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BOARD OF STATE AND COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS

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EDMUND G. BROWN, JR.
Governor

April 30, 2015

To: Members of the Board of the State and Community Corrections

From: David Steinhart, Chair of the Juvenile Justice Data Working Group

On behalf of the Juvenile Justice Data Working Group (JJDWG), I am pleased to submit this report and recommendations on revised reporting requirements for the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) and Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG).

This is the first of two reports that the JJDWG is required by legislation to produce (Assembly Bill 1468, Statutes of 2014). The first mandate is to submit recommendations to the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) by April 30, 2015 on improving reporting requirements for the JJCPA and YOBG grant programs, including “streamlining and consolidating current requirements without sacrificing meaningful data collection.” Another and more global set of recommendations on California juvenile justice data systems is due to the Legislature in 2016.

Both the YOBG and JJCPA grant programs provide critical resources to local government. The main focus of the JJCPA, adopted in 2000, was to expand investment and capacity for local youth crime prevention programs. The central goal of the YOBG, adopted in 2007, was to provide counties with resources needed to manage a new caseload of juvenile offenders shifted from state to local control under California’s major juvenile justice realignment reform (Senate Bill 81, Statutes of 2007).

Both programs went forward with statutory requirements to submit annual plans and reports to the Corrections Standards Authority (now, BSCC). Regrettably, the outcome data mandated for reports under both grant programs has proven to be both unreliable and of limited value in documenting grant program accomplishments. This is due in part to deficiencies in both state and local data system capacity. In addition, since the grant programs were adopted, new justice system trends have evolved. These include impressively lower crime rates, major corrections realignment reforms and an increasing emphasis on “evidence-based” programming. These and other factors led to the establishment of the JJDWG and to the present report.

The recommendations we present include proposals to unify the JJCPA and YOBG grant plans that must be submitted to BSCC each May. They include recommendations to discard reporting data elements and collection methods determined upon exhaustive analysis by the JJDWG to be unreliable and uninformative. Those measures would be replaced by county-level juvenile justice trend data drawn from a central state data repository, thus establishing a common, statewide set of outcome measures for both grant programs. Supplemental data on individual county programs would be collected and reported under program-specific evaluation plans approved by BSCC. Other proposed changes would consolidate BSCC’s annual reports for the grant programs.

Modest statutory changes will be needed to implement these recommendations. The JJDWG has limited its effort to adjustments of the plan and reporting requirements, while maintaining the statutory integrity of each grant program. YOBG and JJCPA have different origins, target caseloads and allocation rules, and it is not our charge to unwind these differences or seek to merge the grant programs into one consolidated whole.

I would like to add thanks for the time, effort and expertise that the members of the JJDWG have contributed to this report. I invite readers to scan the list of members provided in the report in order to gain some appreciation of the expertise that has been drawn into the project. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the BSCC staff that supported the effort, with special thanks to Colleen Curtin, Kimberly Bushard and Corey Kai for their contributions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Steinhart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DAVID STEINHART
Member, Board of State and Community Corrections
Chair, Juvenile Justice Data Working Group