

Child Welfare Council

September 10, 2025



State of California
Child Welfare Council



Housekeeping items

- ***Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act:***
Per the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, CWC Members who are participating remotely must be visible on camera during the open portion of the meeting, unless it is technologically impracticable to do so. If you are unable to be on camera, please indicate so in the Zoom chat.
- *Council Members attending via Zoom – Please **rename** yourself as follows:
First Last – Member (i.e., Jane Smith – Member)*
- *Please **remain on mute** when not presenting or planning to speak.*

Options for Member Comments

1. If virtual, “Raise Hand”

2. If in person, seek recognition of the Co-Chairs by raising your hand and wait for the microphone before speaking

Options for Public Comment

1. Members of the public participating **in person** may seek to make comments during the Public Comment portion of the meeting by letting one of the meeting staff know
2. Members of the public **participating virtually** should raise their hand in Zoom if they want to make a comment during the Public Comment portion of the meeting

Child Welfare Council

September 10th, 2025



State of California
Child Welfare Council



Call to Order

Justice Laurie Earl, Co-Chair
Sect. Kim Johnson, Co-Chair



State of California
Child Welfare Council



ANNOUNCEMENTS



State of California
Child Welfare Council



PUBLIC COMMENT



State of California
Child Welfare Council



Options for Public Comments

1. Members of the public participating **in person** may seek to make comments during the Public Comment portion of the meeting by letting one of the meeting staff know
2. Members of the public **participating virtually** should raise their hand in Zoom if they want to make a comment during the Public Comment portion of the meeting

INFORMATION ITEM

OYCR Ombudsman Report

Katherine Lucero, OYCR Director



State of California
Child Welfare Council



2024

OYCR Ombudsperson Report to the Legislature

Presented by Alisa Hartz,
Ombudsperson
JUNE 2025

Ombuds Division Duties



Receive, investigate, and where possible **resolve complaints** relating to youth in local juvenile facilities



Provide regular reports to the Legislature about numbers, trends, issues, & recommendations



Educate youth, families, and other stakeholders **on the Youth Bill of Rights**



Visit every local juvenile facility at least once annually

Timeline of Key Milestones

SB 823 (Stats. 2020, c. 337) created OYCR and granted the Ombudsperson authority to investigate complaints from youth, families, and staff.	SB 187 (Stats. 2022, c. 50) expanded the Ombudsperson's authority by granting access to youth and records, outlining requirements, prioritizing hiring individuals with youth justice experience, and more.	The Ombuds Helpline was launched, and poster distribution to facilities began.	AB 2417 (Stats. 2022, c. 786) established California's first Youth Bill of Rights for youth in facilities and tasked OYCR with distributing the materials in consultation with youth and advocacy groups.	AB 505 (Stats. 2023, c. 528) strengthened the Ombudsperson's investigative powers by granting access to youth, facilities, records, and court files without a court order, and requiring annual facility visits.
July 1, 2021	July 1, 2022	September 1, 2022	January 1, 2023	January 1, 2024

The Youth Bill of Rights

Together with a diverse group of stakeholders, OYCR developed Youth Bill of Rights publications to inform youth of their rights under existing law and regulation, as codified in Welf. & Inst. Code sec. 224.71. Copies must be provided to youth and parents/guardians on orientation and be posted in classrooms, living units, and visitation areas.

To request materials (free of charge)

- Call: **1(844) 402-1880**
- Email: OYCRombuds@chhs.ca.gov



In California, we have rules to protect the rights of young people who are in a juvenile hall, camp or other facility. Below is a list of the rights:



Discipline

- **No one is allowed to take away any of the following things from you as a form of discipline or punishment:** food; contact with your parents, family, or attorney; sleep; exercise; education; bedding; clean clothes; religious services; a daily shower; clean water; a toilet; grooming products; medical care; reading materials; and sending or getting mail.
- You have the right to not be locked in a room as a punishment.
- You have the right to be given the rules on discipline. You must be given these rules in writing.
- If someone accuses you of something, you have the right to know what it is, to be heard, to defend yourself by sharing evidence or testimony, and to appeal the discipline decisions.
- You may want to contact your attorney to get their help to defend yourself and appeal discipline decisions.

Phone, Mail, & Visits

- You have the right to make at least two free phone calls within an hour of arrival at a juvenile facility after an arrest.
- You have the right to frequent and continuing contact with your parents, family, and attorney, your attorney, a school or religious advisor.
- You have the right to talk to them on the phone, have them visit you, or send them letters. You may be given access to a computer to connect with your family, but it does not guarantee sending them in person.
- You may be allowed to visit other family members and supportive adults with approval from the facility's Administrative staff.
- Mail that you send or get from family, friends, your attorney, and other supporters will not be opened to search for evidence unless there is a serious risk to the safety and security of the facility, other youth, or the public.

Confidential Contacts

- You have the right to contact your attorney, the Office of Youth and Community Reformation, the Department of Social Services, and other people who work for the government about your rights using visits and what is happening inside the facility. You cannot be punished for contacting them.
- You have the right to make private phone calls, send and receive private mail, and have private visits with your attorney, the Office of Youth and Community Reformation, the Department of Social Services, and other people who work for the government.
- You have the right to have these visits and letters be confidential, which means that the Probation Department is not allowed to listen in on your conversations or looking at or reading mail or letters from these people. The Probation Department can authorize certain staff to open mail from these people only to search for evidence and the mail must be given back to you.

Education

- You have the right to a quality education that follows the state's standards and prepares you for high school graduation, college, and a job.
- You have the right to attend the classes for your grade level and job training.
- You have the right to have access to college, career, and job training programs.
- You have the right to have access to a computer and the internet for school, career, or job training programs.
- You have the right to have access to educational services, even if you are on disciplinary or medical status.
- You have the right to have access to information about the educational programs that are available to you.

Treated equally

- You have the right to be treated fairly and have equal access to all available services including housing, care, treatment, and food.
- You should not be treated unfairly or discriminated against because of your race, ethnicity, ancestry, national origin, language, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital or physical disability, immigration, or HIV status.

Religion and Spiritual

- You have the right to practice your religion or spiritual beliefs, including religious observances and customs.
- You have the right to refuse to take part in religious services or activities.

No abuse

- You should tell your attorney, a trusted adult, a staff person, or your probation officer if you are being abused. You can also call the Office of Youth and Community Reformation Ombudsman at 1-844-402-1880.
- You have the right to not be abused in any way. This includes physical, sexual, emotional, or any other abuse that is intended to punish you by hurting you.

WHAT IS AN OMBUDSPERSON?

A person whose job it is to help you if you are in a juvenile justice facility in California and need help to solve problems about how you are being treated.

The Ombudsman is an independent position holder responsible for investigating complaints and attempting to resolve them for the people involved. As a youth in a juvenile justice facility, you have the right to ask questions of the Office of Youth and Community Reformation Ombudsman. You can file a complaint if your rights have been violated or ignored or you are concerned about the conditions of the facility you are in. You cannot be punished or threatened for making a complaint. If you are not sure how we can help, please call, email, or write to us.

WHO TO CALL ABOUT MY RIGHTS:

If you think your rights are being violated or have concerns with the juvenile justice facility you are in, you have the right to privately contact the Office of Youth and Community Reformation Ombudspersons. You cannot be punished or retaliated against for making a complaint.

- **Helpline:** (844) 402-1880
- **Address:** OYCR Ombudsman, 1215 O Street, MS-08, Sacramento, CA 95814
- **Email:** OYCRombuds@chhs.ca.gov
- **Website:** www.chhs.ca.gov/oycr

Overview



Key Data and
Findings



Sample of
Substantiated
Complaints



Recommendations



Looking Ahead

This report is presented to the Legislature pursuant to Welf. and Inst. Code sec. 2200.5

Highlights 2022-2024



Recruited and hired six-person team



Created Procedures and Case Practices to ensure consistent and robust complaint investigations, and revised them consistent with AB 505 (Stats. 2023 c.528)



Developed and implemented a sophisticated Case Management System to track and document complaint investigations



Developed a telephone helpline to receive complaints and upgraded the system to a sustainable call center product



Developed and disseminated age-appropriate Youth Bill of Rights materials **consistent with AB 2417** (Stats 2022 c.786)



Visited each of the state's juvenile facilities at least once, and some of them multiple times

By the Numbers (2024)

296

Complaints
received

154

Complaints closed

Decline to
investigate – 84

Unsubstantiated – 25

Substantiated – 21

No findings – 18

Inconclusive – 4

Referred out - 2

84

Site visits

5,711

Youth Bill of Rights
posters provided

39,315

Youth Bill of Rights
brochures provided

2,490

Helpline calls (in-
and out-bound)

TABLE 1

Contacts to the Office (2024)

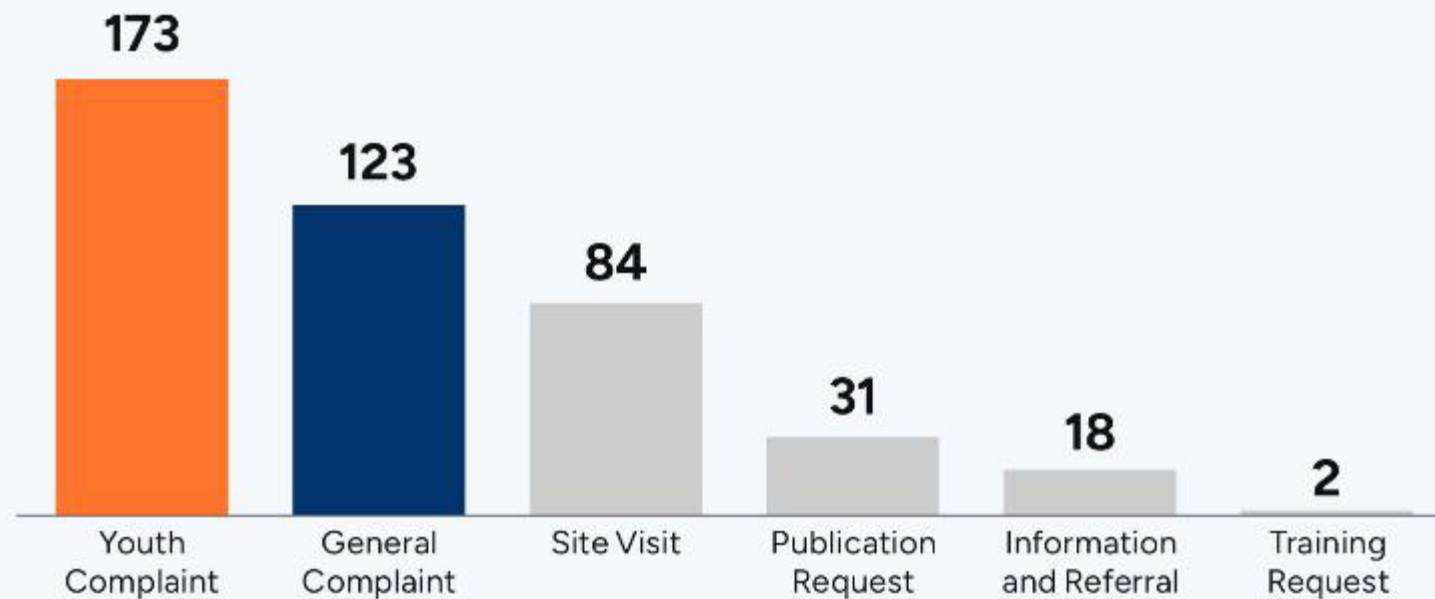


TABLE 2

Race/Ethnicity of Referenced Youth (2024)

