

(2021-2022) Annual Plan

Date: 4/30/2021

County Name: Ventura

Contact Name: Carrie Vredenburg-Division Manager

Telephone Number: 805-973-5123

E-mail Address: carrie.vredenburg@ventura.org

Instructions:

Government Code Section 30061(b)(4) and Welfare & Institution Code Section 1961(b) call for consolidation of the annual plans required for JJCPA and YOBG.

Please submit your most up-to-date consolidated plan. The following is a standardized template for a consolidated county plan. If you find it helpful to use this template, please do so. Each field must be completed before submitting your plan to the BSCC. If you have nothing to report for a field, please indicate 'N/A'. At the end of the template please press the 'Submit' button to be recorded with the BSCC. Your work will be saved each time you log in, if you need to make any edits.

Your Submission will be posted, as submitted, to the BSCC website. carrie.vredenburg@ventura.org

If you have any questions on completing your annual plan, or wish to use your own plan, please email:

JJCPA-YOBG@bscc.ca.gov

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.

There are strong collaborative partnerships that exist among the Juvenile Delinquency Court and various county agencies, including Children and Family Services, Public Health, Behavioral Health, and the Alcohol and Drug Program, as well as with many community-based organizations. These collaboratives 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. Probation also works closely with law enforcement to share information and coordinate diversion efforts.

Ventura County is working to map all available services offered by county or community-based organization, which specifically target at-risk juveniles, juvenile offenders, and their families. This will allow the JJCC to accurately assess the existing services and make informed decisions about new services.

The JJCC has established a sub-committee, the JJCC Program Review and Development Committee. This committee is comprised of members which represent county-based organizations, as well as community-based organizations. This committee is tasked to review current program outcomes, identify gaps in services utilizing the Juvenile Justice Master Plan (JJMP) to guide decisions and to make recommendations for future programming. The JJCC recognizes the importance of assessing and evaluating existing services in addition to keeping the JJMP current and relevant. As such, Applied Survey Research (ASR) was selected after a competitive Request for Proposal process and contracted in February 2021 to conduct an evaluation of JJCPA funded programs, as well as update the JJMP.

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

In Ventura County, the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) was developed to strengthen community partnerships and make recommendations for services to the Board of Supervisors, Juvenile Delinquency Court, and other stakeholders. Our county is fortunate in that collaboration amongst stakeholders is strong and there is a true desire and commitment to provide services and support which will benefit youth and their families. The Ventura County JJMP was last updated in 2017. Since that time, the JJCC has used the JJMP as a roadmap which guides programmatic changes and determines future funding for new programming and services. Ventura County also collaborates with the W. Haywood Burns Institute (BI) and is an active Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative-Racial and Ethnic Disparities (JDAI-RED) county. The JDAI-RED workgroup, Youth Equity and Success (YES), meets monthly to collaborate regarding additional needs and areas of focus within the County.

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.

Ventura County provides a countywide strategy. Data related to JDAI and RED helped determine which areas of the county (based on zip codes) have the highest rates of arrest and admissions to our juvenile facility. This information has been used to identify gaps in services and resources needed. Data from the W. Haywood Burns Institute is also used to target interventions and diversion in certain cities with a higher number of citations. The JJMP identifies Latino, male youth as the population most represented on Probation. In addition, nearly half of the youth on probation reside in the Oxnard/Port Hueneme area, and they face significant challenges and risk factors that may increase the likelihood to become justice involved. The Oxnard Union School District also has the highest truancy and expulsion rate and the second highest suspension rate. Focusing on this population remains a priority. Substance abuse and addiction remain a concern and area of focus in our community. While there is a residential treatment program available, it is in a neighboring county and has a high rate of AWOL. The JJMP also focuses on strategies to increase family engagement and utilizing principles, which promote positive youth development.

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 JJMP serves as an action strategy for responding to gaps in the continuum of juvenile justice services. It allows the JJCC and JDAI-RED to make informed decisions regarding use of resources and community need.

Ventura County currently focuses our attention in the following areas:

Prevention: Contracting services to keep youth from entering the juvenile justice system (i.e. THRIVE).

Intervention: Providing appropriate and necessary services to reduce recidivism for youth already in the juvenile justice system.

