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# Office of Youth and Community Restoration

## Winter 2023 Newsletter

The mission of the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) is to promote trauma responsive, culturally informed services for youth involved in the juvenile justice system that support the youths' successful transition into adulthood and help them become responsible, thriving, and engaged members of their communities with a focus on these three goals:

- Reduce the transfer of youth into the adult criminal justice system.
- Reduce racial and ethnic disparities.
- Increase community-based responses and interventions.

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## **Director's Corner**

*Greetings and Happy Winter Season!*

We are five months out from the final closure of the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). The youth remaining at DJJ will begin to transition back to counties next month and will continue to do so over the next five months. DJJ, the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), and OYCR in partnership with the County Probation Consortium Partnering for Youth Realignment, have worked to identify gaps across the state and to support the transition of youth back to their home counties in as seamless a way possible, and to identify the supports that they need to be successful. In order to understand the needs of counties, the services offered, and the housing that youth will receive in the Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTFs), my staff and I have visited 33 of the 35 SYTFs from Humboldt County to Imperial County, and met with government and community members seeking to understand the new paradigm of the W&I Code Section 707(b) youth being placed either in their county or near their county for rehabilitation services, programs, and healing that prepares them for successful reentry back into their home counties.

Our county liaisons are working across the state to identify technical assistance needs from the counties, and our data and research team continues to develop and identify data sources to document outcomes related to California's new approach to youth justice. Finally, we have launched an OYCR Educational Advisory Committee with our first meeting to be held in February to begin to map out educational and vocational pathways for SYTF youth both in and out of custody. Please reach out to us if you have any questions or suggestions on how to improve the lives of our youth during this important time of transition.

## **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Administrator Ryan's Visit**

On December 9, 2022, OYCR convened leaders across the California Health and Human Services Agency, the California Department of Social Services, the Office of the California Surgeon General, and the California Department of Rehabilitation to engage with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Administrator [Liz Ryan](#). Attendees heard her vision, received an overview of priorities and Administrator Ryan answered questions about her administration's programs. OYCR also held a separate meeting with Administrator Ryan, inviting a wide range of stakeholders from Sacramento and the Bay area, including representatives of the judiciary, probation, community-based organizations, attorneys, other state agencies, and local leaders. Below is a photo of Health and Human Services partners and OYCR staff with Administrator Liz Ryan (back row, second from right) during the visit.



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## **OYCR Technical Assistance Initiative: Ending the Incarceration of Girls**

The Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) of the California Health & Human Services Agency and the Vera Institute of Justice announced the opening of the competitive application process for a statewide technical assistance effort: Ending Girls' Incarceration in California Action Network ("the Network"). The Network aims to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, the incarceration of girls in the state of California. This groundbreaking collaboration will offer four counties—led by their probation offices in collaboration with other system leaders—the opportunity to receive funding from OYCR and technical assistance from the Vera Institute of Justice to implement equitable policies and gender-responsive programs for girls and gender-expansive youth.

"This is the right moment to transition girls and gender-expansive youth out of the juvenile justice system," said Judge Katherine Lucero (Ret.), Director of the Office of Youth and Community Restoration. "We have long known that programs in the youth justice system simply haven't worked for girls, who are frequently held in custody for reasons other than public safety. With funding from OYCR and expertise in youth justice policies and gender-responsive programming from the Vera Institute of Justice, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform our youth justice system, not just for girls, but for all youth." [Get more details and read the full press release.](#)

- To review the application process, including the application deadline, visit Vera's dedicated [website](#).
- To attend the informational webinar at 10 am PST on February 7, 2023, [register](#) today.
- Read the Imprint's [article](#) regarding Santa Clara County's successes and this groundbreaking collaboration.