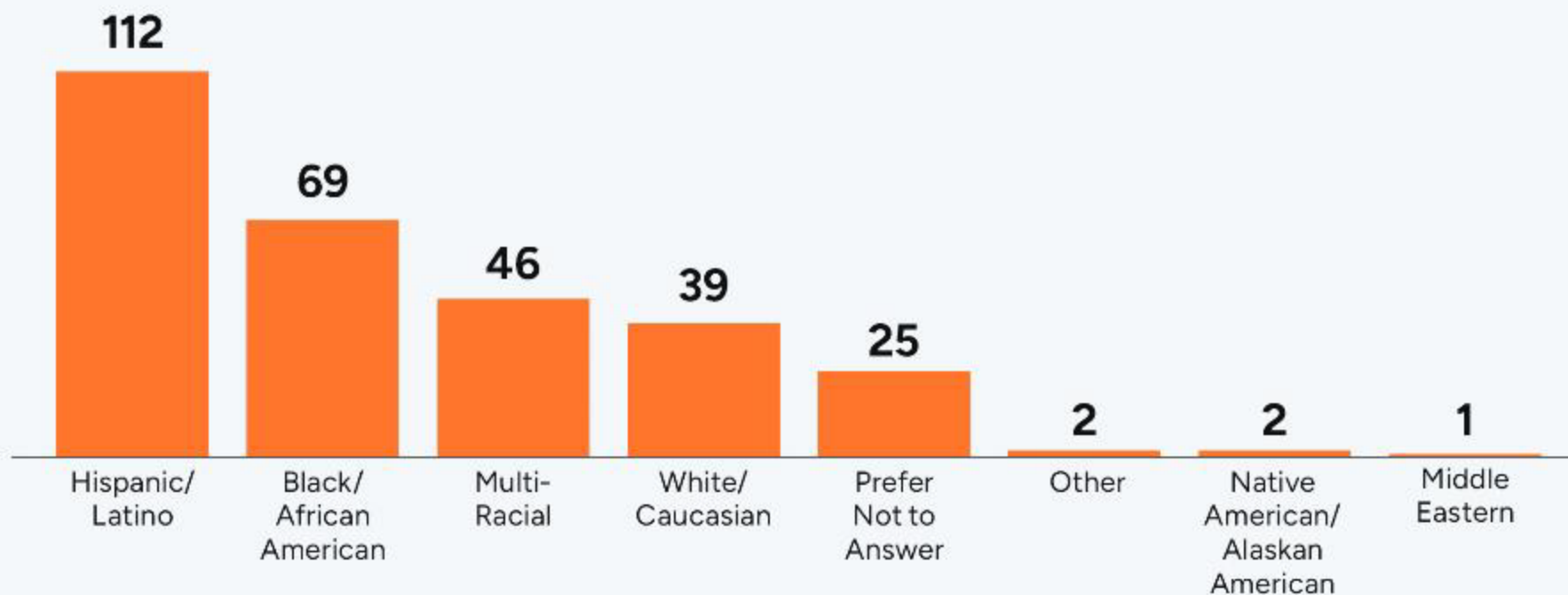


TABLE 3

Referenced Youth in Complaints & CA Youth Wardship Population by Race (2024)

Share of Wardship Population

Black/African American

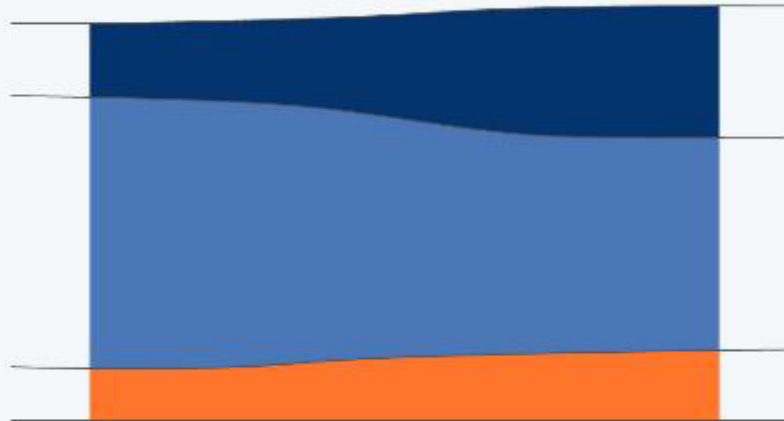
18%

Hispanic or Latino/a/x

65%

White/Caucasian

13%



Share of Complaints

Black/African American

32%

Hispanic or Latino/a/x

51%

White/Caucasian

17%

Source for Wardship Data: [California Department of Justice. \(2024\). *Juvenile Justice in California, 2023* \(Table 20: Juvenile Court Dispositions, p. 77\).](#)

TABLE 4

Gender of Referenced Youth (2024)

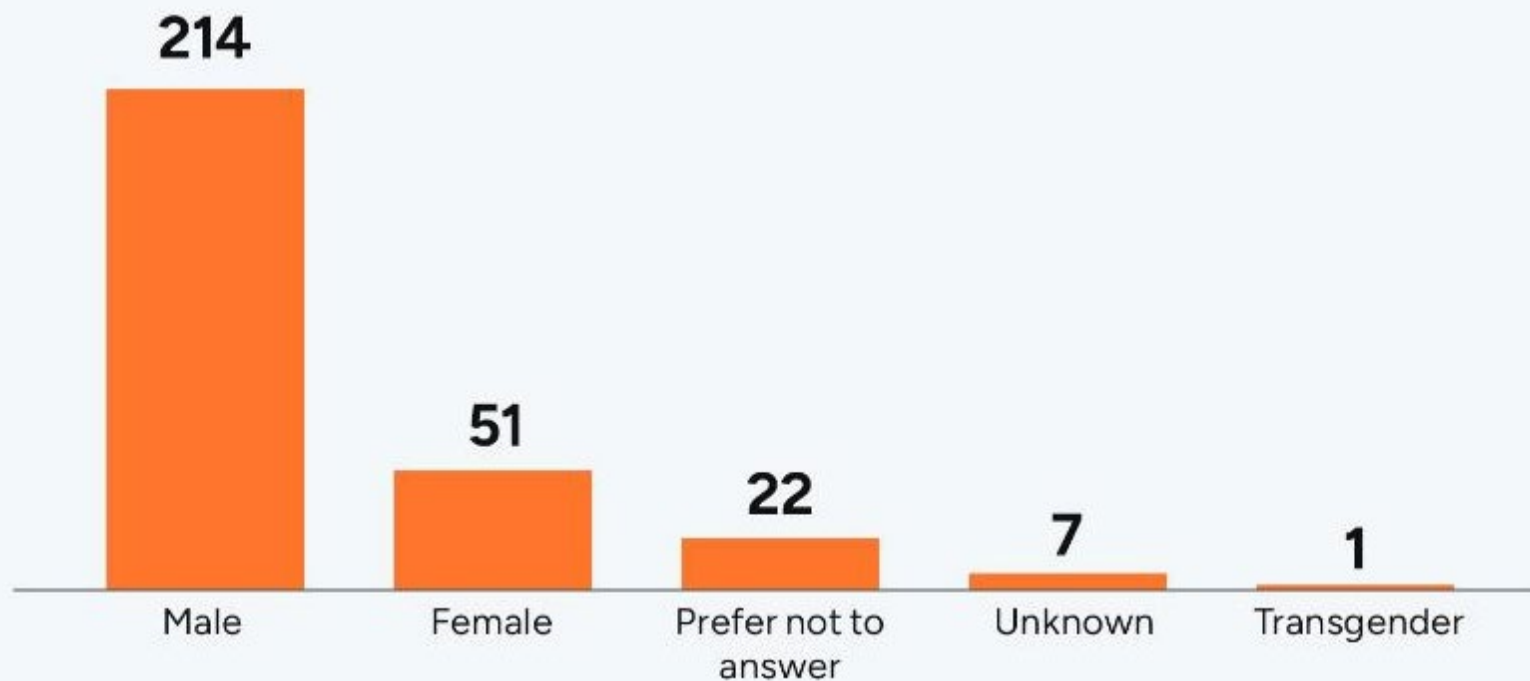


TABLE 5

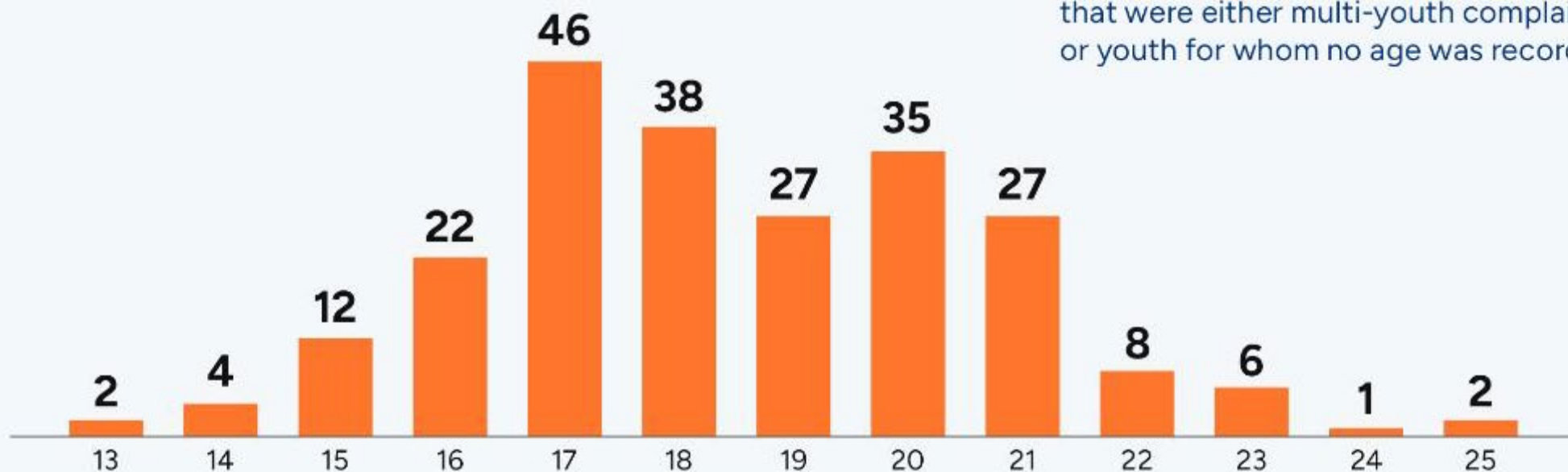
Comparing Referenced Youth in Complaints & Board of State and Community Corrections Total Average Daily Population (ADP) by Gender



Data source: California Board of State and Community Corrections. (n.d.). [Juvenile Detention Profile Survey \(JDPS\) data dashboard](#). OYCR Ombuds complaint data and BSCC Juvenile Detention Profile Survey (JDPS) data offer a way to examine whether the gender distribution of complaints aligns with the gender breakdown of the BSCC's Average Daily Population (ADP). For this analysis, we used the most recent data available from 2024. We calculated total ADP by combining pre- and post-disposition counts for males and females across all facility types and counties. However, direct comparisons have limitations: the BSCC data only covers January through September 2024 and reflects quarterly average daily population figures, while the Ombuds complaints span the full calendar year and are based on individual complaint counts.

TABLE 6

Age of Referenced Youth (2024)



Note: This table excludes 66 complaints that were either multi-youth complaints or youth for whom no age was recorded.

TABLE 7

Complaints by Type (2024)

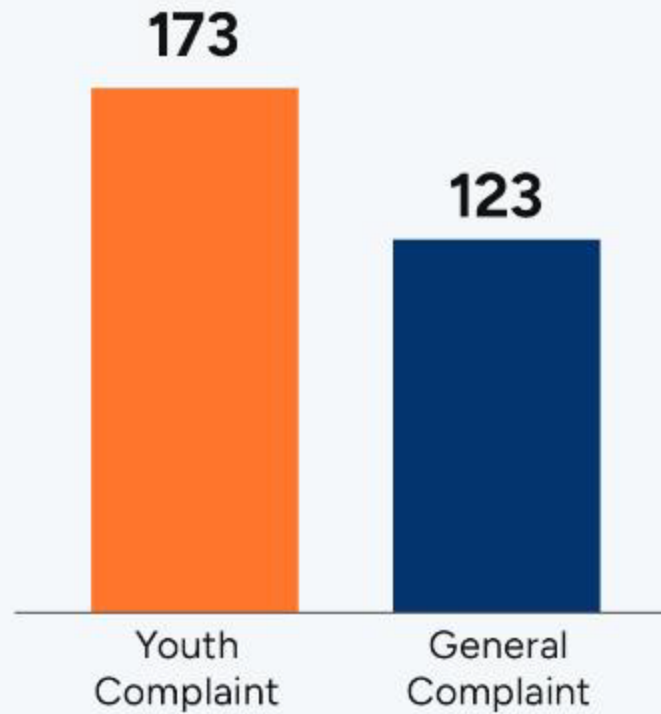


TABLE 8

Complaint Origin - All Complaints (2024)

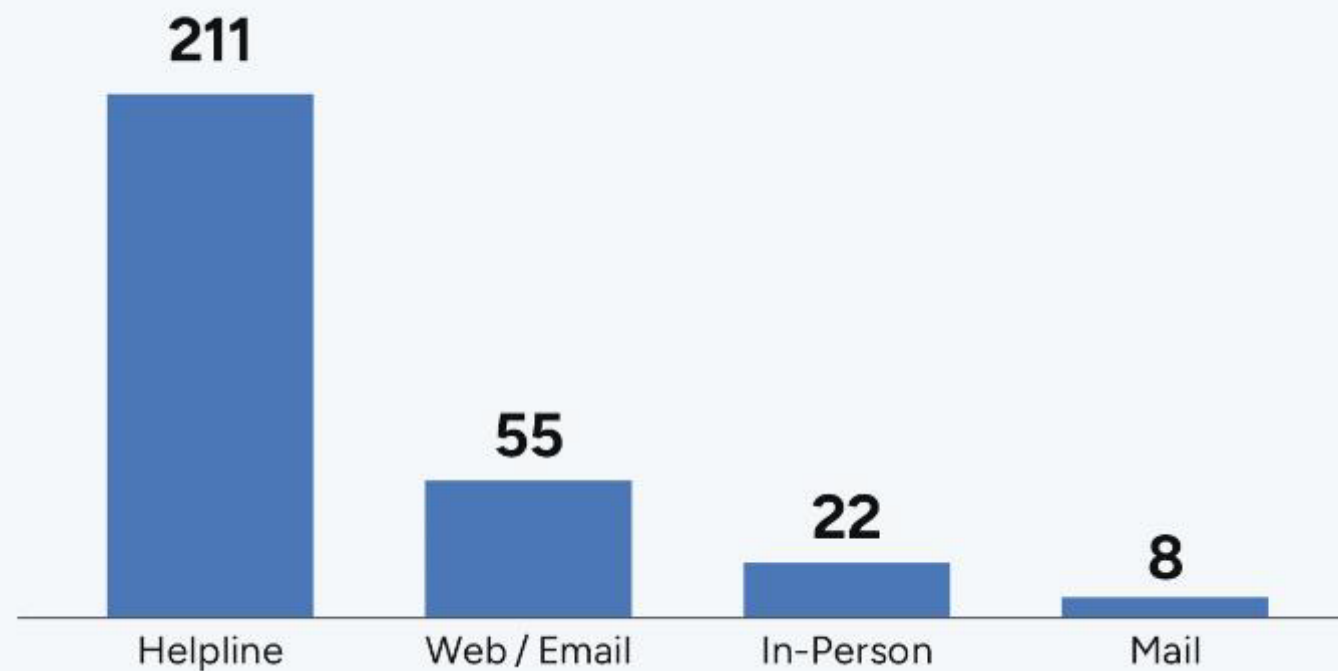


TABLE 11

Complaint Origin – General Complaints – Relationship to Youth (2024)

