



PROBATION  
OVERSIGHT  
COMMISSION  
OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

WENDELYN JULIEN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PROBATION OVERSIGHT COMMISSION

KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION  
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, SUITE 383  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012  
(213) 633-5777 • www.poc.lacounty.gov

## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

HILDA L. SOLIS  
HOLLY J. MITCHELL  
LINDSEY P. HORVATH  
JANICE HAHN  
KATHRYN BARGER

May 6, 2025

TO: Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Chair  
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis  
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell  
Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath  
Supervisor Janice Hahn  
Fesia Davenport, CEO

FROM: Wendelyn Julien  
Executive Director

**SUBJECT: PROBATION OVERSIGHT COMMISSION TRI-ANNUAL SELF-EVALUATION**

The Probation Oversight Commission (POC) is required by the Los Angeles County Code, Ordinance No. 2020-0005 §13, 2020 to undertake a detailed self-evaluation at the end of the Commission's third year, outlining the strengths, weaknesses, successes, and failures of the POC and providing recommendations regarding the future of the commission and the need, if any, for an independent management audit. (LAC §3.80.190)

The self-evaluation is to be submitted to the Board of Supervisors and the Chief Executive Office (CEO) who will determine whether an independent management audit should be conducted. One year later, the POC will provide a written report to the Board of Supervisors to provide an update on the status of the recommendations in the self-evaluation. It also must be shared with the public.

### **History and Development of a New Model of Oversight:**

The Probation Oversight Commission (POC) is a civilian oversight body that advises the Los Angeles County Probation Department and the Board of Supervisors (Board) on the Probation Department's progress on systemic reform. The first body of its kind in the nation, the Board of Supervisors created the Probation Oversight Commission in 2020 to ensure implementation of the Probation Reform Implementation Team's (PRIT) 93 reform priorities, to guide the Probation Department toward the Board's goals of *Care First, Jails Last* and *Youth Justice Reimagined*, and to ensure improvements in transparency and accountability of a Department that has been fraught with issues for decades. The Board of Supervisors appointed nine commissioners in late 2020, hired the inaugural Executive Director in February 2021, and the POC held its first meeting on February 22, 2021.

The Probation Oversight Commission has the authority and duty to:

- Review departmental policies, procedures, and practices.
- Inspect Probation facilities to ensure the physical safety and welfare of youth in Probation's custody and to comply with state law requiring inspection of these facilities by an oversight commission.

- Investigate critical matters brought to the Commission’s attention through collaboration with the Office of Inspector General.
- Compel data, evidence, and direct testimony from Probation including the power to subpoena necessary information from the Probation Department.
- Engage the public through robust and transparent reporting and regular meetings.<sup>1</sup>

The POC successfully launched despite the challenges of COVID-19 and a smaller staff than had been contemplated by the Board motion. The POC onboarded and trained commissioners and staff, staying true to the PRIT goals, and quickly developed [core values](#) and a [model of change](#). The core values embody the Board’s goal to make the POC into an entity that would build trust with the public and use research and data to push for reform of the Probation Department.

### **Structure and Budget**

The staff and budget of the POC have grown gradually since its launch in 2021 with the current staff size of eight (8) being less than half of the originally contemplated size in the Board approved organizational chart that had nineteen (19) staff members. Despite this, the commission has exceeded expectations for engagement, report development, and involvement in Board motions and stayed well within its budget over the three fiscal years. The POC has accomplished this by hiring and retaining excellent staff, with only one staff member leaving during the lifespan of the POC, exercising discretion with county resources, and creatively partnering with other internal and external agencies to advocate for reform.

<b>Probation Oversight Commission</b>	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Number of Staff	6	7	7
Number of Vacancies	0	0	0
Budget/Savings	\$2.266M / \$1.237M	\$1.845M / \$0.635M	\$1.944M / \$0.268M

### **POC Core Values**

The POC was developed by and for the community, as a new concept in civilian oversight in which people with lived experience would work side-by-side with people who work in the Probation Department, people who have expertise in youth development and law, and people who are families of those impacted by Probation to push for reform. The staff of the POC developed a set of core values that were adopted by the commission. Those values are:

#### **INCLUSIVE COLLABORATION**

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

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

---

<sup>1</sup> The ordinance granted the POC authority to receive and review Probation grievances, however those positions were not funded. State law changes altered the need for this function given the creation of the state Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR), an outside entity with authority to receive and investigate complaints. In late 2024, the BOS granted the POC additional authority to receive, refer, and track grievances about LA Sheriff Department School Resource Deputies.

