

Part 2: Target Population (WIC 1995 (C) (1))

Briefly describe the County's realignment target population supported by the block grant:

The realigned target population for the Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant will consist of youthful offenders (males ages 14-25) who would be eligible for a commitment to the Division of Juvenile Justice, which is now being referred to as a local Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF).

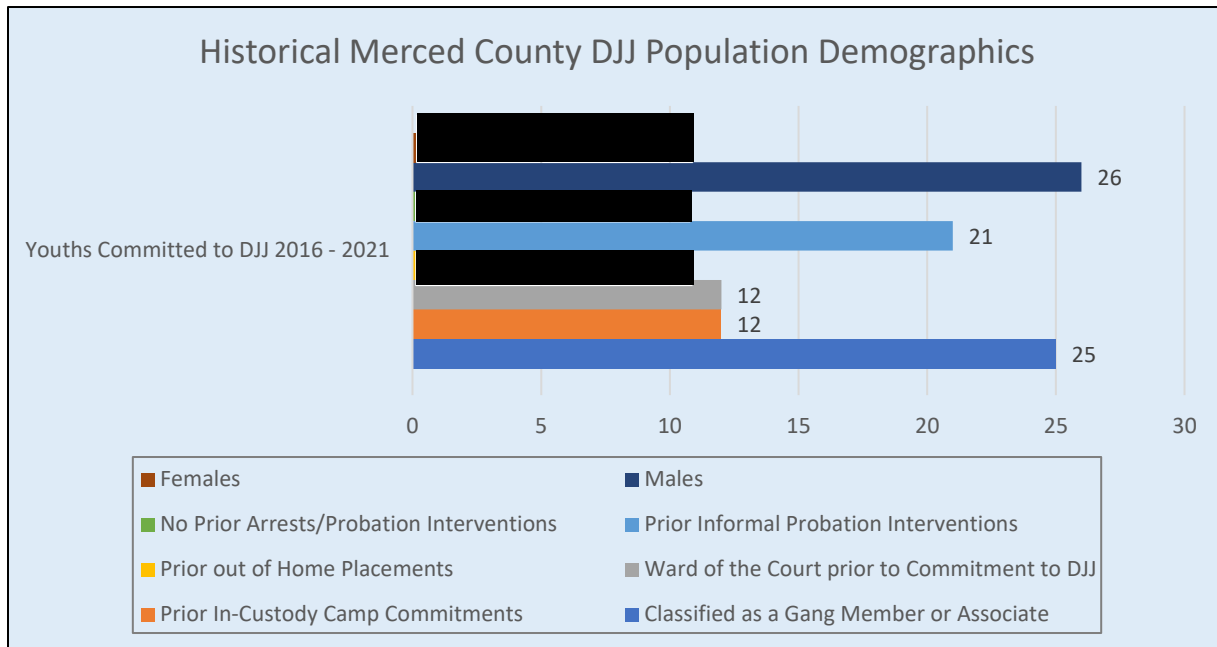
Commitments to the SYTF will require youthful offenders to be adjudicated as a ward of the Juvenile Court based on an offense described in Welfare and Institutions Code 707(b), defined under WIC 1990(b), in cases where the Juvenile Court has made a finding that less restrictive alternative dispositions are unsuitable.

Exclusionary factors for commitment to a SYTF in Merced County would consist of any youth requiring specialized treatment (i.e. females and/or any youths requiring sex offender treatment). Youths requiring specialized treatment will be referred to partnering agencies who will be able to best meet their treatment needs.

Demographics of identified target population, including anticipated numbers of youth served, disaggregated by factors including age, gender, race or ethnicity, and offense/offense history:

Merced County Probation anticipates serving youth ages 14 to 23, and up to age 25 depending on the length of the disposition order by the Juvenile Court.

Between January 1, 2016 and June 30, 2021, 29 unduplicated youth were placed at DJJ. Of those 29 youth, 19 were Hispanic, █ were White, █ were Black, and 4 were listed as Other. The youngest age upon entry was 14 years old while the oldest was 20 years old.

