

PROBATION EDUCATION SERVICES ANNOUNCE PATHWAY TO BACHELOR DEGREES FOR YOUTH

PROBATION EDUCATION SERVICES ASSISTS YOUTH IN ACCOMPLISHING EDUCATION GOALS

Los Angeles County Probation Department's Education Services is excited to announce the establishment of a pathway for young people to earn their bachelor's degree while detained. To date, four young people have received their Associate of Arts degree during their stay at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall, and one is currently in the process of starting his journey to obtaining his bachelor's degree.

While creating a pathway to a bachelor's degree for incarcerated youth was challenging, Probation Education Services Senior Director Dr. Jesus Corral, Program Manager Rahman Williams, and the Probation Education Services team were determined to discover a path. Therefore, they prioritized the matter by meeting with various individuals and entities who could assist in the efforts. After extensive research, the Department of Rehabilitation was the perfect match for a collaboration like this.

Dr. Corral and Mr. Williams met with the Department of Rehab numerous times at their offices. They also met at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall to strategize how probation youth could fit into their service model, precisely, their four-year college degree program. They first educated the Department of Rehab staff on the needs of our justice-involved population and identified how this specialized educational pathway would be executed. The Department of Rehab staff then met with the youth who had previously earned their AA. They conducted assessments and created Individual Plans for Employment (IPE). The IPEs identified the youth's career goals and narrowed down colleges they could apply to pursue the degree needed for that specific career. Probation Ed and Department of Rehab staff assisted them in applying to the identified schools and for financial aid. Upon acceptance, the plan is for them to begin their journey of obtaining their bachelor's degree through the school's online program.

After earning his AA, Youth Johnson* is the first of many to pursue his bachelor's degree while at BJNH. With a support team consisting of Probation Education Services and the Department of Rehabilitation, Mr. Johnson identified and applied to four universities: Oregon State, Chico State, AZ State University, and Southern New Hampshire University; all had online bachelor's Programs. His dream school was Oregon State, and when the acceptance letter from Oregon State University arrived, he was elated. Mr. Johnson accepted the offer and is scheduled to start classes in Spring 2023. He is proud to be an Oregon State Beaver. He told staff that he felt all his efforts mattered. LA County Probation is excited that Mr. Johnson is their first youth to journey on the pathway to a bachelor's degree. They are confident that there will be others following down the same path in the not-too-distant future.

The Department of Rehab has committed to covering the youth's college tuition, books, and a laptop. Along with Probation Education Services, they have also agreed to provide them direct support throughout their entire college process. The pathway was piloted with Youth Johnson and found to work. The same process will be implemented going forward with the youth that earn their AA and express an interest in pursuing a bachelor's degree.

"I'm excited that we were able to figure out how we could help them by bridging the gap and getting them excited about the application process," Mr. Williams shared. "We want the youth to feel like every other young person applying to schools, getting acceptance letters, and having something to look forward to beyond an associate degree."



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Often, youth would leave after acquiring their AA. However, now with juvenile realignment and the Probation Department providing care for Secure Youth Track Facility young people, adult-charged youth, and longer-term youth, it is important for Probation Education Services to have a replicable post-secondary educational plan in place. Moreover, it is essential to develop a process that allows the young person to have a voice in their study area and the college in which they would like to enroll.

"The type of degree and schools are based on the young person's pathway and what they want to do. Then, when they transition back into the community, they'll have the education, degree, and training to join the workforce," expressed Dr. Corral.

Juvenile realignment allows Probation Education Services the additional time to support and assist the youth in setting and accomplishing education goals and elevating them to new academic levels. Currently, forty-four students are enrolled in the BJJNH college program. Some students are in high school and concurrently enrolled.

"I believe that with the support system we have in place in the probation department through Probation Ed Services, young people earning college degrees will be commonplace. They will be with us longer, and we will be able to support them," shared Dr. Corral. "We expect more college graduates by the end of the fall semester. The future is bright for the young people that are supported by Probation."

"Our priority has been to provide our youth with a pathway to a four-year degree. Our partnership with the Department of Rehabilitation closes that gap. It is a very exciting addition to our already robust college program," said Mr. Williams.

College courses are currently being offered at all probation sites. However, the BJJNH program stands apart. Because of the time the SYTF youth are with Probation, staff can design an educational plan where they are provided a pathway to pursue an associate's and bachelor's degree. In addition, other graduates, concurrent and short-term students enrolled in the college program, are also exposed to higher education with the hopes that a seed is planted that motivates them to continue their education upon release.

"It's exciting working with the Department of Rehab and creating a model for the entire state in terms of how to provide postsecondary programming for youth that were previously going to youth authority," expressed Corral. "This is an opportunity to prepare young people for success when they transition home over the next few years. I'm looking forward to great things, and I think we have just scratched the surface. The best is yet to come."

Los Angeles County Probation Department's Educational Services team and the Department of Rehabilitation are dedicated to the continuous support of justice-involved young people and their higher educational endeavors. They not only support them while incarcerated, but the same team maintains contact with them after their release to provide support and encouragement once they return to the community. Congratulations to both teams for forging this pathway to success. Most of all, congratulations to the youth who have decided to pursue higher education and earn a bachelor's degree.

Probation News

"We wanted to make sure it was a process that was replicable. And the Department of rehabilitation is in the business of removing barriers to employment. So, they were a perfect partner for us."

- Probation Education Services Senior Director
Dr. Jesus Corral

