

Hon. Susan Etezadi
Presiding Juvenile
Court Judge, Superior
Court

Sup. David Canepa
Board of Supervisors,
District 5

Judith Holiber
Deputy County Counsel

Commissioners

Monroe Labouisse
Chair

Wesley Liu
Co-Vice Chair,
Administration

Ameya Nori
Co-Vice Chair,
Administration

Karin Huber-Levy
Vice Chair,
Membership

Paul Bocanegra

Allen Bustos

Sathvik Nori

Johanna Rasmussen

Susan Swope

Appollonia Uhila



Juvenile Justice Commission
and
Delinquency Prevention Commission

May 30, 2023
5:15pm

Location and Public participation instructions attached

Joint Meeting: Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commissions
AGENDA

Public comment will be accommodated under Item II for items not on the agenda. The Commission requests that members of the public, who wish to comment on items on the agenda, submit a request to the Chair prior to the start of the meeting so that they may be recognized at the appropriate time.

I. Preliminary Business

- a. Call to Order
- b. Translation Services for JJDPC meetings
- c. Roll Call and Establish Quorum
- d. Approval of Minutes from April 2023 Meeting
- e. Agenda Review and Approval
- f. Swearing in of Whitney Geneviro as Commissioner
- g. Membership Update (Huber-Levy)

II. Oral Communications

This item provides an opportunity for public comment on items not on the agenda (Time limit – two (2) minutes per person). There will be opportunity for public comment on agenda items as they are considered.

III. Updates from System Partners

- a. Private Defender (Rayes)
- b. Probation (Clark)
- c. Children & Family Services (Fong)

IV. Presentation from Community Organization

- a. Redwood City Together (Rafael Avendaño, Exec Director)

V. Current Commission Projects - Updates

- a. Sexual Abuse Prevention (Rasmussen)
- b. Food and Lodging in Detention (Rasmussen)
- c. 2023 Inspections (Rasmussen)

- d. Reimagine Juvenile Hall Committee
 - i. Presentation to Board of Supervisors based on i) Memo to Committee (attached) and ii) [2022 Inspection Reports](#)
- e. Understand Transitioning of Detained Youth (Wilson)
- f. Educational Attainment in Detention (Wilson)

VI. New Business: Updates, Motions and Announcements

- a. Website for Youth in Detention (Youth Commissioner Agarwal)
- b. Youth Commission Resolution on Adult Transfers
- c. Joint JJs Letter on Continuum of Care (Huber-Levy)
- d. Oath of Confidentiality for Commissioners (Wilson)
- e. Police Liaison - Meeting with SM PD Chief (Rasmussen)
- f. 2023 Retreat/Offsite for Commissioners - Planning (Rasmussen)
- g. Commissioner Bocanegra Speaking at DFA Meeting June 7
- h. Google Drive Reminder (Rasmussen)

VII. Adjournment of Joint Meeting

VIII. Convene Juvenile Justice Commission
Commissioners only and In-Person only

JJDPC Meeting, May 30, 2023 Public Participation Instructions

In 2023, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Commission's meetings have returned to being held in person, but will also continue to be accessible to the public by videoconference.

Translation services are available on videoconference for Spanish speakers.

Join In Person

Location:

The College of San Mateo
1700 W. Hillsdale Boulevard, San Mateo, CA 94402
College Heights Conference Room
Building 10, 4th Floor, Room 468
[Campus map](#)

Free parking is available in front of and across the street from the entrance to Building 10.

If you wish to speak to the Commission during public comment, you may raise your hand using Zoom with the Reactions button at the bottom of your screen, or indicate that you would like to speak if you are attending in person. If you have any materials that you wish distributed to the Commission and included in the official record, please send an email before the meeting to sanmateojjdc@gmail.com and attach the materials.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89966609191?pwd=NkYvZF10c0hhRDRyc0JCUDZzemxTQT09>

In order to identify themselves, we prefer that participants use a device with video and activate the camera vs. calling in only on audio. However, you may call in via phone only if you prefer. See instructions below.