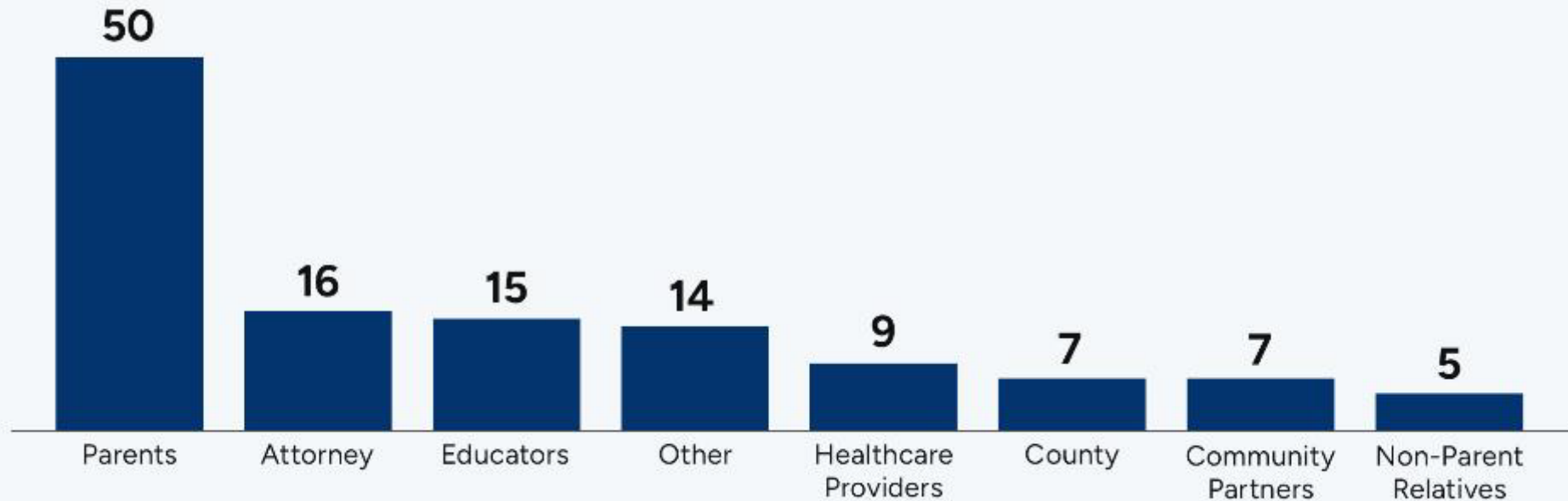


TABLE 12

Closed Cases in 2024

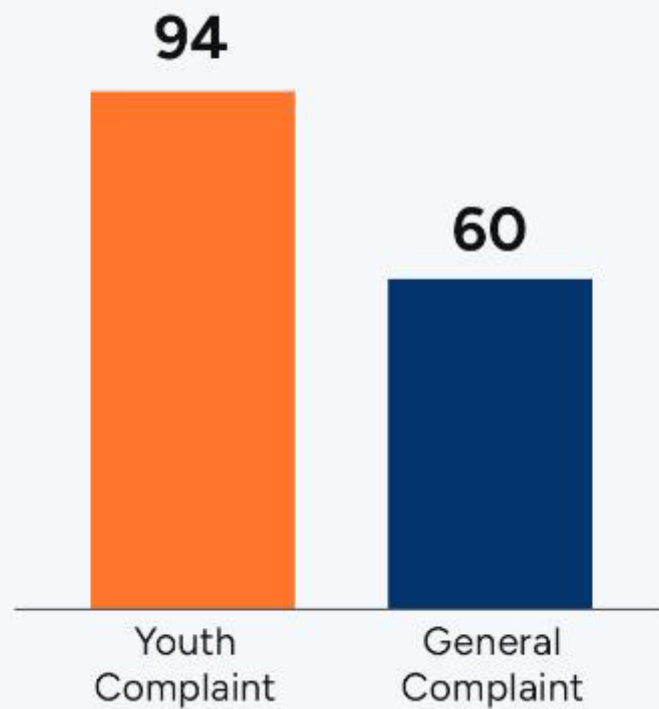


TABLE 13

Closure Findings (2024)

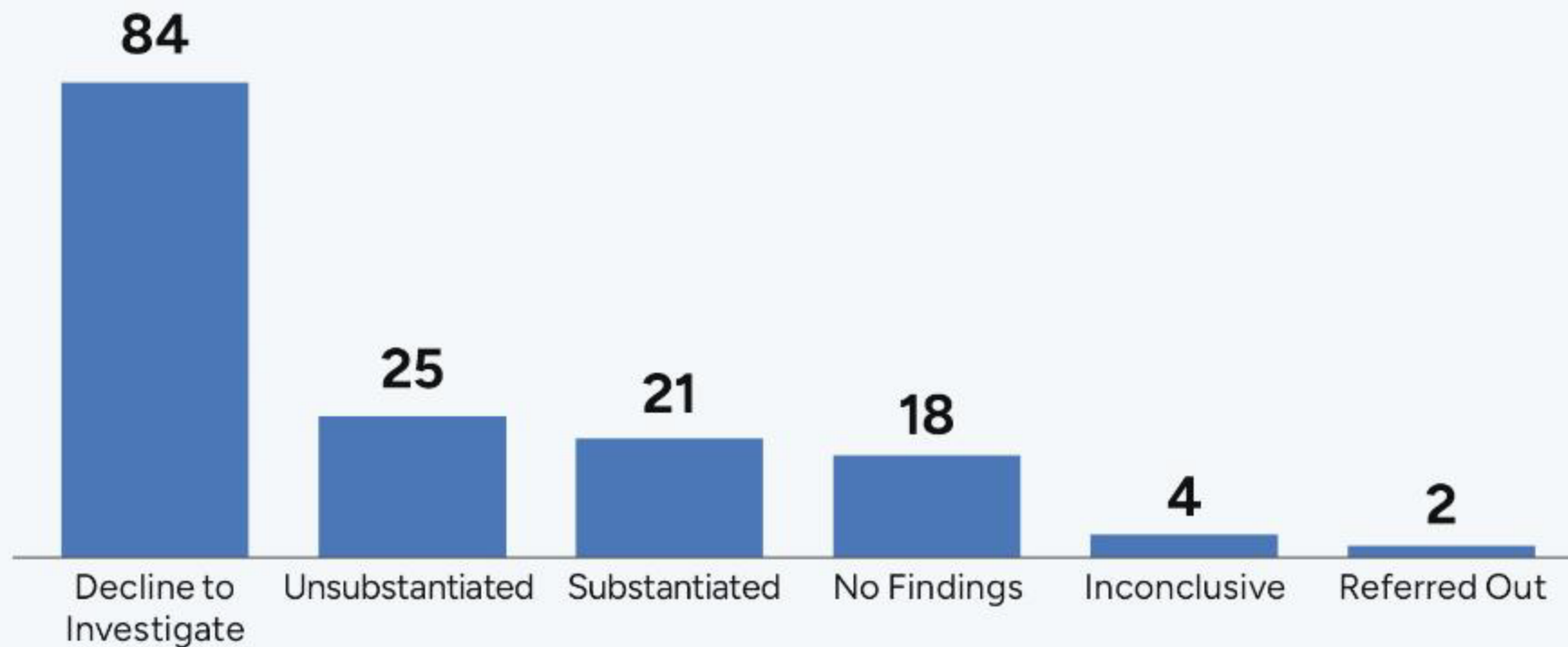


TABLE 14

Cross Report upon Screening (2024)

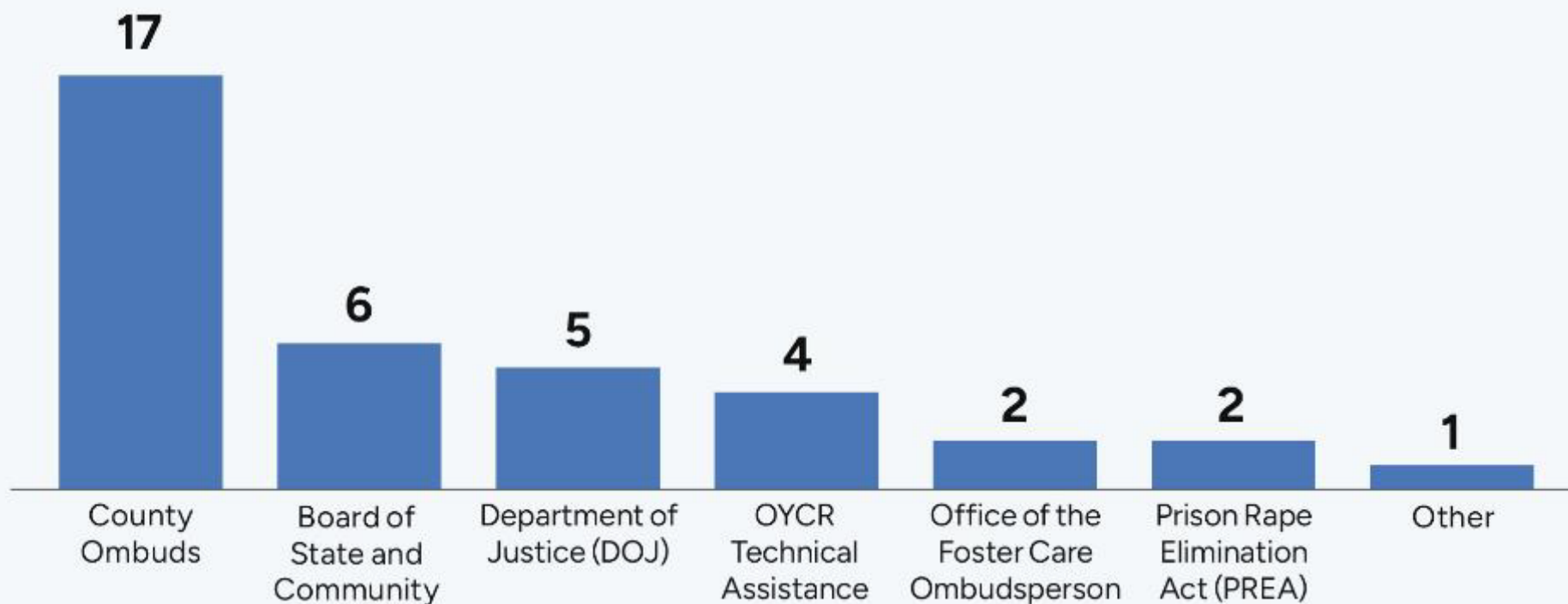


TABLE 15

Closure Findings by Complaint Type (2024)