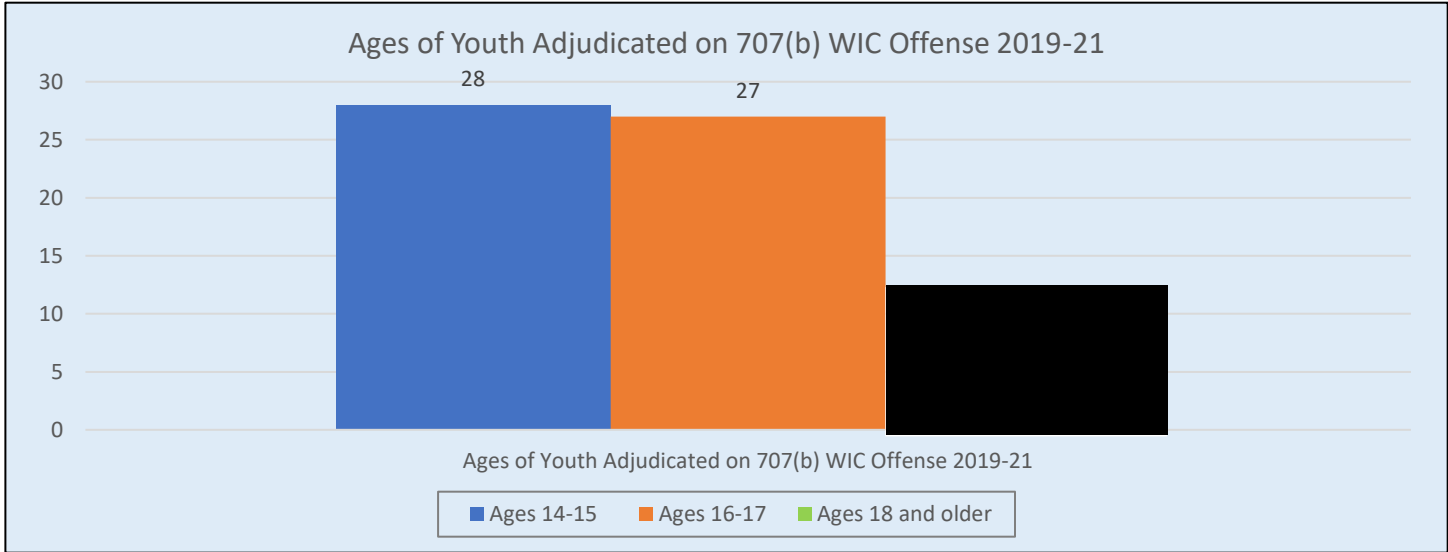


As of December 1, 2021, █ of the aforementioned Merced County youth were still serving commitments in the California Division of Juvenile Justice.

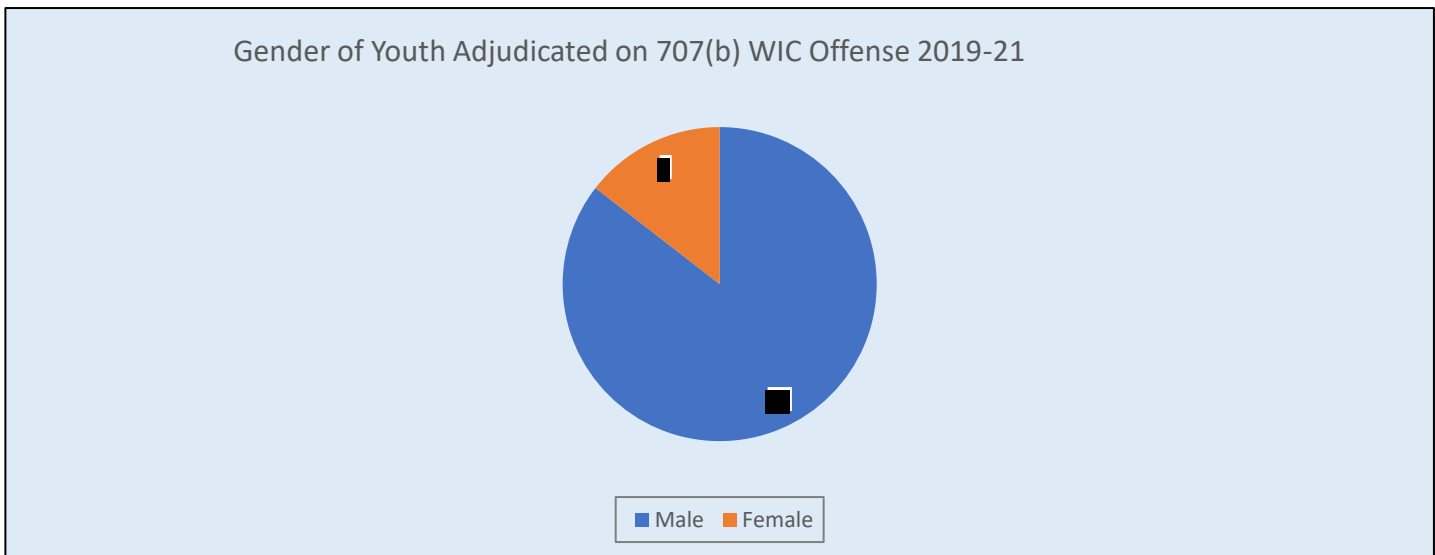
As of December 1, 2021, there are █ who are currently in custody at the Merced County Juvenile Hall pending 707(b) offenses/offenses that would qualify for commitment to a SYTF. It should be noted these youth are still pending the court process and there has been no judicial finding. Ages for these youth range from 15 years old to 19 years old.