One tap mobile +16699006833,,89966609191#,,, *167500#

Dial-in +1 669 900 6833
Meeting ID: 899 6660 9191
Passcode: 167500

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 27, 2023, 5:15 p.m.
In Person Location: Same as above**

MEETINGS ARE ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. INDIVIDUALS WHO NEED SPECIAL ASSISTANCE OR A DISABILITY-RELATED MODIFICATION OR ACCOMMODATION (INCLUDING AUXILIARY AIDS OR SERVICES) TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS MEETING, OR WHO HAVE A DISABILITY AND WISH TO REQUEST AN ALTERNATIVE FORMAT FOR THE AGENDA, MEETING NOTICE, AGENDA PACKET OR OTHER WRITINGS THAT MAY BE DISTRIBUTED AT THE MEETING, SHOULD CONTACT SECRETARY ADRIANA CASTANEDA AT (650) 312-8876 AT LEAST 72 HOURS BEFORE THE MEETING AS NOTIFICATION IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING WILL ENABLE THE COUNTY TO MAKE REASONABLE ARRANGEMENTS TO ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY TO THIS MEETING AND THE MATERIALS RELATED TO IT. ATTENDEES TO THIS MEETING ARE REMINDED THAT OTHER ATTENDEES MAY BE SENSITIVE TO VARIOUS CHEMICAL BASED PRODUCTS.



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission
222 Paul Scannell Drive • San Mateo, CA 94402
Minutes of the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission
April 25, 2023 | 5:15-7:15 pm
College of San Mateo College Heights Conf. Room and Zoom
MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Monroe Labouisse, Chair; Wesley Liu, Co-Vice Chair Administration; Ameya Nori, Co-Vice Chair Administration; Karin Huber-Levy, Vice Chair Membership; Paul Bocanegra; Allen Bustos; Sathvik Nori; Johanna Rasmussen; Susan Swope; Melissa Wilson.

Commissioners Absent: Appollonia “Dee” Uhila

Partners and Stakeholders Present:

Ron Rayes, Juvenile Private Defender
John Keene, Chief Probation Officer
Jehan Clark, Superintendent Probation
Michael Leon, Deputy Chief Probation Officer
Chris Abalos, Deputy Chief Probation Officer
Bonnie MacAskill, Asst. Chief Probation Officer
Jennifer Martinez- Juvenile & Family Specialist,
Redwood City PD
Aurora Pena, Behavioral Health & Recovery Services
Kate Hiester, FLY
Ashley Dwarshuis – Art of Yoga Project

Nadia Hahn, District Attorney’s Office
Ligia Andrade Zúñiga– SMUHSD Board of Trustees,
Liaison - SMC Commission on Disabilities
Chelsea Bonini, Liaison - SMC Commission on
Disabilities; Trustee, SMC Board of Education
John Nibbelin, SMC County Counsel
Judith Holiber, SMC Chief County Counsel
Peter Cruz, SMC Deputy County Counsel
Shelly Johnson, SMC Office of Education
Zahara Agarwal, Youth Commission Liaison

Translation Services: Kimberly Larios, Kennia Cobos

Community Members: Clara Jaeckel, Becca Kieler, Nancy Goodban, Whitney Genevro, Clara Jaeckel, Moniya Wade, Leah Worthington, Mona Shah, Beth von Emster (ACLU), Heather Hopkins, Jennifer Blanco

I. Preliminary Business

- a. Call to Order:** Chair Labouisse called the meeting to order at 5:17 p.m.
- b. Roll Call and Establish Quorum:** A quorum was established at 5:18 p.m.
- c. Action for Approval of March 29, 2023 Minutes:** no changes to attached minutes
MOTION: Swope /SECOND: Rasmussen
AYES (VOICE VOTE): All present
NOES: none ABSTAIN: none
MOTION PASSED
- d. Action to Set Agenda for April 25, 2023:** no changes to the attached agenda.
MOTION: Liu /SECOND: Wilson
AYES (VOICE VOTE): All present
NOES: none ABSTAIN: none
MOTION PASSED.



