



SB 823: 2025 DJJ REALIGNMENT REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“

[SB 823] is the moment we've been looking for... to make that change that we talk about.

- **Community-Based Organization
Stakeholder Respondent, 2024**

”

In 2020, the State of California enacted Senate Bill 823 (SB 823), creating a historic opportunity to fundamentally reenvision youth justice by shifting from state-level incarceration to locally driven, health-based approaches to healing and community reintegration.

This legislation responded to long-standing critiques by advocates of the state-run youth justice system, offering a path to care closer to a youth's community.

Early Key Milestones Achieved



Development of the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR), offering practice and policy technical assistance for the realigned youth justice system.



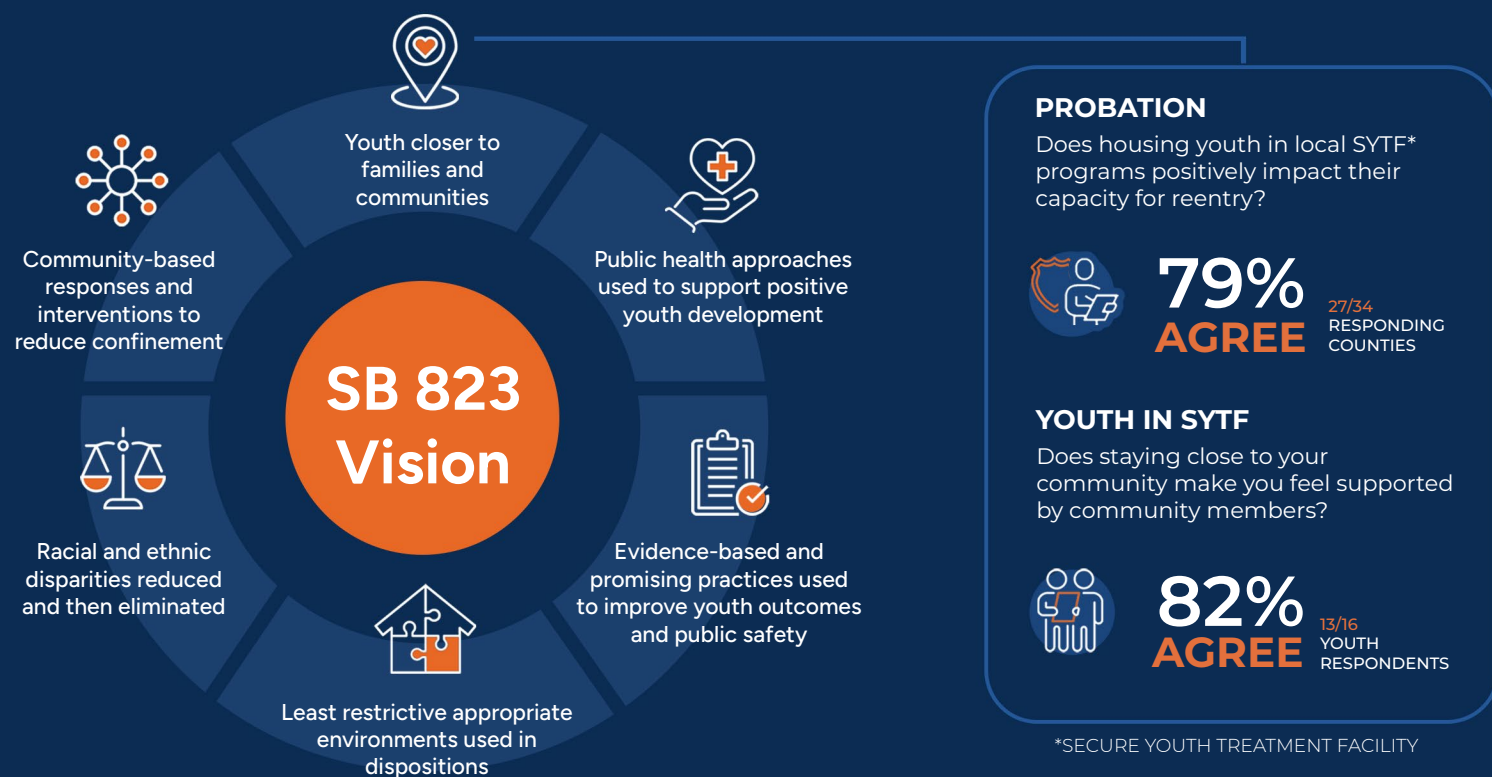
Local planning through Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council's (JJCCs) collaborative court committees, and community-led forums.



Investments to develop and adapt programming to meet the complex needs of youth over longer periods of commitment and a broader age range.



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COMPLETE
2025 DJJ
REALIGNMENT
REPORT](#)



Reform Benefits

- Enables youth greater proximity to home, maintaining or further developing connections with family and support networks
- Offers a safer, more rehabilitative option through county-based care
- Establishes a structure grounded in a strength-based approach to positive youth development
- Enhances continuity of care through stable, trusting relationships

SOURCE: STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES

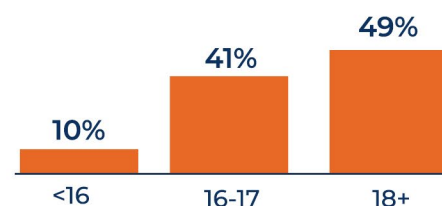
Reform Challenges

- Short timeline coinciding with COVID-19 pandemic and lack of pre-planning influenced counties' abilities to replicate services provided through the centralized DJJ system
- Inconsistent implementation across counties, with variations by county size, funding, staffing, facility type and size, local program availability, population characteristics, judicial policies and procedures, and access to resources/community providers

SYTF Demographics

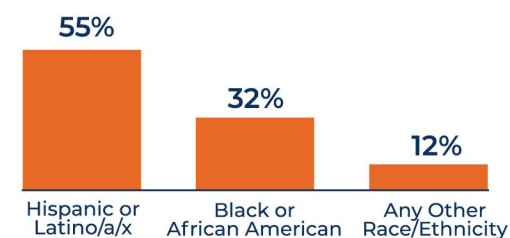
386
TOTAL SYTF YOUTH COMMITMENTS IN FY 2023-24

