

**VENTURA COUNTY
COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS PARTNERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
FY 2022-2023**

Assembly Bill 109 (AB 109), the Public Safety Realignment Act, went into effect on October 1, 2011. This historic legislation changed the definition of a felony offense in California; shifted housing for lower-level offenders from state prisons to local jails; transferred the supervision of designated parolees from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to the local probation agency as “post release community supervision” (PRCS) offenders; and created a new form of supervision called Mandatory Supervision (MS).

AB 109 requires each county’s “Community Corrections Partnership” (CCP) to complete a realignment implementation plan. Ventura County’s Public Safety Realignment Implementation Plan (Plan) was originally initiated on September 27, 2011, with the last significant update in 2015.

Below are some highlights since 2011:

- Re-Entry Court – established new court for realignment offenders.
- Evidence-Based Sentencing – Probation includes results of the Ohio Risk and Needs Assessment (ORAS) in probation and sentencing reports in an effort to provide justice partners with recommendations that may be utilized in Evidence-Based Sentencing.
- Electronic Monitoring Unit (EMU) program - expanded to alleviate rising jail population due to passage of AB 109.
- Pre-Trial Supervision program – alternative to custody for low-risk offenders pending criminal proceedings. In July 2019, Ventura County was selected to participate in the Judicial Council of California’s Pretrial Pilot Program.
- Development of community-based organizations (CBOs) - Interface Children & Family Services (Interface) has been funded to develop CBOs’ capacity to provide evidence-based services to AB 109 offenders.
- Core Connection programs – contracted with Interface to administer a unique program that subcontracts with other CBOs to provide four major evidence-based services.
- Definition of recidivism - expanded Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) definition to gauge more completely the county’s progress in reducing recidivism.
- In-custody evidence-based programs – created more services for inmates in jail.
- Mandatory supervision - coordinated with courts to assist in understanding the use of split sentences as an option to incarceration.
- Realignment Data Dashboard – created a public safety realignment data hub that culls pertinent data from VCIJIS and County AB 109 programs to display outcomes.
- EVALCORP Research and Consulting (EVALCORP) has provided evaluations and assessments of AB 109 programs. EVALCORP also produced a strategic

plan to provide a roadmap for implementing countywide realignment efforts for fiscal years 2019/20–2021/22.

- Participated in the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative with the California State Association of Counties to adapt state-specific evidence-based policymaking strategies.
- Clients that score moderate to very high risk on the ORAS are required to participate in Moral Reconation Therapy.
- Medicated Assisted Treatment (MAT) has been utilized in the jail for realignment clients.

AB 109 PROGRAMS, SERVICES AND HIGHLIGHTS FOR FY 2021-2022:

Sheriff's Office:

The Sheriff's Office continues to advance their efforts to provide innovative and effective programs and opportunities to the inmate population. Enhanced services have been created to address the dramatic increase in inmates with serious mental illness. The Sheriff's Office has maintained their Electronic Monitoring Unit (EMU) program, which moves low risk inmates out of custody, allowing greater flexibility in housing and accommodating inmates who are serving longer sentences. The EMU criteria has been adjusted to provide low-risk offenders nearing the end of their sentences an opportunity to seek employment and engage in out of custody programming, which will assist with their transition back to the community.

Since the onset of realignment, the Ventura County Jail has seen the population numbers of inmates with serious mental illnesses quadruple. There is an intense workload that comes with this specialized population, which can expose the Sheriff's Office to litigation if steps are not taken to provide enhanced services. To address the challenges that come with this population, custody staff have been reallocated to develop a specialized unit to work directly with these inmates. The Sheriff's Office also expanded Crisis Intervention Training to include custody staff.

EMU has been a successful alternative to incarceration for low-risk offenders. The program was established early in the realignment process and remained a small but effective program for several years. The Sheriff's Office EMU program seeks maintains an average population of 50-60 inmates. There is room to develop this program further in order to provide even greater flexibility within the jails.

