



**CALIFORNIA
CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL**
Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR)
Committee
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 29, 2022 – 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM
Zoom Virtual Meeting

Present: Katherine Lucero, Chair. Committee Members: Diana Becton, Sue Burrell, Elizabeth Calvin, Carly B. Dierkhising, Miguel Garcia, Frankie Guzman, Kelly Hood, Hon. Robert Leventer, Chief Dan Prince, Chief Brian Richart, Chief Kelly Vernon. Ex Officio Members: Cathy Senderling-McDonald, Michelle Cabrera, Karen Pank. State Government Representatives: Katie Howard, Dr. Jim Kooler, Aaron Maguire, Linda Penner.

Absent: Sarah Belton, Dr. Laura Abrams, Marcus Strother, Hon. Patrick Tondreau (due to technical issue), Rosalinda Vint.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Staff explained the instructions for the meeting and the process for public comment. Director Katherine Lucero welcomed participants and started the meeting by providing the Office of Youth and Community Restoration's (OYCR's) aspirations for the meeting, including valuing each person for what they bring to the committee, focusing on how all roles can uplift and support young people, acknowledging that we do not know everything at this moment, affirming the practices of active listening and reflecting on opinions and suggestions of all participants, and emphasizing an approach that is strength based and encourages creativity.

Director Lucero asked her staff to introduce themselves: Alisa Hartz (counsel), Alani Jackson (incoming Deputy Director), Rochelle Trochtenberg (special consultant; former California Foster Care Ombudsperson), and Marc Buller (special consultant; former Chief Assistant District Attorney, Santa Clara County).

In lieu of roll call, Director Lucero asked Committee Members to introduce themselves, provide their pronouns if they desired, and give a reason why they came to this work.

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Director Lucero then invited members of the public to provide their names and pronouns in the chat if they desired.

2. Presentation/Discussion: General Updates on the Office of Youth and Community Restoration

Director Lucero provided an update on OYCR with reference to a powerpoint presentation. She began by discussing SB 823 which created OYCR and reviewed OYCR's statutory mandates. She also summarized the goals of SB 823 as ensuring that youth remain close to home because it improves outcomes and reduces recidivism. She discussed OYCR's role to guide and inform counties and help them provide age-appropriate treatment for justice-involved-youth and promote positive youth development including by building the capacity of the continuum of community-based approaches. She also identified the goal of reducing crime by treating youth as youth and creating opportunities for them to succeed. She emphasized OYCR's role in promoting evidence-based practices and the least-restrictive environments for youth, as well as OYCR's mission to provide a catalogue of best practices along with training and technical assistance. She also noted that OYCR's data and research component would be robust, including the mandate of producing a report in 2025 about the effectiveness of local programs.

Director Lucero also discussed the collaborations that OYCR is engaging in, with county partners, state partners (including the Department of Justice, the Board of State and Community Corrections, and others).

Director Lucero summarized the plan approval process for the Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grants. She explained that OYCR has reviewed all the plans, requested supplemental information, and met with 57 chiefs and one deputy chief. She described the process and noted the collaboration of the counties. She noted that OYCR views these plans as part of an iterative process, particularly because they had to be prepared before OYCR was able to provide technical assistance. She explained that OYCR is clarifying expectations around the target population and baseline data, as well as identifying areas for technical assistance.

Director Lucero summarized OYCR's three goals as keeping youth in the juvenile justice system where possible, preventing net widening (not increasing the number of youth going into the secure track) and supporting successful reentry. She also indicated that OYCR is emphasizing Positive Youth Development and the research-based approach. Director Lucero presented some graphs prepared by the W. Haywood Burns Institute presenting the sharp decline in the prosecution of youth as adults since 2008 and since 2016. She indicated that Special Consultant Marc Buller was brought on the team in order to work with the district attorneys and identify concerns to try to work together to keep youth in the juvenile justice system.

Director Lucero then described the plans for building out OYCR and adding additional positions. She also discussed the various state agencies and boards that OYCR is working with, as well as local partners.

Member Guzman noted that the Director's presentation placed more emphasis on law enforcement and public agencies, not on community-based providers. He commented

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that community-based providers are an underused resource and are helpful in transformation and avoiding a reproduction of the status quo. There were no other comments from Members.

3. Public Comment

Rochelle Trochtenberg called for public comment. There was no comment from members of the public.

