

Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act & Youthful Offender Block Grant



2021 - 2022

**Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act & Youthful Offender Block Grant
(JJCPA-YOBG)**

**FY 2021 – 2022
Consolidated Annual Plan**

Date: April 20, 2021
County Name: Merced
Contact Name: Kalisa Rochester, Chief Probation Officer
Telephone Number: 209-385-7665
E-Mail Address: Kalisa.Rochester@countyofmerced.com

Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act & Youthful Offender Block Grant

Government Code Section §§ 30061 and Welfare and Institutions Code Section §§ 1961, as amended by AB 1998 (Ch. 880, Statutes of 2016), combined and establish the planning and reporting requirements under the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) and the Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG) programs. The JJCPA program provides state funding for counties to implement programs that have proven effective in reducing crime and delinquency among at-risk youth and youthful offenders. The YOBG program provides state funding for counties to deliver custody and care (i.e., appropriate rehabilitative and supervisory services) to youthful offenders who previously would have been committed to the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, Division of Juvenile Justice.

An annual JJCPA and YOBG combined plan is developed that describes all programs, placements, strategies, services, and system enhancements that will be supported with JJCPA and/or YOBG funds in the upcoming fiscal year. An annual year-end expenditure and data report for JJCPA and YOBG is developed that describes programs, placements, services, and system enhancements that were funded through either program during the preceding fiscal year, including identification of any programs that were co-funded by JJCPA and YOBG. Additionally, this report includes countywide figures for specified juvenile justice data elements available in existing statewide juvenile justice data systems and includes a summary or analysis of how its grant-funded programs have or may have contributed to or influenced the countywide data that is reported.

Government Code Section §§ 30061(b)(4) specifies that the county's Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) shall review and update the JJCPA component of the plan annually. The JJCC is the entity that develops these JJCPA components. The YOBG component of the plan is not required to be developed by the JJCC.

Juvenile Justice Plan

Part I. Countywide Service Needs, Priorities and Strategy

- A. Assessment of Existing Services
- B. Identifying and Prioritizing Focus Areas
- C. Juvenile Justice Action Strategy
- D. Comprehensive Plan Revisions

Part II. Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA)

- A. Information Sharing and Data Collection
- B. Juvenile Justice Coordinating Councils
- C. Funded Programs, Strategies, and/or System Enhancements

Part III. Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG)

- A. Strategy for Non-707(b) Offenders
- B. Regional Agreements
- C. Funded Programs, Placements, Services, Strategies and/or System Enhancements

Part I. Service Needs, Priorities & Strategy – (Government Code Section 30061(b)(4)(A))

A. Assessment of Existing Services

Include here an assessment of existing law enforcement, probation, education, mental health, health, social services, drug and alcohol, and youth services resources that specifically target at-risk juveniles, juvenile offenders, and their families.

All youth services were impacted during this reporting period due to the widespread and highly contagious COVID-19 virus. The Merced County Probation Department along with program providers have and continue to grapple with how to continue serving youth, their families, and the community during the pandemic. The task is uniquely challenging for Probation as an industry that relies heavily on in-person interaction. Physical distancing, reduction of nonessential operations, and limited contact are fundamental in protecting human health—and raise fundamental challenges about how probation as an industry can continue to reach youth, their families, and communities while at the same time meet expectations. Recovering and emerging with a stronger, more resilient organization will require balancing near-term financial and operational constraints with the need to look beyond the crisis to the next normal.

The Probation Department continues to have a broad array of youth services that target the needs of youth and their families. The department places a strong emphasis on the principles of risk-need-responsivity in response to juvenile crime and delinquency. From the first point of entry into the juvenile justice system, efforts to divert youth from the system and preserve the family are a priority. Targeted strategies emphasize prevention and early intervention, child and family focus and teaming, a cross-systems approach to programs and service delivery, collaboration, and trauma-informed care.

The Probation Department Juvenile Justice Plan continues to confront the problems of youth from a systems perspective. This perspective suggests that the problems of youth crime are related directly to issues involving the families, community, private and governmental agencies, as well as law enforcement, the courts, and the correctional systems. Partnerships with the Juvenile Delinquency Court and various county agencies include, Children and Family Services Branch, Public Health, Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, including Alcohol and Drug Programs, and the Office of Education, as well as with many community-based organizations explore the implementation of effective intervention services for youth and families at risk of contact with the juvenile justice system or are already justice-involved. Additionally, the Merced County Probation Department works closely with local law enforcement agencies to share information and coordinate diversion efforts.

The Probation Department Juvenile Justice Plan has ongoing efforts in collaboration and coordination through locally initiated activities. These activities are summarized below and in a

tradition of cooperation and multi-agency initiatives in addressing the complications of youth crime and at-risk populations:

- The Do Whatever It Takes at Home (DoWITH) Program, offered by ASPIRAnet, is a collaboration between the Human Services Agency (HSA), Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, the Merced County Probation Department, and the Merced County Office of Education. DoWITH offers a unique blend of “wraparound” services designated to be flexible and will consider, blend and incorporate the family's voice in the decision-making process. The strengths of the family are utilized as the foundation of the planning process. The parent of the youth is given a parent partner to assist the parent with the struggles of parenting troubled teens. Parent Partners are parents (mothers and fathers) who have first-hand experience with the Child Welfare System, and who have exhibited exceptional qualities in their efforts to develop viable permanency plans for their children, an understanding of how the Child Welfare system works, an appreciation of what it takes to be successful, and personal qualities that lend themselves to collaboration on various levels. The (DoWITH) Program offers twenty-four-hour on-call assistance with crisis intervention. Youth can be and are best served by their own families and in their schools and communities. DoWITH utilizes the least restrictive, most beneficial setting for youth and their families while utilizing a culturally responsive, family-focused, strength-based, and evidence-based approach.
- The Wraparound Empowerment Compassion and Needs (WeCAN) Program has provided individualized, multisystemic strength-based interventions to ameliorate mental health conditions that interfere with a youth's functioning. The WeCAN Program is operated by Aspiranet and Merced County's other Full-Service Partnership (FSP), which serves children and youth ages 0 to 18 of all races and ethnicities with special efforts to reach those with increased risk factors. WeCAN delivers specialty mental health services to severely emotionally disturbed youths, according to an individualized treatment plan designed with the child and the family. WeCAN meets families in their homes on their time and collaborates with families' natural support systems. WeCAN provides community services and supports 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to youths with an emphasis on those with serious emotional behavior issues living successfully in the least restrictive normative environment. The goals of the program are: to reduce out-of-home placements and to provide strength-based, family-driven services that promote wellness, recovery, and community integration.
- The Bear Creek Academy Long Term Program (BCA/LTP) and Bear Creek Academy Youth Treatment Program (BCA/YTP) consists of youth who have been allowed by the Juvenile Delinquency Court to enter a coordinated system of care to break old patterns that have resulted in negative and destructive behavior. Both programs offer a system of educational and evidenced-based program elements that teach the youth new patterns for dealing with a stimulus that previously resulted in antisocial and delinquent behavior. The program(s) teach positive social skills, correct thinking, moral and ethical values, and strategies for successful community intervention. The programs are point-

based and youth receive points for pro-social behavior(s) and for attending school/programming. The maximum number of points each youth can earn per day is 50.

- Youth committed to the Bear Creek Academy (BCA) Short Term Program are allowed by the Juvenile Delinquency Court to enter a coordinated system of care to break destructive behavior patterns. Youth committed to this program are taught positive social skills, corrective thinking, ethical values, and strategies for successful community interaction. This Program is point-based. Youth receive points for pro-social behavior(s) and for attending school/programming. The maximum number of points each youth can earn per day is 50. A level two commitment is 1500 points and a level three commitment is 3000 points.
- The L.I.N.K (Learn. Inform. Network. Know.) program allows youth to LEARN life skills, get INFORMed about available resources within the community, NETWORK with positive mentors which gives them the KNOWledge they need to be successful in the future. The Probation Department refers based on a risk assessment score of moderate to high risk. The program is incentive-based and held at Atwater Valley Community School. Participants receive independent living skills, employment assistance, anger management classes, substance abuse education, sports training, Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT), and more. A Deputy Probation Officer is the facilitator providing direct oversight; other treatment providers provide the aforementioned services.
- Parents of youth ordered to Out-of-Home Placement attend the Parents Supporting Parents (PSP) support group. The Probation Department facilitates the PSP program. The program is designed to help parents develop and strengthen their parenting skills to facilitate the development of their parental support system, network with each other and utilize each other for support during difficult times, and learn about resources that are available in the community. Also, parents are taught effective communication skills, how to set clear limitations on their child's behavior, and how to manage family conflicts without the intervention of law enforcement.
- The Re-Direct Program provides information to children and parents regarding community resources that are available to families to prevent deeper involvement in the Probation/Court system. The purpose of the Redirect Program is to empower parents to become more effective in their parenting by clarifying their rights and responsibilities and their children's rights and responsibilities. The target population for this group is youth 12 to 18 years of age who have parents/guardians/or a caring adult who is engaged in the life of the youth. This program is a collaborative effort amongst community justice partners including but not limited to: Merced County Probation Department, Field Services and Custody Divisions, Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Merced County Public Defender's Office, Merced County District

Attorney's Office, various Law Enforcement Agencies, Merced County Public Health, Merced County Child Welfare and Merced County Office of Education.

- Supportive Ongoing Services (S.O.S) is a multidisciplinary team that meets weekly to assist families in problem-solving and securing agency resources. The multidisciplinary team consists of Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Merced County Public Health, Merced County Probation Department, Merced County & City School Districts, Merced County Child Welfare, Parent Partners, and Central Valley Regional Center. The ultimate goal for S.O.S. is to keep families together by building on family strengths and providing coordinated resources. All agencies and families have access to S.O.S. Referrals to S.O.S. are routed to a single source and families are scheduled to attend a meeting with resources providers who are typically already connected to the family. Information exchanged is developed into a plan for the youth. A follow-up meeting is scheduled to ensure the success of the plan.
- The Merced County Youth Accountability Board (YAB) is a volunteer organization which originally formed by citizens who were concerned with the problems of escalating juvenile delinquency and the disintegration of the family. YAB provides services to first-time offenders who would otherwise be under-served due to the lack of city and county resources. The volunteers strive to strengthen the community by supporting parents to raise their children to be law-abiding citizens. The family meets with a Social Investigator to review the circumstances of the offense and to create a contract. Once all of the conditions of the contract are met, the youth's record with the Probation Department is purged.
- The Merced County-Los Banos region Prop 47 initiative provides a local intervention program targeting system-involved youth with a history of substance abuse. The intervention program will aim to increase system-involved youth/ young adults' educational attainment, reduce their risk assessment scores (i.e. PACT-2.0 and STRONG Assessments), and reduce their recidivism rates. The intervention will be focused on young males (ages 10-17) and transitioning young adults (ages 18-24) in the Los Banos region (i.e. Los Banos, Dos Palos, Gustine, and Santa Nella). These changes will be measured starting from the first six-month follow-up after intake, and continue through until the end of the three-year initiative. The development of a Youth and Family Safety Hub (the Hub), provides a culturally competent, evidence-based El Joven Noble program, a network of community leaders to recruit and develop mentors, a Youth Leadership Advisory Council (YLAC), and referrals for social services. Also, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) services for substance use and mental health issues will be offered to those youth identified with those specific needs. Given the program is grant-funded and funds are set to expire, the program will be ending in August 2021. A final evaluation report will be submitted to determine whether the overall project was effective in meeting stated goals and objectives.

