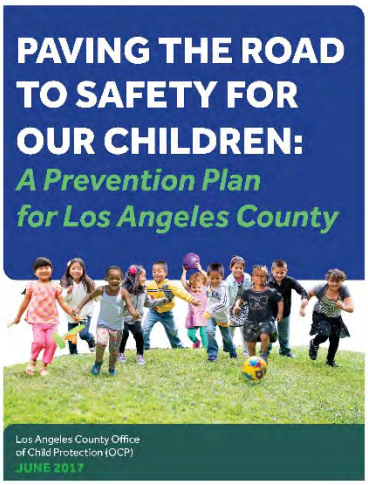
DPP launched in 2012 in four DCFS offices and re-launched with changes in 2013. Youth identified as high risk received additional resources for six months to address that risk. An evaluation of the re-launch showed promising results, including reduced delinquency rates for

[9] Herz, 2006
[10] Bogie et al., 2011

those receiving services during the re-launch when compared to youth who received services "as usual" during the program's hiatus. DPP youth who received full services (N=64) had no arrests within six months of their program start date, compared to only 9% of youth who received no additional services (i.e., the comparison group). Despite these initial results, the program was discontinued in 2014.

A Tiered Approach to Delinquency Prevention

Many of the risk factors for maltreatment, delinquency, and other problem behaviors (e.g., substance abuse) overlap. For example, services that decrease family conflict reduce the likelihood of both maltreatment and delinquency. Similarly, protective factors—factors that help youth prevent maltreatment/delinquency from occurring or reoccurring—are also shared across these experiences.



A starting point for delinquency prevention is contained within the OCP's *Paving the Road to Safety for Our Children: A Prevention Plan for Los Angeles County*, which is intended to:

- Provide prevention services as early as possible
- Reduce the number of children and families that touch the child welfare system
- Reduce the length and intensity of child welfare system involvement for those who do enter the system
- Target services to the needs of the family to also reduce involvement with other systems such as juvenile justice

"Prevention" in *Paving the Road* is defined as connecting children, youth, and families to community-based programming and government (when appropriate) services that provide:

- Support for concrete needs like food and housing
- Opportunities for social, recreational, and community connections that reduce isolation and build personal support systems
- Access to economic and employment prospects
- Assistance in navigating the broad and often confusing array of available education, health, mental health, and other services

This countywide prevention plan prioritizes the following five protective factors in the delivery of services:

- Building parental resilience
- Building social connections
- Providing concrete support in times of need
- Building knowledge of parenting and child development
- Growing the social and emotional competence of children

The services and protective factors targeted by this plan not only are essential for preventing maltreatment and reducing its reoccurrence, but are equally impactful in preventing delinquency and reducing its reoccurrence.

Risk and Protective Factors Related to Crossing into Delinquency

Although maltreatment and delinquency share a number of risk and protective factors, research also highlights particular characteristics and experiences that increase the likelihood of a child welfare–involved youth crossing into delinquency. Figure 1 displays these factors along a developmental continuum.

Figure 1. Risk Factors for Dual System Involvement Across Developmental Age Ranges

0–24 months old	2–5 years old	6–10 years old	11–14 years old	15–18 years old	18–24 years old
• Persistent abuse/neglect starting in childhood and continuing through adolescence • Cumulative adversity (includes, but is not limited to, poverty, trauma, school changes, placement changes)					
			• Adolescence-limited abuse/neglect		
	• Prior investigations/high number of referrals • Behavior problems • Poor social bonds • Not receiving appropriate and timely services to address needs				
		• Instability in educational programming • Academic difficulty (includes truancy, performance) • Behavior problems at school/suspensions • Prior child welfare services • Long stays in child welfare			
Protective Factors (Across All Developmental Stages) • Stability in placement/permanency • Stability in educational programming • Stable relationships with family • Stable relationships with positive adults • Appropriate and timely services to address trauma and other needs • Connection to positive peer groups and activities			• Entering child welfare as an adolescent • Placement instability (number of placements) • Group home placement • Substance abuse • Exposure to negative/delinquent peers • Involvement in commercial sexual exploitation • Cumulative bias in decisions across various points in the system		
				• Limited/no access to transitional support services (i.e., overall lack of stability)	

Taken together, the alignment of risk and protective factors across developmental stages stresses the need to embed delinquency prevention within a larger continuum of prevention services available before system and/or after system involvement with the Department of Children and Family Services.

Integrating Delinquency Prevention into the County's Prevention Network

The delivery of prevention services for delinquency falls along three levels, all of which serve as a foundation for *Paving the Road to Safety for Our Children: A Prevention Plan for Los Angeles County*.

- Primary prevention delivers information and resources to the entire population to increase knowledge about the conditions that contribute to maltreatment/delinquency and ways to prevent them.
- Secondary prevention serves youth and their families who have been identified as being at greater risk for experiencing maltreatment or engaging in delinquency.
- Tertiary prevention (or intervention) serves youth and their families who experience maltreatment and/or have engaged in delinquency, to reduce the reoccurrence of the maltreatment/delinquency.

When these levels are applied to the prevention of dual system involvement, prevention can intervene in dual system trajectories in five distinctive ways:

- Preventing maltreatment from occurring or reoccurring
- Preventing delinquency from occurring
- Diverting youth from entering the juvenile justice system if law enforcement contact occurs
- Diverting youth from adjudication if referred to the juvenile justice system
- Preventing deeper involvement if adjudicated in the juvenile justice system

Ultimately, the services provided along this continuum need to prevent delinquency from occurring or reoccurring by facilitating multidisciplinary collaboration and the delivery of multidisciplinary services from birth throughout young adulthood.

Table 1 illustrates how a continuum of prevention services intersects with levels of delinquency prevention, and the key stakeholders at each stage.

Table 1. A Delinquency-Prevention Continuum | Primary Stakeholders Responsible for Connecting and Delivering Prevention Services to Children, Youth, and Their Families

Primary Prevention	**Secondary Prevention**				
			Tertiary Prevention (Intervention)		
Preventing Maltreatment and Delinquency		***Preventing Delinquency from Occurring***		***Diversion from Entering and/or Being Adjudicated in the Juvenile Justice System***	***Preventing Deeper Juvenile Justice Involvement***
Primary Prevention in the Community	*Secondary Prevention for At-Risk Families Before DCFS Contact*	*Secondary Prevention for Children/ Youth/Families After a DCFS Referral*	*Secondary Prevention/ Intervention for Children/Youth/ Families With DCFS Cases*	*Secondary Prevention/ Intervention for DCFS-Involved Youth With Law-Enforcement Contact*	*Intervention for DCFS-Involved Youth Who Enter the Juvenile Justice System*
PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS • The community • Parent/family • Child/youth • Schools • CBOs • DPSS	**PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS** • Parent/family • Child/youth • Schools • CBOs • DPSS • DMH	**PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS** • Parent/family • Child/youth • Schools • CBOs • DCFS • CLC • DPSS • DMH	**PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS** • Parent/family • Child/youth • Schools • CBOs • DCFS • CLC • CASA • DMH • DPSS	**PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS** • Parent/family • Legal guardian • Child/youth • Schools • CBOs • DCFS • CLC • CASA • DMH • DPH • DPSS • Foster family • Residential provider • Youth develop-ment and diver-sion efforts • Law enforcement	**PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS** • Parent/family • Legal guardian • Child/youth • Schools • CBOs • DCFS • CLC • CASA • DMH • DPH • DPSS • Foster family • Residential provider • Public Defender • District Attorney • Probation

KEY
CBO=Community-based organizations
CLC=Children's Law Center
CASA=Court Appointed Special Advocate
DCFS=Department of Children and Family Services
DMH=Department of Mental Health
DPSS=Department of Public Social Services
DPH=Department of Public Health

Chapter 3: What Can the County Do to Reduce Delinquency and Dual System Contact?

In Chapter 2, we described the importance of developing and implementing a delinquency-prevention continuum of care. This continuum starts before maltreatment begins and represents a powerful opportunity to empower children, youth, families, and communities. Supporting a community-based response system to help families build resiliency and become stronger reduces the onset and persistence of child maltreatment and significantly increases the likelihood that children and youth will grow up in healthy families and communities.

*Commitment to a delinquency-prevention continuum of care requires building a strong network of community-based support to help families **and** it requires addressing system practices.*

Efforts to prevent delinquency must continue within the child welfare system for those who enter it, starting with children at an early age and continuing through their adolescence. In fact, research shows that systems themselves can contribute to delinquency risks for the children and youth they serve.[11] Integrating a delinquency-prevention continuum of care throughout a child/youth's involvement in the system is critical to reducing the likelihood of child welfare–involved youth crossing over into delinquency and to curtailing juvenile justice system involvement for those who touch both systems.

Commitment to a delinquency-prevention continuum of care requires building a strong network of community-based support to help families *and* it requires addressing system practices. In this chapter, we identify the system practices that need to be in place to foster wellness and resiliency in children, youth, and families. We recognize these areas as "Action Areas" because they serve as a blueprint to integrate delinquency prevention into the comprehensive system reform currently underway in Los Angeles County. Each Action Area describes key issues and offers insights into how secondary and tertiary delinquency prevention can be accomplished within systems and across key decision points.

[11] Herz et al., 2019

Action Areas for Secondary Prevention After System Involvement

Screening, Assessment, and Building Case Plans

Action Area #1: Case plans for children, youth, and families should be based on comprehensive assessments and should appropriately address their treatment needs while building on their strengths.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

Decision-making for children, youth, and families should be based on consistent and comprehensive assessments of their needs and the inclusion of their voices. In Los Angeles County, the strengths and needs of children, youth, and families with mental health concerns who enter DCFS are assessed[12] through the Coordinated Services Action Team (CSAT) process. During the CSAT process, children and their families have multiple points of contact across County human services agencies, receiving a clinical mental health assessment along with other, non-clinical screenings and assessments (see "Comprehensive Screening and Assessment" on page 43 for further details on the CSAT process).

Although the CSAT process provides a strong foundation to consistently and comprehensively assess strengths and treatment needs, stakeholders on the Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee raised concerns about *who* is being screened and assessed, *when* they are being assessed, and *what* is being assessed across all children, youth, and families. They also questioned the extent to which the assessment process is seamlessly connected to Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings used by DCFS, and the inconsistency with which CSAT results are often shared with attorneys for children and youth. Subcommittee members also expressed concern about the lack of screening for delinquency and/or sexual exploitation across older children and adolescents.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- All children, youth, and families with DCFS cases should consistently receive a comprehensive assessment when they enter the child welfare system to guide decisions on services and the use, if needed, of out-of-home care.
- Assessments should be administered in a trauma-informed way and should prioritize the voices of those being assessed.
- The assessment process for children/youth should include screenings and/or assessments of child/youth and family strengths in addition to the child/youth's medical needs, exposure to adverse childhood experiences/trauma including exposure to intimate-partner violence,

[12] The terms *assessed* and *assessment* often mean different things when used by DCFS, DMH, OCP, and other entities. In this section, assessment refers to any general "judgment" of the child/family's needs and strengths as determined by DCFS, DMH, service providers, the court, etc. However, assessment can also be a specific term used to denote a comprehensive tool and/or process that results in the documentation of a child and family's strengths and needs, either clinical (i.e., a mental health assessment) or non-clinical (i.e., an assessment of a child's education).

mental health issues, educational (academic and functioning) needs, developmental delays, and Regional Center eligibility.

- Treatment plans, including early intervention, should be based on a holistic review of all the strengths and needs identified, combined with any services that have been effective in the past.
- Assessments completed with older children and adolescents should include substance abuse, experiences with bullying, risk for delinquency, and exposure to the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).
- Assessments of parents/caregivers should include information on family strengths as well as their medical needs/history, history of trauma exposure, mental health needs/history, substance abuse needs/history, and other challenges they face to creating a safe, stable home.
- Assessments should be meaningful and conducted by professionals trained to effectively interact with children, youth, and their families in a trauma-informed way.
- Professionals who are knowledgeable about assessment results for a particular child/youth and family should participate in the CFT process as early as possible to ensure that the case plan addresses the needs of the child/youth and family.
- Assessment results for children/youth should be shared with attorneys as soon as possible and prior to their disposition hearings.

Action Area #2: Keep children and youth with their families whenever possible.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concern

Children and youth are often placed in out-of-home care without workers considering all family options.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- In advance of any out-of-home care decision, every effort should be made to provide families with the resources (e.g., mental health supports, respite assistance, financial assistance, or other supports) needed to enable the family unit to remain safely intact.
- Family engagement and the family-finding process should be prioritized before and when an out-of-home care decision is made.
- Family Centered Services (community-based programs already established in Los Angeles aimed at strengthening and preserving families) should be used to prevent and safely reduce child welfare system involvement, including entries into out-of-home care.

Using Out-of-Home Care

Action Area #3: When out-of-home care is necessary, ensure that out-of-home care decisions are informed by the child/youth and parent and result in the least restrictive setting appropriate to meet the child/youth's needs.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

The current continuum of placements in Los Angeles County is not adequate to meet the treatment needs of children and youth living in out-of-home care. Children and youth are not always placed in the most appropriate setting because of a lack of comprehensive assessments, limited availability, and an absence of appropriate supports to meet the child/youth's treatment needs. Children and youth who exhibit early signs of disruptive behavior in less restrictive settings often move placements to more restrictive levels of care because the placement does not have adequate resources or staff are not trained to address the behavior using trauma-informed practices.

Multiple placement changes can compound the child/youth's struggle to achieve stability and reunification. Inappropriate placements in settings that do not meet the child/youth's treatment needs often lead to negative consequences (e.g., law enforcement contact) and delays in reunification and/or permanency.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- DCFS' Child and Family Team (CFT) process is an integral part of family engagement and service planning and is intended to play a key part in placement decisions. During CFT meetings, the child/youth's voice and the family's perspective should be prioritized when deciding whether or not a placement is necessary and what type of placement is most appropriate.
- When placement into out-of-home care is necessary, the results from a comprehensive assessment (see Action Area #1 on page 18) should be used to identify the most appropriate out-of-home care setting for the child/youth.
- The most appropriate out-of-home care option should be based on the child/youth's needs in combination with the ability of the caregiver/placement to effectively meet those needs.
- Whenever possible and appropriate, out-of-home care in family-like settings should be used.
- When placement in an intensive, short-term treatment facility is deemed necessary, the case plan should reflect the anticipated duration of treatment and a transition plan to a less restrictive setting.
- The "first placement best placement" principle should guide all out-of-home care decisions to reduce placement disruptions and to make it easier for the youth to build trust and attachment.

