



*The purpose of this document is to put forth principles that promote healing and accountability for youth dispositioned to Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTF). These principles, outlined in the Stepping Home Model, are intended to provide guidance to counties and partnering entities as they work to ensure the safe and successful transition of youth from SYTFs to their communities.*

# Stepping Home Model

**Stepping Home is a process for all youth, starting from the beginning of a youth’s confinement in a secure youth treatment facility (SYTF), to returning them safely and successfully to their communities as thriving, successful young adults.** The model transitions the youth from the SYTF to less restrictive programs (LRP) to gradually increase their involvement in the community as they achieve the goals in their case plan until they are successfully home without supervision from county oversight agencies. While SYTFs provide maximum security and supervision, less restrictive programs gradually increase the youth’s positive engagement in the community while decreasing supervision. Less restrictive programs can include camps and ranches, group living and cottages, and community living with supervision (e.g., living with family, independent living, college dormitories). The youth’s transition from the most restrictive SYTF towards home should begin as soon as is reasonably possible consistent with public safety.

## Key Elements of the Stepping Home Model

**The Stepping Home Model encourages counties and partnering entities to include the following elements in their respective plans for youth dispositioned to SYTFs for safe and successful transitions to their communities:**

- **Safe and secure facilities** that protect youth from harm and abuse by promoting a culture and environment of dignity and respect.
- **Professional neuro-psychosocial assessment to identify underlying trauma**, developmental needs, behavioral health treatment needs, and unmet social needs contributing to behavior that led to justice system involvement, coupled with healing, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and therapeutic intervention(s) by qualified professionals and paraprofessionals.

- Whole person case plan development utilizing family and community support teams that addresses the youth's physical health needs as identified by their assessment and includes full access to healthcare, including vision care and dental care such as orthodontia.
- Treatment(s) and supportive services as identified by the assessment and whole person case plan, including but not limited to interventions that address substance use and mental health, administered with fidelity to quality, dose, and duration.
- Restorative programming that promotes youth accountability for their offense(s) and builds and maintains positive relationships and behavior, including but not limited to victim awareness, personal insight, and restorative justice programs.
- A cohort model that promotes positive youth development by connecting youth to others going through the same transition, providing motivation through peer support, celebrating milestones, and exposing youth to pro-social experiences.
- Strengths based, healthy living and support activities for positive youth development that are strengths-based (e.g., opportunities for healing and spirituality, quality and age-appropriate education, outdoor time, leisure time, and opportunity to move from the facility to the community to attend school, work, and family and community events like funerals, births, and weddings pre-release).
- Mentorship through trusted/credible messengers with lived experience throughout continuum of Stepping Home, including ongoing check-ins and feedback from youth regarding their treatment and programming.
- Pre-release engagement with community health and resources that address the social determinants of health through Medi-Cal enrollment and Enhanced Care Management services to ensure continuity of full access to healthcare upon release to community and home living.
- Release and warm transitions to community and home living that include comprehensive Wraparound services such as supported living programs, basic income assistance, continuing substance use and mental health support, educational and vocational placements, and transportation support. Comprehensive Wraparound services for youth nearing 26 years of age or older with significant mental health needs can be fulfilled using Full-Service Partnership (FSP) programs.