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**Office of Youth and Community Restoration**

## Fall 2022 Newsletter

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OYCR's mission is to promote trauma responsive, culturally informed services for youth involved in the juvenile justice system that support the youths' successful transition into adulthood and help them become responsible, thriving, and engaged members of their communities with a focus on these three goals:

- Reduce the transfer of youth into the adult criminal justice system.
- Reduce racial and ethnic disparities.
- Increase community-based responses and interventions.

### Director's Corner

Greetings and Happy Fall Season!

Summer has been busy for our team here at OYCR. We have completed 22 site visits to see for ourselves where the youth will be living in the Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTF) throughout California. We are working with both government stakeholders and communities to welcome our youth back to their counties and regions once the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) closes on June 30, 2023. I am aware most local Juvenile Detention Facilities were not designed as a long-term housing for young people. For that reason, as we visit facilities, we are not only seeking to see the improvements that are being made to current structures to render them more therapeutic, but we are gathering information from the counties on their whole continuum of care, from diversion to step-down plans, to help support counties in making their SYTFs support positive youth development and to keep young people in SYTFs for as short a time as possible. We are seeing a whole range of planning and innovation by county probation and community partners. OYCR in conjunction



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with our Child Welfare Council is developing other step-down strategies to articulate what a strong, safe, and therapeutic continuum of care looks like. The goal is to have a special emphasis on encouraging innovation in allowing young people to step out of detention facilities into less restrictive settings such as community-based run residential programs and to their homes with supervision.

The key question preoccupying all stakeholders is how to deliver a healing therapeutic environment in a detention facility that was created for short term stays. Since building new facilities is usually not feasible or necessarily desirable, our challenge is to imagine how existing facilities can be replaced and repurposed for the duration that a youth is committed to it by the court for rehabilitation and healing purposes. Equally important, we must situate those facilities within a robust continuum of care leading seamlessly to reentry and allowing the youth's community to now have a hand in raising that young person through the most important time of their adolescence. Science confirms that adolescence is a time of great promise for both brain and character development. County Offices of Education, Probation Departments, Behavioral Health providers, and the Courts will now be helping families to raise a child on the SYTF continuum. Connecting our youth to high quality education, vocational training, whole child health approaches, culturally respectful and gender honoring opportunities, and a strength-based spirit lifting milieu are mission critical. Fortunately, everyone we have spoken to--- on our site visits, in our listening sessions, at our hundreds of stakeholder and community meetings--- agree on this point. Now is the time to come together and get it done. I look forward to our continued joint work and our enlightened conversations that will surely lead to success on behalf our youth, families, and our communities.

## [Introducing New OYCR Staff](#)

We are growing! OYCR is excited to share that we have hired our Ombudsperson and Chief Technical Assistance Officer.

- Ms. Efrat Sharony commenced leadership of the Ombudsperson Division as our Ombudsperson on October 24, 2022. Ms. Sharony has over twenty years of experience serving persons affected by the criminal justice system, with an emphasis on serving justice-involved youth. She has worked at multiple levels and with a wide range of stakeholders in the justice system, including families, community members, government officials, advocacy groups, defense attorneys, district attorneys, criminal justice professionals, academics, and most importantly young people. As a mental health expert, Ms. Sharony approaches all her work through a lens of healing and holistic transformation. She joins us from her most recent role as a Criminal Justice Advocate and Consultant. Her contracts include working on legislative issues with CSJ (Californians for Safety and Justice) and working on resentencing and trainings with LA County's District Attorney George Gascon's office. Her work has focused on understanding and educating about the cycles of violence and trauma in our communities in order to advance criminal justice reforms. Prior to her consulting work, Ms. Sharony served as the



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Director of the Mayor's Office of Reentry for the City of Los Angeles. She was the Mayor's subject matter expert on emerging criminal justice trends, conditions, and best practices for reentry initiatives at the city, state, and national levels. She implemented initiatives and priorities related to youth development and reentry populations and facilitated resource disbursement and coalitions with community partners. Her varied projects included spearheading the expansion of Project ImPACT to include youth released from Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), with the tools to help them thrive upon return home and beyond. Ms. Sharony spent 10 years at Loyola Law School's Center for Juvenile Law and Policy where she helped transform the way social workers and future attorneys interact with and serve their clients- from juveniles in delinquency proceedings to juvenile lifers serving LWOP sentences. She helped found the Juvenile Innocence and Fair Sentencing Clinic and served as an Adjunct Professor and Mitigation Specialist. Her focus was on helping clients cope with life-long trauma, including the trauma of incarceration, in order to be resentenced, paroled, and eventually come home. Ms. Sharony has also been appointed and testified as a juvenile gang expert and mitigation expert on capital cases, special circumstance juvenile cases, as well as other serious cases in the Los Angeles Superior Court. Ms. Sharony has a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of California at Santa Cruz and a Masters of Social Work from Columbia University.

