

OYCR

Office of Youth and
Community Restoration

2025 Annual Report





Office of Youth and Community Restoration



A Message from Director Lucero

As I reflect on 2025, I am struck by how clearly OYCR's role as a capacity-builder, resource, and connector has taken shape across California. This past year, more than ever, we saw the strength of a statewide ecosystem working together to advance a rehabilitative, community-based approach to youth justice.

The progress highlighted in this report—expanded diversion programs, stronger family engagement practices, improved educational continuity, and other promising outcomes—is the result of a broad and diverse network of system partners doing essential work. That includes counties, community-based organizations, probation departments, families, and young people—our Youth Advisory Board members among them—whose invaluable insights and leadership are shaped by lived experience. OYCR does not deliver direct services; we provide structure, resources, and strategic support to help our partners do so, translating policy into practice and bringing the vision of Senate Bill 823 to life.

That vision, grounded in rehabilitation, equity, and care closer to home, continues to guide us. Through technical assistance, funding, convening, and knowledge-sharing, OYCR's five divisions and Youth Advisory Board support counties and community partners as they implement approaches that prioritize public safety as well as healing, accountability, and long-term opportunities for young people.

We are deeply grateful to the partners across the state whose leadership and commitment make this work possible. Looking ahead, OYCR remains confident in our shared direction and committed to serving as a steady and supportive presence as the system continues to evolve. The path forward will require continued collaboration, learning, and sustained investment in the people and organizations closest to young people. Together, we are building a youth justice landscape that reflects both the promise of SB 823 and the potential of every young person in California.

JUDGE KATHERINE LUCERO (RET.), DIRECTOR

Office of Youth and Community Restoration

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List of Acronyms

AB	Assembly Bill	LRP	Less Restrictive Program
ARC	Anti-Recidivism Coalition	Ombuds	Ombudsperson
CalAIM	California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal	OYCR	Office of Youth and Community Restoration
CBI	Capacity-Building Initiative	SACJJD	State Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
CBO	Community-Based Organization	SB	Senate Bill
CJJCC	California Juvenile Justice Commissioners' Collaborative	SC&E	Systems Change & Equity
CM3	Credible Messenger Mentoring Movement	SYTF	Secure Youth Treatment Facility
DJJ	Division of Juvenile Justice	TA	Technical Assistance
EGI	Ending Girls' Incarceration	UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
FY	Fiscal Year	YAB	Youth Advisory Board
HPD	Health Policy Division	YEI	Youth Employment Initiative
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act	YJA	Youth Justice Action
JI	Justice-Involved		
JJCPA-YOBG	Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act/Youthful Offender Block Grant		
LA	Los Angeles		

What It Takes for Lasting Change

Real, lasting change does not happen all at once. It is built steadily—relationship by relationship, system by system—through the patient work of people who believe something better is possible and show up every day to make it real.

Youth justice reform in California has been decades in the making, but it transformed in 2020 with the passage of [Senate Bill \(SB\) 823](#) (Chapter 337, Statutes of 2020), which established the [Office of Youth and Community Restoration \(OYCR\)](#) and set a timeline for shifting youth from the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to county care. Since then, OYCR has partnered with counties and system stakeholders to establish the infrastructure, relationships, and frameworks that ensure young people are supported and have opportunities to thrive in and out of the system—and that meaningful systems change endures for decades to come.

In 2025, OYCR’s work shifted from building to sustaining, from planning to implementation, from promise to measurable progress. Together, from secure youth treatment facilities (SYTFs) to community-based organizations (CBOs) across California’s counties, we shaped the youth justice landscape in tangible and lasting ways.

Our Mission

OYCR promotes trauma-responsive, culturally informed, gender-honoring, and developmentally appropriate services for youth involved in the juvenile justice system that support the youths’ successful transition into adulthood.

Our Vision

OYCR envisions a youth justice system framed by accountability and healing, rather than punishment, driven by on-the-ground advocates, researchers, and probation departments, alongside policy, funding, and practice changes that work together to create meaningful change.



Youth facility in Fresno County

All of OYCR's work is guided by our mission and vision and grounded in the state's continued implementation of SB 823. We see this vision coming to life across California every day: in expanded education and career pathways, in focused efforts to address racial and ethnic disparities, in fewer transfers of young people to the adult system, in strengthening CBOs so they can deliver services that truly meet young people's needs, in helping probation departments implement developmentally appropriate practices, and in the partnerships and relationships that ensure reform is not only sustained, but deeply rooted.

The scope of OYCR's work is reflected in metrics that span every division and reach across every corner of California's youth justice system, such as **technical assistance (TA)**. TA is a core way we support counties and CBOs—whether answering targeted questions or working alongside them to address more complex challenges and strengthen systems serving young people.

In 2025, OYCR responded to 213 TA requests—207 direct requests and six capacity-building requests—continuing a steady increase from 168 requests in 2024 and 70 in 2023. We worked with 52 of California's 58 counties, with requests spanning health, reentry, policy development, facility design, data reporting, and many more topics. A more detailed breakdown of request topics and county participation is included in the Appendix.

The impact of OYCR is also reflected in the relationships being built, the challenges being worked through, and the young people whose lives are

opening up for a better future. Over the course of the year, OYCR hosted twelve **Youth Justice Action (YJA)** webinars featuring leading experts, researchers, and individuals with lived experience in the justice system, covering a wide range of critical topics. These convenings are more than information-sharing events; they are spaces where the field comes together to learn, reflect, and strengthen a shared understanding of what reform requires.

In 2025, the webinar series had 1,937 unique attendees and 3,494 unique registrants across 55 counties, reflecting its expanding reach and impact in engaging diverse stakeholders throughout the state. Attendees represented a broad spectrum of roles within the juvenile justice ecosystem, including probation staff, CBO representatives, attorneys and legal advocates, members of the judiciary, behavioral health professionals, and educators. Many webinars qualify for STC (Standards and Training for Corrections), MCLE (Minimum Continuing Legal Education) credits, and continuing education credits from the Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) for licensed mental health professionals. For those unable to attend live sessions, recordings remain available on the [OYCR website](#), where OYCR's 22 webinars generated an additional 4,093 views through December 2025, extending the series' reach beyond real-time participation.

Taken together, these efforts across OYCR's divisions signal something larger than activity—they reflect a system building the capacity, knowledge, and relationships necessary to sustain change. This year's annual report explores the specific ways OYCR centered youth, strengthened collaboration across organizations and systems, and reinforced the structures and resources that carried progress forward in 2025.

Centering Youth

Centering youth is not just a programmatic priority at OYCR; it is the foundation of how the office understands its role. Every funding decision, TA engagement, and site visit begins with a simple but consequential question: how will this impact young people, their families, and the communities to which they belong? This belief, that youth are capable, worthy of investment, and essential partners in shaping the systems that affect them, drives the office's work.

In 2025, that commitment took many forms: elevating youth leadership through the Youth Advisory Board, strengthening accountability through the Ombudsperson Division, investing in rehabilitative tools like education and behavioral health treatment that improve public safety outcomes, and ensuring that reforms reflect not just compliance with policy, but genuine respect for young people's rights, dignity, and potential. System transformation is only effective when it improves the lived experiences of youth and strengthens the communities that surround them.



SPOTLIGHT

Youth Advisory Board

The [Youth Advisory Board \(YAB\)](#) occupies a unique and essential place within California's youth justice system. It represents a fundamental shift in perspective: young people are no longer the subjects of reform but active partners in shaping solutions that affect their lives and communities. When those most impacted have a genuine voice in the decisions that affect them, the system becomes more equitable, responsive, and rehabilitative. And for the young people themselves, the experience builds leadership, confidence, and a strengthened sense of agency and accountability.

For the YAB, 2025 marked a year of expanded engagement, deeper policy influence, and growing national visibility through the work that the board members led themselves.

"YAB gave me the purpose to lead and to speak for individuals like me who are just trying to make it out... I want people to know that [we] aren't lost causes; we're the future leaders. **All we need is opportunities and people to believe in us.**"



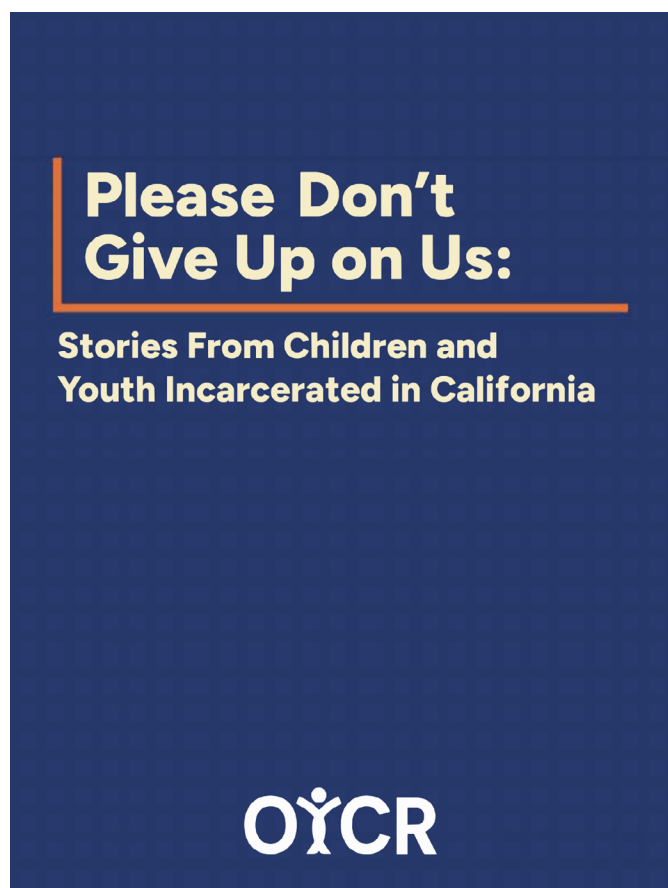
Keven,
YAB Member

Click Keven's photo to
hear more from him on
[@cal_oycr's Instagram.](#)

The YAB reached full membership in 2025, a milestone that significantly strengthened its capacity to engage consistently and represent a broader range of perspectives and lived experiences. With a complete roster of 25, the YAB was able to show up consistently for counties, state stakeholders, and national audiences alike.

Among the year's notable developments, YAB members began forming a gender-expansive subcommittee that created a dedicated space to elevate and address the specific experiences of gender-diverse young people within the justice system. This work reflects the YAB's ongoing commitment to ensuring that reform efforts do not leave anyone behind.

Published in the summer, the YAB also contributed to [Please Don't Give Up On Us: Stories from Children and Youth Incarcerated in California](#), a report commissioned by OYCR and produced by [The Social Changery](#). The report amplifies the voices and experiences of youth directly impacted by the justice system and underscores the belief in transformative approaches to care.



Report cover of "Please Don't Give Up On Us: Stories From Children and Youth Incarcerated in California"

“We must move beyond a basic reform mindset and start to **recreate, rebuild, and reclaim a community of care**. We can dismantle the systems of harm that tear down our young people, and create new ones that build them up. We can create safer and more inclusive communities that help today’s young people believe in themselves and achieve success.”

Please Don't Give Up on Us:

Stories From Children and Youth Incarcerated in California

OYCR

Youth Advisory Board,
excerpted from *Please Don't Give Up On Us: Stories from Children and Youth Incarcerated in California*

Throughout the year, YAB members served not only as advisors, but as practitioners. They provided TA to counties working to establish their own local YABs, helping them embed youth leadership at the county level and create the conditions for young people to influence decision-making closer to home.

YAB members also participated actively in research initiatives, engaged in policy discussions, and attended major convenings across California and beyond. Interest in California’s youth-led model has continued to grow nationally, and the YAB has been at the center of that story.

In 2025, YAB members even traveled to New York City to speak about California’s unique approach at the Beyond the Bar Conference, and they will return to network and share about YAB in 2026. In total, YAB members represented themselves at seven conferences throughout the year, sharing their experiences and insights with practitioners, policymakers, and advocates working on youth justice reform across the country.



YAB at the Native Roots event hosted by the Native Roots Network

Ombudsperson Division

The **Ombudsperson (Ombuds) Division** ensures that young people and those who care about them have a trusted, accessible pathway to raise concerns and seek resolution within California’s youth justice system. Its work is a direct expression of OYCR’s commitment to accountability: every youth in a juvenile facility has rights, and those rights deserve to be protected and enforced.

By offering a clear pathway for complaints to be raised, investigated, and addressed—and by conducting annual site visits to facilities across the state—the Ombuds Division helps build a system that genuinely

centers the young people it serves. In 2025, the division closed over 400 complaints, delivered presentations on its process to a wide range of stakeholders, and ensured that the Youth Bill of Rights, established by [AB 2417](#) and made accessible through OYCR’s [youth- and family-friendly version](#), was available in four additional languages (six total) and widely distributed statewide.

While detailed metrics and analysis will be published in the division’s report to the Legislature, the Ombuds Division’s work in 2025 exemplified a model of how oversight and accountability function as catalysts for genuine improvement.



Ombuds Liaison Miguel Garcia visiting a coffee cart staffed by youth who are currently incarcerated in Merced

Family Engagement Technical Assistance in Los Angeles County

One of the year's most illustrative examples of the Ombuds Division's work began in late spring of 2025, when **staff conducted in-person observations at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall in Los Angeles (LA) County** on May 31 and June 1, 2025.