### **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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

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

### **TRANSPARENCY**

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

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

### **INTEGRITY**

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

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

### **COMPASSION**

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

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

### **KNOWLEDGE**

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

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

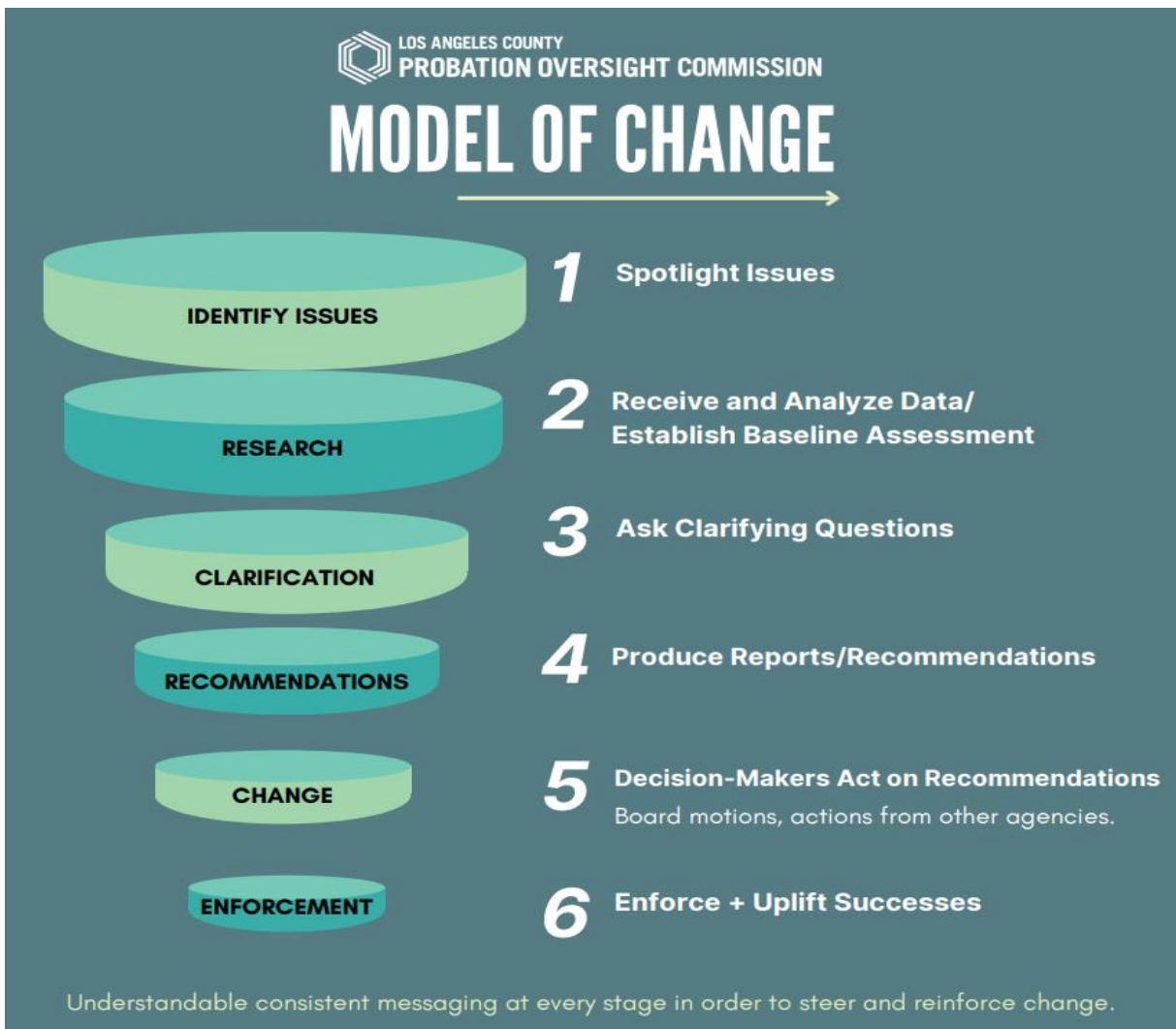
### **HUMILITY**

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

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

### ***POC Model of Change***

The POC developed a model of change to guide the work toward meeting the goals set by the Board and the PRIT. The model of change begins by commissioners spotting issues raised by the Board, agency partners, youth and adults on Probation and their families, the public, and commissioners' own direct observations. POC commissioners then request, receive, and analyze data and information to establish a baseline assessment of the issue.



POC staff and commissioners then ask clarifying questions, conduct research, consult experts, and produce reports and recommendations. The POC shares the recommendations with the Probation Department, the Board of Supervisors, and other decision-makers to act. After action, the POC tracks and uplifts change.

### ***POC's Role as an Arm of the Board of Supervisors***

Within months of its inception, the POC began to be asked by the Board of Supervisors to take on specific oversight duties including initiating a report on the [status of education](#) in the camps and halls and being directed to assist with the Board's July 2021 motion [Preparing for the Closure of the Division of Juvenile Justice Plan](#), in which the POC was directed to engage the public to discuss Secure Youth Track Facility (SYTF) locations, and report back the feedback to the Board.

Subsequently, the POC's 2021 Annual Inspection Report guided the creation of the Board's February 2022's motion [Conditions inside Los Angeles County's Juvenile Halls](#), where the Board instructed the Probation Department to respond directly to the POC's 2021 Inspection findings. The POC has since been directed to participate in and in some cases, lead, on the implementation of more than 20 Board motions including:

