



DRAFT

October 7, 2025

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
LOS ANGELES COUNTY OFFICE
OF EDUCATION (LACOE) TO LEAD
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION
SERVICES FOR YOUTH IN LOS
ANGELES COUNTY PROBATION
DETENTION FACILITIES**

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BACKGROUND

Senate Bill 823 closed the state's Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) as of June 30, 2023, making it so that all youth are now cared for in their own counties rather than at a State Youth Facility (intake stopped as of July 1, 2021). The Probation Education Services Division of the Los Angeles County Probation Department (Probation), which had taken responsibility for the relatively few graduates in L.A. County detention facilities previously, now took on the rapidly expanding role of facilitating educational services for the increasing number of high school graduates in need of post-secondary education. The population of incarcerated youth over the age of 18 has continued to grow and warrants targeted support. Although the Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant (JJRBG) established funding for California counties to implement services for realigned youth, probation departments were provided little guidance from the state about how to best support and educate older youth.

In November 2024, the Los Angeles County Probation Oversight Commission (POC) formed the Education Ad Hoc Committee (Committee) after receiving complaints from local community colleges about their attempts to partner with Probation to implement the Rising Scholars Program at Probation's detention facilities. The Rising Scholars Program was implemented in 2014 to create pathways for incarcerated students to receive a community college education; the program was further strengthened in 2022 after the passage of Senate Bill 178 which allocated ongoing funding and established the Rising Scholars Network. A recent memorandum from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office indicates that twenty-one (21) community colleges in Los Angeles County will receive over \$11.2 million to support this work from 2025-2028, which is 22% of the funding available statewide.¹

Committee members met with staff from the California Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR), participating community colleges, Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), and Probation, to better understand the barriers to implementation. Additionally, committee members met with representatives from the following organizations to better understand how other jurisdictions structure their programs:

- San Luis Obispo County Office of Education
- Alameda County Office of Education
- Ventura County Probation Agency
- Riverside County Office of Education

While these counties are smaller than Los Angeles County, their population of detained youth share key characteristics with ours:

- Majority are Latino and African American youth
- Most are from socioeconomically disadvantaged households
- There is a disproportionately high number of students eligible for Special Education services and supports
- Many are youth who were disconnected from school prior to their detention

¹ [California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Memorandum to the Rising Scholars Network, July 11, 2025](#)



PROBLEM STATEMENT

Access to high-quality education is integral to creating a rehabilitative environment for incarcerated youth and is mandated by California's Title 15 regulations and the Welfare and Institutions Code. Education can significantly change the trajectory of a young person's life; in the case of incarcerated youth, it presents the opportunity to improve self-esteem, build skills, increase job opportunities, and reduce recidivism. In fact, according to the Brookings Institution, "individuals who enroll in postsecondary education programs are 49% less likely to be reincarcerated than those who do not and the odds of being employed post release are 12% higher for individuals who participate in any type of correctional education."²

The current structure in which the Probation Education Services Division takes the helm of planning and overseeing the educational needs of detained high school graduates is outside the organization's core responsibilities and area of expertise. Given LACOE's mandate to improve the County's educational landscape and student outcomes, **the POC strongly recommends that LACOE takes ownership over the education services for all incarcerated youth, including those with a high school diploma.** The POC proposes that funding and items currently spent on the Probation Education Services Division be transferred to LACOE, while leveraging additional funding available from the Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant (JJRBG) to implement and sustain this work.

The Probation Department's recommended budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year (FY) is over \$1.1 billion, which includes approximately \$680 million in unrestricted net county costs (NCC). The Probation Education Services Division has a budget of just over \$5 million, or less than half of one percent of Probation's overall budget. To put this in context, the budget of the entire Rising Scholars Network to provide 20,000 justice-involved students a college education throughout the state of California is only \$50 million.³

According to the Chief Executive Office (CEO), in the current fiscal year, **Probation's Probation Education Services Division** is funded as follows:

- Number of budgeted positions: 33.0
 - Source of revenue: NCC and Juvenile Probation Funds
 - 89% NCC
 - 11% Juvenile Probation Funds
 - Total annual expenditures
 - FY 2024-25 Budget: \$5,584,000
 - FY 2024-25 Actual Expenses: \$4,914,200
 - Number of vacancies: 3.0
- Compensatory education
 - Probation's FY 2024-25 Budget: \$637,000
 - Actual Expenses \$132,500

² Gibbons, Alexandra and Rashawn Ray. ["The societal benefits of postsecondary prison education."](#) Brookings. August 20, 2021

³ [California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Memorandum to the Rising Scholars Network. July 11, 2025](#)



It is also worth noting that LACOE already receives JJRBG funding to support justice-involved students. For example, in FY 2024-25, Probation allocated \$1,476,451 in funding to LACOE to provide transition counseling services to juvenile court school students.⁴ Additionally, LACOE was awarded \$2,175,628 in FY 2025-26 to provide adult education to youth over the age of 18. These allocations suggest that some seed funding is likely already encumbered and accessible for LACOE to begin the process of serving post-secondary youth in detention.⁵ (See Appendix A)