In August, the OYCR Ombudsperson was invited by the LA Probation Oversight Commission to discuss the findings on visitation issues during a public meeting of the Commission. During this meeting, an LA County Probation Deputy Chief responded constructively, **requesting TA and initiating a collaborative process to strengthen visitation practices at the facility.**

Following those visits, the division sent a **formal findings and recommendation letter to the LA Chief Probation Officer**, expressing concerns about the facility's visitation policy and procedures violating youth rights. The letter was grounded in research evidence about the importance of family engagement for youth outcomes and in specific obstacles observed during the visits.

Between August 10 and September 28, **the Commission took independent action, conducting eight random inspections of county facilities.** Their observations revealed neutral to positive conditions at Barry J. Nidorf Secure Youth Treatment Facility, while identifying a range of issues at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall as well.

QUOTE FROM THE FORMAL RECOMMENDATION LETTER

"The separation of parents and children is challenging and can be traumatic for all involved, and the Department has an essential role to play in supporting ongoing positive interactions between youth and their families. The visitation policy and its implementation does not approach parents as partners in youth healing but instead sets them up to fail through complexity and lack of clarity. During the two days that I observed the visitation process, I witnessed disrupted family engagement, including the following examples..."

After their month-long observation period, **the Commission independently developed a report with their own findings and ten preliminary recommendations for improving the visitation process**—demonstrating how OYCR’s initial investigation catalyzed additional oversight and accountability well beyond what any single agency could accomplish alone.

Simultaneously, **OYCR’s Family Engagement Specialist, together with national consultants from JustSolve, engaged in a series of targeted meetings with the LA County Probation Department.** These sessions helped interpret findings, provided guidance on best practices, and informed the development of concrete, actionable strategies to strengthen family engagement at Los Padrinos. LA County Probation also requested model visitation policy language from the team, which they provided in early December 2025.

In December 2025, the **Ombuds Division returned to the Commission to present the model visitation policy language and TA guidance that had been provided to the probation department,** covering the purpose of visitation, youth and family rights, procedures, communication requirements, and special protections. This model policy offers LA County a concrete, actionable framework for ensuring that visitation practices support family engagement and youth wellbeing—rather than creating barriers to it.

The arc of this work tells an important story about how the Ombuds Division operates at its best: moving beyond individual complaint resolution to identify systemic patterns, address root causes, and provide the kind of collaborative, county-specific TA that elevates practice across the system. Through this approach, the division creates a culture of accountability where facilities understand they are open to being observed, where youth and families know their voices will be heard, and where system partners embrace and implement higher standards of care and respect.

Collaboration and Partnerships

No meaningful change can happen in isolation. In 2025, OYCR continued to function as a connective tissue within California's youth justice system: making introductions between diverse stakeholders, creating structures for ongoing coordination, and ensuring that reforms are implemented consistently and equitably statewide. This work included supporting counties and CBOs as they implement new programs, providing TA, and sharing knowledge.

But lasting reform depends on trust, relationships, and a steady hand guiding the work through complexity and setbacks. In 2025, OYCR continued to be that force for the greater youth justice ecosystem, helping partners navigate challenges and turn shared vision into concrete, meaningful improvements for youth across the state.



SPOTLIGHT

Family Engagement

Family is often the most powerful force in a young person's life—especially for those who are systems-involved. [Research](#) consistently demonstrates that when families are meaningfully involved in their child's experience in the justice system, youth experience fewer behavioral incidents, improved mental health, and higher educational achievement, in addition to reducing recidivism, supporting reentry, and helping young people reconnect with the relationships and communities that sustain them.

The LA County family engagement TA project described in the previous section reflects a broader commitment across California to centering families in the work of youth rehabilitation and reentry. That work is visible across divisions and in other counties throughout the state.

Another powerful example is the partnership between the Health Policy Division (HPD) and the [Anti-Recidivism Coalition](#) (ARC). What began as an idea in 2022 is now fully operational through **ARC's Family Engagement Services program**, supported by a \$675,502 pilot grant from OYCR, including \$400,000 awarded to date—\$200,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2024–2025 and \$200,000 in 2025–2026. The program helps families overcome the practical

and logistical barriers that often prevent them from visiting loved ones at Pine Grove and Growlersburg Conservation Camps in Amador and El Dorado counties. As of 2025, it has served more than 100 families. Beyond facilitating visits, ARC works with families to plan for what comes next for young people returning to their communities. This includes gathering vital documents, exploring programs and employment opportunities, preparing for the day-to-day realities of coming home, and beginning to heal together.

Across California, programs that center families in youth rehabilitation are growing stronger, more accessible, and more responsive thanks to partnerships, shared expertise, and strategic investments. The ARC Family Engagement Services program illustrates what's possible when agencies and CBOs co-create solutions: removing barriers to connection, supporting reentry planning, and giving families the tools to actively participate in their young person's growth. By treating families as partners in rehabilitation, these efforts strengthen the entire ecosystem around young people, improve outcomes across the board, and help communities thrive alongside the youth they support.

You can learn more about the ARC's Family Engagement Services program and hear from other partners on OYCR's [Voices of Youth Justice blog](#).



The Anti-Recidivism Coalition's Family Engagement Services program in action

Health Policy Division

The HPD strengthens the capacity of counties, CBOs, and system partners to meet the holistic needs of systems-involved youth. The HPD approaches this work with a whole-person framework, recognizing that behavioral health, physical health, and educational success are deeply interconnected pillars of rehabilitation and reentry.

Education is a critical foundation for success in and beyond the youth justice system, providing young people with the knowledge, skills, and support they need to navigate school, work, and life effectively. By integrating **educational health** into its broader portfolio in 2025, the HPD ensures that young people are equipped to fully engage in rehabilitation, reentry, and long-term opportunities.

The **Education Advisory Committee** is a central mechanism for advancing this work, meeting monthly to ensure that young people have equitable access to high-quality academic programming by sharing best practices and strengthening cross-system coordination. It brings together students with lived experience, county offices of education, higher education partners, probation departments, CBOs, and other stakeholders.

These meetings consistently uplift practical, student-centered solutions—including strengthened literacy supports, credential-aligned career and technical education pathways, and college-bridge activities that prepare students for success immediately upon release. For example, the Committee deepened its collaboration with the [Rising Scholars Network](#) in 2025, integrating frameworks to help analyze barriers to reentry, enhance credit-earning opportunities, and expand exposure to community college and four-year pathways within facilities.

Building on a successful pilot in San Diego in 2024 and strong collaboration with county education and probation partners, the HPD also expanded its **Juvenile Court School Literacy Intervention** to Alameda, San Mateo, and Riverside counties.