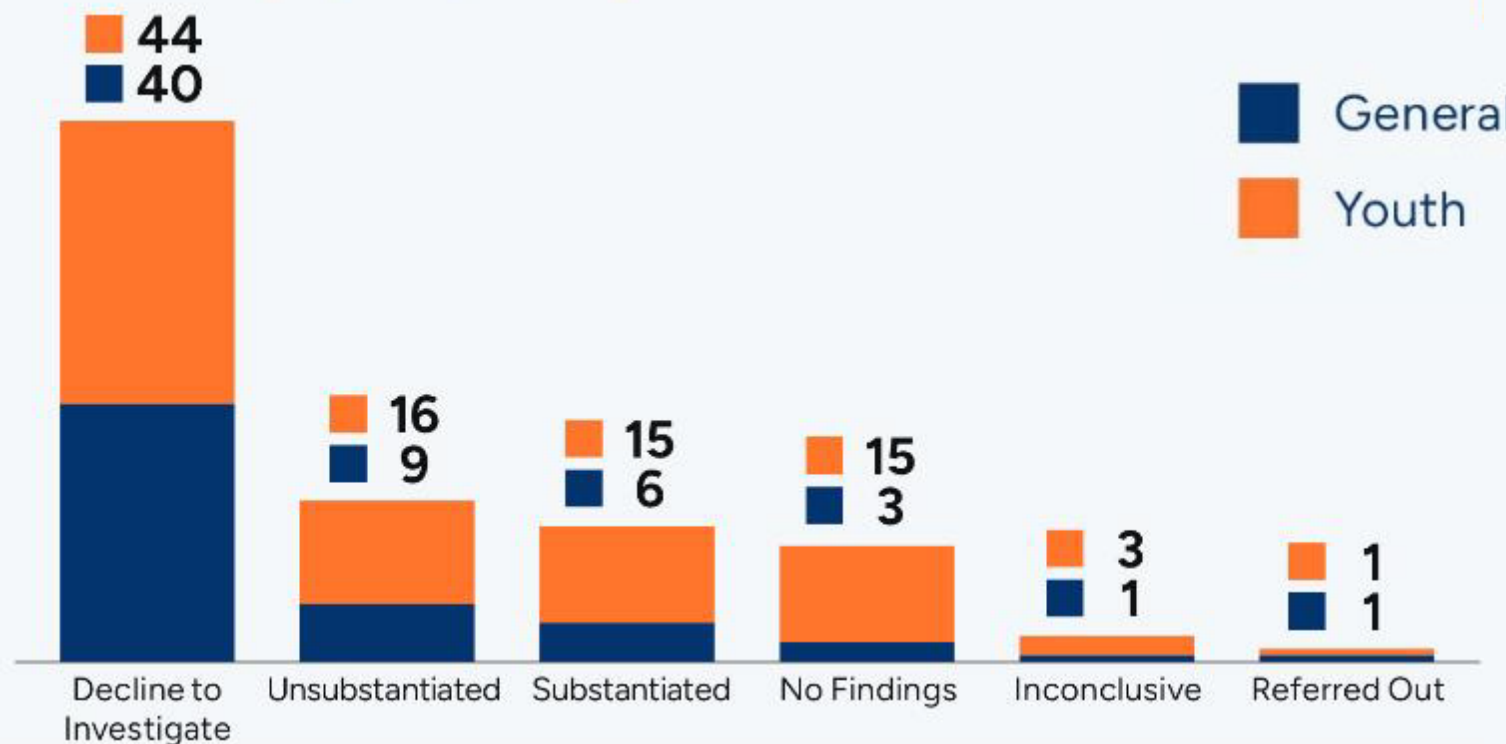


TABLE 16

Complaints Received by County (2024)

County	Case Record Type	Count	Total
San Diego	General Complaint	33	67
	Youth Complaint	34	
Los Angeles	General Complaint	37	59
	Youth Complaint	22	
Sacramento	General Complaint	13	21
	Youth Complaint	8	
Tulare	General Complaint	1	21
	Youth Complaint	20	
Alameda	General Complaint	3	12
	Youth Complaint	9	
San Joaquin	General Complaint	3	11
	Youth Complaint	8	
Contra Costa	General Complaint	3	9
	Youth Complaint	6	
San Bernardino	Youth Complaint	9	9
Ventura	General Complaint	5	9
	Youth Complaint	4	
Kings	General Complaint	2	7
	Youth Complaint	5	

TABLE 17

Closure Findings by County (2024)

County	Closure Finding	Count	Total
San Diego	Decline to investigate	27	37
	No findings	4	
	Unsubstantiated	4	
	Substantiated	2	
Los Angeles	Decline to investigate	8	25
	Substantiated	8	
	Unsubstantiated	3	
	Referred Out	2	
	Inconclusive	2	
	No findings	2	
Sacramento	Decline to investigate	6	8
	Unsubstantiated	2	
Alameda	Decline to investigate	6	8
	Unsubstantiated	2	
Tulare	Unsubstantiated	2	8
	Inconclusive	2	
	Decline to investigate	3	
	Substantiated	1	

TABLE 18

Time to Investigate/Resolve Complaints (2024)



TABLE 17

Time to Investigate/Resolve Complaints (2025)

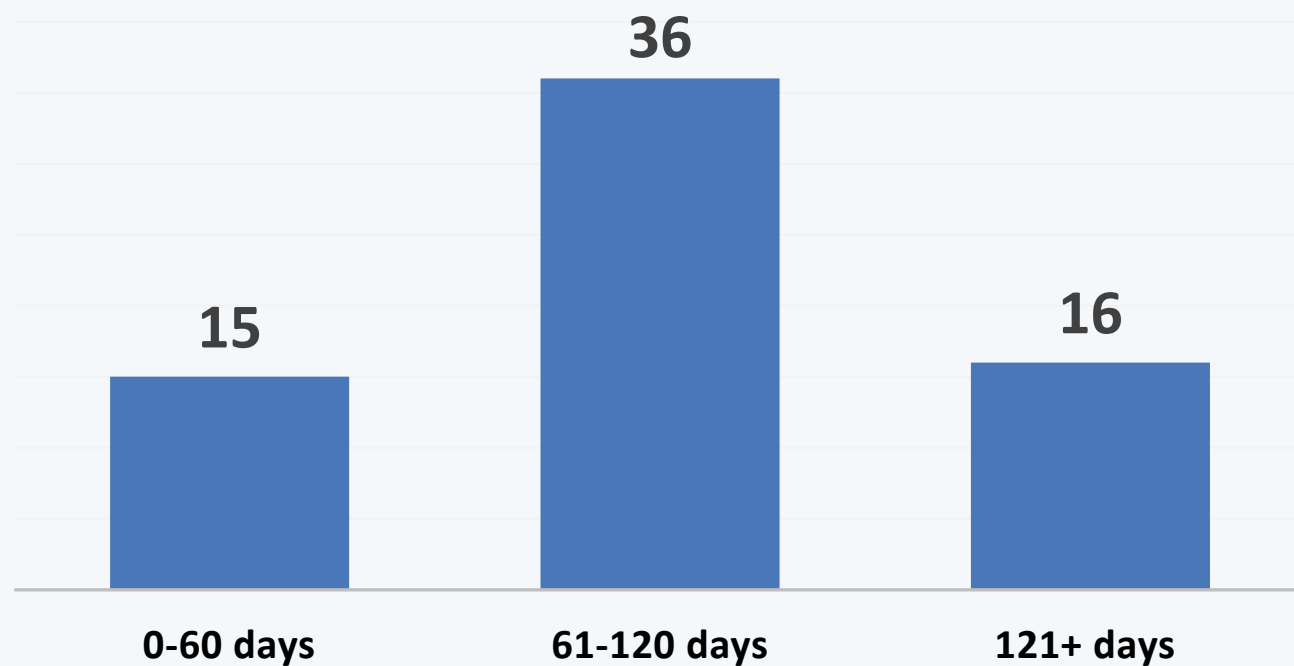


TABLE 19

Post-Closure Referral for Follow-up (2024)

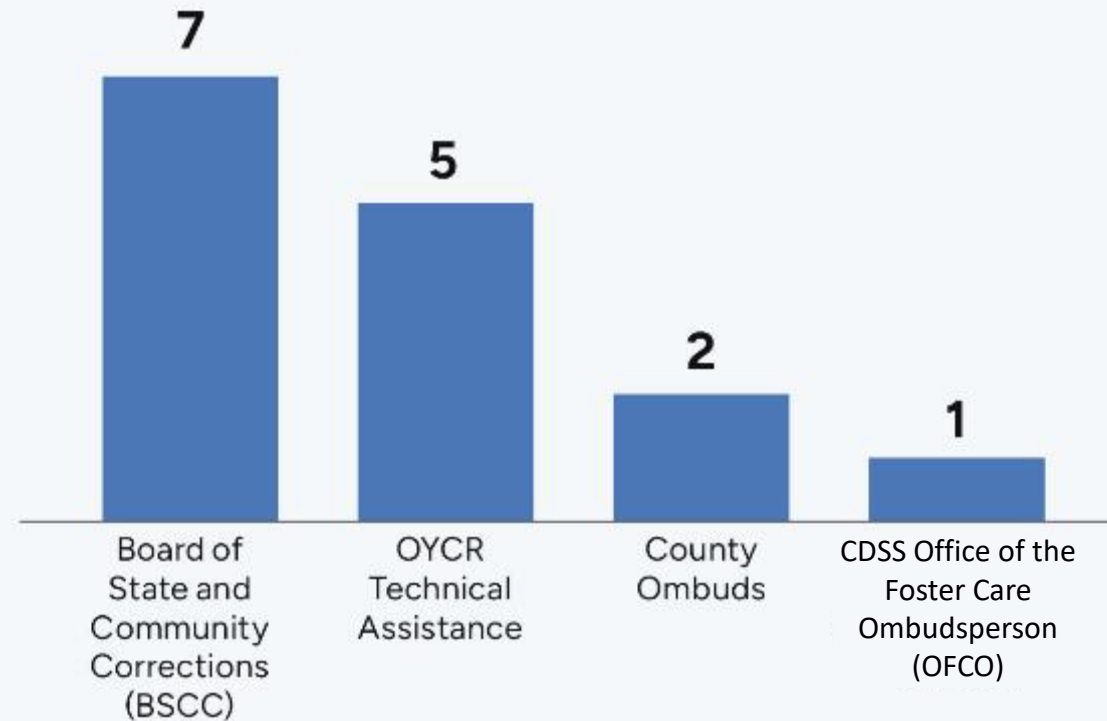


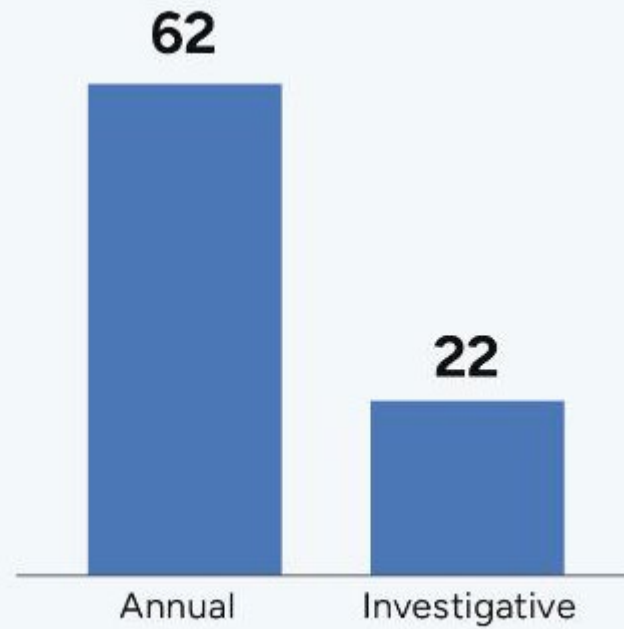
TABLE 20

Complaint Issues (2024)

Abuse/Excessive Force	53	Exercise/Recreation	6
Staffing	50	Property	6
Family Engagement	44	Detention Rights	5
Medical Health	31	Clothing	5
Programming/Incentives	30	Discrimination	5
Education	29	Searches	4
Food/Nutrition	26	Safety and Security	4
Discipline	26	Religion	3
Confidential Communications	24	Medication	3
Retaliation	18	Youth Bill of Rights Materials	2
Grievance Processes and Responses	17	Bedding	1
Hygiene	15	Parenting	1
Healthy Environment	14	Grand Total	441
Mental Health	12		
Court Hearings	7		

TABLE 21

Site Visits (2024)



Complaint Examples

- There was an allegation that a youth who was pending a transfer hearing was removed from a mentoring program because that program was reserved for youth committed to the Secure Youth Treatment Facility was substantiated. The following business day, the agency reinstated the youth in the mentoring program and updated the facility policy regarding which youth have access to the mentoring program.
- There was an allegation that an agency had a policy to regularly strip search youth returning from college furloughs without specific reasonable suspicion was substantiated. The agency updated the policy so that youth returning from furloughs will undergo pat searches and walk through a metal detector.

Complaint Examples *continued*

- There was an allegation that all of a youth's belongings, including family phone numbers and personal photographs, were lost when he returned from a hospitalization for an overdose was substantiated. The property was not located. Ombuds staff recommended that the agency develop protocols to track, store, and return youth property.
- There was an allegation that youth are only permitted to keep their legal documents in their rooms for three days was substantiated. The agency undertook the revision of the facility mail policy relating to possession, storage, and access to legal mail to include a check-in/check-out process allowing youth have access to their legal documents upon request throughout their time in the facility.

