

A group of diverse, smiling children of various ages and ethnicities are shown from the chest up, arranged in a circle and looking towards the camera. They are positioned on the left side of the image, with their heads tilted upwards. A large, stylized orange asterisk is overlaid on the image, partially covering the children's faces.

Child Welfare Council

December 3, 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



In person

- Members **participating in person**, seek recognition of the Co-Chairs by raising your hand and wait for the microphone before speaking

Virtual

- Members **participating virtually**, “Raise Hand”

Options for Public Comment



In person

- 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

Virtual

- 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

Call to Order

Justice Laurie Earl, Co-Chair

Secretary Kim Johnson, Co-Chair



Child Welfare Council Meeting





ANNOUNCEMENTS



PUBLIC COMMENT

Options for Public Comment – Pg 2




In person

- 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


Virtual

- 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

VOTING ITEM



**Mandated Reporting Advisory
Committee (MRAC) Update +
Vote on Semi-Annual MRAC Report**



Kathryn Icenhower and Dana Blackwell, PEI Co-Chairs



**Mandated Reporting to
Community Supporting**

*Communities Keeping Children Safe
and Families Together*

SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT: Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC)

Child Welfare Council Meeting

December 3, 2025

“My daughter was born medically fragile. I had no support from my family, and I didn’t know where to go for help or even what to ask for. The domestic violence in our home got worse because of the stress of being parents of a child with significant needs. When the police called CPS, I had no idea that my child could be removed because I was a victim of domestic violence. How could they take her away? I believe my experience—and my daughter’s life—would have been different if we had support and had known about the “failure to protect” laws. Even though my daughter was in foster care for less than a year, she continues to suffer from the experience.”

— Shelley Lopez, MRCS Task Force and Lived Experience Group member, parent, and advocate

“Students learn best in safe and supportive school environments. We must re-examine our training and support for mandated reporters, as well as our policies and practices to ensure that we are centering child safety and strengthening families through prevention. We need to better understand and address over-reporting and over-surveillance, especially around general neglect, and critically examine how bias contributes to harm experienced by our historically underserved students and families.”

— Dr. Debra Duardo, Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools

“We can do so much better, and the time is now. Maybe 20 years ago the time wasn’t right, but the time is now. Communities are strong and ready to do this work. The Task Force is made up of transformers who must continue to do the work, no matter how scary. It takes all of us living in the uncomfortable zone to push.”

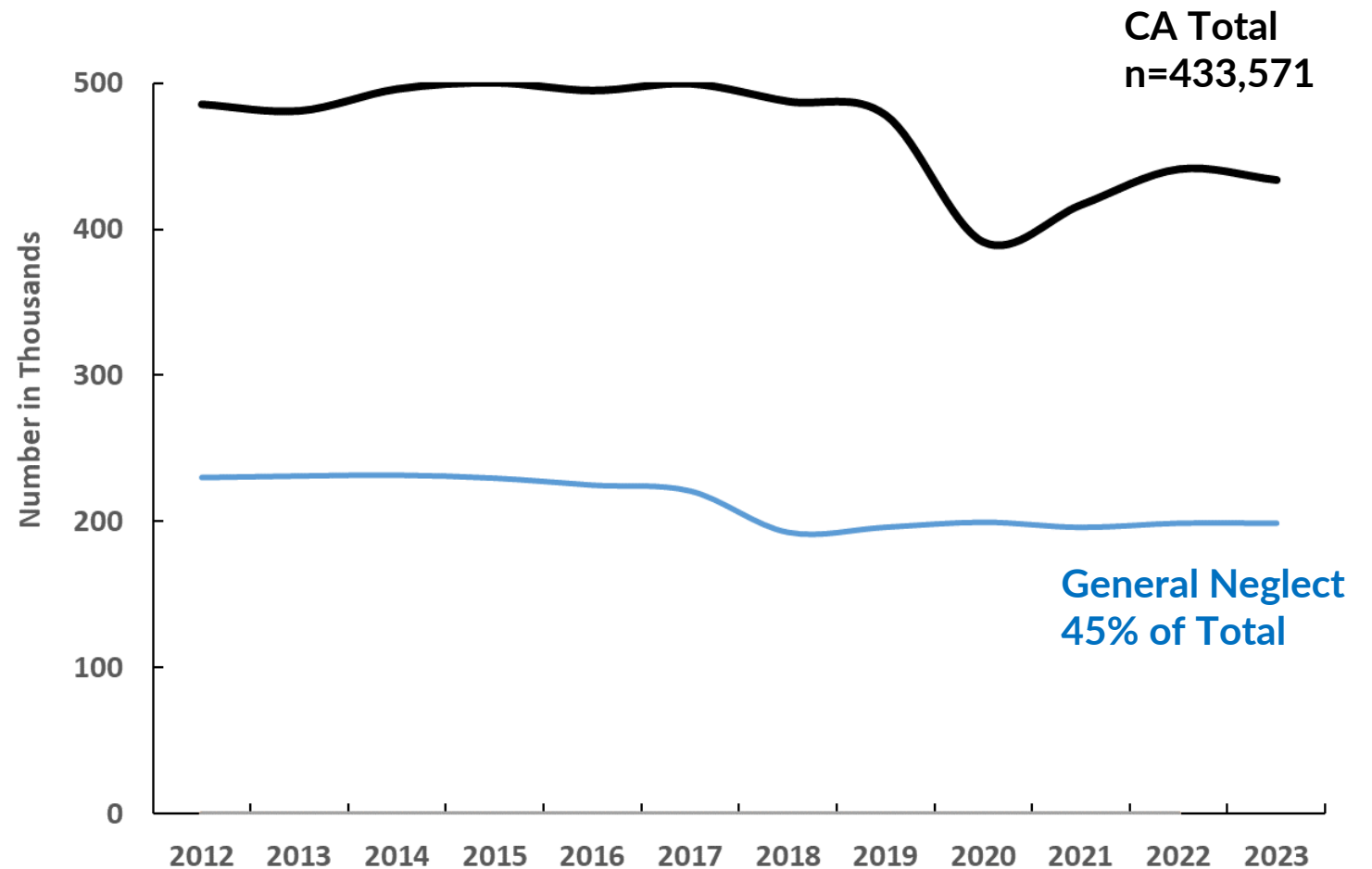
— Janay Eustace, President & CEO, The Child Abuse Prevention Center



General Neglect is the #1 allegation

45% of all children with an allegation of maltreatment are related to general neglect, an occurrence that can often be mitigated by community supports. General neglect is a “catch-all” allegation that is often driven by racism, bias, and the absence of economic opportunity and resources. It can also include issues related to domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health.

Children with an Allegation of Maltreatment



Black/African American, Native American, and Latino families are significantly more likely to be reported to child abuse hotlines

1 in 3 Children

in the U.S. is subject to an investigation of child abuse by the time they turn 18.¹

1 in 2 Black & Native American Children

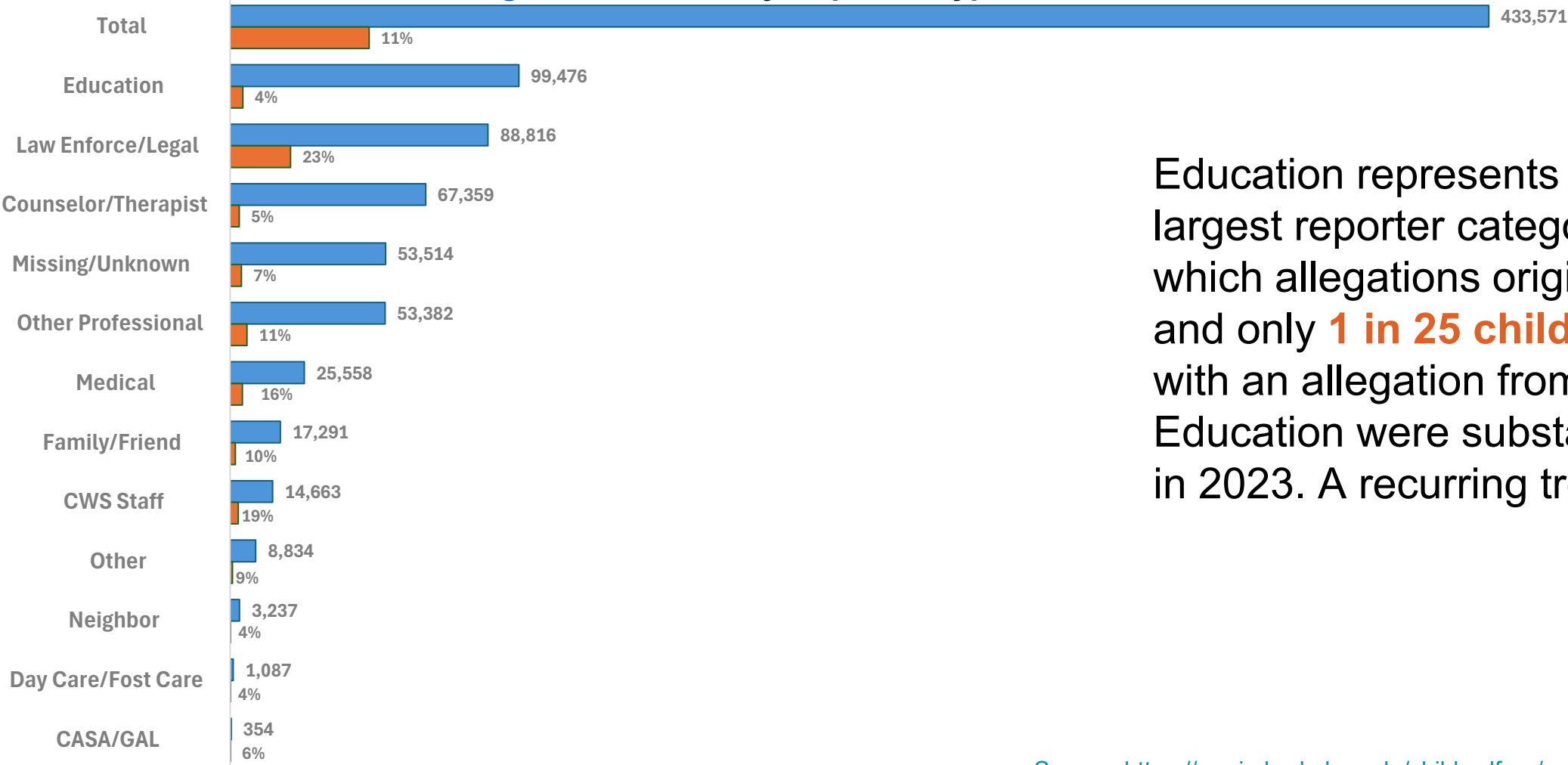
in California is subject to an investigation of child abuse by the time they turn 18.²

¹ American Journal of Public Health, 2017

² California Legislative Analyst's Office, 2024₃

In 2023, only 1 in 9 children with an allegation of abuse and/or neglect was substantiated in California

Children with one or more Allegations in 2023 by Reporter Type & Percent Substantiated



Education represents the largest reporter category from which allegations originate, and only 1 in 25 children with an allegation from Education were substantiated in 2023. A recurring trend.

Standing Up the MRAC

1 - Standing Up The MRAC

36 TOTAL MEMBER SEATS + TRI-CHAIRS

21 Community, Organization, and Provider Seats – Invited applicants from Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force and Subcommittee members

- Parents & Caregivers with Lived Expertise (2)
- Tribal Communities (2)
- Youth with Lived Expertise (2)
- System of Care (1)
- Community-Based Organization (CBO): Child Abuse Prevention Council (1)
- CBO: Domestic Violence Advocacy / Provider (1)
- CBO: Family Resource Centers (1)
- CBO: Behavioral Health (1)
- CBO: Child Welfare Prevention Provider (2)
- CBO: Data & Research (1)
- Education: Elementary/Middle/High School (1)
- Education: Early Childhood and Childcare (1)
- Health Care (1)
- Legal Representation (1)
- Policy (1)
- Law Enforcement/First Responder (1)
- Probation/Juvenile Justice (1)

Progress To Date: Standing Up The MRAC

36 TOTAL MEMBER SEATS + TRI-CHAIRS

9 CalHHS Department Seats – Identify and invite candidates from each selected Department (one person per seat)

- Department of Developmental Services
- Department of Public Health
- Department of Social Services
- Community Services and Development
- Department of Healthcare Services
- Managed Health Care
- Department of Rehabilitation
- Office of the Surgeon General
- Office of Youth and Community Restoration

1 - Progress To Date: Standing Up The MRAC

36 TOTAL MEMBER SEATS + TRI-CHAIRS

6 State Association Seats – Identify and invite candidates from each selected Association (one person per seat unless noted)

- Child Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)
- California Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA)
- Association of Regional Centers Agencies (ARCA)
- California Teachers Association (CTA) - 2
- California Child Abuse Prevention Centers (CAPC)
- Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program and State Advocacy
- Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC)

MRAC Members

Community, Organization, and Provider Seats		CalHHS Department Seats	State Association Seats
Parents & Caregivers with Lived Expertise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tina Rios • Jason Sharpe 	CBO: Data & Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel Webster 	Department of Developmental Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leah Dempsey 	Child Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayle Johnson
Tribal Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keishanne Whitworth 	Education: Elementary/Middle/High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marcelino Serna 	Department of Public Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Andrews 	California Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gail Gronert
Youth with Lived Expertise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monique Nunes • Jevon Wilkes 	Education: Early Childhood and Childcare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthony Garcia 	Department of Social Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jenny Pearlman 	Association of Regional Centers Agencies (ARCA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jennifer Bloom, Director of Client Services
System of Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melissa Preader • Cindy Sutcliffe 	Health Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heather Briscoe 	Department of Education (outside of CA Health and Human Services) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erika Torres 	California Teachers Association (CTA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patricia Rucker, Legislative Advocate • Connie Rosales, Regional Executive Director
CBO: Domestic Violence Advocacy/ Provider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arati Vasan 	Legal Representation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Progress 	Community Services and Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Progress 	California Child Abuse Prevention Centers (CAPC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cindy Marroquin, Training Director
CBO: Family Resource Centers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pegah Faed 	Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luciana Svidler 	Department of Healthcare Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Pam Riley 	Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program and State Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Progress
CBO: Behavioral Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danielle Lowe 	Law Enforcement/First Responder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Sheriff Ed Axelsen 	Managed Health Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Progress 	Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Progress
CBO: Child Welfare Prevention Provider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mara Ziegler 	Probation/Juvenile Justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Progress 	Department of Rehabilitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Progress 	
		Office of the Surgeon General <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lauren Groves 	
		Office of Youth and Community Restoration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josefa Rodriguez Fontan 	

Implementation Strategy and Plan

Key Levers of Implementation: The Recommendations are each connected to a key lever of change to focus the implementation strategy

Shared Framework: To organize development of the implementation plan, the MRAC established a shared framework that articulates the deliverables for each recommendation, guides the identification of key activities, and highlights productive intersections across Workgroups

- Data and Accountability
- Policy
- Training
- Connecting to a Community Pathway of Supports and Services
- Narrative Shift