- CFT meetings should be used to regularly check in with the child/youth about their out-of-home setting. The team should make sure the child/youth feels safe in this setting and is receiving the services and support they need. If issues are raised, the team should address them within the current placement to avoid placement disruption if possible and appropriate.

Action Item #4: Provide a continuum of high-quality out-of-home care options to appropriately meet the needs of children/youth.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

Appropriately serving children/youth in out-of-home care depends on the availability of placements that match a wide range of treatment needs and also support the child/youth's connections to their families and communities. The current continuum of out-of-home care options does not adequately address the array of complex special needs presented by the children/youth requiring care, which often leads to negative consequences.

- Unstable out-of-home living situations and placement changes may lead to multiple school changes which, in turn, destabilize and negatively affect academic progress.
- Unstable out-of-home living situations and placement changes also negatively affect the time to reunification, family strengthening, and permanency.
- Placement in out-of-home care settings that do not appropriately address the needs of children and youth (e.g., complex trauma, substance abuse, mental health, commercial sexual exploitation, and so on) directly contribute to youth leaving without permission, having multiple placement changes, and coming into contact with law enforcement.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- The type and availability of placement options should be examined and reconceptualized to meet the treatment and support needs of children and youth in out-of-home care. Gaps in the continuum, as well as inadequate access to placements that serve critical needs, should serve as a basis for redesigning the out-of-home care continuum in Los Angeles County.
- Once gaps are identified, the County should develop and/or recruit providers who can serve these needs. Areas for further development include but are not necessarily limited to:
    - Intensive Services Foster Care placements
    - Expanding access to small residential placements whenever possible and appropriate for treatment needs; these settings should be family-like environments with intensive supports and services matched to the youth's treatment needs
    - Non-STRTP residential care settings (e.g., transitional housing programs) for specialty populations as allowed by the Family First Prevention Services Act, including but not limited to youth affected by commercial sexual exploitation, expecting and parenting youth, and transition-age youth
    - Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) equipped to serve children and youth with complex needs using trauma-informed and evidence-based practices

  - Inpatient residential substance-use disorder treatment programs that serve youth and young adults

- Ensure adequate access to and prioritization of "least restrictive" and family-like settings with the capacity to appropriately meet the needs of high-acuity children/youth and reduce the need for higher levels of care, limit placement changes, and facilitate reunification and/or permanency.

- Out-of-home caregivers and staff at all levels should be trained to recognize their implicit biases and how those biases affect the cultural dynamic between them and the children, youth, and families they serve.

- Out-of-home caregivers and staff at all levels should be trained on how to engage and serve youth in a trauma-informed way, how to recognize and effectively use trauma-informed practices to address behaviors that might lead to an escalation, removal, or re-placement, and how to establish a safe and stable environment for children and youth.

- When STRTPs are used, they should be developmentally appropriate and meet the treatment needs of youth.

- One-on-one behavioral aides and additional County supports should be readily available to support youth with complex treatment needs and to augment STRTP services whenever needed.

Creating and Maintaining Stability for Children, Youth, and Families

Action Area #5: Build a consistent and effective oversight process to monitor placement changes to reduce out-of-home care instability.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

Placement changes create instability in all aspects of life for children and youth. They negatively affect connections with families and communities, educational progress, mental health, and social support. From a mental health perspective, every placement change is disruptive and creates another loss, re-traumatizing many children and youth. Young people often have to "start from scratch" because they lose social connections and relationships, personal belongings, access to medications, access to known therapists and other positive relationships connected with the original placement, and educational connections. The re-placement experience contributes to losses in self-esteem and to loneliness, alienation, and distrust of the system, and can accentuate the original distress children and youth experience being separated from their families.

The court requires DCFS to file a placement report when a change is made, but unfortunately, those reports are not used consistently across courts, and children's attorneys do not always receive notice of the change until after re-placement has occurred. (In the past, attorneys were notified so they could advocate more effectively on behalf of their clients.) Additionally, no

consistent mechanism exists to track and monitor changes across all levels of out-of-home settings, which limits oversight and accountability.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- Reduce the need to change out-of-home care settings by placing children and youth in settings that appropriately meet their needs.
- Re-placements, when necessary, should be made in a thoughtful, trauma-informed way to minimize the child or youth's loss and disruption.
- The child/youth's attorney should always be contacted and informed prior to a placement change.
- A child/youth affected by a re-placement should be included in all discussions involving the reasons for the re-placement and whether or not the change can be avoided.
- When developmentally appropriate, children/youth should be partners in identifying the issues that led to the removal. If a move is unavoidable, they should be part of the decision-making process to identify a more appropriate placement.
- School stability should be considered when making a placement or placement change (see Action Area #6 below).
- Placement change reports should be used consistently and should clearly detail a plan that addresses (but is not necessarily limited to) these questions:
    - Why did the youth have to change placements?
    - Where was the youth moved to?
    - How is the new placement designed to meet the specific needs of the child/youth?
    - How are clothing and other belongings being transported, and how will lost items be replaced?
    - Did the child/youth's medications go with them?
    - How will continuity in the child's education, counseling, and activities (teams, arts, etc.) be maintained?

Action Area #6: Create and maintain stability in education when out-of-home care settings are changed.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

When children and youth are removed from their homes or change placements, their educational pathways are disrupted, often resulting in school transfers, loss of time at school, and fewer school credits. School changes can also negatively affect both academic and social learning, participation in extracurricular activities, social connections, and progress toward graduation. The psychological and social demands on children/youth in this situation are substantial; not only are they adjusting to a new out-of-home care setting, but they must

simultaneously adjust to a new school environment. Prior to any school change, a best-interest determination (BID) process must occur, and the child should remain in their school of origin until a BID meeting happens. (See the first bullet below and page 48 for further details.)

Children/youth may not be disenrolled from school until and unless their educational rights holder (ERH) finds it, in this meeting, in their best interest to change school placements. California Education Code §48853.5 states that the child/youth's ERH, the child him/herself, and the school district's Foster Youth Liaison are involved in determining whether or not it is in a youth's best interest to remain in the school of origin, and the best-interest determination guidelines further recommend that the child's caregiver be involved. However, the ERH is the final determiner of whether or not the child should change schools. For children remaining in their schools of origin, the child welfare agency (DCFS in Los Angeles County), the school district, the child's caregiver, and the ERH must work together to identify an appropriate transportation plan for the child/youth to attend the current school from the new residence.

While the BID process has many strengths, several critical partners—the child/youth's attorney and social worker/probation officer, for instance—remain marginal to the decision-making process.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- Following any placement or placement change, a BID must be completed with all relevant stakeholders—the child/youth's attorney, caregiver, and social worker/probation officer, as well as the Foster Youth Liaison from the potential new school—included in the meeting to identify which school setting better ensures the child's safety, culture, and learning needs.

  Whenever possible, DCFS/Probation Education Specialists should also attend BID meetings. If a child/youth's dependency attorneys cannot participate in the meeting, they should reach out to the school-district Foster Youth Liaison in charge of convening the BID process to communicate any thoughts or concerns with regard to the school of origin so they can be considered in the discussion.

  The BID process must consider the child's safety and well-being, the number of schools the child has attended, access to the services/supports the child/youth receives at the current school, plus the child/youth's academic progress—ability to complete a school year, for instance, or make a planned transition from middle to high school—academic performance, and social supports or school activities.

  All decisions should also be coordinated with the Interagency Placement Committee (IPC) mandated by AB 1997 (Continuum of Care Reform)—a multi-agency, multidisciplinary team supporting children/youth with significant behavioral, emotional, and medical needs—and the child/youth's Child and Family Team.

- When a placement change is necessary, the placing agency should consider whether or not the new out-of-home setting is within reasonable commuting distance of the school of origin, if it is in the child/youth's best interest to remain enrolled there (this is also recommended in California Rules of Court Rules 5.650 and 5.651).

- Once the child/youth's school setting is stabilized, its continuation should be prioritized and every effort made to avoid further school disruptions resulting from placement changes.
- If the child/youth does change schools, DCFS should ensure that the child/youth is disenrolled from the previous school, all records are transferred to the new school, and all full or partial earned credits are awarded and forwarded to the new school.
- Updated educational plans should be maintained for every student, including a complete set of educational records. In the event that school changes are necessary, students can then stay on track for graduation and avoid duplicating and/or taking unnecessary classes.
- Efforts by the OCP, DCFS, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) should continue to encourage all school districts in the county to sign the long-term school-transportation Memorandum of Understanding developed in response to the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) or to develop alternative agreements for school-of-origin transportation cost-sharing. See page 48 for more information on that MOU.

Action Area #7: Identify and appropriately address the educational needs of children and youth.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

When children and youth enter the child welfare system, assessing their educational needs is critically important. However, the extent to which those needs are consistently assessed is unclear, and coordinating with schools to ensure that the child/youth's educational rights are observed can fall short for some, especially when Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are involved.

Educational rights holders (ERHs) are essential to this process because they hold the legal right to make education decisions for the child/youth. The lack of an active ERH affects a child/youth in several negative ways:

- Immediate education decisions (BID meetings, for example) are delayed, which can impact attendance.
- IEPs are not updated for months.
- Collaborative engagement with school districts is strained.

Social workers are required to identify a child/youth's ERH in DCFS' electronic case-management system, CWS/CMS, so the name appears in the child's Health and Education Passport; such documentation, however, is inconsistently entered and not always updated. The Health and Education Passport also does not consistently include all of the child's education information and may not be updated regularly.

The court is also required to issue a JV-535–Order Designating Educational Rights Holder that remains part of the child's case file. (The court must notice the child and all parties related to the child's case with the original and all updated JV-535 forms in person or by first-class mail no later than five court days after the order is signed.) Although this form is regularly used when

an initial ERH is appointed, the extent to which it is consistently used to appoint replacement ERHs—when a child/youth loses contact with the first one or otherwise needs someone new—is unknown.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- ERHs for children and youth should be empowered as early in the process as possible. This includes:
  - Educating parents on what it means to be educational rights holders, their legal rights as ERHs—which continue even when their children/youth are removed from their care—and how to be effective educational rights holders
  - Identifying more family members, nonrelated extended family members (NREFMs), and volunteers trained by the Children's Law Center or Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) to serve as appropriate educational rights holders or dual-ERHs when parents are not able to serve in this capacity
  - Educating all ERHs on their right to access education records, how to monitor student progress, how to identify and address concerns, and how to use the JV-537–Educational Rights Holder Statement form to report regularly to the court
- The child/youth's social worker and/or DCFS Education Specialist should conduct a complete review of the child/youth's educational records to determine if the child/youth:
  - Has unmet educational needs. For example, have previous teachers identified the need for a special-education assessment? Or does the child/youth have an IEP but continue to struggle academically and/or behaviorally, indicating the need for potential additional or different IEP services?
  - Has a current IEP, which must be updated at least once each calendar year. Whenever possible, IEP plans and updates should be included so all services and support systems are coordinated.
  - Has had any violations of their educational rights. Is the student owed compensatory education for denial of school enrollment, for instance?
  - Has had struggles with school discipline that need to be addressed
  - Has been awarded all full and partial credits earned
  - Is currently in an appropriate educational placement. For instance, is the youth attending an alternative school setting that is not in his/her best interest?

  Concerns related to any of these areas should be brought to the attention of the ERH, the attorney for the youth, and the current school. If violations are identified at a previous school or are not immediately resolvable, the DCFS Education Specialist, ERH, and attorney for the youth should coordinate to determine how to address them.

- Every court order should include the ERH's name even when the ERH is the biological parent, so the case file can provide a consistent and accurate record of who is responsible for the child/youth's educational rights.

  When an ERH is not designated or the ERH needs to be replaced, the child/youth's attorney, the parent's attorney, County Counsel, and the court clerk should address the matter prior to the minute order being finalized by using the JV-535–Order Designating Educational Rights Holder form. Subsequent to this process, all necessary parties—including schools—should be noticed as soon as possible. If there is no ERH, the court should order the minor's attorney or social worker to locate an ERH within a set timeframe (e.g., 21 to 30 days) to avoid any delays.

- In addition to ensuring that an ERH is designated, the court should assess the appropriateness of the current educational rights holder. The ERH must be someone:

  - Who is not legally barred from holding the role (STRTP personnel may present themselves to the court as ERHs without knowing they cannot serve in that role)
  - With whom the child/youth has an ongoing relationship
  - Who is available and willing to take an active role in the child/youth's education

  The appropriateness of the current ERH should be reviewed and changes made, if necessary, whenever an out-of-home care setting is changed (e.g., foster parents who were ERHs but no longer have a relationship with the youth should be replaced).

- Efforts should be made by the court to recruit and train volunteer ERHs who can be appointed in the absence of an available ERH having an existing relationship with the child/youth.

- When appropriate, the child/youth's educational rights should be addressed by making referrals to the 317e Panel (i.e., an education rights attorney). Guidelines and criteria for eligibility should be provided and used by DCFS Education Specialists and social workers to recommend a 317e Panel referral to the child/youth's attorney. The 317e Panel should have sufficient funding to maintain its ability to advocate for the educational rights of children and youth.

- The County should consider developing an electronic Health and Education Passport that could allow for the child's educational information to be automatically ported from the Los Angeles County Office of Education's Educational Passport System (EPS), ensuring that the child's educational information is updated and available to the child's social worker and caregiver.

Action Area #8: Provide ongoing support for student success.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

Once educational plans are developed for children/youth and their educational setting is stabilized, it is important to support their educational success. Often, however, they attend campuses that are not safe, are victims of bullying, or may not have access to the basic educational tools and supports needed to be successful. Their educational progress should be carefully monitored so gaps in learning and learning disabilities are not missed. Without IEPs or specialized supports to help them in the classroom, youth with special needs may struggle.

Children/youth living in out-of-home care, especially STRTPs, experience even more challenges. STRTP residents often labor to get enrolled in/reenter school because of perceptions from school officials that they are "troubled youth." When enrolled, these children and youth are often pushed into alternative education settings such as continuation schools, community day schools, and "independent study," and are often unable to participate in desired extracurricular activities (e.g., after-school athletic teams). This denies them the ability to access the full range of academic, extracurricular, and social offerings at their local comprehensive school.

