



**CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL
Youth Justice Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 28 2026
1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

Call to Order, Roll Call, Announcements

Co-Chair Harris convened the meeting and welcomed attendees. She also welcomed three new committee members: Hon. Sharonda Bradford, a Los Angeles County Superior Court Commissioner who currently sits in the Compton Courthouse; Butte County Probation Chief Melissa Romero and Yolo County Probation Chief Rachelle Gayton. Staff then provided instructions to committee members for participation and for public comment and took roll. The following members were present: Co-Chair Brooke Harris, Co-Chair Katherine Lucero, Dr. Carly Dierkhising, Virginia Corrigan, Frankie Guzman, Danielle Lowe, Rosalinda Vint, Elizabeth Calvin, Chief Jennifer Branning, Hon. Sharonda Bradford, Hon. Tilisha Martin, Chief Rachelle Gayton, and Chief Melissa Romero.

The following members were not present: Diana Becton, Juan Gamez, Kasey Halcon, Tyee Griffith.

Action Item: Approve September 3, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Co-Chair Lucero moved to approve the September 2025 meeting minutes and member Virginia Corrigan seconded the motion. Members Romero and Gayton abstained. The minutes were approved.

Co-Chair Updates

Co-Chair Harris shared updates on two bills that passed in 2025 that members should be aware of. The first was AB 118 which restructured the funding formula for JJRBG. The restructuring helps to support the vision of realignment by providing resources to counties that use less restrictive programs and community-based alternatives. The new formula recognizes that building effective alternatives requires investment, and that counties that transfer youth to LRPs, especially community-based programs, receive larger allocations, which can then be reinvested to sustain and expand the services. She also shared that there are resources and trainings available to help stakeholders understand the changes. The second bill Co-Chair Harris provided an update on was AB 1376 that limits the term of community probation supervision to one year. Any community probation supervision longer than 12 months requires holding a noticed hearing and making specific findings. She noted that this represents a major shift in California and it is important for us to educate the public about the change in law.

Co-Chair Lucero acknowledged the recent departure of the third YJC Co-Chair, San Luis Obispo County Probation Chief Robert Reyes. She noted that the goal was to identify a third Co-Chair to serve in addition to herself, as a member of the Child Welfare Council and Director of OYCR and Co-Chair Harris who represents a youth justice advocacy and community lens.

She encouraged members with system leadership experience, including Probation Chiefs and members of the Bench to consider volunteering to serve as Co-Chair during the March 11th meeting.

Updates on prior YJC deliverables: Step Downs and Alternatives to Incarceration; Higher Education and Vocational Training; and Community Based Organization Capacity Building

Co-Chair Lucero first shared an update on the priority area involving Step Downs and Alternatives to Incarceration. She acknowledged that the Youth Justice Committee's work for the past few years has been reviewing and providing feedback on the stepping home model briefs that were developed through a partnership between OYCR and UCLA's Luskin School of Public Affairs. She noted that the next phase of work is to focus on implementation of the model, which OYCR is working to design a plan for in partnership with UCLA, through an Implementation Science lens.

Co-Chair Lucero then shared work OYCR is supporting related to LRPs to increase awareness and shared understanding of Less Restrictive Programs and build capacity for expansion statewide. To that end, OYCR has developed a new document outlining the definition of LRPs. She also noted that OYCR keeps a current inventory to the best of their ability and based on what is shared with OYCR of LRPs across the state. She shared that OYCR hired LRP subject matter expert Angeles Zaragoza, who has been contracted to develop the LRP continuum across the state and provide support through OYCR's current partnership with 10 counties to develop LRPs.

Co-Chair Lucero also shared an update regarding Higher Education and Vocational Training. In partnership with OYCR, and based on feedback from the Youth Justice Committee, Forward Change has produced two higher education reports for publication. The first was Higher Education Access for Youth in the SYTFs. Forward Change then presented a second report, which this committee reviewed and provided feedback on, in June of 2025, and again in September. This is a comprehensive report focused on preventing juvenile legal involvement and ensuring successful school reentry, entitled Fewer Chutes, More Ladders. She noted that the second report would be published soon and had received all necessary approvals.

