

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
PROBATION DEPARTMENT
DIRECTIVE

No.:	1480
Issued:	10/19/2022
Post Until:	11/19/2022

SUBJECT: SAFE YOUTH ZONE INITIATIVE

This policy provides instructions for Probation staff regarding the expansion of the County of Los Angeles' existing Safe Youth Zone Initiative at Probation's work locations for persons seeking a safe space from exploiters and/or abusers.

Background

On June 9, 2020, the County Board of Supervisors (Board) approved expansion of the existing Safe Youth Zone Initiative to various law enforcement agencies, medical centers and medical facilities, and other County departments.

Safe Youth Zones provide a network of temporary havens for any youth who faces a potentially threatening situation and needs a safe place to go, particularly those in danger from commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and abuse. These youth often have no place to go for assistance and are at-risk of returning to unsafe spaces, traffickers, or other situations where they may be subjected to more abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation. Safe Youth Zones allow youth to proactively identify safe places to go whenever necessary and appropriately connect with medical or basic-need services.

For this policy, "youth" shall be defined as anyone under the age of twenty-five (25) years. This policy sets no restrictions on the age of any person who seeks Probation's assistance regardless of the work location/facility where they may seek aid and assistance.

All Probation work locations/facilities (i.e., area offices, juvenile halls, camps, Probation headquarters, and other facilities) are designated as Safe Youth Zones and will display large metallic Safe Youth Zone signs in highly visible areas outside of public entrances.

Probation Staff Responsibilities

When a youth seeks assistance at a Probation work location/facility, on-site staff, regardless of position, title, or assignment, must assist the youth until they are deemed safe, and the matter transferred to the appropriate authority (e.g., the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), law enforcement, first responders such as paramedics or the Department of Mental Health's Psychiatric Mobile Response Team, etc.). Should staff feel uncomfortable or unsafe approaching a youth, they should refer the matter to a supervisor or manager.

Probation staff response to a request for assistance should include:

- Alert the work location/facility manager or designee and on-site security personnel of the situation.

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- Ensure that the youth is taken to a safe and/or private location at the facility/worksites that is outside of the viewing and hearing range of the public.
- Assess for additional immediate resources that may be required (e.g., medical care, access to a telephone, law enforcement notification, etc.) and summon appropriate care as the situation warrants.
- Call the jurisdictional law enforcement agency and immediately notify the work location/facility manager or designee and security personnel when the youth reports that they are the victim of a crime and/or are in imminent threat or fear of violence.
- Obtaining emergency assistance by contacting Emergency 911 when the youth require immediate medical attention that cannot be provided at the work location/facility.
- If abuse/exploitation is suspected or reported, immediately call the DCFS Child Protection Hotline at 800-540-4000 (youth is under 18 years of age).

For youth who are suspected victims of commercial sexual exploitation, the DCFS Child Protection Hotline will initiate the First Responder Protocol (FRP). The FRP involves a collaborative, ninety (90) minute response by DCFS and/or Probation when one of the participating law enforcement agencies responds to a call or incident involving a youth who has been identified as being the victim of commercial sexual exploitation. Youth will be encouraged to remain in the Safe Youth Zone until the first responders arrive.

- Provide youth with reasonable and available accommodation to the extent possible including water, food/snacks, clothing, and blankets needed for the youth to feel comfortable while waiting for responders to arrive. Youth may seem uncooperative, agitated, and/or emotionally upset. These behaviors may reflect a history of traumatic experiences. It is important for staff to demonstrate a caring presence, remain courteous and patient, and attempt to offer assistance regardless of a youth's presenting behavior.

Probation work location/facility manager is responsible for:

- Immediately notify the Bureau Chief by providing an initial summary of the Safe Youth Zone request and response.
- Provide guidance to on-site staff and ensure that all notifications as outlined in this policy are completed.
- Upon suspecting and/or learning that the youth is or may be a victim of sexual exploitation, contact or appoint a designee to contact Probation's Child Trafficking Unit (CTU) via email at childtrafficking@probation.lacounty.gov and via CTU's 24-hour hotline at (562) 445-6413. The notification must include the youth's name, date of birth, and a description of the Safe Youth Zone incident.
- Maintain the attached Excel Monthly Safe Youth Zone Tracking Log (Attachment 1).

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- Email the Log within 2 business days to the Bureau Chief or designee, who will then submit it by email to childtrafficking@probation.lacounty.gov by the 10th day of the following month.

Training and Resources

The County has a variety of Safe Youth Zone Initiative educational and informational resources available:

- Mandatory training (video) for all Probation staff through the County Department of Human Resources Learning Link.
- Safe Youth Zone poster (in both English and Spanish) that describes sex and labor trafficking as a form of child abuse. Posters will be provided for lobbies of each Probation work location/facility.
- Metallic Safe Youth Zone signs will be affixed in a visibly conspicuous location near the public entrances of each Probation work location/facility.
- Safe Youth Zone Initiative Quick Reference Guide (Attachment 2) outlining the essential steps for staff to take when a youth enters a Probation work location/facility and requests assistance or who is suspected of being a victim of human trafficking and/or commercial sexual exploitation.