SYTF YOUTH COMMITMENTS BY AGE



Source: AB 102 Report

SYTF YOUTH COMMITMENTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY



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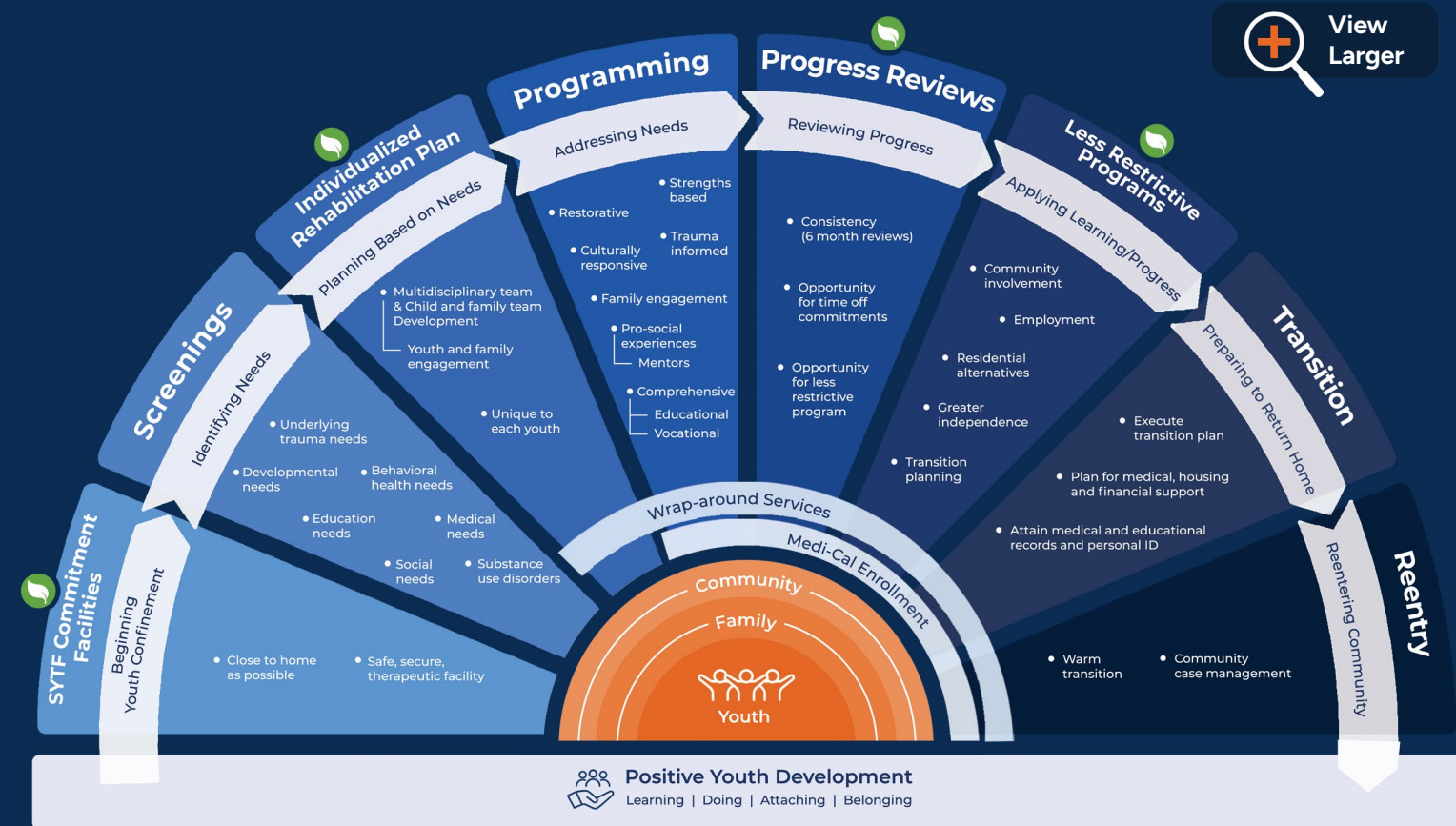
If we don't catch people before they come into the system, then I think it's our responsibility to make sure they only touch it once.

- Board of Supervisor Stakeholder Respondent, 2024

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Framework of Youth Justice in California

In partnership with UCLA, OYCR developed and disseminated the [Stepping Home Model](#). This framework outlines a comprehensive process for all youth that starts at the beginning of a youth's confinement in a SYTF and continues through their safe and successful transition back to their communities as thriving, successful young adults. The steps along the continuum for SYTF commitments and the progress made across the state in these areas can be seen below.



This report captures a snapshot of the perspective of stakeholders across the youth justice system, including the court, probation, community, board of supervisors, behavioral health providers, youth, and family, highlighting the progress that has been made.

The data sources for this reporting include:

62 Interviews with 92 Youth Justice Stakeholders

Surveys of 44 Probation Departments

Surveys/Interviews of 37 Youth with SYTF Experience*

Developed in partnership with 14 members of the Youth Advisory Board

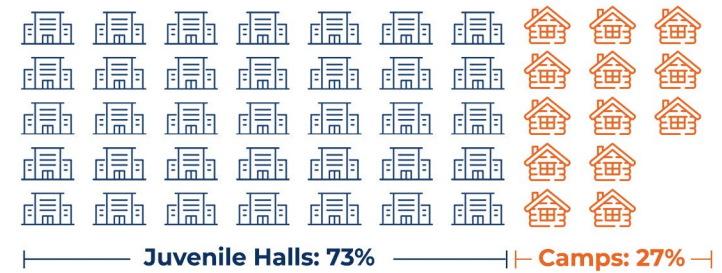
*Youth counts may contain duplicates across survey instruments

SYTF COMMITMENT FACILITIES

Counties developed secure youth treatment facilities (SYTFs) as either stand-alone facilities or units within existing county facilities. As of January 2025, 37 counties in California operate 48 SYTFs.

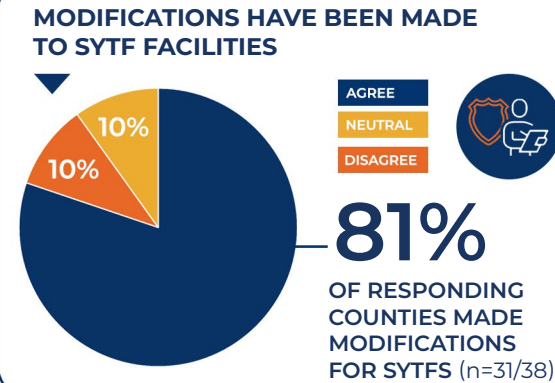
Stepping Home Model: Aims for facilities that are safe, secure, and therapeutic, encouraging a culture and environment of dignity and respect.

CA SECURE YOUTH TREATMENT FACILITIES BY LOCATION



PROGRESS ACROSS THE STATE

MODIFICATIONS TO FACILITIES

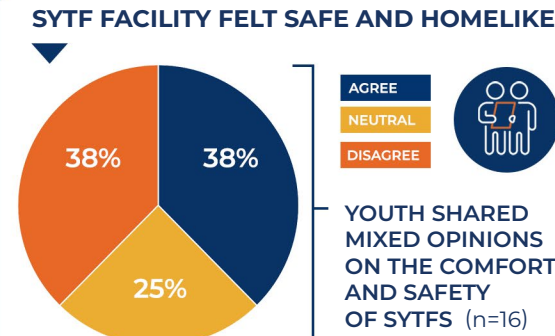


Updates Included:

- **Homelike features** (e.g., paint, carpet)
- **Security upgrades** (e.g., perimeter fencing, cameras)
- **Personalized touches** (e.g., video games, new mattresses)
- **Transportation** (e.g., vans for youth and family transport)

Despite these updates, many stakeholders emphasized that juvenile halls remain carceral settings. With the accelerated timeline, variation in resources, and lack of alternative options locally, alternative options were limited. Various facility infrastructure and limitations exist, with staffing shortages further straining program expansion and separation of youth by age or severity of offense across units, especially for small-sized counties.

YOUTH INSIGHTS

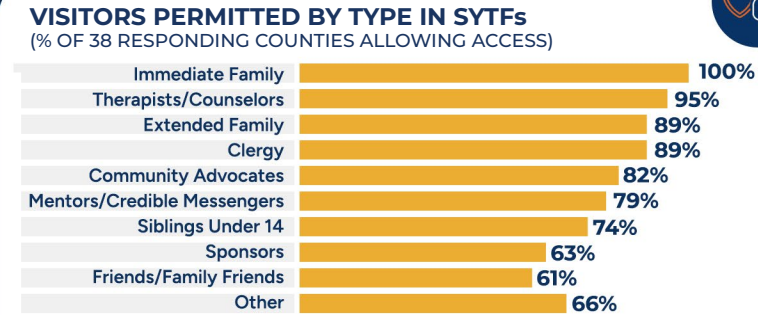


Welf. & Inst. Code § 851 states that a juvenile hall “shall be a safe and supportive homelike environment.” Youth responses highlighted a range of youth experiences, including variations due to timing of commitment and location of the facility.

“ I was in a situation where I was told I could change... people would ask, how are you this week? Is there anything you wanna talk about? ”

- Youth Respondent, 2024

VISITATION POLICIES



Some counties expanded visitation options and policies, including hours, days, events, and visitors permitted.

OYCR SUPPORT

Facility Design Support: MASS Design

STATE OF CA SUPPORT

\$110M in Funding to Build SYTF Infrastructure (YPFG; AB 178)

SCREENINGS & ASSESSMENTS

Screenings and assessments are used to identify behavioral and physical health issues youth may be experiencing and inform treatment options.

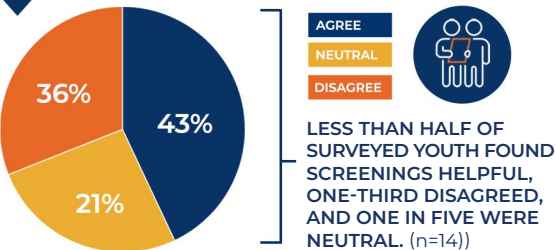
Stepping Home Model: Aims for professional neuro-psychosocial assessments for youth committed to SYTFs to identify trauma, developmental, behavioral, educational, medical, social, and substance abuse needs.

PROGRESS ACROSS THE STATE

Counties use a range of screenings and assessments to identify youth needs and inform IRPs (e.g., MAYSI-2, CANS, JAIS, and PACT). Limited standardization across tools and administration methods makes it difficult to track outcomes.

YOUTH INSIGHTS

SCREENING TOOLS IDENTIFY NEEDS AND HELP MEET THEM THROUGH LINKAGE TO SERVICES



Youth focus group participants emphasized that screenings can feel dehumanizing, especially when considering they are administered during transition periods -- a time when they are in a foreign environment with heightened levels of anxiety and stress, administered by an unfamiliar person, and without a chance to include their voice in the process. These conditions contribute to making them feel labeled.

OYCR SUPPORT

Use of Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS)

STATE OF CA SUPPORT

Alignment of CANS tool through Cal-Aim BH-CONNECT

INDIVIDUALIZED REHABILITATION PLANS (IRPS)

Within 30 days of a youth’s commitment to a SYTF, the court must develop and approve a youth’s IRP to outline individual programming and services that best meet their needs.

Stepping Home Model: Aims for whole person case plan development utilizing family and community support teams that address both the youth’s physical health as well as treatments and supportive services.

PROGRESS ACROSS THE STATE

Counties are using both **multidisciplinary teams (MDTs)** and **child and family teams (CFTs)** to aid in creating the tailored guide to a youth’s goals and services:

MDTs
36 of 38 Counties

CFTs
32 of 38 Counties

Counties’ development processes and templates vary. Multiple stakeholders, including youth, valued the collaboration and structure the plans provide but felt the plans were formulaic.

Benefits	Challenges
- Set goals - Track progress - Used for time off commitments	- Too broad - Not reflective of individual needs

“ But what has really helped was getting to develop my own program. My own plan. There are things that I still need to do, things that I can implement for my own structure. ”

- Youth Respondent, 2024

Youth expressed benefits and limitations to developing IRPs. Some felt the treatment plan helped them understand what is required to reach their goals and others felt their input was overlooked, making the process feel more like a formality than a truly personalized approach.

LOCAL SYTF PROGRAMMING



In partnership with community-based organizations, public agencies, and probation departments, programming and services play a central role in the rehabilitative mission for youth in SYTFs.

Stepping Home Model: Aims for restorative, strengths-based programming that promotes youth accountability and healing, fosters positive peer connections and mentorship, and supports healthy development.

PROGRESS ACROSS THE STATE

THREE MAJOR FACTORS HAVE REQUIRED SHIFTS IN SYTF PROGRAMMING:

Older populations (now up to 25)

impacts the need for expanded educational and vocational opportunities

Longer length of stay (can be up to 7 years)

impacts the need for additional program options and programs of greater duration

Local responsibility for treatment

impacts the need for substance use, sexual behavior, gang intervention, and serious mental health treatment programs

95%

of counties increased capacity for one or more services (36/38)

66%

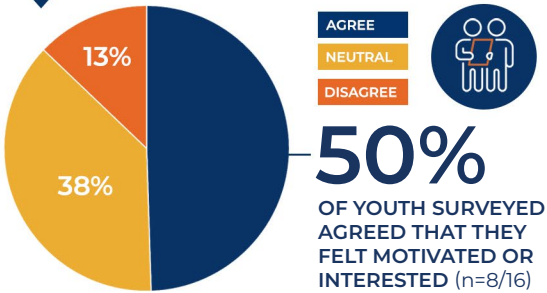
counties added at least one new service for SYTF youth (25/38)

Examples provided by stakeholder groups of programs and their impact across four key Positive Youth Development domains.