Other ongoing work happening in this area for OYCR, includes the Education Advisory Committee, which meets monthly and enjoys sustained public interest and engagement. The committee addresses topics around youth who are involved in some capacity with the youth justice system and works to ensure their educational goals are supported.

Finally, Co-Chair Lucero provided an update on the Youth Employment Initiative, which is a partnership between OYCR and the Department of Rehabilitation. OYCR is collaborating with Probation and County Offices of Education to identify eligible youth between the ages of 14 and 25, and connect them to specialized educational and vocational services aimed at removing barriers. The initiative is designed to support youth in pursuit of educational and vocational services that can lead to the employment and career opportunities of their choice. She shared that as of January 2026, 240 youth have been referred to DOR and are receiving supportive services under this initiative.

OYCR Systems Change and Equity Division Chief Marcia Rincon Gallardo presented updates for the committee in the area of Community Based Organization Capacity Building. She shared that the CBO Capacity Building Workgroup had made significant progress since its formation in 2022, and produced meaningful deliverables such as the CalAIM guide for CBOs seeking

information about reimbursement. She noted that as the workgroup entered a new phase in the work, it was going to be run autonomously by CBO leaders within the group.

Kindful Restoration Executive Director Ernesto Rodriguez, whose organization was a recipient of one of the CBO Capacity Building Initiative Grants, described the capacity building his organization was able to do as a result of the grant funds. This increased capacity helped Kindful Restoration win multiple contracts to provide services with large agencies, including Riverside County Probation. In Riverside, they currently provide health care services to 239 youth and specialty services to 339 youth.

Presentation + Discussion on YJC Priority Area: Data with a Focus on Outcomes

OYCR Research Data Specialist Melissa Lemus shared an overview of the 2025 AB102 Report, which covers data collected between FY 21-22 and 23-24. She noted that AB 102 was enacted to strengthen data collection related to DJJ's realignment, and to better understand how youth are moving through the system at the county level. She shared several high level trends but encouraged members and other participants to view the full report on OYCR's website for full context. Key trends included an increase in DJJ commitments from 237 to 386, though it is important to note that the part of the increase, particularly for FY 22-23, is driven by the youth returning from DJJ after its closure. She also noted that counties were increasingly using Less Restrictive Programs across the state. Step-downs from SYTF to LRPs increased, suggesting greater use of LRPs, as part of the rehabilitation process for the youth in the state. There were also increases in youth adjudicated for 707B offenses and PC290.008 offenses, a trend that matters because adjudication at this level shapes everything that follows, placement decision, length of stay, and potential exposure to most restrictive system responses. Although the overall transfer to adult court remains low statewide, the data shows some fluctuation across the pre-fiscal years. This represents a shift from the prior decade, when thousands of youths were being transferred annually. Based on the available data, she noted that while the report found no clear evidence of net winding since SB 823, to fully explore that question would require deeper analysis, county-level, length of stay, use of LRPs, and case-level review. With respect to racial disparities, the report found them to be persistent throughout California's juvenile justice system. Black and Hispanic youth remain overrepresented, with disparities widening as youth move deeper into the system, from arrest to adjudication to SYTF commitments and transfer decisions. While a smaller number, American Indian and Alaska Native youth, show similar patterns to this disproportionate involvement. She completed her update by sharing that AB 102 has now sunsetted and as of 2025, OYCR began collecting similar data under AB 169, the successor to AB 102, with submissions required twice a year, one in April and the other in October.

Co-Chair Lucero asked if the post-SB 823 increase could be attributed to post-COVID bounce back. Melissa confirmed that this was one hypothesis that could help explain that trend. Member Elizabeth Calvin asked to clarify if all county probation departments had submitted data. OYCR Data and Research Division Chief Kamilah Holloway explained that in the first year there were 47 counties that had submitted data but that in subsequent years OYCR received all the data. Co-Chair Harris asked about the additional factors beyond COVID that may have attributed to the multi-year trends and Division Chief Holloway shared that there was more work to do at the county-level to explore those trends.