- [Preparing for the Closure of the Division of Juvenile Justice: Secure Youth Track Facility Designation and LA Model Expansion](#)
- [Purchase of Taser-7 Model Tasers](#)
- [Safeguarding the Rights of Incarcerated Youth: Support and Implementation of State Assembly Bill Number 2417](#)
- [Aligning the Probation Department's Hiring Practices with Youth Justice Reimagined](#)
- [Phase Out of Oleoresin Capsicum \(OC\) Spray at Central Juvenile Hall](#)
- [Ensuring the Least Restrictive Placements for Young People in the Probation Department's Care and Custody](#)
- [Care First, Jails Last: Holding the Probation Department Accountable and Advancing Youth Justice Reimagined](#)
- [Creating an Independent Process for Complaints Related to School Law Enforcement Services](#)
- [Financial Literacy for Youth in Los Angeles County Care and Accountability of Los Angeles County Probation Department's Unclaimed Juvenile Funds and Property](#)

### **Data, Research, Reports, and Inspections**

Over the first three years, the POC staff conducted several research projects and produced reports with recommendations for improvement including:

- [2021 Grievance and Complaint Report](#)
- [2021-2023 Oleoresin Capsicum \(OC\) Spray Reports](#)
- [2022 Education Report](#)
- [2022 56hr Work Week study](#)
- [2024 Demographics Report](#)
- [2024 Substance Use Disorder Report](#)

These reports required hundreds of hours of field work and research compiling qualitative and quantitative data. The reports addressed various PRIT and BOS goals, brought transparency around critical issues, educated, and resulted in meaningful recommendations guiding the Probation Department toward reform.

Arguably the most important and time-consuming work of the POC over its first three years has been its completion of thorough Annual Inspections of each of the open juvenile detention facilities operated by the Probation Department. Each year, commissioners and staff conducted official, robust, full-day inspections of all the juvenile halls, camps, and Dorothy Kirby Center. Staff compiled the notes to create reports with detailed information about the facilities and key findings. The POC then shared these reports with the Board of Supervisors, the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) as required by law, and the public. Commissioners and staff also conducted informal inspections of the facilities on dozens of occasions, reporting back to the Probation Department and the Board about critical issues.

