

CCJBH Juvenile Justice Meeting Minutes

Friday, June 7, 2024

12:45 – 2:45 PM

In-person and MS Teams Meeting

Workgroup Purpose: The Council on Criminal Justice, and Behavioral Health (CCJBH) webinar discussed residential programs for justice-involved youth with serious mental illness(es) and substance use disorder(s).

Councilmember Advisors:

Mack Jenkins, Chief Probation Officer, Retired, San Diego County

Dr. Danitza Pantoja, Coordinator of Psychological Services, Antelope Valley Union High School District

CCJBH Staff:

Staff Members in attendance: Brenda Grealish, Executive Officer, Elizabeth Vice, Kamilah Holloway, Jessica Camacho Duran, Catherine Hickinbotham, Emily Mantsch, Cameron Byrd, and Belicia Smith.

I. Welcome & Introductions

Ms. Grealish welcomed participants and gave an overview of the purpose of the workgroup and agenda.

II. Discussion on Restorative Justice

Emily Mantsch, *Associate Governmental Programs Analyst, CCJBH*

Mack Jenkins, *Chief Probation Officer, Retired, San Diego County*

Dr. Danitza Pantoja, *Coordinator of Psychological Services, Antelope Valley Union High School District*

Ms. Mantsch reminded participants of the subject of Restorative Justice originated from CCJBH's February Juvenile Justice Workgroup wherein Councilmember Advisors requested a definition of restorative justice from CCJBH. The [Chief Probation Officers of California \(CPOC\) definition](#) was reviewed and it was recognized that many of the elements align with CCJBH requirements, although additional considerations are needed for the behavioral health and justice involved population (BH/JI). Ms. Mantsch emphasized that the restorative justice definition should include accountability and active participation from all parties involved, the importance of connections and support networks within the community, addressing underlying causes of behavioral health issues, promoting healing, and recognizing the impact of trauma on youth actions. Ms. Mantsch shared a [draft restorative justice definition](#) that Councilmember Jenkins composed, highlighting key aspects of the CPOC definition with additional information on the key points mentioned above. Ms. Mantsch then opened the conversation for Councilmember Jenkins and Councilmember Pantoja to discuss and share additional considerations and reflections, which resulted in the following points:

- The dual role of juvenile justice is to support community safety and act in the best interest of justice-involved youth (the most crucial elements in this

definition being community safety and youth welfare).

- It is important to have empathy and acknowledge the living environment from a Juvenile Justice Court application perspective, particularly the significance of family and the overall environment for long-term positive outcomes.
- There was interest in identifying a better term for “delinquent behavior”.
 - While the term was used purposefully as it is a descriptive legal term, language evolves given the understanding of trauma, behavioral health issues, and more mindful language.
 - The use of “delinquent behavior” is important because it accurately describes what brings youth into the justice system, noting that it is not merely trauma, but specific actions that have violated the law. Ninety percent of youth in the justice system have experienced trauma, which must be paired with a law-violating act for accountability.
- Councilmembers agreed to replace “delinquent behavior” with “law breaking behavior”.

Ms. Mantsch outlined next steps, noting that the newly adopted considerations associated with the CPOC definition of restorative justice would be included in the 2024 Legislative Report while emphasizing there would be ample opportunities for additional feedback during the report’s drafting.

III. California Alliance of Children and Family Services (Alliance)

Annie Thomas, Juvenile Justice Policy Advocate, California Alliance of Children and Family Services

Ms. Thomas began her presentation by showing a map illustrating the 165+ nationally accredited non-profit community-based organizations (CBOs) across California, that the Alliance advocates for. Ms. Thomas provided background information, describing that all members are accredited by an Alliance-recognized [national accrediting body](#) including the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) International, the Council on Accreditation, and the Joint Commission. In addition to state licensing regulation, national accreditation signifies that the organizations meet the standards of a healthy organization dedicated to the best interest of children and families. She explained that there are more than 160 chief executives of organizations serving California’s most vulnerable population, all of whom are members of the Alliance. These organizations offer a range of services, such as non-public schools, foster family agencies (FFA), adoption agencies, and residential services.

