



# Reforming the Nation's Largest Juvenile Justice System

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“When I grew up in Los Angeles, California was at the forefront of progressive reforms, including a juvenile justice system committed to helping troubled youths develop knowledge and life skills to raise the odds that, upon release, they would not end up behind bars again. But in the 1980s we shifted course...The mission of rehabilitation got replaced by a culture of punishment... It is only by charting a new future that we can return Los Angeles' youth probation system to a position it has held in the past – that of a national leader and model of best practices.”

—Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chairman of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors<sup>1</sup>

*The Camp Vernon Kilpatrick Replacement project, funded primarily by California State juvenile justice realignment legislation, is poised to become a model for best practices in Los Angeles County, reversing decades of neglect and outdated practices that have led to poor outcomes for incarcerated youth.*

## Introduction

Research confirms that incarcerating young people is harmful – contributing to lower educational achievement, higher unemployment, higher alcohol and substance abuse and increased mental health problems.<sup>2</sup> Roughly three-quarters of youth leaving locked facilities nationally are rearrested and – depending on local juvenile justice statutes – up to 70 percent are convicted of a new offense.<sup>3</sup> These dismal outcomes, combined with a high price tag, have largely made youth incarceration a failed public policy approach.

The good news is that youth incarceration rates in the U.S. have declined by 41 percent over the last 15 years, reaching the lowest level since 1975.<sup>4</sup> While this is due largely to decreasing crime rates and state budget cuts, it also reflects the increased use of cost-effective, community-based programs for youth who pose a minimal threat to public safety.

Nevertheless, approximately 70,000 youth nationwide<sup>5</sup> – 2,000 in Los Angeles County<sup>6</sup> – are still confined in



The command center station in the middle of the room projects a long row of beds in Camp Scobee's 100+ bed dormitory at Challenger Memorial Youth Center in Lancaster. Photo courtesy of Kevin Chang of the Long Beach Press-Telegram.

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juvenile detention facilities on any given day. While the goal remains to reduce these numbers further and keep young people out of the system whenever possible, a small number of youth will remain in secure facilities. How these youth are treated while incarcerated has a marked impact on the rest of their life, their communities, and on our society as a whole.

The Los Angeles County juvenile justice system is the largest system in the nation, with locked facilities that include three juvenile halls<sup>7</sup> and fourteen probation camps.<sup>8</sup> Yet many observers of the system, including legal groups, advocates and organizers, the media, and elected and appointed officials, have concluded over the years the camps are not meeting the needs of youth, and not helping them become law-abiding and productive members of society.<sup>9</sup>

In a critique to the Board of Supervisors, Jerry Powers, Los Angeles County Chief Probation Officer,

has described the design of the probation camps as “creat[ing] an image of a jail-like environment.”<sup>10</sup> Despite recent improvements, most youth in the camps (as in the rest of the country) are still subjected to some discredited and outdated approaches based largely on control and coercion.<sup>11</sup> Research has shown that these types of correctional practices – which are widely adopted and can include promoting fear, instilling boot-camp-style discipline, relying on surveillance and delivering punishment (e.g. isolation) – are ineffective and frequently harmful.<sup>12</sup> These approaches have also led to widespread abuses that have resulted in lawsuits and federal investigations, nationally and in Los Angeles County (see page 5).

In contrast, effective approaches to juvenile justice are treatment-oriented,<sup>13</sup> helping youth to develop pro-social strengths and attributes, heal from past victimization, build relationships, develop skills and address mental health and substance abuse problems. However, while studies have shown that these approaches reduce recidivism<sup>14</sup> and help youth transition successfully into adulthood,<sup>15</sup> they are rarely practiced with full fidelity in locked facilities.<sup>16</sup>

**How these youth are treated while incarcerated has a marked impact on the rest of their life, their communities, and on our society as a whole.**

Now, with the estimated \$48 million allocated for the pilot Camp Vernon Kilpatrick Replacement Project, funded largely by California State juvenile justice realignment legislation (Senate Bill 81), Los Angeles County has the financial resources and opportunity to more fully align its camps with best practices in the field, jump-starting meaningful juvenile justice reform.

# Los Angeles County's Probation Camp System: An Outdated Model

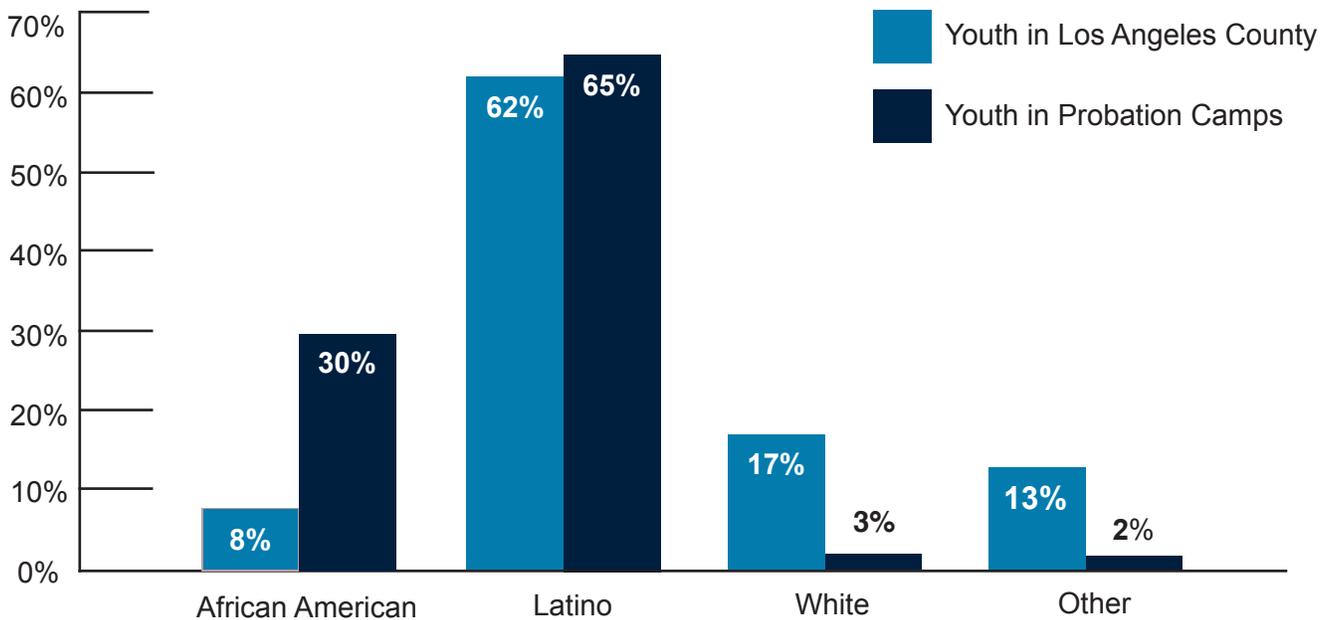
During the past decade, responsibility for managing most system-involved youth has shifted from the State of California to its 58 counties.<sup>17</sup> With 6,500 employees and an annual \$813 million budget,<sup>18</sup> the Los Angeles County Probation Department is responsible for the vast majority of youth who become system-involved in the county, including those who have committed serious crimes and have complex needs. On any one day, the department supervises nearly 17,000 youth, close to 2,000 of which are held in locked facilities.<sup>19</sup>