4. Presentation/Discussion: Ideas for New Business and OYCR Committee Priorities (2:15–3:15)

Director Lucero began the presentation by explaining the purpose of this part of the meeting as seeking to brainstorm ideas for the committee to focus on. She invited all members to contribute and to put ideas in the chat as well. Director Lucero launched a powerpoint presentation that contained the mandate of the Committee as outlined in statute. She called for the committee to identify concrete, meaningful areas where the committee can use its collective knowledge from different backgrounds and expertise to advise the office.

Director Lucero then asked staff to launch an anonymous survey. In response to a question from Member Calvin, staff clarified that all participants were able to respond to the survey (not only members). The first survey question asked whether participants strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagreed with the statement that youth should have multiple opportunities to get back on track after they have violated the law. Director Lucero reported that 68% strongly agreed and 32% agreed. The second poll concerned the statement that public safety is defined as every person in every community feeling safe both in their homes and on the street. Director Lucero reported that there was a strong general agreement with that statement. The next statement polled was that youth who break the law should be treated differently than adults who break the law, and the final statement was that restorative Justice principles (repairing harms, restoring communities and relationships, and recognizing the dignity and worth of all people) are critical to the youth, the crime survivor, and the community.

Director Lucero then resumed the powerpoint presentation and summarized areas that had been identified from other meeting minutes. She invited the Committee to offer ideas about the committee's work moving forward.

Member Miguel Garcia suggested convening a workgroup of young people with lived experience in institutions across the state to provide feedback on less restrictive confinement. He noted the importance of having young people participate in this discussion and indicated that they had done so with the BSCC and the Youth Bill of Rights.

Member Leventer commented that we should encourage or facilitate counties to find alternatives to juvenile hall for the SYTF placements and encourage counties to use the credible messenger programs to have alternatives to having only probation staff being the people who interact with youth.

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Member Burrell seconded Member Leventer's comment. She added that she did not think that there should be a lot of money spent on the transformation of juvenile halls because they are not the right place to do positive youth development services. She would like OYCR to help counties move off using juvenile halls or camps that look like halls.

Member Calvin agreed with these points and said that she thinks that everyone would agree that SB 823 has been implemented quickly and that everyone would probably like more time. She suggested it would be useful to do a survey in and out of California about alternatives to incarceration for serious crimes or step down programs, and encourage and support counties and communities to implement these, and that the committee could help staff identify and set it up.

Member Burrell commented in the chat that the consulting money could be used to help counties analyze their situation and figure out alternatives that could be developed.

Member Guzman agreed with what had been said about supporting counties with the need for less restrictive settings and in particular step down models. He also noted that some counties have more money than others, and that there could be support on how to leverage existing funding or braiding funding, both state and federal dollars, to maximize the impact. Incarcerating young people comes at the cost of health and social services. Counties need that information and expertise, and OYCR may be able to help. He also noted that community organizations could help with the work and need to be resourced through funding. CBOs are often denied access or entry and do not always have the infrastructure or evidence base to support their work. It is important to not dismiss untested programs but to evaluate their promise and the success they have so that communities can do more for themselves and validate their successes.

Member of the Public Ellen Hartz asked in the chat whether the July 1, 2023, deadline for the committee could be extended. OYCR staff responded that that is up to the legislature but that there are other ways to maintain the expertise and perspectives after that date.

Ex Officio Member Pank commented that OYCR is in the Health Agency and that there are a lot of people who are probably able to provide technical assistance to counties in breaking down silos to serve the needs of youth and helping probation understand how some of those work.

Incoming OYCR Deputy Director Jackson commented that there are many people we could tap for their expertise and connections. Director Lucero commented that Deputy Director Jackson has a lot of experience with the MediCal and DentiCal systems as well as state operations, and that OYCR will continue to have health experts and health services experts.

Member Vernon commented that technical assistance is important for small counties because they are resource poor and lack the community-based organizations. She noted that by collecting information from larger counties, OYCR will be able to help

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smaller counties duplicate those successful systems and draw on the repository of information.

Director Lucero asked whether anyone could offer a perspective from a community-based organization.

Member Garcia noted that from a community perspective, there are challenges in getting clearance to get inside institutions, especially for credible messengers. He noted that individual people can be credible messengers and work individually with youth in small counties, even where there are no community-based organizations. But he noted that there are challenges in getting credible messengers inside institutions because of background checks. Some credible messengers do have backgrounds, but they also have the best experience with the young people inside because they have a lot in common. He suggested that small counties could focus on bringing in individuals instead of targeting organizations. He noted that for himself, it was an individual (Member Guzman) who inspired him to go down the path he is on, and that it is an individual who makes an impact, not an organization.