Ms. Thomas described the primary objectives of the Alliance, which include ensuring that California’s children, youth, and families facing vulnerable circumstances have opportunities to thrive. The Alliance works directly with its members to provide legislative and regulatory recommendations to the Governor, Legislature, and various state departments. Their advocacy efforts are shaped by member committees with expertise and passion. They host monthly meetings for nine member committees, where individuals within each member organization can

attend. During these meetings, they cover nine focus areas to navigate the complex landscape of policy, including the Juvenile Justice Committee for justice-involved youth. They discuss legislative and budget goals and strategize their policy platform annually. Member attendance is crucial as meetings provide opportunities for members across counties to relay barriers, they are facing in serving their communities, which can be addressed through legislation. Ms. Thomas then discussed the Residential Services Committee and Juvenile Justice Committee.

- The Residential Services Committee includes short-term residential therapeutic programs (STRTPs), which provide services, supports, and interventions to transition youth back to their communities. STRTPs offer the highest level of care for minor and non-minor dependents and youth in extended foster care. These programs provide specialized and intensive services, including care and supervision, child welfare services, family reunification, mental health treatments, and case management, all designed to stabilize, support, and transition youth to a lower level of care. Ms. Thomas explained that youth are eligible for this program when they meet the medical necessity criteria for mental health services, are emotionally disturbed, or exhibit behavioral treatment needs that can only be met by an STRTP. She continued to describe how the Alliance serves youth who are sexually reactive, affiliated with or impacted by gangs, commercially sexually exploited, or privately and/or voluntarily placed at STRTPs. These programs offer youth the care they need to be more readily housed, safely attend therapeutic interventions, and eventually return to a family setting.
- The Juvenile Justice Committee offers a wide range of supports to justice-involved youth, including aggression replacement therapy, substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, transitional housing, legal services, parenting services, education, vocational training, and expungement of records. She described these services and supports leading to better outcomes for justice-involved youth and by ensuring access to care is available when needed.

Ms. Thomas then shifted the presentation to focus on the main three advocacy efforts brought to current legislative session: [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 2711](#), [AB 2802](#), and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) [Foster Care Rate Reform Proposal](#).

- AB 2711 aims to revise school suspension and expulsion policies for drug-related infractions by requiring local education agencies to offer supportive services before suspending a student for the use, possession, or being under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or other intoxicants. Ms. Thomas described this bill as a “public health approach,” that would decrease the likelihood of future justice involvement with preventative services. The California Education Code currently allows school officials the discretion in deciding whether to suspend or expel a student for controlled substance, alcohol, or tobacco product use, but this discretion is not uniformly applied across school districts. Ms. Thomas explained California Department of Education 2022-2023 suspension expulsion data shows that over 60 percent of drug related suspensions involved boys, over 75 percent are of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and 59 percent involved youth of color. Ms. Thomas

reiterated that AB 2711 would require school districts to offer supportive services, giving administration more flexibility than relying on suspension or expulsion as a response while addressing students' health and reducing the likelihood of future substance abuse and justice involvement.

- AB 2802 would create gender inclusive options for housing arrangements within transitional housing placement programs, serving current and former foster youth over the age of 18. Ms. Thomas explained these options aim to improve access for transgender, non-conforming, and intersex individuals, as well as siblings and coparenting youth of differing genders. Between 2019 and 2023, the combined number of gender non-binary and gender-questioning individuals experiencing homelessness increased by at least 183 percent. Gender-expansive youth of color are twice as likely to experience homelessness compared to their white counterparts. Ms. Thomas continued to explain flexibility from AB 2802 would allow youth to be housed in a Transitional Housing Program where they feel safest, ultimately preventing homelessness.
- California Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) requires a new Foster Care Rate Structure inclusive of payments to foster family agencies and STRTPs. She explained the current rate structure from 2017 is under review and that they will send recommendations to the Administration and Legislature that includes having CDSS and Department of Health Care Services return to the Legislature in January to review the current proposal's progress on implementation. In addition, they will recommend CDSS to further review the distribution and amounts of funding within the various components of the structure and encourage CDSS to work with providers to significantly reduce the duplication of documentation, reporting, and other administrative burdens, without increased engagement with service providers. Negotiations with the legislative budget committee are still ongoing before the release of a joint budget.