With high levels of mobility and trauma, these youth often have unaddressed educational needs and require immediate assessment for appropriate supports and services. Because of these unmet needs, they often face stringent school discipline and an increased likelihood that staff will call school police or law enforcement to address their behavior. Further compounding this problem is a lack of communication between the school and the ERH, the STRTP staff, and the youth's social worker, who all need prompt and accurate information to coordinate the services and supports the youth needs to be successful.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- Schools should provide safe learning environments, maintain safe campuses and classrooms and be vigilant in identifying and constructively intervening in bullying. For example, schools should work with community partners to create "safe passages" for children and youth to get to schools safely when they must travel through rival gang areas.

- Schools should ensure that Foster Youth Liaisons are trained on how to recognize, understand, and serve the needs of foster youth.

- Schools, DCFS, ERHs, and caregivers should work together to create and maintain effective learning environments by reducing bureaucratic barriers and providing basic educational supports seamlessly and efficiently. Critical educational supports include but are not limited to:

  - Meal programs that go beyond breakfast
  - Access to school uniforms and gym clothes
  - Access to technology (i.e., a laptop and smart phones)
  - Access to school supplies and other learning materials
  - Access to a public library card
  - Access to extracurricular programming such as sports, arts, clubs, and so on

- Access to tutoring when needed
- Access to trauma-based supports if needed
- Access to options to make up missing credits, if applicable

- Schools should ensure that their staff are aware of the different individuals who play important roles in the child/youth's education along with issuing the notices and access that should be granted to each person. This this information should also be noted in school information systems.

  ERHs have a right to access all education records and make education decisions. They must also receive official notices about special education meetings, school discipline, etc. Resource families and STRTP staff have a right to access a smaller subset of materials that is relevant to serving the immediate needs of the youth, including the current or most recent records of grades, transcripts, attendance, discipline, and online communication on any platform, and any current IEP (California Education Code, Section 49069.3).

- Parents, caregivers, and/or other ERHs should regularly check in and engage with teachers about their child/youth's educational progress. Both the ERH and the caregiver (unless the court has specifically barred interaction between them) should be invited to school events such as parent-teacher conferences. Ensuring that both parties are properly noticed and invited to education-related functions helps caregivers know how to support the immediate needs of youth and makes certain that ERHs are involved when key decisions must be made.

- Children, youth, and families should be supported by linking and coordinating on-campus services to other services outside of the school (such as mental health resources) to encourage continuity and reduce duplication and class absences.

- Behavior-support plans for youth refusing to attend school should be developed using a systematic, team-based approach to identify and address the social-emotional and trauma-based reasons underlying their behavior.

- Parents, caregivers, ERHs, social workers, and school districts should coordinate to ensure that the child/youth has transportation to school, which may require providing public transportation tokens and/or access to ride services.

- Whenever children/youth are referred to STRTPs, the DCFS Education Section should be contacted to review their education records and assess their current needs, including whether support/advocacy is necessary to address general education matters such as the transfer of education records, awarding of partial or full credits, assessing graduation status, and the need for tutoring or other supports.

  The Education Specialist should review whether the student has special education needs and requires support/advocacy to get the school district to implement an existing IEP, or whether assessments might be needed to address IEP needs not already focused on. Until an IEP can be developed, the STRTP, school, and DCFS should work together to determine how the youth's needs are met.

- For children/youth placed in STRTP settings, intentional connections between the social worker, placement, and school of origin should be built to help support and monitor the child/youth's educational progress. For students with the most extreme needs, it is vital that their intensive treatment services be coordinated with and connected to their schools to support educational success. It is also important for partners to create ways to address behavior problems before a school resorts to suspensions and expulsions.

- Additional legal/advocacy supports should also be provided to help STRTP youth remain in their schools (or get enrolled in a timely manner) and have appropriate access to educational supports.

Action Area #9: Address mental health and substance-abuse needs swiftly and establish continuity in services.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

Once comprehensive case plans are developed for children, youth, and their families, access to the services identified in those plans should be offered as quickly as possible. Effective treatment for mental health issues (including trauma) and substance abuse contributes significantly to overall well-being, but swift access to services is not always possible because of waiting lists. (This is particularly true for older children and youth with substance-abuse problems.) For children/youth whose out-of-home placement changes, treatment is often interrupted and their therapists/psychiatrists changed even if treatment was going well. Just as with placement changes, interruptions in treatment and shifts in providers can negatively affect youth and their overall progress, re-traumatize them, and lead to an overall lack of trust, thereby impeding the efficacy of services.

Substance abuse is a particularly important issue to address among older children and adolescents, yet accessing substance abuse services is particularly challenging given the lack of available providers and institutional barriers (e.g., funding for direct substance abuse services). Although the dependency and delinquency court operates drug courts for families/youth (these programs are limited in their availability (see page 49 for locations).

In the past, the dependency court developed and implemented a drug treatment protocol through which youth needing substance abuse treatment could self-refer or be referred to the court by caregivers, social workers, attorneys, and judges. The protocol established a partnership with substance-abuse counselors who agreed to assess the level of use/problem and provide voluntary services to the youth. This effort was intended to address substance use as early as possible in an effort to prevent further use and delinquency. The drug treatment protocol is no longer in place leaving the court without a seamless, consistent way to connect youth to substance-abuse services.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- Once Child and Family Teams (CFTs) craft comprehensive case plans, children/youth should be able to access appropriate services as soon as possible. This requires linking them and

their families to providers, supporting their participation in services (e.g., providing transportation if needed), and assessing treatment progress through regular updates.

- Hold regular collaborative meetings with psychiatrists and therapists to make more informed recommendations for children and youth who are prescribed medication. Whenever possible, these individuals should be part of CFT meetings so as to include the child/youth in discussions and decision-making.

- Ensure access to services by making an adequate number available. Assess the type and capacity of existing treatment services to identify gaps in the continuum of care and in high-need areas. Reducing or eliminating waitlists depends on increased resources—especially inpatient, outpatient, and residential substance-abuse treatment for adolescents.

- Connecting children and youth to therapists is with appropriate levels of experience and availability/sustainability is a critical decision for therapy to be effective. A number of factors should be considered, including the child/youth's permanency plan. Clinical interns, if used, should be advanced in their training (working on their certifications), appropriate for the setting and child/youth's treatment needs, and appropriately supervised. Whenever possible, youth with the highest needs should be seen only by licensed professionals.

- Ensure stability and continuity in treatment care for children and youth receiving mental health and/or substance abuse services. Continuity in therapy and with therapists is essential to establishing trust and credibility with young patients. Stability in care entails having children's therapist/psychiatrists follow them across placement changes and when they exit from juvenile halls or probation camps, for older youth.

- When continuity with a particular therapist/psychiatrist is not possible, the current clinician should facilitate a seamless transition to a new therapist/psychiatrist by communicating with the child/youth about the change and providing a detailed update to the new clinician. Whenever possible, this should occur during CFT meetings.

- Children and youth should be connected to wraparound teams and other supports, when appropriate, to provide continuity both in services and in their relationships with significant adults.

- When appropriate, treatment services should be coordinated with Regional Center eligibility.

- Mandate training for social workers and other key decision-makers on recognizing the symptoms of substance abuse, thereby both raising awareness and facilitating engagement opportunities to connect the youth with services.

- For older children and adolescents, substance use or abuse should be identified and addressed with appropriate levels of treatment. When it is suspected, adults should assess and respond appropriately to experimentation as a normal part of adolescent development, as opposed to "substance abuse." When substance use or abuse is identified, assess its co-morbidity with trauma and mental health issues and coordinate appropriate services.

- For youth with substance abuse issues, drug testing should be used as part of the treatment process and *not* as a punitive measure against the youth.
- The Department of Public Health's Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (DPH–SAPC) unit should work with DCFS, Probation, and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to discuss how substance-use disorder screenings and/or assessments can occur consistently for youth that are referred to the Interagency Placement Committee for STRTP placement.
- DPH–SAPC should work with STRTPs to discuss how to better integrate substance abuse services within the STRTP model and connect youth with substance-use disorder services.
- Confidentiality for children and youth receiving mental health and substance-abuse services is critically important and must adhere to current laws (see Action Area #13 on page 37).

Action Area #10: Foster family connections and overall wellness.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

When children, youth, and families enter the child welfare system, their time with DCFS should be as short as appropriate and possible. Fostering and nurturing family connections, maintaining a sense of normality for children and youth, and providing effective services and supports are essential to fostering resiliency at both the individual and family level.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- Relationships with parents, siblings, relatives, nonrelated extended family members (NREFMs), and resource families should be identified early in the process and supported throughout the child/youth's time in care. They should be a central part of his/her programming and play a core role in throughout all decision-making about the child/youth. This includes, but is not limited to:
    - Conducting family-finding and engagement upon the child's entry into care
    - Engaging family and NREFMs within the Child and Family Team
    - Regular and consistent contact with siblings
    - Individualized plans for family contacts and visits to facilitate/support family reunification whenever possible
- Build and maintain sustaining systems for parents, caregivers, and staff that include, but are not necessarily limited to, support during difficult moments, forums in which to discuss challenges/identify collective solutions, and opportunities to further engage family in the process.
- Case plans should be based on an assessment of the child/youth's interests, strengths, and needs, as well as family strengths and needs. They should also include strategies to create as much normalcy and continued participation in the community as possible, which includes, but is not limited to:

  - Regular visits with siblings and other family members
  - Having and using library cards
  - Access to transportation
  - Access to sports, fitness, and wellness activities
  - Access to opportunities to engage in arts programming
  - The ability to participate in school events (e.g., the prom) and school activities (e.g., clubs and organizations)

- Interactions should prioritize building positive relationships for young people in DCFS care with social workers, out-of-home caregivers and staff, and treatment providers who foster their resiliency by focusing on what is happening in their lives in constructive and supportive ways. Feedback from children and youth with system experience emphasizes the importance of developing meaningful, supportive relationships with adults rather than ones focused on corrective and punitive oversight.

- Youth behavior and responses to that behavior should be based on what is developmentally appropriate and trauma-informed; there should not be a different standard for youth because they are DCFS-involved.

- Design, provide, and expand specialized services for youth experiencing particular challenges—those affected by complex trauma, substance abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, gangs, and so on

- Connect youth to mentors/support networks in the community from the time they enter the child welfare system so they have a direct connection to someone who is available to help when needed.

- After-care services, including flexible funds, should be provided to youth to support permanency when they transition out of STRTPs.

- STRTPs should regard social pursuits as normal prosocial activities and not define them as privileges and/or rewards.

- Social workers, service provider staff, and out-of-home placement caregivers/staff should be held accountable for:

  - Facilitating trauma-informed environments that are safe, stable, and nurturing
  - Meeting youth and their families where they are in the process
  - Engaging youth and their families in culturally informed and respectful ways
  - Using motivational-interviewing techniques to establish a rapport with youth and their families
  - Building positive and sustainable relationships to support and mentor youth development
  - Connecting youth to supportive activities and groups (e.g., peer networks to help create stable, sustainable, positive relationships)
  - Providing support services for LGBTQ+ youth

Action Areas for Tertiary Prevention (Intervention) After Dual System Contact

Reduce the Likelihood of Entering and/or the Time Spent in the Juvenile Justice System

Action Area #11: Reduce contact with and involvement in law enforcement whenever possible.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

DCFS-involved youth are often viewed differently than their counterparts outside the child welfare system. Schools, law enforcement, and juvenile justice decision-makers such as probation officers and district attorneys can perceive them as being at higher risk of offending simply because of their dependent status.

Youth entering the juvenile justice system typically do so as a result of incidents occurring at school or where they live. Since DCFS-involved youth often live in group homes or STRTPs, a high number of arrests have historically occurred in those venues. Dual system contact is further compounded by restricted access to diversion options for DCFS-involved youth because decision-makers often assume these youth cannot succeed in diversion programming without parent/caregiver involvement.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- Reliance on school police should not be the first response for schools when students misbehave, and calling the Sheriff's Department or local police should not be the first response of STRTP staff or out-of-home placement caregivers. If children/youth are given the appropriate support services at school and are similarly placed in a living arrangement adequate for their treatment needs, alternative responses that are trauma-informed should be available to address their behavior.

- DCFS should work directly with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) and school districts to develop protocols and communication pathways for addressing youth behaviors at school without contacting law enforcement or utilizing school police. These protocols should include all DCFS-involved youth, with a particular focus on youth in STRTPs.

- DCFS-involved youth should have equal access to diversion program opportunities after contact with law enforcement. Diversion programs should be vigilant to make sure:

  - Their participation criteria do not exclude DCFS-involved youth, directly or indirectly
  - Program services do not duplicate case plans nor put undue burdens on youth
  - Resources to support the youth's success are provided

- Alternatives to calling law enforcement should be developed to address the undesired behavior in the most trauma-informed manner. For example, DCFS, Probation, and the

Department of Mental Health (DMH) should work collaboratively to increase access to Psychiatric Mobile Response Team (PMRT) services for STRTPs and Community Treatment Facilities (CTFs), and strength-based and restorative-justice approaches should be used as an alternative to referring youth to law enforcement.

- Use of the term "runaway" should be reframed, better understood, and not used to penalize youth. When youth leave placement, the situation should be referred to "leaving placement without permission" rather than their being "AWOL" (absent without leave) or a "runaway," and it should not automatically trigger a punitive response. Reframing how "leaving placement without permission" is understood and responded to should be incorporated into state licensing requirements to more accurately represent the behavior and reduce the negative, criminalized stigma currently associated with it. Placement stability should be maintained and living situations not changed solely as a result of a youth leaving placement without permission.
- To reduce the likelihood of young people leaving without permission, standard community-pass guidelines should be collaboratively developed by youth, STRTP providers, and advocates. These would allow youth to spend time on their own in the community and develop independent living skills, while maintaining safety for themselves and the neighborhood (see page 51 for progress in this area).
- Train and encourage STRTPs to use leaving without permission as an opportunity to identify unmet needs underlying that behavior and to recognize potential options for permanency. In other words, who is the youth going to see and could this person represent a positive connection and/or a more permanent option for the youth?
- Identify placements with high numbers of referrals to the juvenile justice system and work closely with program staff to implement the practices identified in the recommendations above.