Division Chief Holloway then shared with the committee a presentation about the Juvenile Justice Data Inventory Framework OYCR is developing and why investing in an integrated statewide juvenile justice data model can support transparency, accountability, and better

outcomes for youth. The inventory is intended to create a foundation of consistent, comparable, transparent data across counties and systems. It is fueled by the data OYCR collects as part of its statutory role in overseeing multiple juvenile justice reforms and funding streams, including the AB 102 and AB 169 data regarding 707B and 290.008 adjudications, transfers from SYTFs to LRPs, and adult court outcomes. Additionally, OYCR evaluates submissions for the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act Youthful Offender Block Grant, Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant, the Juvenile Re-entry Grant, and other DJJ realignment data submissions. The inventory includes more than 40 datasets organized into 3 domains; California and OYCR juvenile justice data; National juvenile justice data; and social, economic, and environmental data. Together, these domains allow OYCR to understand not just system activity, but the broader context influencing youth justice involvement. In addition to the data OYCR collects from counties, as part of CHHS, the agency can responsibly integrate health and human services data, such as Medi-Cal Behavioral Health metrics, foster care metrics, juvenile dependency measures, homelessness indicators. National Juvenile Justice Data Sources that allow California to benchmark progress and identify trends include the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the DOJ's National Juvenile Arrest and Court Data Archives. The VERA Institute data, and sources like Kids Count can help ensure that the work aligns with national best practices. Family support, school climate, community stressors, economic hardship, and policing exposure are key domains influencing justice involvement. OYCR is working to embed these domains into the inventory in order to comprehensively examine disparities.

Division Chief Holloway explained that the inventory will support standardized reporting, improved data quality, and legislative transparency, as well as bolster research and cross-system collaboration. It will also serve as the backbone for OYCR to create dashboards and analytical tools with actionable insights for both state and local partners. Counties will benefit through clear expectations and access to standardized tools and data that supports local continuous quality improvement. Next steps are to create a metadata dictionary, develop crosswalks across the reporting streams, and finally, build out the statewide OYCR dashboard, involve stakeholder engagement, to gather feedback from counties and partners to ensure that the data model is practical, usable, and aligned with real-world needs. She then shared a visual and brief walkthrough of how the combined datasets could be used to look across different areas and identify trajectories.

Co-Chair Harris asked if the DOJ dataset was included and Division Chief Holloway confirmed that it was. She further asked if California's DOJ data would be included. Member Dr. Carly Dierkhising asked if the dashboard would include individual level data. Division Chief Holloway explained that for external use the dashboard would only display aggregate-level data that allowed for county by county, county to state level comparisons. Dr. Dierkhising noted that it was important to note that the dashboard wouldn't be talking about specific kids and their trajectories but what was happening more generally in a specific area or region. She asked an additional question about the level of buy-in from counties to be contributing data and noted the complexities of collecting data from multiple sources within the same county. Division Chief Holloway explained that the sources identified so far were based on required reporting elements from counties and publicly available data. She also noted that stakeholder engagement about what would be most useful to counties was an important step in the work. Member Elizabeth Calvin asked if the intention was to be able to view the data by county and Division Chief Holloway confirmed that it was. Member Calvin asked what would appear if a given data set was redacted due to the size of the data set and Holloway said the intention was to make it clear through the display and dashboard design when data was redacted due to small sample size. Member Calvin went on to note that the agency rules about redaction were based in health

practices and in critical ways not appropriate for what we're doing in the youth justice system, given that some of the most serious outcomes for youth are very small numbers. It prevents stakeholders, including OYCR from being able to fully analyze what's going on.

Co-Chair Harris invited the committee to consider how the data inventory framework or dashboard could be a focus of their work. One example she offered was the possibility of using data available through a tool like this to provide evidence for litigating instances of racial bias in the court system under the Racial Justice Act. Co-Chair Lucero raised the possibility of tracking literacy and education-related data, including from court schools, looking at disparities in those outcomes, and suggested including the Cradle to Career data from CHHS in the inventory. Co-Chair Harris raised a question from the chat if type of crime would be collected and available for analysis in the tool and Division Chief Holloway confirmed that it would.