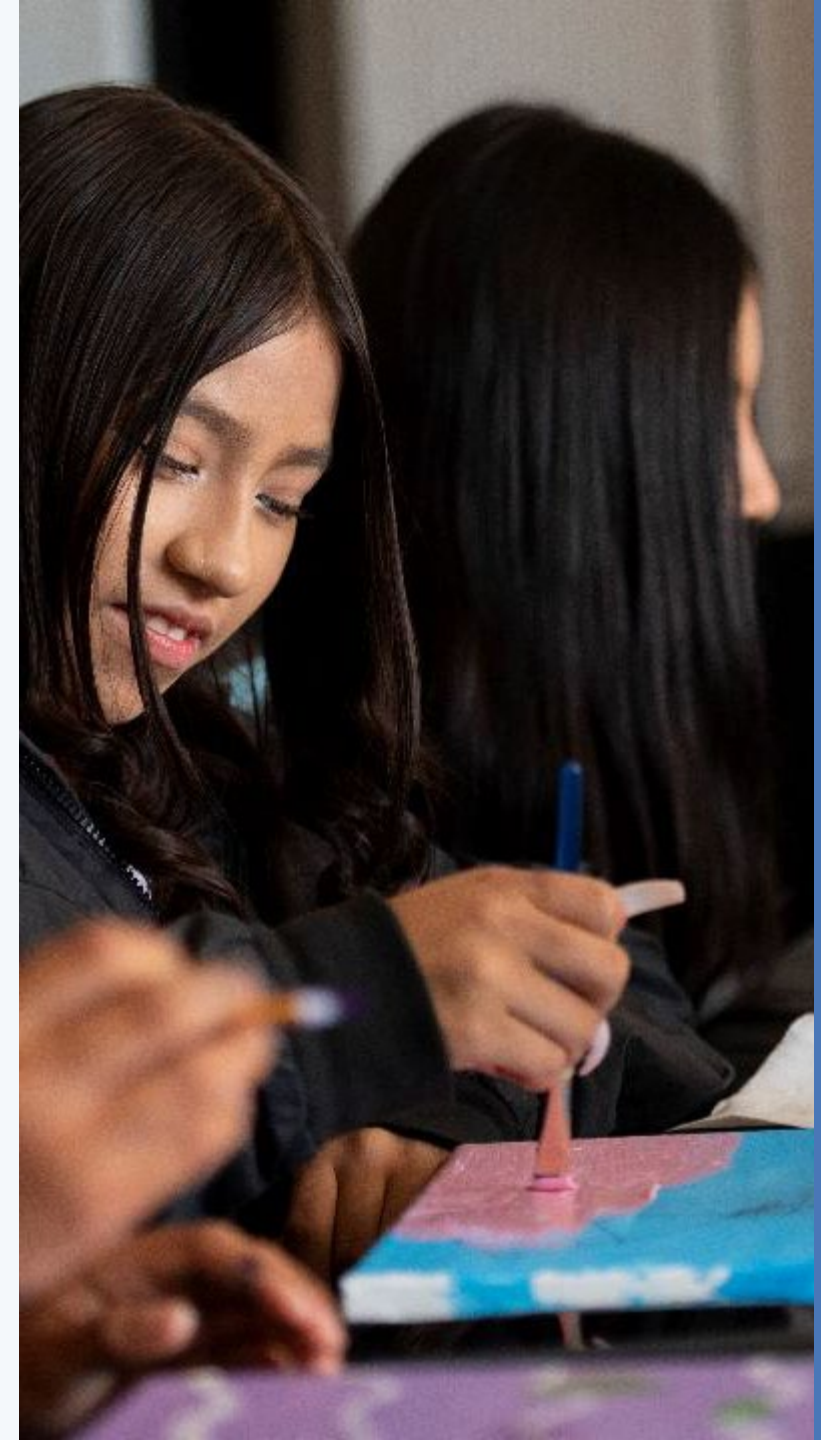
Recommendations

- **Room confinement.** The Board of State and Community Corrections should continue to support departments in understanding the very limited circumstances in which a youth can be locked in a room during daytime hours.
- **Food.** Food is an especially important part of the life of any adolescent or emerging adult. Some facilities have developed innovative approaches to enhancing youth's experience of institutional food. For example, some facilities solicit youth input on preferred meals, offer a robust canteen program with youth input on popular items, offer on-demand healthy snacks, and/or allow families to bring food in on occasion.
- **Visiting.** Facilities should review visitation policies to ensure that youth, in particular youth with long-term stays, have meaningful engagement with family including siblings who are under 18 and supportive adults.



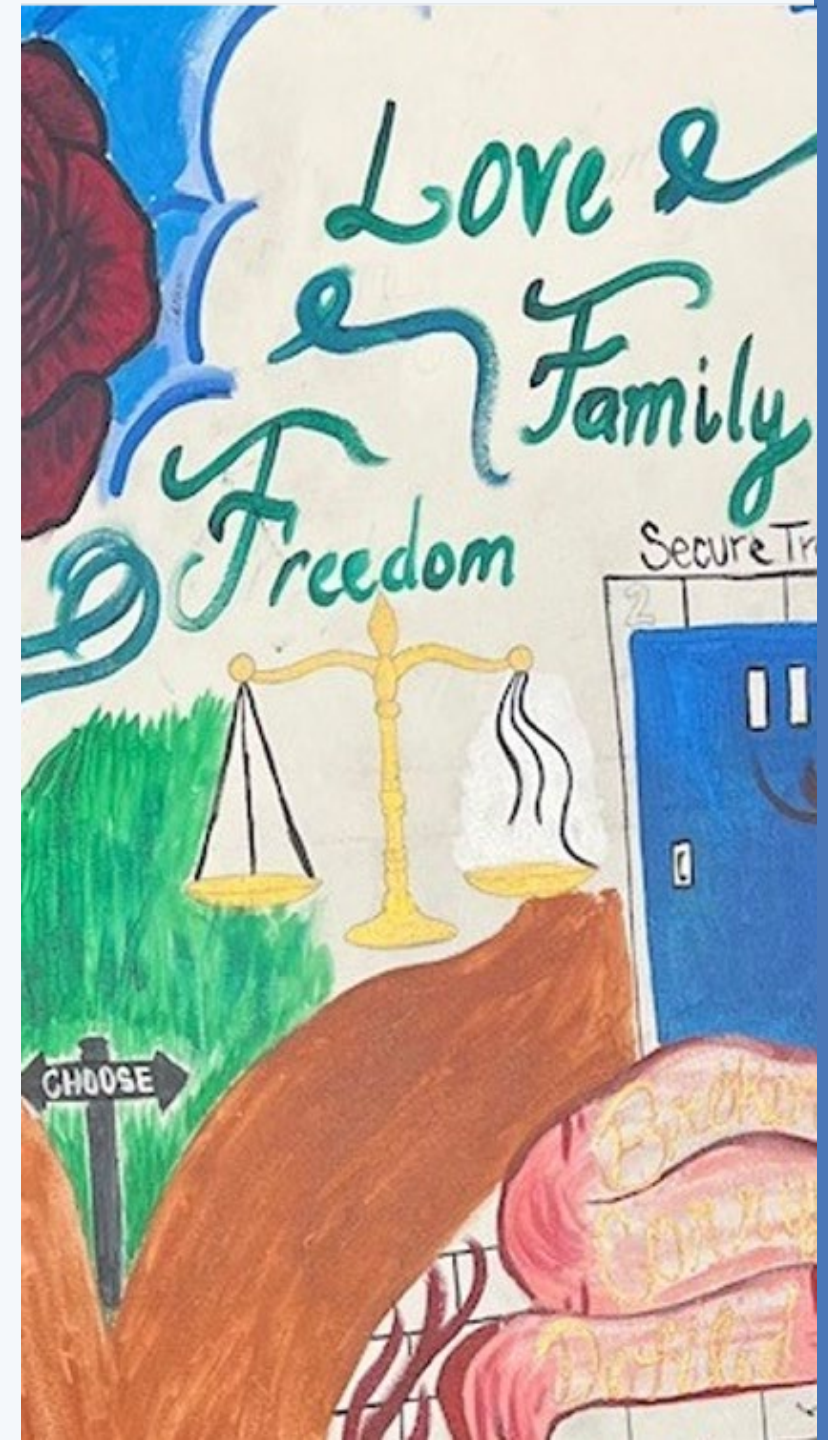
Recommendations *continued*

- **Pregnant youth.** Facilities should have a plan for caring for pregnant youth, including but not limited to pre-and post-natal care, breast feeding and parenting education, availability of breast pump and lactation plan, suitable clothing, mattress, and food. consistent with Cal. Code Regs, tit. 15 §§ 1417, 1461, 1480, and 1483.
- **Mechanical restraints policies and procedures.** Facilities should review their policy and procedures on use of mechanical restraints for transport to ensure that they comply with Welf. & Inst. Code § 210.6(a). The least restrictive restraint necessary shall be used “consistent with the legitimate security needs of each juvenile” (emphasis added) and once the department chooses to use mechanical restraints, other than handcuffs, the reasons must be documented. Some counties appear to justify the use of mechanical restraints based on the youth’s offense without a youth-specific determination. The fact that a youth is in custody for a serious or violent offense does not automatically mean they pose a current threat of physical harm to themselves or to another, or that they pose a substantial risk of flight.



Recommendations *continued 2*

- **Voting rights.** Some facilities are taking innovative steps such as bringing county elections officials into the facilities or transporting youth into the community to vote in person. Facilities should review their policies to ensure that they are complying with these affirmative obligations.
- **Higher education.** Facilities should review their policies to ensure compliance with Welf. & Inst. Code § 858(b)(2) which, among other things, requires probation departments to ensure that youth in their care with high school diplomas or the equivalent “have access to, and can choose to participate in, public postsecondary academic and career technical courses and programs” Facilities should also review their computer use policies to ensure that youth are not being deprived of their right to higher education as part of a disciplinary response. If youth need computers for higher education, they should not be barred from computer access as a facility disciplinary measure.



Recommendations *continued 3*

- **Youth councils and advisory boards.** Youth in facilities with youth councils (or other types of advisory boards that incorporate youth voice) expressed positive experiences and empowerment in the opportunity to make their views known to facility leadership.
- **Informing Youth of Internal Affairs Investigation Outcomes.** We recommend that Departments review their practices relating to notifying youth of the outcomes of Internal Affairs investigations and provide youth with as much information as possible consistent with law and collective bargaining agreements. This will provide the youth closure on difficult or serious incidents and demonstrates to youth how the system is holding itself accountable.



Looking Ahead

In 2025, the Ombuds Division is prioritizing the following areas and will report to the Legislature on all of these goals:

- Decreasing complaint response times
- Increasing the percentage of complaints investigated
- Increasing our collaboration with OYCR technical assistance experts to assist in resolving complaints based on evidence and data

Dear Ombudsperson:

WE ALL MESS UP
BUT WE ARE ALL
STILL HUMAN, NEVER
PERFECT.

JAN 26 12:05

Sincerely,

A barcode located at the bottom right of the page, likely for document tracking or identification.



Office of Youth and
Community Restoration

Questions?



Office of Youth and
Community Restoration

Thank You

INFORMATION ITEM

The Role of Courts in the Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice Systems

Justice Laurie Earl, Co-Chair

Judge Craig Arthur, Orange County Superior Court

Judge Denine Guy, Santa Cruz County Superior Court

Judge Tilisha Martin, San Diego County Superior Court

Judge Shawna Schwarz, Santa Clara County Superior Court



State of California
Child Welfare Council





The Role of Courts in the Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice Systems

Sept. 10, 2025

Introductions

Hon. Denine Guy
Santa Cruz County



Hon. Tilisha Martin
San Diego County



Hon. Craig Arthur
Orange County



Justice Laurie Earl
Third Appellate District



Hon. Shawna Schwarz
Santa Clara County

Overview: Juvenile dependency proceedings

Overview: Juvenile justice proceedings

Complexity of decision-making

Overview: Collaborative courts

Duties of a judge: roles, ethics, independence, discretion



Discussion

Juvenile Dependency



“The objective of the dependency scheme is to protect abused or neglected children and those at substantial risk thereof and to provide permanent, stable homes if those children cannot be returned home within a proscribed period of time.”

In re Marilyn H. (1993)





Goal

Safety & protection

1

- Neglected, exploited, abuse
- Are at risk of ...

Preservation of family

2

- If safe
- If timely

Permanency

3

- Return to parents, or
- Adoption / guardianship / px w/ rel, or
- APPLA / foster care w/ plan

Underlying goal = best interests

Core philosophies

5

Child safety requires financial resources.

4

State has a role as parent.

3

Removal has long-term consequences.

2

Children need family and permanence.

1

Children do better at home.



Liberty interest
in parenting...