Member Guzman said that CBOs have challenges with funding structures. While the government is paid and gets funding whether they do the work, but CBOs are often paid on reimbursement models and must staff up without funds and have the staff available whether or not they get the contracts. There needs to be some flexibility around how CBOs are funded to do the work and how they are resourced.

Jessica Hellman commented that she hopes the Committee can help identify some standardized training components for use among the variety of system professionals. Mark Hall commented that partnerships with community colleges and universities is the goal of his CBO.

Member Prince stated that it would be helpful for OYCR to identify alternatives to traditional facilities and correctional facility design, perhaps by engaging with design developers and looking at new paradigms for housing secure track youth. He expanded that experts in the field could be engaged, including experts on the Committee.

Member Burrell noted that there has been a lot of work done on facilities in the adult system, including in Norway, and that there are foundations that have funded work on architectural design. She echoed Member Prince and said that having architectural students design a place that does not look like a prison, where people could thrive, is an exciting idea.

Mark Cole made a comment in the chat related to step downs with strong social and emotional learning curriculums leading to custodial situations, combined with appropriate community based organizations.

Member Prince suggested looking at strengthening relationships with community colleges, state colleges, and universities to assist youth who wish to transition to higher education. He noted that San Marcos State College has an active program, specifically

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targeting foster care youth. Member Burrell commented in the chat that these links seem especially important now that youth can be held up to age 25.

Member Garcia suggested that the committee could research de-escalation methods to lower tensions in units and reduce fights, in particular how to deescalate without using pepper spray. He suggested looking at techniques of conflict resolution and mediation for young people.

There was a comment in the chat that the committee should engage experts in eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in the system.

Director Lucero commented on the importance of partnership with community and state colleges. She also noted that we do not know the graduation rates of probation youth because it is not collected and that OYCR will have a robust data and research team to shine light on the gaps. She noted that when Santa Clara County did a point in time study, fewer probation youth had graduated than foster youth.

Member Richart commented in the chat on innovation and workforce opportunities.

There was a comment in the chat that additional training recommendations for custody officers for dealing with youth and young adults are important because they have not had much contact with that population.

A comment was made relating to reentry and opportunities to start planning that up front and the need to look at creative ways of securing housing for young people before they are released. They suggested establishing partnerships with trade unions, and apprenticeship programs so that kids have options that are both brain and brawn.

Member Guzman commented that DJJ was providing training around computer coding and technology. You need to train youth in jobs that are in demand and that would give them a living wage. DJJ did a good job with that and now the local level will need to figure out how to do it. Geography will be a challenge but there may be things that OYCR can do from Sacramento.

Director Lucero emphasized that it is important to connect with DHCS and those resources at the time of reentry and that this is a good opportunity to make sure that those resources are connected in the right way. She highlighted the importance of breaking down silos and connecting people to existing programs.

Member Richart noted in the chat that it is important to remember the needs of the specific population as opposed to the custody population. He also noted that OYCR needs to be focused in the beginning and not get spread thin.

Member Richart stated that because of OYCR's placement within the health agency, it can provide a bridge locally by providing technical assistance when requested to connect probation youth and community resources funded through the Department of Health Care Services. At the local level, providers, connectors and funders do not see how they could leverage the resources they have.

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Director Lucero acknowledged that this is a goal of OYCR and that OYCR will have county liaisons who can bring information to meetings and share information.

OYCR staff commented that OYCR intends to have in-house expertise on all of the available streams of funding through the deputy director and the policy unit.

5. Public Comment (3:15–3:25)

A member of the public responded to Director Lucero's question about robust reentry programs. She highlighted restorative justice and family-centered approach, and the importance of supporting families, caregivers, and siblings to help support the young people when they get home. Restorative justice in a community-based setting is important instead of only offering it inside the institution.

Mark Hall commented that he has identified mentors in colleges and universities. He asks juniors and seniors majoring in education or social work to make a two year commitment and do one on one mentoring.

Michelle Cabrera commented that she is happy to lend their expertise on the behavioral health side.

6. Next Meeting Date (3:25–3:30)

OYCR Counsel explained the new meeting requirements that require an in-person quorum. She proposed meeting on Wednesday, May 4, and then coming into alignment with the full Child Welfare Council which meets on the first Wednesday of the month.

Member Calvin asked how often we are suggesting that the committee meet. Director Lucero responded that we would have a proposal at the next meeting about how best to use our short time together.

7. Adjourn

Director Lucero thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting.