



CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL



The next **Child Welfare Council Annual Report** covering the period **from July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025**, will feature highlights on the work of the Council and its committees. Please use this template to write your committee report and submit it to Sarah.Saria@jud.ca.gov no later than **February 13, 2026**.

Members of the Legislature and the public may not be familiar with acronyms and abbreviations. Please fully write out acronyms and abbreviations the first time you use them and be consistent in using the same acronym or abbreviation throughout the rest of the report.

Readers may not be familiar with policies, organizations, or programs that are well known to your committee. Please consider including brief explanations so readers can better understand your report.

July 2024 through June 2025 Activities and Accomplishments: Please briefly list major activities and accomplishments for FY 2024-25.

Concerns or Challenges: Describe any issues that you feel need the Council’s attention in order to maximize opportunities to address barriers to the work of the Council.

2025 – 2026 Goals & Objectives: Indicate your committee’s goals and objectives for the coming year.

Committee/ Task Force Name	Youth Justice Committee (YJC)
Purpose	To address issues that impact justice-involved families, children and youth.
July 2024 through June 2025 Activities and Accomplishments	<p>At the September 4th, 2024 YJC meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee welcomed new member Judge Tilisha Martin, of Assistant Supervising Judge of the Juvenile Court in the San Diego Superior Court. • OYCR Special Consultant Will Lightbourne shared updates on OYCR’s plans to support counties in expanding capacity of community-based Less Restrictive Programs, as well as the work of the first cohort of community organizations involved in the Justice Serving Network Initiative, managed by Sierra Health Foundation. • Dr. Elizabeth Barnert, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at UCLA and Kassandra Angel from UCLA’s Luskin School of Public Affairs shared an overview of two newly drafted briefs that were part of their research partnership with OYCR to develop the Stepping Home Model. The first

brief focused on Gender and Sexuality and the second on Disabilities. The committee provided feedback and asked clarifying questions.

- Abraham Medina from the Sierra Health Foundation shared an update on the launch of the Transform Youth Justice (TYJ) Initiative, which represents a \$24 million dollar investment in transforming youth justice. He shared with members updates on the three pillars of the TYJ initiative: the Community Based Organization Capacity Building Initiative known as CBI, the Ending Girls Incarceration Initiative and the Justice Serving Network Initiative, fueled by a partnership between OYCR and DHCS.
- OYCR Workforce Development Liaison Tommy Winfrey shared an update on the Youth Employment Initiative OYCR's partnership with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and the Amity Foundation aimed at supporting youth in the juvenile justice system by addressing their unique needs through specialized educational and vocational services.

At the December 4th, 2024 YJC meeting:

- OYCR Health Policy Chief Dr. Juan Arguello and Dr. Elizabeth Barnert, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at UCLA provided updates for members on the Stepping Home Model, which is a key deliverable for the committee in their priority area of Step Downs and Alternatives to Incarceration.
- The committee voted to approve the Gender and Sexuality Brief and the Disabilities brief to complete the initial set of research associated with the Stepping Home Model. They also voted to approve a memo to the Child Welfare Committee requesting formal adoption of the Stepping Home model and all of the completed UCLA briefs.
- To inform members on ongoing work in the YJC priority area of Higher Education and Vocational training, Dr. Michael Massa, OYCR Special Consultant, highlighted several key efforts to support and improve educational opportunities for young people involved with the justice system, including Collaborative Classroom, a literacy intervention designed for Juvenile Court Schools by a nonprofit partner that has seen with encouraging early data from a pilot in San Diego County. He also noted the importance of the passage of Assembly Bill 2176 which focuses on absentee rates and represents a significant opportunity to work on meaningful strategies for improving participation in Juvenile Court Schools.
- To inform members about ongoing work in the YJC priority area of Community Based Capacity Building, Marcia Rincon-Gallardo, OYCR Systems Change and Equity Chief, and Abraham Media, from the Sierra Health foundation, shared updates on the ongoing work to build organizational sustainability; secure funding sources for CBOs around the state and to work toward a conceptual framework of reflective practice and healing-centered youth development.

