

Youth Diversion in Los Angeles County

Advancing Evidence-Informed Policy to Improve Youth Outcomes

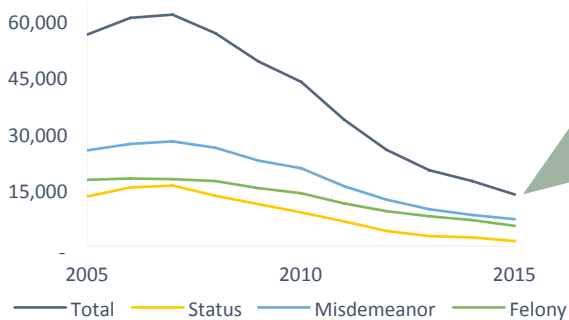
In November 2017, Los Angeles County adopted a new, comprehensive model of youth diversion that will connect youth with community-based services that support their development in lieu of arrest or citation.¹

Informed by the data and evidence presented here, this model will build the infrastructure needed to ensure that all youth in Los Angeles County have the opportunity to connect with community-based activities and services, reducing youth arrests and equitably improving outcomes for youth and communities.

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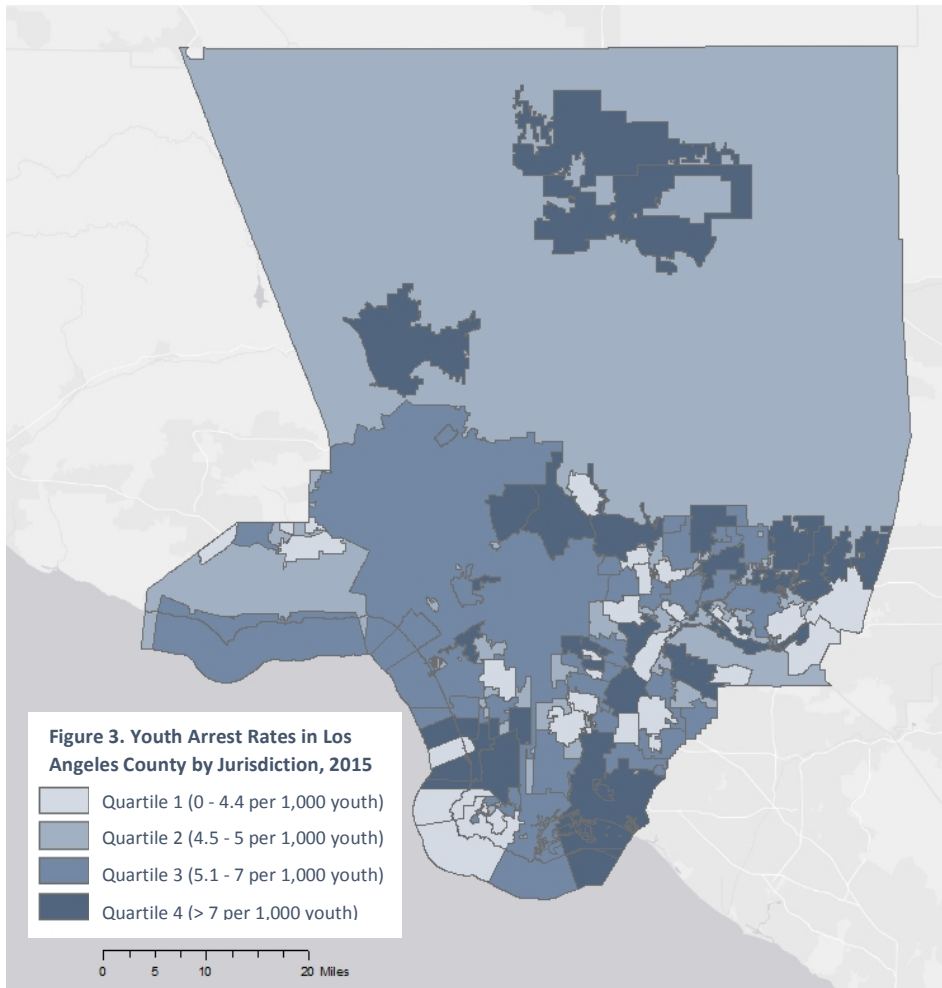
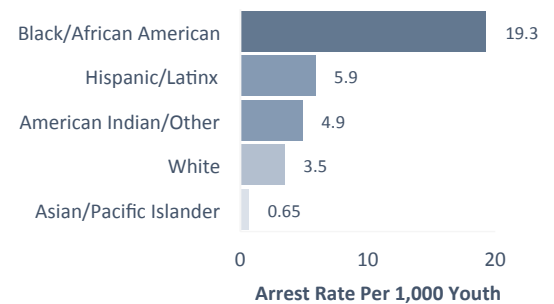


