

# OYCR New Year Newsletter

## Director's Letter

As we kick off the new year, we reflect on the progress OYCR has made in our work to transform California's youth justice system.

In 2023, we entered a new era of county-based care for all youth in the juvenile justice system. By providing technical assistance, resources, training, policy leadership, and highlighting best practices, OYCR has been honored to serve as a partner for counties and communities as they develop the necessary programs and infrastructure to care for our youth. We completed our visits to every secure youth treatment facility in the state which included meeting with leadership from every county probation department, and we also met with various youth-serving statewide and local community-based organizations (CBOs).

As we move forward, we will continue building bridges and establishing strong partnerships across the youth justice system which includes behavioral health, educators, vocational partners, social workers, treatment providers, youth advocates, judges, defenders, and district attorneys as well as probation officers.

Last year, we also provided monumental funding to increase CBO capacity and empower communities to care for youth, including the launch of a [\\$3 million project](#) to provide grants and technical assistance to CBOs. We know from our field experience, juvenile justice research, brain science, and data that longer youth incarceration times **do not** equate to better public safety outcomes. That's why OYCR is committed to investing in the development and expansion of community infrastructure to ensure youth transition into Less Restrictive Programs as soon as their individualized treatment plans are fulfilled, and their treatment teams recommend it.

We are energized as we continue our work of creating a more equitable California and making sure our most vulnerable youth grow up to be healthy, successful adults through restorative justice and positive youth development models.



**Judge Katherine Lucero (ret.) Director**

Office of Youth and Community Restoration

California Health and Human Services Agency.

## 2023 Highlights

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### Ending Girls' Incarceration

OYCR partnered with the Vera Institute of Justice to launch [the Ending Girls' Incarceration](#) Action Network, a 4-county pilot project that aims to zero out the incarceration of girls and gender-expansive youth. Since the program launched in April, Los Angeles, San Diego, Imperial, and Sacramento counties have been developing gender-responsive programming and working toward ultimately ending the incarceration of girls and gender expansive youth who do not pose a risk to public safety.

### Youth Bill of Rights

In collaboration with youth, probation officers, child welfare organizations, and other stakeholders, OYCR developed standardized materials presenting the Youth Bill of Rights in age-appropriate language. They are currently available on our [website](#) in English and Spanish, and will be mailed out to counties in the coming weeks. To request copies of posters or brochures, please contact [OYCRombuds@chhs.ca.gov](mailto:OYCRombuds@chhs.ca.gov) or call 1-844-402-1880.

## **Rising Scholars**

Through AB 417, California community colleges have received more than [\\$15 million](#) to support higher education opportunities for youth in detention settings and increase the number of justice-involved students participating and succeeding in community colleges. Research shows that postsecondary education is the most effective pathway to reduce recidivism and increase employment.

## **Less Restrictive Program Grants**

OYCR is awarding grants to county probation departments and community partners to fund innovative approaches to transitioning youth from Secure Youth Treatment Facilities to less restrictive programs as soon as it is deemed appropriate by the youth's care team and the court. Funds are awarded in the range of \$100,000 – \$200,000 per youth to provide 24 months of support and strategically targeted services.

## **Data Partnerships**

In the past year, the OYCR Data and Research Division has fostered diverse partnerships, including with the California Tribal Families Coalition, the Vera Institute of Justice, and various county probation departments. These collaborations have enabled us to extend support and technical assistance in research initiatives.