These reports have provided a new window into the challenges and successes inside these facilities and have led to multiple actions by the Board and Probation to improve conditions. Those inspection reports are available here:

- [2021](#)
- [2022](#)
- [2023](#)
- [2024](#)

### ***Data Dashboard***

After over a year of work by the POC team and support from the Executive Office's IRM team, the POC launched a [public-facing data dashboard](#) in May 2024 that shows statistical information and trends about the youth detained in Los Angeles County Probation-operated facilities including population, demographics, and OC spray uses. The information shared on the dashboard was already public and shared as monthly PDFs, but the dashboard created a new and much more user-friendly way for the public to interact with the data.

The POC is continuing to enhance the dashboard as the Probation Department shares more data. Eventually, the POC hopes that the dashboard will be replaced by a dashboard in which the Probation Department shares information directly with the public and the POC has offered to share all the resources and learning involved with creating the dashboard with the Department.

### **Strengths**

#### ***Genuine Public Engagement***

The POC's greatest success in its first three years is its respectful, robust engagement with the public and stakeholders. Participants in the meetings regularly comment that the POC provides a safe, inclusive venue where the public can share their concerns and hear directly and in detail from the Probation Department.

Let's start with the numbers: The POC began meeting in February 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic and held virtual-only commission meetings and town halls that year. In 2022, the POC added a Communications Manager to the team and had attendance of **3,728** for virtual commission meetings and town halls. In 2023, meetings transitioned from virtual-only attendance to hybrid as COVID-19 restrictions lifted, and total meeting attendance numbers grew to **5,640**. In 2024, **7,500** people attended regular POC meetings in person and virtually.

By the end of 2024, the POC had over **200,000** social media impressions on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and X (Formerly Twitter). It launched its YouTube channel in mid-2022 and had more than **11,800** hours of watch time. POC website traffic almost doubled in the year following the hiring of the Communications Manager. In 2023 the POC website traffic totaled **2,700** page views, and in the first six months of 2024 website views increased to **4,000**.

POC GovDelivery email engagement has seen significant growth. From February 2021 to February 2022 the POC recorded **59** emails sent, **39,522** unique email opens, with an average of **670** unique opens per email sent. From February 2022 to February 2023 those numbers grew again as there were **69** emails, **171,858** unique email opens, and an average of **2,490** unique opens per email sent. Most currently, from February 2023 to February 2024 the growth was recorded at **51** emails sent, **149,000** unique email opens, and an average of **2,939** unique opens per email. In total, from February 2021 until February 2024, the POC sent **179** emails, with **361,280** unique email opens, and an average of **2,018** unique opens per email sent.

While the numbers show incredible growth, perhaps even more impressive is how the POC staff and commissioners have built trust and rapport with attendees at the meetings, creating an environment where people with differing experiences and opinions feel safe and welcome to share their concerns and recommendations. Over the first years of the Commission, multiple POC meetings have seen hours of public comment from young adults formerly detained in Probation facilities, adults on probation, families, Probation staff members, program providers including credible messengers, therapists, and teachers, advocates, and civil rights lawyers, and representatives of other county agencies. The POC prides itself in providing a welcoming, inclusive, safe environment where people can express themselves. Despite addressing extremely emotional and sometimes controversial topics, this approach has meant that the POC has not had a single security issue during meetings since its inception. Some participants have become “regulars” and a couple of those “regulars” have since been appointed to the POC as commissioners.

Much of the success of the POC’s engagement occurs because of work that happens outside the meetings. POC staff and commissioners meet regularly with Probation staff, advocacy groups, parents, county partners, and others, to build trust and learn about the issues.

### ***Leadership with Experience***

POC Executive Director, Wendelyn Julien, described her thoughts about another key strength of the POC in an [article](#) published in 2024 about leadership by people with lived experience. From the earliest conversations about the development of the Probation Oversight Commission (POC), the framers understood the need to include people on the commission with “lived experience within the Probation system as either an adult or juvenile to properly understand the work to be done.” This makes sense, since many of the people involved in the Probation Reform Implementation Team (PRIT) had lived experience themselves and others clearly understood that the POC needed to take a different approach than prior efforts in order to successfully steward the Probation Department toward achieving true reform. The ordinance creating the POC formally reflects the requirement, mandating that the POC consist of nine members, “with at least one member who is formerly justice-system involved, [and] at least one member who is a family member of someone who is currently or formerly justice-involved....” When the original nine commissioners were selected, the Board went beyond their own mandate, selecting three commissioners with lived experience and others with impacted family members. When an opening came up during the POC’s first year, the Board appointed a fourth commissioner who is formerly justice involved.