The Sheriff's Office has restarted their Moral Recognition Therapy treatment program since COVID, with plans to expand. This program teaches and reinforces reasoned thinking and decision making while encouraging appropriate behavior and responses to stressors in society. Lastly, Wellpath has been contracted to provide this program to a larger population of inmates. Participation, success, and efficacy of the program are being monitored by an independent organization to ensure an evidence-based evaluation.

Probation Agency:

PRCS and MS offenders are actively supervised by deputy probation officers assigned to three regional offices (Oxnard, Ventura, and Simi Valley). Caseload sizes are capped at 40 - 55 offenders per deputy probation officer.

A comprehensive risk/needs assessment (ORAS) is completed on each offender to identify risk to reoffend in the community and identify criminogenic risk factors and other areas of need. The assessments are to be completed after release from prison for the PRCS offenders and provided to the Court at the time of sentencing for MS offenders to better inform the Court and assist in sentencing decision-making. In the field, deputy probation officers use the assessments to work with offenders to create, support and monitor individualized case plans targeting treatment to address moderate to high needs along with providing community supervision to ensure compliance with terms and conditions. A formalized graduated response and incentive system was implemented to enhance rewards for case plan successes and proportionate sanctions for non-compliance.

Deputy probation officers are part of a multi-disciplinary screening team which includes representatives from the Behavioral Health Department, Telecare, Alcohol and Drug Programs, and the Human Services Agency. Specialized assessments are completed, and referrals are made for mental health services and chemical dependency treatment. In addition, the Human Services Agency provides countywide employment and vocational training and services for those offenders appropriate for entering the workforce. This program, "Specialized Training and Employment Project for Success" (STEPS), has been recognized by the California State Association of Counties as an innovative approach to reduce recidivism among participants.

Each offender is monitored closely in the community by a "Probation/Police Supervision Team" which includes deputy probation officers and a police officer or deputy sheriff. These teams conduct unannounced home visits, employment checks, and community contacts with offenders to ensure compliance with community supervision terms. The Probation/Police Supervision Teams are knowledgeable in community resources and services, and complete referrals to these organizations as needed. The Probation Agency's law enforcement partners include the Ventura Police Department, Simi Valley Police Department, and the Sheriff's Office.

To better service offenders sentenced to MS, a deputy probation officer is assigned to the Todd Road and Main Jails to work closely with this population in custody. In this capacity, the Probation Agency conducts risk/needs assessments, works with the Sheriff's Office's Inmate Services to address risk factors through custody case plans, conducts cognitive behavioral interventions, and collaboratively works with offenders and their support systems to develop and implement re-entry case plans upon their release.

Furthering the use of best practices, the Probation Agency is part of the very successful Pre-trial Supervision program. As part of the program, the Probation Agency provides the court with evidence-based pre-trial risk assessments and meets with defendants

who are released on their own recognizance to monitor their compliance with the terms and conditions of their supervised release. This program is operational seven days a week.

The Probation Agency also provides Re-entry Court with a deputy probation officer as part of a multi-disciplinary team consisting of representatives from the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, and the Behavioral Health Department. The Re-entry Court program serves as an alternative to custody sanction for violations of probation. Services include intensive court supervision and additional case plan management.

This coming year, the Probation Agency will transition to take the responsibility of contracting directly with providers for the CORE services. This transition will free up additional funds used to pay ICFS to subcontract with the providers. Those funds can be used for additional direct services to our clients.

District Attorney's Office:

The District Attorney's realignment budget funds the equivalent of three full-time Deputy District Attorneys (DDA) and a portion of a Victim Advocate that is dedicated to handling cases affected by realignment. Core staffing remains assigned to handling Penal Code Section 1170(h) cases, parole hearings, victim services, and realignment programming. Direct supervisory, legal support and indirect costs associated with public safety realignment positions are no longer supported by AB 109 revenues, though the services and costs cannot be eliminated. The passage of AB 109 legislation dramatically changed sentencing, custody, supervision, and revocation options for well over 700 different kinds of felony offenses described within a number of different codes (i.e., Business and Professions Code, Health and Safety Code, Government Code, Penal Code, and others). These changes have necessitated increases in training, policy and procedure development and other increases in workload related to realignment's impact on criminal filings, shaping appropriate alternative sentencing and intervention programs, participating in parole revocation proceedings and expanded victims' services responsibilities.