Experts consider probation camps to be a more moderate alternative to the adult criminal justice system and the state-run Division of Juvenile Justice. Each camp in LA County is a fully enclosed facility, with a capacity to hold up to 120 youth. While the LA County Probation Department runs these facilities, other county departments provide education (300 minutes of daily instruction in classes with a maximum 17-to-1

student-to-teacher ratio)<sup>20</sup> and health and mental health services.

Youth are sent to these facilities post-adjudication for three-, six- or nine-month sentences, with an average camp stay of 4.7 months.<sup>21</sup> The average daily cost to house a youth in a probation camp is \$329.61; for a six-month sentence, this equates to over \$60,000 for one youth.<sup>22</sup> Of the approximately 900 young people detained in the probation camps, 89 percent are male and more than 95 percent are youth of color. African American youth are particularly over represented in LA County's camps, with an incarceration rate three times that of their prevalence in the general population. Youth in the camps come largely from the First and Second supervisorial districts, encompassing South Los Angeles, East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 1: Racial Breakdown of Youth in Los Angeles County Probation Camps Ages 10-18**



## Ineffective Design and Operations

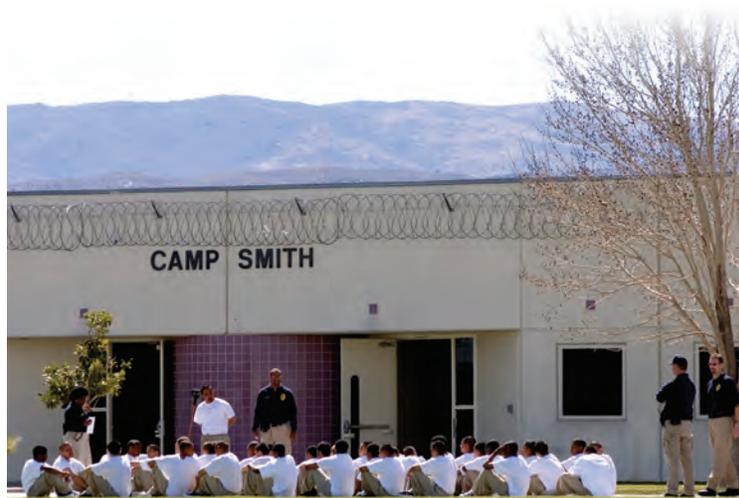
Today, we know that youth involved with the juvenile justice system have low rates of educational attainment and high rates of learning disabilities, substance abuse and mental health issues. Moreover, these young people are often victims of violence themselves and suffer from high levels of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>24</sup> But until recently, juvenile justice remained rooted in century-old beliefs that youth, instead of having complex needs that must be addressed, needed only discipline and structure, and that housing them together in one large space was the most cost-effective solution.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, counties in California had just two options for system-involved youth: adult prisons or juvenile training schools. Overcrowding at the training schools in 1931 led to the opening of the first juvenile probation camp in the U.S., Camp Glenn Rockey in LA County.<sup>25</sup> Grouping a large population of youth together in a rural setting far from urban temptations, Camp Rockey served as the model for similar probation camp programs for youth throughout the state.<sup>26</sup> However, since little was known at the time of its construction over 80 years ago about effective juvenile justice facilities or programs, the camp was limited in its ability to positively impact youth.<sup>27</sup>

Built mostly in the 1950s and 1960s, today's LA County probation camps followed this model, which relied on penitentiary-like facilities and strictly enforced routines. Over the decades, changes consisted mainly of implementing a boot-camp structure. Even the newest Los Angeles County probation camp – Challenger Memorial Youth Center, which opened in 1990 in a geographically remote area with a command-and-control program<sup>28</sup> – represents an outdated era of juvenile justice that does not meet the needs of today's system-involved youth.

### **Camp design does not foster rehabilitation.**

In Los Angeles County, as in counties throughout the state, juvenile probation camps are located in sparsely populated, geographically isolated areas of the county and remain largely correctional in design, with razor wire-topped perimeter fences.<sup>29</sup> Barracks-like



Youth at Camp Smith sit lined up on the field by deputy probation officers before walking to another building for classroom instruction in March 2008. Camp Smith is one of six camps at Challenger Memorial Youth Center, the largest facility in LA County built with a combined 660-bed capacity. Photo courtesy of Kevin Chang of the Long Beach Press-Telegram.

dormitories can typically house up to 100 youth in one large open area built around a monitoring center, where a large custodial staff enforce supervision and control. Bathrooms consist of open showers and toilets without privacy.

The design of large, open dorms like this has been repeatedly cited as problematic, particularly given the population and its needs, including mental health problems, anger management issues, and gang affiliation. As noted by former LA County Assistant Chief Probation Officer (and former Interim Chief Probation Officer) Calvin Remington, this design, which places many youth in one room together, can foster competition, deepen factions and further gang problems.<sup>30</sup>

Nearly half of the camps contain a special housing unit (SHU) with individual cells used in large part to isolate youth who misbehave or pose safety concerns; camps without a SHU utilize one at a neighboring facility. Despite research showing the detrimental effects of solitary confinement on youth, the SHU continues to be utilized.