Key Lever of Implementation: Training

Leverage training as a tool to begin shifting the conversation from reporting families to supporting families

TRAINING	DELIVERABLES	ACTIVITIES	TIMING
Rec 3 — Use data to track AB 2085 implementation [shared with Data & Accountability]	Oversight of the AB 2085 training (CDSS lead)	Provide structured oversight of CDSS MR training (feedback loops, reviews, certificate process)	Oversight of the development of CDSS MR training: March 2025–April 2026
Rec 8 — Require standardized mandated reporter training	Recommendations for CANRA amendments tied to standardized training	Create crosswalk between training and legislation	Decision-making tool survey with the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP): November 2025
Rec 9 — Develop statewide “gold standard” curriculum with lived expertise	Curriculum oversight to ensure alignment with core content and lived expertise	Explore review processes for non-state trainings	Webpage development & implementation: TBD
Rec 10 — Develop a statewide mandated reporter webpage	Training approval standards and certification processes	Survey decision-making tools from CA counties and other states	AB 2085 training development and oversight: January 2026
	Development and ongoing monitoring of statewide MR webpage	Develop and operationalize MR webpage content, monitoring, and dissemination	
		Monitor AB 2085 training implementation data	
		Develop communications and messaging for training awareness	

Key Lever of Implementation: Data & Accountability

Focus and sustain action to ensure the efforts of mandated reporting reform are carried out with fidelity and accountability

DATA & ACCOUNTABILITY	DELIVERABLES	ACTIVITIES	TIMING
Rec 1 — Establish MRAC; track data to monitor and support progress	Semi-annual report to CWC on progress	Align with FFPS CQI workgroup; review plans, EBPs, county saturation	Metrics landscape analysis + socialization: February 2026
Rec 2 — Recommend and apply data sets to advance MR reform	Ongoing analysis of impacts of recommendations		
	Recommendations for future data tools/processes for mandated reporting	Inventory statewide data sources and metrics (SDOH, ACES, EpiCenter, etc.)	Recommend five key metrics: March 2026
Rec 3 — Use data to track implementation and success of AB 2085 [shared with Training]	Oversight of implementation data	Conduct landscape scan of available upstream/downstream metrics	Alignment with FFPS: Ongoing
	Regular monitoring of statewide data	Develop and recommend five key metrics to track reform impact	Quarterly cross-workgroup coordination: Ongoing
Rec 13 — Continue to advance MR reform through ongoing data analysis	Annual publication of disparities and impact data with CDSS	Outreach to agencies and youth/parent advocacy groups for qualitative data	
	Data submissions to support Community Pathways capacity assessment (Rec 11)	Meet quarterly with all MRAC workgroups to identify shared measures	

Key Lever of Implementation: Community Pathways

Help ensure mandated reporters understand the resources available to support families and the mechanisms for making connections to supports instead of reporting

COMMUNITY PATHWAYS	DELIVERABLES	ACTIVITIES	TIMING
<p>Rec 11 — CDSS to assess capacity of community supports/services for MR and OCAP funding alignment</p> <p>Rec 12 — CPPs must include MR-specific info/education on community pathways</p>	<p>Review of CQI Outcomes</p> <p>Develop Recommendations from CQI findings (in partnership with CP Advisory Committee)</p> <p>Align OCAP Funding (ensure funding is accessible to CBOs and linked to prevention needs)</p> <p>Define “information and education” for CPP amendments; develop statewide template</p> <p>Draft All County Letter or Interagency Letter with requirements and timeline</p> <p>Create process to ensure all amendments are completed</p> <p>Monitor implementation of amendments through CDSS + CP Advisory Committee</p> <p>Support counties in building MR-focused websites and warm handoff practices</p>	<p>Coordinate timelines with MRAC Data and CP Advisory Committees</p> <p>Review statewide CQI reports and identify gaps</p> <p>Conduct EBP access and county CPP gap analysis</p> <p>Stakeholder outreach and engagement (ILTs, providers, counties)</p> <p>Create dissemination plan for recommendations</p> <p>Collaborative meetings with CDSS, CP Advisory Committee, and workgroups</p> <p>Draft CPP amendment template</p> <p>Establish ACL/Interagency Letter content & approval process</p> <p>Develop tracking tool for county submissions</p> <p>Coordinate with Data Workgroup on monitoring</p>	<p>All Rec 11 Initial Deliverables: Within 0–12 months</p> <p>All Rec 12 Initial Deliverables: Within 0–12 months</p>

Key Lever of Implementation: Policy

Enact laws and regulations that will address the well-documented over-reporting of the current mandated reporting system, with a focus on the disproportionate burden on Black/African American and Native American communities

POLICY	DELIVERABLES	ACTIVITIES	TIMING
Rec 4 — Support LAO analysis of narrowing MR categories	Collaboration with LAO to analyze MR categories and child safety impacts	Invite LAO to present findings; develop 1-page summary	LAO engagement + report alignment: Feb 2026
Rec 5 — Amend CANRA to eliminate General Neglect as a reporting requirement	Research on national MR category reforms	Review other states' MR categories and outcomes	SDM tool review (counties + definitions): Feb 2026–March 2026
Rec 6 — Update CANRA definition of Severe Neglect to align with SDM	Recommendations for legislation removing General Neglect from MR requirements	Gather data from mandated reporters beyond top categories	Liability pilot research + stakeholder coordination: March 2026
Rec 7 — Implement 2-year liability immunity pilot using decision-making tools	Recommendations for clarifying Severe Neglect definition	Review SDM tool use across CA counties (Humboldt, LA, Ventura)	
	Liability pilot design, tools, evaluation framework (leveraging LA County model)	Research other states' definitions of neglect and recent reforms	
		Review CA county MR decision-making tools to inform pilot design	

Key Lever of Implementation: Narrative Shift

Increase awareness and understanding of the need for mandated reporting reform; as well as the individual, family, and societal benefits of safely narrowing the front door to CPS

NARRATIVE SHIFT	DELIVERABLES	ACTIVITIES	TIMING
Rec 14 — Create a statewide narrative change initiative to shift beliefs and values from mandated reporting to community supporting	Establish campaign objectives and communications plan	Develop key messages (poverty = support, safety redefined, harm acknowledgment)	Key messaging + harm statement: Jan 2026
	Develop and implement statewide Narrative Shift Campaign	Gather stakeholder input through extensive listening sessions	Listening sessions + synthesis: End of Q2 2026
	Co-develop messaging with lived experts and community stakeholders	Review existing listening session data (Humboldt, LA, statewide FGIs)	Full communications plan: Draft by Sept 2026; Final by Nov 2026
	Build qualitative data library (case studies, lived expertise stories)	Draft full communications plan (purpose, audiences, strategies, tactics)	Qualitative Data (stories) Library: Q1 2026 and ongoing
	Merge dissemination and NS Workgroup efforts	Compile qualitative stories, bright spots, and case studies Coordinate with CP, Data, Training, Policy Workgroups to support their implementation	

Leveraging the Natural Intersections

While advancing implementation of all recommendations

WHAT: AB2085: Seeing clear intersections across recommendations, the MRAC is pinpointing where an integrated approach will move the work forward faster and more effectively.

WHY: Almost three years following the implementation of AB 2085, awareness and adherence to the law are extremely low across the state.

HOW: With a coordinated implementation effort that strategically applies the implementation levers of change the MRAC will harness our collective impact efforts to significantly increase awareness, help strengthen practice consistency, and ensure the law achieves its intended impact of reducing unnecessary reporting and advancing equity statewide.

MRAC Charge

The MRAC is not simply a committee tasked with carrying out recommendations. It is a statutorily mandated body with a clear charge: ensure California's shift from mandated reporting to community supporting moves forward, and that it drives the measurable elimination of disparities in the child welfare system.