Action Area #12: When DCFS-involved youth enter the juvenile justice system, reduce their involvement in and the likelihood of their reentering this system.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

When DCFS-involved youth enter the juvenile justice system and are petitioned to the delinquency court, they are referred to DCFS's 241.1 and Probation's Dual Supervision Units (Welfare and Institutions Code §241.1). These units are responsible for providing youth with 241.1 MDT assessments that form the basis for 241.1 joint assessment reports submitted to the delinquency court. A detailed 241.1 protocol has been in place since the 1990s in Los Angeles County, and it is widely believed that all youth with open DCFS cases are referred to and handled by the 241.1 units. The 241.1 protocol was updated in 2006 to support a teaming approach and is currently under review with further revisions as part of the Dual-Status Workgroup's collaboration with the Los Angeles County Juvenile Court.

Most 241.1 youth receive formal diversion and are supervised by the Probation Dual Supervision Unit; however, youth who become wards of the delinquency court (i.e., WIC 300/602 or WIC 602) are supervised by a field deputy probation officer (DPO) if put under probation supervision in the community; by a suitable-placement DPO if they are in a group-home setting; or by a camp DPO if they are in a probation camp. Coordination with the youth's social worker is relatively seamless for DPOs in the Dual Supervision Unit, but it can be inconsistent when youth are in different units.

Research conducted using 241.1 youth data reveals several concerning issues. First, these youth are more likely than youth without DCFS cases to become wards of the delinquency court and go into suitable placement. This is likely because many of these youth are living in group homes at the time of their arrest and have no "home" (as legally referenced in the statute) to return to; however, this disposition potentially gives the impression that these youth need a higher level of care because they pose a higher risk to public safety. Research also shows that these youth are detained at high rates after arrest and after disposition, and that detentions after disposition are often related to probation violations rather than new offenses.

Recent research also shows that 241.1 youth represent only a small portion of all youth in the juvenile justice system who have had DCFS contact (see Chapter 1 for a more detailed summary of this point). According to this research, 64% of adjudicated youth had contact with the child welfare system at some point in their lives, but their maltreatment histories are rarely known and/or incorporated into their case plans.[13] Thus, the opportunity to address unresolved trauma and significantly lessen the risk of future delinquency is missed.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- The 241.1 MDT assessment process should be followed by all delinquency courts, yielding comprehensive assessments that guide case plans to equally build on youth strengths and address their treatment needs.
- In addition to the information required as part of WIC §241.1, the 241.1 MDT assessment should include an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) screening as well as a determination of possible treatment needs related to trauma exposure.
- The information used in by the 241.1 MDT assessment should be the most updated and accurate information available from all sources allowed within the joint process, and all MDT members should review it and prepare for an assessment discussion prior to the meeting.
- The 241.1 MDT assessment process should consider all available information to fully understand the context within which the subject behavior occurred, to better identify appropriate responses and services to stabilize the youth's situation, and to avoid conflicting recommendations.

[13] Herz et al., 2021

- The 241.1 MDT should view and refer to youth accurately with regard to the subject incident and presume innocence until he/she is found responsible for the charges.
- When considering "running-away" behavior, the 241.1 MDT should distinguish between leaving placement for long periods of time versus leaving for a few hours.
- When an out-of-home care placement is necessary, the 241.1 MDT should consider all options, including higher-rate foster homes, when a higher level of care is necessary. Group homes, Dorothy Kirby Center, or probation camps should not be the default options for youth with higher needs.
- All DCFS-involved youth, regardless of disposition type, should be supervised by dedicated units in DCFS and in Probation that are specially trained to support youth with dual system involvement. Social workers and DPOs in these units should collaborate to navigate services and facilitate successful outcomes for youth to reduce their time and level of involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- Trauma-informed methods and restorative-justice programs should be used as alternatives to placing DCFS-involved youth in detention for probation violations.
- Probation assessment and case-plan processes should recognize the extent of maltreatment experiences among the youth it serves and use WIC §602 to make them wards of the delinquency court only as a last-resort option.

Build System Capacity to Better Serve Children, Youth, and Families and Prevent Delinquency

Action Area #13: Protect the confidentiality of children, youth, and families

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

Although collaboration across agencies requires disclosing information, the extent to which information is shared and how it is shared must be carefully outlined. It is important to protect children and youth from information related to sensitive areas of their lives—substance abuse, mental health diagnoses, and so on—being used against them in current court cases and/or any future court involvement. Crafting comprehensive service plans is necessary to appropriately serve children, youth, and their families, but this should be accomplished in a way that produces no harm or negative consequences for them.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- Parental consent or consent from whomever holds privilege (the child/youth's legal guardian or attorney, for instance) must always be sought, and the youth should also provide assent before any information is collected and shared across parties.

- At the time of obtaining consent, there should be full disclosure about the extent to which assessment/screening results will be shared; what can be shared and with whom should be clearly identified. For example, if a mother and stepfather are part of the CFT, the youth may be okay with information being shared with the mother but not with the stepfather.

Action Area #14: Support delinquency prevention across all Action Areas by developing and delivering consistent multidisciplinary training.

Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee Concerns

To support the Action Areas listed above, ongoing multidisciplinary training is necessary. Many critical areas for training do not currently exist (e.g., the interrelatedness of maltreatment, delinquency, and other issues), and when instruction does exist, it does not always bring staff together across agencies or provide an ongoing platform to support life-long professional learning. Training must be dynamic, interconnected, and engaging rather than didactic. It should also provide opportunities for staff across agencies to find areas of common ground and identify constructive ways to better serve children, youth, and families through collaboration.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- Establish training platforms to build practices that are mindful, engaged, and anchored within the strengths and needs of families to ensure sustainability in the delivery and impact of services within and across agencies.

- Provide interdisciplinary cross-training to establish the connections between maltreatment, system responses, and delinquency prevention. This includes:

  - Recognizing the developmental nature of behavior and how early behavior and intervention is related to later behavior
  - Knowing what risk factors are and how they simultaneously underlie a variety of problem behaviors in adolescence and young adulthood
  - Reflecting on how youths' lived experiences both within and outside of the system are related to current and future behavior

- Develop a common language across agencies and systems to help staff communicate and collaborate effectively.

- Provide training for attorneys on the key components of the initial hearing in dependency court, which include ERH questions and school-of-origin issues.

- Provide training on how to connect comprehensive assessments to appropriate services and placements (when necessary) as early as possible.

- Provide training on methods and techniques to successfully engage families in a culturally informed way in their service plans.

- Provide training to address bias in decision-making across all system decision-makers as well as out-of-home caregivers and staff. This training should define implicit bias and illustrate how it affects perceptions and decision-making and the cultural dynamic between staff and the youth, families, and communities they serve. This training should also include how to assess children and youth and their families without bias, plus a section on understanding the impact of biased system decision-making on future trajectories.
- Provide training across all system decision-makers as well as out-of-home caregivers and staff on how to deliver trauma-informed practices. This includes how to establish a safe and stable environment for children and youth and how to appropriately assess and respond to youth and family needs from a holistic, trauma-informed perspective.
- Provide training to school district Foster Youth Liaisons on how to recognize, understand, and serve the needs of foster youth.
- Train out-of-home caregivers and staff in less restrictive placements on how to recognize and effectively address behaviors (using trauma-informed practices) that might lead to an escalation, removal, or re-placement.
- Identify specialized professionals (e.g., defense attorneys in dependency and delinquency, case workers, and service providers) and provide them with training and support to effectively work with DCFS-involved youth who experience an increased risk for delinquency and DCFS-involved youth who cross over into delinquency.
- Train law-enforcement agencies and STRTPs on de-escalation techniques to reduce the likelihood of inappropriate referrals to the juvenile justice system.
- Provide training on substance abuse that includes how to identify its signs and symptoms, how to talk to youth about it and engage them in services (motivational interviewing), and how to access appropriate services to address substance abuse.
- Train STRTP staff on how to identify and prevent commercial sexual exploitation.
- Provide ongoing training on the finalized revised 241.1 protocol for judges, attorneys, and all 241.1 MDT partners to support its uniform implementation across all delinquency courts and to avoid “net-widening.”

Action Area #15: Hold systems and agencies accountable for delivering best practices and maintaining high standards of care for children/youth.

How Can the County Address These Issues?

- Build and maintain a data infrastructure and dashboards to monitor key metrics related to delinquency prevention. See "Assess Impact with Data Feedback Loops and Hold Agencies Accountable" on page 53 for progress in this area.

- Match administrative data sets across systems to monitor changes over time, especially with regard to dual system involvement.

- Monitor all placement changes to identify patterns and/or areas of concern for individual youth across providers and out-of-home settings.

- Develop a formalized feedback process to support the oversight of placement changes at the County level and to facilitate collaborative problem-solving with providers (e.g., to address STRTP-to-STRTP "recycling"). Create regular data reports to support accountability and transparency by regularly tracking and reporting these measures, at a minimum:

  - Rates of transition to permanency
  - Youth perception of safety
  - Youth satisfaction with services
  - Youth self-reports of wellness

- Incentivize and monitor systems and service providers for using trauma-informed practices.

- Build a quality-assurance process to ensure that the 241.1 protocols are implemented appropriately across all delinquency courts and 241.1 MDT joint assessments.

- Establish formal, ongoing research partnerships between the County and university researchers to help build and oversee a standardized and consistent way to monitor progress over time and evaluate practices addressing dual system involvement and the improvement of overall wellness for children, youth, and families.

A New Vision

The Action Areas presented in this chapter highlight critical ways in which delinquency can be reduced and resiliency increased for children, youth, and their families in Los Angeles County. None of these recommendations, however, can be accomplished in isolation. They require an interconnected web of reform, initiatives, and networks across the county, which requires a reconceptualization of human services centered around community engagement and the need for social equity and justice. The *Youth Justice Reimagined* (2020) report directly illustrates this point by calling for the replacement of the probation system for youth delinquency by a community-, healing-, restorative-based response system addressing factors that contribute to youth delinquency.

This report's Action Areas reinforce the vision of this new approach and further imagine the incorporation of delinquency prevention into efforts that build resiliency from birth. We believe they also align with and are easily adapted into the DCFS Core Practice Model as well as all the reform efforts directed at the well-being of children, youth, and families currently underway in Los Angeles County. Ultimately, we believe the County is capable of rebuilding human services to represent a life-long continuum that supports a whole-child, whole-family, and whole-community model.

> *… [S]ystems change … includes a **reconceptualization of human services** centered around community engagement and the need for social equity and justice … an interconnected web of reform, initiatives, and networks across the county.*

Chapter 4: Current Opportunities to Prevent Delinquency—Promising Programs, Processes, and Practices

In this chapter, we highlight County programs, processes, and practices in place or under development that align with Action Area recommendations offered in Chapter 3. Recognizing these efforts acknowledges the importance of these themes to the overall well-being of the children, youth, and families served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. At the same time, these examples illustrate ways to leverage and expand opportunities to effectively prevent dual system involvement and reduce juvenile justice involvement when it occurs.

Reaching the full potential of these efforts, however, requires the County to understand how they are interrelated and to intentionally connect them to form a seamless, comprehensive delinquency-prevention continuum of care.

Primary and Secondary Prevention to Divert Families from the Child Welfare System

- Partnerships for Families (PFF), developed by First 5 LA and administered by DCFS, is secondary prevention program aimed at increasing families' protective capacity, improving family functioning, and augmenting ties between families and communities. A short-term home visitation service offered to children from birth to age five, PFF focuses on improving child/caregiver relationships and building upon family protective factors. PFF services are voluntary for high-risk DCFS families with inconclusive or substantiated allegations of child abuse or neglect, and for families at risk of child maltreatment. Services are also available to eligible families referred through community service providers. *Families referred to PFF are less likely to have subsequent child welfare involvement.*

- Numerous partners are working together to expand home visiting programs to all mothers across the county who want to participate:

  - The Department of Public Health (DPH) was awarded $1 million per year in California Home Visiting Innovation grants, which allow the County to continue its AAIMM (African American Infant and Maternal Mortality initiative) doula program through June 2023.

  - First 5 LA was awarded state Home Visiting Coordination funding totaling $200,000 across two fiscal years to develop and implement action plans for system-building—including initial work with a Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) consultant to develop a master consent form for sharing home visiting data at the County level—and providing a series of implementation retreats to strengthen coordination and communication.

  - Van Nuys Charities has made a $100,000 new award to the County's Center for Strategic Partnerships (CSP) to support collaboration among Los Angeles Best Babies Network

(LABBN), Peace Over Violence, the CSP, and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), in providing virtual trainings to the home visiting workforce regarding domestic-violence prevention, detection, and intervention.

- DPH, First 5 LA, the CSP, Southern California Grantmakers (SCG), and multiple philanthropic partners are also addressing the need for technology so families may access virtual home visiting services.

- Through the "Hotline to Helpline" program at its Child Protection Hotline, DCFS makes referrals to the community-based agencies in the County's Prevention and Aftercare networks (P&As), which work with families to prevent their entry into the child welfare system. Community networks like the P&As strengthen families, increase family protective factors, and improve access to needed services through a strengths-based, community-specific strategy. *Families participating with P&A agencies are less likely to have a subsequent substantiated case with DCFS.*

- To stabilize the early care and education industry in Los Angeles County, $5 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act funds—also known as the CARES Act—is being invested through a partnership between the Department of Public Health's (DPH's) Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education (OAECE), the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles, and the County's Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA).

- DCFS is developing a front-end screening tool to identify families who qualify for services under the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) at the time of their referral to the Child Protection Hotline. The FFPSA pathway will allow community partners to work with families in their homes addressing issues related to mental health, substance use, and parenting, thus eliminating the need for unnecessary child-abuse investigations and potential subsequent system intervention.

Secondary Prevention After System Involvement

Comprehensive Screening and Assessment

- The Los Angeles County Coordinated Services Action Team (CSAT) process ensures that all DCFS-involved children receive appropriate front-end assessments to determine mental health concerns, strengths, and needs, and to link them to appropriate services and supports. (See page 18 for further CSAT details.)