**Youths' lives are regimented yet filled with aimless free time.** Youth wear LA County-issued clothing and are permitted few personal items. Roll call is taken throughout the day, and youth transition between activities by marching with their hands

behind their backs in single-file lines. Youth spend much of the day, including at meal times, in the dorms and transitioning between activities “on quiet,” where talking is restricted and sometimes silence is even required. Youth spend most of the day in school. Late afternoons and evenings often include recreation, enrichment programs or individual and group therapy, though programs vary by camp. At some facilities, program options are scarce, and youth have considerable amounts of aimless free time.

**Youth interaction with staff is inconsistent and often adversarial.** While some probation positions are specifically geared toward counseling, the design of the camps, which requires supervision and control, perpetuates a more guard-like approach toward youth from many line staff. Probation staff uniforms are similar to law enforcement attire, including badges and combat boots, which can reinforce a correctional feel. Most staff, particularly probation line staff, works a 2½-day (56-hour) schedule, which includes two consecutive 16-hour shifts (6 a.m. to 10 p.m.), one eight-hour shift, and two eight-hour sleep periods on-site, followed by several days off. As a result of these long shifts—designed to ensure adequate supervision and lessen commute times, given the remote location of these facilities—youth interact with a constantly changing group of staff.<sup>31</sup>

## **A Pattern of Misconduct and Abuse**

Recent lawsuits and allegations of ongoing misconduct and abuse have revealed critical systemic problems in Los Angeles County’s probation camps and halls. Evidence of shortfalls has been extensive, multi-faceted, and ongoing, including:

- An LA County Civil Grand Jury report<sup>32</sup> in 2000 that gave a majority of the county’s probation camps a failing score, citing unsanitary conditions and inadequate programming, among other problems;
- A Department of Justice (DOJ) investigation and federal oversight beginning in 2004 that examined unsafe and abusive conditions at the three juvenile halls;
- A DOJ investigation and federal oversight into the probation camps that began in 2008 and resulted in a still ongoing 41-provision Memorandum of

Agreement (MOA);

- A federal class-action lawsuit in 2010 that charged LA County with failing to provide adequate educational and rehabilitative services for youth in the county’s largest probation camp, Challenger Memorial Youth Center, which led to a settlement agreement in 2011 that is still being monitored<sup>33</sup>;
- County of Los Angeles Office of Independent Review annual reports of the Probation Department in 2012 and 2013, assessing things like employee misconduct that have plagued the department;
- Internal documents, including Interim Chief Probation Officer Calvin Remington’s 2010 “Back to Basics” report, outlining policy and procedural challenges faced by the department; and
- News and feature stories reporting on scandals and abuses in the camps and halls.

These findings have centered primarily on the following problems in the camps:

**Failure to protect youth from harm.** Several reports repeatedly found that staff employed excessive use of force, inappropriate physical restraints, blatant mistreatment and assault, overuse of pepper spray and verbal abuse. Reports also found a high incidence of youth-on-youth assaults, particularly when large numbers of youth were together in the dorms and when youth moved from one activity to another. Solitary confinement was being used excessively and inappropriately, causing mental and emotional harm to young people. Additionally, camps failed to provide adequate suicide management. Investigations into abuse allegations failed to examine grievance reporting and investigation processes.

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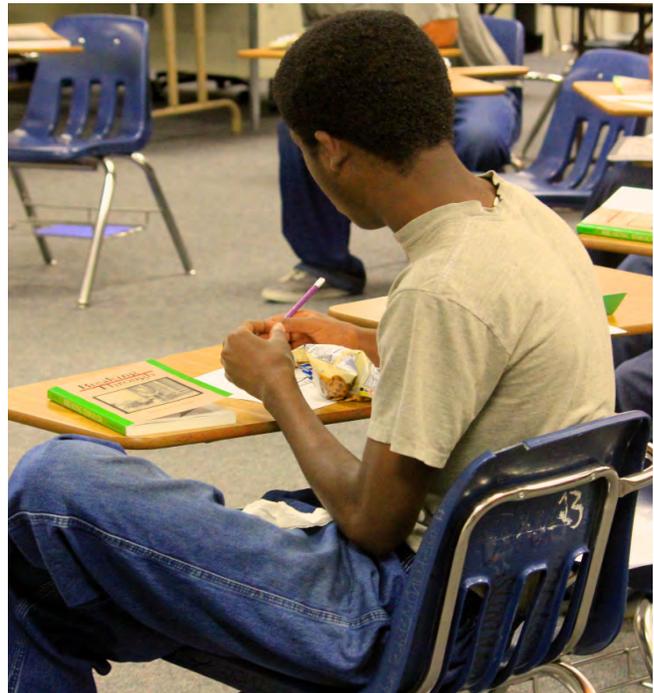
**Insufficient and problematic staffing.** Reports documented extensive problems related to staffing, including an insufficient number of staff, untrained staff, staff engaging in unpermitted punitive behavior and staff drinking on the job. Other pervasive problems include poor staff communication and collaboration.

**Inadequate rehabilitative and educational services.** Reports repeatedly found inadequate mental health services and rehabilitative programming. Camps often failed to provide mandatory educational services, including ensuring participation in the required minimum school day—for all youth, including those held in the special housing unit—and assistance for youth who asked for help with schoolwork. The reports also frequently cited conditions incompatible with a rehabilitative environment, including unsanitary environments and dilapidated infrastructure.

### The Limits to Current Reform

To address violations and abuses, the LA County Probation Department, County Office of Education, and Department of Mental Health, have undertaken considerable policy, program and staffing changes. The following details these steps forward:

**New programs.** The county has implemented an integrated behavioral treatment model<sup>34</sup> at five camps. It consists of a unified approach to screening, assessment, case planning, treatment, transition and after-care (reentry), with all staff members trained to work together with a common vocabulary and common treatment goals. The approach is promising, though the extent of fidelity to the model is unknown and the results have yet to be determined. The Los Angeles County Office of Education has improved its educational programs to increase student engagement and curriculum relevancy, including the project-based and interdisciplinary educational program Road to Success Academy that piloted at camps Scott and Scudder and is now being expanded, and the Children’s Defense Fund Freedom Schools® literacy and enrichment program. Evidence-based programs such as Aggression Replacement Training are now standard throughout the camp system. To support these new programs, the probation department is working to create smaller groups in the dorms when possible.<sup>35</sup>



A young man at Camp Afflerbaugh is participating in CDF’s Freedom School program, which piloted in two LA County probation camps in summer 2013. Photo courtesy of Hanif Houston.