PROGRAMMING DOMAIN	HIGHLIGHT	SUCCESS STORY	OYCR SUPPORT
 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING	44 college programs across the state participate in Rising Scholars for youth. 87% of counties (34/39) provide access	A youth who acquired an associate's degree was subsequently accepted to the University of California, Berkeley to pursue a four-year degree.	Building Higher Education Pathways Report Literacy Intervention Pilot Program Educational Health Dashboard for CA Juvenile Court Schools
 EMPLOYMENT & VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMING	Young people with disabilities have more opportunities for education and career successes, due to a partnership between Department of Rehabilitation and OYCR. As of May 2025, 77 youth in nine counties have received services.	After participating in an entrepreneurship program where a youth learned skills to develop a business model, do taxes, and adhere to labor laws, he launched a successful window washing business and is now employing others in the community.	California Conservation Corps (CCC) Partnership Department of Rehabilitation Partnerships
 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING PROGRAMMING	On January 26, 2023, California became the first state to offer targeted Medicaid services for youth in juvenile correctional facilities up to 90 days prior to release.	A youth developed and submitted a proposal to probation for a guide dog training program. This program was implemented in the juvenile facility. The dogs remain with the youth 24/7, encouraging responsibility, connection, and comfort.	Implementation and sustainability support with: CYBHI, Proposition 1, BH-CONNECT, Safe Spaces, Cal-MAP
 RELATIONSHIPS & COMMUNITY-ORIENTED PROGRAMMING	The Credible Messengers program provides SYTFs youth access to mentors with lived experience. 97% of counties stated they offer mentorship opportunities. Several counties specifically highlighted the value of the Credible Messengers approach. (37/38)	A judge highlighted how a group of youth who graduated from DJJ and SYTFs are now working as advocates through the Anti-Recidivism Coalition, and are serving as Credible Messengers, using their lived experience to support and mentor others.	Credible Messenger Expansion and Sustainability Initiative (CM3)

YOUTH INSIGHTS

YOUTH MOTIVATION & INTEREST IN SYTF PROGRAMMING



Youth shared that academic and vocational training, such as college preparation, apprenticeship programs, and Rising Scholars were the most beneficial programs. Others highlighted programs that provide real-life context, emotional support, and community engagement.

However, some youth felt programs were not truly rehabilitative and felt more like a formality than an opportunity for growth.

OYCR SUPPORT

[Juvenile Justice Toolkit \(RAND\)](#)

STATE OF CA SUPPORT

\$15M earmarked through Rising Scholars for juvenile-justice-impacted youth

\$4B+ for CYBHI and Safe Spaces; additional support through Proposition 1 and Cal-Map

I think the programs she is in are absolutely amazing. And I don't think she would be doing as well as she is without them.

- Family Respondent, 2024

I'm seeing young people be involved... and respond to the folks they're working with in a way I haven't seen before.

- Court Stakeholder Respondent, 2024

PROGRESS REVIEW HEARINGS



A new judicial mandate requires review hearings to assess the youth's progress on their treatment, at least every 6 months. With positive progress, youth can receive up to six months off their baseline commitment and/or be moved to a less restrictive program (LRP).

STAR Court Model: Aims for a safe environment for youth conducted in a collaborative, trauma-informed manner.

PROGRESS ACROSS THE STATE

Counties vary in stakeholder involvement, incorporation of youth voice, and time-off commitment decisions. Stakeholders overall described the reviews as valuable, especially for shared accountability and cross-collaboration. However, the hearings can be emotionally difficult for the youth and victims and variation in time-off commitment decisions can be perceived as unfair.

STAKEHOLDERS DESCRIBED PRACTICES:

- Including community providers and peer advocates in progress hearings
- Purchasing formal attire for youth and ensuring they have space to communicate their progress through the method that is most comfortable to them (e.g., vision boards, letter, presentation)
- Offering 90-day progress reviews between the standard 180-day reviews to allow the team to assess progress and adapt before the hearing that considers time-off commitments

When youth actually start programming, the focus shifts not to the bad they've done, but the good... And there's something that I think motivates them to continue receiving praise that perhaps they didn't receive before

- Court Stakeholder Respondent, 2024

YOUTH INSIGHTS

Many youth felt that the process was formulaic. They reinforced the importance of youth voice in the review hearings

The six-month reviews with the county judge should feel more personal and engaging, focusing on real progress and challenges rather than just checking off boxes.