At the March 5th, 2025 YJC meeting:

- OYCR Ombudsperson Alisa Hartz shared an overview of the recent work of OYCR's Ombuds Office, highlighting key staffing updates that

have increased the team's capacity. She then shared data summarizing key details about the complaints regarding youth in facilities that the Ombuds Office has received and reviewed since 2022.

- OYCR Data and Research Specialist Krystle Englehart then shared a summary of OYCR's AB 102 findings, which provides insight into statewide data regarding the progress of SB 823 realignment.
- The committee then discussed potential new priority areas for their work moving forward, as key deliverables such as the Stepping Home Model, in the previously identified areas were in the process of being completed. The two new areas identified were: Data with a focus on outcomes and Diversion. They also determined that racial and ethnic disparities should be a key focus within both of those areas.

At the June 4th, 2025 YJC meeting:

- Arnold Chandler, President of Forward Change presented emerging findings from Building Higher Education Pathways Report, the second education-focused report his organization developed in collaboration with OYCR which also speaks to the committee's priority area Higher Education and Vocational Training. He shared some of the key insights from the report, including recommendations for intervening and disrupting pathways from school to system involvement and better understanding predictors and risk. He asked the members to prepare to give feedback at a later date prior to its publication,
- OYCR Regional Specialist Hilary Gayhart shared a presentation highlighting how OYCR is helping implement step down options for youth and secure youth treatment facilities transition into less restrictive programs (LRPs).
- Cal HHS Attorney Maggie Schuster led a brief discussion about the agencywide HHS data de-identification guidelines that cover OYCR's data analysis. The guidelines, which are available on the CalHHS website, emphasize a public health lens that prioritizes individual privacy protections, include risk scoring for demographic variables that are intended to prevent re-identification of individuals, particularly vulnerable populations. This includes guidance to refrain from publishing data sets under 11.
- OYCR Research Data Specialist Melissa Lemus shared an overview of OYCR's analysis of the AB102 data, starting with the data and methods used to complete the analysis as well as some of the data limitations. She went on to highlight some of the report's key findings in the following areas: trends in the use of LRPs, whether or not there was evidence of net widening, racial disparities with respect to youth in the juvenile justice system broadly, and racial disparities specifically with respect to Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF) commitments
- OYCR Ombudsperson Alisa Hartz and Ahmed Nemr, Chief of the Ombuds Division, provided some updates from the work of the Ombuds Division and noted the forthcoming Ombuds Report to the Legislature was forthcoming and would be published on the OYCR website

<p>Concerns or Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire to increase virtual and in-person attendance and participation from members of the public. • Ensuring more consistent member attendance and engagement in a virtual setting
<p>2025 - 2026 Goals/Objectives</p>	<p>The committee has continued to focus on work in three ongoing priority areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Higher Education – The committee reviewed and provided ongoing feedback on a statewide report developed by Forward Change that focuses on preventing juvenile legal involvement and ensuring successful school reentry. 2. Step Downs and Less Restrictive Programs – The committee participated in the creation of the research briefs that formed basis for the newly adopted Stepping Home Model, that establishes a framework for policy goals related to the care of youth committed to Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTFs) in the state’s juvenile legal system, and the services and supports to make possible transitions from SYTFs to Less Restrictive Programs (LRPs). The committee will continue to gain insight into counties’ efforts to implement the Stepping Home Model, informed by a UCLA research team that is gathering data through interviews. 3. Community Based Organization Capacity Building – The committee supported efforts to expand CBO capacity by supporting of a statewide CBO capacity building work group, and the implementation of the CBO Capacity Building Initiative, which funds the work of 8 CBOs. <p>The committee is also working to produce meaningful deliverables that impact practice and outcomes in two newly identified priority areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diversion- The committee is working on gaining better insight into what pre-arrest diversion efforts are currently in place statewide and understanding the funding levels are needed to sustain that work. 2. Data with a focus on outcomes- The committee is working to explore the possibilities for collecting data that could better illustrate how young people and their families are actually impacted by system responses and the services they receive.