The initiative responds to the significant reading gaps experienced by youth in detention by strengthening evidence-based literacy instruction and supporting educators with targeted tools and professional learning. Through this work, young people develop the foundational reading skills needed to reengage academically and transition to postsecondary education, career pathways, and community reentry.

In 2025, the first year of [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 2176 implementation](#), which requires OYCR to investigate and address chronic absenteeism in Juvenile Court Schools with rates of 15 percent or higher, OYCR and the Education Advisory Committee prioritized this work across the state. Through site visits, cross-agency coordination, and tailored TA, the office worked to improve school access for youth in the counties most affected. Findings from the 2025 review cycle are detailed in OYCR's [AB 2176 report](#).

Overall, the HPD manages a **\$5.2 million portfolio** across 13 contracts that support counties and CBOs in delivering services and ensuring alignment with major state-funded initiatives.



Teachers from the Alameda County Office of Education's Juvenile Court Schools

Among the initiatives OYCR funded in 2025...

- The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) continued its work on the **Stepping Home Model**, which transitions youth from SYTFs to **less restrictive programs (LRPs)**, gradually increasing community involvement as youth achieve goals in their case plans.

The Continuum of Less Restrictive Programs

MOST RESTRICTIVE →

LEAST RESTRICTIVE

Secure Youth Treatment Facility

LRPs within Title 15-Regulated Facilities

- Educational/Vocational Furloughs
- Off-site reentry programming
- Credible Messenger mentorship

Pine Grove Fire Camp CDCR / CAL FIRE

Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTP) & Foster Family Agencies

Transitional Re-Entry Housing

Community-Based Programs

CBO-Run Home

- On-Site Staff
- Vocational/Educational
- Re-entry Programming
- Mental Health
- Family Reunification

Independent Living

- Not CBO-Run
- Vocational
- Educational
- Reentry Programming
- Mental Health
- Family Reunification

Higher-Education Based Programs

- Rising Scholars (CC)
- Project Rebound (CSU)
- Underground Scholars (UC)
- Student Dorm/Off-Campus Student Housing

Family or Kinship Homes

- with robust programming and services (may include electronic monitoring for a transition period)
- with less required programming (no electronic monitoring)

- The HPD and the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine continued collaborative work to improve the diagnosis, treatment, and services for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders—an often-unrecognized condition that profoundly affects behavior and development—within probation and child welfare systems.
- The HPD moved [Beloved Village](#)'s multi-county pilot into implementation and evaluation, advancing community-based housing and reentry alternatives specifically for girls and transgender youth at risk of incarceration.
- The HPD is supporting counties across California in developing integrated behavioral health plans by May 2026, including funding a Northern California [rural community of practice](#) to address the distinct

behavioral health challenges that arise from workforce shortages and resource constraints in rural communities.

- A new pilot program with the University of Southern California established a Youth Justice track for bachelor's degree students, pairing evidence-based training with a cross-disciplinary minor and 300 hours of applied field experience—building the next generation of practitioners with the skills and commitments the system needs.

Beyond its own funded contracts, the HPD works intentionally to ensure that major state-level behavioral health initiatives—including the [Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative](#), [California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal](#) (CalAIM), and [BH-CONNECT](#) (Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized

Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment)—are designed and implemented explicitly with youth who are systems-involved in mind. The division provides essential TA to CBOs on how to effectively leverage these state investments, including guidance on eligibility determination, Medi-Cal billing processes, and managed care plans.

The [CalAIM Justice-Involved \(JI\) Reentry Initiative](#), in particular, prepares youth exiting the justice system to successfully transition back into their communities by connecting them with essential services—like housing, transportation, medical care, and enhanced care management—both prior to release and after reintegration. The HPD provides TA and coordination to the full range of county and community partners responsible for planning, implementing, and sustaining youth reentry and health initiatives. This collaboration helps ensure that resources reach the youth who need them most, rather than getting lost in bureaucratic complexity.

But the depth of the HPD’s support cannot be captured by funding figures alone.

In 2025, the Health Policy Division...

- Maintained 38 standing meetings per month with partners across schools, behavioral health, CalAIM implementation, workforce development, and cross-system care coordination;
- Delivered more than 20 presentations to audiences ranging from county probation departments to state educational leaders;
- Hosted four webinars reaching 237 attendees;
- And developed practical resources, including fact sheets and implementation guides.

This infrastructure of consistent, reliable support is what enables partners to sustain high-quality practice even when challenges arise. When leadership changes, when funding landscapes shift, or when new policies create new questions, OYCR is able to share their knowledge and relationships.



CalAIM convening in the Central Valley

Systems Change and Equity Division

In 2025, OYCR continued to advance collaboration and equitable, durable reforms through the Systems Change and Equity (SC&E) Division. The division strengthens the office’s ability to provide hands-on support, helping counties and community partners improve policies and practices in ways that intentionally reduces disparities for youth of color and other historically marginalized young people. By working closely with those who know the system best, SC&E ensures that reform is not only well-intentioned, but practical, inclusive, and sustainable.

Three key initiatives exemplify this philosophy:

ENDING GIRLS’ INCARCERATION

In March 2025, the **Ending Girls’ Incarceration (EGI)** initiative awarded \$3.6 million in grant funding to five CBOs across Imperial, LA, Sacramento, and San Diego counties. By the end of the year, the [EGI “California Action Network”](#) was actively implementing tactics to shift practices, with early positive trends emerging. Three of the four counties had already met or exceeded the targeted 10–20% reduction in admissions projected for June 2026, while all counties have begun implementing changes to detention decision-making, alongside CBOs launching new diversion and reentry programs.

"[Being selected as part of the EGI California Action Network] validated our commitment to redefining youth justice in a rural community like [ours]. We don't have much, but the little we do have, we try to grow it and make the best out of it."



Elizabeth Sais,
Chief Probation Officer
of the Imperial County
Probation Department

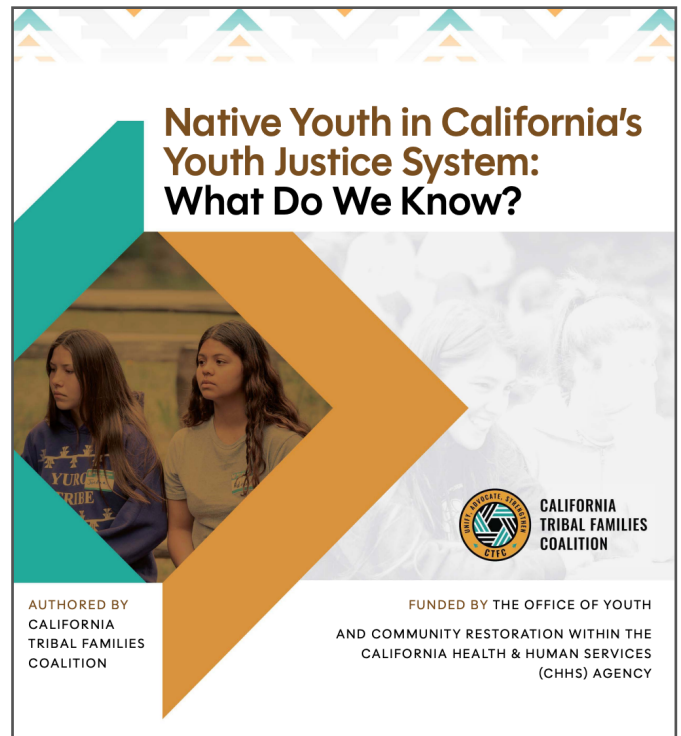
Imperial County has limited local resources, immigration pressures, and trafficking risks make decisions more challenging. Despite these challenges, the county has maintained an average daily population of just 0–1 girls since 2023. You can learn more about the partnership between Imperial County Probation and CBO Rite Track on OYCR's [Voices of Youth Justice blog](#).

In 2026, leadership of this initiative will transition fully to OYCR from the [Vera Institute of Justice](#), deepening OYCR's direct stewardship of this critical work.

SUPPORTING TRIBAL YOUTH

OYCR's engagement with Tribal partners in 2025 reflected a long-term, relationship-centered approach that honors the distinct needs and sovereignty of Tribal communities. For instance, OYCR finalized a \$30,000, two-year contract with the Yurok Tribe to support cultural activities and transportation.

Throughout the year and the state, the SC&E team conducted site visits, held meetings, and participated in events to stay attuned to the needs of Native youth and their families. The team also regularly attended statewide Indian Child Welfare (ICWA) meetings hosted by the California Department of Social Services to ensure young people involved in



Report cover of "Native Youth in California's Youth Justice System: What Do We Know?" from the California Tribal Families Coalition

the justice system would be considered in discussions of ICWA protections. The year culminated in a statewide webinar on Tribal youth justice that drew 140 participants, and the release of the [California Tribal Families Coalition report](#)—a significant resource for practitioners across the state.

LRP GRANT INITIATIVE

Through the LRP grant initiative, the SC&E Division reinforced its commitment to supporting youth transitioning from SYTFs to less restrictive, community-based living options such as [RAMP LA](#), Court to College, and [LA Room and Board](#). In FY 2024–2025, the initiative awarded the final \$2 million of its \$15.9 million total in grants to the last of 11 counties, Santa Clara County. These grantees helped 61 young people transition or prepare to step down, providing access to housing stability, educational pathways, and supportive services within their home communities—building toward lives of genuine opportunity rather than cycles of reincarceration.

Together, these initiatives advance equity by reshaping systems to center historically marginalized youth, expand access to community-based supports, and create opportunities for every young person to succeed.



Young people in less restrictive programs

“People underestimate the brilliance that lives in our communities. Just imagine what our world is missing by not having pathways to leadership for people. Seventh grade was my last year of formal education. [But] I’m smart; I’m an innovator. When I took over the Young Women’s Freedom Center, we were [at a deficit]. It’s a \$15 million organization now with a hundred staff.”



Jessica Nowlan,
President of
[ReImagine Freedom](#)

Those with lived experience within the justice system, also known as **“credible messengers,”** are essential guides for our work and critical to driving lasting change, grounded in an understanding of the barriers

youth face and what supports make a real difference. Recognizing this, SC&E focused in 2025 on elevating and developing the capacity of these leaders whose authority comes from firsthand knowledge of navigating the system, rather than from titles or credentials alone.

In 2025, SC&E partnered with the [Credible Messenger Mentoring Movement \(CM3\)](#) to build statewide infrastructure for credible messengers to practice, including TA, convenings, and targeted training and orientations across California. Another two partners, the [National Compadres Network](#) with the [Brotherhood of Elders Network](#), concentrated on developing culturally responsive training curricula, facilitating communities of practice, and providing TA to CBOs working to recruit, train, and retain credible messengers as a sustainable workforce.

The value of working with credible messengers cannot be overstated. Their insight, presence, and determination build confidence in systems that have historically caused harm and inspires young people still inside the system. Supported by growing infrastructure and dedicated spaces for development, credible messengers inform policy and practice in ways traditional approaches often cannot.

“The nuanced understanding credible messengers bring is as important as a lawyer’s knowledge of the penal code. Their ability to anticipate how policies play out on the ground is unique and essential. Just on our small team at Sister Warriors, there’s 50 years of combined experience with incarceration in California’s women’s institutions. While that doesn’t define our team members, it is an expertise nobody else can bring to the table.”



Amika Mota,
Executive Director of the
[Sister Warriors Freedom
Coalition](#) (Justice Serving
Network grantee)

Several of the CBOs which are part of the **Capacity Building Initiative (CBI)** are led by credible messengers themselves—organizations that combine direct service delivery with advocacy, mentorship, and community healing. In 2024, OYCR partnered with [The Center at Sierra Health Foundation](#) to award \$4 million over two years to eight CBOs, with the goal of strengthening their capacity to sustainably serve youth in both facilities and community settings. As a result, 2025 marked the first full year of funding for these grantees, alongside the expansion of the CBO Capacity Workgroup, which convenes organizations to identify new pathways for directing resources to historically underfunded communities. The Center works with the [Public Works Alliance](#) and the [National Center for Youth Law](#) to provide guidance and support to these organizations.



Capacity Building Initiative grantees

Already, CBOs report that the CBI has enabled them to hire new staff, acquire property, and secure new referrals and contracts. By investing in both credible messenger leadership and the organizations they lead, OYCR is helping ensure that this work not only grows but also endures, to continue strengthening communities and sustaining impact regardless of shifts in the broader system.

Every day, OYCR connects people who might not otherwise be in the same room, creating space to share knowledge, surface best practices, and build the mutual support that sustains reform over the long haul.

In 2025, two notable connective structures advanced this work. The [Justice Serving Network](#), managed by The Center at Sierra Health Foundation in partnership with the Public Works Alliance since 2024, helps CBOs access CalAIM and other Medi-Cal funding streams. And in January 2025, OYCR partnered with the newly formed **California Juvenile Justice Commissioners’ Collaborative (CJJCC)** to begin providing TA to commissions across the state related to operational, cultural, and programmatic needs.

Throughout the year, OYCR also participated in Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council and Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Committee meetings in 39 counties, and completed more than 100 TA requests, enabling the office to build relationships and capacity in every corner of the state.