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)

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 semi-annual report** presented December 2025



THE MOTION & VOTE TO MOVE TO IMPLEMENTATION

In September 2024, the voting members of the Child Welfare Council approved the motion to craft a strategy to move toward a focus on mandatory reporting to community supporting, considering the MRCS Task Force recommendations

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 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.

SEPTEMBER 2024 MOTION

That the Secretary of CalHHS and the Director of CDSS, alongside other associated CalHHS departments, work together to craft a strategy to move toward a system shift from a focus on mandatory reporting to community supporting, considering the MRCS Task Force recommendations as advanced in this report. This 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 director of CDSS should work with the PEI Committee and the MRCS Task Force, including the lived experience subcommittee, and be prepared to provide the CWC a quarterly update, during each of its meetings, on progress in creating this comprehensive strategy to consider each of the MRCS recommendations and ultimately move toward a system shift from a focus on mandatory reporting to community supporting.

CalHHS and CDSS will then bring the strategy back to the Council for consideration.



**Mandated Reporting to
Community Supporting**

*Communities Keeping Children Safe
and Families Together*

Discussion

~

Consensus Vote

INFORMATION ITEM



Beyond the Bench Conference Report Out



BEYOND THE BENCH 2025

Coming Together Again to Support Children, Families & Communities

NOVEMBER 17-19, 2025 || LOS ANGELES



Judicial Council of California

- **By the numbers**

Approximately 1000 attendees

- **Audience:**

- Over 100 juvenile judges
- Over 300 attorneys
- Over 100 child welfare and probation
 - agency participants
- Over 80 Lived Experts
- Court staff, Court Appointed Special
 - Advocates, Behavioral Health
 - professionals, tribal leaders





• Content

- 78 workshops

- 3 plenary sessions

- State Agency partner/faculty workshops:

- Tiered Rate Structure
- Solving the Puzzle of Effective ICWA Inquiry
- Please Don't Give Up on Us: Stories from Incarcerated Youth and Children in California
- Promoting A Kin-First Culture: Aligning All the Child-Serving Systems*
- Measuring Progress in County-Based Care for Realigned Youth
- How Court Findings and Orders Impact Funding Options for Children and Young Adults
- Strengthening Child and Family Outcomes: Collaboration Between State, County, and Court Systems
- Family First Prevention Services: Supports for Keeping Families Together
- Navigating the Future: Enhancing Court Collaboration Through the New Child Welfare Services-California Automated Response and Engagement Systems (CWS-CARES)
- The OYCR Ombudsperson Division: Role and System Impact
- Beyond Confinement: Advancing Youth Success Through the Stepping Home Model and Less Restrictive Programs
- Permanency Planning for Older Youth*
- Supporting System-Involved Youth with Complex Needs: Bridging Gaps in Care Through System Collaboration
- Mitigating Housing Instability





- **Additional Child Welfare Council Related Courses**

- The Role of Harm Reduction in the Courtroom and Beyond

- Reforming Mandated Reporting: Reducing Family Involvement in California's Child and Family Court System

- Finding "Family" Requirements and Relative Placement Advocacy Promoting a Kin-First Culture

- Making Every Move Matter: Building Child-Focused, Developmentally Sensitive Transitions in Foster Care

- Foster Youth Education Toolkit: Education Rights of Systems-Involved Youth

- From the Life to Legalese and Back Again: Communication Strategies for Working with and Empowering CSEC Youth

- The Future of Mental Health for California Families: A Changing Landscape

• Popular Workshops

It Works! Restorative Justice Practices with Justice-Involved Youth and Adults

• Wrangling Writs and Appeals: What Dependency Attorneys Need to Know

• Centering Historical and Cultural Trauma: Leveraging ACEs and Expert Testimony in Child Welfare Cases

• Children Exposed to Violence: Understanding Trauma and Supporting Resilience in the Judicial System

• 2025 Legislative and Policy Updates in Dependency

Juvenile Dependency Case Law Update

• Law & Order: Juvenile Edition – Navigating the Complexities of Juvenile Restraining Orders

• Doing the Right Thing at the Right Time: Ethics, Neuroscience, and Epigenetics in Foster Care Advocacy

• Domestic Violence legal update

• Welfare and Institutions Code section 827 Unsealed: Seeking Juvenile Records in Life and Death



• **CDSS/JC conference evaluation**



Committee & 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.)





Office of Youth and
Community Restoration

Child Welfare Council Update: Youth Justice Committee

December 3, 2025

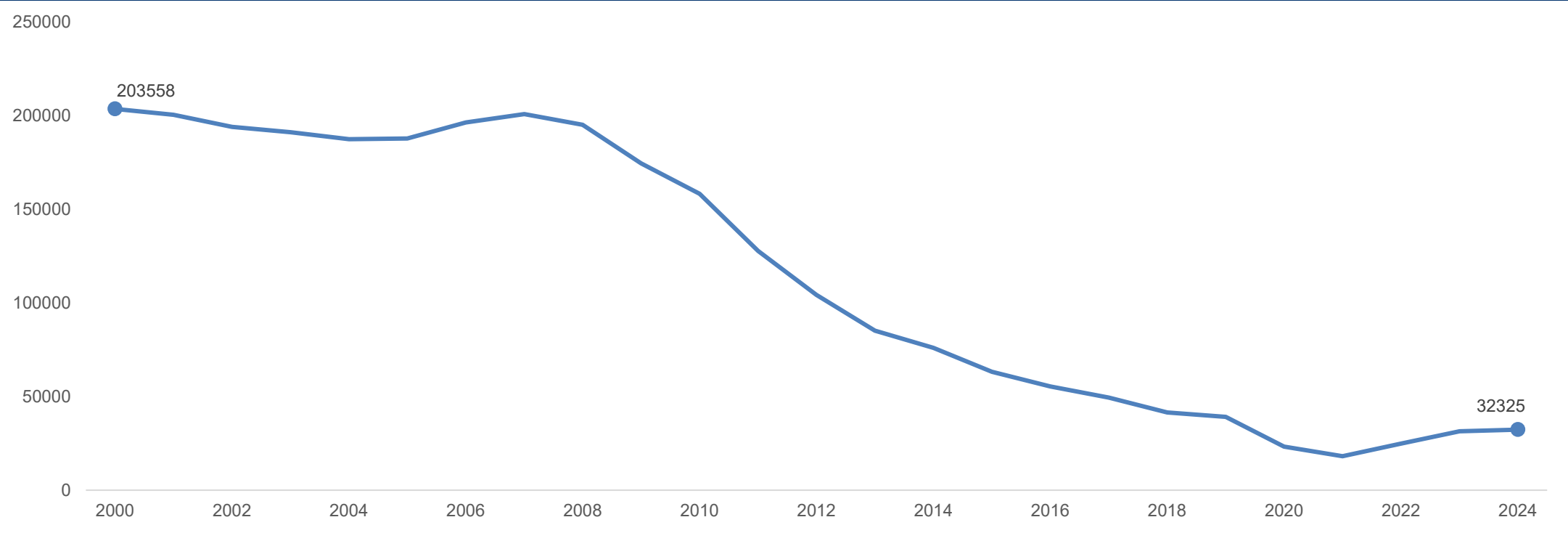


Youth Justice Committee Updates

- **Prior YJC Priority Area Updates**
 - Stepping Home Model Implementation
 - Higher Education
 - Community Based Organization Capacity Building
- **New Priority Areas Identified by the YJC**
 - Diversion
 - Data with a Focus on Outcomes
- **Youth Justice Committee Membership Updates**