- Ms. Marcia Rincon-Gallardo will be leading the County Coordination Division as OYCR's Chief Technical Assistance Officer starting November 14, 2022. Marcia joins us from her most recent roles as the Co-Founder and Executive Director of Alianza for Youth Justice (7 years), as a Field Instructor, Adjunct Lecturer at CSU, Monterey Bay (3 years), and Founder and Principal of NOXTIN: Equal Justice for All (9 years). As the Executive Director for Alianza, she directed the coalition of national organizations and members to amplify visibility and advocacy for Ending the Data Gap of Brown youth in the justice system and to end incarceration of youth with long term solutions rooted in culture, community, and healing. As a lecturer, Marcia instructed a graduate level policy class for the master's in social work department; taught graduate students on subject of macro policy, social justice, and the role of social workers. In this capacity, she also served as field instructor to interns conducting their 9-month internship at the Alianza. Through Marcia's role with NOXTIN, she provided technical assistance and consultation nationally on data driven reduction efforts of racial and ethnic disparities of Native American and Latinx youth in the juvenile justice system. NOXTIN developed a healing informed curriculum "Ollin Youth" for movement building to advocate youth justice transformation. As consultant to Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), Marcia's organization served as technical assistance for state scale and local county replication, a thought partner, authored blogs, and national reports with recommendations regarding change in policies, practice, and procedures to transform the systems. In her career, Marcia was a Senior Site Manager for W. Haywood Burns Institute where she managed five Disproportionate Minority Contact Technical Assistance Project (DMC TAP) sites. These grant sites in California worked to increase racial/ethnic equity and decrease use of detention for youth of color. She worked with the Hoopa and Yurok Nations and implemented the BI process to reduce disparities, provided technical assistance to the five TAP Grants to build their data capacity, collection, and analysis while traveling to each site on a monthly



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basis, provided disproportionate minority contact 101 – racial and ethnic disparities trainings among internal probation departments and community members; provided guidance on outreach to community to build their DMC Collaborative, and guided to build Alternatives to Detention (ATD) for their target populations; and maintained sound fiscal management and contract oversight. Marcia's portfolio included selecting the first tribal nation to implement JDAI in the country - the Mississippi Band of Choctaw. She has also worked as a DMC/JDAI Coordinator for the Pima County Juvenile Court Center where she coordinated data analysis and reporting to a data driven decision-making collaboration to decrease racial and ethnic disparities of youth of color, which included the Yoeme and Tohono O'odham Nations, an urban inter-tribal community, Latinx and African American youth and their families. Marcia's efforts successfully reduced detention population in five years by more than 50%; she also developed trainings, conferences for diverse community and staff on DMC/JDAI methodologies, strategies, and provided on-going orientations for community leaders, CBO, parents, and youth. Marcia has a bachelor's degree in Biology from University of California, Santa Cruz, and a Master of Social Work from San Jose State University.

Stay tuned for more OYCR opportunities and be sure to subscribe to OYCR's listserv to receive the latest updates! You can email [OYCR@chhs.ca.gov](mailto:OYCR@chhs.ca.gov) to subscribe.

## What is the role of a County Liaison?

OYCR currently operates statewide and offers concentrated technical assistance through four regions in California – 1. Northern Region, 2. Bay Area Region, 3. Central Region, and 4. Southern Region. Each region includes approximately eight counties that will be operating a Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF), in addition to counties that do not have their own SYTF. The specific regions that County Liaisons have been assigned to can be found [here](#).

- OYCR County Liaisons:
  - Serve as a liaison between the county probation department and OYCR to help identify needs as shared with them by probation or from site visits. They take that information back to their OYCR team to identify how the Office might be able to assist.
  - Attend local Juvenile Justice Commissions, Juvenile Justice Coordinating Councils, SB823 Subcommittee meetings, and other public meetings, as a representative of OYCR to learn more about what is happening in each jurisdiction.
  - Meet with various stakeholders (i.e., County Probation Leadership, youth advocates, Public Defenders, etc.) to present OYCR's work and to hear perspectives of what is working well and areas where OYCR may be able to provide value using evidence based best practices.
  - Receive, review, accept and approve County Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant (JJRBG) Plans annually submitted by Probation departments.
  - Lead special projects in collaboration with OYCR staff and external partners.



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## OYCR Research Unit Corner

### LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE-BASED OR PROMISING PROGRAMS?

Clearinghouses are a great place to start! Clearinghouses are databases designed for non-researchers to locate evidence-based programs (EBPs). These clearinghouses classify programs based on their level of evidence in categories like promising practice or strong evidence. Details about cost, target population and training or staffing requirements are often included to aid in implementation.