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II. Oral Communications (Public Comment):

- a. Community member Clara Jaeckel emphasized the importance for youth at YSC to have full access to programs and services required by law, starting with those identified in the JJDPC Inspections Report, to set them up for future success. She urged that these recommendations be put into practice as soon as possible.
- b. Community Member Nancy Goodban shared that she was one of a group of 10 people who met with DA Wagstaffe on April 14 to request that he stop transferring youth to adult court. This is supported by the Democratic party of San Mateo and 15 other organizations in our county, representing the faith community, In Our Care, ACLU, People Power, Democracy for America, and Silicon Valley De-Bug. It is not acceptable to hide behind the excuse that SMC cannot provide these youth with the rehabilitation services required by law.
- c. Community Member Becca Kieler, co-founder of In Our Care, stated that youth need to be held accountable for their actions, but science supports idea that youth are amenable to rehabilitation and restorative justice; recidivism rates are higher for youth sentenced in adult court. The lack of services through probation is not the fault of the youth, it is our legal and moral obligation to take care of them. She asks Chief Keene to tell the community what is needed to make this happen.

III. Updates from System Partners:

a. Private Defender (Rayes)

There were 40 new cases referred to their department, 10 of which were alleged 707(b) offenses (serious juvenile offenses), and 6 of those were probation violations. With regard to this legislative cycle, SB 448 (Promoting Family Connections for Youth in Foster Care), which has particular importance to detention of out of county youth, is progressing and is now with Senate Appropriations Committee.

b. Office of Education (Johnson)

Ms Johnson, Principal of Court & Community Schools, reported that the Office of Education are finalizing strategic planning which will guide LCAP, SIPSA and WASP planning for the upcoming school year; and as part of this will assess what is working/not working for students. She provided the meeting with an overview of key metrics and reported on current and



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planned programming to the end of the school year (June 2), through the summer (including credit recovery camps to facilitate graduation on June 30), and into fall (including in-person art and English 105 programs provided to Court Schools through Project Change).

c. Probation (Clark):

Ms. Stauffer has officially retired, however her position (head of Juvenile Institutions) has not yet been filled. Current stats for Juvenile Institutions:

- i. Diversion/Intake: overall 318 youth in custody
 - 181 new cases: 134 cases on formal/informal supervision
 - 5 youth with gang orders
- ii. Placement:
 - 0 youth in placement
 - 3 youth receiving extended foster care services
 - 17 youth on EMP
 - 11 new case referrals
- iii. Top Five Offences: Battery, Assault and Battery, Assault with a Deadly Weapon, Grand Theft, Firearms
- iv. Juvenile Hall: 32 youth in facility - 29 males / 2 females / 1 transgender
- v. Camp Kemp: 4 girls – 3 from SMC / 1 from Sonoma County
- vi. Girls Empowerment Program: 0

IV. Q&A with Chief John Keene

- a. Is there some way to provide a minimal amount of funding from the county so that we can have funding for programs, namely therapists? (Labouisse)**

We have restructured our contract to get more funding, however money is not the issue. We do not have enough service providers to staff the programs.

- b. Can you give us an update on how we're using funding to soften Juvenile Hall? (Swope)**

I was not supportive of the transition from DJJ to county-level institutions. Counties are being asked to match DJJ programs with less funding. We have been working hard on the 'Reimagine Juvenile Hall' project, especially using recommendations from JJDPC report.