Co-Chair Harris suggested as a next step that Division Chief Holloway continue to bring questions and updates on the work of the inventory and dashboard to the committee so they could serve as a stakeholder group in informing its development. Co-Chair Lucero asked members if this body of work felt like the right focus for a deliverable in the priority area they have identified of Data with Focus on outcomes. Dr. Dierkhising appreciated the work to bring together the data to a centralized place and that it was much needed, but also noted the ongoing struggle to be able to analyze what's happening at the individual level for youth and families who are touching the system and receiving services. As an example, she asked about what kind of data is being collected by organizations like Kindful Restoration that highlights the impact of those services on youth and families. She emphasized the need to have more insight into how individual young people are impacted by system responses and the services they receive. Co-Chair Lucero thanked Dr. Dierkhising and noted that the committee may want to consider a pilot with a small number of CBOs and/or counties who might be willing to provide this type of data.

Presentation + Discussion on YJC Priority Area: Diversion

OYCR County Liaison Cecilia Simmons highlighted some of OYCR's current work around diversion by first offering definitions for pre-arrest diversion and post-contact or court-referred diversion. Pre-arrest diversion is where law enforcement encounters are redirected towards community-based organizations before any formal charges, court involvement or detention occurs. In these models, law enforcement serves as a referral point while CBOs lead the intervention. Court-referred or post-contact diversion refers to programs and interventions offered after a youth has had formal contact with the juvenile justice system but before or instead of a deeper system contact. This model typically includes diversion that occurs after the arrest or citation and after the referral to probation. While court-referred or post-contact diversion reduces confinement and formal adjudication, they do not prevent system contact and often involve continued court or probation oversight as a condition. In 2025, OYCR had the opportunity to partner with the Council of State Governments (CSG). California is one of six states, working on the Collaborative for Youth and Public Safety Initiative. Through that work, OYCR decided that one of their focus areas, was law enforcement referred and CBO-led diversion. She then shared a snapshot of different funding that has occurred throughout the state, past and current to support diversion. Proposition 47 involved \$167 million that was awarded to 23 grantees. These funds have supported front-end diversion, behavioral health, and community-led programs that reduce justice system involvement. The SEC Tribal Youth Diversion Grant Program supported culturally grounded community-based diversion for tribal youth. She also noted the SB 823 county plans, as well as the YOBG plans, include varied county-level approaches to diversion. She shared examples of two organizations demonstrating promising practices around diversion: Centinela Youth Services in LA, focused on restorative justice and diversion and victim-offender mediation. They represent a strong model of law

enforcement-referred, CBO-led diversion. She also highlighted the Ridley Peace Building Initiative in the Central Valley in Fresno County. Their approach is that they get a referral from Ridley Police, pre-booking or adjudication and the restorative justice coordinator at Kings County Canyon Unified School District receives the referral. The youth can decide, if they want to move forward. If they complete it, then there's no citation or booking, it is completely voluntary. She shared possible next steps for the diversion work in California: scaling up on CBO-led diversion pilots through statewide coordination; more technical assistance to strengthen pre-arrest diversion and law enforcement referrals; elevate local success stories to replicate across the regions; and continuing cross-agency planning to expand early intervention capacity statewide.

Kindful Restoration CEO Ernesto Rodriguez, whose organization focuses on diversion, has been able to create sustainability for that work through CalAIM and Medi-Cal funding. He shared how his organization does both formal and informal diversion work, working with youth who are currently in detention who participate in their programs, to youth who have not yet had formal system involvement. He also shared the pillars of how they work with young people and details about their wraparound service programs.

Co-Chair Lucero thanked the presenters and encouraged the committee to continue thinking about what deliverable they would like to produce in this area might look like and that the committee would revisit this in the next meeting.

Public Comment

Nicole Morris from Outdoor Outreach shared that her organization does a lot of juvenile diversion work in the San Diego area. She asked for a resource or list of other organizations doing work similar to what Kindful Restoration does in the state. Co-Chairs Harris and Lucero suggested she contact the OYCR email and to contact Marcia Rincon Gallardo directly for more information.

Adjourn

Co-Chair Harris thanked the members and staff, reminding participants that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday, March 11, 2026. The meeting was adjourned.