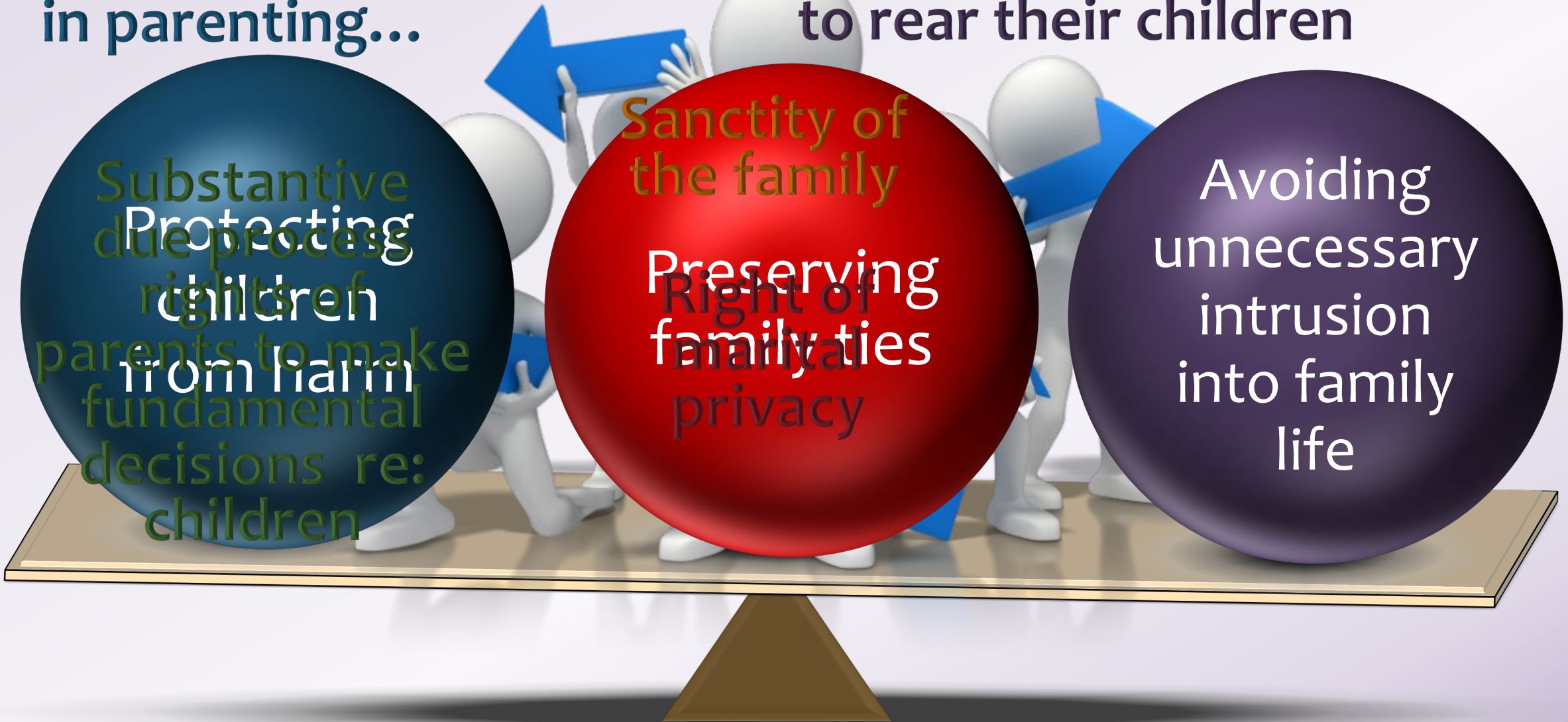
Constitutional rights of parents
to rear their children

Sanctity of
the family

Preserving
family ties
Right of
marital
privacy

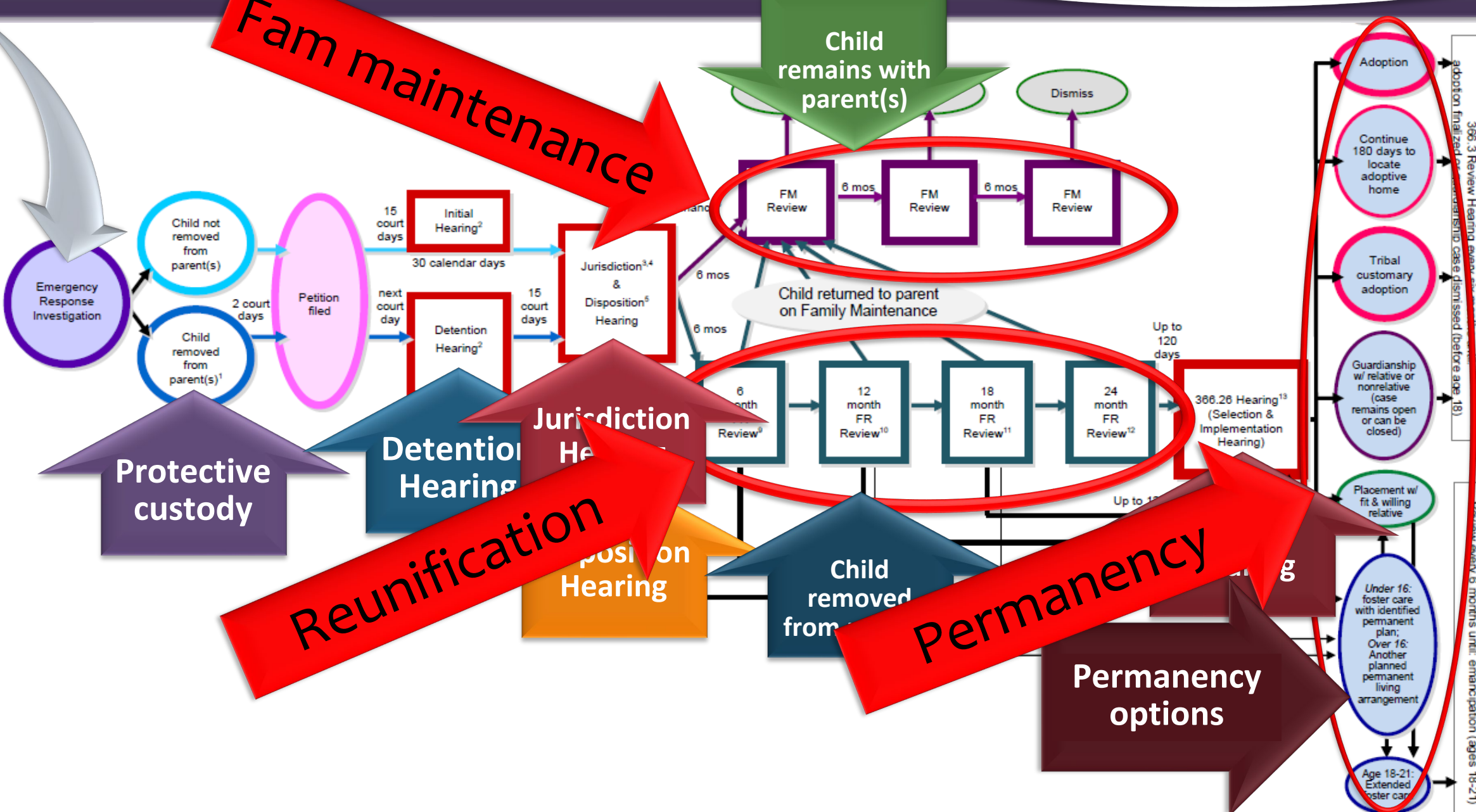
Avoiding
unnecessary
intrusion
into family
life

Substantive
due process
rights of
children
parents to make
fundamental
decisions re:
children



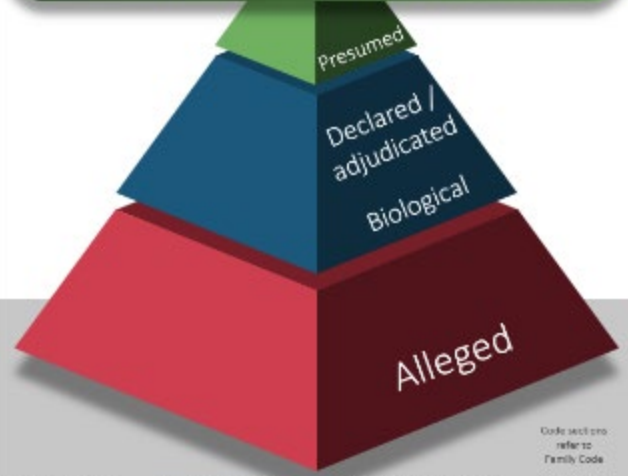
Court process

Fam maintenance



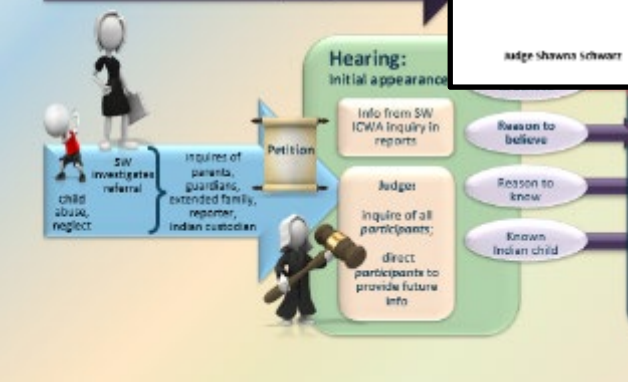
Hierarchy of Parentage

- Marriage**
- § 7540 – conclusively presumed
 - § 7610(a) – mother
 - § 7611(a) – child born during marriage
 - § 7610(b) – adoptive parents
 - § 7611(b) – parents tried to marry
 - § 7611(d) – Holding child out as own
 - § 7611(c) – child born before marriage
 - § 7570 – Voluntary Declaration (VDOP)
- Case Law**
- Kelsey S. – unmarried bio dad, thwarted
 - Equitable father – In re D.M., In re Jerry R.



Mon. Shawna Schwarz, schwartz@scsccourt.org, Santa Clara County Superior Court, March 2021

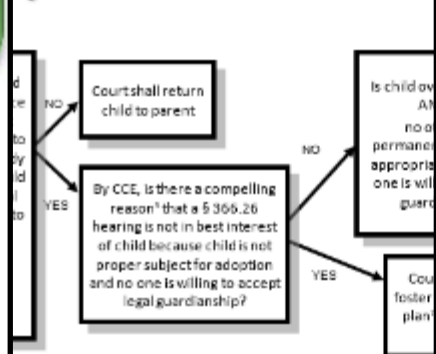
- 12 WIC § 366.21(g)(5)
13 WIC § 366.21(g)(4), 366.21(g)(5)
- Judge Shawna Schwarz
- 10 The court shall not be provided.
11 Court's decision.
12 WIC § 366.22(a)(2) parent or legal guardian.
Judge Shawna Schwarz



24-Month Review¹: WIC § 366.22 and C

Court shall continue reunification services for additional six

24-Month Review¹: v

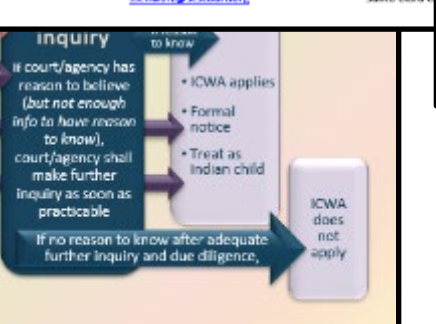


all occur within twenty-four months after the date the child was originally an(s).
The burden of proving detriment. The fact that the parent is enrolled in a case of the parent to participate regularly and make substantive progress in co the social worker's report and recommendations and the report and reco nstrated by the parent and the extent to which s/he availed her/himself of d is returned to parent, the court shall specify the factual basis for its decis hat the return would be detrimental. (WIC § 366.25)(e)(2))
defined in WIC § 366.21(g)(5): child is not proper subject for adoption and n

- 7 Identified permanent plan could be return home, adoption, tribal customary adoption, guardianship.
8 The court shall determine whether reasonable services have been offered or provided to the parent codified the clear and convincing standard for findings of reasonable services for the 6, 12 and 18 m evidence. There is no indication (via statute or published case law) as to what action the court sho indicated that a reasonable services finding is not a prerequisite to setting a § 366.26 hearing follo 366.25(a)(3) provides that "if the child is not returned to a parent ..., the court shall order that a he resolved split of authority regarding the impact of a finding of no reasonable services at the 18-m services at the 18-month review hearing, there is no automatic extension of services; the court has consistent with child's interests. Extending services beyond 18 months is not required by § 366.22 month review.