  The CSAT process includes multiple tracks, each designed to cater to the specific needs of the child and family. Prior to and following detention, children and families experience multiple points of contact with DCFS, the Department of Mental Health (DMH), and the courts, which ensures the completion of a variety of screening and assessment tools required by state and county-level policies and procedures. These include but are not limited to:

- Mental Health Screening Tool (MHST)
- Multidisciplinary Assessment Team (MAT) assessment
- DMH triage, assessment, and linkage tools

State-level Continuum of Care Reform efforts (CCR) and updates to California's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) regulations have introduced additional tools and requirements in recent years, such as the Level of Care assessment (LOC), the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths tool (CANS), and the Pediatric Symptom Checklist-35 (PSC-35).

- All DCFS-involved children, regardless of their track in the CSAT process, receive an MHST. When the MHST result is "pre-acute" or "pre-urgent," the case is shared with DMH's co-located Specialized Foster Care (SFC) units for triage and assistance with immediate needs. Children with acute or urgent mental health needs are often linked to intensive mental health services to begin immediate treatment. In routine cases, however, children are assigned a DMH contracted provider and give a timely and thorough MAT assessment, which eventually links the child/youth and family to appropriate services.

- Children and youth who are newly detained, Medi-Cal–eligible, placed in out-of-home care, and residing in Los Angeles County are also eligible for a MAT assessment conducted by a DMH contracted provider. To make that referral, DCFS verifies the child/youth's Medi-Cal eligibility and assembles the referral packet. Children not eligible for MAT are referred to other CSAT tracks based on the specifics of their case.

- The comprehensive MAT assessment collects information on:

  - The family story (family goals, circle of support, family strengths, family worries)
  - Assessment of the child (strengths, trauma exposure, mental health history, current symptoms, behaviors)
  - Physical health
  - Current developmental functioning (social-emotional, motor, communication, cognitive, self-help, problem-solving, organizational/regulation, interpersonal relationships, and readiness for independence)
  - Education/child care
  - Family dynamics
  - Observation of the child's interactions with the family

  The OCP, in partnership with DCFS and DMH, has contracted with the California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions (CIBHS) to evaluate the MAT process. This report should be completed by the end of summer 2021.

- Several DCFS regional offices have adopted a process that integrates the MAT with Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, incorporating the MAT summary of findings into a CFT meeting. This reduces meeting appointments, avoids duplication, and integrates findings seamlessly into the case plan that is used throughout the child and family's time with DCFS. DCFS and DMH plan to expand the MAT/CFT combination to other DCFS offices over time.

- Through its Essential History program, Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Los Angeles volunteers complete a full review of a youth's dependency case file to produce a comprehensive summary of all key events that have occurred during the youth's time in the system. The final Essential History report focuses on two specific areas:

  - Adverse Childhood Experiences (what initially brought the child into the system)
  - Well-being history, which covers permanency/placement changes, school changes, tracking of mental health diagnoses/psychotropic medications, etc.

  The ultimate goal of the program is to provide attorneys, social workers, and judges with a clearer look at a youth's entire history within the system and promote trauma-informed decisions going forward.

Keep Families Together

- DCFS policy directs children's social workers to immediately, but no later than 30 days from the date of removal, identify and locate all of the child's adult relatives and non-related extended family members (NREFMs), then contact all known and appropriate relatives and NREFMs who are willing and able to care for the child. Relatives are the preferred placement resource and must be considered first for all children needing out-of-home care services. The process of locating relatives as possible placement resources does not cease until a permanent plan is made for the child.

- An Up-Front Family Finding pilot project has been active since 2016 and is now established in 10 DCFS offices: Belvedere, West Los Angeles, West San Fernando Valley, Santa Fe Springs, Glendora, Vermont Corridor, Santa Clarita, Wateridge, Hawthorne, and Lakewood. A plan is currently being considered to expand this program to the remaining DCFS offices. *Between January and December 2020, 83% of over 4,250 children detained through pilot offices were placed with kin following their removal from parental homes.* A longitudinal study examining the pilot's impact on placement stability, family reunification, and permanency by Child Trends is expected in 2021.

Use Out-of-Home Care Only When Necessary and Appropriate

- DCFS policy also directs children's social workers to prioritize the use of family-like settings when out-of-home care is required. When placement in an STRTP is necessary, the case plan must reflect the anticipated duration of treatment and the transition plan for and to a less restrictive environment.

- Placements in an STRTP must be authorized by a mental health clinician through the Interagency Placement Committee (IPC) and CFT processes. The IPC—a multi-agency, multidisciplinary team supporting children/youth with significant behavioral, emotional, and medical needs through a screening process and subsequent treatment/placement recommendations—submits its needs and services plan within 10 days of placement, explicitly stating the conditions for "step-down" (a reduction of the child's level of care); this

plan is reviewed on a monthly basis. The CFT process is an integral part of family engagement and service planning and is intended to play a key part in placement decisions.

- The OCP Temporary Shelter Care Facilities (TSCF) pilot—previously known as Transitional Shelter Care (TSC)—was launched in 2016 to increase placement success and stability for some of the most vulnerable children and youth in foster care. Through it, children's social workers carrying reduced caseloads of youth at highest risk for placement disruption team with a case coordinator (a member of DCFS' Accelerated Placement Team), a supervising social worker, and mental health professionals. They prepare youth and caregivers for placements in contracted Temporary Shelter Care Facilities, and deliver the highest standard of practice in a model that supports flexibility, access to resources, and a powerful, relationship-centered approach. Rapid responsiveness to both youth and caregivers at times of crisis or potential disruption maintains the stability of the placement and furthers youth goals. The reduced caseload allows for intensive contact with youth from the point of engagement through "graduation" from the pilot. *Preliminary data demonstrates a dramatic reduction in number of placements and increase in stability.*

- Family Preservation (FP) services aim to protect children/youth while they remain in or safely transition back to their homes. Through FP, families involved with DCFS and with juvenile probation receive intensive, short-term services focused on improving family functioning to ensure the safety and well-being of their children. *Families referred to community-based FP are less likely to have a subsequent substantiated abuse/neglect report, case opening, or an out-of-home placement following their successful completion of services.*

- In addition to preventing entry into the child welfare system (see page 18), Prevention and Aftercare networks (P&As) support families leaving DCFS care. *Families referred to community-based P&A agencies were less likely to have a subsequent substantiated report, case opening, or out-of-home placement following their successful completion of services.*

Address Educational Needs and Maintain Stability in Educational Plans

- California Welfare and Institutions (WIC) Code §366 (a)(1)(c) requires a child's Educational Rights Holder (ERH) to be identified at each juvenile court hearing. (See Action Area #7 on page 25 for a further discussion of ERHs.) Once the initial JV-535–Order Designating Educational Rights Holder is issued, it remains in effect until changes are needed.

- The Children's Law Center of Los Angeles (CLC) currently recruits and trains volunteers to be ERHs for foster children and youth, and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) volunteers are also trained to provide holistic advocacy serving as ERHs.

- The Judicial Council created bench cards for judges around education and mental health issues starting in 2013, through the Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court initiative.

- The Health and Education Passport (HEP) is a document generated via DCFS' electronic case-management system, CWS/CMS, that summarizes a child's immunizations and health, dental, mental health, and educational history (including the designated ERH and school of

origin). The HEP meets California's requirements for providing health and education information and must be given to out-of-home caregivers and attached to all court reports; it must be updated whenever new health or education information is entered into CWS/CMS.

- DCFS and Probation currently contract with a firm to supply experts known as Education Specialists to assist children's social workers, deputy probation officers, parents, caregivers, youth, ERHs, and authorized DCFS staff in navigating the educational systems within Los Angeles County. Education Specialists also assist school staff with navigating DCFS, the child welfare system, and the juvenile justice system.

  These services ensure that the educational needs and rights of youth under the supervision of DCFS or Probation—either voluntarily or with court jurisdiction—are addressed, and that they have access to and receive academic assistance, educational resources, programs, services, and benefits. Once the current Education Specialist contract ends, however, the Probation Department has indicated that it will drop this service.

- CLC oversees a grant from the In-N-Out Burger Foundation to fund independent educational assessments for youth most in need, with doctors coordinating the in-depth assessment process with CLC's CARE (Crossover Advocacy Resource Effort) unit. *Results show that IEPs generated from these assessments were more substantive and comprehensive than traditional IEPs.*

- LACOE and the 80 school districts in Los Angeles County each have employees designated as Foster Youth Liaisons or AB 490 Liaisons.

  LACOE's Foster Youth Liaisons are housed in its Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) and are called FYSCP Counselors. They advocate for and provide support services in line with students' best interests to youth suffering traumatic effects from displacement from family/schools and multiple placements in foster care. This includes identifying a stable school environment for these youth and ensuring immediate enrollment, transfer of records, proper course placement, and academic assistance and services, including eligibility for graduation modifications (AB 216). The goal of FYSCP is to build capacity and increase multi-sector collaboration amongst child welfare, probation, education, and community agencies to improve educational outcomes for foster youth.

  The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) also buoys foster youth through its Student Support Programs and specialized student-population counselors, who assist underserved groups including foster youth, students experiencing homelessness, and students involved in the juvenile justice system, providing them with local, integrated, and specialized support services.

- The DCFS Education Section, in collaboration with local school districts, coordinates and implements triage meetings to help districts make informed educational placement decisions for youth in STRTPs. Currently, four STRTPs in the Pasadena Unified School District catchment area participate in this process—Bourne Inc., Five Acres, Hathaway-Sycamores, and Hillsides—as does one STRTP in LAUSD's catchment area (Vista del Mar). The process is

triggered when the Education Section receives advance notice of a youth qualifying for entrance into a STRTP. With the assistance of LACOE, section staff gather past educational and other pertinent records to develop a comprehensive history of the youth. The youth's strengths and challenges are then presented in a regularly scheduled triage meeting—participants include the case-carrying children's social worker, the child's ERH and Education Specialist, the STRTP's education liaison, and various members of the school district's team—that facilitates the district's making an informed school-placement decision. The DCFS Education Section is in the process of extending this process countywide.

- California Education Code requires a "best interest determination" (BID) process to determine whether children/youth remain in their schools of origin or switch schools when they are removed from their homes or their placements change. (See Action Area #6 on page 23 for further details on this process.) Cost-sharing arrangements for transportation—if the BID so indicates—are mandated by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and are discussed in the next bullet.

  The BID process is augmented by California Rules of Court 5.650 and 5.651, which require that school stability be considered when the system contemplates any placement change. Notice must be provided to the court, the child/youth's attorney, and the ERH within one day of a decision to change a child/youth's placement—*before* any switch of school location. Current law for students with IEPs requires additional notice to be provided to the Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) of both the school of origin and the new school of residence at least 10 days prior to the placement change [CA Rule of Ct. S.651(e)(1)(B)].

  The BID meeting must include the ERH, the school district's Foster Youth Liaison, and the child/youth. Caregiver, social workers, and anyone else with relevant information—a special education representative and/or mental health support, for instance—may also attend in an advisory capacity. The BID discussion considers the number of previous school placements the child/youth has experienced, their academic performance and social adjustment, and access to support services at their current and potential schools. Student preference, student safety/school climate, length of attendance/strong ties, academics, special needs, timing of transfer, commute time, length of anticipated stay, and so on are also reviewed.

- Los Angeles County has developed protocols for transporting foster youth to their schools of origin when they are removed from their homes or their placements change, as required by ESSA if their BIDs so recommend. To date, 38 school districts serving almost 75% of the county's foster youth have signed the ESSA long-term school-transportation Memorandum of Understanding, and thousands of children/youth have taken advantage of those arrangements. The County continues to pursue school-of-origin transportation cost-sharing agreements with the remaining school districts, either using the MOU template or separately.

- OCP is working with John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) and relevant County departments to facilitate enhanced support for post-secondary educational attainment for youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and to implement SB 12 provisions.

Address Mental Health and Substance Abuse Needs

- DPH's Substance Abuse Prevention and Control unit (DPH–SAPC), DMH, and DCFS partnered to outstation substance-abuse counselors in DCFS regional offices to provide on-site support and connections to further substance-abuse services for those parents or youth who need them. A scaled-down version of the SUD–TIPS (Substance Use Disorder–Trauma-Informed Parent Support) program is likewise in place, with counselors stationed at Client Engagement and Navigation Services (CENS) area offices and receiving referrals directly from the DCFS offices aligned with them.

- Four delinquency courts (Eastlake, Sylmar, Inglewood, and Lancaster) currently operate Drug Courts for youth in the juvenile justice system, providing access to substance-abuse services to prevent future delinquency. These four courts offer a starting point for the development of Drug Courts throughout the county.

- Four dependency courts currently operate Family Drug Treatment Courts in conjunction with the Belvedere, Torrance, Vermont Corridor, and Lancaster DCFS offices. The primary focus is on providing treatment for parental substance abuse, but substance abuse prevention for youth is also integrated into programming. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has voted to create more comprehensive Family Treatment Courts countywide, but that project is presently on hold.

- With support from DCFS, Probation, DMH, DPH, the Juvenile Court, Children's Law Center, Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers, Inc., and others, the OCP last year submitted an application to participate as the Los Angeles County lead for a new statewide effort to establish regional learning collaborative: "Effective Child Welfare and Justice Systems for Families Impacted by Opioid and Stimulant Use." This technical-assistance project is designed to help county teams incorporate evidence-based practices for addiction treatment to improve outcomes in child welfare and juvenile justice systems for those affected by opioid and stimulant use. Los Angeles was selected as one of the 13 participating counties for this project, which will last from January 2021 to August 2022; team meetings began in February 2021.

- As a part of the STRTP program model, youth and their families engage in after-care services following a youth's transition from the STRTP back into the community. Services include case management and mental health services with a designated clinician and STRTP team.

- The OCP convenes a Psychotropic Medication Workgroup monthly to oversee the implementation of all protocols related to the use of psychotropic medications for youth in out-of-home care in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Enhance Family Connections and Wellness

- The OCP—through its subsidiary body the Education Coordinating Council, or ECC—and the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), DMH, and the Arts for Healing and Justice Network (AHJN, formerly the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network) collaborated to implement a healing-informed arts education pilot for middle and high schools with high

numbers of foster and probation youth. The program will help youth build protective factors through the arts and will develop local networks of mental-health clinicians, artists, teachers, and other stakeholders within schools and their surrounding communities. Because of COVID-19 closures, programming has pivoted to virtual platforms.