VISION

Incarcerated high school graduates receive high-quality, multifaceted educational, vocational, and life-skills training delivered by caring, credentialed teachers and subject matter experts who help students:

- Achieve and at times, exceed academic proficiency levels
- Discover their potential
- Learn new skills
- Improve readiness to enter the workforce
- Improve pro-social skills

Programming should be available year-round to ensure youth are regularly engaged and have access to differentiated instruction styles to meet the various needs of all youth. This vision is not just aspirational; it is the expectation articulated in the Welfare and Institutions Code and Title 15.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

- **No clear ownership** – The jurisdiction of county offices of education is currently K-12 education; no Los Angeles County government agency is tasked with supporting post-secondary education. This creates a gap in services that leads to incarcerated high school graduates being underserved.
- **Changing landscape** – Assembly Bill 2181 (Gipson), effective January 1, 2025, expands the educational opportunities for juvenile court school students by allowing them to stay in high school longer to take advantage of additional education opportunities, such as dual enrollment courses, before graduating. The law requires county offices of education to assess juvenile court school students and share academic information with students to help them understand this option, explore opportunities, and make the best decision for their situation/needs. This expanded role for county offices of education means that they will play a more prominent role in connecting juvenile court students to higher education services.

⁴ [L.A. County Probation JJCC – CMJJP Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Funding Recommendations – Adopted by JJCC during 3/10/25 Meeting](#)

⁵ [L.A. County Probation FY 2025-26 JJCC-JJRBG Ad Hoc Subcommittee Funding Recommendations – Adopted by JJRBG 3/27/25](#)



- **Unclear strategies and uncommunicated outcomes** – The work of the Probation Education Services Division is largely unknown. It is unclear what the team does and what their strategy is to meet the educational and vocational needs of youth detained throughout Probation's facilities. There is no publicly available data to show what programs they lead or how students benefit from the work or support implemented by this unit. On occasion, the Probation Department has shared enrollment numbers in verbal presentations, but enrollment data only tells a partial story. Despite many requests for matriculation data, the department has never produced this information.
- **Stalled implementation of the Rising Scholars Program** – The Rising Scholars Program was established in 2014 to increase the number of justice-involved youth participating in community college courses. Probation's community college partners have faced several roadblocks in working with the Probation Education Services Division to fully implement the program. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Problems with scheduling courses and lack of communication
 - Allegations of favoritism and unequal treatment of community college partners
 - Enrollment concerns
 - An unwillingness by LACOE to allow graduates and high school students in the same dual enrollment classroom
 - Speculation that students are enrolled in courses by Probation staff without getting their buy-in
 - Inability to offer peer mentoring
 - Lack of transitional planning for youth post-detention

FRAMEWORK

The following framework repeatedly emerged in the POC's discussions with other jurisdictions and serves as a guiding principle for an effective partnership between the Los Angeles County Probation Department and county offices education:

County Offices of Education	Probation and County Offices of Education	Los Angeles County Probation Department
ROLE	SHARED VISION	ROLE
Lead, develop, coordinate, and provide comprehensive and relevant K-12 and post-secondary education for all detained youth, regardless of age.	Equip detained youth of all ages with the education and rehabilitative services they need to thrive.	Support and collaborate with county offices of education to remove barriers, and ensure their services are effectively implemented. Provide classroom supervision to ensure a safe learning environment.



KEY POINTS AND THEMES FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

- 1. *Probation departments fund the infrastructure county offices of education need to provide individualized and targeted support for detained high school graduates.***
 - a. Specialized staff – County offices of education have specialized staff that work exclusively with high school graduates to meet their unique educational needs. These coordinators and specialists are funded by Probation, primarily through state Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act dollars⁶. These staff perform a range of duties, including but not limited to:
 - i. Providing educational and vocational consultation and guidance for high school graduates and collaborating with probation departments to address educational and vocational planning.
 - ii. Working with youth to learn their strengths and interests and build structured pathways that lead to post-secondary education or vocational training.
 - iii. Serving as a liaison between students, the court, teachers, and administrative staff.
 - iv. Attending and participating in case planning and family team meetings. Communicate with parents and guardians as needed.
 - v. Finding and creating new community partnership and strengthening existing partnerships.
 - vi. Collecting data regarding successes, challenges, barriers, and outcomes. Monitor academic and behavioral gains.
 - vii. Troubleshooting and providing individualized support for students as they enter new educational environments/programs.
 - viii. Supporting transition planning for youth as they prepare to return to the community.
- 2. *Collaboration and mutual respect.***
 - a. Probation departments and county offices of education respect each others' roles, and they work collaboratively as partners to achieve positive outcomes for youth. This includes acknowledging that staff of the county offices of education are the education experts and positioning them to lead education-related efforts. Staff of the probation departments have regularly scheduled meetings with staff of the county offices of education to support them in troubleshooting issues. Probation departments also work to identify and modify space within their facilities for staff of the county offices of education to use as designated college programming areas (Ideally, these spaces are located in areas other than the living units to create a different environment).