**Staffing changes.** The staff-to-youth ratio for both probation officers and teachers has decreased. Camps have hired important new positions for transition counselors and additional mental health staff. Staff has also undergone extensive training in new procedures and programs.

With changes like these, most of the provisions of the Memorandum of Agreement have been satisfied, and many of the most concerning abuses – inappropriate use of pepper spray, for example – have been remedied. Additionally, the operations, programming and atmosphere at Challenger Memorial Youth Center has seen a positive shift under the settlement agreement. Moreover, the significant reductions in juvenile hall and probation camp populations – down 41 percent between 2009 and 2012<sup>36</sup> – mean that fewer youth, like those with only a technical violation, are being unnecessarily detained. These are promising developments.

Still, progress has been slow and limited in other ways:

**Compliance challenges with the MOA and Challenger lawsuit.** LA County was not able to achieve and maintain substantial compliance with the

Memorandum of Agreement for the camps within the required four-year period. The county still has not complied in full with several significant provisions:

- Providing sufficient staff supervision to keep residents safe and allow successful implementation of rehabilitative activities;
- Providing adequate rehabilitative and gender-specific programming to deliver instruction that meets youths' needs, as well as mental health services, enrichment activities and family involvement;
- Providing a facility-wide behavior management system;
- Addressing substance use disorders; and
- Collecting sufficient and reliable data to evaluate implementation of the MOA.<sup>37</sup>

In addition, the county struggled to resolve quickly and consistently the educational violations happening at the Challenger Memorial Youth Center. Progress has at times stalled or reversed. For example, in November 2011, the settlement monitors found that certain program gains had “evaporated” and that staff turnover and staff quality was quite concerning.<sup>38</sup> While things have certainly improved as of late due to dedicated efforts by the county and expert monitors, things like staff stability, staff collaboration and data collection are continuing concerns.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, as of early 2013, new violations have still emerged at Challenger such as the failure to provide nutritionally adequate food, despite the increased resources and scrutiny at the facility.<sup>40</sup>

**Misconduct and Violence.** Youth-against-youth and staff-against-youth violence, while declining, remain problematic. Some staff misconduct has been persistent, including aggressive behavior toward youth and an excessive use of force.<sup>41</sup> Despite many improvements in staff recruitment, training and oversight, alarming incidents still occur, including staff overseeing fight clubs and staff physically abusing youth in their custody.<sup>42</sup>

**Forcing trauma-exposed youth into one large dormitory leads to increased violence, threats to youth safety and delayed acceptance of rehabilitation.**



A view of a single bed and shelf in the open dorm at Camp Afflerbaugh in La Verne, taken July 24, 2013. Youth are permitted few personal items and have little to no privacy. Photo courtesy of Michelle Newell.

**Inter-department Collaboration.** Collaboration among county agencies serving youth, while improving, remains fragmented. For example, a report cited the lack of a close relationship between probation officers and education staff at the Challenger Memorial Youth Center as “harmful to the education of the youth, as lack of cooperation is carried over from the classroom to the living units.”<sup>43</sup>

## The Price Youth Pay for an Outdated Approach

The design and operations of the current camps remain obstacles to comprehensive reform. While promising programs, such as the Road to Success Academy education model, have seen success, and lawsuits and federal oversight are implementing needed change, there is a limit to this success within our current camp system. Fully rehabilitative and therapeutic environments simply cannot be established in facilities with institutional designs and operations that combine to cause safety concerns and atmospheres not conducive to positive mental health or meaningful relationship building between youth and staff.

**Design obstacles.** The current juvenile facility design in LA County constrains effective treatment programs. A design that requires supervision from a control center limits staff-youth relationship building. In large open dorms, it is also difficult to create



An inside view of the dormitory at Camp Afflerbaugh in La Verne, taken July 24, 2013. Opened in 1961, this juvenile probation camp houses younger boys in one 120-bed open-dormitory style living unit. Photo courtesy of Michelle Newell.

a therapeutic environment, form cohesive groups and conduct small-group treatment. For this reason, camps offer treatment programs and evidence-based programs one to two hours a day at most. Some sites provide the programs only a couple hours a week. During the remainder of the day or week, the facilities revert to their routine operations, which do not support—and potentially undermine—the gains youth make during small-group treatment. Moreover, research demonstrates that forcing trauma-exposed youth into one large dormitory leads to increased violence, threats to youth safety and delayed acceptance of rehabilitation.<sup>44</sup> When youth do not feel safe, rehabilitation

## A New Model

### Senate Bill 81 as a Vehicle for Reform

Senate Bill 81, a juvenile justice realignment bill<sup>49</sup> passed by the California State Legislature in August 2007, created new juvenile justice funding streams for counties, including \$200 million in lease revenue bonds for counties to construct or improve juvenile facilities.<sup>50</sup>

In December 2010, LA County was notified that it received a state grant to tear down and rebuild one of its

cannot occur.<sup>45</sup>

Additionally, many aging facilities require costly maintenance because of ongoing water, sewer and infrastructure problems.<sup>46</sup> When a facility unexpectedly closes for maintenance, its youth are shuffled to another camp. The combination of displacement and disruption and a crumbling and poorly kept environment stymies attempts at rehabilitation.