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c. Do you have any further thought on Peer Point with its updated model? (A. Nori)

I am aware and interested, I think it has great potential to be used for Secure Track. Useful in schools.

d. Body scanning equipment replacing strip searching techniques in Sacramento, any plans to implement in San Mateo County? (Huber-Levy)

I am familiar with it but I have not looked into it for application in SMC. It feels like there is great potential for use of this, and I am up for any improvements being made in the facility to minimize trauma. It seems that this is consistent with the natural transition to using biometric technologies to reduce physical interaction in institutions. I will be interested in seeing the results of the next BSCC inspection to understand their assessment of the body scanning technology and Title 12 requirements.

e. How does the budget process work so that we can help youth further? (Rasmussen)

Money is not the issue. We do not have enough service providers to staff programs.

f. Why have we had kids in the hall for years without a single certification/trade, what will it take to soften the impact, and send boys to Camp Kemp? (Bocanegra)

We don't know what the future of Camp Kemp is. Girls being in detention is much harsher on families than boys. It is very hard to build something new in this county, board members have discussed this already.

g. Would you consider coming to our meetings on a regular frequency and having a conversation about our relationship? (Wilson)

You are free to talk to us and our staff at any time to ask questions, I am very open about any proposals and about who I am.

h. Do you foresee a way to expand Project Change and the course offerings? (Liu)

We are working with programs to expand the project and the courses offered. We really are committed to the program, using our own funds to improve it through computers and other technology.

i. Current Commission Projects – Updates - TABLED

j. New Updates and Motions - TABLED

Meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 30, 2023

Memo

From: The Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission

Date: December 15, 2022

Subject: Recommendations for use of 2022 state funding for renovations at juvenile facilities and Juvenile Hall

To: The Reimagine Juvenile Hall Committee

The San Mateo County Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission (JJRPC) recently completed and approved their annual inspection reports for juvenile detention facilities in the county. Copies of the full approved inspection reports can be found in the JJRPC's meeting agenda packets on the Probation department's website, under the Commission's tab and in the Meeting Information section.

Using the information in those inspection reports, we have summarized below our prioritized recommendations for using the approximately \$1.4 million in funding allocated by the state in 2022 for physical improvements to San Mateo County's Juvenile Hall.

The JJRPC encourages this Committee to consider investment of these new state funds with higher-level goals in mind and not with the goal simply of brightening and softening the space, although that in itself would also be an improvement. At a high level, the Commission's top priorities for improvements in Juvenile Hall are to:

- do more to support the mental health needs of youth in the facility, and to improve their living conditions on the residential units;
- to end the current outsourced food program and develop an on-site food program that can also provide opportunities for youth to gain vocational skills and certificates in food handling and culinary arts; and
- to enable the County to offer regular vocational and fine arts classes over and above what is offered today at Hillcrest High School.

Towards those ends, the Commission recommends allocating funds for physical improvements in the following areas:

Mental Health Support

Dedicated mental health counseling space(s)

Currently, at Juvenile Hall, there are no rooms that are dedicated for the use of mental health. At Camp Kemp, there is a dedicated room for counseling that has been designed and furnished with therapeutic needs in mind. The Commission believes there is an immediate need for a dedicated mental health counseling room at the Juvenile Hall that is therapeutically designed, equipped, and utilized by BHRS staff and clinicians to provide services to youth.

BHRS is currently providing mental health services in the programming room at the center of housing units. These rooms have several large windows that overlook the large central space in the residential units, aka the Day Room. They are also located next to the staff desk. Therapy sessions are interrupted whenever staff needs to retrieve an item from the room or access the kitchenette. It was BHRS staff who brought this issue to our attention. They were concerned the programming rooms lacked privacy and were not conducive for providing trauma informed mental health services.

Individual cells more like home bedrooms

Especially for the sake of youth who, due to Realignment, may now be living at Juvenile Hall for years at a time, but also for the sake of all youth in residence at Juvenile Hall, changes need to be made to individual cells that will make the rooms more dorm-like and home-like. For example, a partial list might include:

- Replace steel wall-mounted bed frames with dorm-like bed frames and mattresses like Camp Kemp
- Replace the floor-mounted stools near desks with desk chairs to enable more comfortable studying and homework
- Install individual storage units for keeping personal items
- Equip each room with electrical outlets for the sake of charging personal items like laptops and electric hair trimmers / razors
- Install a chalkboard in each cell wall for youth to draw, write and express their thoughts, as Alameda County's juvenile hall has done
- Provide alternative bedding i.e., comforters, blankets
- Invest in electronic tablets that youth can use inside of their cells. Tablets are currently being used in the juvenile halls in Alameda County and San Francisco County. Tablets are also provided to inmates at the San Mateo County Jail.
- Intake/Quarantine Supplies: Puzzles, sudoku, word search, coloring books and crayons to help decrease the sensory deprivation of youth who must remain in their cells during this phase of their detention.