Supervision: Using a risk and needs assessment to determine the appropriate level of supervision. Utilize evidence-based practice and programs to drive client behavior change. Use a graduated response matrix to aid in determining the appropriate level of response for violations and utilizing appropriate treatment referrals and resources (i.e. referral to ERC or KEYS program).

Custody: Youth in commitment are assigned to a Deputy Probation Officers while in the facility. The youth on these caseloads are assessed at intake and referred to a variety of necessary services and programming. These include school attendance, behavioral health services (including equine assisted psychotherapy and learning), substance abuse counseling, as well instruction on poetry, art, music, dog training, landscaping, Paxton Patterson construction trades, radio broadcasting and job and career skills. The probation officers monitor youth's progress throughout their commitment and develop release plans that include the youth, parents or guardian as well as the probation officer that will be providing community-based supervision upon their release.

D.Comprehensive Plan RevisionsDescribe how your Plan has been updated for this year.

The introduction of Restorative Justice Conferencing (RJC) to our continuum of services is a revision to our plan for the year to come. Extensive research indicates that the use of restorative practices to deal with crime and wrongdoing are recognized as evidence-based practices. Literature states that grounding offenders in their communities and building social networks are critical to success and address this component of the risk and needs responsivity assessment. RJC is a program that diverts youth away from the juvenile justice system by offering the opportunity to participate in a restorative justice conference and be connected to needed youth services. Restorative Justice Conferencing seeks justice by bringing together the youth and the victim to discuss the harm caused and, together, create a plan to move forward. In addition, RJC can be utilized as a graduated response for those on probation supervision and with youth in our juvenile facility. RJC will be provided by a community-based organization. A request for proposal is being released in late April 2021. The RJC provider will service up to 60 youth in year one, with the potential for expansion in year two.

Ventura County is still pursuing a program which promotes and increases youth and family engagement. This has been identified as an area where improvement can be made. A survey and analysis are underway to determine the best way to approach this strategy. It is hoped that assessing youth and their families and adopting a family case plan will strengthen the family unit and consequently prevent further involvement in the juvenile justice system.

In addition, Ventura County is still pursuing the development of a parent partner program. This involves using adults with previous juvenile justice system experience to provide peer support for families. It is hoped this program will build trust, establish safety, and empower families. This approach too can strengthen families and prevent further involvement in the juvenile justice system.

At the Juvenile Facility, there are plans to order 80 tablets by the end of 2021. These tablets will offer individualized programming to youth in custody, including online job and educational training. It is hoped that utilizing tablets in this manner, in conjunction with employment services, will enhance the job application experience. Tablets can also be used to provide addiction recovery courses, assistance with reentry services, financial literacy, and anger management. In addition, tablets can be used as an incentive to view movies and will allow for video family visits.

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

N/A

**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 is a part of the Ventura County Integrated Justice Information System (VCIJIS). VCIJIS is an electronic database that allows for limited sharing of case and court information among the Courts, Probation, District Attorney, Public Defender and the Sheriff's Department. In addition, Probation has an independent data system, Probation Records Information System Management (PRISM). This system allows Probation to utilize data to enhance caseload management and supervision of youth. This system contains demographic information, client assessments, case management information, client related documents, and information related to our youth in custody.

Outside of the above integrated system, there is no established data sharing with other partner agencies. Data sharing is recognized as a key component for building a child and family well-being system. In the absence of automated data sharing, information from respective public entities are shared via the Essential for Childhood-Ventura County (E4C-VC) collaborative forum to better understand common areas of needs and to work towards coordinating community interventions, a system's approach to targeting and impacting common areas of need. E4C-VC is in the planning stages of such efforts, using AB 2083 as the impetus for cross-system collaboration.

Ventura County also contracts with the W. Haywood Burns Institute (BI). BI uses data to inform funding decisions and to focus areas of attention regarding community interventions.

Lastly, Probation has integrated performance measures and associated data outcomes in service contracts with community-based organizations providing services to youth. This data is invaluable and guides the agency in making informed decisions about programming and case management.

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 list the current vacancies that exist on your JJCC, when those vacancies occurred, and your plan for filling them.

N/A

C. Funded Programs, Strategies and/or System Enhancements

JJCPA Funded Program(s), Strategy and/or System Enhancement

Below are JJCPA funded programs reported by the county.