[Esperanza United](#) developed a helpful community centered EBP approach to bridge culturally relevant, community-based scholarship and EBP. The Esperanza United model is based on the Transdisciplinary Model of Evidence Based Practice a unified, transdisciplinary EBP model that addresses the overlap of the preferences of the individual receiving the service, the practitioner's expertise, and environmental and community contexts.<sup>1</sup> This lens is helpful when reviewing the programs in the clearinghouses below.



Below is a list of some clearinghouses:

- [SAMHSA](#) is committed to improving prevention, treatment, and recovery support services for mental and substance use disorders. The Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center provides communities, clinicians, policymakers and others with the information and tools to incorporate evidence-based practices into their communities or clinical settings.
- The [Results First Clearinghouse Database](#) is an online resource that brings together information on the effectiveness of social policy programs from nine national clearinghouses. It applies color-coding to the clearinghouses' distinct rating systems, creating a common language that enables users to quickly see where each program falls on a spectrum from negative impact to positive impact.

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<sup>1</sup> Haynes, R. B., Sackett, D. L., Gray, J. M. A., Cook, D. J., & Guyatt, G. H. (1996). Transferring evidence from research into practice: 1. The role of clinical care research evidence in clinical decisions. *BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine*, 1(7), 196.



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- [What Works Clearinghouse \(WWC\)](#) is an investment of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within the U.S. Department of Education that was established in 2002. The work of the WWC is managed by a team of staff at IES and conducted under a set of contracts held by several leading firms with expertise in education, research methodology, and the dissemination of education research.
- The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) provides leadership in targeted efforts to improve the lives of children and families served within the child welfare system. As part of their improvement strategies, CDSS selected the Chadwick Center for Children and Families - Rady Children's Hospital-San Diego to create the [California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare \(CEBC\)](#). The CEBC is a critical tool for identifying, selecting, and implementing evidence-based child welfare practices that will improve child safety, increase permanency, increase family and community stability, and promote child and family well-being.
- The [Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse](#) was established by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to conduct an objective and transparent review of research on programs and services intended to provide enhanced support to children and families and prevent foster care placements.

## [County Plan Summary Report Highlights](#)

A component of SB 823 is the Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant (JJRBG) program, which provides funding to counties to help them care for youth who would otherwise have been eligible for DJJ. To be eligible for the funding, each county was required to create a subcommittee of the multiagency juvenile coordinating council and develop a plan that included specific elements (i.e., youth demographics and needs, programs and services, plans for long-term commitments and any step-down plans, data collection and outcome measures, etc.).

As the Director states in the forward of the report, "OYCR views these plans from an iterative process that will build, expand, and deepen from year to year, ultimately creating the documentation of evidence based, trauma informed, gender respectful and culturally aware programs necessary to provide the healing interventions that will make a positive difference in the lives of our youth." The full [summary of the plans](#) along with each county plan can be found on the [OYCR website](#).



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Three highlights from the plan review included the following:

### Regional and Consortium Agreements

- Small/rural counties expanded or developed new regional approaches.

### Supporting Specialized Populations

- Counties focused on developing new specialized programs (i.e., treatment for youth with sex abuse offenses)

### Already Planning for Step-Down Placements

- Twelve (21%) counties already identified a step-down placement for youth in their plan

During the process of plan review and discussions with county stakeholders, four common areas of need were identified and OYCR will work with counties to support best practices and offering technical assistance in these areas.

#### 1. Challenges For Small, Rural Counties

- While small counties were often able to engage in individualized diversion and placement of youth preventing the need to send them to DJJ, they also indicated that they lacked necessary, easily accessible services due to a scarcity or total lack of community-based organizations or mental health providers, or due to the distances required to access such services.

#### 2. Measuring Effectiveness

- While some counties had sophisticated data collection and analysis systems, others were manually counting youth. Additionally, while some counties were using a large set of qualitative metrics to evaluate youth outcomes, others remained focused on metrics of recidivism and similar measures typically used for adult correctional outcome measurement.

#### 3. Retaining Youth in The Juvenile System

- Counties plan to offer a continuum of services through partnerships with community-based organizations and give youth an opportunity to succeed at the lowest level of intervention as possible. Success will depend ensuring there are specialized treatment and programming options available to meet the high-needs youth and that evidence-based practices are used at all levels of programming and services.

#### 4. Facilities Design and Step-Down Approaches

- While counties have put substantial thought into adapting existing facilities to serve as Secure Youth Treatment Facilities, transforming an existing and often old facility into a therapeutic environment and or developing step down options is a challenging endeavor.



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## Site Visits to County Secure Youth Treatment Facilities

OYCR is in the process of connecting with each county, via site visits, to learn how to support the current work being done to facilitate change in systems, build capacity, improve practices, and develop performance metrics. These visits are also an opportunity for OYCR to highlight best practices within the counties and share innovative ideas and successes with other counties.

The OYCR team has conducted 22 informational site visits around the state, prioritizing counties that have Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTF). We observed programming and met with staff and youth. Numerous counties are in the planning phases of enhancing a homelike environment and showed us their progress and their plans. A few key highlights observed in certain facilities during our visits are below:

- Youth are creating art, including participating in designing and painting murals in their living and programming spaces
- Youth are engaging in music activities, including performing their music live and making recordings to share
- Youth are being called by their first name
- Assessments for housing and education needs are conducted prior to the youth arriving
- Youth are allowed to have free phone calls
- Youth are participating in journaling and gardening programs, and in construction and welding programs that lead to certificates and employment potential
- Weekly team meetings involving multiple interdisciplinary stakeholders (CPS, Probation, Behavior Health, Community Based Organizations and Judge) are held to discuss youth individually to improve youth healing and to develop a plan for re-entry into the community
- Youth are stepping down into the community at their home with a GPS
- Youth have access to a college counselor once a week
- SYTF is a home like setting with comfortable furniture, such as overstuffed couches, rugs, and beanbag chairs, to allow youth to move around freely and to engage in recreation such as television, gaming entertainment, and large motor exercise.

We have plans to visit numerous additional facilities with and without a SYTF through the fall and winter. We also met with several Community Based Organizations, Public Defenders and District Attorneys before, during or after site visits. We appreciate the opportunities to collaborate and welcome all requests to assist with the realignment.

## Listening Sessions for OYCR Funding Priorities

OYCR held four public listening sessions along with a written comment period throughout the month of September to receive input on project and grant ideas and priorities. OYCR has \$20 million dollars available to provide technical assistance, disseminate best practices, and issue grants to counties and probation departments for the purpose of transforming the juvenile justice system to improve outcomes for justice involved youth. OYCR received a variety of feedback from various stakeholders including youth with lived experience, community-based organizations, probation departments, educational institutions, behavioral health specialist, and other inter-agency partners throughout California. Participants drew on their own expertise and experience and encouraged our office to





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prioritize funding for housing, sex abuse treatment, mentorship, capacity building, vocational/education training, and more. We appreciate the thoughtful feedback we received and are grateful to all who joined the listening sessions and sent written comments.

## **Ombudsperson Office Updates**

The OYCR Ombudsperson Hotline has been operational since September 2, 2022 and is receiving and investigating complaints. Young people, families, staff, and others can make complaints relating to harmful conditions in juvenile facilities by calling 1-844-402-1880 or emailing [OYCRombuds@chhs.ca.gov](mailto:OYCRombuds@chhs.ca.gov).

OYCR mailed out a small initial set of posters to counties with Secure Youth Treatment Facilities. A larger set of posters and brochures are being printed and will be mailed to all juvenile facilities around the state for posting and providing to youth and families during this fall. For inquiries about obtaining additional posters, please email [OYCRombuds@chhs.ca.gov](mailto:OYCRombuds@chhs.ca.gov). Printable electronic copies can also be found [here](#).

## **Notable Legislative Updates**

- Youth Bill of Rights. On September 29, 2022, the Governor signed into law [AB 2417](#), which establishes a Youth Bill of Rights applicable to all juvenile facilities in the State. The Youth Bill of Rights summarizes the key rights of youth in juvenile facilities under existing laws and regulations. It also gives the OYCR Ombudsperson the responsibility of developing information explaining these rights in age-appropriate language. OYCR will consult with a variety of stakeholders on this summary, including youth, youth advocate and support groups, groups representing children, families, children's facilities, and other interested parties.
- Detention Facility Phone Call Legislation. On September 29, 2022, the Governor signed into law [SB 1008](#), which mandates, among other things, that local youth detention facilities "provide persons in their custody with accessible, functional voice communication services free of charge to the person initiating and the person receiving the communication." This provision is codified in Welf. & Inst. Code § 208.1.

## **Can Youth in Juvenile Facilities VOTE?**

Yes, they can! Youth in the juvenile system who meet the eligibility requirements can vote. A young person can vote in California if they are a U.S. citizen and California resident and are age 18 or older on Election Day. Youth can [register online](#). A helpful summary of youth voting rights is available [here](#).

## **Stay Connected with OYCR**

Please email us at [OYCR@chhs.ca.gov](mailto:OYCR@chhs.ca.gov) and request to be added to OYCRs email list.



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Thanks for all that you do to serve our youth,

**Katherine Lucero, Director**

Office of Youth and Community Restoration  
California Health and Human Services Agency

[katherine.lucero@chhs.ca.gov](mailto:katherine.lucero@chhs.ca.gov)