DAC secured additional funding to provide virtual workshops to educators in its partner districts through December 2020; they were facilitated by AHJN members, the Rhythm Arts Alliance, and artworxLA. DAC, AHJN, DMH, and the OCP are working to integrate culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining themes into the training, including instruction:

- That is designed to accept and affirm the backgrounds of students of color (culturally relevant)
- That will connect to students' cultural knowledge and prior experiences (culturally responsive)
- That will sustain cultural ways of being in communities of color while supporting students to critique dominant power structures in society (culturally sustaining)

- The Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) implemented a group in the Antelope Valley targeting foster youth with an interest in social services to develop their skills/knowledge in that area. Youth who complete the group's requirements will be placed in a training program leading to a permanent career in the human services field, ideally with a County department.

- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Information Office (CIO), DCFS, and the OCP jointly agreed to include the Centralized Transition-Age Youth (TAY) Hub's in the procurement of a new information and referral service to be integrated with an enhanced Los Angeles County Community Information Exchange (LACCIE). This new approach leverages and combines existing CIO platforms/resources with new information and referral services to create a new countywide Information, Referral, and Connection (IR&C) system. A Request for Proposals (RFP) for establishing the IR&C system in Los Angeles County was released in February 2021.

Tertiary Prevention (Intervention) after Dual System Contact

Reduce Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System

- The Association of Community Human Service Agencies (ACHSA) and its member agencies developed community pass guidelines—agreements between youth, their Child and Family Team, and the residential provider to allow the youth to independently spend time in the community. Passes are individualized based on the youth's strengths, level of independence, needs, and safety/risk while in the community. ACHSA's guidelines outline the process to develop and approve community passes, factors for determining their appropriateness and parameters, and how to plan for the youth's safety and success within the community. As a next step, DCFS and Probation should incorporate these community pass guidelines in their practices for children's social workers and deputy probation officers.

- ACHSA has also worked with STRTPs and law enforcement agencies to implement electronic reporting protocols for low-risk youth who leave placement without permission; these are currently being used by the Los Angeles Police Department's West Bureau and the Pasadena Police Department. These protocols allow STRTPs and law enforcement to meet federal and state licensing reporting requirements while at the same time reducing to the greatest extent possible in-person law enforcement contacts with youth and the related trauma. Once reports are submitted, law enforcement responds in person only to reports in which youth are exposed to a high risk of danger (e.g., commercial sexual exploitation).

- Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) are now required by their County contracts to train staff on reducing law enforcement contacts. Many want similar trainings for their resource families and are seeking recommended curricula and guidelines that could be made available across the county.

- Pursuant to California's Health and Safety Code 1538.75, County departments are required to work collaboratively with local law enforcement and STRTP providers to develop best practices and guidelines for when law enforcement should be called and, when law enforcement responds, how to respond in a trauma-informed manner (e.g., unarmed and using de-escalation techniques).

- The OCP's Dual-Status Workgroup developed diversion guidelines for DCFS-involved youth that were adopted by the County Office of Diversion and Reentry's Youth Diversion and Development unit (YDD) for use in its diversion pilot program. See "Diversion Guidelines for DCFS-Involved Youth" on page 11 for further details.

- Los Angeles County's Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) integrated leadership team released the *CSE Research to Action Brief: Translating Research to Policy and Practice to Support Youth Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE)*[14] last year. This report outlines the steps necessary to better prepare out-of-home placement staff to provide trauma-informed care to youth affected by commercial sexual exploitation; the recommen-

[14] Dierkhising, C.B. & Ackerman-Brimberg, M. (2020)

dations improve out-of-home care for *all* children/youth, particularly those at risk for entering the juvenile justice system.

- Current 241.1 MDT assessments bring social workers, probation officers, DMH clinicians, and DCFS and Probation Education Specialists together to review youth records and produce a comprehensive report with case-plan recommendations to the court. For further background, see Chapter 1 starting on page 4, and Action Area #12 on page 35.

  MDT meetings facilitate information-sharing and a comprehensive understanding of the youth and his/her situation, and allow clinicians to identify and access needed services. If youth have not been linked to mental health services, for example, the 241.1 MDT refers them to a CSAT coordinator who then assists with that linkage.

  Up until recently, the Juvenile Court supported a 241.1 pilot court in which a single judge oversaw and coordinated supervision and case plans for a limited number of dual status youth across DCFS and Probation. As mentioned earlier, an updated 241.1 protocol has been developed by a subcommittee of the OCP's Dual-Status Workgroup and is currently in the hands of the Juvenile Court.

- Several programs are currently run by the Juvenile Court and other agencies to address the special needs of youth and support their success. Although not necessarily aligned with dual system involvement, these programs often serve youth with current or prior contact with DCFS. They include:

  - The Children's Law Center's Crossover Advocacy and Resource Effort (CARE) program
  - Juvenile Mental Health Court
  - Juvenile Drug Court
  - CSEC units in DCFS and Probation
  - The DREAM Court in dependency (Dedication to Restoration through Empowerment, Advocacy, and Mentoring)
  - The STAR Court in delinquency (Succeeding Through Achievement and Resilience)

- The *Youth Justice Reimagined* report (2020) offers a new conceptualization for responding to problem behaviors and delinquency, replacing a traditional probation approach with a community-based, healing- and restorative-justice model implemented under a Department of Youth Development. The Board of Supervisors recently voted to begin moving this report's recommendations forward.

Building System Capacity to Improve Information-Sharing, Create Feedback Loops on Impact, and Hold Systems Accountable

Improve Information-Sharing

- The OCP worked with DCFS, the CIO, and County Counsel to launch a web-based portal to facilitate the electronic sharing of information relevant to investigations of child abuse or neglect across six County departments and DCFS, based on an MOU that the OCP finalized with participating departments, County Counsel, and the CEO. The Emergency Response Investigation Service (ERIS) helps streamline DCFS investigations and the placement of children with relatives when a removal is necessary, and will ultimately include data from other departments as well as user suggestions to improve system functioning.

- The OCP, County Counsel, and several state agencies worked with both California's Department of Justice and its Health and Human Services Agency to elucidate a part of the law regarding data matches. A joint letter by both agencies was released in September 2020 clarifying that California state law allows for direct system-to-system data matches across agencies so that jurisdictions can identify their "common clients" across departments. This clarification has significant implications for how California counties and the state work together to improve the coordination of care for clients served by multiple departments.

- The OCP is working with the Los Angeles Network for Enhanced Services (LANES, a health information exchange system), DPH, County Counsel, DCFS, and the CEO to provide child welfare teams with health information from LANES to support health care coordination and effective treatment for DCFS youth. Using LANES, child welfare public health nurses (PHNs) are able to view, download, and print timely, comprehensive health records for their clients and update children's social workers and caregivers, as appropriate, about client needs. The LANES pilot was launched in October 2020 in three DCFS regional offices (Carson, Wateridge, and Pasadena) and one Medical Hub (MLK).

- The Education Coordinating Council (ECC) has made significant progress toward greater access to accurate and consistent education data for foster youth. Between July and August 2020, LACOE trained staff at 10 school districts on its electronic Education Passport System (EPS). During this time period, district staff made 4,495 document searches and 1,152 student searches in EPS. To date, 73 districts have been trained on EPS by LACOE.

Assess Impact with Data Feedback Loops and Hold Agencies Accountable

- Countywide Prevention Metrics (CPM) are a standardized set of metrics to track the County's progress in achieving the *Paving the Road to Safety for Our Children*'s goals for every child to be healthy, to be growing and thriving in a strong family, and to be supported by a safe and nurturing community. CPM was developed by the OCP and the CIO in partnership with County departments, First 5 LA, the University of Southern California's Children's Data Network, and other key stakeholders. A preliminary report was recently released publishing six dashboards. The full report, to be released in late 2021, will publish 23 dashboards

of impact and actionable indicators spanning the dimensions of health, development and well-being, and safety across the ecological levels of strong children, strong families, and strong communities.

- State oversight bodies and initiatives for STRTPs monitor the use of psychotropic medication and the number of law-enforcement contacts on an annual basis.

Conclusion

The majority of young people adjudicated in the Los Angeles County juvenile justice system have had contact with the child welfare system. Research unequivocally shows that this relationship is a culmination of maltreatment experiences and child welfare system experiences, which can create and exacerbate adversity over developmental stages. These findings further demonstrate the need to integrate maltreatment and delinquency-prevention efforts across a continuum, starting at birth in the community and expanding into schools and throughout the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

This report challenges the leaders and key stakeholders in Los Angeles County to recognize dual system involvement as a sizeable, vulnerable population resulting from:

- A historical absence of community-based prevention networks
- An absence of comprehensive case planning based on the strengths of children, youth, and their families
- Gaps and limitations in the service continuum
- Decision-making that contributes to instability and adversity
- Inadequate educational and social supports
- Fragmented decision-making within and across systems
- Limited efforts to integrate systems
- A general perception that young people in the child welfare system are "riskier" than young people without child welfare involvement

The Action Areas and recommendations listed in Chapter 3 highlight specific and detailed ways for Los Angeles County to address these issues and significantly improve the well-being of young people, their families, and their communities. The current practices, programs, and policies described in that chapter demonstrate how those areas can be targeted by building on work already underway across systems and within reform initiatives.

More specifically, we believe delinquency prevention is tied to virtually every current County initiative, including but not limited to:

- The OCP's *Paving the Road to Safety for Our Children: A Prevention Plan for Los Angeles County*
- DCFS's *Invest LA* initiative
- The Thriving Families, Safer Children and Family First grant
- The County's recommendations for evidence-based practices in conjunction with the federal Family First Prevention Services Act
- The Alternatives to Incarceration initiative
- The *Youth Justice Reimagined* (2020) report calling for the replacement of the probation system for youth delinquency by a community-, healing-, restorative-based response system addressing factors that contribute to youth delinquency

- The November 2020 Board of Supervisors motion, Reimagining Safety Health and Human Services for the County's Children and Families, and its approved amendment, which together are designed to bring County departments together for prevention planning and a review of local and national best practices, along with the improved integration of persons with lived experience in the planning process

Los Angeles County is currently positioned to reframe how funding and services can best help young people, their families, and their communities thrive in a socially just and equitable way. This requires rethinking "business as usual."

This report is a call to action on behalf of the young people who experience the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and the consequences they bear because of their involvement. The opportunity to do better has presented itself, and we hope this report helps Los Angeles County embrace and live up to its fullest potential.

List of Abbreviations

AB	Assembly Bill
ACHSA	Association of Community Human Service Agencies
AHJN	Arts for Healing and Justice Network
BID	best-interest determination
CANS	Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths
CARE	Crossover Advocacy Resource Effort *(an initiative of Children's Law Center)*
CARES Act	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act *(federal)*
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocates
CBO	community-based organization
CCR	Continuity of Care Reform
CEC	commercially exploited children
CENS	Client Engagement and Navigation Services
CEO	Chief Executive Office
CFT	Child and Family Team meeting
CTF	Community Treatment Facility
CIBHS	California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions
CIO	Chief Information Office
CLC	Children's Law Center
CPM	Countywide Prevention Metrics
CSAT	Coordinated Services Action Team
CSE	commercial sexual exploitation
CSEC	commercially sexually exploited children
CSP	Center for Strategic Partnerships
CWS/CMS	Child Welfare Services/Case Management System
DAC	Department of Arts and Culture
DCBA	Department of Consumer and Business Affairs
DCFS	Department of Children and Family Services
DMH	Department of Mental Health
DPH	Department of Public Health
DPH–SAPC	Department of Public Health Substance Abuse Prevention and Control unit
DPO	deputy probation officer
DPP	Delinquency Prevention Project
DPSS	Department of Public Social Services
ECC	Education Coordinating Council
EPS	Education Passport System *(a project of the Los Angeles County Office of Education)*
EPSDT	Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment
ERH	Educational Rights Holder
ERIS	Emergency Response Investigation Service
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
FFA	foster family agency
FFPSA	Family First Prevention Services Act
FP	family preservation
HEP	Health and Education Passport

IEP	Individual Education Plan
IPC	Interagency Placement Committee
IR&C	Information, Referral, and Connection system
JBAY	John Burton Advocates for Youth
LABBN	Los Angeles Best Babies Network
LACCIE	Los Angeles County Community Information Exchange
LACOE	Los Angeles County Office of Education
LANES	Los Angeles Network for Enhanced Services
LAUSD	Los Angeles Unified School District
LGBTQ+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and other sexual identities
LOC	Level of Care assessment
MAT	multidisciplinary assessment team
MDT	multidisciplinary assessment team
MHST	Mental Health Screening Tool
MLK	Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCCD	National Center for Crime and Delinquency *(now* Evident Change*)*
NREFM	non-related extended family member
OAECE	Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education *(a unit of the Department of Public Health)*
OCP	Office of Child Protection
OJJDP	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention *(federal)*
P&A	Prevention & Aftercare
PFF	Partnerships for Families *(a First 5 LA initiative)*
PHN	public health nurse
PMRT	Psychiatric Mobile Response Team
PSC-35	Pediatric Symptom Checklist-35
RFP	Request for Proposal
SAPC	Substance Abuse Prevention and Control *(a unit of the Department of Public Health)*
SB	Senate Bill
SCG	Southern California Grantmakers
SELPA	Special Education Local Plan Area
SFC	Specialized Foster Care
START	Start Taking Action Responsibly Today
STRTP	Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program
SUD–TIPS	Substance Use Disorder–Trauma-Informed Parent Support
TAY	transition-age youth
TSC	Transitional Shelter Care
TSCF	Temporary Shelter Care Facilities
UCLA	University of California Los Angeles
WDACS	[Department of] Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services
WIC	Welfare and Institutions Code
YDD	Youth Diversion and Development

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Appendix

The Intersection of Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice: Key Findings from the Los Angeles Dual System Youth Study

Children's Data Network

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THE INTERSECTION OF CHILD WELFARE & JUVENILE JUSTICE:

Key Findings from the Los Angeles Dual System Youth Study

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Permission for Children's Data Network to use LA County Probation records was obtained through a research court order from the LA Superior Court Juvenile Division, with approval by leadership at the Probation Department. The use of child welfare records from the California Department of Social Services fell within existing state data use agreements and was endorsed by leadership at the LA Department of Children and Family Services. The provision of funding and the permission to use data from these entities does not indicate an endorsement of the content or the conclusions contained within the report. The findings and conclusions contained within this report are those of the authors.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research convincingly demonstrates that many youth cross between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and there is a need for reliable point estimates to better address "dual system" contact. Using data from the Los Angeles (LA) Probation Department, all youth born in/after 1998 with a first juvenile justice petition between 2014 and 2016 were matched to statewide child welfare records. 6,877 youth were identified with a petition and 64.1% of those youth had touched both systems (i.e., the youth matched to a child welfare record with an investigation, case, or out-of-home placement).