OYCR Operations, Data, and Infrastructure

The infrastructure OYCR has built and maintained ensures that every other element of the office's work is possible: the partnerships can be supported, the TA can be delivered, the data can be gathered, and the state can meet its obligations under SB 823 and federal law.

This final section of the annual report profiles that backbone—the people, systems, and processes that enable OYCR to show up consistently for partners and for the young people they serve.

SPOTLIGHT

State Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

The [State Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention \(SACJJDP\)](#) is a Governor-appointed committee charged with overseeing California's compliance with the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, including the strategic oversight of Title II federal funds, and providing guidance on youth justice policy and programs. OYCR provides essential staff support, logistical coordination, and strategic guidance to the committee, ensuring it can fulfill its mandates effectively and transparently.

In 2025, the SACJJDP established a reliable rhythm of governance, meeting consistently each quarter to build a foundation of accountability and engagement. The SACJJDP also assumed OYCR's Restorative Justice Subcommittee and launched multiple new subcommittees, including the Racial and Ethnic Disparities, Policy and Legislative Advocacy, Youth and Emerging Leaders, and Community Investment and System Accountability subcommittees. These structures allow members to examine critical issues in greater depth, engage broader stakeholder input, and develop more informed recommendations.

New leaders elected at the end of 2024 began their terms in 2025, marking a historic first for California: both

the chair and vice chair bring lived experience having been incarcerated as young people. Their leadership brings a critical perspective to the committee itself, ensuring that deliberations, recommendations, and oversight are informed by firsthand understanding of the system, strengthening the committee's credibility, relevance, and ability to guide meaningful youth justice policy.

"My lens has been shaped by the places I have been and things I have seen. That allows me to analyze some of the gaps, the challenges, and the strengths [within the system]."



Cristian Franco,
Vice Chair of the SACJJDP

You can learn more about the SACJJDP leadership and hear from other partners on OYCR's [Voices of Youth Justice blog](#).

Operations and Grant Program Support Division

The **Operations and Grant Program Support Division** keeps OYCR running efficiently and effectively, ensuring that programs, policies, and initiatives are coordinated, resourced, and ready to deliver impact for youth and communities. By managing key operational and programmatic functions, the division translates the office's goals into practical action and helps partners across the state implement them successfully.

In 2025, the division focused on three core areas: workforce development, federal grant compliance, and legislative analysis. These efforts ensure that OYCR's work is sustainable, accountable, and grounded in the real needs of young people and the communities that support them.

Workforce Development

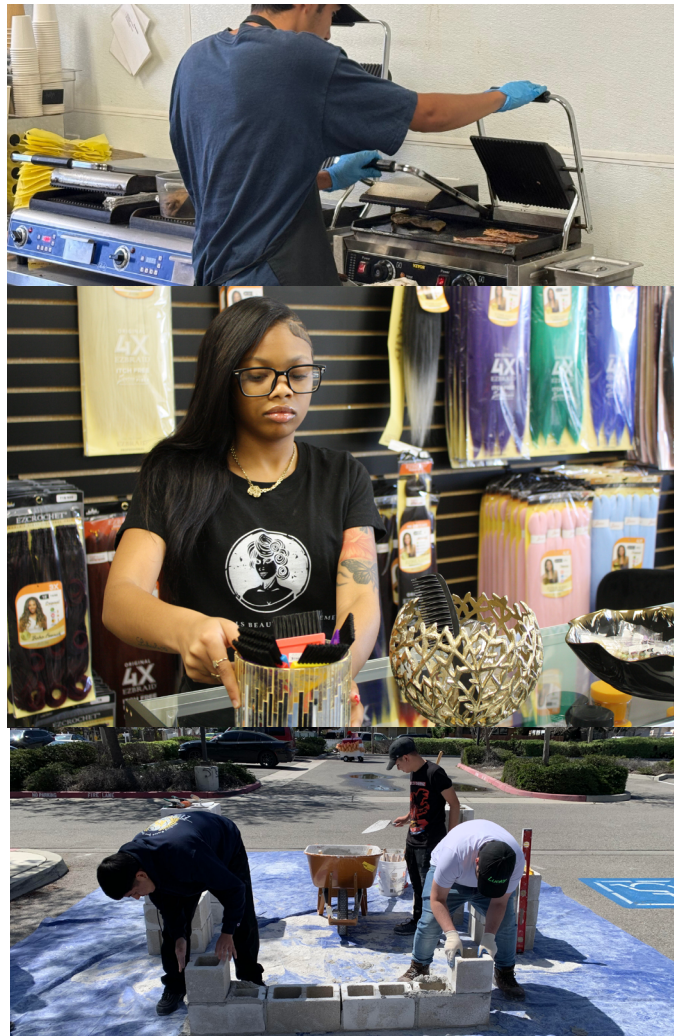
Workforce development is one of the most concrete ways California invests in the long-term wellbeing of youth involved in the justice system. Programs like the **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)** provide not just jobs, but the skills, mentorship, and supports that equip young people to succeed in their communities and break cycles of incarceration.

In 2025, the Operations and Grant Program Support Division, in partnership with the California Department of Rehabilitation, distributed \$12.3 million to deliver services in 10 counties—up from eight counties in 2024—reaching 186 youth across programs in various stages of implementation through the YEI. These programs combine career exposure, work experience, and guidance to help youth develop practical skills for adulthood.

OYCR also formalized a partnership with the [California Local Conservation Corps Foundation](#) in 2025, helping youth enroll in Local Corps programs offered through 14 community-based organizations across the state. These programs provide meaningful work experience, mentorship,

and pathways toward careers that can sustain a life outside the justice system.

Because workforce development does not fit neatly into other divisions, it is housed within the Operations and Grant Program Support Division. This placement ensures the programs are strategically coordinated, well-resourced, and implemented effectively, connecting OYCR's broader mission to tangible opportunities for youth.



Young people participating in the Youth Employment Initiative through sub-grantee California Family Life Center in Riverside County

Title II Formula Grants Program

The second half of 2025 marked one year since OYCR assumed responsibility for California’s federal [Title II Formula Grants Program](#) from the Board of State and Community Corrections, as well as the third year of the initial three-year compliance monitoring cycle. Over the course of the year, OYCR conducted 234 compliance monitoring site inspections statewide—a substantial effort that reflects the office’s commitment to rigorous federal compliance and to holding local partners accountable for implementing programs that improve outcomes for youth.

Grantees made progress toward multiple goals identified in the 2024 Title II 3-Year Plan, providing:

- “Community-Based Prevention and Early Intervention”;
- “Alternatives to Detention and Aftercare/ Reentry”;
- “Mentoring, Counseling, Education, and Workforce Readiness”; and
- “Equity and Trauma-Informed Approaches.”