- The Learning for Life Program addresses taking ownership and responsibility for actions, learning from mistakes, having an open discussion regarding anger and conflict management with the ultimate goal of accepting consequences.
- The Teen Outreach Program as facilitated by the Merced County Sheriff's Office continues to provide informational sessions designed to provide troubled teens and their families with county resources and other assistance programs. The presentation provides an overview of parent involvement and awareness, drug & alcohol abuse, violent crimes, gang violence in Merced, gang structure & recruitment, community resources, and additional information on teen help programs.
- The 3rd Millennium Classroom for the intervention of first-time offenders. 3rd Millennium Classrooms offers courses for marijuana and other drug use, intimate partner violence and sexual consent, nicotine awareness, and theft and impulse control. All programs use a motivational interviewing style and provide personalized feedback reports. The goal of the program(s) is to engage the youth in a powerful learning experience that impacts behavior. Probation primarily used their Marijuana 101 program. Marijuana 101 is a marijuana education and intervention course that is used as a sanction for marijuana violations or possession of drug paraphernalia, as well as an educational component for DWI violations. Youths are presented with compelling information about the dangers associated with marijuana use in a reasonable and balanced manner.

Law Enforcement - Local law enforcement agencies investigate juvenile law offenses and submit new referrals regarding all juvenile matters to the Juvenile Probation Division. The Juvenile Probation Division subsequently reviews all referrals and handles them either by diversion, referral for informal services, or petition for Juvenile Court intervention.

Education - Probation staff works closely with the local educational systems. Probation staff attends Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) meetings, 504 meetings, Manifestation Hearings, and parent/teacher conferences, when appropriate, for probation youth. Probation staff visit school campuses regularly to contact youth, verify attendance, address behavioral obstacles, and maintain solid communication with educational staff and administrators regarding the activities (both positive and negative) of probation youth. Probation Officers serve on the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) and take a supportive/mentoring role for Merced County families and children who struggle with truancy-related issues.

Mental Health - Probation continues to work closely with collaborative partners such as Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Children's System of Care Division. BHRS through their Children's System of Care provides a streamlined process for referrals and linkage to services.

Through Point of Entry (POE), children and youth referrals are reviewed and passed to the appropriate program such as Supportive Case Management; Intensive Case Management;

Home and Community Based Services; Family-Based Treatment; Community Residences; and Residential Treatment Facilities. The following programs are also used commonly for probation youth:

- The Juvenile Behavioral Health Court Program is a court-supervised, comprehensive, four-phase treatment program provided in collaboration with the Judge of the Superior Court-Juvenile Division, Merced County Probation, Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS), Merced County District Attorney, Merced County Public Defender, and Merced County Office of Education. The program is designed for youth who have been diagnosed primarily with an Axis I mental illness or for youth who have a dual diagnosis. BHRS has trained a Dual Diagnosis specialist to be a part of the treatment team. BHRS is now under the Drug Medical Organized Delivery System and can provide services within the community, which allows for their counselors and case managers to visit youths at home, school, etc. This program provides resources, tools, and a continuum of care which increases their overall quality of life and decreases incarceration for youths.
- Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS) is an intensive, individualized, one-to-one behavioral coaching program available to children/youth up to age 21 who are experiencing a current emotional or behavioral challenge or experiencing a stressful life transition. TBS is only available to children/youth with full-scope Medi-Cal benefits receiving ongoing mental health services. TBS can help children/youth and parents/caregivers learn skills to increase successful behaviors and learn new ways of reducing challenging behaviors. TBS is not a stand-alone service; it supports an ongoing primary mental health service such as mental health therapy or case management.
- CHAT is a child abuse treatment program that provides services to child victims of violence, abuse, neglect, domestic violence, family, school, and community violence regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion. CHAT assists in referring eligible children to Merced County Victim Witness compensation services and provides help and support during court proceedings at no cost. Approved family members may also receive services as an integral part of the child's treatment plan. CHAT staff members provide immediate and ongoing emotional support to youths as they work through loss, anger, sadness, and as they begin to reorganize their lives.
- The CUBE is a wellness center that is planned for youth by youth. The CUBE offers a safe setting for youth to set their wellness & recovery goals. The CUBE serves all transitional age youth between the ages of 16-25. Services and Resources available at the CUBE include but not limited to: Therapy; Counseling; Case Management; Social Skills Groups; Indoor/Outdoor Recreation Activities; Independent Living Skills Classes; Employment Assistance; Laundry; Tables for Homework; Computers with Internet Access; Tutoring; and a Quiet Area to Relax.

As part of a larger institutional and community mental health strategy, the Probation Department and Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) have identified treatment needs that are not only required to be addressed by Title 15 Minimum Standards for Juvenile Facilities but are also in the best interest of the target population. In preparation for DJJ realignment as enacted by the passage of Senate Bill 823, the Merced County Probation Department and BHRS developed a collaborative clinical team servicing the behavioral health needs of youthful offenders in the juvenile facility. BHRS has committed to assigning a full-time licensed mental health clinician, a full-time unlicensed mental health clinician, and a full-time mental health worker to provide ongoing direct services to the youth in custody. The Probation Department has committed to funding a full-time peer support specialist as a member of this treatment team. This integrated team is the first of its' kind to be placed at the Merced County Juvenile Facility. They will provide a culturally competent and trauma-based service approach when delivering services to youth.

Identified Services will include:

- Assessment of mental health symptoms and concerns in a confidential environment upon referral from facility staff, medical staff, or by way of self-referral.
- Individual therapy/rehabilitation at designated intervals as determined to be appropriate by the clinical team.
- Group therapy (average of three (3) to five (5) times per week) to include the following topics:
 - Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART);
 - Social Skills;
 - Interpersonal Skills;
 - Stress Management;
 - Decision Making;
 - Stages of Change (Substance Use).
- Family therapy when deemed appropriate by the Clinician.
- Clinical case management, including linkage to substance use disorder services, psychotropic medication evaluation, appropriate follow-up services, and referrals upon release from the facility.
- Collaboration with, consultation, and communication of recommendations to probation staff and medical staff when permissible and following ethical and legal standards or with a signed release of information.
- Assessment of suicide risk in a confidential environment upon identification of risk and referral from facility staff, medical staff, or by way of self-referral.
- Crisis intervention and stabilization to include, but not limited to, an assessment of risk, de-escalation, and management of the crisis, and coordination of appropriate treatment

and referrals, which may include recommending transport to the hospital for medical clearance or admission to an inpatient psychiatric facility.

- Regularly, but no less than daily, reassessing youth on suicide precautions to determine whether the level of precaution or supervision shall be raised or lowered.
- Reporting all incidents of known, or intended, self-harm to facility staff and facility administrators, immediately upon discovery.
- Ensuring that youth who are removed from suicide precautions receive a follow-up assessment by a BHRS clinician within twelve (12) hours of removal.
- Working collaboratively with the assigned program specialist who will act as a liaison for programmatic services.

Child Welfare Services - The Probation Department works closely with the Merced County Human Services Agency, Child Welfare Services (CWS) agency, and the California Department of Social Services (DSS) in a variety of ways. Probation staff collaborates with Social Workers and CWS administration regarding cases according to Welfare and Institutions Code 241.1 when youth come between both dependency (WIC 300) and delinquency (WIC 602) court intervention. Also, CWS has committed to placing a Social Worker at the Probation Department in the capacity of a liaison to resolve issues related to dependents who have been admitted to the Juvenile Facility, to assist with the processing of 241.1 protocol reports, to generate child abuse and neglect referrals, to conduct emergency response investigations, to provide child welfare services case summaries, assist with case plan development, and participate in planned Probation organized operations.

Public Health – Probation placement officers consult with a Public Health Nurse to synchronize information necessary for Health and Education Passports for foster youth. Pregnant or parenting youth 19 years or under are referred to their Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) / Young Parents Program (YPP) for prenatal services, case management support services, and linkage with pertinent medical providers. Healthy Families America (HFA) is a home visiting case management service for (WIC) pregnant or up to 2 months postpartum women, serving families up to the child's 3rd birthday. Additionally, juvenile probation staff refers youth and their caregivers to Public Health nursing services for ongoing education for proper management of chronic health conditions.

Drug and Alcohol Services - Youth affected by substance abuse issues are referred to the Recovery Assistance for Teens (RAFT) program as offered by Behavioral Health and Recovery Services. RAFT offers three programs under its umbrella. The RAFT Education Program provides intensive prevention services to Merced County youth that have been indicated as high-risk for substance abuse-dependence issues. The program curriculum is comprised of evidence-based principles and practices intended to motivate and support positive decision-making. The program is a minimum of 7-weeks. The RAFT Treatment Program is a counseling and recovery program for adolescents that meet diagnostic criteria for substance abuse or dependence as outlined by the DSM IV-TR, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders. The

treatment program is based on the same principles that make up the long known effective and evidence-based 12-step recovery programs. Youths are encouraged to voluntarily attend outside 12-step/support meetings throughout treatment and as a continuing care program following completion of treatment. This program is a minimum of 90-days. Lastly, the Juvenile Behavioral Health Court program as previously mentioned.

The Iris Garrett Juvenile Justice Correctional Complex offers a variety of programs to meet each individual's specific treatment needs.

While in custody, youth are required to participate in programming designed to enhance practical life skills and reduce high-risk behavior by addressing trauma. To address the treatment needs of youth while they are in our care, the Merced County Probation Department created two new positions, the Probation Program Specialist (PPS) and the Peer Support Specialist (PSS). The PPS is responsible for managing and overseeing the day-to-day operations of the cognitive-behavioral and evidence-based programs facilitated at the facility. This includes working with the facility staff to help enhance programming as a means to reduce risky behavior. Utilizing a trauma-informed approach and Healing Centered Engagement, we encourage youth to understand the impact their behavior (Legacy) leaves behind. The PPS oversees facilitators and performs quality inspections to ensure youth are learning new skills. The PPS also acts as a facilitator of several groups that help teach prosocial behaviors. The PPS conducts independent research and through data collection, recommends programs that have an everlasting impact on the youth. The PPS is also responsible for the planning and execution of special events: field days, curriculum ceremonies, holiday events, holiday activities, school graduations, etc. Lastly, the PPS provides staff training on Trauma Informed-Care and Cognitive Behavioral Techniques.

The PSS dedicated to the Bear Creek Academy Camp Program and funded by YOBG, interviews and participates in educational and clinical settings to assist youth in the completion of forms. The PSS assists with outreach Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Social Services, and Probation staff in linking youth with resources and the appropriate level of care. The PSS leads activity groups and prevocational groups in a program setting. Lastly, the PSS prepares routine reports and correspondence and maintains youth records.

The following is a list of different programs the facility offers to address youth's treatment needs:

Youth Crossroads: High-Risk Offenders

The Youth High-Risk Offender curriculum is designed for the medium to the high-risk offender. It covers a broad range of issues that are designed to help participants overcome negative behavioral patterns and enable them to become more pro-social and productive individuals. This curriculum demonstrates ways to make and keep supportive positive friends, ones that will encourage the offender to make pro-social choices. Last but not least, the curriculum covers a variety of research-validated employment-focused components. The curriculum also introduces the offender to the idea of accepting responsibility for the harm caused to the victim.

Youth Crossroads: Anger Management

The Youth Anger Management curriculum uses role-plays and scenarios to assist individuals in learning what they must do to avoid confrontational situations. The curriculum assists participants in learning ways to manage their emotions and develop alternative behavioral responses. Through this skills-based curriculum, participants commit to avoid the use of anger or violence to solve personal problems.

Youth Crossroads: Cognitive Life Skills

This program offers an extended and comprehensive educational process to help participants overcome negative behavioral patterns, and enable them to be more productive in their environment. Through activity-enhanced components targeting criminogenic needs, participants learn how to establish positive, goal-directed behavior patterns, and understand the process necessary to change negative behavior.