In 2021, the District Attorney's Office reviewed more than 1,300 1170(h) cases submitted by law enforcement and litigated more than 560 of those cases. In 2022 to date, the office reviewed more than 1,250 1170(h) cases and litigated more than 710. The District Attorney's Office also participated in more than 300 parole and post release offender petitions in 2021 and 272 to date in 2022. In addition to the parole and probation revocation hearings, a DDA participates in several specialty courts, such as the Homeless Court, Mental Health Court and Veterans Court, whose aim is to facilitate rehabilitation among targeted populations. As an example, Veterans Court connects veterans to needed treatment and services, which may include mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, vocational rehabilitation, or other life skills services and programs. Lastly, the Victim Advocate performs responsibilities formerly performed by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, such as ensuring victims are notified of appeal status, providing victim support at revocation hearings, developing an adequate plan to collect restitution from defendants, and helping to develop plans to ensure compliance with Marsy's Law when offenders are released on home detention or other

alternative sentencing forums.

Public Defender:

The Public Defender's Office (PDO) realignment budget continues to include funding for three attorneys, two social workers, and one law clerk in order to absorb the impact of AB 109 on department operations. In addition to litigating AB 109 matters, the department also uses realignment funding to connect eligible clients to creative, non-jail treatment programs that promote rehabilitation and reduce recidivism. The Public Defender also continues to assist clients with re-entry into the community, further reducing the rate of recidivism.

Public Defender attorneys screen our PRCS, MS, and parole clients to identify those who would benefit from - and are willing to accept – treatment. The department's team of social workers then finds appropriate treatment programs at no cost to our clients. Once an appropriate program has been identified, and then approved by the justice partners, the Public Defender Social workers make arrangements for medication and treatment needs for release, the Attorneys make the necessary Court appearances, and the Public Defender Investigator staff transport clients from jail directly to the program. Often, clients are released early for purposes of treatment, reducing jail overhead costs by lowering the number of jail beds occupied. The Public Defender Attorneys appear on all program review court appearances and obtain necessary review documents for the Court.

- In 2021, our clients spent 2633 days in treatment in lieu of incarceration. In 2022, thus far they have spent 4142 days in treatment instead of incarceration. In 2018, it cost the county approximately \$139 a day to house an inmate, so in 2021 the savings to the county by having our clients in treatment was \$365, 987 and in 2022 it was \$575,738.
- In 2021, we transported 216 clients to various programs. Year to date in 2022, we have transported 213 clients.

In 2020, the shutdowns and closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced the number of available treatment programs, and the department struggled to find appropriate placements for clients during that year. In 2021 and 2022, however, we have connected more clients to programs than we did before the pandemic. The number of clients we have assisted in finding treatment during the past four years are below:

- 2019: 163 placements
- 2020: 82 placements
- 2021: 189 placements
- 2022 (as of December 2022): 195 placements

The Public Defender's Office continues to connect clients to specialty courts such as Homeless Court, Veteran's Court, Mental Health Court and Re-Entry Court, working in collaboration with our justice partners (Probation, District Attorney, and Behavioral Health) to find rehabilitative services that will assist clients in returning to their families

and their community. Homeless Court, for example, allows clients to reduce their court fines and fees by performing community service.

All AB109 clients including those on Mandatory Supervision, PRCS and Parole continue to be eligible for Re-Entry Court, another collaborative effort on the part of all justice partners to find appropriate evidence-based alternatives to incarceration. The goal is to ensure that clients are connected to appropriate services to address criminogenic issues so they can rejoin their families and the community and break the cycle of incarceration.