**Operational obstacles.** Punitive practices are often an unavoidable part of a supervision-driven camp model, which adversely affects youth with mental health issues and trauma-exposed youth. Though decreasing, some facilities still regularly employ solitary confinement in a special housing unit, which can have a devastating effect on young people already exposed to high levels of trauma. In response to studies demonstrating the harm of such prolonged isolation, the United Nations has called on all countries to prohibit solitary confinement in juvenile cases.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, staff-related policies, including the staffing schedule, hinder attempts at creating a rehabilitative model. The 56-hour staff shift, with its 16-hour days and extended time away from the facility when a shift ends, undermines the staff's ability to perform effectively, engage with youth and address critical programmatic responsibilities.<sup>48</sup>

probation camps based on best practices.<sup>51</sup> The county selected Camp Kilpatrick, an all-boys camp, because it was physically in the worst shape – the county Chief Executive's Office found that the camp needed \$22.3 million worth of renovations beyond the \$1.127 million the county needed to spend, on average, to maintain it annually.<sup>52</sup>

Since the Board of Supervisors approved this grant in early 2012, the county, in a burgeoning partnership with researchers, advocates and funders, has taken a

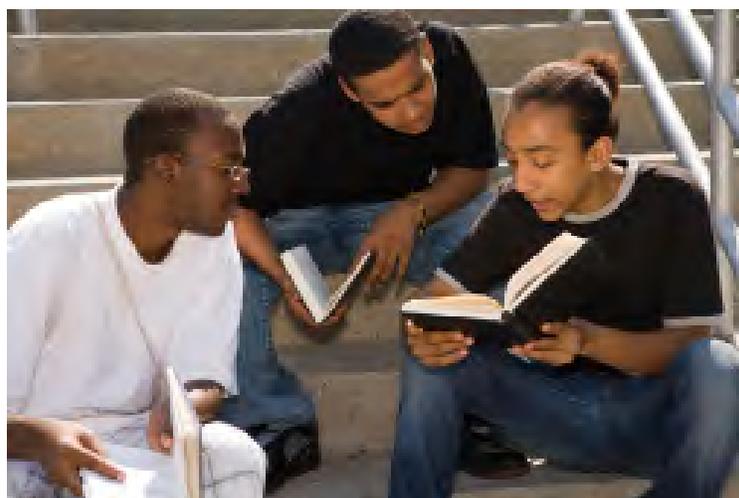
number of steps to inform the design of this new camp program, including conducting research on best practices and performing site visits to model programs throughout the country. With demonstrated commitment and leadership from the Board of Supervisors (who recently allocated more resources to this project to help ensure fidelity to the model), the probation department and the Los Angeles County Office of Education, LA County now has the opportunity through this \$48 million project to create an innovative model that can vastly improve services for youth in the juvenile justice system, and can stand as an example of innovation and system reform for the rest of the nation.

### The Origination of a New Model: A Success Story

For the Camp Kilpatrick project, policymakers in the county have committed to a new approach known as the LA Model. It is informed by best practices centered on a rehabilitative small group treatment model, which began to emerge in Massachusetts in the 1960s. This approach was exemplified in Missouri, whose juvenile justice system has proved so successful over the last 30 years—reducing recidivism to one of the lowest rates in the nation—that it is known as the “Missouri Miracle.” A number of practices combine to make this approach unique: it is primarily made up of small, cottage-like facilities located at sites throughout the state that keep young people close to their own homes and embody a rehabilitative approach. The effectiveness of these practices in Missouri on reducing recidivism, improving educational and employment outcomes, and improving safety are clear:

- In 2011, only 6.9 percent of youth discharged from Missouri’s Division of Youth Services (DYS) were

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recommitted for new juvenile offenses within one year;<sup>53</sup> 84 percent of youth discharged from Missouri’s DYS are law abiding and productive in school or work after one year.<sup>54</sup>

- Seventy percent of youth incarcerated in Missouri facilities accumulated educational credits in core academic subjects as fast as, if not faster than, their same-age peers;<sup>55</sup> 85.3 percent were enrolled in school or employed at the time of discharge in 2008.<sup>56</sup>
- Compared to other state’s juvenile justice systems, assaults on youth in Missouri are 4.5 times less likely and assaults on staff members are 13 times less likely. The frequency of restrictive conditions, including isolation, is 200 times less than in other juvenile justice agencies.<sup>57</sup>

The success of the Missouri Model led states and counties across the country to implement a similar juvenile justice model.

After publicly acknowledging its failing juvenile justice system in 2006, Santa Clara County, California, undertook an overhaul of the William F. James Boys Ranch, a co-ed, 96-bed residential camp for youth, based on the small-group approach used in Missouri. Before the new model (called the Enhanced Ranch Program) was adopted, 47 percent of youth failed the program while at the ranch<sup>58</sup> and 42 recidivated<sup>59</sup> within one year after release.<sup>60</sup> In 2011, only 17 percent of youth failed the program, and 21 percent recidivated.<sup>61</sup>

These statistics reveal a 63 percent reduction in

program violations and a 50 percent reduction in new arrests and violations for youth who returned to their communities.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, between 2007 and 2011, the average number of violent incidents per individual per year (including gang-related fights, possession of contraband and disruptive conduct in the classroom) dropped from 9.8 to 2.36.<sup>63</sup>

In Washington, D.C., the Oak Hill Youth Center was dangerous, overcrowded and plagued by lawsuits and consent decrees. Fifty-one percent of the center's youth were rearrested within a year of returning to the community. Administrators, looking for a new way, designed and built the New Beginnings Youth Development Center, a 60-bed facility based on the Missouri Model.

By 2010, after the new model was adopted, the recidivism rate dropped to 35 percent.<sup>64</sup> Youths' average annualized grade improvement in reading was an impressive 1.73 in the 2011-2012 school year during their approximately nine-month stay.<sup>65</sup>

Sites in Louisiana, New Mexico and New York City have also shifted their focus from large, correctional facilities and instead embraced this small group treatment model. These sites have experienced a drop in violent incidents and an improvement in youth-to-staff and youth-to-youth interactions.



At the Watkins Mill Park Camp in Missouri, as in all secure juvenile facilities run by the state, youth are housed in small, cottage-like dormitories of 12, rather than large locked facilities. Photo courtesy of Julio Marcial.



The Santa Clara County Probation Department redesigned its William F. James Boys Ranch with small dorms to create a home-like environment that supports rehabilitation. Photo courtesy of the Santa Clara County Probation Department.