El Joven Noble

El Joven Noble is a comprehensive indigenous-based, youth leadership development program that supports and guides youth through their “rites of passage” process while focusing on the prevention of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, relationship violence, gang violence, and school failure.

How to Escape Your Prison: Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT)

The program has 16 Steps with 12 of these typically completed in 30 group sessions held under the implementation site’s own needs and characteristics. Youths complete homework for each group before coming to a session. In a group, each youth presents his or her homework and the facilitator passes the youth to the next step or has the youth redo the homework based on objective criteria.

Coping with Anger (MRT)

Coping with Anger is targeted at juveniles who have problems with managing feelings of anger and frustration appropriately. It is used with violent offenders, argumentative or oppositional clients.

Thinking for Good (MRT)

This program is used in groups with offenders who may be resisting treatment opportunities or who may be in the contemplative stage of making changes. This workbook focuses especially on typical criminal thinking issues such as Everyone lies, cheats, and steals; no one can be trusted; the rules don’t apply to them; that all relationships are manipulative.

Character Development (MRT)

This program focuses on character development through willpower and self-discipline. Youth learn about the meaning of willpower and self-discipline to mitigate bad habits and maladaptive thinking.

Parenting and Family Values (MRT)

Parenting and Family Values is a workbook designed to help participants assess values related to family issues and relationships. Youths perform a clarification on their values regarding family and establish appropriate discipline routines.

Your Lifework (MRT)

This workbook focuses on finding one's life purpose, establishing principles, and living life as being on a personal mission. This unique program guides individuals in an evaluation of their personality, habits, beliefs, and attitudes and compare these to what they believe is their true purpose and mission.

Easy Money Workbook (MRT)

This workbook focuses on helping participants understand basic concepts about money and making informed financial decisions. Participants progress from the simple concept of earning money up to the point of setting personal financial goals and creating an action plan to achieve them. Some of the topics discussed include: opening a bank account, planning for purchases, paying bills and budgeting, credit cards, and saving money. Topics are presented in a straightforward, easy-to-understand manner and the exercises challenge participants to apply this information to their own life.

Job Readiness: Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT)

- Work Goals and Habits
- How to Get and Keep a Job
- How people Get Promoted
- Professionalism-Professional Appearance

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

A type of psychotherapy in which negative patterns of thoughts about the self and the world are challenged to alter unwanted behavior patterns or treat mood disorders such as depression.

Social Responsibility Training

Targeted for adult and juvenile offenders to teach them socially responsible behaviors while also enjoying a positive contribution.

Work Landscape Agriculture (WLA)

A program funded and administered via the Merced County Office of Education, youth are allowed to work on landscaping and agriculture projects.

Regional Occupational Program (ROP)

ROP offers high-quality courses in several industry sectors to high school students and adults. ROP classes are appropriate for students who want to: explore career options, gain employability skills, earn high school credits, prepare for advanced education and training,

learn new job skills and/or increase work experience, or earn credits at local community colleges. In addition to the skills developed for specific fields, each class helps students develop an employability portfolio, review effective interviewing techniques and identify sources of employment.

Leadership for Life

A perspective for integrating personal leadership in one's own life, family leadership, and leadership within any team, group, or organization. Instead of defining success only through

Describe what approach will be used to facilitate collaboration amongst the organizations listed above and support the integration of services.

All youth deserve to live with a committed, nurturing, and permanent family that prepares them for a successful transition into adulthood. Agencies serving youth including child welfare, probation, behavioral health, education, and other community service partners collaborate effectively to surround the youth and family with needed services, resources, and supports rather than requiring youth and caregivers to navigate multiple service providers. System Partners seek to ensure that all public programs for youth and families provide services in an integrated, comprehensive, culturally responsive, evidence-based/best practice manner, regardless of the agency door by which youth and family enter. This mission includes an awareness of and a commitment to incorporate youth experience and voice into county-level collaborations and partnerships that manage or oversee the delivery of services affecting youth currently in the system and receiving direct and indirect service. System Partners have a shared responsibility to ensure appropriate and timely services to youth and families.

Merced County has developed an existing continuum of services that strongly emphasizes collaboration across agency boundaries toward reducing crime and delinquency for delinquent and pre-delinquent youth. The County has a history of developing such inter-agency projects through the dedication of pre-existing resources and maximizing external funding through a range of projects. The strengths found through this Juvenile Justice Plan include:

- A continuum of care, using graduated responses and programs ranging from prevention and intervention to incapacitation.
- Collaborative service delivered through programs such as Juvenile Behavioral Court Program, intensive wraparound services as facilitated by our county contracted provider ASPIRAnet, and RISE to Higher Grounds Coffee Cart Program as facilitated by Merced County Office of Education.
- Programs recognizing the need to deal with the multiple causes and problems leading to at-risk and high-risk behavior.

Pursuant to Section 236 of the Welfare and Institutions Code notwithstanding any other provision of law, probation departments may engage in activities designed to prevent juvenile delinquency. These activities include rendering direct and indirect services to persons in the community. Probation departments shall not be limited to providing services only to those persons on probation being supervised under Section 330 or 654, but may provide services to any juveniles in the community. The fundamental precept of 236 WIC service is that the Probation Officer will reach out into the community, school setting, housing community, etc. and, with the assistance of community-based organizations, school officials and other vested stakeholders will identify and intervene with youth vulnerable to situations beyond their control, youth exhibiting problematic behavior within the school setting, youth in need of exposure to enriched/prosocial activities, youth not attending school as directed, youth in need of afterschool enrichment activities, etc.

As identified in last year's annual plan, the Early Intervention Officer (EIO) was created to target an at-risk population. The purpose of the EIO is to provide community protection, youth accountability, and competency development through early intervention. The EIO provides prevention, early intervention, and diversion services to all areas of Merced County. The EIO targets at-risk, low-level youth cited by a law enforcement agency or referred by school districts. The EIO seeks to apply constructive evidence-based interventions to hold the youth accountable for inappropriate negative and criminal behavior, as well as address the criminogenic needs of the youth when possible. Also, the EIO collaborates with the Atwater Caring About Kids Council to assist with the identification of needs and appropriate level of response.

The City of Merced and Probation Department recognizes the opportunity for community service experiences to benefit the community. The City of Merced and Probation Department entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a collaborative working relationship among the parties and participating departments and to document the responsibilities of each party relative to the provision of the Community Service Program (CSP). The goal of this collaboration is to provide a positive community service program that benefits the community, the participants, and the agencies.

Collaboration and regular meetings across various disciplines working with youth in both public and private sectors are ongoing. Committees meet to address adverse childhood experiences, commercial sexual exploitation of children, placements, and gang intervention.

Weekly meetings of the Inter-agency Placement Council (IPC), ensures systems partners' programs and policies reflect a coordinated, integrated, and effective delivery of services for children, youth, and families.

The IPC is a group led by the Merced County Human Services Agency who in conjunction with representatives from Behavioral Health and Recovery Services and Probation Department provides guidance, advice, and input to a broad range of programs for children and families, as requested by public and private agencies. Moreover, the IPC creates a committee that

determines the placement of child/youth/non-minor dependent (NDM) when considering foster placement.

The Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) advises the Board of Supervisors on the development and implementation of a comprehensive multi-agency plan that identifies resources and strategies for providing an effective continuum of responses for the prevention, intervention, supervision, treatment, and incarceration of youth, including strategies to develop and implement local out-of-home placement options for youth. The Council will also coordinate on a countywide basis the work of those governmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in activities designed to reduce the incidence of juvenile crime and delinquency in the greater community, develop information and intelligence-sharing systems to ensure that county actions are fully coordinated, and provide data and appropriate outcome measures.

The Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council Subcommittee assists in the development of a comprehensive long-term realignment plan to serve youth at a local level, including the identification of facilities, programming, service needs, and the allocation of grant funding.

The Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Council meets regularly to discuss various issues about juvenile delinquency within Merced County. Representatives from Probation attend these meetings and provide detailed updates on the various programs, future needs, gaps in services, and ongoing challenges within Merced County. To facilitate collaboration amongst the organizations listed above and support the integration of services, the JJDP council convenes to communicate, identify service gaps, and assess progress.

Additional opportunities for collaboration and integration of services come naturally through the many partnerships forged through this and other processes including the IPC, JJCC, JJCC Subcommittee, and JJDP.

B. Identifying and Prioritizing Focus Areas

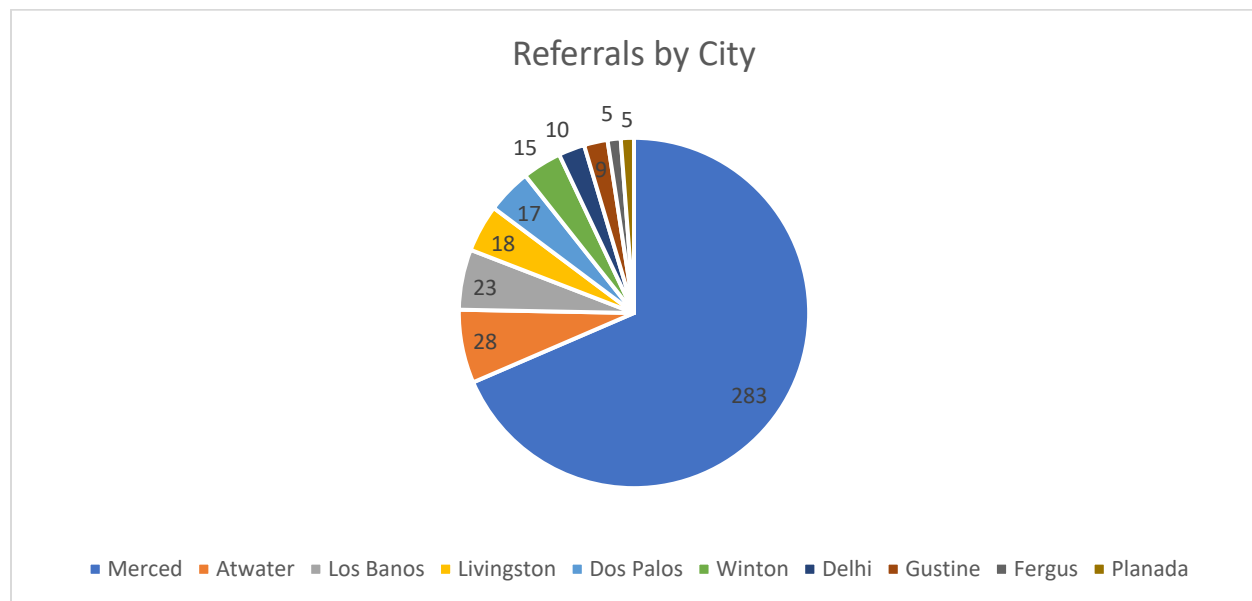
Identify and prioritize the neighborhoods, schools, and other areas of the county that face the most significant public safety risk from juvenile crime.

Merced County is situated in central California in the San Joaquin Valley. Though the region is the world's most productive agricultural area, it is severely economically depressed. The economy of the county has never recovered from the 1995 closing of Castle Air Force Base. However, the opening of the University of California (UC) Merced, which broke ground in 2002 and held its first classes in 2005, provides hope for the growth and expansion of the local economy. Merced is culturally as well as ethnically diverse, with a population of 255,793 residents. Merced County ranks among California's lowest in several socioeconomic indicators. The specifics of these indicators are described in Section 4, Demographic Profile, and taken as a

whole they describe a county with low income, high unemployment, an under-educated population, lack of affordable housing, high incidence of drug and alcohol abuse, high crime rates, and families under extreme stress.