Demographics of youth adjudicated of a 707(b) WIC offense, disaggregated by factors including age, gender, race/ethnicity, and placement upon disposition

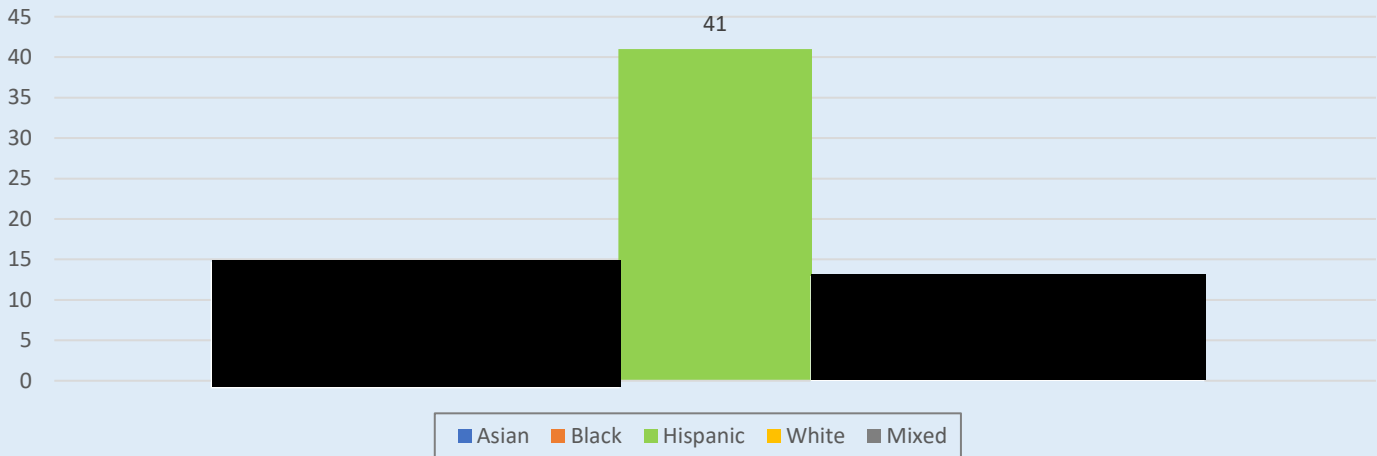
Between January 1, 2019 and December 31, 2021, there were 62 unduplicated youth adjudicated of a 707(b) offense.



As illustrated in the chart above, the majority of 707(b) WIC adjudications were for youth between the ages of 14 and 17. During this time frame, there were no youth under the age of 14 or over the age of 18 adjudicated of a 707(b) WIC offense.