The majority of youth with a petition were male (74.1%) and Hispanic (59.7%). The patterns of dual system involvement varied across gender and race/ethnicity. Overall, female youth in all racial/ethnic groups were more likely than their male counterparts to have dual system involvement, and Black youth were more likely to have dual system involvement than other racial/ethnic groups. The risk for dual system contact was even greater when gender and race/ethnicity were examined together: 80% of Black females were identified as having dual system involvement compared to 55% of White males.

Dual system involvement varied by type and timing and was defined by four pathways based on which system the youth interacted with first and whether the youth had contact with both systems at the same time. The majority of these youth did not touch both systems at the same time, and nearly all had contact with the child welfare system before juvenile justice. Comparison of pathways of dual system involvement also revealed differences in duration and intensity of child welfare involvement (e.g., low and limited, long and extensive) and differences in juvenile justice system experiences (e.g., offense type, recidivism). Youth with the most extensive child welfare involvement had the greatest risk of juvenile justice detention and of subsequent recidivism.

The finding that almost two-thirds of youth in the LA County juvenile justice system were previously involved with child welfare suggests an opportunity for prevention, as well as a need for recalibration and realignment. The results underscore the importance of a prevention-oriented approach to supporting children, youth, and families across the board, both to prevent and reduce contact with child welfare and to reduce delinquency and dual system involvement. Prevention of dual system contact should be anchored within a full array of preventive supports and services, starting with community-based supports for families (primary prevention), services to mitigate and address risk (secondary prevention), and continuing services for families during and after their involvement with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (tertiary prevention). The study underscores the importance of a comprehensive approach to support children, youth, and families in their communities and public-private sector partnerships to fund and administer needed resources, supports, opportunities, and services.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

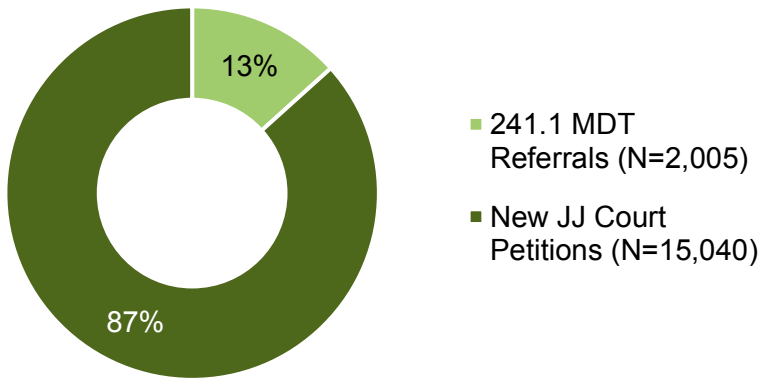
Youth with an open child welfare case who enter the juvenile justice system are typically described as "dual status". In LA County, these youth are identified through the County's Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 241.1 Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Protocol. Beginning in 2012, all 241.1 referrals were entered into a single database.

The WIC 241.1 Protocol requires the delinquency court to refer all youth with an open child welfare case to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) WIC 241.1 Unit. The DCFS 241.1 Unit then convenes a multidisciplinary team comprised of representatives from the DCFS 241.1 Unit, the Probation Dual Supervision Unit, Juvenile Court Mental Health Services, and an education specialist to complete a joint assessment for the delinquency court.

241.1 MDT referral numbers between 2016 and 2018 were used to estimate the prevalence of dual status youth relative to all delinquency petitions. As shown in Figure 1, only 13% of all delinquency petitions in LA County involved youth with child welfare involvement. Such a low number can easily lead policymakers and agencies to believe that dual status youth represent a small population of the juvenile justice system; however, recent studies conducted in LA County and other jurisdictions cast doubt on this conclusion.

FIGURE 1

Percentage of Dual Status Youth Using 241.1 MDT Referrals and Number of First Petitions in LA County Between 2016-2018



The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Dual System Youth Design Study (Dual System Youth Design Study)

Child welfare and juvenile justice records were linked to measure the incidence of dual system contact for youth petitioned to the delinquency court for the first time in Cook County, IL, Cuyahoga County, OH, and New York City, NY. Results for these sites showed between **45% and 70% of petitioned youth also touched child welfare.**

Herz, D.C., Dierkhising, C.B., Raithel, J., Schretzman, M., Guiltinan, S., Goerge, R.M., Cho, Y. Coulton, C., & Abbott, S. (2019). Dual System Youth and their Pathways: A Comparison of Incidence, Characteristics and System Experiences Using Linked Administrative Data. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence,* 48(12), 2432-2450.

The Los Angeles County Probation Outcomes Study, Part II

This study matched statewide child welfare data to youth exiting from Probation placements and found **83% of youth had touched the child welfare system.**

Herz, D.C. & Chan, K. (2017). The Los Angeles County Juvenile Probation Outcomes Study, Part II: Assessing the Experiences of Probation-Involved Youth Exiting from Out-of-Home Placements across Two Cohorts. *Cal State LA*.

McCroskey, J.M., Herz, D.C., & Putnam-Hornstein, E. (2017). Crossover Youth: Los Angeles County Probation Youth with Previous Referrals to Child Protective Services. *Children's Data Network*.

These studies raise important questions about how dual system youth are defined and how the prevalence of dual system contact is measured. To explore this issue in LA County, the current study replicates the methodology used in the Dual System Youth Design Study to examine the prevalence of dual system youth overall and their pathways.

DEFINING DUAL SYSTEM YOUTH AND PATHWAYS

Researchers and practitioners describe youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems using a number of terms (e.g., crossover youth, dually-involved youth, dual status youth, and so on) which often leads to confusing estimates of dual system involvement. To address this issue, the Dual System Youth Design Study proposed a framework to consistently define youth who touch both systems. Under this framework, youth who touch both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems are considered "dual system youth", and dual system pathways delineate the timing and type of system contact. The Dual System Youth Design Study framework originally identified six pathways; however, findings supported

consolidating groups into four pathways (see Table 1): Youth who touch the child welfare and the juvenile justice system non-concurrently (Dual Contact Child Welfare First, or DCCW); youth involved in child welfare who subsequently touch the juvenile justice system with or without a historical child welfare case (Dually-Involved Child Welfare First, or DICW); youth involved in the juvenile justice system with a historical child welfare case who then touch child welfare (Dually-Involved Juvenile Justice First + a Historical Child Welfare Case, or DIJJH); and youth involved in the juvenile justice system who then touch child welfare with no prior child welfare contact, non-concurrent and concurrent contact combined (Dual System Juvenile Justice First, or DSJJ).

TABLE 1

Definitions of Dual System Pathways

Dual System Pathways	Brief Description	time
Dual Contact Child Welfare First (DCCW)	Touch both systems non-concurrently & first contact is with child welfare	DCCW
Dually-Involved Child Welfare First (DICW)	Touch both systems concurrently & first contact is with child welfare (may also have a historical child welfare case)	DICW DICW
Dually-Involved Juvenile Justice First + a Historical Child Welfare Case (DIJJH)	Touch both systems concurrently and this contact is with the juvenile justice system first; however, there is historical contact with child welfare	DIJJH
Dual System Juvenile Justice First (DSJJ)	For both non-concurrent and concurrent contact, touch juvenile justice system before child welfare	DSJJ DSJJ

Child Welfare Involvement

Juvenile Justice Involvement

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Probation records were probabilistically linked to state child welfare data from 1998 through 2017. Using Probation data, all youth with a first juvenile justice petition between 2014 and 2016 and who were born in/after 1998 were identified and linked to records in the Child Welfare Services-Case Management System (CWS/CMS). All first petition cohort youth who received at least one child welfare investigation were defined as "dual system youth" and youth with no child welfare investigations were classified as "juvenile justice only youth".

KEY FINDINGS

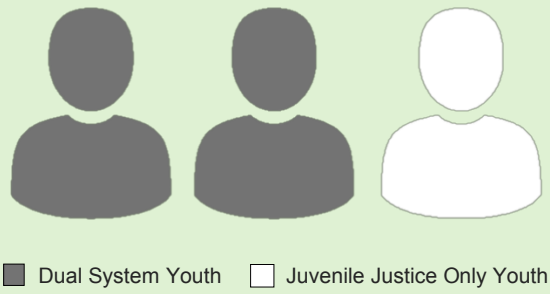
The Prevalence of Dual System Contact

A total of 6,877 youth had their first juvenile justice petition between 2014 and 2016 and were born in/after 1998. Of this cohort, 4,410 (64.1%) were identified as "dual system youth" and the remaining 2,467 (35.9%) were considered "juvenile justice only youth" (see Figure 2).

Two-thirds of youth were identified as dual system.

FIGURE 2

Dual System Youth Prevalence for the First Juvenile Justice Petition Cohort



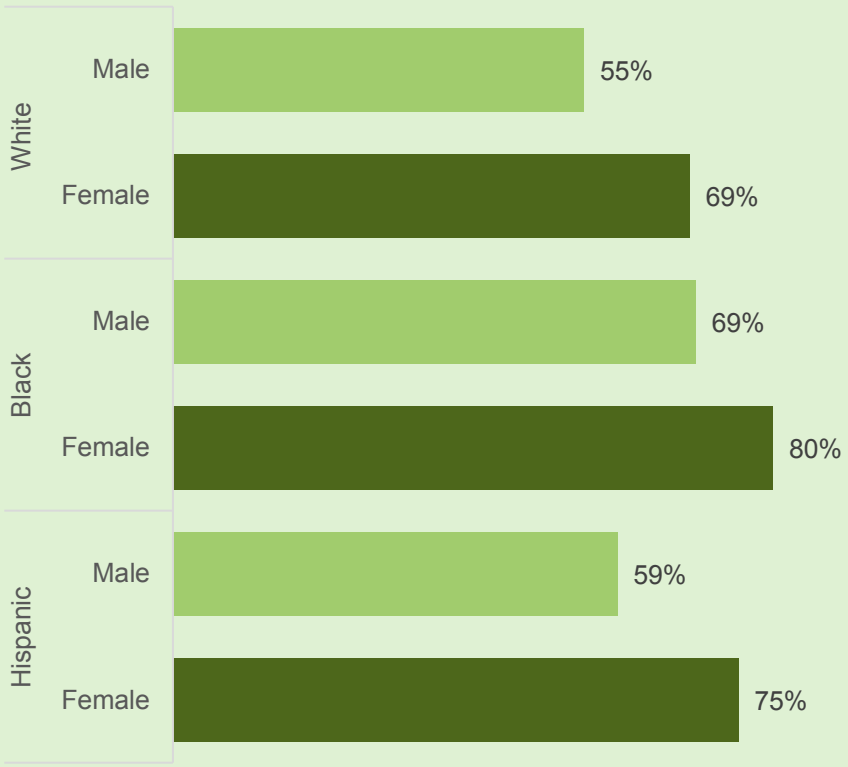
Dual System Youth: Gender and Race/Ethnicity

The majority of youth in the study were male (74.1%) and Hispanic (59.7%); yet, dual system involvement varied across gender and race/ethnicity. Figure 3 explores the risk of dual system contact for all youth in the first juvenile justice petition cohort across gender and race/ethnicity. Overall, females in all race/ethnicity groups were more likely than their male counterparts to be dual system youth, and Black youth were more likely to be dual system youth than those of any other race/ethnicity. The risk for dual system contact was even greater when gender and ethnicity were examined together, as seen in Figure 3.

Four-fifths of Black females were dual system compared to just over half of White males.

FIGURE 3

Percentage of Dual System Youth by Gender and Race/Ethnicity



As displayed in Figures 4 and 5, dual system youth were more likely to be female (26% compared to 15%) and more likely to be Black (31% compared to 22%). When the gender and race/ethnicity were both examined, Black females (35%) and Black males (30%) were more likely to be dual system than juvenile justice only (28% and 20%, respectively).

Dual system youth are more likely to be female and Black compared with juvenile justice only youth.

FIGURE 4
Comparison by Gender

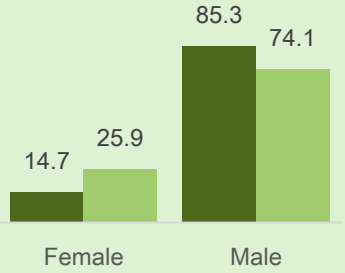
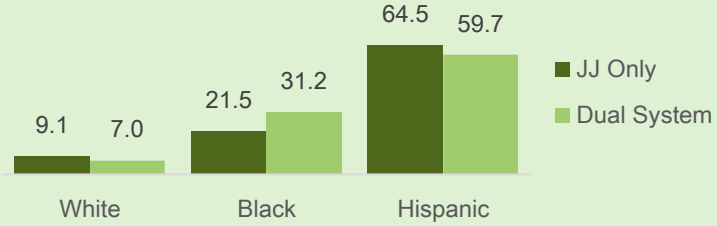


FIGURE 5
Comparison by Race/Ethnicity

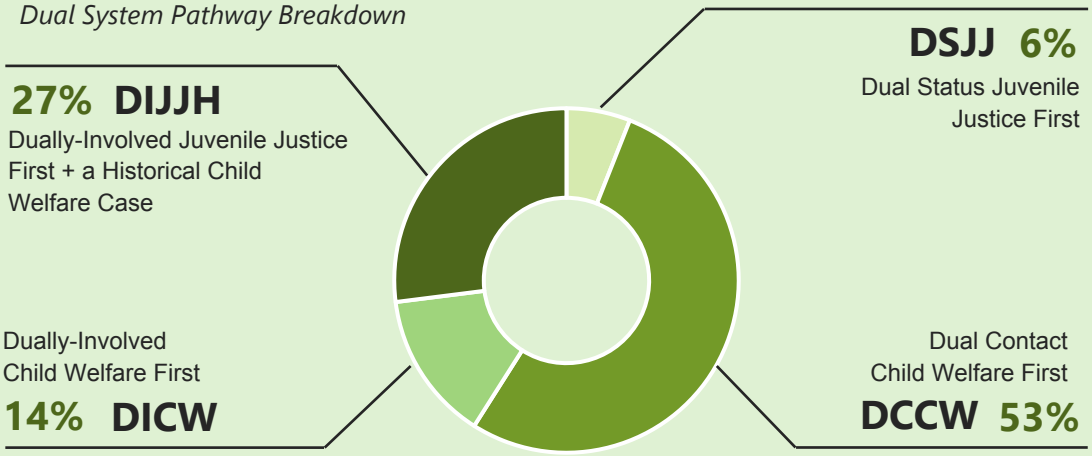


Dual System Pathways

Dual system youth in LA County touch the child welfare and juvenile justice systems differently. As shown in Figure 6, 53% of dual system youth (DCCW) touched both systems non-concurrently, and 41% of youth touched both systems at the same time (DICW and DIJJH youth combined). Among dual system youth, 94% touched the child welfare system before the juvenile justice system, with only 6% interacting with the juvenile justice system without any previous child welfare contact. Youth in the dual system—juvenile justice first pathway group were excluded from the current study due to their small number and uniqueness related to system involvement.