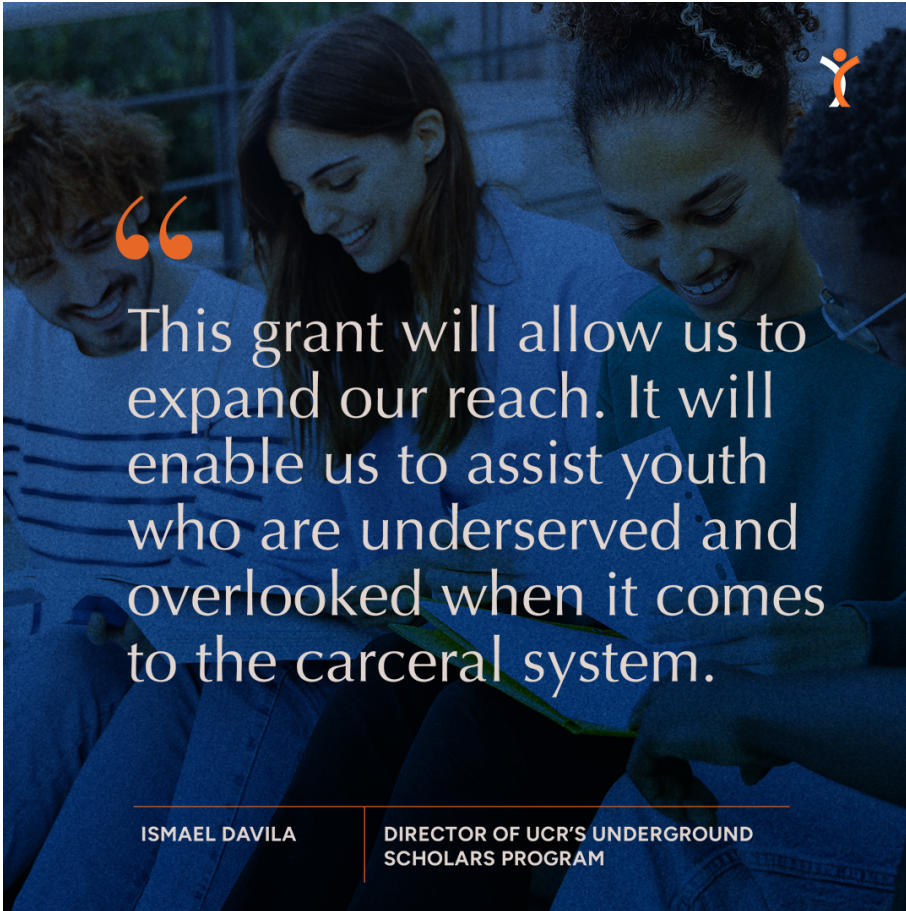
## Recent News

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### **California Awards \$150 Million to Support Mental Health Programs for Youth and Young Adults**

As part of Governor Gavin Newsom's [Master Plan for Kids' Mental Health](#), The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) awarded \$150 million in grants to 262 organizations to support the mental health and wellness of children, youth, and young adults. California also [introduced](#) the Certified Wellness Coach program and [website](#) to support overall physical, emotional, and mental well-being, and build a more diverse behavioral health workforce to help children and youth. [Read the Governor's press release.](#)



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This grant will allow us to expand our reach. It will enable us to assist youth who are underserved and overlooked when it comes to the carceral system.

ISMAEL DAVILA

DIRECTOR OF UCR'S UNDERGROUND  
SCHOLARS PROGRAM

## UCR's Prison-to-University Pipeline Program Receives \$300K Grant

In a massive victory for youth and education, the [Underground Scholars](#) program at UC Riverside received a \$300,000 grant from the [California Wellness Foundation](#) to help youth who are court-involved succeed in college.

Underground Scholars is a prison-to-university pipeline program that supports youth who are formerly incarcerated or have been directly affected by a family member's incarceration. [Read the press release on UCR's website.](#)

## Upcoming Events

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### **Credible Messenger Mentoring Movement**

February 5, 2024, 12:00 – 2:00 pm PST

OYCR Special Consultant LaRon Dennis will provide an introduction to credible messenger mentoring and its efficacy research. Clinton Lacey, President and CEO of Credible Messenger Mentoring Movement, will then discuss the necessary components to establish a successful credible messenger mentoring program. [RSVP here.](#)

### **Victims and the Justice System: Myths, Facts, and New Solutions to Better Serve Them**

March 4, 2024, 12:00 – 2:00 pm PST

Lenore Anderson, Co-founder and President of Alliance for Safety and Justice, will be joining OYCR Director Katherine Lucero. They will discuss why the current juvenile justice system has failed victims, what myths and facts remain, and how the system can do better. [RSVP here.](#)

## Past Webinars

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### **OYCR Webinar: High Quality Education for Incarcerated Youth**