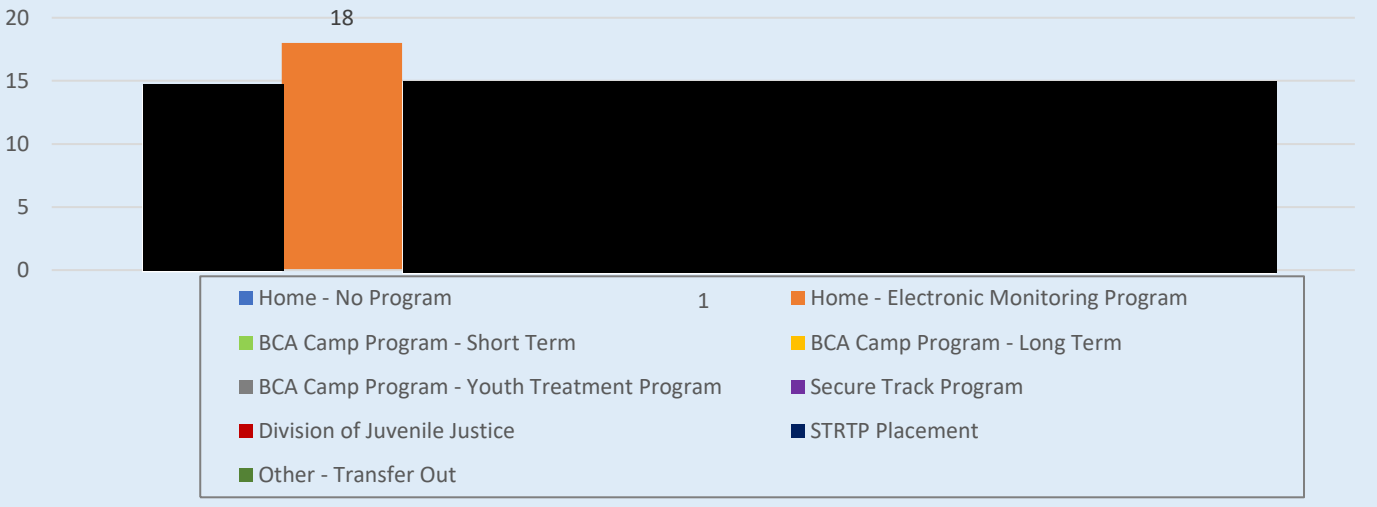


Race/Ethnicity of Youth Adjudicated on 707(b) WIC Offenses 2019-21



The graph above is relatively consistent with the demographics of Merced County. Approximately 61% of Merced County residents are of Hispanic descent with the remainder of the population divided amongst the other categories.

Placement of Youth Upon Adjudication of 707(b) WIC Offense



The above illustrates where a youth is placed following the disposition of a 707(b) WIC offense. Of note, over one-third of these youth were returned home on either an electronic monitoring program or no program at all. Additionally, only one youth were committed to the Division of Juvenile Justice or a Secure Track Program. These placements are indicative of our Department's efforts to employ the least restrictive measures when determining the appropriate treatment for these youth. The "Other-Transfer Out" category represents those youth who resided outside the County. Their cases were transferred to their county of legal residence for disposition.

Part 5: Facility Plan

Describe in detail each of the facilities that the County plans to use to house or confine the target population at varying levels of offense severity and treatment need, and improvements to accommodate long-term commitments. Facility information shall also include information on how the facilities will ensure the safety and protection of youth having different ages, genders, special needs, and other relevant characteristics (WIC 1995 (4)):

The Merced County Iris Garrett Juvenile Justice Correctional Complex, has two (2) separate buildings for housing our target populations. They will be identified as Building one (1) and Building two (2). Each building has two separate housing units, consisting of two wings in each housing unit. Each wing has the capability of housing up to 15 youth, each unit has the ability to house up to 30 youth. Although the facility design allows for us to house up to 120 youth, the probation department is budgeted to hold up to a maximum of 90 youth.

We will utilize our housing units to serve the target population, as the need arises. Utilization of housing will consist of separation based on age/criminal sophistication while also keeping in mind the need for those youth who may have special needs or behavioral issues.

Building 1

- Pre-Adjudicated housing and/or housing for post-adjudicated youth who have been transferred to adult court.
 - A-wing: General Population Unit Ages 14-18
 - B-wing: Administrative Separation, Self-Separation, Separation Program Unit (Reserved for youth who are having programmatic issues and/or have been assigned for separation by Behavioral Health or the Medical Provider)
 - C-wing: Maximum Security Unit Ages 14-17
 - D-wing: Maximum Security Unit youthful offenders Ages 18-25

Building 2

- Post-Adjudicated housing only
 - E-wing: Administrative Separation, Self-Separation, Separation Program Unit (Reserved for youth who are having programmatic issues and/or have been assigned for separation by Behavioral Health or the Medical Provider)
 - ❖ Behavioral Health Assessments will help determine placement to this unit. Youth will be assigned to the appropriate level of care regardless of age.