Ms. Thomas concluded by highlighting three member organizations: Rancho San Antonio, who provides trauma informed services and supports in an STRTP for boys aged 6-13; Mountain Valley Academy, which offers residential services and a rural school for special education students needing academic and behavioral support; and Trinity Youth Services, that provides comprehensive support services. She shared testimonials from former youth, emphasizing the significant impact of these organizations.

IV. Trinity Youth Services:

Cher Ofstedahl, *Chief Executive Officer, Trinity Youth Services*
Hannah Chuapoco, *Clinical Director, Trinity Youth Services*

Ms. Chuapoco began her presentation by describing her role in providing clinical oversight to programming across STRTPs, FFAs, and adoption agencies. She explained that Trinity was established in 1966 to serve underrepresented youth and families primarily in Southern California, but they've also spread across 26 other counties. Trinity currently serves 150 children and families and has served 65,000 since its inception. Additionally, they have an Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program, which provides shelter and long-term foster care programs. An in-

house trainer provides certification in the evidence-based programs, Managing and Adapting Practices and Seeking Safety, while the entire agency personnel receive ongoing training on Motivational Interviewing. Foster family social workers and mental health providers collaborate with county mental health contracts, and therapists receive training and certification in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

Ms. Chuapoco discussed treatment programs for children and adolescents with problematic and harmful sexual behaviors delivered in STRTPs. The primary goals are to keep the community safe, prevent further victimization, and maximize youths' potential to live a responsible and healthy lifestyle. She detailed the program's philosophical underpinnings include implementing research of Andres and Bonta's [Risk-Needs-Responsivity \(RNR\) model](#) and Tony Ward's [Good Lives Model](#).

- The RNR model provides guidance on the intensity and breadth of treatment for youth based on risk factors, with high-risk youth receiving more intensive treatment and lower-risk youth receiving less intensive services and shorter length of treatments. Ms. Chuapoco explained that the RNR model informs targeted treatments, such as attitudes, values, and beliefs that promote law breaking behaviors, antisocial personalities, and substance abuse. Ms. Chuapoco continued describing the RNR model also addresses how treatment should be delivered considering factors such as the youth's learning style, cognitive abilities, developmental stage, and family dynamics and culture.
- The Good Lives Model focuses on reducing sexual recidivism by enhancing a person's overall well-being, helping curate individualized treatment plans by identifying dynamic, protective risk factors. She explained these risk factors include attitudes and beliefs about sexual offending, forming pro-social relationships, self-regulation strategies, problem-solving, healthy relationships, and strategies to prevent sexual offending. Ms. Chuapoco noted the average length of treatment in an STRTP is nine months to one year, and shorter for youth with more protective factors. The family reunification process influences the length of stay as well. Over the past three years, success in the Good Lives Model has been measured through incident reports showing low sexual acting out while in treatment and permanency rates indicating youth remain in a safe and stable living environment post-treatment. Youth who move to lower level of care maintain stability, and those reunited with families who participated in the Clarification and Safety Planning showed higher success rates, following the Association for Treatment of Sexual Abusers Guidelines. Ms. Chuapoco detailed these statistics are based on their three, six, nine, and 12 month follow up contacts.