Figure 1. Total Number of Youth Arrests in Los Angeles County by Offense Level, 2005-2015



13,655
total youth arrests or citations
reported in 2015:
91%
14 years or older,
75%
Male,
62%
Hispanic/Latinx,
81%
Arrested for status, misdemeanor,
or low-level felony offenses.²

Figure 2. Youth Arrest Rates in Los Angeles County by Race/Ethnicity, 2015



Los Angeles County is home to the largest juvenile justice system in the nation. Available data suggest that processes by which youth are arrested into that system vary depending on their racial and ethnic background and the practices of their arresting jurisdiction.

Although the total number of youth arrests has decreased in the last decade overall, youth of color have become increasingly more likely to be arrested than their White peers. In 2015, the arrest rate for Black youth in Los Angeles County was over 6 times higher than that of White youth.²

This inequity by race and ethnicity persists throughout the justice system. Youth of color are also disproportionately likely to be referred to Probation, detained, or incarcerated.³

One factor that may contribute to this inequity is the wide variation in current diversion practices and resources in Los Angeles County. Additional coordination and support is needed to scale and spread evidence-informed diversion programs that can meaningfully address the needs of youth in communities countywide.

Youth who participate in pre-arrest diversion programs are

2.5x

less likely to re-offend

than similar youth who were not diverted; youth who participate in post-arrest diversion programs are 1.5x less likely to re-offend.⁴

Both initial contact and continued involvement with the justice system are associated with negative outcomes such as increased likelihood of high school dropout, trauma, substance abuse, and other outcomes that negatively impact a young person's lifetime health and success. In addition to holistic prevention efforts, effective early intervention has been shown to improve outcomes for youth.

When implemented well, with ongoing data-driven adjustments and fidelity to a health and development centered approach, youth diversion programs can equitably reduce the negative consequences and social costs associated with justice system involvement. Effective youth diversion can also reduce systems costs and improve public safety.⁴

The Los Angeles County Solution: A Model for Youth Diversion & Development

The newly established Youth Diversion and Development division (YDD) of the Los Angeles County Department of Health Service's Office of Diversion and Reentry will advance a coordinated, comprehensive, and evidence-informed model of youth diversion that empowers community-based organizations as the primary providers of youth diversion and development services countywide.

Community providers who receive YDD contracts will receive funding; connection to local partners for referral; ongoing tailored capacity-building; and other resources for data collection, evaluation, and communication of results.

Once a diversion partnership has been established, law enforcement agencies will refer eligible and suitable youth to their partnering community-based provider in lieu of arrest or citation and in alignment with YDD guidelines.

Diversion providers will then carry out or refer clients to individualized developmentally appropriate community-based services, including but not limited to: youth development and enrichment activities; case management, care coordination, and systems navigation; trauma-responsive preventive services and treatment for physical, mental health, and substance abuse needs; housing and transportation support; educational and vocational support; credible mentorship; family engagement and support; and restorative or transformative justice practices.

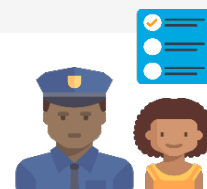


1.

The Youth Diversion & Development division of the Office of Diversion & Reentry will provide countywide coordination and contracting for youth diversion services.

2.

Law enforcement refers eligible youth to community-based diversion partners in lieu of arrest or citation.



3.

Community partners conduct intake assessment, develop individual diversion & development plan, link youth to services.



4.

Upon successful completion of diversion, no permanent arrest or criminal record exists.



5.

Diversion partners communicate regularly and collect data needed to inform improvement and assess progress.



Suggested Citation:

Schooley, T. 2017. Youth Diversion in Los Angeles County: Advancing Evidence-Informed Policy to Improve Youth Outcomes.

References:

¹ A Roadmap for Advancing Youth Diversion in Los Angeles County: Report to the Board of Supervisors by the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee Youth Diversion Subcommittee and the Chief Executive Office. 2017.

² California Department of Justice youth arrest data for all reporting law enforcement jurisdictions requested and analyzed by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention. 2016.

³ Herz, D., Chan, K., Leap, J., Rivas, L., Putnam-Hornstein, E., McCroskey, J. 2017. The Los Angeles County Juvenile Probation Outcomes Study: Part II.

⁴ Human Impact Partners. 2017. Reducing Youth Arrests Keeps Kids Healthy and Successful: A Health Analysis of Youth Arrest.

⁵ Visuals developed with icons adapted from Freepik via www.flaticon.com.

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