While most of the population is clustered in the cities of Merced, Los Banos, and Atwater, many families live in the small, scattered rural communities. The county is large, 1,935 square miles, and the rural roads zigzag around the fields, pastures, and orchards. Public transportation to some areas of the county is non-existent, and long distances to services create a major logistical problem for service providers and those seeking services. In an environment of low income, high levels of poverty, low levels of education, high unemployment, a high percentage of young children, and high rates of drug-related crime, it is no surprise that Merced County experiences high rates of homelessness, child abuse, neglect, and juvenile offenders. While Merced has many positive attributes and many people of goodwill and intent, it is the pervasive poverty of the county that influences many of the issues and options discussed in this report.

The Probation Department continues to focus on providing responsive programming throughout Merced County. The focus of juvenile prevention and intervention is county-wide. A greater emphasis on areas of the county where a majority of referrals are generated will result in decreased public safety risk from juvenile crime. In the following chart, approximately 70% of referrals received from July 2020 to April 2021, are generated in the City of Merced. Strategies such as providing localized programs or programs offered in a virtual platform increased access to transportation to attend said programs, and language interpreters, take the programs and information directly to the lesser served populations. Implementing programs that work with the whole family, and not just individual youth, provides a more in-depth, holistic approach to deal with the presenting offense, as well as to provide preventative services to lessen re-occurrence.



The problems of at-risk and high-risk youth in Merced County are much like jurisdictions throughout the country. Previous research has shown those youth who exhibit the greatest risk factors are best served in prevention programs. The Department uses the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) to determine risk level to re-offend, identify targets of intervention, and monitor the client's progress. The PACT is validated, reliable, representative of risk and protective factors, representative of static and dynamic factors, and clinically relevant.

At-risk and high-risk youth are composed of individuals who may meet one or more of the following problem criteria:

- **School:** Those with truancy and attendance issues; those with behavior and adjustment problems; those in danger of failing; and youth either dropping out or in danger of dropping out.
- **Family:** Those youth residing with families in conflict (including violence and abuse in the home); children of substance abusers; and those whose parents lack fundamental parenting skills. Family issues are often a precursor to youth failing to attend school.
- **Community (Anti-social peers and premature independence):** Those youth involved in gang or gang-like activities; those youth who are at risk of developing attachments to anti-social friends and norms, and engaging in activities outside convention; those exhibiting signs of early independence through rebelliousness and early initiation into problem behaviors such as truancy; and those out of parental control, and/or suffering from a mental health disorder such as depression, anxiety, and trauma impairing their normal functioning. These youth are typically the most likely to avoid the educational system.
- **Sexual activity and resulting parenthood:** Youth, who engage in sexual activity, often resulting in early parenthood, create a range of problems for themselves and their children.
- **Substance Abuse:** Youth consuming substances can lead to problems at school, cause or aggravate physical and mental health-related issues, promote poor peer relationships, and place stress on the family. Continued use can develop into lifelong issues such as substance dependence, chronic health problems, and social and financial consequences.
- **Behavioral Health:** By age 14 over half of the mental health conditions begin. 75% of mental health conditions develop by age 24. The normal personality and behavior changes of adolescence may mimic or mask symptoms of a mental health condition. Early engagement and support are crucial to improving outcomes and increasing the promise of recovery.

- Poverty: Poor families and children living in low-income are highly vulnerable, powerless, and afraid. They are dependent on others. Their rights and freedoms are restricted. They live without support, on the sidelines, watching economic growth and prosperity pass them by.

C. Juvenile Justice Action Strategy

Describe your county's juvenile justice action strategy. Include an explanation of your county's continuum of responses to juvenile crime and delinquency as well as a description of the approach used to ensure a collaborative and integrated approach for implementing a system of swift, certain, and graduated responses for at-risk youth and juvenile offenders.

The Juvenile Justice Plan adopted several strategies to address both prevention and intervention of what was, at that time, a growing juvenile delinquency problem within Merced County. By adopting these strategies and implementing numerous programs supported by YOBG and JJCPA funding sources, the trend of Juvenile Delinquency in Merced County has decreased significantly. With referrals to our agency being at its' lowest, we believe now is the time to enhance our focus on preventative programming for youth who are most vulnerable and at risk.

We work collaboratively with our Child Welfare partners to ensure that engagement is at the least restrictive level within the various systems. Protocols are established to staff cases according to the 241.1 Welfare & Institutions Code. Weekly meetings of the IPC ensure system partner programs and policies reflect a coordinated, integrated, and effective delivery of services for children, youth, and families. The IPC continues to provide guidance, advice, and input to a broad range of programs for children and families, as requested by public and private agencies.

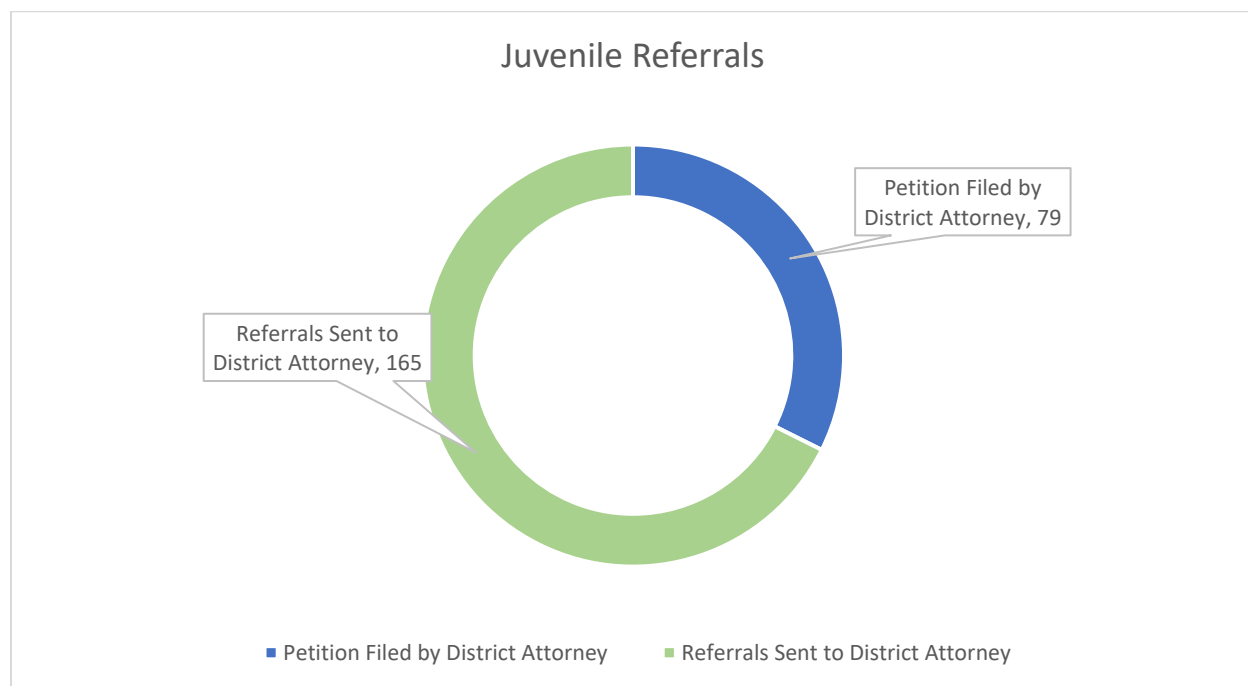
On January 1, 2020, Senate Bill 439 established a minimum age of juvenile court jurisdiction for status and delinquency offenses in California with exception of some serious offenses. The law specifies that if children ages eleven (11) and younger come into contact with law enforcement, law enforcement officials shall release those children to the care of their parent, guardian, or caregiver. This means that children ages 11 and younger may not be arrested, booked, incarcerated, or brought before a judge.

A protocol was created to guide county law enforcement, child welfare, and behavioral health agencies in interacting with children age eleven (11) and under who engage in delinquent or truant behavior, but do not fall within the juvenile court jurisdiction. The county has put forth

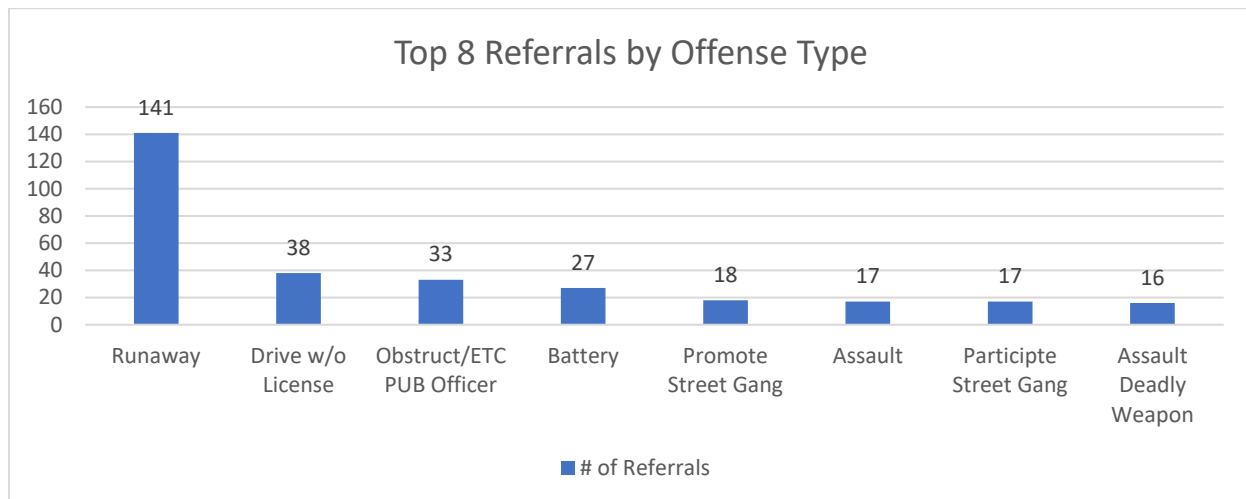
guidelines for determining the least restrictive responses that may be used instead of, or in addition to, the release of the youth to his or her parent, guardian, or caregiver.

Probation continues to be proactive in implementing evidence-based strategies, establishing strong collaborative relationships, and developing needed programs and interventions both within the department and with outside agencies. This approach has led to an incredible reduction in juvenile arrests, incarceration, and youth under correctional supervision. The youths that remain under supervision have significantly higher needs and Merced County has continued to look at strategies for addressing this population of youth. Probation's juvenile justice strategy is to continue to be evidence and strength-based, as well as collaborative and balanced in terms of offender accountability and rehabilitation.

The Juvenile Services Division oversees all juvenile matters referred to the Probation Department by other law enforcement agencies in Merced County. Probation staff process hundreds of referrals from law enforcement agencies for youth alleged to have committed law violations, those who are beyond parental control, curfew violators, truants, or runaways. In the following chart between the period of July 2020 to April 2021, the Probation Department had forwarded 165 referrals to the Merced County District Attorney's Office for review and 79 additional 79 referrals where a petition was filed with the juvenile court.