To conclude her presentation, Ms. Chuapoco transitioned to discuss the challenges Trinity faces. Some of these challenges include struggling to find local substance abuse programs that can provide treatment in a timely manner, as they typically have waitlists extending up to months. Trinity attempted to mitigate this issue by offering their own co-occurring disorder program in the STRTP, though youth with moderate to severe SUD issues may require more targeted help. Ms. Chuapoco also described reunification as a challenge for families, which they addressed by

providing transportation and creating other engagement strategies such as Family Days and telehealth services for families in Northern California or other distant locations. Moreover, there are few aftercare options to monitor and reinforce what youth learned during the program to continue post-program success. Lastly, Ms. Chuapoco explained how staffing is another challenge, with large caseloads leading to staff burnout and exploring other career options. They provide trainings to improve staff retention as they notice an overall lack of mental health providers with training and experience working with children with problematic sexual behaviors and adolescents with harmful sexual behaviors. Additionally, once therapists and case managers become licensed, they tend to pursue remote work or private practice.

V. Rancho San Antonio (Rancho)

Aubree Sweeney, *Executive Director, Rancho San Antonio*

Natinael “Nati” Jatana, *Current Resident of Rancho San Antonio and Graduate of the STRTP*

Ms. Sweeney introduced herself as the Director of Rancho and the Chair of the California Alliance Residential Committee for two years, followed by another two years on the Juvenile Justice Committee. She provided a brief history of Rancho, established in 1933 by the Catholic Big Brothers, serving 18 youth who needed a safe haven and a place to call home. The Catholic Charities oversaw the facility until it became an independent corporation in 2008. Initially, it was a residential facility for probation youth and some from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). They significantly expanded their services following the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) and the Families First Prevention and Services Act (FFPSA).

Ms. Sweeney then provided an overview of the program, starting with the Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP), which serves 32 male youths, ages 13 to 18, including non-minor dependents, to address the life patterns that led to their placement outside the home. All residents receive Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS), including individual, family, and group therapy, substance abuse treatment, and one year of Aftercare Services. She continued by explaining that 98 percent of the youth they serve are on probation. They also serve youth from LA and other counties through the contract with DCFS. Rancho’s services are trauma-informed, which has allowed them to be recognized as a Complex Trauma Training Consortium. Additionally, Rancho has a Creative Healing Arts Program, an art sound studio, and a SUD Program for both STRTP and outpatient youth.

Ms. Sweeney noted they also have a Youth Diversion Program and private funding for Transitional Age Youth (TAY) apartments for justice-involved youth aged 18 to 23 who would otherwise be homeless.

She then transitioned to discuss the Youth Diversion Program, where Rancho partners with local law enforcement to receive referrals of youth. Youth Diversion Case Managers support youth at risk of offending or entering the formal youth justice system with field-based, culturally sensitive, human-centered, and evidence-based case management services. Most notably, Ms. Sweeney expressed that upon completion of the Youth Diversion Program, youth records are expunged, reducing barriers to employment such as fingerprinting clearances and other opportunities.

Rancho's residential program for youth placed in STRTP offer SMHS, trauma informed care, family therapy, group therapy, individual therapy, and SUD treatment. Furthermore, Rancho serves youth with sexual behavioral problems, and provide special programming for young fathers, LGBTQIA+ youth, and neurofeedback. Rancho current has a mental health contract with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health to provide SMHS to all youth in the STRTP and Aftercare.

They also have a contract in Los Angeles County Substance Abuse Prevention and Control, providing SUD services based on best practice principles, including screening, assessment, and identifying appropriate levels of care. Ms. Sweeney explained that this program offers individualized drug treatment for youth aged 12 to 20 years old and includes services for pregnant and parenting teens and young adults, as well as recovery services with appropriate medications for addiction treatment.

Ms. Sweeney stated their current SUD contract only serves youth in their STRTP; however, they are looking to expand the contract to provide outpatient services with funding from DHCS' Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program Round 4: Children and Youth grants. She outlined their goals to build an outpatient facility under the Substance Use Treatment Program to secure an outpatient mental health contract to serve more youth in the community with non-traditional modalities and treatments such as creative healing arts and neurofeedback. They are hoping this expansion will address the lack of outpatient services in West San Fernando Valley and a long waitlist at other local organizations.

Ms. Sweeney reported high satisfaction rates in their programs at Rancho, nothing that 100 percent of the parents they've worked with have reported they've been satisfied with the services, 90 percent of youth report being satisfied, and less than two percent have been discharged and returned within one year.