Program Name:

Evening Reporting Centers (ERC)

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

Evening reporting centers (ERCs) were implemented throughout the County as an alternative to detention and to reduce youth of color admissions into the Juvenile Facilities. They have expanded to receive community referrals in an effort to be preventative and reduce the number of youth coming into the juvenile justice system. ERCs provide programming grounded in evidence-based practices for positive youth development and empowerment. Each ERC is grounded in research highlighted below:

The Boys and Girls Club (BGC) of America offers tested, proven and nationally recognized programs, such as Project Learn and Summer Advantage USA, that closely align with the developmental needs of all young people. The BGC prioritizes programming related to three focus areas: academic success, good character and citizenship, and healthy lifestyles.

One Step a la Vez utilizes evidence-based programming to increase positive personal development and professional skills among participants. Some of the programs include, Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT), Way of Council and Restorative Justice. Also, staff members are in the process of being trained to conduct Smart Recovery support groups, a workbook-based program, to offer guidance and support to youth with drug and/or alcohol addiction.

Big Brothers Big Sisters offers one on one mentoring to youth and research supports that these relationships 1) increase the social-emotional development of children and adolescents and challenge the negative views youth hold of themselves; 2) improve cognitive development and thinking skills; and 3) facilitate identity development.

Description:

The ERCs provide community-based alternatives to detention and assist in the reduction of youth of color admissions into the Juvenile Facilities. There are currently three ERCs in the County of Ventura: The Boys and Girls Club in Oxnard, One Step a la Vez in Fillmore, and Big Brothers Big Sisters in Simi Valley. The ERCs serve youth ages 12 ½ to 18 who reside in the designated areas of the county. Approximately 43 youth are served per month. The ERCs utilize evidence-based programming for the selected youth that strives to build positive personal development and professional skills among participants (i.e. positive self-identify, hope about one's future, reduce recidivism, educational, vocational, social, emotional, and cultural competencies, community and civic involvement, the knowledge, skills, strategies and attitudes necessary to have a positive foundation for change and values enabling one to develop positive relationships with others). The programmatic goals include: Reduce recidivism; promote and implement positive youth development; track youth who successfully complete the program and continue to attend the ERCs; enhance public safety; and promote and increase academic success, character, citizenship, and healthy lifestyles. The centers are socially and environmentally safe facilities for youth to attend. The programs are based upon physical, emotional, cultural, and social needs of youth, and offered in a non-competitive environment that encourages skill development, self-esteem, and acceptance. It also reinforces positive social values that benefit the community. Collectively, 71% of youth continue to participate in ERCs after their initial 20-45 day commitment.

Program Name:

Truancy Habits Reduced Increases Vital Education (THRIVE)

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

The California Attorney General's fourth annual Report on California's Elementary School Truancy and Absenteeism Crisis was issued in 2016, setting forth the importance of eliminating school truancy and making it a top priority of the California Department of Justice to keep children in school and out of the criminal justice system. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, approximately 57% of violent crimes are committed by juveniles while they are truant. Studies conducted across the country have shown that excessive absenteeism in school increases the risk of falling behind academically, dropping out of school, and becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

Description:

THRIVE is a collaborative effort between the Ventura County District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Probation Agency, Public Health, and the School Attendance Review Boards (SARB).

THRIVE provides truancy intervention for students from 12 Ventura County school districts, which include 21 individual school/district sites. THRIVE aims to help all children with chronic absenteeism between the ages of 6 to 18, offering appropriate remedial and community referral services during the SARB meetings, based on the youth's needs that have brought them to SARB (i.e. homelessness, mental health, medical, transportation, etc.). Between September 1, 2019 and April 15, 2020, 546 students have been served throughout the county and a total of 1,037 THRIVE student meetings have been held. In FY 20-21, the probation officer assigned to THRIVE attends an average of 25 SARB meetings monthly. In collaboration with the assigned public health nurses, they manage to attend approximately 114 truancy student meetings on a monthly basis.

THRIVE utilizes the services of three Public Health Nurses which assist in determining whether there are medical reasons for the youth's truancy. On average, nurses provided youth and/or their families 27 referrals to services per month and delivered 4833 interventions for the first two quarters of FY20-21. In addition, due to COVID-19, over a six-month period, public health nurses consulted and collaborated 1412 times with schools to provide guidance and develop protocols so children and staff could return to school safely.

The program also has expanded Public Health involvement, with nurses attending team meetings for youth who have been identified as Commercially and Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC). The nurses provide health information and services to CSEC youth in an effort to prevent truancy and further involvement in the juvenile justice system.