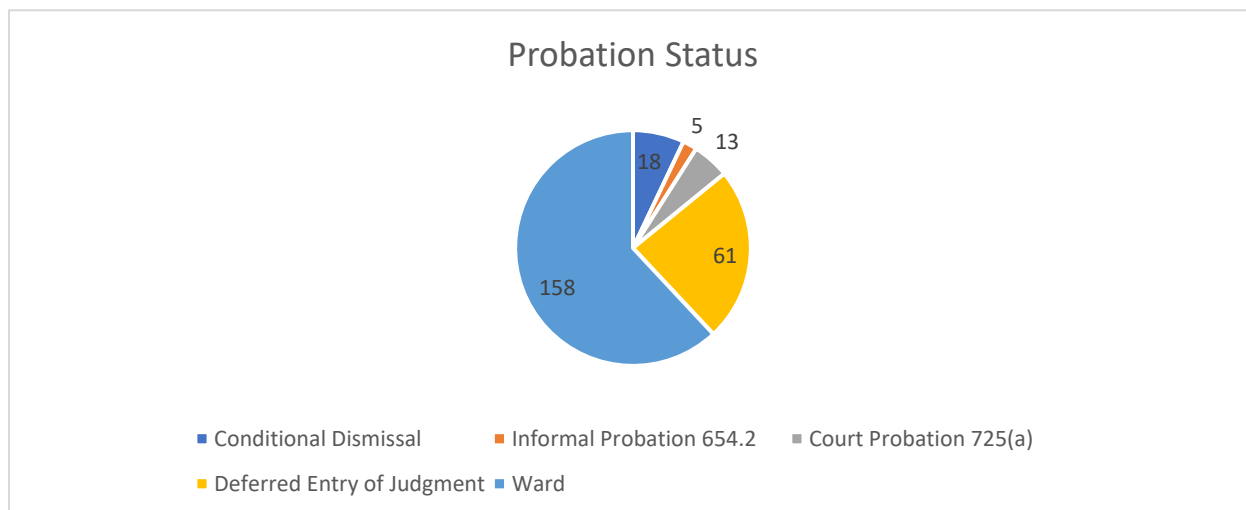
In the following chart between the period of July 2020 to April 2021, the Probation Department identified the top 8 received referrals by offense type.



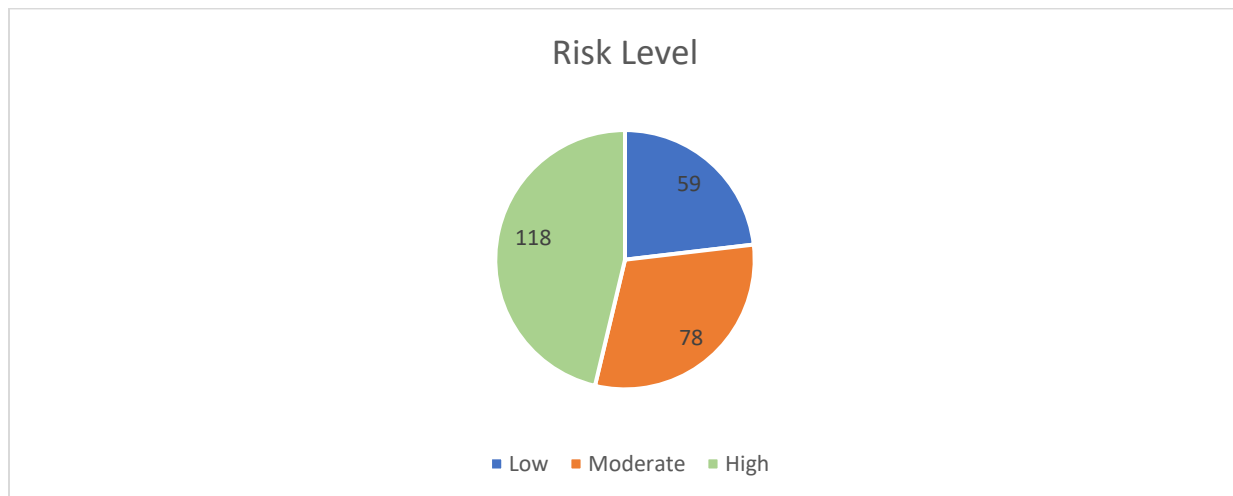
In a review of the data presented above, Probation received one hundred and forty-one (141) referrals for Runaway. Youth who run away face new problems like not having money, food to eat, a safe place to sleep, or anyone to look out for them. Youth with no home and no money become desperate, doing anything to meet their basic needs. Because of this, they often find themselves in risky situations that would be frightening, even for adults.

As previously mentioned, the creation of the Early Intervention Officer was to target this at-risk population. The EIO provides prevention, early intervention, and diversion services and applies constructive evidence-based interventions to hold the youth accountable for inappropriate negative and criminal behavior, as well as address the criminogenic needs of the youth when possible.

In the following chart between the period of July 2020 to April 2021, the Probation Department had youth under supervision (the totals below were calculated on a daily average).



Probation has adopted the use of detailed assessments of all juvenile referrals to help categorize the level of supervision warranted and to provide targeted interventions to address the specific criminogenic needs of youth. In the following chart between the period of July 2020 to April 2021, the Probation Department identified the average amount of cases assessed at a specific level. On average, there are 118 youth assessed as High Risk, 78 youth assessed as Moderate Risk, and 59 youth assessed as Low Risk.



To ensure an integrated approach for a system of swift, certain, and graduated responses for youth, the Probation Department utilizes a “Graduated Positive Response Grid” for an incentive-based approach and a “Graduated Response Grid” for redirecting and encouraging behavior change. The Graduated Positive Response Grid provides a continuum of motivational incentives to achieve desired behaviors and decrease undesirable behaviors for youth under supervision to the extent attainable. For a graduated positive response system to be effective in modifying behavior, probation must adhere to certainty, celerity, and magnitude.

| DESIRED BEHAVIOR | LOW LEVEL | DESIRED BEHAVIOR | MODERATE LEVEL | DESIRED BEHAVIOR | HIGH LEVEL | DESIRED BEHAVIOR |
|---------------------|---|---------------------|--|---------------------|---|---------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adhering to Curfew Keeping Appointments Enrolled in Required Programs Enrolled in School Improved Family Relationships Modeling Pro-Social Skills Engaged in Physical Activities Improved Hygiene Arranging Own Transportation Positive Collateral Contacts/Reports Making good choices Keeping Program Appointments Attending Court Hearings | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean drug/alcohol test Improved School Attendance Program Attendance/Participation New Pro-Social Activity Making Restitution/Fine Payment Identifying Own Trigger(s) Active Participation in Case Planning Positive Court Review Association with Pro-Social Peers Demonstrates Effective Coping Skills Self-referral to Program Applying for Gainful Employment Reduction in Risk Level(s) Completing Registration Requirement Taking Prescription Medication Display Sincere Appreciation for Others Improved Grades | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing Gainful Employment Completing a Program Secure & Maintain Housing Completion of Case Plan Goal/Objective Gang Tattoo Removal Membership in Pro-Social Organization Self-sufficiency Obtain High School Diploma/GED Obtain Driver's License Six Months of Sobriety Payment of Restitution/Fines in Full Disassociation with Anti-Social Peers Leadership Role in a Probation Program Acting as Peer Mentor | |
| SUGGESTED RESPONSES | LOW LEVEL | SUGGESTED RESPONSES | MODERATE LEVEL | SUGGESTED RESPONSES | HIGH LEVEL | SUGGESTED RESPONSES |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal Positive Praise/Reinforcement E-mail/Text Message Affirmation Snacks Drinks Achievement Coin Note Card with Positive Message Bus Tokens | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any Low-Level Response Bus Pass Five/ Seven Dollar Gift Card(s) Decreased Reporting Requirement Decreased Drug/Alcohol Testing Positive Report to Court/Judge (Ex-Parte) Reduced Level of Supervision | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any Low- or Moderate-Level Response Certificate of Completion Recommendation to Modify Term/Condition of Probation Ten Dollar Gift Card (s) Early Termination of Probation | |

To reduce violations, Probation utilizes a “Graduated Response Grid” to bring more uniformity and objectivity to the Probation Officer's response to a client's behavior. The implementation of evidence-based responses to violations of probation enhances community safety and promotes behavior change. It is also important to recognize and acknowledge the signs of progress and to encourage youth toward greater compliance and positive life accomplishments.

| | PROBATION VIOLATION | | |
|---------------|---|--|---|
| | MINOR VIOLATIONS | INTERMEDIATE VIOLATIONS | SERIOUS VIOLATIONS |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truancy (2 days of varied unexcused absences w/in 1 mo.) • School Disruption resulting in on campus suspension/detention • Curfew Violation (2 or less within 1 mo.) • Failure to Keep Appointments/Maintain Contact with DPO (whereabouts known) • Leaving Home Without Permission for less than 24hrs (1 time w/in 1 mo.) • Leaving County Without Permission (1 time w/in mo. – whereabouts known) • Positive Drug Screen or Admission (marijuana), Alcohol Use/Possession, Tobacco Use/Possession (1 time w/in 1 mo.) • Traffic Infraction • Failure to Attend Court Ordered Programming (2 or less times w/in 1 month) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple (3 or more) minor violations w/in 30 days • Truancy (3-5 days of varied unexcused absences w/in 1 mo.) • School Disruption resulting in off campus suspension • Curfew Violation (3-4 within 1 mo.) • Leaving Home Without Permission for less than 24hrs (2 times w/in 1 mo.) • Positive Drug Screen or Admission (marijuana), Alcohol use or Possession, Tobacco use or possession (2 w/in 3 months) • Association with Restricted Persons and/or Wards • Entering Prohibited Places • Arrest for Non-Violent Misdemeanor • Failure to Attend Court Ordered Programming (4 or less times w/in 2 mo.) • Failure to Attend Court Ordered Counseling (1-time w/in 1 mo.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple (3 or more) intermediate violations w/in 30 days • School Expulsion • Leaving Home Without Permission for more than 48hrs (whereabouts unknown) • Positive Drug Screen or Admission for any substance other than marijuana • Violate no Contact Order - Victim • Association with Gang Members and/or Co-defendants, Felons/Ex-Felons • Arrest for Violent Misdemeanor or any Felony • Leaving Court Ordered Placement • Refusal to Test • Tamper with GPS Device/Equipment • Tamper with Drug Test • Leave state/county w/o permission (Whereabouts Unknown) |
| | RESPONSE FOR MINOR VIOLATIONS | RESPONSE FOR INTERMEDIATE VIOLATIONS | RESPONSE FOR SERIOUS VIOLATIONS |
| LOW RISK | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal Reprimand • Letter of Apology • Writing Assignment on Condition Violated • Essay, Book Report or Thinking Report • Home Based Chores (up to 7 days) • Loss of Home-based Privileges (up to 7 days) • Restriction on Curfew and/or Association(s) (Up to 7 days) • Community Service (up to 8 hrs.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any minor level sanction(s) • Meeting with Youth/Parent/School (CFT) • Referral to MH/RAFT counseling • Referral to Breaking Barriers (Westside) • Increased reporting (in person or by phone) • Community Service (up to 16 hours) • Increase Drug/Alcohol Testing • Recommend modification of terms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any minor or intermediate level sanction(s) • Referral to WRAP Services • Restrictions on Curfew/Location(s)/ Association(s) (up to 14 days) • BCA Home Commitment Level II • Increase Supervision Level • Community Service (up to 40 hours) • Home-Based Chores (up to 14 days) • Loss of Home-Based Privileges (up to 14 days) |
| Moderate Risk | RESPONSE FOR MINOR VIOLATIONS | RESPONSE FOR INTERMEDIATE VIOLATIONS | RESPONSE FOR SERIOUS VIOLATIONS |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal Reprimand • Meeting with Parent/Youth/School (CFT) • Essay, Book Report or Thinking Report • Home-Based Chores (up to 7 days) • Loss of Home-Based Privileges (up to 7 days) • Increased Reporting (by phone or in person) • Restrictions on Curfew and/or Associations (up to 7 days) • Community Service (up to 16 hours) • Increase Drug/Alcohol Testing • Recommend modification of terms • Referral to MH/RAFT counseling • Referral to Breaking Barriers (Westside) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any minor level sanction(s) • Home-Based Chores (up to 14 days) • Loss of Home-Based Privileges (14 days) • Restrictions on Curfew and Association (up to 14 days) • Community Service (up to 24 hours) • BCA Home Commitment Level II • Increase Supervision Level • Referral to WRAP Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any minor or intermediate level sanction(s) • Community Service (up to 40 hours) • BCA Home Commitment Level III • Increase Supervision Level • Detention (Requires SPO Approval) • Referral to L.I.N.K. (Eastside of County) |
| High Risk | RESPONSE FOR MINOR VIOLATIONS | RESPONSE FOR INTERMEDIATE VIOLATIONS | RESPONSE FOR SERIOUS VIOLATIONS |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal Reprimand • Home Based Chores (up to 14 days) • Loss of Home-Based Privileges (up to 14 days) • Restriction on Curfew and/or Association(s) (up to 14 days) • Essay, Book Report or Thinking Report • Increase Reporting (by phone or in person) • Community Service (up to 24 hours) • BCA Home Commitment Level II • Increase Drug/Alcohol testing • Recommend modification of terms • Referral to MH/RAFT counseling • Referral to Breaking Barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any minor level sanction(s) • Community Service (up to 40 hours) • BCA Home Commitment Level III • Referral to WRAP Services • Home Based Chores (up to 30 days) • Loss of Home-Based Privileges (up to 30 days) • Restriction on Curfew and/or Association(s) (up to 30 days) • Referral to L.I.N.K. (Eastside of County) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any minor or intermediate level sanction(s) • Detention (Requires SPO Approval) |