❖ The Separation Program Unit will provide a comprehensive and therapeutic program to treat youth with behavioral health needs.

- F-wing: Vacant (Medical Quarantine)
- G-wing: 18-25
- H-wing: 14-17

At full implementation, we would like to have a wide variety of services and supports such as educational, vocational, and employment for youths to choose from to build onto their portfolio while they are housed in our secure facility, and a full functioning Reentry Center for them to report to where a community transition team will be co-located for youths to meet with their treatment provider(s), gain educational assistance in their coursework (pre or post graduate) and their Deputy Probation Officer. For those youth who have nowhere to go upon their release, they will be able to participate in a transitional housing program with the Merced Rescue Mission. The Merced Rescue Mission provides home/family-like settings for individuals transitioning into independent housing. Participants receive healing, housing, job assistance and other supportive services to ensure they succeed. Staff include clinicians, education specialists, and other relevant providers.

The Bear Creek Academy (BCA) program will also serve as a step-down program for secure track youth to transition into. The BCA is a less restrictive program that focusses on transition services that enhance youthful offender's contact with community-based programs, services and support. The BCA program is an academy setting offering evidenced-based program elements that teach youth new patterns for dealing with stimulus, which previously resulted in anti-social and delinquent behavior. The BCA program has rehabilitative-driven programming with a concentrated focus on the individual youth's identified treatment needs and education/vocational training with family support to increase overall success with community reintegration, thus reducing recidivism.

Merced County Probation is committed to providing a facility design that encourages rehabilitation. We recognize that re-designing a space that is supportive and as "homelike" as possible will evolve in phases since our current design does not have these design principles, and funds have been limited. The process to build a new building (collegelike campus) will take some years, therefore the following phases will be used as immediate and long-term facility planning.

Immediate Unit Features

Merced County Probation will make simple improvements to building two (2), including but not limited to painting the units and adding new artwork, revamping the honor room (earned privilege room) installing flexible furnishings, adding a computer room (community area), and provide a new (secured) tablet program that allows youth to have better access to communication with loved ones, education, and age-appropriate entertainment content.

The computer room will offer a better educational resource and career training space, where youth can access the College Transition Advisor and Job Development Training Technician for assistance and

advice. The youth will be able to walk into the computer room/ “collegelike environment” to access soft skills trainings, career technical education trainings, college, and tutoring.

The honor room is a homelike place where youth can practice autonomy and independence. This space is furnished with cooking equipment, refrigerators, television, couches, bean bags, video game consoles, books, and cable. Youth, upon receiving their Food Handler’s Certificate, are able to budget and cook homemade meals. Eligible youth are able to participate in the honor room every day for two (2) hours, and spend their leisure time playing video games, reading books, watching movies and learning basic life skills, such as cooking and cleaning. Merced County Probation will work to strengthen and grow this safe and secure space by allowing it to also serve as a private, de-escalation space. We will add fidget toys, stress balls, aromatherapy and writing supplies for youth to access while they meet privately with a clinical staff.

Long Term Facility Plan

Merced County Probation is committed to creating spaces that foster rehabilitation, and encourages positive interactions between youth and staff. As we look at long-term planning, we envision a building (campus) that supports learning and training programs. This campus would offer several certification training programs through our partnerships with our local education department and colleges. As secure youth are able to transition into a step-down or reentry program, they will have the opportunity to access additional programming in the community to assist in the continuum of care process.

Designing a supportive and secure campus requires a great deal of forethought, resources, and careful planning. Unfortunately, many counties, including Merced County, have not had the funding to create state-of-the art buildings that exists in larger counties and places such as Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Creating this type of facility design will require additional funding that SB 823 is providing to counties. Most of SB 823 funds have been utilized to create and expand evidence-based programs that will help youth acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to live successful, crime free lives.

Nevertheless, Merced County Probation recognizes that effective planning and service delivery will need to bridge different stakeholders, agencies, services, and supports.