## Core Principles and Practices of the New Model

Across the country, including in Missouri, Santa Clara, and Washington, D.C., this new model has seen success from the following characteristics:

**Rehabilitative and non-institutional environment.** The model emphasizes a continuum of care, encouraging community alternatives to incarceration whenever possible. Secure facilities are rehabilitative, small and cottage-like, non-institutional, and whenever possible close to the young people's communities. Facilities are designed to create a physical and emotional space that enables both staff and youth to feel safe and be open to taking risks, an approach integral to behavioral and cognitive change.<sup>66</sup>

**Small-group treatment model.** Youth spend almost all day in small groups of 10 to 12,<sup>67</sup> sleeping, eating, exercising and attending school and therapy sessions together, and interacting with the same highly trained staff (youth specialists or youth counselors). This approach<sup>68</sup> is based on positive youth development principles, which emphasize cognitive changes, the importance of peer influence among teens, close relationships and positive peer accountability.<sup>69</sup>

**Safety fostered by positive relationships.** Positive relationships among peers and between youth and staff foster a rehabilitative climate while improving safety. Punitive responses such as restraints and isolation are avoided; alternative approaches, such as “circling up” – youth coming together in a circle to talk through their problems – help facilitate positive social behavior.

**High-quality education.** Access to a range of academic services – an engaging curriculum, vocational and credit recovery programs and a focus on developing soft skills, such as team building, communication and leadership—helps youth become motivated to change, build skills for the future and adapt to the demands of reentering their communities when released.

**Integrated program based on collaboration.** This model requires integration at every stage. Departments and staff have a unified approach and remain in close communication. Staff attends joint trainings across departments, and job descriptions and duties support collaboration.

**Focus on reentry planning and family involvement.** Staff undertakes thorough aftercare (reentry) planning early in a youth’s stay.<sup>70</sup> This includes completion of school enrollment, even if a youth must leave the camp temporarily to enroll at a school site. Staff helps identify employment opportunities, match a youth with mentors and meaningfully involve the youth’s family.<sup>71</sup>

	<b>Current Probation Camp Model</b>	<b>The New Model</b>
<b>Facility Design</b>	Large, institutional, and geographically isolated	Smaller, rehabilitative, home-like environment rather than a correctional setting.
<b>Sleeping &amp; Living</b>	Large open dorms with 50-120 beds in military barracks style; open bathrooms; no privacy	Small dorms of 10-12 youth; living room area; private bathrooms.
<b>Safety</b>	Safety largely through supervision (command centers), restraints, isolation rooms	Staff provide services and supervision; no use of isolation rooms; safety through positive relationships
<b>Staffing Schedule</b>	Staff work 56-hour work schedule with long (16 hour) shifts, sleeping at facility, then gone for several days	Staff have regular work schedules to support working with youth, consistency, and relationship building
<b>Family &amp; Community</b>	Limited family engagement and community involvement	Interactive approach between youth, families, treatment center staff and community staff
<b>Collaboration</b>	Siloed working practices; different programs done by different county agencies	Integrated treatment model; cross-agency collaboration at each stage, including seamless transition and post-release services
<b>Programs &amp; Education</b>	Programs varied, sometimes limited, and often inconsistent with rest of camp experience	Program and education central; focus on skill-building, relevancy, and internal transformation

# Moving Forward: Recommendations for LA's Camp Kilpatrick Replacement Project

Los Angeles County is at a critical stage in reforming its juvenile justice system. The following recommendations will help ensure that the Camp Kilpatrick Replacement project supports true reform:

## **1. Ensure youth sent to Kilpatrick (and other camps) truly need to be there.**

The first step to a better juvenile justice system is a smaller one. Since research confirms that incarcerating young people who commit low-level offenses is particularly harmful,<sup>72</sup> LA County should only send youth to Camp Kilpatrick, or any other camp, who present significant danger to the community.<sup>73</sup> While LA County has taken decisive steps to improve intake screening and reduce the average daily detention population in its 14 probation camps, further ensuring that only those youth who seriously threaten public safety be sent to the probation camps will promote better outcomes and cost effectiveness.

## **2. Maintain fidelity to the model while adapting to the unique circumstances of Los Angeles.**

Success at other sites has been the result of adherence to the therapeutic, integrated, small-group treatment model. While each site's location and population has specific needs, faithfulness to the model's core principles is critical. In LA County, adaptations will likely include a projects-based education program modeled after the Road to Success Academy as well as extended and integrated mental health and aftercare services developed in coordination with community-based reentry programs.

Even the most forward-thinking building design will fall short if the county does not maintain fidelity to the model's programming, training, collaboration and staffing by:

- Consulting with experts on the model;
- Committing to small groups of no larger than 12 youth;
- Ensuring staff focus on counseling and

relationship-building by adjusting recruitment for these positions, modifying job descriptions, improving trainings, and changing staffing schedules; and

- Conducting cross-departmental trainings and revising Memorandums of Understanding between departments to increase collaboration.

## **3. Ensure broad agency collaboration and community partnerships.**

The historical fragmentation and insularity of the county's juvenile justice system has resulted in limited resources, a lack of transparency and hurdles to reform. Because county agencies – including departments of health services, mental health, education and probation – all play critical roles, collaboration at every step is vital.

Community partnerships are also essential to ensure that reform is based on solid research and reflective of community needs. LA County's community-based and faith-based organizations, advocates, researchers, organizers, youth and parents all have an investment in improved systems and improved youth outcomes. For community input to be significant, it must be solicited early and often and be taken seriously. It also must come from those that have directly experienced the system. An outside evaluation will further help foster a successful public-private partnership.

## **4. Improve tracking and use of data.**

Juvenile justice policy decisions in LA County are, unfortunately, often based on minimal data. Without the necessary data, the county implements new programs and expands pilot programs more often because they "feel" right than because of their demonstrated effectiveness. To better understand the experiences and outcomes of probation-involved youth and the success of programs that serve them, the reform of Camp Kilpatrick must be thoroughly documented and evaluated, enabling necessary course correction and ensuring that the experiences and outcomes of youth are indeed improving.

## **5. Use Kilpatrick as a pilot for important concepts.**

By using resources wisely and documenting successes and challenges, Camp Kilpatrick can be a springboard for greater reform in LA County probation camps. All youth in LA County, especially those who have been detained and deprived of their liberty, deserve to be treated humanely and in ways that will support their development, which means in probation camps aligned with best practices. While there are several other promising programs to learn from and expand on – including the multifaceted educational overhaul at Challenger Memorial Youth Center, the Road to Success Academy educational model at Camps Scott

and Scudder (which is in the early stages of roll out to other camps), and community-based partnerships at other camps—lessons learned from Kilpatrick should undoubtedly inform future reform. This includes lessons from the research and planning phase happening now, as well as lessons from implementation when the camp opens in a few years.