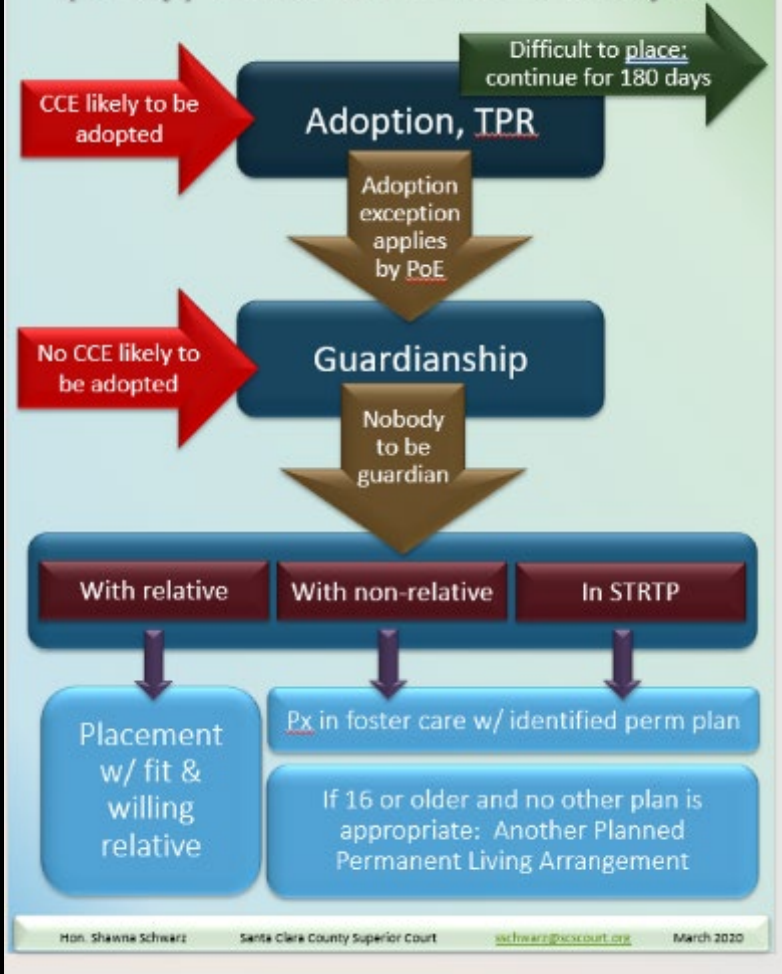
Note: § 366.25 makes no mention of minor parents, nonminor dependents

Judge Shawna Schwarz, schwartz@scsccourt.org, Santa Clara C

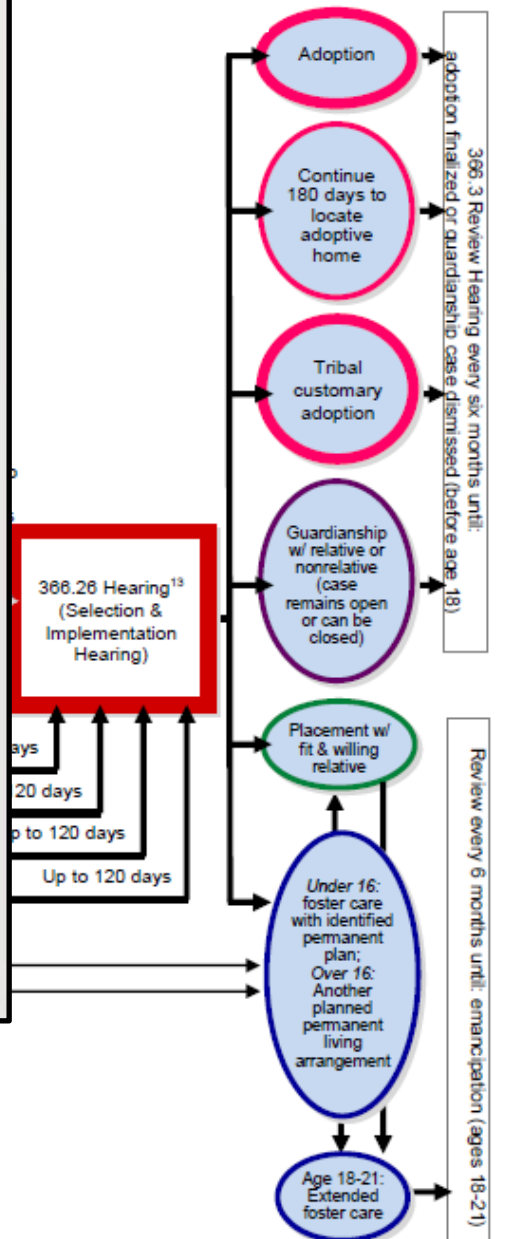


Court process 2

(Very) Basic §366.26 Analysis



Mon. Shawna Schwarz, Santa Clara County Superior Court, schwartz@scsccourt.org, March 2020

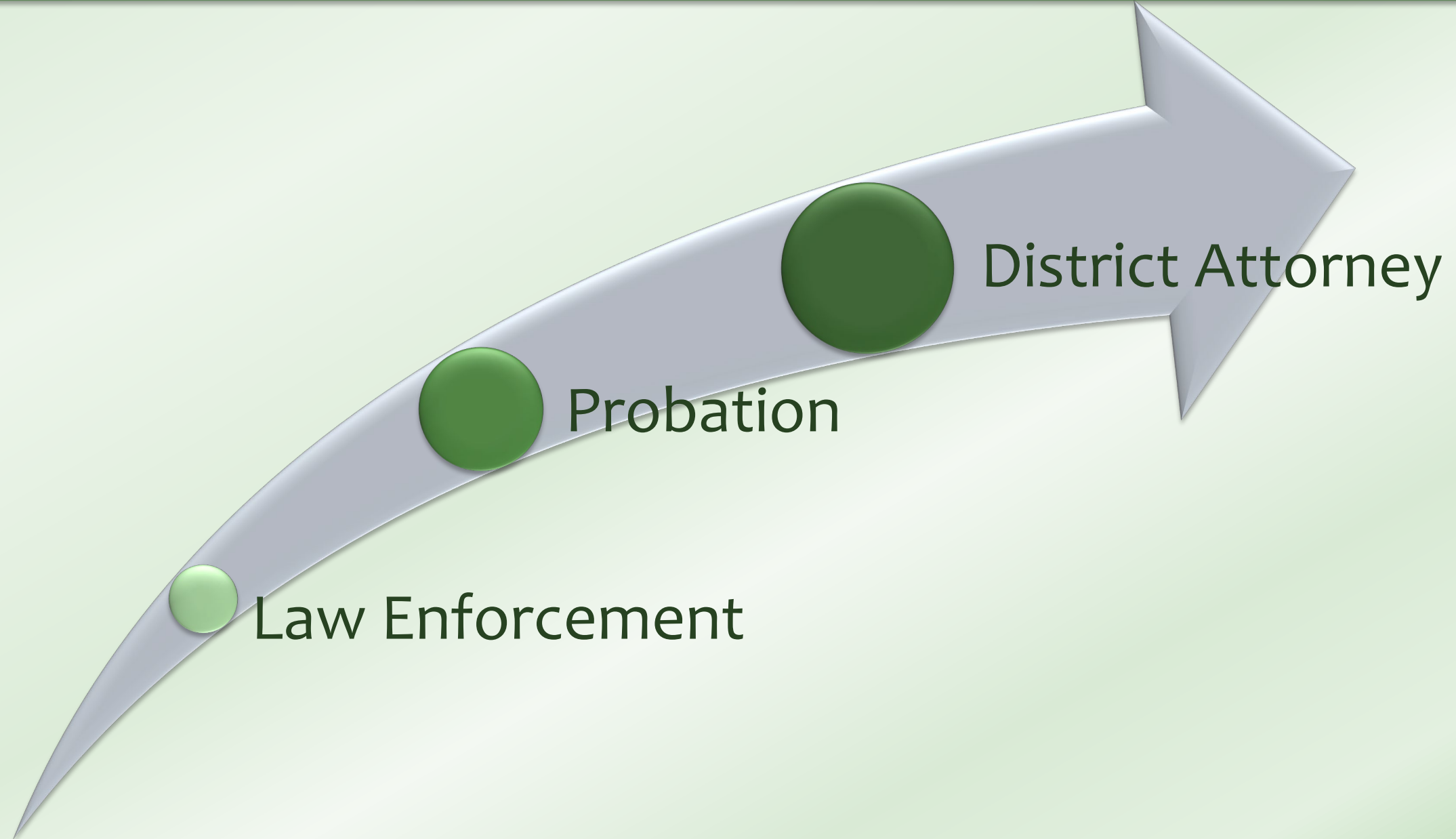


Juvenile Justice

Judicial responsibility



Juvenile Court Process



Juvenile Justice Proceedings

Detention

Transfer

Readiness

Jurisdiction

Disposition

Reviews

Sealing

- DIVERSION

- DIVERSION
- COMMUNITY SUPERVISION
- SECURE TRACK



San Diego County Juvenile Justice Guiding Principles

Law
Evidence
Discretion



**1. YOUTHS ARE
FUNDAMENTALLY
DIFFERENT FROM ADULTS**



**2. REHABILITATION OVER
PUNISHMENT**



**3. EARLY PREVENTION AND
INTERVENTION**



**4. LIMITING THE UTILIZATION
OF DETENTION FACILITIES**



**5. KEEPING YOUTH IN THE
COMMUNITY – DIVERSION**



**6. PROGRAMMING IS
IMPORTANT FOR
YOUTH SUCCESS**



**7. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT IS ESSENTIAL**



**8. EMPOWERMENT OF
YOUTH VOICE**



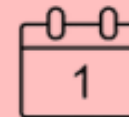
**9. ACADEMIC GROWTH
AND OPPORTUNITY**



**10. INDIVIDUALIZED
TREATMENT AND CARE**



**11. REENTRY PLANNING
STARTS DAY ONE**



**12. LISTENING TO AND
SUPPORTING VICTIMS**



Complexity Of Decision-Making

U.S.
Constitution

ASFA

UCCJEA

FFPSA

Title
IV-E

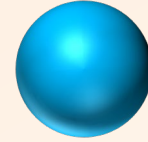
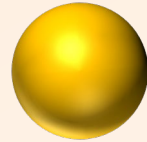
ICWA

ICPC,
Hague

WIC,
Fam Code,
Penal Code
Rules of Court

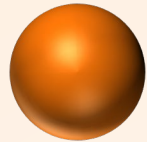
Judges make independent decisions, based on:

Discretion



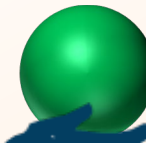
Services

Facts



Supports

Law



Placements



Toll on judges

High stakes, life altering decisions

Emotionally draining subject matter: abuse, neglect, substance abuse, mental illness, DV

Time pressure and high caseloads

Role conflict: neutral fact-finder and child advocate (ie, act in best interest of child)

Moral and ethical weight: weight of these decisions lingers

Lots of ambiguity due to subjective standards like "best interest of child"

Inadequate resources and services:
Overburdened child welfare systems, limited placement options, lack of services

Need for significant training on non-legal issues, like trauma, child development, family systems.

Systemic frustrations: powerless to fix root causes; frustrated by repeat cases, intergenerational cycles of trauma, neglect

Improving Outcomes for Foster Youth through the Collaborative Court Model

Adult Courts

Drug Courts
DUI Courts
Veteran Courts



Vulnerable Youth

How can we better serve this population?



Timelines

Lengthy periods of time between court hearings



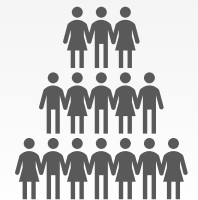
Hands-on Approach

Unique setting where Judge is very involved in with the individual youth

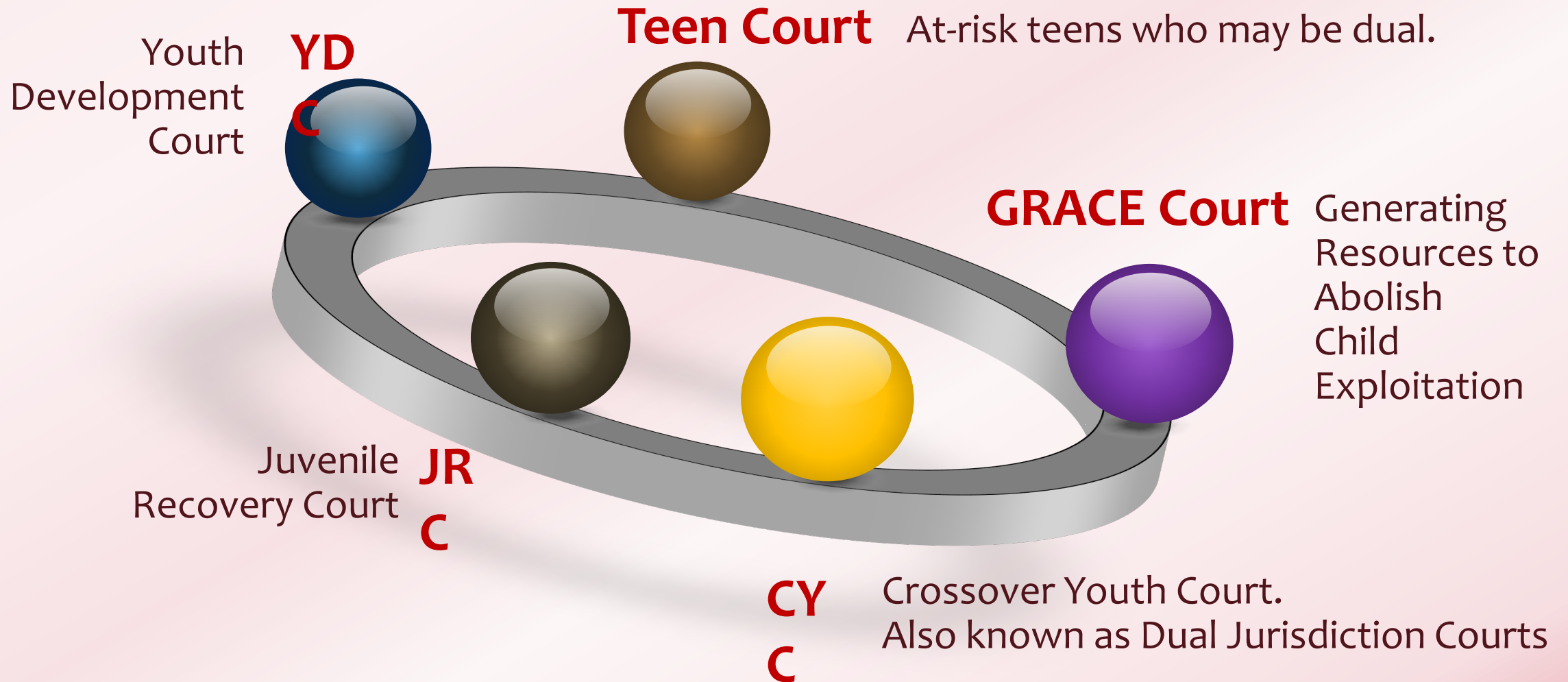


Team Approach

All stakeholders are present at each hearing and work collaboratively



In Orange County



Other types

Mental Health Court



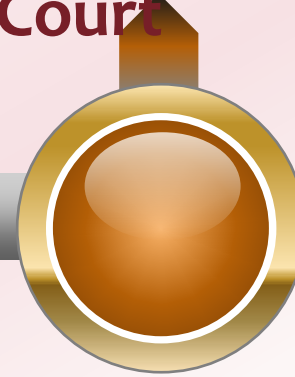
At-risk teens
who are
challenged with
diagnosed
mental health
issues