During the 2019-2020 school year, before the intervention of THRIVE, students were attending school at an overall rate of 78.2%. After THRIVE intervention, overall attendance increased to 81.9% and unexcused absences dropped significantly from 17.2% to 13.2%. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of THRIVE in reducing truancy in Ventura County schools.

Also, with efforts by the YES collaborative, representatives from the Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) and Oxnard Union High School District have been long-standing members that are interested in exploring ways to improve outcomes for youth of color by promoting regular attendance, preventing the use of punitive discipline and ensuring that youth who are on probation or in detention have the support they need to achieve academically.

Below is an example of THRIVE in action:

Wendy, a single mother of four children, struggled to get her children to engage in school during distance learning. Numerous reasons were given for their unexcused absences. Due to their excessive absences, Wendy and her three school aged daughters (grades 2, 3, and 4) were brought before the SARB. Two meetings were held with Wendy and the girls and all assured the group their attendance would improve. Despite numerous interventions and accommodations offered through the school, their attendance failed to improve. They were brought back for a third meeting at which the THRIVE probation officer spoke with the girls about their attendance and offered to personally deliver them gift cards if there was a significant improvement in their attendance. The girls perked up and were excited for the challenge. At the next meeting, one month later, it was reported that the girl's attendance had improved dramatically, only having one absence during that time. The girls were beaming as they were congratulated by the SARB team. The THRIVE probation officer made good on her promise and delivered Target gift cards and certificates to their residence. The girls were so excited and proud of their accomplishment. Wendy was grateful and relieved to see her children's success.

Program Name:

Repeat Offender Prevention Program (ROPP)

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

Between 1994 and 2000 the State of California implemented multiyear ROPP demonstration projects in eight California counties in an effort to reduce recidivism. Probation officers identified cases that were appropriate for the program, provided enhanced case management and referred them to a youth and family resource center. At the centers, agencies collaborated as a team to assess a youth's need and devise a case planning strategy. The collaborative partners offered an array of enhanced services such as individual and group counseling, mental health services, tutoring, transportation, and vocational training (ie. wraparound services).

Description:

ROPP is an intensive, comprehensive, multi-disciplinary program that provides services to first time formal wards, informal probationers, and DEJ youth who are 16.5 years or younger at the time they are placed on supervision, and who demonstrate at least three of four risk factors associated with chronic delinquency. The ROPP team is comprised of three intensive supervision probation officers, three Marriage and Family Therapist, three Youth Advocates, and a Tutoring/Reading Specialist. The program is guided by evidence-based practices, and the ROPP team meets bi-weekly to discuss the cases.

The primary objective of ROPP is to provide early identification and services to eligible youth. ROPPs broadly defined objectives include breaking the patterns of delinquency, antisocial behavior and domestic violence, by providing services before the youth become entrenched in the juvenile justice system.

The target population is known as the "8%", youth who are identified as having specific characteristics which make them a high risk for re-offending. The majority of the chronic recidivists are an 8% group with the following characteristics:

1. 16.5 years of age or younger at the time of their initial case disposition
2. Declared wards of the Court at their initial system referral
3. Found to have significantly more problems in four composite areas:
 - a. Significant family problems such as domestic violence, child abuse and family criminality
 - b. School attendance or performance problems
 - c. Drug and/or alcohol use

d. Pre-Delinquent behaviors such as gangs, runaway, stealing

It was found that chronic juvenile offenders have a significantly higher rate of incarceration and recidivism. More than half of the families of high-risk youth have significant problems impeding their ability to provide adequate supervision, structure, or support to their children. Youth are reviewed periodically throughout the time spent in the program. The length of the program is open ended and based on the stability of the family and the sufficiency to which the identified risk factors have been addressed.

73 youth participated in the ROPP program between 7/1/20 and 3/1/21. 25 youth received individual counseling by Marriage and Family Therapist/Associates employed by The Coalition for Family Harmony. One youth participated in family counseling. Other youth participating in the ROPP program received individual counseling through a private or county behavioral health service provider, which they had been previously connected before their participation with ROPP.

Bianca's story:

Bianca came to the Repeat Offender Prevention Program for supervision two months after her 13th birthday. She was tagging for a gang, stealing vehicles consistently and had multiple hit and runs. Bianca was engaging in drug and alcohol use and ran away from home often. The first sign that Bianca trusted probation was when she reported to an office visit and reported 2 separate sexual assaults that happened to her. This was her first contact with her local law enforcement agency where she felt safe enough to report. Bianca began to open up more to probation, but as peer pressure continued, she spent the next year and a half in an out of custody battling an addiction to pills, alcohol and stealing vehicles. Then, probation learned Bianca and her family were victims of physical and emotional abuse from their father who resided in the same household. Probation was able to assist Bianca's mother in receiving domestic violence counseling that led to her mother leaving safely with her children. Once she witnessed her mother's strength, Bianca completed drug counseling, became sober, trusted not only probation, but law enforcement and the court system. She went on to testify against an adult registered sex offender which showed her maturity and bravery she gained over the past two years. Bianca is now 15 years old, has not returned to custody in over a year, complies with probation and is set to be off probation shortly. She has plans to become a motivational speaker to teens who are making the same choices she did. She would like them to know that although stealing cars and doing pills is "cool to your friends", it is something that can ruin your life. She wishes she could go back and tell her 13-year-old self that drugs don't make friends and actions have consequences.

Bianca has been through the worst of the worst and without the services of ROPP (public health

nurse, therapy with a MFT and the support of a dedicated probation officer and youth advocate) as well as services available in the community, she may not have ended with a positive outcome. She has matured and it is hoped that her path can inspire others. She looks forward to graduating high school in two years and being that role model for other teens struggling with abuse, addiction and peer pressure.

Program Name:

Early Intervention and Prevention Services

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

This program combines prevention and intervention services through evidence-based programs, practices, and strategies for youth who are not currently wards of the Court. The community-based organization assesses youth/family to determine services needed and utilizes cognitive behavioral interventions.

Description:

This program provides specialized early intervention services to youth and their families. The early intervention services are intended to divert youth from further juvenile justice involvement. Services will be brief and will focus on assessment, case management, family mediation, skill building, and counseling within a cognitive behavioral intervention framework. Services are provided to youth under age 18 who reside in Ventura County who are first and sometimes second time youth offenders who commit 601 offenses, miscellaneous misdemeanors, and lower level felony offenses (the felonies likely reserved for youth 13 and younger). The provider will respond to all referrals within 24 hours, provide a referral disposition within 30 days, and conduct a service assessment with youth/family to determine the most appropriate intervention. Staff will provide interventions for up to 90 days, then if needed, facilitate appropriate linkage to community partners as well as other counseling services. Modality of services will include weekly skill building group – conflict resolution, anger management, healthy relationship skills, and other topics. Youth can join at any point.

Between 7/1/20 and 3/31/21, 28 youth were referred to this program and 93.25 hours of service were provided.

Program Name:

Commercially and Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Mentoring and Case Management

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

Preventing the exploitation of children is achieved through multi-pronged efforts including safety education, awareness training, and addressing demand. Mentoring and training are trauma informed.

Description:

Ventura County contract with Forever Found to work with this identified population. This program builds supportive relationships with high-risk youth, current victims, and recovering survivors ages 12-21. It aims to provide support and a mentor team to vulnerable youth who have a history of abusive and dysfunctional relationships. Mentors provide social and emotional support and focus on modeling wholesome relationships, encouraging a positive self-identity, teaching life skills, and introducing healthy choices. Each youth is assigned a case manager and may participate in both individual and group classes. In FY 20-21, 29 youth were referred to Forever Found and a total of 436 service hours were delivered. In addition, the provider utilizes equine therapy with youth.

Program Name:

Juvenile Justice Treatment for Sexually Abusive Youth

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

Services are based on the California Coalition on Sexual Offending's guidelines for the assessment and treatment of sexually abusive youth and the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers Adolescent Practice Guidelines 2017. The program is a cognitive-behavioral multimodal program drawing on several disciplines to inform best practices and evidenced based interventions.

Description:

Ventura County contracts with Anew Therapeutic (Anew) to provide treatment to those youth who have been court ordered into treatment for sexually abusive behavior. Anew integrates treatment of the youth's trauma symptoms and response as well as their characterological strengths and deficits. Anew focuses on a Risk, Needs, and Responsivity (RNR) approach to identifying risks. Anew offers individual, group, and family therapy that complies with the California Coalition on Sexual Offending's guidelines for the assessment and treatment of sexually abusive youth.