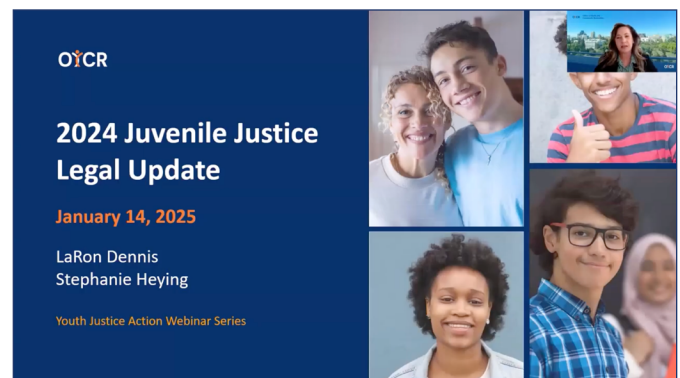
In addition to on-site monitoring, OYCR strengthened its grant management and accountability practices throughout 2025. The division re-executed 12 grantee agreements, secured Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention budget approval, submitted quarterly federal reports, and collected grantee data disaggregated by race and ethnicity to support equitable program implementation. Staff also completed advanced financial management training, further enhancing the office’s ability to oversee complex federal funds effectively.

Looking ahead, the division is preparing a competitive bid process to select new grantees under the next federal Title II award, ensuring continued investment in programs that prevent delinquency and support systems-involved youth across California.

Legislative Affairs

The Operations and Grant Program Support Division is actively tracking, interpreting, and analyzing new and proposed laws to ensure that OYCR’s funded programs, strategies, and TA remain aligned with state and federal priorities. During the legislative session, OYCR provides the California Health and Human Services Agency with expert analysis and research related to policy and legislative issues where young people are key stakeholders.

In January 2025, the division hosted its second annual [“Juvenile Justice Legal Updates” webinar](#), preparing and empowering counties, CBOs, and other stakeholders with the knowledge needed to navigate California’s evolving legal landscape.



Data and Research Division

The Data and Research Division provides the foundation on which OYCR's strategic decisions are made, on which other divisions' and partners' planning is grounded, and on which the state can assess whether efforts are reaching those they are designed to serve. The division collects data from all 58 counties, synthesizes complex information into actionable insights, and produces reports and tools that partners across the state can use immediately.

In 2025, the Data and Research Division completed its third year of EGI data collection, providing insights to strengthen programming and track outcomes for girls and gender-expansive youth. The division also published the 2025 [AB 102 Report](#), which examined statewide youth justice trends to evaluate progress toward the goals of SB 823. The report paid particular attention to practices that unintentionally expand system involvement (sometimes called "net widening") and to the persistent racial disparities that remain among the most pressing challenges in the system.

With the sunset of AB 102 at the end of 2024, [AB 169](#) went into effect at the start of 2025, requiring the collection of similar youth justice data from all 58 counties twice a year. The Data and Research Division continued to collect, validate, and support counties in reporting this data, providing targeted TA that led to measurable improvements in both completeness and timeliness. Findings from this work are expected to be published in fall 2026.

Among the most significant infrastructure investments for the Data and Research Division in 2025 were **three OYCR dashboards**—covering AB 102/169 data, [Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act/Youthful Offender Block Grant](#) (JJCPA-YOBG) trends, and the broader youth justice landscape—developed throughout 2024 and 2025

and targeted for public launch in the second half of 2026. These dashboards will provide stakeholders across the state with real-time access to data on trends, program outcomes, service gaps, and system capacity, making the evidence base for reform more accessible than it has ever been.

The Data and Research Division also manages and reports on three important state grant programs:

- **JJCPA-YOBG:** The division produced its first summary of county efforts, including snapshot profiles from seven counties. A full statewide analysis of youth justice trends will be published in 2026.
- **[Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant](#):** In its fourth year, counties continue to strengthen infrastructure, expand services, and deepen partnerships—while preparing to meet new planning and evaluation expectations introduced under [AB 118](#) in 2025.
- **[Juvenile Reentry Grant](#):** Data collected and submitted to the Department of Finance enabled targeted fund allocations supporting county probation departments in assisting youth through reentry—ensuring that resources go where they are needed most.

Finally, a cornerstone accomplishment for the division was the [DJJ Realignment Report](#), which examines post-SB 823 realignment trends and identifies promising practices, system-wide challenges, and opportunities to strengthen outcomes for the young people the system serves. In 2025, the division shared findings through statewide forums, the YJA webinar series, and conference presentations, engaging partners across California and reinforcing OYCR's commitment to using data not only to measure progress, but to drive continuous improvement across the youth justice system.

Looking Forward to 2026

A Letter from the Leadership Team

As we close 2025, we are reminded that meaningful systems change is measured not only by milestones, but by the strength and durability of the systems that sustain them. More than four years since our first hire in November of 2021, OYCR's work is about reinforcing and expanding the capacity that will carry youth justice reform forward for the long term.

Across California, counties have refined their approaches, CBOs have strengthened operations and expanded services, and credible messengers have become more embedded in local systems. What distinguishes this moment is not simply activity, but staying power. We are seeing clearer alignment between policy and practice, stronger cross-sector partnerships, and greater investment in community-rooted organizations positioned to lead well into the future. These are indicators of a field moving from transition to stability and from stability toward long-term resilience.

In 2026, OYCR will continue to build on this momentum. We will broaden the reach of evidence-based programs through the competitive Title II Federal Grants process, sustain and expand gender-responsive diversion and reentry programs via the EGI-CA Action Network, and support the ongoing work of credible messengers through Phase III of CM3. Our data and research efforts will guide practice and policy, including publishing

AB 169 findings, expanding the AB 102 dashboard, analyzing JJCPA-YOBG spending, and sharing the UCLA Stepping Home Model evaluation. Equity and collaboration will remain central: we will finalize OYCR's Equity Action Plan, conduct a statewide needs assessment with CJJCC, and support counties in implementing CalAIM JI and integrated behavioral health plans, including the rural community of practice. In October, we will also host OYCR's second California Youth Justice Summit, convening young people, practitioners, and system leaders from across the state to share learnings, elevate lived experience, and strengthen collective action. Through these efforts, we aim to sustain impact while ensuring that the infrastructure supporting this work remains adaptable, accountable, and durable.

Our role remains to guide, connect, and support partners, providing resources, TA, and coordination that help the youth justice system function better for young people, families, and communities. Thank you again to our partners across the state for your collaboration, dedication, and shared commitment to California's young people and communities. "Together, we are building something that will last—a system grounded in the understanding that young people can change, that communities are stronger when youth are supported rather than incarcerated, and that California's future depends on all of us working to get this right.