The majority of dual system youth touched both systems at different times (53%). Nearly all dual system youth interacted with the child welfare system before entering the juvenile justice system (94%).

FIGURE 6
Dual System Pathway Breakdown



Dual System Pathways: Gender and Race/Ethnicity Breakdowns

Race/ethnicity and gender varied significantly across pathways. Just under half (43%) of DICW youth and 33% of DIJJH youth were female compared to only 18% of DCCW (see Table 3). With regard to race, Black youth were more likely to fall into the DICW pathway (40%) while Hispanic youth were more likely to fall into the DCCW and DIJJH pathways. The representation of White males and females were low and similar across all pathways.

DCCW youth (those with non-concurrent contact) were more likely to be male and Hispanic, and DICW youth (those with concurrent contact) were more likely to be female and Black.

TABLE 3

Race/Ethnicity and Gender Characteristics Across Dual System Pathways

	DCCW	DIJJH	DICW
Female			
White	6.5%	--	7.9%
Black	30.9%	38.3%	42.9%
Hispanic	60.4%	50.0%	48.5%
Male			
White	7.0%	8.1%	7.5%
Black	28.7%	26.2%	38.3%
Hispanic	62.2%	61.9%	53.1%

Note. Cell sizes <10 left blank given data sharing requirements.

Dual System Pathways and Child Welfare Experiences

Dual system pathway comparisons revealed important differences across child welfare experiences. Table 4 displays a comparison of child welfare experiences across pathways: DCCW youth had the smallest average number of investigations; were the least likely pathway to have a case opened; were most often placed with relatives or a resource family through a foster family agency (FFA); and spent the least amount of time in out-of-home care. DIJJH youth were younger than DCCW youth but older than DICW youth at the time of their first investigation, were the least likely group to be placed with relatives and spent 6 months longer in DCFS care than DCCW youth and 9 months fewer than DICW. DICW youth, on the other hand, had the highest average number of investigations, were the most likely group to have cases opened (100%) or experience at least one placement in a group home, and spent the greatest amount of time, on average, in out-of-home care.

Dual system youth with non-concurrent contact (DCCW) had more limited child welfare involvement compared to youth with concurrent contact (DIJJH and DICW).

TABLE 4

A Comparison of Child Welfare Experiences Across Dual System Pathways

	DCCW	DIJJH	DICW
Number of investigations (average)	3.6	7.8	11.6
Age during investigations (avg. years)	6.6 to 11	6.1 to 15	5.2 to 11.6
Cumulative time with an open case (avg. months)	25.3	32.6	40.3
Cumulative time in out-of-home care (avg. months)	17.7	19.9	38.5
Number of placements (average)	2.3	2.5	5.5
Experienced placement with a relative	52.6%	45.7%	51.6%
Experienced placement with a resource parent	57.4%	52.5%	69.9%
Experienced placement with a group home	47.4%	70.1%	83.2%

Dual System Pathways and Juvenile Justice Experiences

Juvenile justice experiences also varied across dual system pathways (see Table 5). DCCW youth were older when they touched the juvenile justice system, were less likely to be detained or charged with violent, assault-related offenses, and were more likely to receive formal diversion. Youth with moderate to high levels of child welfare involvement (DIJJH and DICW), on the other hand, were more similar than different. Youth in both groups were older at the time of their petition and about half of these youth were detained in juvenile detention prior to adjudication. Approximately two-thirds were charged with a violent offense, most of which were related to some type of assault. The only difference found between DICW and DIJJH youth was in the dispositions they received. DICW youth were more likely to receive formal diversion (47% compared to 38%) and to be placed in a group home (29% compared to 20%) while DIJJH youth were more likely to receive probation supervision in the community (38% compared to 16%).

DCCW youth experiences were quite similar to those for juvenile justice only youth; however, DIJJH and DICW youth were significantly different from juvenile justice only youth across all juvenile justice experiences, including recidivism. Recidivism was defined as having at least one new arrest within one year of disposition. Recidivism rates were lowest for juvenile justice only youth (19%) followed closely by DICW youth (23%). Recidivism was highest for DICW and DIJJH youth, with nearly a third (29%) of these youth experiencing a new arrest.

Dual system pathways with extensive child welfare involvement and concurrent contact (DIJJH and DICW) were at increased risk of detention, violent offenses, and juvenile justice recidivism compared to juvenile justice only youth and DCCW youth (non-concurrent contact).

TABLE 5

A Comparison of Juvenile Justice Experiences Across Dual System Pathways

	JJ Only	DCCW	DIJJH	DICW
Age at first JJ petition (average)	15.3	15.3	14.9	14.7
Detained prior to adjudication	34%	38%	48%	51%
Charged with a violent offense	43%	49%	66%	62%
Violent offense related to an assault	62%	63%	74%	73%
Delinquency court disposition (outcome)				
Formal diversion	53%	48%	47%	38%
Probation supervision in the community	34%	36%	16%	38%
Placement in a group home	6%	7%	29%	20%
Placement in a correctional facility	4%	5%	6%	4%
Recidivism	19%	23%	29%	29%

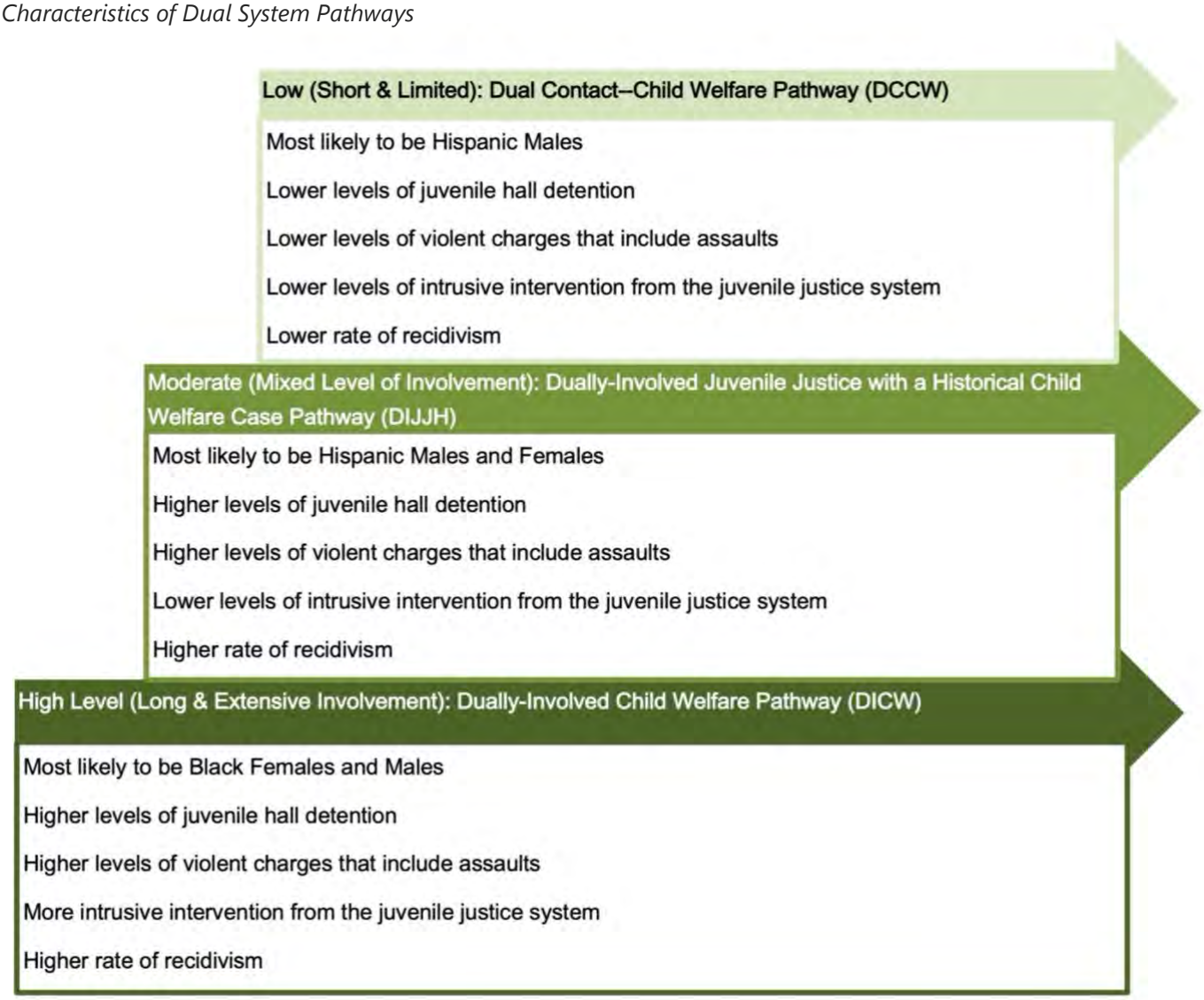
CONNECTING THE DOTS

Taken together, pathway comparisons across demographics, child welfare experiences, and juvenile justice experiences revealed significant patterns. Specifically, juvenile justice experiences and outcomes in this study, as well as the Dual System Youth Design Study, were aligned with different levels of experiences with the child welfare system. Figure 7 summarizes these findings and indicates the following:

- Youth with more limited child welfare involvement had less intensive juvenile justice outcomes. This group was more likely to include DCCW youth and Hispanic males.
- Youth with the most extensive child welfare involvement had the most serious juvenile justice outcomes. This group was more likely to include DICW youth, Black females, and Black males.

FIGURE 7

Characteristics of Dual System Pathways



SIGNIFICANCE

This study reconceptualizes how dual system contact is understood, defined and measured. It broadens our understanding of the maltreatment-delinquency relationship from a narrow definition of co-occurring dual status involvement to identifying young people with dual system contact across their lifespan. Under previous legal definitions used in LA County, the rate of dual status youth among youth adjudicated in the juvenile justice system was estimated to be no more than 13% in any given year, reinforcing assumptions that this was a small population. When examined using any type of child welfare contact, however, the rate of dual system involvement increases dramatically to 64%, demonstrating that this contact is far more common than previously believed.

A CALL TO ACTION

The majority of youth adjudicated in the juvenile justice system experience some level of contact with the child welfare system. For most, their contact with the child welfare system occurs before they enter the juvenile justice system, presenting a significant opportunity for prevention and reduction of delinquency.

This finding combined with others from this study underscore the need to build a delinquency prevention continuum of care that begins in the community and continues throughout child welfare and juvenile justice system involvement.

Prevention of dual system contact should be anchored within a full array of preventive supports, resources, and opportunities, starting with community-based supports for families (primary prevention), services to mitigate and address risk (secondary prevention) and continuing services for families involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (tertiary prevention).

Furthermore, delinquency prevention efforts should be tied to existing efforts already underway in the county[1] to develop a more comprehensive array of prevention and early intervention services supporting families at risk for and involved with child welfare.

1 For example, planning for the Family First Prevention Service Act; Thriving Families, Safer Children; DCFS Invest LA Strategic Plan; and the Office of Child Protection Prevention Plan.

THE DUAL STATUS YOUTH WORKGROUP

In 2018, the LA County Board of Supervisors created the Dual Status Youth Workgroup under the Office of Child Protection (OCP).

OBJECTIVE
Identify ways to prevent delinquency and dual system involvement among DCFS-involved youth.

RECOMMENDATION
Develop a delinquency prevention continuum of care by recognizing and addressing the relationship between maltreatment and delinquency into the current (a) countywide prevention strategy, (b) related county reforms, and (c) the services provided by the Department of Family Services, the Office of Youth Development and Diversion, and the Probation Department.

The Workgroup highlights Action Areas (summarized below) that build and strengthen efforts to reduce dual system contact and improve the lives of children and youth who enter the child welfare system.

ACTION AREAS

1 PRIMARY PREVENTION

- Connect existing community resources and provide additional opportunities and services to support families, prevent maltreatment, and reduce delinquency.
- Support resource centers trusted by communities to help families access the services they need when they need them.

2 SECONDARY PREVENTION

- Prioritize the voices of children, youth, and families at all stages of child welfare decision-making.
- Keep children and youth with their families whenever possible.
- When out-of-home care is necessary, ensure that decisions are informed by children, youth, parents, and family members and utilize the least restrictive setting appropriate to meet their needs.
- Appropriately address, stabilize, and support educational performance and success.
- Provide trauma-informed services and address mental health and substance abuse concerns.

3 TERTIARY PREVENTION

- Reduce involvement in the juvenile justice system and decrease detention, particularly during the pandemic, through diversion and other alternatives whenever possible.
- Track current and previous involvement with DCFS when youth enter the juvenile justice system to connect youth and their families with services, reduce system involvement, and prevent re-entry.
- Hold systems and agencies accountable for delivering best practices and maintaining high standards of care for children/youth and their families.
- Stabilize and improve the living situations, educational performance, and behavioral health of youth involved in all levels of the juvenile justice system.

CONCLUSION

Coming to the attention of the juvenile justice system can provide an opportunity to stabilize and support healthy, productive family relationships, improve living situations, and reconnect to educational programs and options. A prevention continuum of care must be holistic, comprehensive, and integrate practices that promote the overall well-being of youth and their families. Investing in a continuum of prevention, supports, and services gives LA County the opportunity to invest in improving the futures lives of thousands of young people, rather than perpetuating a pipeline that sends too many vulnerable youth into the juvenile justice and adult criminal justice systems.