In addition to leadership on the Commission, the POC built outreach and participation strategies to encourage and welcome people impacted by Probation to participate in the meetings, both as panelists and through robust opportunities for public comment. This strategy has clearly demonstrated that leadership and engagement by people with “lived experience” is a way to reach better outcomes for the people impacted by Probation and to promote accountability and transparency. It is, by definition, expertise by people willing to share their experiences and recommendations and who demonstrate profound understanding of the nuances and complications of the criminal justice system and the Probation Department.

### **Challenges**

During its first three years, the POC worked through several challenges including continuous turnover and reassignment of Probation Leadership, recurrent crises related to facility suitability, Probation’s significant data deficits, and testing of the purpose and bounds of oversight.

### ***Continuous Changes in Probation Leadership***

Since the POC was founded in 2021, there have been three Chief Probation Officers, multiple Chief Deputies, and not a single Probation facility is still led by the same person. The Chiefs have demonstrated varied degrees of interest and willingness to collaborate with the POC and enact reform. Turnover in leadership at the Chief and Chief Deputy level has repeatedly disrupted gains made toward collaboration with oversight, with a commitment to a practice model leading the county closer to the Board's goals of *Care First, Jails Last* and *Youth Justice Reimagined*, and with the goal of building trust with stakeholders. Since the POC was founded in 2021, all the people in the top four tiers of leadership at Probation have retired, been replaced, or been removed (Chief, Chief Deputies, Deputy Directors, Bureau Chiefs, and all the facilities directors).

Changes in leadership make collaboration difficult, but they also have disrupted follow-through with various Board motions that the POC has supported, followed, and been responsible for. For example, the BOS instructed the Probation Department in 2019 to change its Use of Force operations within its detention facilities, specifically by ending the use of [Oleoresin Capsicum \(OC\) spray](#). That was reiterated in a [motion](#) in 2022. The Department had made significant progress, including a well-drafted phase out plan that was later abandoned. The motion requiring elimination of OC spray against girls and developmentally disabled youth led to successful elimination of spray in those units, but the practice has since resumed. The new Chief agreed to reopen Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall without OC spray, but the Department quickly returned to the regular use of OC spray at the hall.

Second, in 2021, the BOS unanimously supported an effort to move toward the [decarceration of girls and gender-expansive youth](#), acknowledging the particular vulnerabilities of this population. The Department obtained a grant and outside support for this, leading to its success in decreasing the population only to have it jump up again.

### ***Constant Crises and a Lack of Regular Access to Data***

During the lifespan of the POC, the Probation Department has been in a constant crisis stemming from the lawsuit and settlement agreement with the Department of Justice (DOJ), compliance with minimum legal standards according to the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), unsuitability findings and the need to rapidly relocate large groups of youth, public and media outcry about abusive behavior caught on camera in the juvenile detention facilities, thousands of lawsuits for sexual misconduct and other mistreatment, and a long-standing staffing crisis including extremely high rates of staff leave and callouts. The POC and the Department have focused, understandably, on addressing these crises rather than on long-term reform.

These constant crises hamper the POC's efforts to promote transparency and move the Department toward data-driven outcomes since the Department has not been able to regularly share data and has even stopped collecting and sharing its own internal outcomes and data in the form of PROBSTAT. In its quest for transparency to the public and the board, the POC has requested various data sets that have only been fulfilled after numerous requests for the same information and the issuance of multiple subpoenas.

In addition, the continuous disregard of POC requests for non-confidential data, reports, and documents have tested the bounds of the commission and resulted in the POC exercising its subpoena power after months of formally requesting the information during POC meetings. OIG has been extremely supportive of the POC in these requests and in providing other support, which has resulted in the POC receiving all the requested information before resorting to court proceedings.

