



# YOUTH JUSTICE AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

## THREE-YEAR BLUEPRINT FOR SYSTEMS REFORM

Anti-Recidivism Coalition, Brotherhood Crusade, Children's Defense Fund-California, Community Coalition, InnerCity Struggle, Khmer Girls in Action, Social Justice Learning Institute, Urban Peace Institute, Youth Justice Coalition



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## Document outline

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1. Overview
  2. The Intersection of Justice and Youth Development
  3. Recent Developments in Youth Justice and Youth Development Systems Reform
  4. Existing Work
  5. Existing Goals and Objectives
  6. Specific Priorities
  7. Strengths and Opportunities
  8. Strategies to Support and Invest In
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## Overview

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In late 2017, nine organizations (Anti-Recidivism Coalition, Brotherhood Crusade, Children’s Defense Fund-California, Community Coalition, InnerCity Struggle, Khmer Girls in Action, Social Justice Learning Institute, Urban Peace Institute, Youth Justice Coalition) were convened and supported by the California Funders for Boys and Men of Color to develop a blueprint for Los Angeles County that would accomplish the following goals:

- 1) Reduce youth contact with the justice system, from arrest through incarceration.**
- 2) Create a countywide youth development system that includes community-based prevention, diversion and alternatives to incarceration programs that are supported by dedicated sources of funding.**
- 3) Build a youth and community-led movement that develops the leadership of impacted individuals to organize for change and to increase positive public investment in young people of color.**

This document reflects a summary of the thinking, recent developments and existing work, shared goals and priorities, and current and needed strategies in Los Angeles County towards reducing the reliance on criminalization and punishment of youth and instead, making the investment toward, strengths-based youth development approaches. Moving forward, connecting, expanding, and strengthening existing work will be especially critical to achieving greater transformation of systems that serve youth, their families, and communities in Los Angeles.

The following shared principles will guide campaign goals and strategies:

- We believe that system transformation has to be centered on the voices and experiences of youth and families most impacted.
- We will advance strategies that build youth power in the highest need communities in LA County.
- We have a shared framework that by shifting systems toward the strengths and needs of youth, rather than punishment, we can create safer communities and better outcomes for youth.
- Our aim is that local governments and other agencies remove barriers to self-actualization for boys and young men of color, ensure that trans and queer students feel supported and lifted in this process, and that all young people are loved and given the opportunity to live confidently without harming themselves or others.
- We demand that all public systems (schools, social services, law enforcement, probation) achieve racial equity and become welcoming for boys of color, queer and trans youth of color, and youth with disabilities in a way that nurtures them to be critical thinkers.
- We commit to strengthen communication and build our respective organization’s capacity to better position all the organizations for coalition and alliance work.

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## THE INTERSECTION OF JUSTICE AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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Justice systems that use surveillance, supervision, containment, and other punitive approaches have too frequently been relied upon to respond to the unmet needs of youth accused of misbehavior and crimes. Yet, zero tolerance discipline policies, policing, prosecution, courts, and probation often fail to achieve positive outcomes for youth and communities, disproportionately impact youth of color, and can negatively impact their long-term health.<sup>1</sup> Investments in law enforcement approaches have dwarfed those in community, health and school-based alternatives. We believe, significant research has suggested, and youth development practitioners have evidenced that other child-serving systems – including education, physical health and mental health, child welfare – are more appropriate and often better equipped to address the needs of vulnerable children and youth.

Accordingly, shifting responsibility and investment toward youth development approaches is imperative for the long-term health and sustainability of communities of color. All systems that work with youth can and should be guided by youth development “as an alternative approach to community health and public safety that builds on the strengths of youth, families and communities, addresses the root causes of crime and violence, prevents youth criminalization, recognizes youth leadership and potential, and turns young people’s dreams into

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<sup>1</sup> Rios, Victor M. *Punished: Policing the lives of Black and Latino boys*. New York University Press, 2011.

realities.”<sup>2</sup> Youth development as a framework for systems – including justice systems – works with youth in a place-based, asset-based, holistic and comprehensive way. Ideally, it is also promoted as a system unto itself, with County and community infrastructure and resources to ensure coordination and efficacy. Youth development systems and supports would achieve outcomes including:

- Helping young people develop identity, agency, and orientation towards a purposeful future
- Cultivating young people’s academic and critical thinking skills, life-skills and healthy habits, and social emotional skills,
- Linkages of youth to holistic support systems, and
- Empowerment of youth to engage in the betterment of their communities and the world.

Additionally, we understand that child-serving systems alone do not fully meet the needs of vulnerable youth. Youth and children are part of family units, and further are connected to their larger community, which necessitates looking comprehensively at the underlying social, economic, and environmental conditions that impact vulnerable youth and children. Therefore, a key aspect of advancing positive youth outcomes, is ensuring that there are community organizing campaigns and similar public education/awareness efforts seeking to win policy change and resources to help strengthen family units and lift them out of poverty, i.e. a strong social safety net, and investments in strategies that address the built environment to address community elements that foster youth involvement in punitive systems.