Program Name:

Youth Advisory Council (YAC)

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

Youth Advisory Councils are a youth engagement strategy used by programs and organizations to positively incorporate youth voices and help build the capacity of youth participants.

Description:

Ventura County contracts with One Step a la Vez to coordinate and oversee the YAC. Once operational, the YAC will facilitate meetings as needed. Participants will be provided leadership, leadership training and mentorship with the goal that those formerly involved in the justice system should advise and make recommendations for services to youth who are currently or at risk for becoming involved with the justice system.

The Haywood Burns Institute (BI) has been providing One Step a la Vez some technical support. The two organizations have been meeting with various community-based organizations in an effort to recruit youth for the YAC. As recruitment efforts have not been successful thus far, they are expanding their recruitment to youth formerly incarcerated which attend nearby universities and community colleges. BI is also coaching One Step a la Vez and assuring they are up to date on the goals of the county in working with at risk or justice involved youth.

Program Name:

Youth and Family Engagement (Proposed Enhancement)

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

There is a lot of research surrounding the role of families in the lives of justice involved youth and the impacts they have on the youth. It is widely accepted that family is critical in the development of children, yet their involvement when a youth enters the justice system is historically minimized. Instead families need to be engaged, as they can offer protective factors to youth and increase their success on probation. The Campaign for Youth Justice, in partnership with Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), identified the principles of effective family engagement which would be incorporated into this program.

Description:

Develop a whole family approach to work with youth who are at the highest risk to reoffend and/or be removed from their home. This approach will embed a child and family development specialist in the Probation office. This specialist will assist the probation officer in assessing not only the youth's needs, but those of the family. The case plan would focus on the needs of the entire family in an effort to strengthen families and prevent further involvement in the juvenile justice system.

COVID 19 greatly impacted the ability to move this strategy forward as hoped. However, in January 2021, a survey was developed in consultation with an outside organization and thereafter was administered to probation officers, youth and their families. The collection of survey results recently concluded, and an analysis of the feedback and information is underway. The outcomes of this survey will assist in the development of this program.

Program Name:

Parent Partners (Proposed Enhancement)

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

There is a lot of research surrounding the role of families in the lives of justice involved youth and the impacts they have on the youth. It is widely accepted that family is critical in the development of children, yet their involvement when a youth enters the justice system is historically minimized. Instead families need to be engaged, as they can offer protective factors to youth and increase their success on probation. The Campaign for Youth Justice, in partnership with Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), identified the principles of effective family engagement which would be incorporated into this program.

Description:

Develop a parent partner program. This involves using adults with previous juvenile justice system experience to provide peer support for families. This program may be volunteer based or require hiring staff to focus specifically on connecting families who are encountering the justice system with a partner who will help them navigate the system and stay better connected. Such support may help build trust, establish safety, and empower families. This approach can strengthen families and prevent further involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Program Name:

Restorative Justice Conferencing (RJC) (Proposed Enhancement)

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

Restorative practices to deal with crime and wrongdoing are recognized as evidence-based practices according to extensive research. Literature states that grounding offenders in their communities and building social networks are critical to success and address this component of the risk and needs responsibility assessment.

Description:

RJC is a program that diverts youth away from the juvenile justice system by offering the opportunity to participate in a restorative justice conference and be connected to needed youth services. Restorative Justice Conferencing seeks justice by bringing together the youth and the victim to discuss the harm caused and, together, create a plan to move forward. In addition, RJC can be utilized as a graduated response for those on probation supervision and with youth in our juvenile facility. RJC will be provided by a community-based organization. A request for Proposals is being released in late April 2021. The RJC provider will service to up to 60 youth in year one, with the potential for expansion in year two.

Program Name:

JJCPA Program Evaluation and Juvenile Justice Master Plan

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

The JJCPA requires that counties review update their juvenile justice plans regularly. Applied Survey Research (ASR) was selected after a competitive Request for Proposal process and contracted in February 2021 to conduct an evaluation of JJCPA funded programs, as well as update the juvenile justice master plan. ASR has experience in conducting these evaluations and developing master plans.