- Youth Respondent, 2024

OYCR SUPPORT

[Funding for Progress Review Hearing Best Practices](#) (Los Angeles Justice Partners)

LESS RESTRICTIVE PROGRAMS (LRPS)



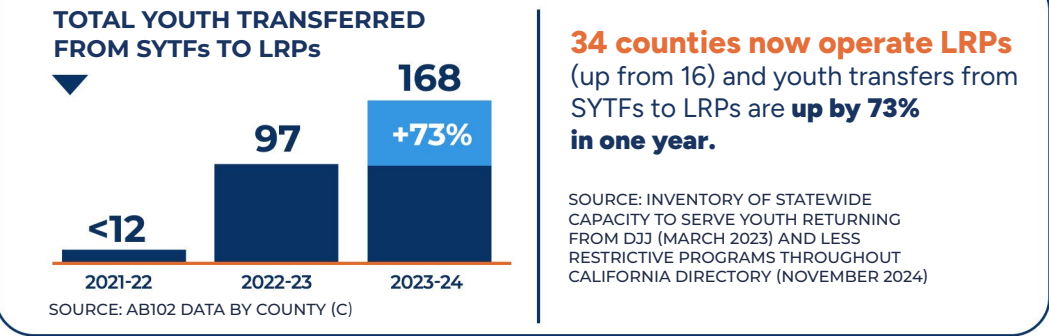
LRPs offer more freedom and independence than in SYTFs, helping youth apply new skills in real-world settings with ongoing supervision and structure. Youth in LRPs receive day-for-day credit off their baseline commitment.

Stepping Home Model: Aims for providing gradual less restrictive programming (i.e., more access to the community) until they are ultimately placed at home where restrictions are removed and their commitment is completed.

PROGRESS ACROSS THE STATE

Not all counties currently have or use LRPs, though this has been expanding. Stakeholders described challenges to their creation including accessing consistent, reliable funding to support LRP development in addition to gaps in staffing and partnerships in the community to provide oversight.

LRP USE EXPANDING



“She was in... transitional housing. I think that did a lot of good getting her adjusted to being back... and helped normalize getting her into society.”

- Family Respondent, 2024

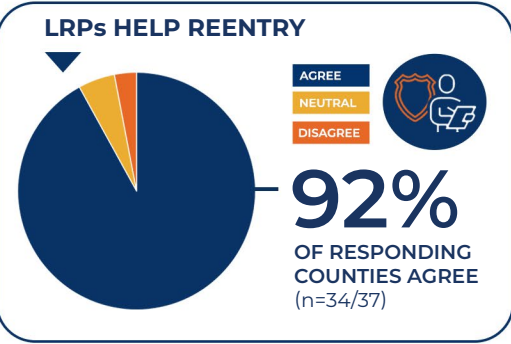
LRPs can either be in a facility (governed by Title 15 standards) or outside of a facility (not governed by Title 15 standards). Common types include:

	RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS	These can be community or county based and offer a structured, supervised living environment outside of a secure facility.
	ELECTRONIC MONITORING	Youth live at home independently while being monitored through electronic devices with wraparound teams for high touch support.
	FIRE CAMPS	Youth may be placed in state-run camps such as Pine Grove where they receive firefighter training, or local-run fire camps.
	ENVIRONMENTAL/ VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS	State-run programs like California Conservation Corp (CCC) provide hands-on environmental or job readiness training.



21/44 counties shared benefits to youth in LRPs

Education, Vocational Training and Employment Support (n=14)	Opportunities to build life skills, pursue higher education, and gain real-world experience, helping youth develop employable skills and strong work habits.
Housing and Independent Living Skills (n=10)	Transitional housing and programs that allow for independent living, learning practical skills, or preventing return to unfit environments. One county noted that “... LRP programs with housing are extremely beneficial, as youth prefer not to return to the same home environment from which they came.”
Step-down Models and Community Integration Programs	Programs that gradually transition youth from custody using monitoring and structured strategies.



YOUTH INSIGHTS: Youth emphasized the importance of LRPs, noting benefits such as building important connections, developing healthy habits, and gaining independence. They recommended incorporating peer mentorship opportunities and clearly defined timelines and milestones to ensure opportunities are applied equitably across youth.



Most stakeholders valued LRPs and desired to see them used more frequently, especially those outside of a SYTF.