To ensure that a small-group treatment approach can be successful at other facilities, physically reconfiguring other camps to support smaller groups and a more rehabilitative environment (as Santa Clara County did with its reconfiguration of its William F. James Ranch facility) should also be a top priority.

## **Conclusion**

The time is now for Los Angeles County to move even further beyond outdated and ineffective approaches to juvenile justice with a probation camp that puts the needs of youth first. The Camp Vernon Kilpatrick Replacement Project—scheduled to open in 2017—represents a unique opportunity to develop an innovative approach that will profoundly improve the treatment of incarcerated

youth. With a facility design, program design, staffing, training, and evaluation based on rehabilitative best practices, the LA Model can ensure that youth in the LA County juvenile justice system are set on the path toward becoming responsible adults with achievable goals, a credit to their communities.

## Endnotes

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5. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Statistical Briefing Book*, released December 9, 2011, <http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/corrections/qa08201.asp?qaDate=2010>.
6. California Board of State and Community Corrections, *Juvenile Detention Profile Survey: Third Quarter Calendar Year 2012*. Sacramento, CA: California Board of State and Community Corrections, Facilities Standards and Operations Division [Producer and Distributor], 2012. [http://www.bscc.ca.gov/download.php?f=/3Q12\\_JuvDS\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.bscc.ca.gov/download.php?f=/3Q12_JuvDS_full_report.pdf)
7. The juvenile halls in the county typically hold youth pre-adjudication for an average of 17 days; these facilities, which contain individual cells, are not designed for long-term stays and typically offer minimal programming.
8. Of these fourteen probation camps, eleven are for males, two for females, and one is a treatment center (Dorothy Kirby) for both genders.
9. Examples include but are not limited to: lawsuits filed by organizations such as Public Counsel and ACLU – Southern California; federal oversight from the Department of Justice; a decade worth of documented youth stories, policy analysis and organizing campaigns around reform from the Youth Justice Coalition; op ed articles written by the Advancement Project; numerous media reports of troubling conditions and policies; internal audits by the county and probation department; elected officials' writings and public comments like LA County Board Supervisor Ridley-Thomas.
10. Letter to the LA County Board of Supervisors on the Camp Vernon Kilpatrick Replacement Project, from William T. Fujioka, CEO, and Jerry E. Powers, Chief Probation Officer, January 17, 2012. <http://file.lacounty.gov/bos/supdocs/65921.pdf>
11. Richard Mendel, *No Place for Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration* (Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011).
12. Mark W. Lipsey, James C. Howell, Marion R. Kelly, Gabrielle Chapman, and Darin Carver, "Improving the Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Programs: A New Perspective on Evidence-Based Practice," (Washington, DC: Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, December 2010), 23-24.
13. A classic treatment-oriented program that has been shown to reduce recidivism in the juvenile justice system is Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT). This form of behavioral therapy is designed to elicit changes in thinking and beliefs, and ultimately influence behavior. CBT is active and goal directed and requires a small-group format, a trusting environment and strong relationships. "Cognitive Behavioral Treatment," Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, <http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/progTypesCognitivePrev.aspx> (accessed April 11, 2013).
14. Mark W. Lipsey, "The Primary Factors that Characterize Effective Interventions with Juvenile Offenders: A Meta-Analytic Overview," *Victims & Offenders* 4, no. 9 (2009).
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16. Stephen Phillippi, Laquinta Below & Damien Cuffie, "Evidence Based Practice for Juvenile Justice Reform in Louisiana," (Louisiana State University School of Public Health, January 2010). [http://publichealth.lsuhsu.edu/lamc/pdf%20files/EBP%20Whitepaper%20FINAL%20FEB%202010%20\\_3\\_.pdf](http://publichealth.lsuhsu.edu/lamc/pdf%20files/EBP%20Whitepaper%20FINAL%20FEB%202010%20_3_.pdf).
17. At its peak, the California Division of Juvenile Justice (formerly known as the California Youth Authority) housed nearly

- 10,122 young adults in 1996 in its facilities. In 2013, there are fewer than 750 young people in a mere three facilities, [http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/bccj/New\\_Era.pdf](http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/bccj/New_Era.pdf) (accessed July 9, 2013).
18. County of Los Angeles, 2012-2013 Final Budget. [http://www.lacountyannualreport.com/2012/pdf/2012-13\\_Complete\\_Budget.pdf](http://www.lacountyannualreport.com/2012/pdf/2012-13_Complete_Budget.pdf)
  19. LA County Probation Data, August 2012.
  20. In October 2008, the LA County Board of Supervisors voted to increase the 240 minutes of instruction required by the state to 300 minutes. <http://file.lacounty.gov/bos/supdocs/41381.pdf>
  21. Laura S Abrams, Jessica Nolan Daugherty and Bridget Freisthler, "County of Los Angeles: Young Offender Reentry Blueprint" (Commissioned by the Los Angeles County Community and Senior Services, and Prepared by UCLA School of Public Affairs, Department of Social Welfare, December 2010), 33. This average length of stay of 4.7 months is inconsistent with the three-, six-, and nine-month sentences youth are given because early release from the camps is a common practice.
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  23. LA County Probation Data, August 2012
  24. Anna Gorman, "Addressing girls' health needs at juvenile detention centers," Los Angeles Times, March 16, 2013, <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-juvenile-girls-health-20130317,0,564591.story> (accessed July 2, 2013).
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  26. Annette Kondo, "Doing Time: Camp Glenn Rockey Gives Juvenile Offenders a Chance to Fight Back." Los Angeles Times, April 23, 1989. The camp also served as the model for federal Civilian Conservation Corps camps.
  27. Richard Mendel, No Place for Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration, 2011
  28. Challenger Memorial Youth Center, which is located next to an adult prison in a geographically remote area 70 miles north of downtown Los Angeles, is composed of six camps housed in a barracks-like compound. Group sizes are large and organized with a command-and-control model.
  29. Daniel Macallair, Mike Males, Dinky Manek and Natasha Vinakor. "Renewing Juvenile Justice." A report to the Sierra Health Foundation by the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (March 2011), 54
  30. Assistant Chief Probation Officer Calvin Remington, quoted in "Game-changer for a probation camp," Zev's Blog (Zev Yaroslavsky, Los Angeles County Supervisor, Third District), February 14, 2012, <http://zev.lacounty.gov/news/game-changer-for-a-probation-camp> (accessed July 3, 2013).
  31. Calvin C. Remington, "Management and Administrative Assessment of the Los Angeles County Probation Department: Back to the Basics: The Steps Required While Moving Forward," Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, August 24, 2010. <http://zev.lacounty.gov/pdfs/MANAGEMENT-ADMINISTRATIVE-ASSESSMENT.pdf>
  32. California Penal Code §919(b) mandates that the Grand Jury inspect all county and municipal police departments, jails, and holding cells in superior and municipal courts, as well as juvenile camps and other institutions operated by the Los Angeles Probation Department.
  33. Counsel in the lawsuit included ACLU of Southern California, ACLU National Prison Project, Disability Rights Legal Center and Public Counsel.
  34. The characteristics of an integrated behavioral treatment model are described in: Clemens Bartollas and Stuart Miller, Juvenile Justice in America (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2008), 280.
  35. At Challenger Memorial Youth Complex, reopening three of the camps has allowed for group sizes of close to 30 in some of the dorms. However, youth do not spend all day with this group, like is typically done to promote group cohesion in other small group treatment models.
  36. LA County probation camp and hall numbers were compared from 2009 to 2012 using the: Juvenile Detention Profile: California Board of State and Community Corrections. Juvenile Detention Profile Survey: Third Quarter Calendar Year 2012. [http://www.bscc.ca.gov/download.php?f=/3Q12\\_JuvDS\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.bscc.ca.gov/download.php?f=/3Q12_JuvDS_full_report.pdf)
  37. "Second Amendment to Memorandum of Agreement Between the United States and the County of Los Angeles Regarding the Los Angeles County Probation Camps Entered Into On October 31, 2008," October 2012. [www.justice.gov/crt/about/spl/documents/lacamps\\_secondMOA\\_10-12-12.pdf](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/spl/documents/lacamps_secondMOA_10-12-12.pdf)