Questions or concerns regarding this policy shall be emailed to childtrafficking@probation.lacounty.gov



Karen L. Fletcher, Chief Deputy
Adult and Juvenile Services

Monthly Safe Youth Zone Tracking Log

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Submit this log by email to childtrafficking@probation.lacounty.gov by the 10th day of the following month.

SAFE **YOUTH** ZONE



The Safe Youth Zone initiative is a way to ensure temporary haven for any youth who faces a potentially threatening situation and needs a place to go, particularly those in danger from human trafficking and abuse. Oftentimes these youth have no place to go for help and end up going back to unsafe spaces, exploiters, traffickers, or other situations where they may be subjected to more abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation.

KEY STEPS: Los Angeles County Probation Department

Human Trafficking and Exploitation

- CSEC is child abuse
- Trading sex to meet basic needs is exploitation
- Exploitation happens to boys, trans, and gender non-confirming youth, too
- Exploitation also includes labor trafficking, the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person to work, including illegal work like selling drugs

Young adults 18+ can also be victims of exploitation

1

Youth comes into a Safe Youth Zone site. Take youth to a designated private space in the facility and/or alert staff member who can assess for any immediate resources that may be required (medical care, law enforcement notification, etc.)



Report suspected child abuse to the LA County Child Protection Hotline
1-800-540-4000



2

Provide youth with a safe, secure location to wait for responders to arrive. Provide water and snacks, along with any clothing/blankets needed for the youth to feel comfortable, to the extent possible.



3

WARNING SIGNS FOR EXPLOITATION

Exploitation happens to youth of all genders. Many youth are trafficked because they are easy targets, and LGBTQI+ youth often feel isolated and alone. This makes them more vulnerable to exploitation of all kinds. Sex and labor trafficking are the most severe forms of exploitation and can happen simultaneously.

- Provocative, sexualized clothing or clothing that is not consistent with the season
- Tattoos, branding or scarring (i.e., crowns, references to money, \$, loyalty)
- Substance use interferes with their functioning
- Shows other signs of abuse or neglect (i.e. unexplained bruises or other physical trauma)
- Secrecy regarding intimate partners, friends, associates
- Fearful of exploiter, partner, caregiver, or employer
- Seems afraid to answer questions or appears agitated
- Not in control of personal identification
- Conversation seems scripted
- Youth is exchanging sex for money or material goods, including food, shelter, drugs, clothing, basic needs for themselves or someone else
- Uses language that suggests exploitation (i.e., "the life", "the game", "track/blade")
- Runaway and/or homeless

Additional Agency Steps

SAFE YOUTH ZONE: Safe Youth Zone is a way to ensure temporary haven for any youth/non-minor dependent (NMD) who faces a potentially threatening situation and needs a place to go, particularly those in danger from human trafficking and abuse. Often these youth have no place to go for help and end up going back to unsafe spaces, traffickers, or other situations whether they may be subjected to more abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation.

Protocol:

When a youth in trouble seeks help at a designated Safe Youth Zone, the following protocol will be initiated:



1. Youth seeks help at a designated Safe Youth Zone location. (Youth may not specifically ask for help, but staff should approach any unaccompanied young person/NMD as someone who potentially needs assistance).
2. Probation staff takes the youth to a private location in the Area Office/Institution and alerts the Area Office Director/Institutions Superintendent/designee who will assess for additional immediate resources that may be required (medical care, access to a telephone, law enforcement notification, etc.).
 - a. If the youth/NMD reports an *imminent threat* of violence, call Area Office/Institution security personnel or the jurisdictional law enforcement agency for assistance.
 - b. If the youth/NMD requires immediate medical attention that cannot be provided at the Area Office/Institution, transport youth to hospital or call 911 for assistance.
 - c. If the youth is a minor (under 18 years of age), or if they disclose that they are a NMD, immediately call the Child Protection Hotline at 800-540-4000 to report child abuse/neglect if suspected.
 - d. If it is suspected that the youth is CSE, contact the Child Trafficking Unit at childtrafficking@probation.lacounty.gov or at (562) 445-6413 with a description of the Safe Youth Zone incident, along with the name of the youth/NMD, date of birth, and age. CTU will then provide additional assistance.
3. Area Office Director/Institutions Superintendent/designee then provides youth/NMD with a safe, secure location to wait for responders to arrive.
 - a. While youth is waiting, Area Office staff provides water and snacks, along with any clothing/blankets needed for the youth to feel comfortable, to the extent possible. (Note that youth may seem uncooperative or agitated. These behaviors may reflect a history of traumatic experiences. Staff must remain courteous, patient and attempt to offer assistance regardless of youth's language and/or behavior.)
 - b. For youth who are suspected victims of CSE, DCFS Child Protection Hotline (CPH) will initiate the First Responder Protocol (FRP). The FRP involves a collaborative, ninety (90) minute response by DCFS and/or Probation, a specialized CSEC advocate, and law enforcement if needed. Youth will remain in the Safe Youth Zone until the FRP responders arrive. For youth who are not suspected of CSEC, DCFS CPH will initiate their standard response protocol.