The Public Defender further operates a Fresh Start program which assists all clients clear their records after their participation in treatment or completion of supervision. This relief allows clients to obtain greater opportunities in employment, housing and schooling and contributes to the further decrease rates of recidivism.

Community Based Organizations:

The Core Connection team is a collaborative of community-based agencies with the shared goal of providing services to the AB109 population and their families in Ventura County. The mission of Core Connection is to remove barriers, increase awareness, and provide community support to individuals who have been incarcerated in order to promote successful reintegration and reduce recidivism.

In FY 2021-2022, the Core Connection team at Interface continued to function as the reentry coordination agency. Ongoing services include coordination of service referrals with the CBO reentry providers, serving as a liaison between CBOs and the Probation Agency, providing a quality assurance function for the subcontracted agencies and providing community capacity building around reentry issues. Contracts were renewed with existing providers selected to deliver Moral Reconciliation Therapy, Reentry Case Management, Restorative Justice Accountability Group, Inc. Counseling, Trauma Treatment Services, Sober Living and Specialized Treatment Services. Due to continued COVID-19 impacts, Restorative Justice services were never re-introduced in-custody. All services provided by the Core Connection Partnership continue to be available in English and Spanish. In FY 2021-2022 Core received 393 referrals (individual clients may have been referred or re-referred to more than one service). Core Connection service partners completed 138 new initial intakes, 142 intakes for previously active clients and 200 clients successfully complete services.

During FY 2021-2022, Core Connection offered several capacity-building events, forums, and trainings. These were held virtually for the service partners in order to call attention to issues and services that are important to the reentry community. Additional capacity building was provided virtually for probation officers, service providers as needed.

Core continues to host the County's Reentry Council. Meeting is held on the first Wednesday of every 2 months. Core attends and helps with Telecare Coordination Meeting. Telecare Coordination Meeting is scheduled for the second Thursday of every month. Core also participates as a member of the Reentry Court (RC) Team. Reentry Court is held weekly via Zoom on Tuesdays at 1pm. The purpose of our attendance is

to provide Core Client progress, provide service coordination, and to collectively provide recommendation to the court regarding RC cases.

Interface has developed an internal Training, Grants and Evaluation department, to prepare a structured monitoring and evaluation system for the Core Connection program to support data on outcomes for FY 2021-2022. The results of this evaluation will be utilized to inform service delivery and operation improvement.

Human Services Agency:

County of Ventura Human Services Agency (HSA) Adult Family Services (AFS) Department provides employment services via the Specialized Training and Employment Project for Success (STEPS) program. Referrals into the program are made directly by probation officers after they assess whether the client is an appropriate candidate for the program. Upon entering the STEPS program, clients complete an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) that assesses for job skills, career objectives, barriers to employment, and supportive services. The IEP is also used to develop an Individualized Service Plan (ISP) addressing his/her unique needs. In addition to being provided with job readiness (e.g., job application completion, resume completion, interview skills, etc.), job search, and job placement assistance, STEPS program participants are provided with assistance in meeting other basic needs so that they can secure a job (e.g., with clothing or medical care, as needed). STEPS program staff identify and build relationships with employers throughout the county to ensure successful job placement.

During FY 21-22, the STEPS program received 130 referrals and 80 referrals resulted in program enrollment. Forty participants were provided support services to address barriers and employment needs. In addition, 102 participants received cash incentives for achieving program benchmarks, such as job readiness workshop completion, employment attainment, 90-days of consecutive employment, and completion of employment portfolios. Eleven participants were served through on-the-job training, and 3 attended vocational training to enhance their employability skills. Sixty-Seven participants gained successful employment at an average wage of \$16.78 hour. As of November 2022, we received 68 referrals, 40 participants enrolled in the program, and 30 entered employment.