Family Treatment Court



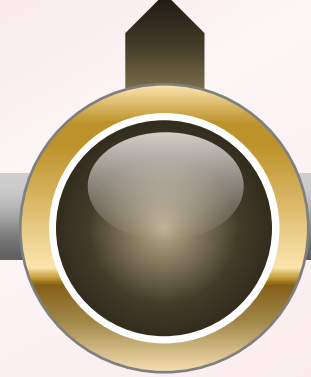
Addresses
parental
substance
use

NMD Court



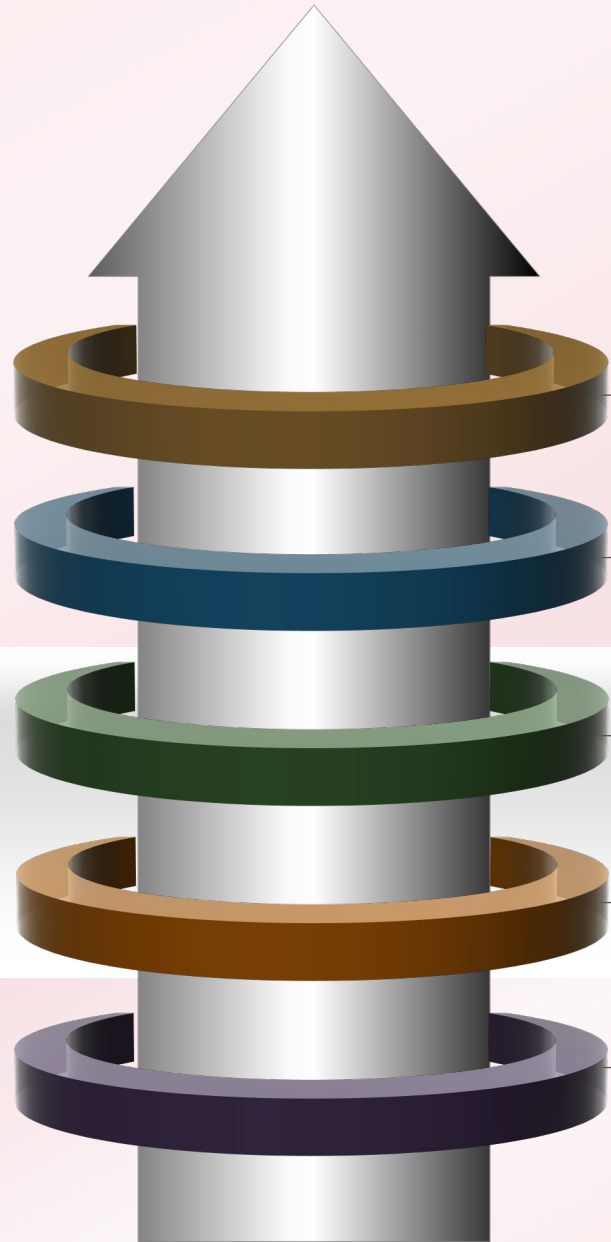
Court
dedicated to
Non-minor
Dependents

ICWA Court



Court
dedicated
to Indian
Child cases

Benefits



Collaborative court activities

Informal proceedings

Interactive discussions with judge

Team of stakeholders at every court hearing

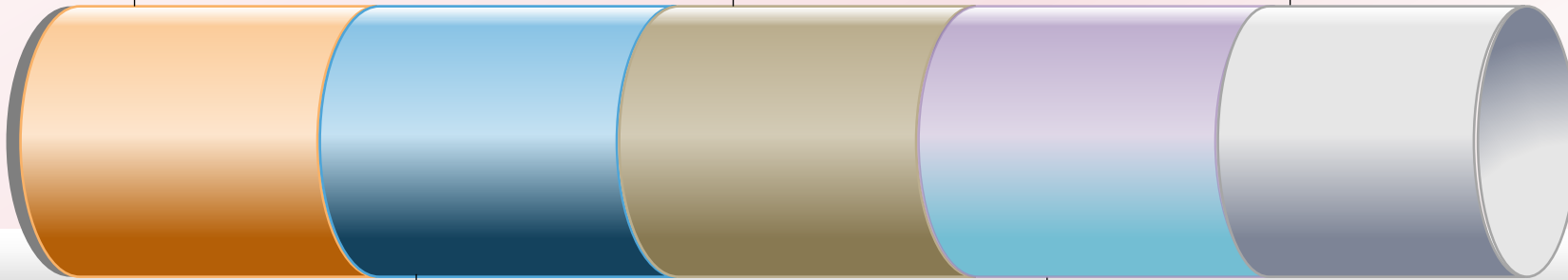
More frequent interaction with youth

Challenges youth face

Family trauma,
difficulties in
finding
appropriate
placements

Substance use,
including alcohol,
illegal drugs,
prescription meds

Peer issues,
including gang
activity, bullying,
pressure to engage
in criminal activity



Educational
issues, including
missed schooling,
failing grades,
multiple schools

Mental health issues,
including depression
and anxiety;
gender/sex identity
issues

Duties of a Judge:

Roles,

Judicial ethics,

Independent decision making, &

Judicial discretion

1

A judge shall uphold the integrity and independency of the judiciary.

2

A judge shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all of the judge's activities.

3

A judge shall perform the duties of judicial office impartially, competently, diligently.

4

A judge shall so conduct the judge's quasi-judicial and extrajudicial activities as to minimize the risk of conflict with judicial obligations.

5

A judge ... shall not engage in political or campaign activity that is inconsistent with the independence, integrity, or impartiality of the judiciary.

Compliance with the Code of Judicial Ethics (i.e., who must comply)



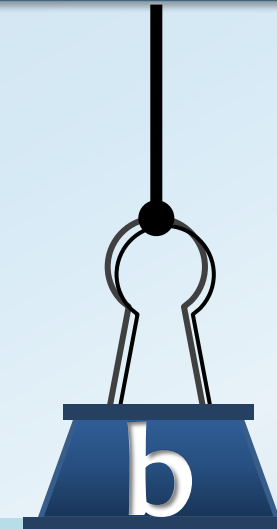
Assignments
To Juv Ct



PJ should assign judges to juvenile court for minimum of three years.

Priority should be given to judges who have expressed an interest in the assignment.

Importance of
Juv Ct



PJ of Juv Ct consulting w/ PJ of superior court should:

Motivate and educate other judges re significant of juv court

Work to ensure sufficient judges, staff, facilities, financial resources are assigned to juv court



Provide active leadership w/in community in determining needs and obtaining and developing resources and services for at-risk children and families. (delinquents, dependents, status offenders)

Take active part in formation of a communitywide network to promote and unify private and public sector efforts to focus attention and resources for at-risk children and families.

Exercise leadership role in development and maintenance of permanent programs of interagency cooperation and coordination among court and various public agencies that serve at-risk children and families.



Investigate and determine availability of specific prevention, intervention & treatment services in community for at-risk children and families

Exercise authority by statute or rule to review, order, enforce delivery of specific services and treatment for at-risk children and families

Unique role of Juv Judge

Maintain close liaison w/ school authorities and encourage coordination of policies and programs.

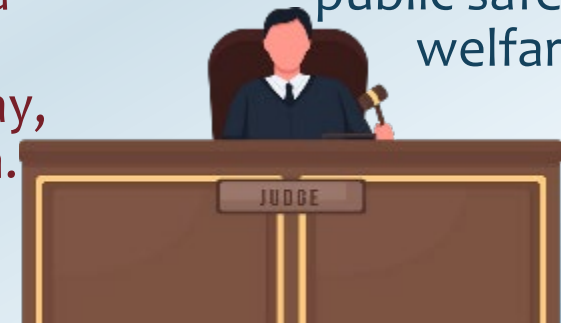
Evaluate criteria established by child protection agencies for initial removal and reunification decisions and communicate court's expectations of what constitutes "reasonable efforts" to prevent removal or hasten return of child.

Be familiar w/ all detention facilities, placements, and institutions used by court.

Educate the community and its institutions through every available means, including the media, concerning the role of the juvenile court in meeting the complex needs of at-risk children and their families.

Encourage the development of community services and resources to assist homeless, truant, runaway, and incorrigible children.

Act in all instances consistent with the public safety and welfare.



Education

Take responsibility w/ other juv ct participants at every stage of case to ensure educational needs are met, regardless of whether child is w/ parent or other placement, and regardless of where child is placed at school

Provide oversight of social service and probation agencies to ensure child's educational rights are investigated, reported and monitored



Independence of the Judiciary and Judicial Decision Making

Questions & Answers

Discussion

Thank
you!



INFORMATION ITEM

Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC) Update

Kathryn Icenhower, CEO, SHIELDS for Families



State of California
Child Welfare Council





**Mandated Reporting to
Community Supporting**

*Communities Keeping Children Safe
and Families Together*

UPDATE: Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC)

Child Welfare Council Meeting

September 10, 2025

ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY: PROGRESS AT-A-GLANCE



In September 2024, the voting members of the Child Welfare Council approved a motion to advance the 14 recommendations of the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force for planning and implementation

Important reminders about the motion:

- The leads are the Secretary of CalHHS and the Director of CDSS, in partnership with the PEI Committee, the [former] MRCS Task Force, and lived experts.
- The request was to craft a strategy to move toward a focus on mandatory reporting to community supporting, considering the MRCS Task Force recommendations as advanced in this report.
- The strategy should address areas of policy that must be advanced, trainings that must be created or implemented, data reporting that must be enhanced, and program structures that must be altered or augmented.
- The CWC requested a quarterly update.
- The strategy will come back to the Council for consideration.

IMPLEMENTED

Recommendation 1

- Tri-Chairs selected and leading the work
- 36-member MRAC established – former Task Force members, CalHHS, and Statewide Associations
- Ongoing commitment to lived expertise, diverse membership at all levels, and proximity to mandated reporting



SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS MADE

- **Narrative Shift (Recommendation 14)**
 - 25+ presentations statewide
 - National CWLA and BUILD Conference proposals
 - Presenting at CWDA and Beyond the Bench
 - Support from Rally Communications secured by Casey Family Programs
- **Workgroups** have met numerous times since June to develop comprehensive implementation plans for all recommendations for consideration by the CWC – focused on the key levers of change:
 - Data & Accountability
 - Policy
 - Training
 - Connecting to Community Pathways
 - Narrative Shift
- **First bi-annual report** on-track for December 2025



A BIG WIN: ADVANCED IN LEGISLATION



SB 119, signed into law in July 2025

- The California Child Welfare Council shall establish a Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC). It is the intent of the Legislature that the MRAC ensure the transformation of mandated reporting to community supporting continues and disparities in the child welfare system are eliminated. (Recommendation 1)
- The new statewide mandated reporter training will incorporate content identified in the Task Force recommendations. (Recommendation 9)
- When counties update their Comprehensive Prevention Plans, the update shall include information for mandated reporters regarding the resources available to support families in their communities. (Recommendation 12)

What's Next

- The first bi-annual written report will be presented at the December CWC meeting
- Join upcoming conference presentations
 - CWDA Annual Conference, October 8 – 10, Santa Clara
 - Children's Network Conference, October 15 – 16, Ontario
 - Beyond the Bench, November 18 – 19, Los Angeles



**Mandated Reporting to
Community Supporting**

*Communities Keeping Children Safe
and Families Together*

Questions?

~

Thank You

COMMITTEE AND TASK FORCE UPDATES

- **Prevention and Early Intervention Committee:** *Kathryn Icenhower & Dana Blackwell*
- **Permanency Committee:** *Bob Friend & Hon. Leonard Edwards (Ret.)*
- **Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee:** *Dr. Daniel Webster*
- **Youth Justice Committee:** *Hon. Katherine Lucero (Ret.)*
- **Behavioral Health Committee:** *Karen Larsen & Pete Weldy*
- **CSEC Action Team:** *Leslie Heimov & Kate Walker Brown*
- **Empowerment Committee:** *Jevon Wilkes*



State of California
Child Welfare Council



FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CLOSING



State of California
Child Welfare Council