Description:

ASR will evaluate our existing JJCPA funded programs to assure they are utilizing strategies which demonstrate effectiveness in reducing juvenile delinquency and are appropriate for the current population. ASR will also assist in the development of a comprehensive measurement report which includes data collection. These outcome measures can then be used to create consistent performance measure reports and will allow both Probation and the organization to evaluate the fidelity of their programs. Additionally, ASR will identify gaps in services and guide the JJCC in making future decisions about programming and how to utilize funding. It is anticipated that ASR will complete their work in December 2021.

**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.

Ventura County utilizes the juvenile justice strategy outlined in Part I Section C for all youth. Youth committed to the Ventura County Juvenile Facilities by the Juvenile Delinquency Court for periods of time ranging from 30 days to a year or more are provided direct services to deter future delinquency and skills to transition back into the community. Youth enter the facility commitment program in which the average commitment duration is approximately 88 days. In a camp like dormitory setting, they attend school, receive behavioral health services, and participate in a variety of programming activities designed to raise their level of awareness as it relates to making better choices and equip them with the insights and abilities to positively redirect their lives once released from the facility for community-based supervision.

In the community, youth have the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of services offered by county-based agencies or community-based organizations. In addition to the community ERCs, Probation operates a Day Reporting Center (DRC). The DRC provides a menu of services that target life skills, education achievements and job readiness/placement. Additionally, a Deputy Probation Officer provides early intervention services to deter youth from entering the juvenile justice system.

B. Regional Agreements

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

N/A

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

Below are YOBG funded programs reported by the county.

Program Name:

Leaders

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

N/A

Description:

Youth in this program serve commitments of 45 days or more at the Juvenile Facilities. Programming is delivered on a group and/or individual basis. These youth represent a smaller portion of the commitment population who agree to participate in specialized programming, vocational training and drug and alcohol treatment services to help them transition back into the community. Specialized services, which is based on youth needs, may include: mental health treatment, gender specific classes, mentorships and other enrichment programming. Vocational training encompasses courses such as landscaping, and job readiness that are taught by professionals in the trade and/or by the Ventura County Office of Education. In addition, the Paxton/Patterson Building Skills construction course is part of the vocational training component that is taught by certified Probation Agency staff. The drug and alcohol treatment services provided to the youth in this program are funded through a separate funding source associated with the Ventura County Behavioral Health Department.

In February 2021, Probation contracted with Women of Substance Men of Honor (WOSMOH) to provide the Alpha Leadership Program. This is a 13-week program that covers topics such as Priorities and Goals, Individual Identification and Finances. There are currently five youth in this program.

Program Name:

Gender Specific Programming

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

N/A

Description:

In February 2021, Probation contracted with Women of Substance Men of Honor (WOSMOH) to provide gender specific programming to both female and male populations. Healthy Lifestyles is a 10-week program which covers topics such as: Boundaries, Diversity, Feelings, Friendships, Role Models, Hygiene, STDs, HIV, Sexual Assault, Date Rape Drugs, and Protection. There are currently 8 females enrolled in this program.

Program Name:

Enrichment Program Services

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

N/A

Description:

Enrichment programming offers an array of services to youth in the facility that focus on continuing education, career and technology training, life skills, cultural arts and diversity, and cultural awareness. Programs include broadcast journalism, Paxton/Patterson Building Skills (introductory construction courses), landscaping skills, poetry, origami, life skills, Hi-Set testing (formerly GED), music lessons, art lessons (which has included youth participation in the painting of professional facility murals), sculpture, dance, exercise, community service activities, and equine assisted psychotherapy and learning.

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy can be regarded as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in nature. A modified version of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) was used to measure the effectiveness of the program. Five youth participated in the program for 6-9 sessions. Male participant anxiety reduced from 73% to 40%, depression decreased from 87% to 40%, oppositional behavior decreased from 73% to 53%, anger decreased from 80% to 47%, and attention deficit decreased from 80% to 53%. Communication increased from 26% to 80%, optimism increased from 40% to 86%, resiliency increased from 46% to 53%, natural supports increased from 47% to 67%, talents/interests increased from 53% to 73% and their well-being increased from 47% to 66%. Female participant anxiety reduced from 70% to 50%, depression decreased from 90% to 50%, oppositional behavior decreased from 90% to 50%, anger decreased from 90% to 60%, and attention deficit decreased from 80% to 50%. Communication increased from 30% to 60%, optimism increased from 40% to 70%, resiliency increased from 50% to 70%, natural supports increased from 30% to 50%, talents/interests increased from 40% to 60% and their well-being increased from 40% to 50%.

