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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 24, 2025

NATION'S LARGEST TRIAL COURT ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH LEADING JUVENILE JUSTICE SCHOLARS TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUTH

Study to Examine Los Angeles County Juvenile Justice System and Provide Evidence-Based Recommendations for Improvement

The Superior Court of Los Angeles County is launching a new partnership with the California Health and Human Services Agency, the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice (RFK NRC) and the National Center for Juvenile Justice to study and review the juvenile justice system to deliver research-informed recommendations to improve outcomes for justice-involved youth in Los Angeles County, Presiding Judge Sergio C. Tapia II announced today.

"Because the Court plays a significant role in the juvenile justice system of Los Angeles County, it is uniquely positioned to explore and leverage the latest research to improve outcomes for justice-involved youth," Presiding Judge Tapia said. "This research opportunity, in collaboration with leading juvenile justice scholars, will enable the Court and its county justice partners to thoughtfully examine the foundations of the juvenile justice system. By using data-informed recommendations, we aim to reduce disparities, enhance existing strengths, and address ongoing challenges with actionable milestones to improve youth outcomes. This important research project reinforces the Court's commitment to providing equal access to justice through the fair, timely and efficient resolution of all cases. Supervising Judge of Juvenile Justice Miguel Espinoza, with his extensive experience and unwavering dedication to juvenile justice, is the ideal person to lead this critical endeavor at this crucial time."

This partnership will operate under the auspices of the Probation and Youth Justice System Review framework, which will allow Los Angeles County justice partners, including the Court and the Los Angeles County Probation Department, to better understand the interaction among disparate government institutions and how this impacts outcomes within the juvenile justice system.

Expected to last 12-15 months, this collaborative study will examine core aspects of the county's juvenile justice operations, including probation supervision, internal and cross-agency collaboration processes, administration and quality assurance. The study will create several interdisciplinary projects among justice partners that can be used to measure effectiveness and track and analyze performance indicators. Key areas of focus will include alternatives to detention, diversion programs and resources for family engagement, all informed by a commitment to racial equity. Findings from the assessment will provide actionable recommendations to increase accountability and support positive outcomes for youth, families and the community at large.

“The Superior Court of Los Angeles County is committed to creating a juvenile justice system that not only addresses the needs of our youth but does so in a way that prioritizes fairness, community involvement and accountability,” Supervising Judge of Juvenile Justice Miguel Espinoza said, who is overseeing the initiative. “This partnership with RFK NRC provides us with an invaluable opportunity to conduct a thorough review and implement the latest best practices.”

The initiative also emphasizes collaboration among a range of partners within Los Angeles County, including:

- Los Angeles County Alternate Public Defender
- Children’s Law Center of California
- Los Angeles County Probation Department
- Los Angeles County Department of Youth Development
- Los Angeles County Independent Defense Counsel Office
- Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services
- Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
- Los Angeles County Office of Education
- Members of the Los Angeles County Youth Commission
- Office of Youth & Community Restoration
- Los Angeles County Public Defender
- Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office

This collaborative approach is designed to address the unique needs of youth and to ensure that the system operates cohesively throughout the stages of a young person’s experience.

“California Health and Human Services and the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) are pleased to partner with the Los Angeles County Youth Justice stakeholders to achieve system improvements which will improve outcomes to ensure that youth have a successful transition into adulthood,” OYCR Director Katherine Lucero said. “OYCR promotes trauma responsive, culturally informed, and developmentally appropriate services for youth involved in the youth justice system which have been shown to improve public safety. We look forward to this study to identify where these services can best be incorporated into the youth justice system continuum of care in Los Angeles County.”

“Our juvenile justice system serves as a critical support network for youth during pivotal moments in their lives,” Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court Akemi Arakaki said. “Through this initiative, we are investing in a future where our youth receive support that respects their developmental needs and aligns with proven strategies for reducing recidivism and promoting positive community outcomes.”

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