

Kirk Haynes, ESC Chair
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such physical altercations will happen and proceeding to take away pepper spray, a tool that ends most physical altercations immediately and leaves physical force as the only option for officers is knowingly and willingly placing residents and staff at serious risk.

Chief Salio's comments are particularly important because over 50 percent of California's deputy probation officers are now female, by nature smaller in stature than the predominantly male residents in our care.² In a typical scenario, a five foot tall, 120 lb. female detention officer must be able to stop the assault on another youth or staff of a six foot, 250-pound male resident without causing injury to herself, the youth, or her coworkers. Pepper spray is the great equalizer in these scenarios. Without pepper spray, female officers are forced to try to restrain larger, stronger youth, often resulting in injury to the officer and the resident. Pepper spray ends such assaults by youth quickly and safely for everyone involved.

2. Use of Pepper Spray in Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall

Probation chiefs and line staff throughout California know pepper spray is highly effective in reducing threats to staff and mitigating assaults by youth. Following the riot at Los Angeles County's Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall just a few weeks ago, Interim Chief Probation Officer Guillermo Viera Rosa announced the temporary issuance of pepper spray to all staff for the purpose of maintaining security in the facility. Chief Rosa is a former ex-officio member of the BSCC who is lauded for his commitment to juvenile probation reform, yet he recognizes that pepper spray remains necessary to the safety of staff and residents in juvenile facilities. A decision by the Executive Steering Committee to ban pepper spray would strip probation chiefs of this critical safety tool even in emergencies.

3. Comparison to Other States is Misleading

Advocates of a pepper spray ban often assert California is in the minority of states that still allow the use of pepper spray in juvenile institutions. What those advocates fail to report are the options those states employ in lieu of pepper spray.

Many of the states that have prohibited the use of pepper spray have a staff to resident ratio far below California's 1:10 ratio during waking hours and 1:30 ratio during sleeping hours. Texas and Idaho, for example, have juvenile facility staffing ratios as low as 1:4; Maryland and Pennsylvania, 1:6. Staff to resident ratio levels that low give officers the ability to supervise more closely, build rapport faster, and provide more officers to respond to incidents in which they must physically stop an assault by a violent youth.

Many of the same states that have banned pepper spray allow room confinement in their facilities without the limitations adopted in California. In Alabama and Arizona, youth may be held in isolation for up to 24 hours; in Maryland and Michigan, for up to 72 hours; in a few states for five days or more. This practice keeps violent residents separated long-term from other youth to

² Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC), "Women Empowering Women: Celebrating Women Probation Leaders", <https://www.cpoc.org/post/womens-history-month-webinar>.