Housing Unit Improvements to common living areas: Day Room & Programming Room

In order to soften and brighten the common living areas on residential units -- which would support improved mental health of the youth in detention -- a number of improvements could be made, many of which this Committee has already discussed: softer furniture, brighter lighting and paint, etc. In addition, the Commission also recommends other changes:

- Install a water cooler on each housing unit for youth and staff
- Add cushions or pillows to dayroom furniture
- Purchase exercise equipment for the facility
- Restore cable service and/or start subscriptions with Netflix and Disney Plus
- Update programming rooms on each housing unit. Add additional lighting, plants, wall hangings, area rugs, and furniture. The rooms are very sparse.

Note: Because food is now delivered on trays, residents have been eating on the units, and so the carpets are badly in need of replacement and/or thorough cleaning, but the Commission believes funding for this improvement should come from normal maintenance funds and not state funding.

Telephones

Telephone calls are a lifeline for incarcerated youth. The cordless telephones currently being used by youth often drop calls, have poor reception, and echo loudly when calling from a youth's cell. The commission recommends replacing the current telephones with ones that are capable of maintaining a signal and providing clear and consistent call quality.

Housing Unit Libraries: Books, Magazines, and Newspapers

A large portion of the books in the housing unit bookcases are outdated, damaged and in poor condition. There are no magazines or newspapers provided. The Commission would recommend purchasing new books, with a focus on graphic novels, that appeal to youth at all reading levels and begin magazine subscriptions that are in compliance with facility rules for each housing unit. Youth have expressed interest in: Sports Illustrated, Car & Driver, The Atlantic, Popular Mechanics, Scientific American, National Geographic, US, and People. The San Mateo Daily Journal is a free local newspaper that is already being delivered to the lobby of the Youth Services Center.

Improvements to outdoor recreational space

The Commission is recommending that two new picnic tables be added to the outdoor recreational space. Picnic tables can serve multiple functions, both recreational and educational. In addition, the basketball goals and soccer goals all need refurbishing.

Changes to Food Services Program

Food Services was contracted out in 2021. Since this time, the biggest complaint of youth incarcerated at both Juvenile Hall and Camp Kemp has been the quality of the food. A considerable amount of each meal goes uneaten and is thrown out due to its taste, quality, and temperature. In the words of one of the staff at Camp Kemp, it is unreasonable to ask teenagers of any kind to develop and improve themselves if they are hungry. Teenagers fundamentally require to be well fed.

Towards that end, the Commission urges probation to terminate their food services contract with the San Mateo County Sheriff Department. Currently all of the food provided to the YSC and Camp Kemp facilities is prepared by the Maple Street Correctional Facility (county jail). Meals, fruit, and snacks are transported to the facilities the day before they are scheduled to be served. Youth at both facilities all describe the food as terrible. Our Commissioners have shared meals with youth at the facilities and concur.

Kitchen and Facilities Improvements

With physical improvements to the facilities in mind, the Commission would prioritize whatever changes may be needed in order to bring back on-site food preparation. While the Commission cannot specify exactly what those changes need to be, we would ask that Probation work with a new outside provider who can prepare good food on-site to determine what their requirements are and hold back funds from the state that can be used for facilities improvements as needed. Note: One known change needed in the kitchen is to purchase new dishwasher(s) because the current one is broken and very old. The Commission believes this funding should come not from the state grant but from regular maintenance funds.

Culinary Arts and Food Handling Vocational Training

In conjunction with changes required to bring back on-site food preparation, the Commission encourages considering creating opportunities for residents, especially those who have completed high school, to participate in food preparation and food handling classes if they choose to. In the design of that vocational program, there may be changes to the facilities and/or kitchen needed and funding should be set aside for those changes as well.

In addition to the pride and value that would come from preparing food for their fellow residents, those classes and experience should earn them the appropriate vocational

skills and certificates that would improve their chances at employment in the food industry after their release.

Note: Jobs in the food industry do not necessarily pay a living wage in San Mateo County and therefore should not be prioritized over the other vocational opportunities below, but if for a low investment, when on-site food prep is returned to the YSC, the opportunity exists to teach these skills to those who want them, the Commission encourages Probation to offer the classes.

Vocational and Arts Programs

For many years, the Commission has been advocating for investment in a vocational program(s) and training for youth at Juvenile Hall. Because of Realignment, these are needed more than ever for youth who will be living long-term, for years at a time and up to the age of 25. In order to enable these programs, the facility needs to remodel and redesign some existing spaces for their use.

Classrooms for Vocational Training

Vocational classes are best taught in spaces that are functional for whatever trade is being taught. High school classrooms or residential units cannot be used for a carpentry, electrical or other vocational space unless they are remodeled or redesigned. In Santa Clara, youth are being taught vocational classes in dedicated spaces that include Tuff Sheds for tools and equipment, and closets for uniforms and protective gear. Santa Clara has also acquired a forklift simulator. We can also provide vocational classes but need the right space for teaching.

Creative and Artistic Spaces

Just as space that is functional for mental health counseling and vocational classes is necessary, current service providers at Juvenile Hall who teach the visual arts tell our Commission that one of their biggest challenges to teaching art is that the space they teach in -- usually the common area in the residential units -- is not conducive to teaching art. Art classes and creative expression have helpful therapeutic effects for youth and that is why several of the evening programs currently at the YSC involve creative expression: Arts Unity Movement, The Art of Yoga, and The Beat Within.

The Commission also recommends developing a music program that includes the creation of a music studio like the ones in Napa and Alameda Counties. The music program would include making beats, writing lyrics, recording and editing tracks, and performing.

Conclusion

To reiterate what was stated at the beginning of this memo, and to put in context again the bigger picture goals of the previous sections:

At a high level, the Commission's top priorities for improvements in Juvenile Hall are to:

- do more to support the mental health needs of youth in the facility, and related, to improve their living conditions on the residential units;
- to end the current outsourced food program and develop an on-site food program that can also provide opportunities for youth to gain vocational skills and certificates in food handling and culinary arts; and
- to enable the County to offer regular vocational and fine arts classes over and above what is offered today at Hillcrest High School.

We are available to assist in the ideation and design necessary to accomplish these goals.

June 1, 2023

The Honorable _____
1021 O Street
Sacramento, CA

Dear _____,

We are court appointed members of Juvenile Justice Commissions mandated by the California Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC 225-230). We are writing to express urgent concerns regarding the lack of safe placements with appropriate training, resources and support for high acuity dependent youth. Our concerns are specifically related to changes in the foster care system due to California's AB 403, also known as the "Continuum of Care Reform" Act (CCR). While this reform was well intentioned, it has resulted in serious gaps in options to address the extremely high needs of dependent youth who have severe mental health issues. This has created unsafe conditions for youth, staff and caregivers across California.

We are reaching out to you specifically because of your advocacy for youth and social justice in our state.

The Commissions' purpose as defined by state law is to be a public conscience in the best interest of youth in the county we represent. The gravity of this situation is so serious that we have established a joint California-wide taskforce to more effectively give voice to the critical needs of these vulnerable youth, and ensure our state legislative representatives are aware of the severity of this emerging crisis.

California and the federal government have passed legislation to greatly restrict and reduce all forms of congregate care. California's AB 403 required all Group Homes to transition to Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs). Statewide, 486 Group Home providers with a capacity of 4,328 beds did not transition to the STRTP model. Recent federal legislative requirements in response to the Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) have resulted in even more facilities closing permanently.