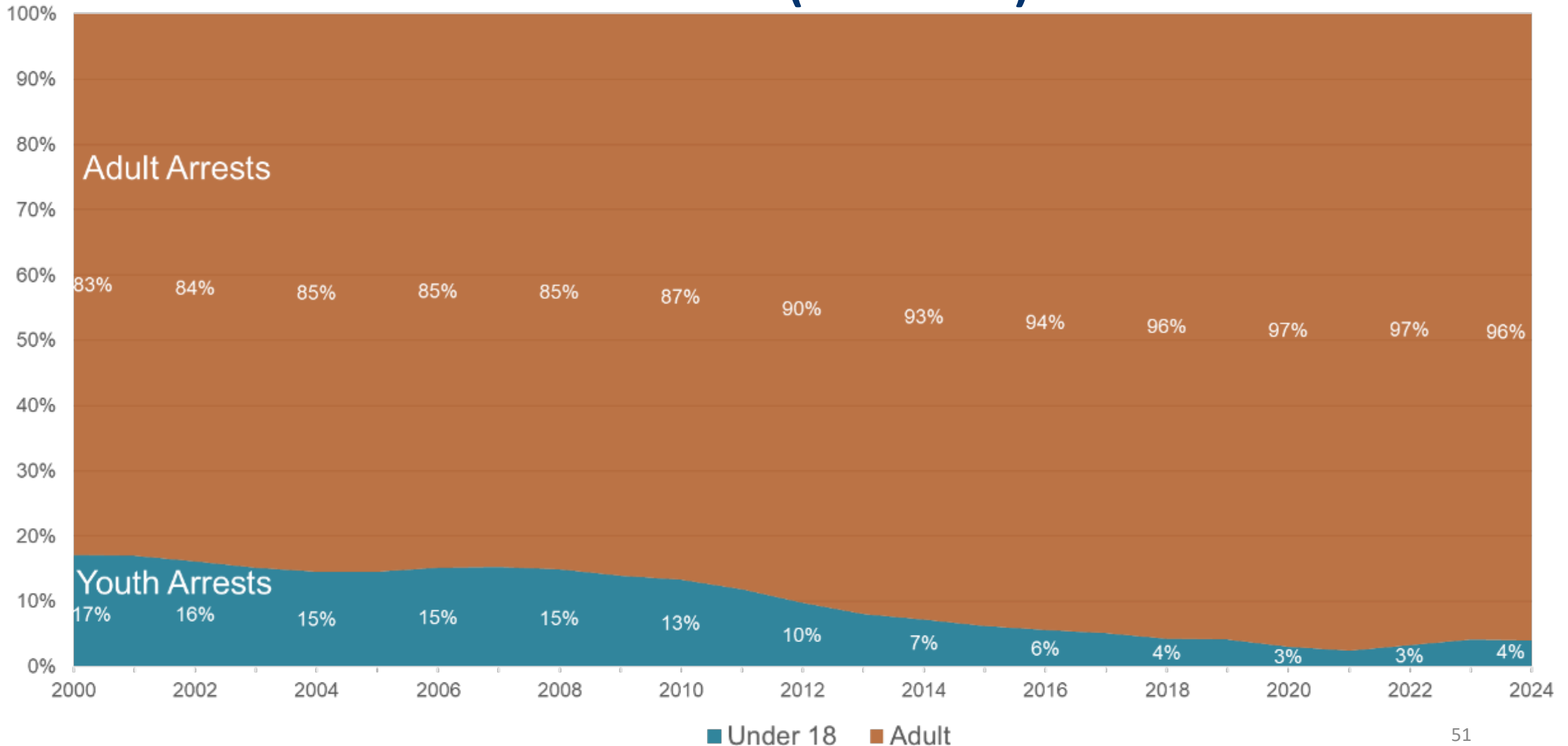


Total Youth Arrests in California, 2000-2024



Source: Department of Justice, 2025; Youth (under 18)

Youth Arrests as a Percentage of Total Arrests in California 2000-2024 (DOJ 2025)



Stepping Home Model Overview

- Establishes a research-based framework, best practices and a series of elements to inform California's policy goals regarding care of youth committed to Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTFs)
- Offers a model for stepping youth out of custody and into the community that will be informed by ongoing partnership with the field and emerging research



Stepping Home Model Continuum and Key Elements

A process and continuum of care

- Begins in SYTF and ends at home and in communities
- Usage of LRPs to increase community engagement
- Goal is to optimize healing and accountability, enhancing community safety
- Key strategies: robust care **at or close to home** to strengthen youth, families, and communities

Key Elements of the Model

- Safe and secure facilities
- Trauma-informed facilities, programs, and staffing
- Comprehensive screening and assessments
- Positive youth development
 - Restorative justice
 - Credible messengers
- Less restrictive programs
- Robust reentry services

Stepping Home Model Implementation

- UCLA is currently conducting a round of in-depth confidential interviews with a small group of counties that represent various geographic regions across the state
- The interviews, which include a diverse group of stakeholders within and outside of probation are designed to gather insight into
 - understanding of and progress with implementing the elements of the Stepping Home Model
 - successes, challenges and support needs at the county level
- A full analysis of findings will be shared with OYCR and used help guide how the agency
 - shares best practices
 - supports counties in ongoing implementation efforts, and
 - evaluates impact



Stepping Home Model Implementation – Pg 2

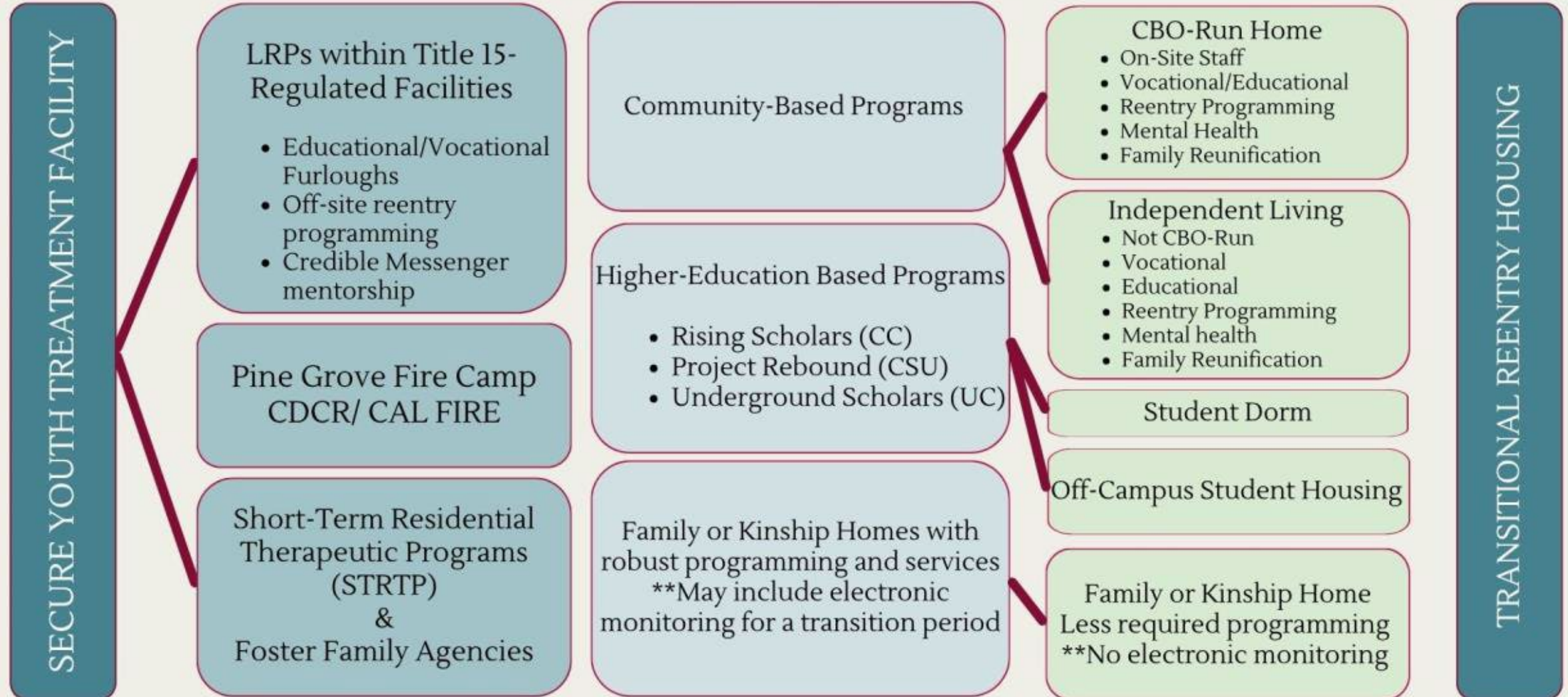
- Emerging themes from interviews with two participating counties
 - Strong alignment with the values that inform the Stepping Home Model
 - Familiarity with the Stepping Home Model itself is limited.
 - Strong collaboration and partnership with community-based organizations.
 - Individualized plans are made for the youth in both counties.
 - Both counties expressed that a lack of access to less restrictive programs (LRPs) is a major challenge.