⁶ SLOCOE also referenced using CCAP Funding to support this work <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/r17/ccap24rfa.asp>



3. County offices of education-led support has yielded creative practices and promising results.

- a. They recognize the need to provide college-bound youth with additional opportunities for skill-building before they begin taking college courses. This includes introductory classes like time management and notetaking to help ease the transition to college-level work.
- b. San Luis Obispo and Alameda Counties both allow some college students to have furlough days so students can attend class in-person on campus, allowing them to have a more realistic and inspiring college experience.
- c. Additionally, Alameda County is piloting an initiative to use college enrollment as a step-down opportunity – they currently have one student who attends an out-of-state university and lives on campus.
- d. Tutors are regularly available to support students – Alameda County uses tutors from UC Berkeley, while Ventura County has a robust volunteer program in which retired teachers and other professionals are brought into the facilities to help students with schoolwork and assignments. These tutors offer additional support and mentorship to students and present an additional opportunity for a caring adult to offer hope and encouragement.

The POC did not come across any other County that had a structure like Los Angeles County where the Probation Department staff take the lead in creating and implementing educational and vocational services for high school graduates.

THE PROPOSAL

The need to support the self-efficacy, cognitive development, and overall wellbeing of youth is fundamental to the success of the *Youth Justice Reimagined* framework. Given the Probation Department's enormous budget, it is possible to allocate funding in a way that appropriately balances the need for custodial and supervision services ***while also making greater investments in positive youth development and allowing the experts to lead.*** Education plays a vital role in rehabilitating justice-involved youth; and when executed properly, it has the ability to increase confidence, instill hope, and reduce recidivism. Diverting NCC from the Probation Department to LACOE to invest in better educational services and outcomes for youth would be a major step forward. Should LACOE take on this enhanced role, the infrastructure, programming, and support they provide high school graduates must be measured, evaluated, and better than what currently exists.

As noted, access to quality education is not simply aspirational, it is the law and should be Los Angeles County's minimum expectation. Failure to meet legal standards for educating youth previously led the County into court and a stipulated judgement with the DJJ. To support young people and reduce liability, the POC respectfully presents the following recommendations.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Probation Department's effort to serve detained high school graduates is noteworthy. However, as the population grows and their needs become more complex, it is in their best interest for an educational institution to lead and oversee this work. The POC's recommendations are as follows:

- The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) should develop a proposal in consultation with the Los Angeles County Probation Department (Probation) and the Los Angeles County Probation Oversight Commission (POC) that articulates the infrastructure they need to successfully implement this work. The proposal should include the student outcomes they will measure and their recommendations for making the data publicly available.
- Should the Board of Supervisors (Board) find the proposal satisfactory, the Board should:
 - Designate LACOE as the lead entity to develop and implement educational and vocational services for all youth in Probation's detention facilities including high school graduates.
 - Instruct Probation to enter a Memorandum of Understanding that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of the Probation Department and LACOE. The agreement should also define the duties, facility use, and expectations LACOE has of Probation to ensure the success of this initiative.
 - Instruct LACOE to enter into a data-sharing agreement with the POC as it relates to student education services and outcomes.
 - Instruct LACOE to change its current policy prohibiting graduates and high-school students from participating in the same dual-enrollment courses.
 - Work with the Chief Executive Officer to explore the feasibility of transferring NCC-funded Probation Education Services items (positions) to LACOE. These positions should be used to provide intensive case management support to post-secondary students similar to the support available in other counties.
 - Instruct the Auditor-Controller to assess the spending plan for the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCRA) and Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant (JJRBG) funding from the State of California, in consultation with the POC. A recent state audit revealed that the County only spent \$9.7 million of its \$88 million allocation of JJRBG funds.
 - Investigate if any of this funding can be awarded to LACOE or passed through LACOE to community-based organizations to support the implementation of this proposal.



APPENDIX – SAMPLE BUDGET

Alameda County Office of Education Post-Secondary Educational Support Services Program Budget⁷				
Personnel (Salary + Benefits)	1.0 Program Director 4.0 FTE Program Managers			
	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	Total
	\$594,680.27	\$712,353.66	\$790,219.85	\$2,097,253.78
Sub- contractors for Services	Intersession Contracts			
	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$70,000
Educational Materials and Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">After-Hours SupportEducational Software and LicensesCollege and Career LabsStudent Milestone Payments		<ul style="list-style-type: none">CTE Certifications and TrainingStudent GraduationsPost-Secondary Staff Development and TechnologyFurniture	
Subtotal + Indirect cost	\$221,450.96	\$432,583.88	\$434,812.21	\$1,088,847.06
Grand Total	\$836,131.23	\$1,169,937.54	\$1,250,032.06	\$3,256,100.84

⁷ Taken from The County of Alameda Standard Services Agreement, Procurement Contract No. 28093 between Alameda County Probation Department and Alameda County Office of Education