OYCR SUPPORT

[Less Restrictive Program Grant](#)

TRANSITION PLANNING & RE-ENTRY SUPPORT



Transition planning begins at least six months before reentry, with many counties beginning this process a minimum of one year prior. This can include medical coordination, housing and financial support, job acquisition, compilation of paperwork (e.g., IDs and transcripts), and strategies for warm hand-offs.

Stepping Home Model: Aims for pre-release engagement with community health and resources that address social determinants of health.

PROGRESS ACROSS THE STATE



93%

OF COUNTIES OFFER TRANSITION PLANNING FOR YOUTH IN SYTF PROGRAMS (n=41/44)

Transition plans include:

- Medical, housing, and financial support,
- Acquiring medical, educational, and identification records
- Family reunification counseling, when appropriate

Some counties are able to provide youth with stipends for housing and/or work (to purchase uniforms, licenses, etc.)

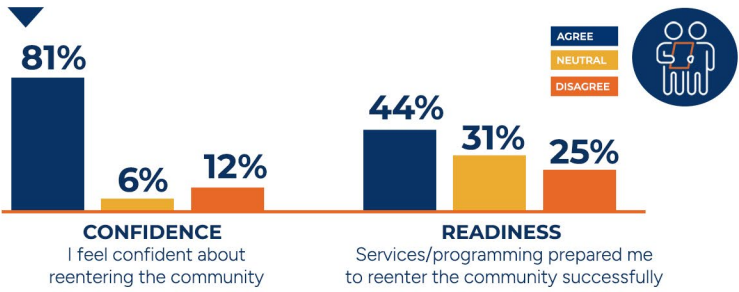
Counties have begun transition planning earlier in the process, established multidisciplinary teams to coordinate reentry support, increased partnerships, and engaged in collaborative efforts to support continued education and/or employment opportunities post-release. Some counties have begun tapping into Medi-Cal Juvenile-Involved Reentry Initiative funding to expand access to behavioral health care and continuity of service.



Stakeholders described challenges in reentry support including instability of a youth's employment, negative or toxic home environments, and housing barriers (e.g., lack of safe housing opportunities in a youth's budget, transitional housing for youth under 18, and limited space to build housing units dependent upon county).

YOUTH INSIGHTS

YOUTH CONFIDENCE VS. READINESS (n=16)



Many youth described feeling unprepared for life after their commitment, citing a lack of transitional housing, employment opportunities, and financial support. In turn, the youth described what contributed to their sense of confidence in preparation:

- A job and the skills to succeed in that job
- Opportunities to connect with peers and mentors with lived experience
- Access to stable housing

“If you don't change the circumstances that facilitated them making these decisions, you can't expect someone who's 15, 16, 17 to change their own life.”

- Behavioral Health Stakeholder Respondent, 2024

OYCR SUPPORT

STATE OF CA SUPPORT

[Justice Serving Network Development Initiative with Sierra Health Foundation](#)

[Juvenile Reentry Grant; Cal-Aim Justice-Involved Reentry Initiative](#)

“I have a mentor that helps people when they are released from juvenile hall and gives them a monthly stipend [and] a support system that gives them a chance when they get out.”

- Youth Respondent, 2024

“

I have those moments where... youth that were committed to this program early on really didn't come close to reaping the benefits they should have and the intent behind it ... **it breaks my heart, and it always makes me want to move faster so that the youth that are in our care currently get absolutely each and every benefit that they should have.**

- Probation Stakeholder
Respondent, 2024

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CONCLUDING SENTIMENT

Despite local and systematic gaps and barriers, stakeholders across all groups expressed a passion and commitment to the success of realigned youth. Stakeholders consistently described a strong commitment to sustaining and improving SB 823 implementation. It will take a coordinated, collaborative effort with youth at the center to ensure state and local youth justice systems and their stakeholders have the capacity, clarity, and opportunity to pursue strategies that lead to better outcomes for young people.

Interested in Learning More or Getting Involved?

- Attend a [Youth Advisory Board](#) Meeting (Public can attend on the third Monday of each month between 6:00-7:00pm.) Email: yab@chhs.ca.gov
- Join the quarterly [Youth Justice Committee](#) Meeting hosted by OYCR
- Keep up to date by signing up for the [OYCR Listserv](#)
- Look for career opportunities with [OYCR](#)

