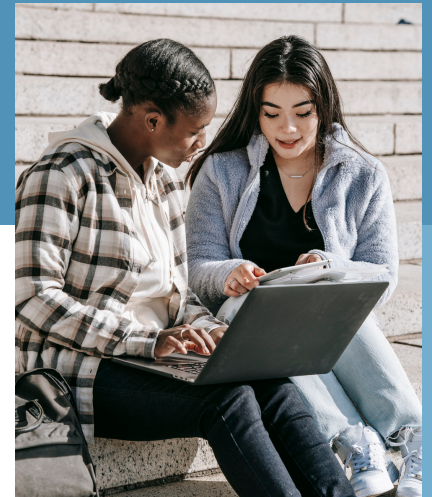


REPURPOSING & REIMAGINING THE CHALLENGER MEMORIAL YOUTH CENTER

The County of Los Angeles is committed to reforming its local youth justice system, shifting to a care-first model that provides proactive, effective programs to support at-risk youth. The Challenger Memorial Youth Center (Challenger Reimagining Project), is part of the County's larger Youth Justice Reimagined efforts. The Challenger Reimagining Project aims to help under-served and under-resourced youth transition safely and securely to an independent and productive adulthood.

The program will serve young women and men between the ages of 18-25 who were involved with the criminal justice or foster care systems or who are homeless. Participants will live on the Challenger campus for 6-18 months while they are provided with educational pathways, career counseling and training, comprehensive mental and behavioral health services, robust life-skills instruction, and enriching activities like arts, sports, recreation and play. Those with children would also be encouraged to participate as childcare services will be available as parents begin building a better future for their families. Upon successful completion of selected curriculum, participants will be linked with living wage jobs and housing, and alumni services will be maintained to assist with post-program transition.

This innovative project offers a meaningful opportunity at a unique moment in history to achieve transformative social change. It will transform a punitive, institutional detention facility into a home filled with opportunity and hope for young adults. By turning away from incarcerating young people and instead prioritizing programs that educate and support them, the County of Los Angeles is investing in the future of our youth and our communities. The aim is to provide a replicable model that can be a catalyst for changing the trajectory of a generation - locally, throughout the State, and across the country.



Proposal to provide Los Angeles County \$25 million to reimagine and repurpose the Challenger Memorial Youth Center. This program will provide vulnerable transition age youth with temporary housing, education, career training, mental health services, life-skills instruction, and access to arts, sports and recreation.

The Challenger Memorial Youth Camp

Background

The Challenger Memorial Youth Camp, a former juvenile detention camp, is located in the City of Lancaster, approximately three miles west of SR-14. The Challenger facilities comprise a total of 220,000 square feet and are located on approximately 60 acres of County-owned land. The Challenger site is part of a larger County-owned landholding of approximately 360 acres, which includes the former Mira Loma women's prison, the former High Desert Multi-Service Ambulatory Care Center (MACC), a solar farm, and areas of unimproved land. Many of these facilities are currently vacant and present opportunities for repurposing and reuse.

The Antelope Valley is one of the most disadvantaged and underserved regions in Los Angeles County. One of the most racially and culturally diverse areas, with the highest concentration of households with children in the County, the Antelope Valley has the County's highest rates of reported child abuse and neglect, and the highest concentration of youth impacted by the criminal justice system. A 2019 study made the following findings: 1) the region's employment rate is 46 percent, lower than the rest of County; 2) life expectancy is also lower, while the average rates of obesity, diabetes, and unintentional drug-related deaths are higher than respective County averages; 3) poverty and food insecurity also disproportionately affect the community (21.4 percent of households report incomes less than 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level); and 4) homelessness is higher (11.3 percent of adults in the Antelope Valley reported housing instability in the last five years, as compared to 4.8 percent reported countywide).

Reimagining and repurposing the Challenger Memorial Youth Center is an effort to remediate long-standing inequity in the Antelope Valley. It is also part of the County's broader commitment to focus on providing necessary and effective care for vulnerable youth to prevent them from becoming homeless or becoming involved in the adult criminal justice system.



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