She then introduced Nati Jatana, a resident in the TAY Housing Program and former STRTP resident who shared his journey, highlighting the support her received at Rancho, which allowed him to pursue higher education and. Mr. Jatana recently graduated from Pierce Community College and was accepted to multiple prestigious universities. He has recently committed to the University of California, Los Angeles, and aims for a future in law to create positive change for youth with similar backgrounds as his. Mr. Jatana was recently accompanied to Sacramento by Rancho staff to make public comment to Senator Menjivar at the Health and Human Services Subcommittee 3 regarding rate reform for STRTPs.

Mr. Jatana shared that when he first arrived at Rancho, he wasn't as open to help because of his Ethiopian culture and a stigmatization of mental health, which prolonged his mental, physical, and psychological growth. Mr. Jatana underwent brain surgery at Rancho, which caused him to put his trust and belief in the hands of Rancho staff and he noticed that all the staff went out of their way to check in on him during the recovery process and assist with scheduling follow up appointments for the next year. Mr. Jatana reflected on how to give back to the Rancho staff since this was uncharacteristic of what he was used to experiencing. In his community it was often a "two-way street," where one person gives someone something in exchange for something else. Mr. Jatana learned that he had to be vulnerable in

order to change and as soon as he accepted that, the growth came easily. Being able to reside in the TAY apartments relived many stressors for Mr. Jatana, such as where he would sleep and shower and the proximity to school made for an easy commute, all factors that contributed to his success and building the future he wants.

He shared that he didn't want to go back home because that is the environment that landed him in the juvenile justice system, and he didn't want to put himself in the same environment. He stated it would be pointless to graduate from the STRTP to return to his community because it would only result in him returning to the STRTP. Mr. Jatana stated his experience at the STRTP was divine intervention and that he was put here for a reason. Now he wants to focus on ways to give back as much as possible.

Ms. Sweeney concluded her presentation with extending an invitation to anyone who wants to visit an STRTP emphasizing the benefits of tours as they demonstrate the positive impacts of residential care. She indicated that the Alliance or Catalyst Center could assist in scheduling a tour for an STRTP in your area. She hopes that the Alliance's recommendations in terms of funding are followed and that the legislation to create a STRTP and FFA rate are supported. She expressed her support of shortening residential stays and family reunification, when possible, but that there must be resources and places to catch youth that are leaving the system who might otherwise not have a place to live. It is important to recognize that treatment and intervention is a balance of healing the trauma, as well as looking at the consequences of the behaviors and decisions and restorative justice. She stressed that restorative justice involves repairing harm rather than dismissing it. Rancho believes that kids do have consequences for those behaviors, and they should not be ignored, but simultaneously the trauma and story behind the behavior need to be examined.

Councilmember Discussion

- Q:** Councilmember Jenkins expressed gratitude and congratulated Nati on his journey. He directed his question to Ms. Thomas asking how long "short term" in terms of years for an STRTP stay.
- A:** Ms. Thomas described that the idea is to have youth stay six months to a year, but this is not the reality. Ms. Ofstedahl added that the length of stay depends on how long it took youth to successfully complete a program, which was dependent on the case plan and individual needs.
- Q:** Councilmember Jenkins related his question to an earlier conversation on restorative justice and requested clarity across the three presentations. He mentioned different categories of youth involved in the California Justice System (i.e., 602/delinquent and dependents) and asked for clarification on which classification of youth they all serve.
- A:** Ms. Sweeny described that STRTPs serve both 600s (delinquency court) and 300s (i.e., DCFS). Programs like Rancho tend to serve more juvenile justice youth, currently 98 to 100 percent of youth that are placed in Rancho are adjudicated 602s, but they are contracted with DCFS to serve 300s youth. There are other providers in the Alliance, such as Sycamores, that serve primarily DCFS youth and might have a few probationary youths. Ms. Ofstedahl elaborated that Trinity serves both, as well and has

seen a shift as many of the STRTP's that previously served probation youth are no longer serving that population due to the intensive needs, the extensive property damage and additional staffing needs that have gone underfunded.

