

Supporting Incarcerated Youth Transition Back Into Community

The California Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) houses youthful offenders (up to age 25) who have been sentenced by juvenile courts when local incarceration is not considered appropriate. DJJ is mandated to provide treatment services as well as trainings to these youth in preparation for their return to community. On average, twenty five percent (25%) of youth committed to DJJ are referred from Los Angeles County.

While treatment services and trainings are part of DJJ’s mandated program, youth released from DJJ have not fared well and have recidivism rates of approximately forty percent (40%) three years after release. Additionally, DJJ has consistently been critiqued on its inability to provide mandated mental health services and employment development opportunities to youth. Both contribute to recidivism and difficult transitions/adjustments after leaving DJJ custody.

To provide employment opportunities, access to professional and personal development training -- inclusive of mental and social health, -- and ultimately reduce

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recidivism, Impact Justice¹ applied for federal AmeriCorps funding to create a three-year program that will employ young adults for a year of service. These AmeriCorps members will be current or former DJJ youth or others with prior criminal justice involvement. They will be placed with local community-based organizations and serve as navigators for youth and young adults with prior criminal justice system involvement. They will also build awareness of California's new Honorable Discharge petition which can lift barriers to employment and education and provide evidence of rehabilitation that can help seal criminal records.

Through an AmeriCorps grant, the members will be provided a living allowance of \$14,000 for 11 months of service. Members will complete approximately 20 hours of service each week for 11 months.

The County's My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Initiative aims to increase opportunities for youth and young men of color through the development of strategies and programming around six goal areas². Goal six calls for ensuring that youth and young men remain free of violence and receive a second chance. The ability of youthful offenders to receive meaningful opportunities to transition back to their respective communities is increased when services are provided in custody and continued in the community. The Impact Justice AmeriCorps program presents the County with an

¹ Impact Justice is a national innovation and research center advancing new ideas and solutions for justice reform. They served as the consultants for the County's recent youth diversion work.

² The six MBK goals are: Children enter school cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally ready; Children read at grade level by third grade; Youth graduate from high school; Youth complete post-secondary education or training; Youth out of school are employed; and Youth remain safe from violent crime and receive a second chance.

opportunity to target and enhance resources to DJJ youth that increases their ability to better manage life challenges, engage in mental health services, and continue along a path of success, while also developing a pool of navigators, with lived experiences, who can assist other youthful offenders.

Understanding the importance of addressing challenges faced by boys and young men of color and the impact unresolved trauma and violence can have on their ability to navigate life, the Probation Department has identified \$1.5M over three years to support the transition of these DJJ youth back into community and in their role as navigators for other youthful offenders. This funding will increase the stipends and work hours of the DJJ youth and increase their ability to serve more youth and young adults.

Given the new role of the Youth Diversion and Development (YDD) division of the Office of Diversion & Reentry (ODR) as the County's focal point for alternatives to justice system engagement and for the development of practices related to youth development, YDD is uniquely situated to provide oversight and management of the Probation funds that will support this effort.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors:

1. Authorize the Director of the Department of Health Services (DHS), or designee, to contract with Impact Justice to expand their AmeriCorps Program in support of youth transitioning back to Los Angeles County from DJJ.
2. Delegate authority to Director of DHS or designee, to execute amendments to the Impact Justice services agreements to amend the statement of work, extend the agreement term, update the pricing schedule, and incorporate new Board requirements, subject to review and approval by County Counsel.

3. Direct ODR's division of YDD to report back in writing within 180 days on how the expansion of the AmeriCorps Program is progressing and provide updates on progress and outcomes every 120 days, thereafter.

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HLS:rk