As a result of various interventions, Merced County has seen the level of out-of-home residential placements drop significantly. Increased and better-coordinated services, both in

the community and in the Juvenile Facility, have resulted in lowered populations of youth on formal probation and reduced numbers of youth requiring detention.

Probation intends to utilize all of the programming and services funded through the YOBG in coordination with the services provided through JJCPA to provide supervision and rehabilitative services to realigned youth.

Iris Garrett Juvenile Justice Correctional Complex

The juvenile facility continues to provide youth with the Behavioral Management System (BMS) that promotes positive behavior by encouraging adherence to facility rules, providing pro-social and skill-building chores to willing residents, and recognizing hard work and good behavior with enhanced privileges. The BMS is a multi-level system designed to increase desired behaviors through reinforcements and decrease unwanted behaviors through a menu of appropriate sanctions. The system is designed around the principle of effective interventions and follows best practice guidelines of effective reinforcement and sanctioning behavior.

The BMS is designed on several principles of effective reinforcement/sanction, relying especially on two of the primary principles: immediacy and consistency. The BMS provides youth and staff with the ability to reinforce and sanction behavior timely, while also providing opportunities to reinforce long-term positive change. The BMS is comprised of a three-tiered system that is designed to address immediate, short-term, and long-term behavior.

D. Comprehensive Plan Revisions

Describe how your Plan has been updated for this year.

No Updates

If your Plan has not been updated this year, explain why no changes to your plan are necessary.

In 2020, the Probation Department took great strides to update our comprehensive plan to make it more robust and address identified areas of need. The following programs/services were implemented; Early Intervention Officer, Probation Assistant (PA) Supervising Low-Risk Caseload, Merced County Office of Education & Probation RISE to Higher Grounds Mobile Coffee Cart Program, RISE Program, Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT), and the Graffiti Abatement Program.

These changes were added to the plan last year and are still in place.

Part II. Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) – Government Code Section 30061(b)(4))

A. Information Sharing and Data

Describe your information systems and their ability to facilitate the sharing of data across agencies within your county. Describe the data obtained through these systems and how those data are used to measure the success of juvenile justice programs and strategies.

Probation currently utilizes a web-based SaaS (software as a service) solution that enables the department to coordinate, communicate, record, and track each step of a client's supervision process. Built-in features allow for streamlined client management, while multiple layers of security provide system protection at a centralized data center, application, and user levels that is Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) compliant and meets Amazon GovCloud requirements.

The system allows for full case monitoring and reporting capabilities for both adult and juvenile clients. Additionally, the system was developed with institution management in mind. The system is scalable and flexible that allows for tracking, recording, moving, and reporting seamlessly. Moreover, the system allows for:

- Integrated forms generation
- Document management
- Reduce missed events by sending automatic appointment reminders
- Integration with 3rd party assessment providers
- Reports generation (Reports can be shared with agencies within the County)

B. Juvenile Justice Coordinating Councils

Does your county have a fully constituted Juvenile Justice Council (JJCC) as Prescribed by Welfare & Institutions Code 749.22?

Yes

If no, please explain what vacancies exist on your JJCC, when those vacancies began, and your plan for filling them.

C. Funded Programs, Strategies, and/or System Enhancements

Describe each program, strategy, and/or system enhancement that will be supported with funding from JJPCA, identifying anything that is co-funded with Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG) money.

JJCC Funded Program, Strategy and/or System Enhancement

Program Name:

Juvenile Field Supervision Services

Evidence Upon Which It Is Based:

The officers assigned to the Juvenile Field Supervision Services Unit utilize the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) to determine what level of supervision a youth will receive. Supervision by risk level is a fundamental principle of evidence-based supervision that is supported by extensive research. Moreover, Probation utilizes a Response Matrix to bring more uniformity and objectivity to the Probation Officer's response to a client's behavior.

Description:

Since the inception of the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA), the Merced County Probation Department has utilized the allocation for school-based supervision. The initial focus was to supervise juvenile probationers and provide prevention and intervention services to other students who exhibit at-risk behaviors such as truancy, tardiness, and poor academics. Over time, the various school districts evolved the utilization of the deputy probation officers more for campus security, rather than utilizing evidence-based approaches for addressing youth behavior.

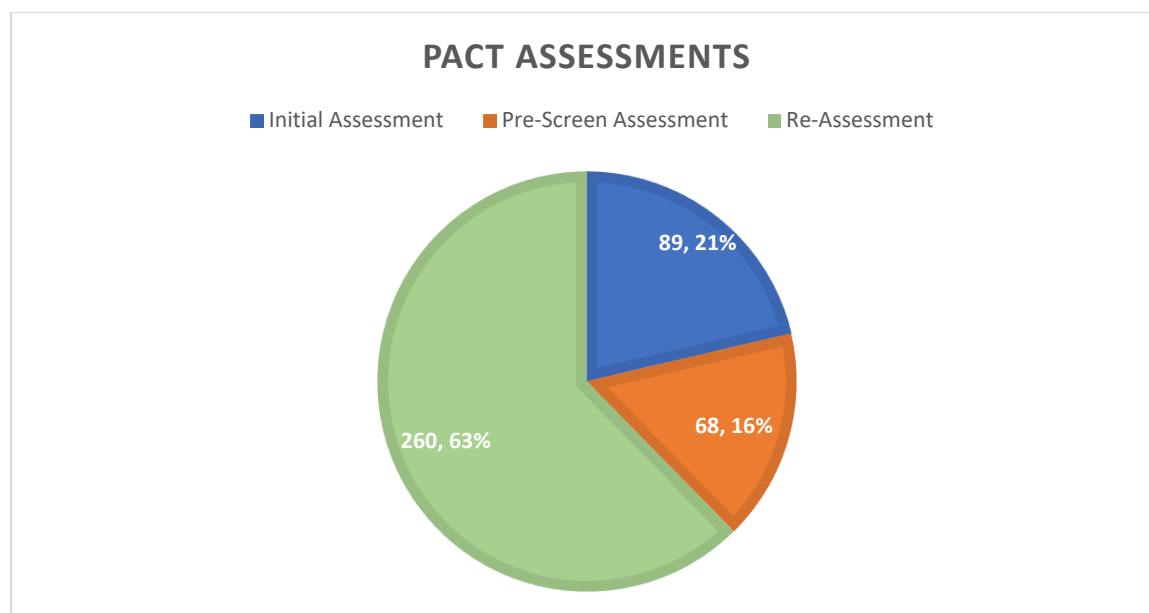
In 2013, the Merced County Probation Department presented a modification to employ a three-pronged approach to addressing juvenile delinquency: 1. Caseload reduction; 2. Assign minors to caseloads based on risk and need; 3. Provide cognitive behavioral services to address dynamic needs. First, Probation implemented evidence-based supervision practices. Professionals recognized for identifying these practices, including the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), recommend minor to staff ratios of between 15 and 50:1. APPA's 2006 publication, *Caseload Standards for Probation and Parole*, was authored by Bill Burrell, Associate Professor, Temple University. Burrell recommends 15:1 ratios for highest risk, 30:1 for moderate to high, 100:1 for low, and no supervision for lowest (administrative supervision in those cases).

In 2013, deputy probation officers supervised between 60 and 75 youth. Caseload assignment did not distinguish between the level of risk or offense nor are the assignments offender-need specific. The timing for the modification was perfect for the implementation of the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT). According to the probation department's vendor: "The PACT identifies not only the areas (domains) in which the juvenile is most at risk but just as importantly, those in which he or she has strengths (protective factors) which can be built upon to help turn the youth's life around. Risk and protective factors in the instrument include both static and dynamic characteristics. The benefit of measuring both factors and characteristics is that a juvenile justice professional is better able to match a child's current needs with the

appropriate programs and services. The comprehensive assessment instrument measures a youth's risk and protective factors in the following 12 domains: Criminal History, School, Use of Free Time, Employment, Relationships, Family, Living Arrangements, Alcohol and Drugs, Mental Health, Attitudes/Behaviors, Aggression, and Skills. Assessment of criminogenic risk factors and treatment directed toward changing dynamic characteristics provides the best chance of reducing recidivism.”

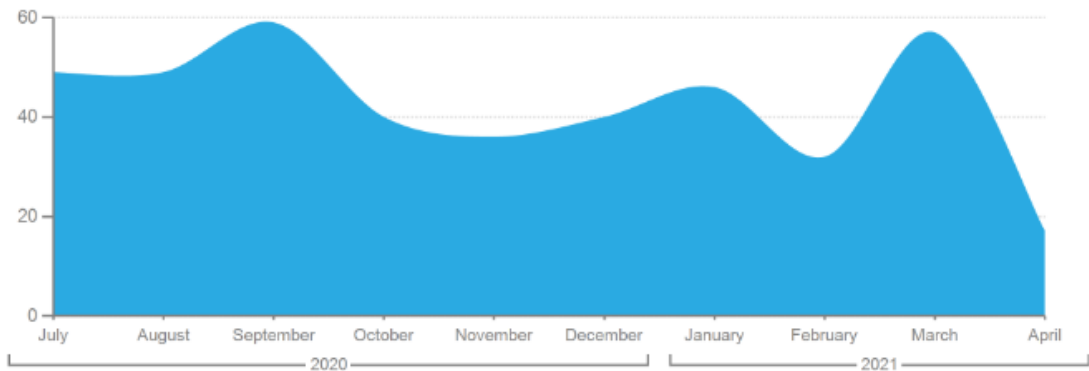
All youth had a PACT assessment completed and were assigned to supervision caseloads based on their level to re-offend and based on their specific needs. Each of the officers currently funded by JJCPA was assigned workspaces within the confines of the juvenile probation office, rather than being stationed solely on school campuses. The officers continue to have a presence on various campuses; however, the focus will be more on providing proven intervention services rather than serving as a school resource and truancy officers.

Between the period of July 2020 and April 2021, the Probation Department completed a total of 260 Re-Assessments, 89 Initial Assessments, 68 Pre-Screen Assessments, and 5 Final Assessments for a total of 425 Assessments (PACT Assessments Chart). On average, staff completed 40 assessments per month with an average completion time of 20 to 30 minutes (Count Over Time Chart).