Q: Councilmember Pantoja stated she has heard what is happening at county camps and asked if that is happening at the residential facilities.

A: Ms. Ofstedahl explained it has become very difficult to obtain insurance for many of their programs due to some behavior the probation youth and many STRTPs have chosen not to serve that population. Both Trinity and Rancho began serving probation youth at their inception and believe youth are entitled to these services, but CDSS Rate Reform threatens their ability to provide these services.

Q: Councilmember Jenkins stated a breakdown of 602 vs 300 youth and who they are would be helpful to the Councilmembers because their trajectory into the system is different and the interventions need to reflect that. He asks a question regarding AB 2711, wondering if the bill removed the discretion of school districts to suspend and what it entailed.

A: Councilmember Pantoja explained school districts always had discretion to use other means of corrections and to have programs in place in lieu of suspensions or expulsions. However, this bill requires districts to consider all options rather than defaulting to suspensions and expulsions, as youth of color and foster youth were disproportionately expelled and suspended rather than referred for services. Ms. Ofstedahl added that the bill mandated districts to use all options rather than defaulting to suspension and expulsion and that this legislation would monitor districts more closely.

Q: Councilmember Jenkins directs his next question to Ms. Chuapoco about the SAFETTY Stages of Treatment program, clarifying that it targets youth who have engaged in sex offending behavior and seeking additional information on what those behaviors are. He inquired about the effectiveness of the assessment process to engage youth at a commensurate level of need given the range of behaviors.

A: Ms. Chuapoco affirmed that behaviors such as rape, sexual battery, and sexual assault are some of the behaviors exhibited by the youth they serve, along with milder offenses such as fondling. She explained they administer the PROFESR assessment at intake and throughout treatment to ensure the case plan is and remains appropriate.

Q: Councilmember Jenkins commented on CBT being used in Trinity's youth program and asked Ms. Chuapoco to address to the fact that CBT curriculum research has not been validated on youth populations.

A: Ms. Chuapoco explained the challenge is that there are no evidence-based programs for youth with problematic sexual offending or sexuality reactive youth that have been validated. They use CBT curriculum as it is the closest available program. The Problematic Sexual Behavior Program for children has been tried and studied, but there are currently only promising programs for adolescent youth.

Q: Councilmember Jenkins stated there are a lot of researchers who would study the impact of the curriculum for a small amount of money. He asked a question to Rancho regarding their diversion component and what the sources of referrals for deferred or diverted youth, more particularly if they are coming from probations intake and law

enforcement.

- A:** Ms. Sweeney described the two streamlined referral sources: youth on probation coming from the probation department, generally from juvenile hall, and youth for the diversion program coming directly from the police departments and have touched the law, but the police department has chosen to divert them. She noted some youth will have been flagged for diversion, but also end up in the STRTP, so they will be served by both groups at Rancho. Once they've touched the law, the goal is to assist the family and implement interventions that prevent further involvement with the justice system.
- Q:** Councilmember Jenkins stated the importance of having a good assessment process as youth flagged to be diverted can receive appropriate level of intervention while there are a lot of youth who never need to be in the system whatsoever.
- A:** Ms. Sweeney responded by saying CCR might have missed something when they removed group homes because now it seems like waiting for kids to "fail up" to the level of STRTP. There aren't many options between STRTPs and diversion to catch youth that don't meet the criteria for an STRTP but might not have been diverted. Ms. Ofstedahl added that STRTPs are a prevention service as it helps youth before they are involved as adults in the justice system and that STRTPs are not a different form or alternative to incarceration.
- Q:** Councilmember Jenkins reemphasized the importance of proper assessment earlier on in the continuum to prevent further harming youth by underserving them and asks for specific assessment tools in place at Rancho in particular. He asked Ms. Sweeney to share the tools they have in place to assess youth needs.
- A:** Ms. Sweeney explained they use the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment tool for every youth placement, which is now being considered in determining the rate paid in an STRTP and FFA. The Alliance has put together a group to respond to the use of the CANS in connection to rates. All providers use the CANS, but no other state has ever validated or tied that to rate. The statistics come from DCFS, but probation has not been able to integrate data into the platform, so decisions were made without CANS data for probation youth. She mentioned CPOC and the Alliance are in conversations regarding the flaws in integrating data from probation and advocating for better decision making on rate reform.
- Q:** Councilmember Pantoja inquired about the academic component and partnerships with school districts and if residential facility can deny youth who have been referred to the facility or if they must take them if they were referred from probation or DCFS?
- A:** Ms. Sweeney stated that for STRTPs, all youth are referred either through probation or DCFS. Youth are interviewed with an intake director to help determine whether or not they are suitable for the program. They learn youth's interests, needs, geographical considerations, etc. and are able to reject youth if they would not be most appropriately served at that STRTP. If so, they answer questions to the Department of Mental Health or the placing agency to explain why they rejected the youth. She further explained that they've been around so long and have established great rapport with probation and they typically know if someone is a good match or not before referring. Ms. Ofstedahl added that youth voice plays a large role as youth must agree to stay in the program and that the intake process usually becomes a conversation rather than just a referral