The Continuum of Less Restrictive Programs

Most Restrictive

Least Restrictive



Less Restrictive Programs (LRPs)



Progress Across the State

Not all counties currently have or use LRPs, though this has been expanding.



LRP USE EXPANDING





TOTAL YOUTH TRANSFERRED
FROM SYTFs TO LRPs



SOURCE: AB102 DATA BY COUNTY (C)

34 counties now operate LRPs
(up from 16) and youth transfers from
SYTFs to LRPs are **up by 73%**
in one year.

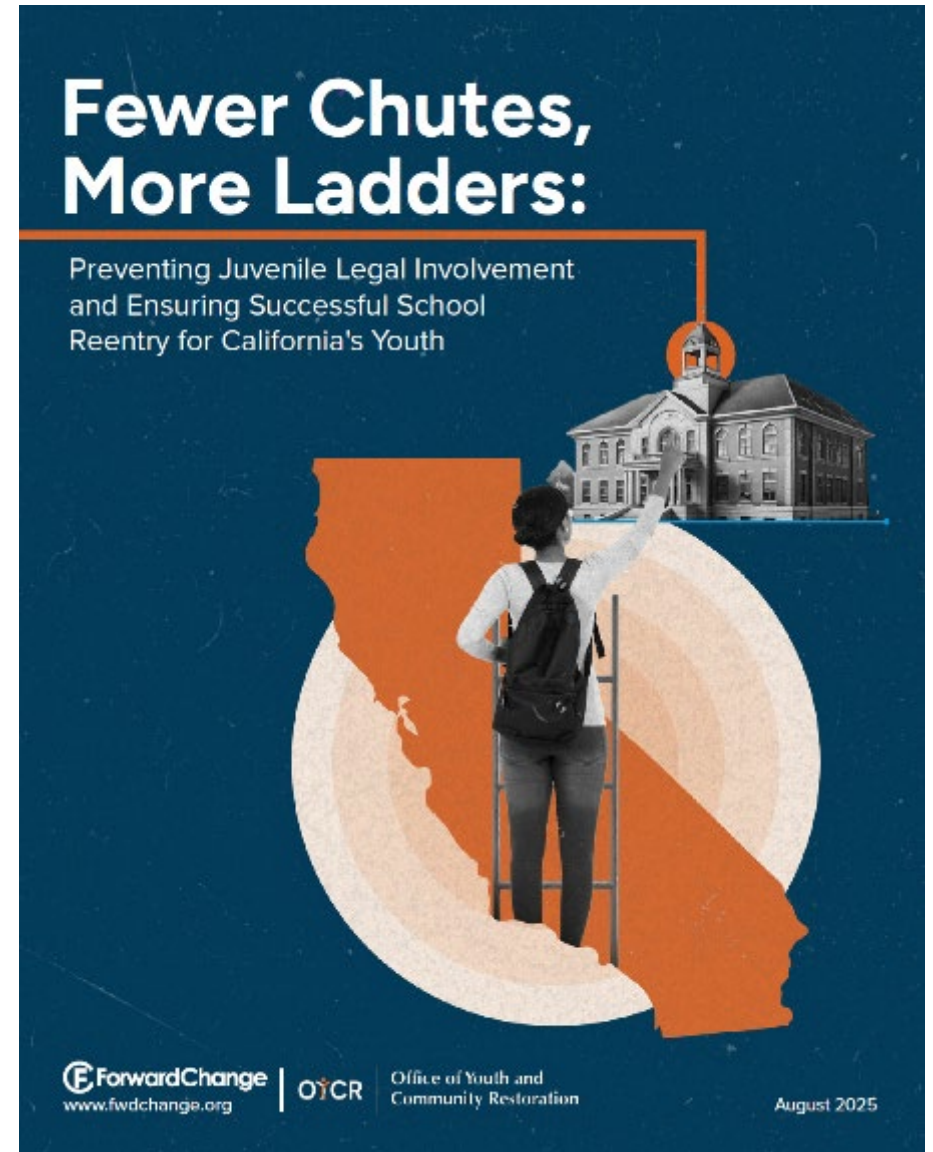
SOURCE: INVENTORY OF STATEWIDE
CAPACITY TO SERVE YOUTH RETURNING
FROM DJJ (MARCH 2023) AND LESS
RESTRICTIVE PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT
CALIFORNIA DIRECTORY (NOVEMBER 2024)

	RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS	These can be community or county based and offer a structured, supervised living environment outside of a secure facility.
	ELECTRONIC MONITORING	Youth live at home independently while being monitored through electronic devices with wraparound teams for high touch support.
	FIRE CAMPS	Youth may be placed in state-run camps such as Pine Grove where they receive firefighter training, or local-run fire camps.
	ENVIRONMENTAL/ VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS	State-run programs like California Conservation Corp (CCC) provide hands-on environmental or job readiness training.

LRPs can either be in a facility (governed by Title 15 standards) or outside of a facility (not governed by Title 15 standards).

Higher Education Update

- Fewer Chutes, More Ladders
 - In partnership with OYCR, Forward Change has produced a comprehensive report focused on preventing juvenile legal involvement and ensuring successful school reentry
- Education Advisory Committee
 - includes representatives from community colleges and universities, county offices of education, SELPA, State Board of Education, probation, advocates, and others
 - Meets regularly with a focus on identifying opportunities, barriers, and strategies to promote higher education and career opportunities for justice-involved youth
- Legislative Briefing



CBO Capacity Building Update

- CBO Capacity Building Workgroup
 - Includes representation from 3 CBOs, 1 philanthropic organizations, 2 probation departments, 2 TA providers and 1 Juvenile Judge
 - Meets regularly to support the capacity development of CBOs by developing materials and deliverables beyond traditional grant funding streams.
- CBO Capacity Building Initiative
 - In partnership with the **Public Works Alliance (PWA)**, **National Center for Youth Law (NCYL)**, and **Sierra Health Foundation (SHF)**, OYCR funds the capacity development of **8** community-based organizations (CBOs) across California
 - To date \$4M has been invested in CBOs through this initiative