Short Term Residential Treatment Program challenges include:

- Extreme mental health needs of youth referrals
- Severe staffing challenges including:
 - lack of candidates with required education and mental health experience
 - Inadequate pay
 - High stress, dangerous job
 - Requires on-site 24-hour shift work
- Youth Rights Protections allow residents to leave at any time and limit consequences for youth behavior

- Limits the time a youth may stay even though stabilization may take longer
- STRTP capacity is limited due to high needs of residents, typically a 6-bed facility can only safely house 2-4 residents.
- Financial reimbursement for STRTP youth is inadequate for staff/resources needed

The level of support required to serve youth with high mental health needs in STRTP's has made it nearly impossible for these community-based organizations to operate financially and maintain required staffing levels. As a result, these organizations are failing across the state. At the same time, out of state facilities and locked mental health facilities are no longer a placement option.

For example, Contra Costa County currently has approximately 10 youth who are regularly denied placement in a STRTP due to their behaviors and/or lack of adequate staffing. Sometimes these youth are placed in Psychiatric Emergency Facilities for long stays since no inpatient beds are available, and then discharged and go back into placements that cannot meet their needs.

In Sonoma County, only two STRTP's remain open. Two additional facilities recently converted to serve other youth such as private, post-adoption, and unaccompanied minors which is more sustainable for them. In Sonoma County, a Children's Shelter is used for high needs youth awaiting placement due to lack of other options.

Santa Clara County currently has one STRTP opened provisionally in 2022 with 4 beds. Children and Family Services (CFS) reports that they need as many as 50 placements for youth with significant mental health and behavioral needs at any one time.

Youth demonstrating the most severe effects of trauma are older and have complex mental health needs, including self-injury, suicidality, substance use and violent and destructive tendencies, alongside other challenging behaviors (fire-starting, property destruction etc.) that require specific training, expertise and management - often over a long period of time. Due to the intensive needs of these *high acuity youth* they usually cannot be safely placed in foster family homes.

The lack of safe and effective county placements results in:

- Youth held in county offices, receiving centers, shelters, or hotel rooms
- Repeated failed foster home placements
- AWOL for prolonged periods
- Placement in STRTP's in remote counties due to lack of available beds
- Risk for trafficking, homelessness, and other victimization
- "Revolving door" cycles in and out of the hospital
- Further trauma to these youth, making placement even more difficult
- Placement in Juvenile Hall as a result of escalating behavior

Case example: “James”

James first entered foster care at the age of 2, based on allegations of abuse from his mother. He was placed with a relative until the age of 8 when he re-entered foster care. He has been in and out of placements for the past 10 years, including several years at a STRTP. James has been diagnosed with schizophrenia and has suffered from auditory hallucinations. He has been prescribed psychotropic medication, which he has taken on and off. He has a history of substance use, AWOL, and verbally aggressive behavior. He is significantly behind in school credits and has an IEP for Emotional Disturbance and Specific Learning Disability.

James has had several temporary stays at a Receiving Center with a 24 hour CFS person assigned to him for one-on-one supervision. The Receiving Center later refused to take him and CFS was forced to utilize a hotel setting with one-to-one or two-to-one staffing ratios. During this time CFS has sought placement, unsuccessfully, with approximately 60 STRTPs.

These *high acuity* youth deserve safe housing and intensive rehabilitative care for their trauma-induced needs. They are some of the most vulnerable citizens of our state and they need our help now. The system is failing them. This failure is occurring despite heroic efforts from social welfare agencies, STRTP administrators, and state representatives who assist on a case by case basis. But this case-by-case decision making is neither effective nor sustainable, requiring more effort, time and money with inconsistent outcomes, than a proactive, system-wide response at the state-level would provide.

Our goal as Joint Juvenile Justice Commissioners from throughout California, is to raise awareness of this crisis situation and to advocate for a broader range of options for these youth, **including high intensity mental health treatment centers, significant additional funding and support for existing STRTP’s and support for specialized foster homes.** The current STRTP format is not working and is not sustainable.

Our intent is to raise your awareness and interest in these youth and to meet with you to share our knowledge, concerns and propose actions, which we believe would help these vulnerable youth in our counties.

Best Regards,

Sonoma County JJC