Although the Probation Department has improved its data sharing within the last year, they continue to struggle with antiquated data systems, a culture that does not value data, and challenges related to staff turnover.

### ***Lack of Response to Recommendations***

The POC was created to drive reform and serve as an extension of the Board, yet the POC has faced challenges in obtaining information, enforcing the Board's reform priorities, and receiving feedback on inspections, findings, and recommendations. Probation very rarely responds to any of the POC's recommendations or findings in writing or at the meetings, even after being requested to do so by the Board. The multiple Probation Chiefs have been chronically absent from POC meetings, which has been noted multiple times by the Commissioners, the public, and the Board.

### **The Future of the POC**

The POC has been able to lead reform and earn public trust through effective, fact-based reporting and public engagement. The BOS, informed by the work of the PRIT, envisioned a Probation Oversight Commission that would lead with integrity, shine a light on a department that had long-avoided requests for transparency and accountability, and continue to move the Probation Department toward reform. The POC has now been successfully launched and is meeting those goals. To further this path, the POC recommends two adjustments to its structure:

#### ***1. Revise the organizational chart***

The POC recommends that its organizational chart be revised to reflect the work the POC is currently doing and hopes to do in the future if more resources become available. Some of the positions originally approved have become unnecessary. For example, since the POC was created, the State of California created the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) that has authority to accept and investigate grievances and complaints in juvenile probation facilities. The POC now works closely with Probation's Office of the Ombudsman and with OIG to handle complaints. To avoid redundancy, the POC recommends that the Grievances and Assessment positions including one Project Director, and two Investigators be eliminated from the approved organizational chart. The recommended organizational chart is attached and reflects a total of 17 positions as compared to the 19 positions originally approved.

#### ***2. Consider revisions to the POC ordinance to reflect its current and future work***

The POC recommends some amendments to its ordinance to clarify sections, outline duties and responsibilities that have emerged, and promote transparency and efficiency in the process of selecting at-large commissioners when vacancies arise. The recommended changes do not change the fundamental structure of the POC and most reflect the current operations of the POC. The POC will work with County Counsel to draft these amendments and present those to the BOS for input and approval.

The recommended changes are:

- Clarify in the ordinance that when an at-large position becomes available, the POC will form an ad-hoc committee with members selected by the POC chairperson. The committee will request and review applications, working with POC staff and County Counsel to ensure that candidates meet the qualifications to serve as a commissioner. The committee will rank the applications, interview the top candidates, and recommend candidates to the full POC for a vote. The applicant receiving the most votes at the POC meeting will be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

- Work with County Counsel to investigate the possibility of adding to the ordinance an indication that the Probation Oversight Commission is the county's "Probation Commission" under the meaning of the Welfare and Institution's Code which grants the POC the duties and authorities of a juvenile justice commission including, among others, the duty and authority to inspect facilities where youth are detained.
  - Consider changing the section of the POC's Ordinance prohibiting the POC from receiving confidential information to reflect that confidential information can be provided as allowed by the Welfare and Institutions Code for Juvenile Justice Commissions.
- Clarify the role of OIG as able to conduct inquiries on behalf of the Probation Oversight Commission to be consistent with the OIG's ordinance.

### **Conclusion**

In the short and long-term, the Probation Oversight Commission intends to continue to promote accountability and transparency with the goal of promoting the BOS's "*Care First, Jails Last*" and "*Youth Justice Reimagined*" vision by improving the outcomes for youth and adults who are supervised by the Probation Department. During the first years of the POC, the Probation Department has experience tumultuous crisis after crisis and the impact has been felt most egregiously by the children and young adults in the juvenile facilities, their families and advocates, and the Probation staff who work with them. The POC gives all these stakeholders a safe place to be heard, a place to find that they often have common ground, and a place to share their concerns and recommendations.

The POC launched and has operated efficiently, effectively, and successfully, becoming a trusted organization by county partners, Probation staff, advocates and advocacy organizations, and most importantly members of the public who have been impacted by Probation. As a result, and given the evidence presented, the POC asks that the Chief Executive Office determine that there is not a need for an independent management audit at this time.