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43. "First Semi-Annual Report of the Technical, Consulting, and Advisory (TCA) Team at the Challenger Memorial Youth Center: Casey A v Gundry (April 1, 2013), 3-4
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45. Daniel Macallair, Mike Males, Dinky Manek and Natasha Vinakor. "Renewing Juvenile Justice." 55
46. For example, in summer 2013 Camp Gonzales closed for several months due to roof repair. Other camps, like Camp Kilpatrick, incur average annual repair and maintenance costs of over \$1 million.
47. In United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture, Juan E. Méndez told the UN's General Assembly's third committee, which deals with social, humanitarian and cultural affairs, to ban the solitary confinement of prisoners except in very exceptional circumstances and for as short a time as possible, with an absolute prohibition in the case of juveniles and people with mental disabilities. <https://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=40097&Cr=torture&Cr1=%20ForceRecrawl:%20#.Ud0DU1eRfKc>
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49. Senate Bill 81 was termed the juvenile justice realignment bill because it set strict eligibility requirements for which youth could be committed to the state juvenile justice authority, the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), ensuring that California juvenile courts could only send youth that had committed the most serious or violent crimes to DJJ. The remaining youth who would no longer be eligible for commitment to DJJ would remain the responsibility of the counties.
50. Juvenile Justice Realignment Law § SB 81, Chapter 175, and AB 191, Chapter 257 (2007), [http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/sen/sb\\_0051-0100/sb\\_81\\_bill\\_20070824\\_chaptered.pdf](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/sen/sb_0051-0100/sb_81_bill_20070824_chaptered.pdf)
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55. Richard Mendel, "The Missouri Model."
56. Missouri Department of Social Services, "Missouri Division of Youth Services Annual Report Fiscal Year 2008," <http://dss.mo.gov/re/pdf/dys/dysfy08.pdf>
57. Richard Mendel, "The Missouri Model."
58. Santa Clara County defines program failure here as a violation or new arrest while at the ranch.
59. Santa Clara County defines recidivism here as a re-arrest or violation within one year of release.
60. "County of Santa Clara Strategic Investment in Innovative Juvenile Support Paying Off," County of Santa Clara press release, June 11, 2012, on the County of Santa Clara website, <http://www.sccgov.org/sites/opa/nr/Pages/County-of-Santa-Clara-Strategic-Investment-in-Innovative-Juvenile-Support-Paying-Off.aspx>, accessed July 10, 2013.
61. Santa Clara County Enhanced Ranch Program presentation, Washington, D.C., September 2012
62. Ibid.

63. Ibid
64. District of Columbia Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, 2012 Annual Performance Report. [http://dyrs.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dyrs/page\\_content/attachments/DYRS\\_AR-low-res\\_041713.pdf](http://dyrs.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dyrs/page_content/attachments/DYRS_AR-low-res_041713.pdf)
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66. Richard A. Mendel, "The Missouri Model: Reinventing the Practice of Rehabilitating Youthful Offenders," Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, [http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/Juvenile%20Detention%20Alternatives%20Initiative/MO-Model/MO\\_Fullreport\\_webfinal.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/Juvenile%20Detention%20Alternatives%20Initiative/MO-Model/MO_Fullreport_webfinal.pdf)
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70. In the Youth Justice Coalition's report "Welcome Home LA: From the Cell Block to the Corner Block" (February 2011), which many organizations and individuals endorsed, it is stressed that reentry planning should start as early as the time of arrest. <http://www.youth4justice.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/2012WelcomeHomeLA.pdf>
71. In "Families Unlocking Futures: Solutions to the Crisis in Juvenile Justice," a report by Justice for Families, with research support by Data Center (September 2012), the crucial roles families play in the success of system-involved youth is detailed. In a survey of over 1,000 families, nearly one-third of them from California, eighty-six percent of family members surveyed said they would like to be more involved in their children's treatment while they are confined, yet a majority of families said there were serious impediments to reaching youth by phone or visiting (difficulties with transportation, distance, cost, insufficient visiting hours and restrictive visitation rules were cited). Additionally, only 32 percent of parents and families surveyed reported discussing release plans with juvenile justice system staff before their child was released. A family-centered approach is needed so families are engaged in meaningful ways. <http://www.youth4justice.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Families-Unlocking-Futures.pdf>
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