The Boys and Girls Club of Oxnard Port Hueneme maintains a club house inside the facility that offers a variety of programming services and activities to the youth at the Juvenile Facility. A library is also available to youth that hosts activities including a book club and guest speaker presentations by selected authors.

A Multi-Sensory De-Escalation Room (MSDR) was established in the facility by repurposing an

unoccupied classroom. The MDSR is used to identify a resident's triggers, strengths and suggested sensory activities that may assist with internal regulation of behavior. A resident's ability to use the resources in the environment to calm his/her emotions with staff engagement is a critical step in the process of self-regulation. The MSDR environment promotes engagement and interaction between the resident and staff in a non-adversarial setting.

The program also offers two separate canine programs that are managed in a multiagency collaborative effort with a community-based organization. The first is a therapy dog program, in which certified therapy dogs and their handlers from two separate community organizations (Love on a Leash and Therapy Dogs International) visit the juvenile facilities weekly to provide emotional support to the youth.

The second is a canine care and dog training program, with dogs that reside full-time in the facility called "Pawsitive Steps." This program is a multi-agency collaboration with the Canine Animal Rescue League (C.A.R.L), Ventura County Animal Shelter, a certified dog trainer, Behavioral Health and Ventura County Office of Education to provide training, counseling, and education to the youth working with the selected dogs. With the assistance of a trainer, this program teaches youth how to properly care for and train a shelter dog. In doing so, the youth prepare the dog to be a more attractive candidates for adoption into the community. Combined with the physical training and care of the dogs, there are additional program components consisting of Restorative Justice through Behavioral Health, humane education and career pathways. The youth can also earn elective school credits during their participation. Upon completion of the program, the youth participate in the adoption process of the dogs. This program offers the youth the opportunity to give back to their community; enhance their social, educational and vocational skills; and promote their sense of responsibility, kindness and compassion.

Probation will continue to engage in community outreach, provide re-entry services and enhanced dental/vision services to the youth.

Program Name:

Juvenile Day Reporting Center named KEYS (Keeping Engaged Youth Successful)

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

N/A

Description:

To safely reduce reliance on secure detention, the Ventura County Probation Agency (VCPA) established the KEYS program. This program was developed with the assistance of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, Youth Offender Block Grant (YOBG) and the strategies found in the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). It addresses the needs of the youth in the community as outlined in the Ventura County Juvenile Justice Master Plan, which provides strategies to reduce juvenile delinquency.

The KEYS program is a collaborative partnership that includes the VCPA, Human Services Agency (HSA), and participating community-based organizations. The KEYS program, as part of an overall continuum of juvenile supervision strategies, is a one stop resource center that offers rehabilitative services. Using educational and vocational evidence-based methods, participants obtain the tools required to gain employment and become successful members of the community. The program goals include: Drop in center for the youth to work on enhancing life skills that will help them be functional adults; education (Tutoring, GED preparation, college enrollment, vocational training); job skills (Career guest speaker, resume building, interviewing skills); connect youth to potential employers; break the pattern of delinquency; build confidence; pro-social activities (i.e. college tours, job fairs, seasonal celebrations); and provide an alternative sanction to address violations of probation in lieu of Court. There is one DPO assigned to the program who focuses on completing the above noted goals. When the program is not open, the DPO coordinates and participates in pro-social activities and assists youth with a variety of other needed items.

The HSA portion of the KEYS program is called the Specialized Training & Employment Project for Success for Youth (STEPS-Y) program. STEPS-Y prepares youth for re-entry into the local workforce by offering them job search and job skills training, resume building, networking recognition and skills, supportive services, and other life skills training through either the KEYS program or while in the Juvenile Facility. For the first half of FY 20-21, 27 youth were enrolled in the program and 11 youth obtained employment.

Due to COVID-19, the KEYS program was suspended to assure staff and youth safety. It is hoped this program will reopen as the county progresses toward re-opening.

Program Name:

Early Intervention and Prevention Services

Evidence Upon Which It is Based:

The service provider contract is paid through JJCPA. However, the funding for the DPO that reviews and supervises cases is through YOBG.

Description:

There is one DPO assigned to the program who reviews all citations and diverts appropriate cases. The DPO contacts youth and his/her families and makes treatment or other diversion referrals as necessary. Additionally, the DPO contacts victims in order to establish restitution.