Count over Time

COUNT OF COMPLETED ASSESSMENTS



The Juvenile Field Services Unit has a dedicated standards manual that serves as a description of the assignments, standards, and procedures unique to the unit. The manual is not intended to cover every specific detail or duty assignment; however, serves as a guide to complement the Probation Department Policy Manual and the Human Resources Rules and Regulations Manual.

Currently, the Juvenile Field Services Unit consists of seven (7) Deputy Probation Officers and one (1) Supervising Probation Officer who works in partnership with various law enforcement and community service agencies in the supervision of high-risk and moderate-risk youth. As previously mentioned, our plan changed last year as all cases identified as being low-risk, in the Merced area, are now supervised by a Probation Assistant. The average caseload size is approximately 30 cases.

In summary, the modification to the Merced County Probation Department's JJCPA program has improved how we address rates of recidivism, incarceration, restitution, and community service, as well as continue to address school attendance and academic achievement.

JJCC Funded Program, Strategy and/or System Enhancement

Program Name:

Early Intervention Officer

Evidence Upon Which It Is Based:

Engaging in delinquent behavior can lead to drug use and dependency, dropping out of school, incarceration, adult criminal behavior, and injury. Early intervention and prevention of delinquent behavior can divert juveniles from the adverse consequences that can result from delinquency.

There are identified risk factors that increase a juvenile's likelihood to engage in delinquent behavior, although there is no single determinative risk factor. To counteract these risk factors, protective factors have also been identified to minimize a juvenile's likelihood to engage in delinquent behavior.

The four areas of risk factors are individual, family, peer, and school, and community. Individual risk factors include early antisocial behavior, poor cognitive development, hyperactivity, and emotional factors, such as mental health challenges. Family risk factors include poverty, maltreatment, family violence, divorce, parental psychopathology, familial antisocial behaviors, teenage parenthood, single-parent family, and large family size. Peer factors of association with deviant peers and peer rejection are identified as risk factors. School and community risk factors include failure to bond to school, poor academic performance, low academic aspirations, neighborhood disadvantage, disorganized neighborhoods, the concentration of delinquent peer groups, and access to weapons. Many of these risk factors overlap. In some cases, the existence of one risk factor contributes to the existence of another or others.

Generally, protective factors --such as positive school attendance, positive social orientation, or the ability to discuss problems with parents --are a buffer to minimize or moderate the effect of risk factors and their ability to bring about delinquent behavior. Protective factors seem to mitigate the influence of risk factors. Both risk and protective factors are discussed as part of delinquency prevention and intervention. Information for this section was taken from the National Conference of State of Legislatures (www.ncsl.org)

Description:

The Early Intervention Officer (EIO) provides prevention, early intervention, and diversion services to all areas of Merced County. The EIO targets at-risk, low-level youth cited out by a law enforcement agency or referred by school districts. The EIO seeks to apply constructive evidence-based interventions to hold the youth accountable for inappropriate and criminal behavior, as well as address the criminogenic needs of the youth when possible.

In a review of the data presented between the period of July 2020 to April 2021, Probation received one hundred and forty-one (141) referrals for Runaway. As previously mentioned, youth who run away face new problems like not having money, food to eat, a safe place to sleep, or anyone to look out for them. Youth with no home and no money become desperate, doing anything to meet their basic needs. Because of this, they often find themselves in high-risk situations. The Probation Department recognizes the nexus between running away and committing future crimes. Measuring and interpreting this data assist the Probation Department in making informed decisions regarding the dedication of resources in the attempt to flatten the curve.

The EIO is located at the Merced Main Office and is supervised by the Juvenile Intake/Investigations Supervising Probation Officer. The EIO is responsible for managing the Youth Accountability Board (YAB) program and ensuring appropriate youth are receiving a suitable level of services. The EIO provides community outreach and attempts to recruit volunteers to serve as Social Investigators and panel members. The EIO is the point of contact for our partnership with the Merced County District Attorneys Office Supporting Attendance and Families through Education (S.A.F.E.) Program. All Truancy referrals are assigned to the EIO for intake and investigation. The EIO works collaboratively with the respective school district that generated the truancy referral.

The EIO is the point of contact for all school districts within the County of Merced. It will be the responsibility of the EIO to make regular contact with school districts and school sites to establish and build rapport. The EIO is responsible for providing gang and drug abuse awareness presentations to both parents and teachers identifying early warning signs; to include, vape pen usage to both elementary and middle schools within the county. Additionally, the EIO will act as the primary representative of the Department to participate in School Attendance Review Boards (SARB).

The EIO will be charged with the responsibility of creating a county-wide lunch program for all law enforcement agencies (if they chose to participate) for youth who are struggling at school and need a pro-social individual that may assist them in making better choices with the ultimate goal of fostering a positive rapport with the officer. The EIO will participate in and act as a representative of the Department for monthly (or as needed) Supporting Ongoing Services (S.O.S.) meetings. The EIO will participate in and act as a representative and primary presenter for the Re-Direct Program.

JJCC Funded Program, Strategy and/or System Enhancement

Program Name:

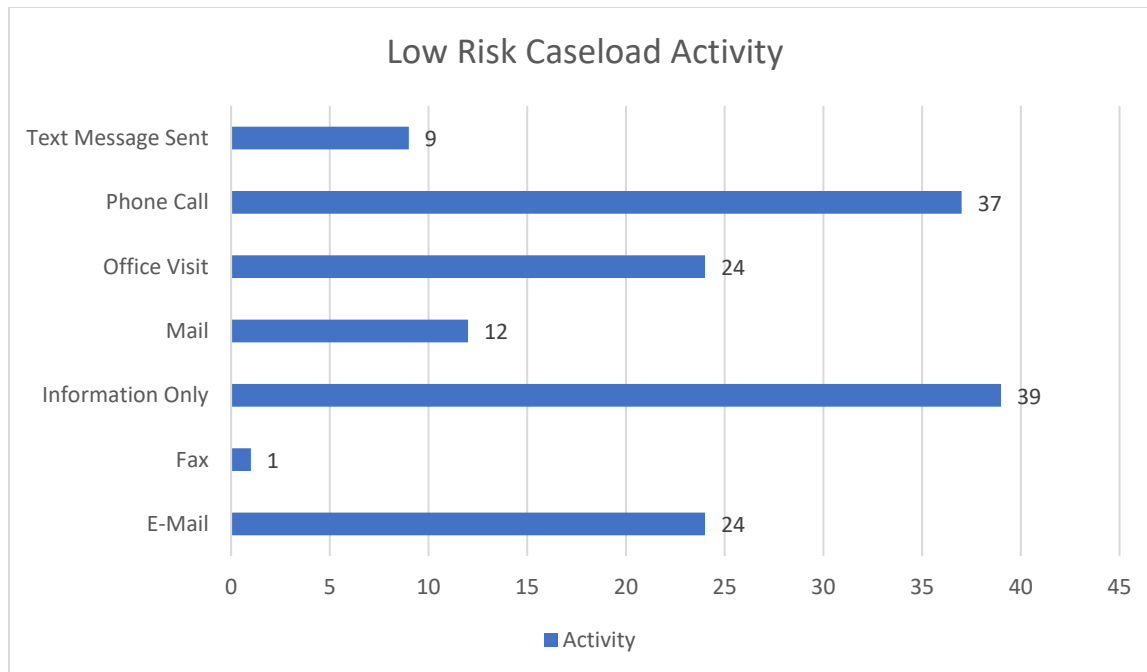
Probation Assistant (PA) Supervising Low-Risk Caseload

Evidence Upon Which It Is Based:

Research has shown that focusing time, attention, and resources on low-risk youth has negligible impacts on recidivism. Intensive supervision of these youth can produce negative consequences: Low-risk youth supervised at higher levels are more likely to re-offend compared to low-risk youth who are placed under supervision programs involving minimal levels of contacts, treatment, monitoring, etc. (Andrews, Bonta & Hoge, 1990; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2004; Lowenkamp, Holsinger, & Latessa, 2006; Lowenkamp, Flores, Holsinger, Makarios, & Latessa, 2010).

Description:

The agency sees the benefit of transitioning all low-risk youth to the direct supervision of a Probation Assistant (PA). The agency utilizes the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) to determine what level of supervision a youth will receive. Supervision by risk level is a fundamental principle of evidence-based supervision that is supported by extensive research. The assigned PA has met the expectation as outlined by the agency; to include, monthly contacts in the office or by phone, home visits (as needed and conducted by DPO's), monthly collateral contacts/resources referrals, monthly victim contact, and drug/alcohol testing and searches (as needed and conducted by DPO's). The following chart between July 2020 and April 2021 displays all activities conducted during the period.



Additionally, the PA will limit their supervision activities for low-risk youth to monitoring compliance with the conditions of release, if applicable, and respond appropriately to any changes in circumstances.

JJCC Funded Program, Strategy and/or System Enhancement

Program Name:

Merced County Office of Education & Probation RISE To Higher Grounds Mobile Coffee Cart Program

Evidence Upon Which It Is Based:

Years of research have revealed the key barriers that inhibit someone's ability to be successful upon re-entry, and that the process of re-entry should begin at day one of incarceration. While incarcerated, correctional staff and facility programs should strive to help youth acquire a pro-social worldview and positive community relationship, and overcome any existing substance abuse or mental health concerns. Once the client reenters society, their likelihood of becoming a contributing member of their community is dependent on whether they can secure meaningful employment, find a place to live and have the education and skills necessary to advance in life. A successful re-entry program helps youth overcome one or more of these barriers and collaborates with other community resources to supplement its program with other services.

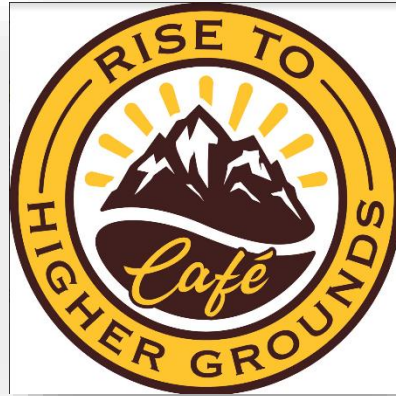
The RISE to Higher Grounds Mobile Coffee Cart program provides an opportunity for youth currently detained and completing an in-custody program, to learn skills related to customer service, handling cash, barista, merchandising, stocking and various other tasks oriented towards daily operational duties. The ultimate goal is to give youth practical work skills they can use once they leave and assist them with a smoother transition to the community if employment is no longer a barrier to success.

Description:

Youth participating in the Bear Creek Academy (BCA) Long Term Program (LT) or Youth Treatment Program (YTP) will be enrolled in the Merced County Regional Occupational Program (ROP) Culinary Essentials program. Participation in the program is based on behavior, current status within the BCA LT/YT program, and overall drive to partake in and contribute to the success of the program.

The program's instructor is a credentialed teacher who is a former restaurant owner/manager. The program is also supported by an Instructional Aide with foodservice experience. The youth are transported and supervised by the officer assigned to the in-custody portion of the BCA program. Once youth have learned the necessary culinary skills in the classroom/kitchen lab and have obtained their Food Handlers certification card, they can then utilize their skills in the mobile coffee trailer to gain hands-on culinary experience and customer service training through interaction with customers from the general public. The mobile coffee trailer and truck have been purchased; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the delivery has been significantly delayed.

The trailer will first be operated at the classroom/kitchen site. After that, a route will be established to serve county agencies as well as other sites to increase youths' public interactions and sense of self-efficacy with culinary skills and customer service. Income from sales would be used to replenish the coffee supplies. Thus, the supply expense budget should decrease over time as the cart/trailer becomes self-sustaining. Youth participating in the program will be under the direct supervision of the BCA Officer at all times.