Director Lucero at the Youth Advisory Board's anniversary celebration



Chief Counsel Protima Pandey and Ombudsperson Alisa Hartz at the 43rd Annual Youth Defender & Advocate Training Seminar



Ombudsperson Alisa Hartz at Los Padrinos in Los Angeles County



(Left to Right) Former Systems Change & Equity Division Chief Marcia Rincon-Gallardo, Deputy Director Alani Jackson, Data & Research Division Chief Kamilah Holloway, Director Katherine Lucero, and Health Policy Division Chief Dr. Michael M. Massa at the 3rd Annual California Leadership Summit



Los Angeles Impact Justice Team at the 2025 Cal State LA Prison Graduation Initiative Convening

Appendix

Additional Entities with Whom OYCR Worked in 2025

1. 3rd Street Youth Center & Clinic
2. Alternative Restoration Communities (ARC)
3. Amelia Ann Adams Whole Life Center
4. Applied Survey Research
5. Asian Pacific Islander Reentry through Support Inclusion & Empowerment
6. Burns Institute
7. Bright Futures for Youth
8. California Alliance for Youth and Community Justice (CAYCJ)
9. California Department of Education
10. California Department of Justice
11. California Support Services
12. Centinela Youth Services
13. Community Justice Center
14. Community United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ)
15. Council of State Governments Justice Center
16. Eden Youth
17. Focus Forward
18. FosterHope
19. Full Circle Health Network (FCHN)
20. Garden Pathways
21. JustSolve
22. Kindful Restoration
23. Kings Canyon Unified School District
24. Healing Dialogue and Action
25. Homeboy Industries
26. Hoops 4 Justice
27. Integral Community Solutions Institute
28. MILPA
29. National Center for Youth Law
30. Nested Integral Coaching Constellation
31. Operation New Hope
32. Population Health Innovation Lab (PHIL)
33. Project Aware
34. Promesa Behavioral Health
35. Prosecutors Alliance
36. RAND Corporation
37. Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY)
38. Restore 180
39. Sacramento Recovery House
40. SPEARITWURX
41. The Children's Initiative
42. The Exception
43. The Mentoring Center
44. Three Sisters Garden
45. Two Feathers Native American Family Services
46. Underground Grit
47. Yolo Conflict Resolution Center
48. Youngsters for Change
49. Young Visionaries Leadership Academy
50. Youth Alliance
51. Youth Empowerment
52. Youth Transforming Justice

Counties Served through TA

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. Alameda | 21. Modoc | 41. Siskiyou |
| 2. Alpine | 22. Mono | 42. Solano |
| 3. Butte | 23. Monterey | 43. Sonoma |
| 4. Contra Costa | 24. Napa | 44. Stanislaus |
| 5. Del Norte | 25. Nevada | 45. Sutter |
| 6. El Dorado | 26. Orange | 46. Tehama |
| 7. Fresno | 27. Riverside | 47. Trinity |
| 8. Glenn | 28. Sacramento | 48. Tulare |
| 9. Humboldt | 29. San Benito | 49. Tuolumne |
| 10. Imperial | 30. San Bernardino | 50. Ventura |
| 11. Inyo | 31. San Diego | 51. Yolo |
| 12. Kern | 32. San Francisco | 52. Yuba |
| 13. Kings | 33. San Joaquin | |
| 14. Lake | 34. San Luis Obispo | |
| 15. Los Angeles | 35. San Mateo | |
| 16. Madera | 36. Santa Barbara | |
| 17. Marin | 37. Santa Clara | |
| 18. Mariposa | 38. Santa Cruz | |
| 19. Mendocino | 39. Shasta | |
| 20. Merced | 40. Sierra | |

TA is provided to CBOs, families, organizations, and probation who contact OYCR for assistance. OYCR provides support to all 58 counties through funding, trainings, webinars, and more.

2025 Funding Allocations

Ending Girls’ Incarceration

	RECIPIENT	TOTAL FUNDING
Probation Grants	Imperial County Probation Department	\$250,000 (FY 2024–2025 to FY 2025–2026) \$400,000 additional for rural demonstration pilot (FY 2025–2026 to FY 2026–2027)
	Los Angeles County Probation Department	\$250,000 (FY 2024–2025 to FY 2025–2026)
	Sacramento County Probation Department	\$250,000 (FY 2024–2025 to FY 2025–2026)
	San Diego County Probation Department	\$250,000 (FY 2024–2025 to FY 2025–2026)
CBO Grants	FosterHope (Sacramento County)	\$450,000
	Hooked on Fishing Not on Violence (Sacramento County)	\$550,000
	Rite Track (Imperial County)	\$673,380
	San Diego Youth Services (San Diego County)	\$1,000,000
	Young Women’s Freedom Center (Los Angeles County)	\$1,000,000

Capacity-Building Initiative

RECIPIENT AND COUNTY	TOTAL FUNDING
Amelia Ann Adams Whole Life Center (San Joaquin County)	\$500,000
Asian Pacific Islander Reentry through Inclusion, Support & Empowerment (API RISE; San Bernardino County)	\$500,000
Bright Futures for Youth (Nevada County)	\$500,000
Kindful Restoration (Riverside/San Bernardino County)	\$500,000
Operation New Hope (Riverside/San Bernardino County)	\$500,000
Restore 180 (Kings/Tulare County)	\$500,000
Three Sisters Garden (Yolo County)	\$500,000
Ujima Adult and Family Services/Spearitwux, (Siskiyou County)	\$500,000

Less Restrictive Program Grant Initiative

RECIPIENT	TOTAL FUNDING
El Dorado County	\$100,000
Fresno County	\$2,000,000
Madera County	\$1,000,000
Merced County	\$1,000,000
Riverside County	\$2,000,000
Sacramento County	\$2,000,000
San Francisco County	\$2,000,000
Santa Clara County	\$2,000,000
Solano County	\$1,400,000
Sonoma County	\$1,400,000
Stanislaus County	\$1,000,000

Youth Employment Initiative

RECIPIENT AND COUNTY	TOTAL FUNDING
Amity Foundation (distributing workforce development funding to the eight counties below and Humboldt and Los Angeles counties)	\$10,000,000 (FY 2024–2025, 2025–2026)
Contra Costa County	\$400,000 (FY 2024–2025, 2025–2026)
Imperial County	\$400,000 (FY 2024–2025, 2025–2026)
Kern County	\$400,000 (FY 2024–2025, 2025–2026)
Riverside County	\$75,261.77 (FY 2024–2025)
Sacramento County	\$200,000 (FY 2025–2026)
San Benito County	\$70,000 (FY 2024–2025)
San Mateo County	\$400,000 (FY 2024–2025, 2025–2026)
Solano County	\$400,000 (FY 2024–2025, 2025–2026)



**Office of Youth and
Community Restoration**