December 4, 2023

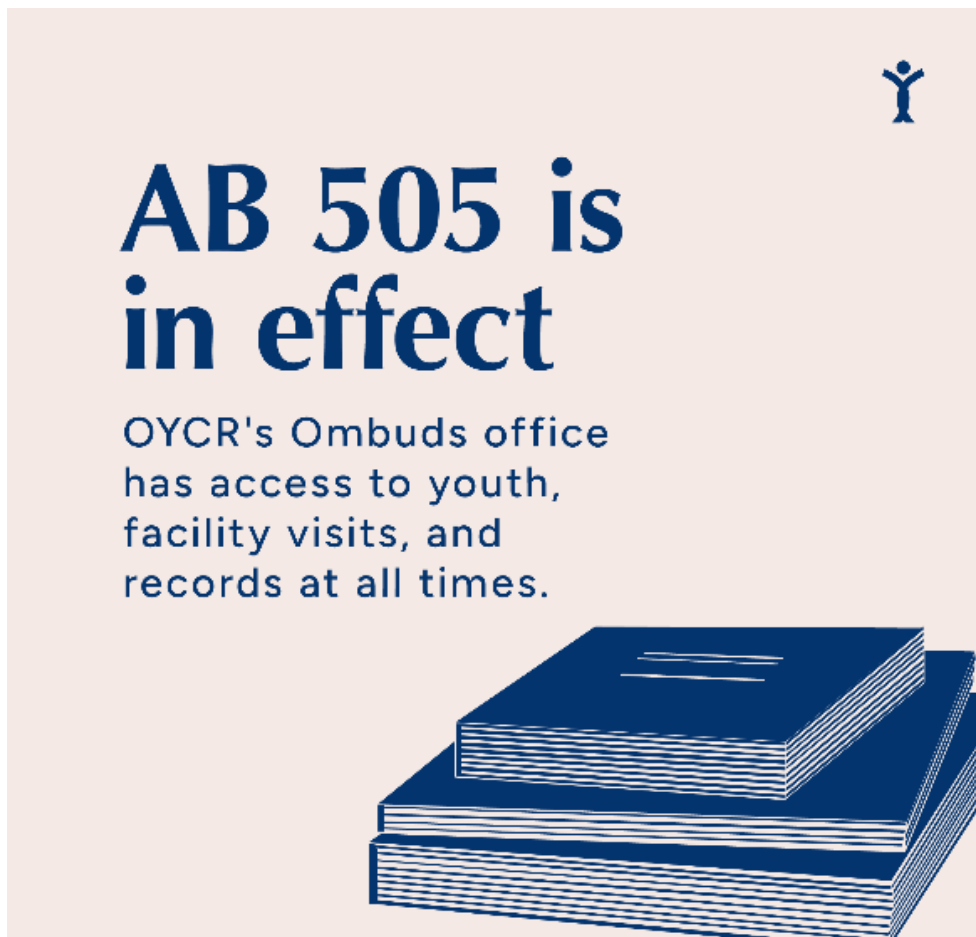
A panel of legal experts, policy advocates, and education leaders from Rising Scholars; Youth Law Center; California County Superintendents; Forward Change; and San Diego, Mendocino, and Los Angeles County Offices of Education joined OYCR Director Katherine Lucero and Dr. Michael Massa, OYCR Education Subject Matter Expert. They discussed effective higher education pathways for youth in juvenile detention settings, offer guidance

around individualized education services, and identify a range of resources available to them. [View links to webinar information and recordings on our website.](#)

## **OYCR Webinar: Juvenile Justice Legal Updates**

January 8, 2024

David Steinhart, Commonwealth Juvenile Justice Program Director, joined OYCR Special Consultant LaRon Dennis to provide an update on the legislation passed in 2023, including some relevant foster care and criminal justice legislation, and appellate cases that will affect juvenile justice. [View links to webinar information and recordings on our website.](#)



## OYCR Webinar: AB 505

January 19, 2024

OYCR Ombudsperson Alisa Hartz joined OYCR Director Katherine Lucero and OYCR Data Research Specialist Christian Lucchesi to provide an update on AB 505 and share key changes that went into effect on January 1, 2024. These changes include increased authority for the Ombudsperson and changes to the Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant (JJRBG) plan requirements. [View links to webinar information and recordings on our website.](#)

## Active OYCR Recruitment Efforts

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- OYCR is hiring an [Attorney III](#) in Sacramento County.
- Health Policy Division — OYCR is hiring a [Health Program Specialist I](#) and a [Health Program Specialist II](#) in Sacramento County.
- Systems Change and Equity Division – OYCR is hiring a [Staff Services Manager I](#) (Fresno or LA) and an [SSA/AGPA](#) in Los Angeles County.





## Partner Highlights

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### Kids in Konflikt



Kids in Konflikt (KIK) offers classes and leadership initiatives that provide our most vulnerable youth with the skills they need to succeed. Their newest project uses funding from the Sierra Health Foundation to address systemic and structural inequities that affect youth—especially youth of color—in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. This December they hosted their annual toy drive to spread joy to local families. [Visit KIK's website.](#)

### The Children's Initiative

For more than 20 years, the Children's Initiative has served as an advocate and custodian for effective policies, programs, and services that support the education, health, safety, and well-being of children and families in San Diego County and throughout California. They identify key issues affecting the health, safety, and education of San Diego youth and coordinate solutions, including by identifying funding, writing supporting legislation, and advocating local policy change. [Visit the Children's Initiative's website.](#)



## Juvenile Justice in California 1890-2023

### **Video: Juvenile Justice in California 1890-2023**

California has made monumental progress over the years in reshaping its youth justice system. OYCR is proud to oversee the transition as California moves to a community-based health and healing model.

Watch the full [California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation \(CDCR\)](#) video about the history of California's youth justice system.