for services. The only youth they are unable to accept are fire starters due to insurance purposes. Ms. Sweeney stated Rancho, along with many other providers, have that same limitation due to insurance. She emphasized youth voice in the decision for placement and stated the youth can reject the STRTP for a variety of reasons, including information shared on the STRTP in the community (i.e., too many rules, too strict). Sometimes the youth's input is valid and sometimes they might need counseling as to why a placement might suit them that they are not choosing.

- Q:** Councilmember Pantoja asked how they partner with a school district or if they have their own program?
- A:** Ms. Sweeney stated that Rancho has a Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) continuation school adjacent to their facility or transport youth to the local high schools if they were succeeding or involved in sports, which is typically seen more with DCFS youth who were previously at a high performing school. She noted that most probation youth perform better at the onsite LAUSD school, which has a component for credit catchup. Ms. Ofstedahl added that on rare occasions, they provide academic assistant with online schooling and district-provided packets.
- Q:** Councilmember Pantoja reflected on the downfalls of CCR that were discussed earlier and that there is not an appropriate middle ground (e.g., group homes). She stated school districts are seeing a lot of aggressive behaviors and residential facilities not accepting students because of the level of aggression or type of behaviors. She asked if this could be attributed to the shortcoming of CCR causing behaviors to escalate?
- A:** Ms. Sweeney explained that the transition away from the group home model led to a "fail up" system and has created a negative perception of residential programs, which were often seen as the last resort for youth. A consequence of the elimination of group homes is also that there is no step-down placement for a youth once they leave an STRTP unless they're 18 and can go into a transitional housing program with supports.
- Q:** Councilmember Pantoja asked if there is a step-down model and support for youth transitioning back into the community.
- A:** Ms. Sweeney explained that the Los Angeles Department of Mental Health funds an aftercare program for up to a year post-placement, which helps youth get back in their school of origin, get jobs, and create a life plan. However, other counties across California do not receive aftercare funding. Ms. Ofstedahl added the difficulty in finding supports for youth in smaller counties and especially sexually reactive youth programs.
- Q:** Ms. Grealish inquired about aftercare being required by FFPSA.
- A:** Ms. Sweeney responded that LA County provides required aftercare because of FFPSA, but that it may not be funded properly in other counties. Ms. Ofstedahl noted that other counties often view aftercare as a warm handoff to a wraparound service provider rather than comprehensive support.
- Q:** Ms. Grealish questioned if all justice-involved youth who when through STRTPs benefit from the aftercare programs.
- A:** Ms. Sweeney confirmed that 100% of youth benefit, including those moving from STRTP's to the transitional housing. Ms. Ofstedahl added that one of the challenges they face is youth choosing to engage in the aftercare once they leave the program, as aftercare is optional, and the youth can decide if they want to continue services.