Behavioral Health Department:

For FY 2021-2022, Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) clinicians provided 283 total assessments for the AB 109 population and served 291 unique clients. To continue serving the mental health and substance use disorder treatment needs of the PRCS offenders, VCBH has three co-located clinicians with mental health and substance abuse assessment and treatment experience at the Probation Agency's regional sites. VCBH also can do in-custody assessments in cooperation with the Sheriff's Office. This interagency collaboration supports a one-stop evaluation and referral process. In addition to screening, triage, and assessment, the VCBH clinicians provide motivational interviewing, psychoeducation and support, referrals to appropriate services and supports, care coordination, and follow-up.

For substance use treatment services, in addition to the six county-operated clinics, VCBH contracts with Alternative Action Programs (AAP), HealthRIGHT 360, Tarzana Treatment Centers, Aegis Treatment Centers, and Western Pacific Med Corp. Alternative Action Programs provides population specific, evidence-based outpatient treatment in Oxnard, Ventura, Simi Valley, and in-custody at Todd Road Jail. All outpatient VCBH and AAP services include individualized assessment, treatment planning, group and individual counseling, medication assisted treatment (MAT), and Recovery Services. Both HealthRIGHT 360 and Tarzana Treatment Centers provide withdrawal management (detox), and three levels of acute stabilization and residential services (Clinically Managed Low-Intensity, Clinically Managed Population-Specific High-Intensity, and Clinically Managed High-Intensity) for clients meeting medical necessity. Aegis Treatment Centers and Western Pacific Med Corp provide medication-based opioid/narcotic treatment for opioid use disorder. During FY 2021-2022, 1,625 unique clients received NTP services at Aegis or Western Pacific. During FY 2021-2022 a total of 3,920 unique clients were served throughout the entire VCBH Substance Use Services Network.

For mental health treatment services, VCBH contracts with Telecare. Telecare provides a two-tiered program with a capacity to treat up to 45 AB 109 clients. Mental Health services are provided in accordance with the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) model. Behavioral Health continues to be committed to treating individuals in the least restrictive setting possible; however, some funding is available for those who may require a higher level of care.

Local Law Enforcement:

A balanced approach with this population has been most effective in reducing recidivism, targeting short-term (length of supervision) prevention and suppression efforts and long-term behavioral change through evidence-based practices, assessments, and treatment. The partnership between local law enforcement and the Probation Agency allows agencies to timely share and distribute critical information, work together in the field to enforce terms of supervision, and track and maintain contact with offenders allowing for enhanced community monitoring and targeted treatment referrals.

The partnership between the Probation Agency, the Sheriff's Office and the cities of Oxnard, Ventura, and Simi Valley have been strong and successful since realignment. One law enforcement officer from the Sheriff's Office, Ventura and Simi Valley is embedded with the corresponding probation field units. Absent this direct team approach, a greater burden would be placed on both the Probation Agency and local law enforcement to obtain information on offenders and coordinate resources in the community. Continued success of this partnership is a vital part of maintaining the prevention/suppression strategy within the desired balanced approach to supervision.

EVALUATION OF AB 109 PROGRAMS:

On behalf of the Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) the Probation Agency contracted with EVALCORP Research and Consulting (EVALCORP) to develop a revised Strategic Plan for the CCP in order to provide a roadmap for implementing countywide realignment efforts for FYs 2019/20–2021/22. The Strategic Plan was finalized in July 2019 and provides an overview of the county’s AB 109 program’s assets and gaps. The CCP assembled an “Exploratory Committee” made up of representatives from the partnering agencies. The Exploratory Committee was tasked with reviewing AB 109 programs and their efficacy utilizing the Strategic Plan and pending analyses from EVALCORP on recidivism of subpopulations and services impacts.

In December 2019, EVALCORP produced the analysis by subpopulation and cohort groups from FY 2011/2012 to 2015/2016. The analysis concluded that 56% (n = 1,828) of offenders across the three offender subpopulations (PRCS, MS and jail only) recidivated within three years of release from custody; 77% of the new arrests were misdemeanor level offenses; and 22% were felonies. Of these offenses, an average of 43% were for drug offenses across subpopulations.