Credit: 3 Sisters Garden

CBO Capacity Building Update B

- PWA Justice Serving Network (JSN)
 - With **SHF and OYCR**, PWA provides technical assistance to **two cohorts of 10 CBOs** to access Medi-Cal funding through the CalAIM Justice Involved Initiative
- CBO Website and Resources (in development)- Goals
 1. Host resources to **assist non-OYCR grant funded CBOs** in accessing capacity-building guides and resources
 2. Uplift **sustainable funding methods** for organizations providing services to youth in community and detention
 3. Promote **the success stories of CBOs** offering developmentally-appropriate services throughout the state
 4. Connect **CBOs together to form regional networks** of community-based youth justice services



Credit: Homeboy Industries

New YJC Priority Areas

- In June 2025, YJC identified the following new priority areas
 - **Data with a focus on outcomes**
 - **Diversion**
- Currently the committee is gathering additional research in each area to inform meaningful deliverables, this includes:
 - Report outs on OYCR's work with the Council of State Governments on Diversion
 - Exploring the creation of a Juvenile Justice Data Inventory



Youth Justice Committee Member Updates

Incoming members

Honorable Sharonda Bradford
Los Angeles County Superior Court
Commissioner

Chief Melissa Romero
Butte County Probation

Chief Rachelle Gayton
Yolo County Probation

Departing Members

Chief Dan Prince
Imperial County Probation

Chief Robert Reyes
San Luis Obispo County Probation

Lauren Mendez
Child & Family Policy Institute of California
Youth Engagement Project

New Youth Justice Committee Roster

CO-CHAIRS

Director Katherine Lucero, OYCR

Brooke Harris, Executive Director,
Pacific Juvenile Defender Center

JUDICIAL BRANCH:

Honorable Tilisha Martin

San Diego County Superior Court
Assistant Supervising, Juvenile

Honorable Sharonda Bradford

Los Angeles County Superior Court
Commissioner

PROBATION REPRESENTATION:

Chief Melissa Romero

Butte County Probation

Chief Rachelle Gayton

Yolo County Probation

Chief Jennifer Branning

Lassen County Probation

JUVENILE LAW EXPERTS:

Elizabeth Calvin

Senior Advocate, Human Rights Watch

Frankie Guzman

Director, California Youth Justice Institute
National Center for Youth Law

Virginia Corrigan

Deputy Attorney General , Bureau of Children's Justice
Civil Rights Enforcement Section, CA Department of
Justice

Diana Becton

Contra Costa County District Attorney

TRAUMA RESPONSIVE/THERAPEUTIC CARE EXPERT:

Carly B. Dierkhising, Assistant Professor

School of Criminal Justice and Criminalistics, CSULA

EDUCATION EXPERTS

Tyee Griffith

Associate Dean

Educational Partnerships and Associate Faculty,
Social Justice Studies, Norco College

VICTIM VOICE/RESTORATIVE JUSTICE:

Kasey Halcón

Deputy County Executive

Office of the County Executive- Santa Clara County

DIRECT YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM EXPERIENCE/ YOUTH ADVOCATE:

Juan Gamez

Direct Youth Justice System Experience

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Danielle Lowe, Director

Behavioral Health Services, Shields for Families

Rosalinda Vint, Program Director

Woman of Substance, Men of Honor

More Committee & Task Force Updates

- Behavioral Health Committee: Karen Larsen & Pete Weldy
- CSEC Action Team: Leslie Heimov & Kate Walker Brown



CSEC Action Team

Child Welfare Council Presentation

December 3, 2025



A workgroup of the California Child Welfare Council

The Action Team

Established in 2013, the California Child Welfare's CSEC Action Team, brings together key stakeholders—community based and grassroots organizations, public agencies, lived experience experts, service providers, parent partners, judges, lawyers, and interested community members to address CSE.

We meet quarterly to grow awareness about CSE, identify challenges facing California's young people impacted by CSE and their families and caregivers, share promising practices, and develop tools and resources. Our goal is to spur members across California to take action to better serve youth and their families who have been impacted by exploitation.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Leslie Heimov, Co-Chair, Executive
Director, Children's Law Center of
California

Kate Walker Brown, Co-Chair,
Attorney, Senior Director, National
Center for Youth Law

Hon. Craig E. Arthur, *Juvenile
Presiding Judge of the Orange
County Juvenile Court*



**MEET THE NEW
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MEMBER**

2025: YEAR IN REVIEW

1. Focus on Harm Reduction

- a. Peer-to-Peer Recruitment
- b. Office Hours
 - i. Advisory Board and UC Davis CAARE Team Partnership
- c. Courtroom Guidance
 - i. In partnership with Judicial Council, CBOs, Attorneys, Advisory Board, and other individuals with Lived Experience

2. Supporting LGBTQIA2S+ Youth



2025: YEAR IN REVIEW

1. Advisory Board

- a. Nearly 200 hours of formal consultation
- b. Professional development
- c. Community building

2. Impact

- a. Office hours - direct assistance for individual kids and families
- b. Updating Harm Reduction Definition for CDSS
- c. UCSF Grand Rounds
- d. Emerging Leaders Summit (young professional with lived experience)