- Q:** Ms. Grealish asked Ms. Ofstedahl and Ms. Sweeney to describe what aftercare services entails.
- A:** Ms. Sweeney explained that aftercare is a combination of treatment in the home and linkage such as, job interview support, providing professional clothing, school enrollment assistance, college campus tours, etc. She stated there are so many available resources for former foster youth, but often they aren't aware of the services available once they leave the STRTP. LA County has an Independent Living Program (ILP) and the STRTP does a warm handoff with the ILP worker.
- Q:** Ms. Grealish questioned if they provide CalAIM Enhanced Care Management (ECM) referrals to ensure continuity of care post-STRTP and that youth are being connected with high level case managers, using the Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCP), making appoints, getting transportation, etc.
- A:** Ms. Sweeney confirmed that they are, but noted backlogs and waitlists for referrals when the STRTP provides the family or youth with a referral. To mitigate this, they provide substance abuse treatment outpatient in-house through the SAPC contract, even in aftercare, and the transitional housing program. She also noted there is a shortage of treatment, so they provide as many services in house for youth as possible. They want to ensure that it is not just a warm handoff, but that the service is booked, and the youth is attending their sessions. Ms. Ofstedahl stated many startup agencies are signing ECM contracts to continue a higher level of case management and ensure youth don't fall through the cracks. Jim Adams added that when youth leave, they want to ensure they continue to take their medicine properly and that they're connected to a psychiatrist in their community.
- Q:** Ms. Grealish stated that ECM referrals shouldn't go to the families, but directly from the STRTP to the MCP. But if agencies are becoming ECM providers, then they are able to provide both services.
- A:** Ms. Ofstedahl stated there is not a triggering mechanism that moves the youth to ECM automatically, but there should be. Currently the STRTP has to hand off to an ECM provider or become a part of the ECM network.
- Q:** Councilmember Jenkins reflected on the challenges presented by Trinity, specifically noting the difficulty in serving youth with moderate to severe SUD problems and staff burnout and stated that it shows him insight onto what is important to the program. As a retired Probation Officer (PO), Councilmember Jenkins asked the presenters to reflect on their relationships with the Chief PO in their county. Has it been good? Bad? What would they change?
- A:** Ms. Ofstedahl said it has been good and bad and it depends on the officer. Many POs have been reassigned to correctional facilities so they lost the day-to-day relationship with one specific PO who would have their office in the STRTP or was readily accessible.
- A:** Ms. Sweeney stated the POs are amazing and have worked closely with the on-site officers for many years. Similarly, most of them have been deployed to the halls because of the crises occurring. Unfortunately, this has resulted in a lack of accountability for the PO and the probation department. Historically, when the PO would come on site the youth knew they had the authority to make recommendations

on their case and they were taken very seriously. Now, due to the broken system, youth talk to POs with disrespect and there is no accountability. The STRTP doesn't have the same ability to put consequences on the youth's behavior and neither does the probation department. It can sometimes feel like the youth are running the program, which is a result of the broken system.

- A:** Mr. Jatana described having both negative and positive experiences with different POs. He had a positive experience with the POs that he spent more time with because they got to know each other better. Some of the previous POs had caseloads of youth from juvenile hall who had authoritative issues and immediately assumed he would have the same behavior so they wouldn't have open and honest conversations.
- A:** Councilmember Jenkins spoke to the benefits for having the same PO to develop rapport and a relationship, which will allow the youth to better engage in services and that there is research to support this claim.

Open Public Comment

No public comment was provided.

VI. Announcements

The next [Full Council Meeting](#) will be on June 28, 2024, from 2:00- 4:30 PM, and will focus on the latest innovations in SUD Treatment. The next [Juvenile Justice Workgroup](#) will be on August 16, 2024, from 12:45-2:45 PM and will focus on the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative. The next [Diversion/Reentry Workgroup](#) will be on August 16, 2024, from 3:00-5:00 and will focus on the multi-system implementation of evidence-based practices and how they can be used to support the implementation of new state initiatives.

VII. Adjourn