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Here is a poem from Free Minds, an incarcerated poet

### “My Mural” – A Poem by Youth “D.S.”

“If I had the opportunity to design a mural mine would be a tribute to the mothers Mothers from all over the diaspora, mothers from Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean, and the U.S. The mothers on the mural are teachers, because mothers are our first teachers. I would have Ida B. Wells, Maya Angelou, one of our strongest poetic voices. Assata Shakur would be in the middle standing on the Globe. She represents the struggle for freedom by any means necessary. You already know the Free Minds women are on there. Along with the sistaz from Black Lives Matter. Behind the Free Minds family would be the poem I know why the caged bird sings. There would be faces you wouldn’t know because all mothers are important. I would have Nina Simone and Billie Holiday and Lauryn Hill Front and center. Nina and **Billie** singing about strange fruit. Lauryn telling us why you just lost one. Meshell Ndegeocello can play the bass. While Nikki Giovanni is explaining through her poetry why Tupac was important. My mural is a living mural so I would like for it to grow. I would like to add more faces and poems. We already call Earth Mother Earth, we call nature Mother Nature. I believe if there is a God, she’s a woman. Women give birth to everything; the female aspect is the most important. So my mural is about mothers giving birth to movements, Important moments in history, art, science, and math. Like the sistaz from Hidden Figures and the first black woman in space. Most of all I want my mural to represent the strength and resilience of our Mothers, our sisters, our Queens.”

## Introducing New OYCR Staff

We are growing! OYCR is excited to share that we have hired staff in the Research and Data Unit and Ombudsperson Division.

**Christian Lucchesi** joined the OYCR Research Unit as a Research Data Specialist I. Christian is a trained evaluator and business psychologist from West Allis, Wisconsin. He has worked in the private, non-profit, and academic industries conducting research and building capacity in organizations to use data and lived experiences for program planning and implementation. He is excited to support the initiatives of the Office of Youth and Community Restoration using data and methodologies to promote human-centered and compassionate services. Christian earned his master’s degree from the University of Wisconsin – Stout located in Menomonie, WI, in applied psychology with a focus on industrial and organizational psychology and program evaluation. His professional interests include interpersonal communication, knowledge-sharing and facilitation practices, participatory evaluation methodologies, and data visualization.

**Ahmed Nemr** joined OYCR as the Staff Services Manager II, Division of the Ombudsperson. Prior to joining OYCR, he was a manager at the Office of Foster Care Ombudsperson for over five years overseeing the helpline, case management system, and reporting, in addition to the core function of the Office which is investigating and informally resolving complaints impacting foster youth, increase awareness about foster youth rights, and make recommendations to help support systemic change. Ahmed has been working in the fields of Social Services, and Mental Health for over fifteen years in the micro and macro levels in



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community-based organizations, and government settings. He has extensive child welfare, and mental health knowledge and experience, direct practice work with juvenile sex offenders, emotionally disturbed children, and adult with mental health in a psychiatric health facility. Ahmed has a Bachelor of Art in Social Work. He enjoys watching soccer games, news, playing tennis, and swimming in his free time.

## **Notable Legislative Updates**

### **Petition Dismissal**

The juvenile court can now exercise its discretion under [Welf. & Inst. Code sec. 782](#) and dismiss a petition any time after filing, and regardless of whether it was sustained at trial, by admission, or through a plea agreement.

### **Clear and Convincing Evidence for Transfer to Adult Court**

[Welf. & Inst. Code sec. 707](#) now requires the judge to find by clear and convincing evidence that a minor is not amenable to juvenile court rehabilitation before it can transfer the case to adult court. This is a higher standard and may mean more youth will remain in juvenile court.

### **Electronic Monitoring & Custody Credits**

Newly added [Welf. & Inst. Code sec. 628.2](#) ensures youth who are released from custody and placed on electronic or GPS monitoring will now receive custody credits for each day or part of a day they are supervised. Also, if a minor is supervised on electronic monitoring for more than 30 days, the court must hold a hearing at 30-day intervals to ensure the minor is not being monitored for an unreasonable period of time.

## **San Bernadino SYTF wins Challenge Award**

San Bernadino's A Restorative Integration for Successful Engagement (ARISE) SYTF won a California State Association of Counties (CSAC) award. This program was developed and implemented by California's 58 counties to honor the dedicated county leaders and employees who work to improve our communities each year. CSAC's judging panel reviewed 370 entries spotlighting the most innovative programs developed by California's Counties this past year. Congratulations [San Bernardino County Probation Department!](#)

## **Technical Assistance Corner**

The OYCR Technical Assistance and County Coordination Division is grateful for the opportunity to join Director Lucero on the 31 visits to the Secure Youth Treatment Facilities that are home to our youth returning from DJJ and that have been housing others since SB 823 went into effect in July 2021. In the months to come, the County Coordination (CC) Unit will be reaching out to the counties that do not have their own SYTF to meet with them as well, and to meet with the diverse and plentiful community-based organizations, leaders, advocates and directly impacted youth and their families.

In addition to keeping a focus coordinating the SYTF visits, the TA/CC Division has spent valuable time building relations and our internal capacity, coordinated meet and greets, and responding to a variety of requests on issues of racial equity, such as the Equity Evolve Kick Off event sponsored by our CA Health and Human Services. The TA/CC Division



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attended the OJJDP State and Tribal Relations Assistance National Training Conference in San Diego and participated in the language development for the California's Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) state plan led by the Office of Tribal Affairs of the California Department of Social Services.

## **Ombudsperson Division Updates**

Our Ombudsperson Division has been busy in establishing our office. In addition to site visits, meetings with probation, community members we have had the opportunity to meet with youth in various counties. We have been working on setting up our case management system so we will be better able to manage and track our investigations. We have been out across the state following up on complaints we have received on our hotline and more. Please keep a look out as we will be posting positions to build up our team in the near future. Please contact us with any questions or concerns. Our hotline number is: 1-844-402-1880 or email us at: [OYCRombuds@chhs.ca.gov](mailto:OYCRombuds@chhs.ca.gov)

## **BSCC Juvenile Regulations Revision Is Underway**

The Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) has started the process of reviewing and revising the juvenile facility regulations. The second meeting of the Executive Steering Committee is March 23, 2023. Visit the BSCC's [website](#) for materials and additional information.

Director Lucero is chairing the Juvenile Regulations Revision Executive Steering Committee (ESC) Subcommittee on Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTF) Regulations. This Subcommittee will take direction from the [2022 Juvenile Titles 15 and 24 Regulations Revision Executive Steering Committee](#), review minimum standards in Titles 15 and 24 and create proposed regulations revisions that address the operations, design, or construction of SYTF facilities. All Subcommittee recommendations will be presented to the ESC for their consideration.

Stay tuned for more information on the announcement of Subcommittee members and meetings by joining the OYCR email list by emailing [OYCR@chhs.ca.gov](mailto:OYCR@chhs.ca.gov) and by consulting the BSCC [website](#).

## **Health Agency News Highlights**

### **BHCIP Grant Applications Open**

The Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) Round 5: Crisis and Behavioral Health Continuum Grant [Request for Application](#) has been released and is now available. DHCS will award \$480 million in projects to address significant crisis care gaps in California's behavioral health (mental health and substance use disorder [SUD]) infrastructure, with consideration for funding priority to those that provide crisis services to individuals in need. The application submission portal opened Thursday, November 3, 2022, and applications are now due February 13, 2023.



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## **Open Positions in OYCR and CalHHS Departments**

- OYCR is seeking a [Grants Management Specialist](#) (Staff Services Manager I Specialist) to lead OYCR's work in offering and seeking grants to enhance racial, ethnic and gender equity services for court-involved and justice system-involved youth and improve county and local programs throughout California. Applications will be accepted through February 16, 2023.
- OYCR is in the process of hiring two Research Data Specialist II. The recruitment was extended through January 18, 2023, and interviews will soon be in progress.
- The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS/Health Care Delivery Systems Program) is looking for a mission-driven, exceptionally motivated individual to serve as the [Policy Advisor for Homelessness and Housing](#) within its Health Care Delivery Systems program. The recruitment is continuous and is open until filled.

### **OYCR Partner Open Positions**

CCJBH is seeking a Health Program Specialist I (HPS) - 1 limited-term position who will act as a highly skilled technical subject expert in support of behavioral and physical health care policies and programs. The HPS I will perform special projects related to program development and management, contract development and monitoring, and support the Council to identify best practices of program models.

This position is limited term/full-time with the possibility of becoming permanent and is posted until filled. Visit the CalCareers job [posting](#) to learn more.

Please continue to share with your networks. Stay tuned for more OYCR opportunities.

### **Stay Connected with OYCR**

Please email us at [OYCR@chhs.ca.gov](mailto:OYCR@chhs.ca.gov) and request to be added to OYCR's email list.

Thanks for all that you do to serve our youth,

**Katherine Lucero, Director**

Office of Youth and Community Restoration  
California Health and Human Services Agency

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