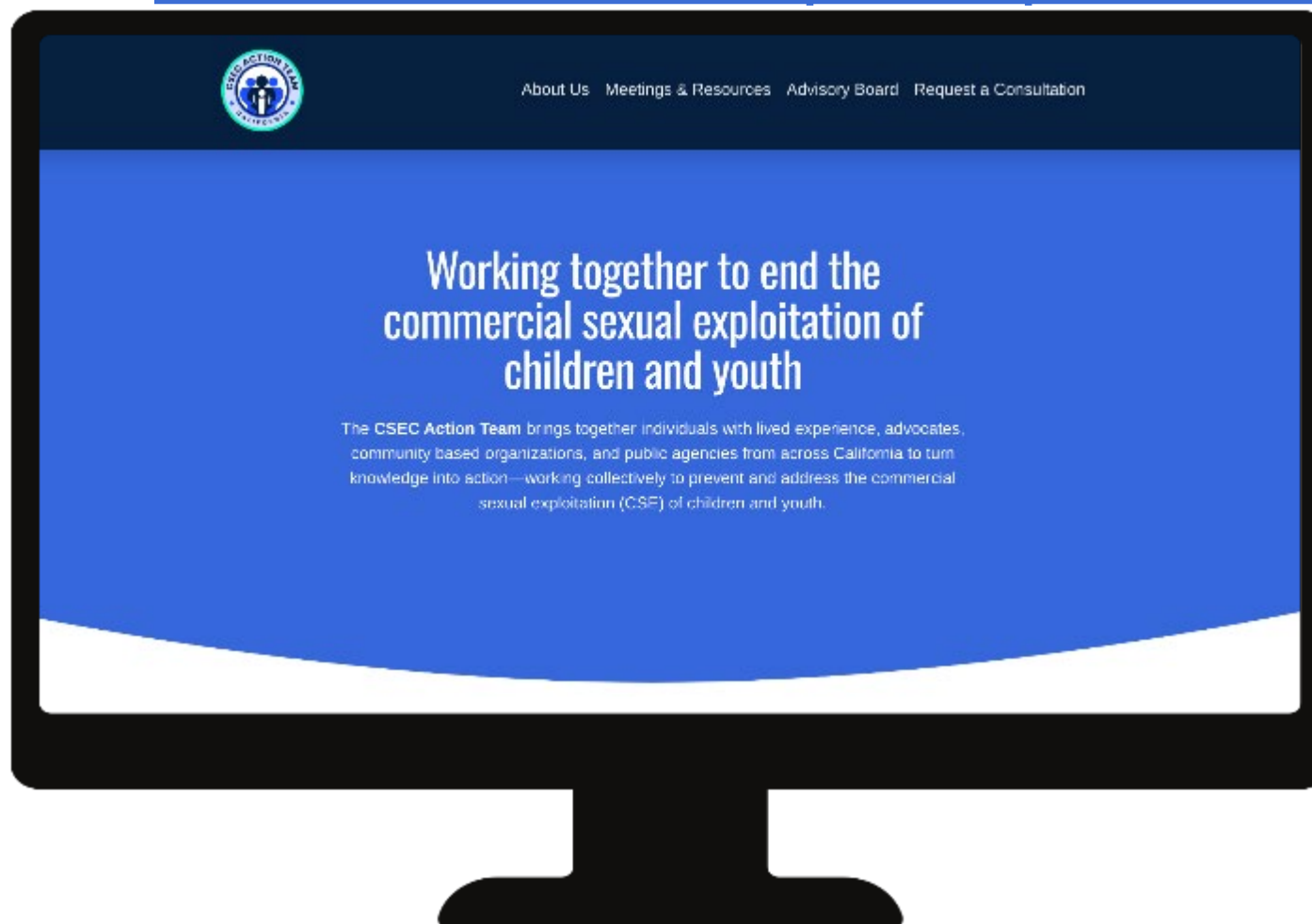


DON'T MISS OUT!

GO TO THE CSEC
ACTION TEAM
WEBSITE



csecactionteam.squarespace.com



CALLING INTO THE MEETING

- **Register in advance to receive your call-in information**
 - To register go to: <https://tinyurl.com/dec25csecat>
- **Please complete our [survey](#) at the end of the meeting!**
- **Need help accessing Zoom?**
 - Email: dchavez@youthlaw.org

UPCOMING HTPM TRAINING: CSEC ACTION TEAM

Intersections of Trauma and Trafficking: Principles of Trauma-informed Care and Practice Applications

Join the CSEC Action Team to deepen your understanding of what trauma is (and isn't), and the impact it has on a youth's growth and development before, during, and after trafficking. Practical strategies will be provided that promote safety, build trust, foster collaboration, support choice, and honor cultural and historical experiences for all children.

- **When:** January 14, 2026 at 1:30 PM (PST)
- Click [\[HERE\]](#) to register in advance for the virtual meeting



[Zoom
Registration](#)

UPCOMING HTPM TRAINING: PACT

PACT Statewide Virtual Convening: A virtual opportunity for PACT cohort members & partners across all four regions to build valuable connections with peers, brainstorm challenges and define future steps together in their collective work to prevent and respond to child trafficking!

- When: January 21 at 1 PM (PST)
- Click [\[HERE\]](#) to register in advance for the virtual meeting

Hidden in Plain Sight: Child Labor Trafficking & Intersection With CSE: Across California — children are coerced, deceived, or forced into unsafe work. Some labor in fields, restaurants, or homes, while others are pushed into criminal acts like selling or transporting drugs. Get trained to spot the signs, respond with empathy, and connect young people to safety and support.

- When: January 22 at 10 AM (PST)
- Click [\[HERE\]](#) to register in advance for the virtual meeting



UPCOMING HTPM TRAINING: CDSS

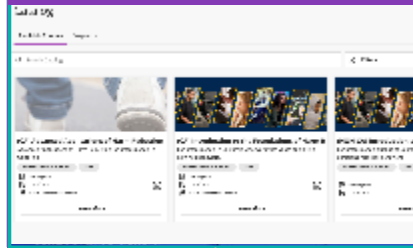
Community Drop-In Centers: Be Inspired by a virtual panel of drop-in center Directors & Partners (San Francisco & Orange County) on practical strategies to build a response that supports youth in your community!

- When: January 28 at 1:30 PM (PST)
- Click [\[HERE\]](#) to register in advance for the virtual meeting



RESOURCES

Tools for the Field



Develop collaborative, trauma-informed practices on the ground



CSEC Action Team



Working together to stop the sexual exploitation of children



Advisory Board



Support leadership of lived experience expertise



NCYL ISSUE BRIEFS

LGBTQIA2S+

WHAT WE KNOW

LGBTQIA2S+ Youth in the Sex Trade

- LGBTQIA2S+ youth are disproportionately impacted by the sex trade. In 2018, 15% of youth in the sex trade identified as LGBTQIA2S+.
- LGBTQIA2S+ youth are more likely to be in the sex trade than their peers.

nearly 50%
of youth in the sex trade
identified as LGBTQIA2S+

LGBTQ youth
are 2x more likely
to be in the sex trade

Source: NCYL 2018 Survey

Boys & Men

WHAT WE KNOW

Prevalence

- 31% to 71% of boys and young men in the sex trade identify as LGBTQIA2S+.
- LGBTQIA2S+ youth are more likely to be in the sex trade than their peers.

31% to 71%
of youth in the sex trade
identified as LGBTQIA2S+

- LGBTQIA2S+ youth are more likely to be in the sex trade than their peers.
- LGBTQIA2S+ youth are more likely to be in the sex trade than their peers.

Criminalization of Girls

• Criminalization of girls in the sex trade is a major barrier to their safety and well-being.

31%
of youth in the sex trade
identified as LGBTQIA2S+

18%
of youth in the sex trade
identified as LGBTQIA2S+

35%
of youth in the sex trade
identified as LGBTQIA2S+

Learn practical tools to
better support
LGBTQIA2S+ youth
impacted by CSE



Learn best practices to
identify & support
boys and young men
impacted by CSE



Learn how criminalization
affects girls & gender-
expansive youth
impacted by CSE



HARM REDUCTION RESOURCES

- Judicial Council of California - Harm Reduction & CSEC Bench Cards
- CDSS Harm Reduction Series
 - [ACIN I-51-23 \(Sept. 5, 2023\)](#) - Harm Reduction Series: Juvenile Courts
 - [ACIN I-50-19 \(July 29, 2019\)](#) - Harm Reduction Series: Probation Officer
 - [ACIN I-28-19 \(July 22, 2019\)](#) - Harm Reduction Series: Social Worker
 - [ACIN I- 31-22 \(April 8, 2022\)](#) - Harm Reduction Series: Caregiver
- [Harm reduction office hours](#)
- UC Davis Training
 - [Foundations of Harm Reduction](#)
 - [Advanced Application of Harm Reduction](#)

HARM REDUCTION CONSULTATION OFFICE HOURS

Looking for a space to collaborate, ask questions, and explore harm reduction strategies for supporting youth impacted by CSE? CDSS and [UC Davis CAARE Center](#) Harm Reduction Office Hours provide a confidential, interactive forum where counties and partners can bring cases, share challenges, and learn from experts and peers alike. **Don't miss the [next session](#) hosted by UCD on February 23!**

Upcoming Office Hours:

- [UCD](#): February 23, 12-2pm

REGISTER NOW



THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The **Executive Committee** guides the Action Team's work and ensures quarterly meetings reflect the needs of youth and families. Members include:

Co-Chair Kate Walker Brown
National Center for Youth Law
kwalker@youthlaw.org

Co-Chair Leslie Heimov
Children's Law Center of California
heimovl@clccal.org

Maria Contreras
National Center for Youth Law
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Darla Chavez Chavez
National Center for Youth Law
dchavez@youthlaw.org

Julie McCormick
Children's Law Center of
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Sue Abrams
Children's Law Center of California
abramss@clccal.org

Sawan Vaden
Community Against Sexual Harm
svaden@cashsac.org

Hon. Craig E. Arthur
Orange County Juvenile Court

Vida Castaneda
Judicial Council of California
vida.castaneda@jud.ca.gov

More Committee & Task Force Updates!

- Empowerment Committee: Jevon Wilkes



CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENTS