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, program implementation was delayed until March 9, 2021. The program is currently providing service for two youth with the protentional of expansion soon.





Once students complete the culinary program and transition out of Juvenile Facility, they will be enrolled in the RISE program.

JJCC Funded Program, Strategy and/or System Enhancement

Program Name:

RISE Program

Evidence Upon Which It Is Based:

Oftentimes young people make mistakes whether due to socio-economic circumstances, immaturity, lack of adult mentor guidance, or simple peer pressure. Sadly, most of them could have done something better if given the chance to prove themselves. The most significant challenge a client experiences after being released from a juvenile correctional facility, jail, or prison is finding a job. Although they have already paid their debt to society, employers understandably are somewhat concerned about employing a client as they will not pass an employment background check and thus, if hired makes the employer a target for a negligent hiring lawsuit in the event of a mishap.

Description:

The RISE Program provides participants with employability skills training followed by paid work experience in a culinary establishment. With their culinary training, food handlers certification card, experience in the mobile coffee trailer, and work experience with a local culinary establishment, participants will be prepared for employment in the local culinary labor market.

Program Sequence:

- Participants attend two weeks of Employability Skills Training facilitated by a credentialed Career Technical Education teacher.
- The training is held off-campus at the Merced County Office of Education administration complex to assist students with the transition from school to a sheltered work environment before placing them at local businesses for paid work experience.
- Upon completion of the two weeks of Employability Skills Training, students are placed in local businesses for up to 200 hours of paid work experience.

The following criteria were established for students to get into the RISE program:

- GPA 2.0 or better (required for a work permit)
- Right to work documents (original SS card; school ID)
- Age 16 or higher
- Progress with Probation requirements
- Has demonstrated a willingness to learn/improve
- Attendance (to be determined by school administration)

The following criteria were established for students to stay in the program:

- Successful completion of workshops
- 100% school attendance unless the absence is excused by the school administration
- Continue to progress with Probation requirements
- Appropriate behavior at school and on the job

The following measures were agreed upon to measure program effectiveness:

- Completion of the program
- GPA
- Behavior
- Attendance
- Recidivism
- Employment and job retention after the program
- Exit survey for employers

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, program implementation was delayed until February 11, 2021. The Probation Department has referred a total of fifteen (15) youth to the first cohort of the program. Currently, we have seven (7) youth actively participating in the program. Of the seven (7) youth, four (4) have secured employment through the following participating employers; Rancho San Miguel, H & W, Taco Bell, and 7-11. The remaining three (3) are slotted to secure gainful employment soon.

JJCC Funded Program, Strategy and/or System Enhancement

Program Name:

Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)

Evidence Upon Which It Is Based:

Moral reasoning is how people make decisions about what they should or should not do in a given situation. MRT® fosters moral development in treatment-resistant individuals. MRT® is an effective systematic, cognitive-behavioral approach that treats a wide range of issues including substance abuse, domestic violence, trauma, parenting, job skills, and other issues. The programs are implemented in groups utilizing workbooks directly targeting specific issues. MRT® has been shown to reduce recidivism, reduce criminal justice involvement, reduce substance abuse, increase housing stability and job retention, increase medication acceptance, increase treatment adherence, decrease hospitalization, enhance life purpose and raise motivation.

Description:

High and Moderate Risk Officers have received training in Moral Reconciliation Therapy - MRT®. Officers facilitate MRT® groups both at the L.I.N.K. program and at the Juvenile Facility. While at the Juvenile Facility, officers will be under the direction of the Probation Program Specialist (PPS). As previously mentioned, the PPS oversees facilitators and performs quality inspections to ensure youth are learning new skills and ensure fidelity to the program model.

Officers assigned to the Juvenile Field Services Unit attended MRT training in October and November of 2020. Officers began co-facilitating MRT classes with Peer Support Specialist in October 2020. Officers currently facilitate two (2) sessions a week on a scheduled rotation. To date, officers have facilitated over forty-five (45) MRT sessions.

JJCC Funded Program, Strategy and/or System Enhancement

Program Name:

Graffiti Abatement Program

Evident Upon Which It Is Based:

Per California Penal Code, graffiti is an act of vandalism. Our local government as most, see graffiti as a negative because it inhibits or detracts from the beautification of a local community. Graffiti often stigmatize a neighborhood or community through being labeled as a low socio-economic area. Indeed, this converts to suppressed housing prices and has strong correlations with local crime and gang activities. Considering the cost graffiti incurs on local communities, governments take the burden through removal. Graffiti is near impossible to eliminate, despite changes in legislation to increase the fine for committing such offenses. Graffiti abatement is a joint effort between the community, its public works division, the police department, community development, parks, recreation, and community services to eliminate graffiti vandalism.

Description:

The Graffiti Abatement Program focuses on hot spot areas frequently targeted by graffiti vandals. These hot spots are checked regularly, with the overall goal of removing graffiti as soon as possible. The Graffiti Abatement Program has a long history in the County of Merced. Youth that has been adjudicated for vandalism (graffiti) or those youth that need to learn the importance of not damaging personal or government property will have the opportunity of participating in the graffiti abatement program. Their participation will reduce local government costs while allowing youth to perform community service under the supervision of a Deputy Probation Officer.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program had a delayed started date of October 2020. To date, the program has run a total of thirteen (13) times, runs at a minimum of twice a month, and has serviced a majority of the unincorporated communities within the County. The program has provided participating youth an opportunity to complete community service hours. Both in custody and out-of-custody youth have been referred to and completed community service hours. One youth in particular housed at the Juvenile Facility completed well over twenty-five (25) hours of community service.



Part III. Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG) – (Welfare & Institutions Code Section 1961(a))

A. Strategy for Non-707(b) Offenders

Describe your county's overall strategy for dealing with non-707(b) youthful offenders who are not eligible for commitment to the Division of Juvenile Justice. Explain how this plan relates to or supports that strategy.

Probation operates the Bear Creek Academy (BCA) Camp Program. The BCA program consists of 30 beds dedicated to the Long Term and Youth Treatment Programs. The BCA programs are point-based with up to five phases, and depending on which program ordered, one to two years in length. Program elements include vocational education, alcohol and drug education, mental health counseling, cognitive and life skills development. The final phase of the program includes aftercare and re-entry services to effectively transition youth into the community. A re-entry plan is developed for each participant. Case management will be provided by an assigned probation officer, to ensure adherence to the re-entry plan.

The BCA Camp Program has a dedicated Peer Support Specialist (PSS) that is funded through YOBG. The PSS is a person with "lived experience" who has been trained to support youth housed at the Juvenile Facility. The PSS personal experience of challenges provides expertise that professional training cannot replicate. The PSS interviews and participates in educational and clinical settings to assist youth in the completion of forms. The PSS assists with outreach Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Social Services, and Probation staff in linking youth with resources and the appropriate level of care. The PSS completes assessments such as the PACT and works with the youth to complete institutional case plans. The PSS leads activity groups and prevocational groups in a program setting. For example, PSS and officers assigned to the Juvenile Field Services Unit began co-facilitating MRT classes in October 2020. Staff currently facilitate two (2) sessions a week on a scheduled rotation and have facilitated over forty-five (45) MRT sessions. Lastly, the PSS prepares routine reports and correspondence and maintains youth records.

Both the Officers assigned to the BCA Camp Program and PSS activity participates in Child and Family Team Meetings (CFT-M). A CFT-M is defined as "A group of individuals who are convened by the placing agency and who are engaged through a variety of team-based processes to identify the strengths and needs of the child or youth and his or her family, and to help achieve positive outcomes for safety, permanency, and well-being." The CFT-M is comprised of a network of care that shares the responsibility to assess, plan, intervene, monitor, and refine service delivery over time. During the CFT-M process, staff create an action plan and gather information needed to create realistic goals for the institutional case plan.

B. Regional Agreements

Describe any regional agreements or arrangements to be supported with YOBG funds.

N/A

C. Funded Programs, Placements, Services, Strategies and/or System Enhancements

Describe the programs, placements, services, strategies, and system enhancements to be funded through the YOBG program. Explain how they complement or coordinate with the programs, strategies, and system enhancements to be funded through the JJCPA program. For additional template pages, simply click the “copy template” box below.

YOBG Funded Program, Placement, Service, Strategy, and/or System Enhancement

Program Name:

Bear Creek Academy (BCA) Long Term and Youth Treatment Programs

Nature of Coordination with JJCPA:

All youth participating in the Long Term or Youth Treatment Programs will have a PACT assessment completed by the BCA Officer. That BCA Officer will utilize the Response Matrix in the attempt to bring more uniformity and objectivity to the Probation Officer's response to a youth's behavior. Moreover, the youth will be evaluated and referred to additional programming designed to address dynamic needs to modify less desirable behavior.

Description:

The Bear Creek Academy works with at-risk youth who have great potential to be productive citizens of the community. The academy is structured into five phases with an estimated length of one year (Long Term) to two years (Youth Treatment Program). For youth to complete the program, they have to complete a required amount of points (in custody portion) or time (aftercare portion) to pass each phase. Points received are based on an evaluation system, rating the youth's participation in the academy elements with an opportunity to earn up to 50 points a day. Additionally, youth will be required to participate in Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, participate in Bear Creek Academy review hearings both in custody and post custody and participate in the Learn. Inform. Network. Know. (L.I.N.K.) program (if found appropriate). The mission of the Bear Creek Academy is to strive to make positive changes in how youth committed to the academy think and behave to prepare them to return to their families, their community and live a delinquent-free life.

The Bear Creek Academy consists of two Deputy Probation Officers who are funded by YOBG. A Deputy Probation Officer is housed at the Juvenile Facility whose primary responsibility is to interface with youth participating in the in-custody portion of BCA. This officer is responsible for the transition of the youth back into the community and connecting them with the aftercare Deputy Probation Officer. Additionally, this officer also participates in the Review Board for youth assigned to the BCA Program. The Review Board consists of a Deputy Probation Officer, a Supervising Juvenile Institutions Officer, and a Program Manager. The group meets weekly to discuss and review all academy movements and disciplinary actions that resulted in a loss of points in the academy. The Review Board will convene a special hearing if the regular board meeting is not within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays.

The Bear Creek Academy has a dedicated Peer Support Specialist assigned who is funded by YOBG. The Peer Support Specialist provides support services to youth in the Criminal Justice system. This classification provides services directly related to assisting youth with access and provision of services. The Peer Support Specialist is under the general supervision of the Program Specialist. Duties of the Peer Support Specialist may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Interviews and participates in educational and clinical settings; assist youth to complete forms.
- Assists Probation staff in linking youth with resources and appropriate level of care.
- Leads activity groups and prevocational groups in a program setting.
- Identifies and utilizes appropriate community agencies for referral of youth.
- Prepares routine reports and correspondence and maintains youth records.
- Assists youth in various skills needed for craft activities and transport to various activities.
- Provides a therapeutic climate for youth by listening and socializing with them.

Officers assigned to the Juvenile Field Services Unit are responsible for conducting after-school mentoring via the L.I.N.K. program. The officers work with the Probation Program Specialist and Supervising Probation Officer in seeking out and coordinating local Community-Based Organizations that can provide informative discussions and training. The L.I.N.K. program is incentive-based. Youth earn a daily incentive as well as a weekly incentive for participating. If youth were to do a near-perfect program, it would take approximately four (4) months to complete the program. Youth must complete MRT to complete L.I.N.K. Also, youth are offered the opportunity to participate in the following programs:

- o Thinking for Change
- o Students With Aspiring Goals (S.W.A.G.)
- o Ace Overcomers
- o Aspiranet