In February 2021, EVALCORP presented their report on AB109 Service and Recidivism Findings to the CCP. Since the start of realignment through to June 2019, a total of 2,456 PROs and 900 MS clients have received or been referred for services. Mental Health Services were provided to 11% of the PROs and 10% of the MS clients. The primary mental health diagnosis was mood disorder, followed by psychotic and anxiety disorders. Of those referred for mental health services, 66% of the PROs and 63% of the MS clients completed services. There was a 52% recidivism rate among those who did not receive any mental health services. The recidivism rate for clients who completed substance abuse treatment was 46%, while those that did not complete treatment recidivated at 74%. Those clients that participated in the STEPS program had a 47% recidivism rate. The recidivism rate for clients that completed CORE was 38%.

In August 2021, the Budget and Exploratory Subcommittees were merged into a new Program Review and Development Subcommittee. This subcommittee will review and evaluate programming and services for clients, formulate the budgets for the fiscal year, and make recommendations on how to efficiently utilize AB109 funding.

Through implementation of the client survey and focus groups, AB 109 client participation in services and perceptions of services while on AB 109 supervision were conducted and assessed by Evalcorp. Below is a summary of the findings.

Services

Nearly 4 in 5 respondents (79%) reported participating in one or more community-based service(s) at the time the survey was conducted. Most of the AB 109 Client Survey respondents think highly of the community-based services in which they participated with over half indicating that the following services were “Very Helpful”: transitional living; mental health treatment; employment services; substance abuse treatment; case management; and trauma services. Among respondents who participate in services, most indicated the services that they participated in met their cultural and language

needs (71%) and/or gender identity needs (80%). The highest percentage of clients who are not participating in any services are those who have been on probation less than 3 months, indicating greater recruitment efforts should be made for this group.

Needs

Some requests were made through the open-ended items on the survey and the focus groups including adjusting the length of community supervision and community-based services, and attending substance use disorder treatment prior to incarceration. When survey respondents were asked what other community-based services they desired, nearly half requested services to help address basic needs (e.g., housing assistance, transportation vouchers, hygiene products, etc.). Nearly 1 in 3 respondents requested additional services to help address issues around substance use disorders.

Experiences with Deputy Probation Officers

There was an overwhelmingly positive perception of survey respondents' Deputy Probation Officers (DPOs). Compliments and encouraging feedback about the probation department were evident throughout many of the write-in response options included in the survey and the responses from focus group participants.

Additionally, Evalcorp conducted an analysis of system level outcomes stemming from Realignment efforts from FY 11/12 through FY 20/21. The total AB109 Population (PRCS, 1170(h)-MS, and 1170(h) Jail Only) came to 6,697 clients. They presented a detailed report of the recidivism metrics to CCP in February of 2022. Below is a brief summary of those findings.

The 3-year recidivism rate for all 3 populations was 55%
13% for felony and 42% for misdemeanor
52% were PRCS clients
48% were MS clients
62% were Jail Only clients

The accumulation of misdemeanor convictions was the strongest predictor of recidivism across all the groups. Specifically, offenders with one misdemeanor had an 18% higher chance of recidivating than those with no prior misdemeanor convictions. Similarly, those with two or more convictions had a 29% and 46% higher chance, respectively, of recidivating in three years.

OUTLOOK:

As in years past, Ventura County public safety agencies, local law enforcement entities, health/human service departments, Superior Court, and community-based providers continued to collaborate in a comprehensive effort to reduce recidivism among this high-risk, high-need population. The goals of the CCP continue to be to reduce recidivism; reduce criminogenic needs of clients; enhance their ability to successfully re-enter into society; and community safety.

To improve on this effort, the CCP approved the formation of the Program Review and Development Subcommittee to review the strategic plan, programming and services, and further analyses of subpopulations and services impact.

In 2023, the CCP will continue its ongoing review of local efforts to ensure Ventura County is moving in the right direction.