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## **THE YOUTH JUSTICE LANDSCAPE IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY - RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN JUVENILE COURT, CONFINEMENT, PROBATION, EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

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In the last several years, there has been notable progress and momentum in state and local efforts to: 1) reduce Los Angeles County’s reliance on traditional justice systems (including police, prosecutors, probation, court and school discipline) to address youth behavior and crime, and 2) reorient systems toward developing and building the strengths and well-being of youth, families and their communities. These efforts have contributed successfully to a dramatic decline in arrests, prosecutions, and detentions of youth across California in an effort to move away from the racially imbalanced scales of the justice system. This work has been led by organizers and youth directly impacted by the system (Youth Justice Coalition), advocates (Children’s Defense Fund, Urban Peace Institute and Anti-Recidivism Coalition), and has been informed by community intervention organizations (also known as gang interventionists or peacebuilders). From 2012 to 2016, arrests dropped by about half, prosecutions by about 30 percent and detentions by about 50 percent. In Los Angeles County, the numbers have tracked statewide trends: from 2012 to 2016, arrests of youth went from over 25,000 arrests of youth to about 11,400. Average daily populations in the camps decreased from 983 in 2012-2013 to less than 400 in 2017.<sup>3</sup>

As one massive arm of the criminal and juvenile systems, the Los Angeles County Probation Department has been a particular focal point of scrutiny and critique, as well as experimentation and change. The largest in the

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<sup>2</sup> LA for Youth, Violence Prevention Coalition and Youth Justice Coalition, “Building a Positive Future for LA’s Youth” (September 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Rand Corporation study of LA County Probation contracted by LA County Board of Supervisors to highlight population data and costs.

country, the Probation Department has over 6,000 employees represented by 3 unions, and an approximate \$960 million budget that has grown significantly in the last decade. As Probation has increasingly occupied multiple roles over many youth populations – from detention and prosecution, to case management and service referral even for youth who have yet to enter the justice system – advocacy and organizing has been increasingly needed to ensure youth are not pulled into the justice system unnecessarily, youth in the system are well-served, and resources for more appropriate, community-based interventions are made available.

In LA County, as well as across the state, increasing numbers of youth, families, formerly incarcerated people, organizers, advocates, service providers, researchers and county leaders have worked to fundamentally shift the County's - and also the state's - responses to youth behavior and crime. This began in the early 2000s with a downsizing of the state's youth prison system (formerly California Youth Authority now Division of Juvenile Justice) - closing three-fourths of the facilities and reducing the population from 5,000 youth a day to less than 1,000. Successful organizing and policy work (led by Human Rights Watch, Youth Law Center, Anti-Recidivism Coalition, Youth Justice Coalition and National Youth Law Center) included a host of statewide policy changes that have worked to decriminalize those who are on the margins, including an end to Life Without Parole, and legislation to end the transfer of 14 and 15-year-old youth from juvenile court to adult court. The Ella Baker Center, the Youth Justice Coalition and Children's Defense Fund ended the use of solitary confinement in youth facilities across the state (SB 1143) as well as at the LA County level through a Supervisorial motion. The Youth Justice Coalition exposed the impact, unfairness and inaccuracy of law enforcement gang surveillance systems and passed the first law right to notification, challenge, and appeal for youth under 18, as well as the first state audit of CalGang and shared gang databases. The Urban Peace Institute and the Youth Justice Coalition also worked along with the ACLU to sue the city of Los Angeles to remove nearly 10,000 people from gang injunctions and end the enforcement of injunctions citywide.

One critical intervention in reducing contact with the justice system has been ending the criminalization of fare evasion. The Youth Justice Coalition decriminalized youth fare evasion at the county level and then statewide through the passing of SB 882. And the Youth Justice Coalition and Public Counsel organized to divert all youth citations in LA County out of court, close the juvenile traffic court and won amnesty for 250,000 past tickets. At the county level, the Youth Justice Coalition ended the collection of detention fees, court fees, and fines from youth and their families. In addition, the youth Justice Coalition also worked in partnership with other organizations to pass SB 190 and end fees and fines for youth under 18 statewide.

***At the same time that we are seeing a massive shift in systems of juvenile and criminal court and Probation, effective organizing efforts have also advanced educational justice.*** These efforts have challenged the criminalization of youth of color and reduced punitive school discipline approaches while helping to increase graduation rates in the Los Angeles and Long Beach school districts.

These efforts have been led by organizations focused on community organizing, civic engagement and strategic alliances- like the Brothers, Sons, Selves (BSS) - that serve as vehicles for impacted youth and families to be at the helm of dismantling the school-to-jail-track.

Further, these efforts have included new policies to put an end to zero tolerance policies that historically over-suspended and expelled male students of color, Black males in particular,<sup>4</sup> for willful defiance (i.e. talking back, coming to class without class materials) and a push for restorative practices with an emphasis on Restorative Justice programs as the main solution to moving away from punitive discipline policies. Beyond Restorative Justice, there is an effort to look at comprehensive strategies to address positive school climate to counteract the school-to-prison pipeline.

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<sup>4</sup> Wood, J. L., Harris III, F., & Howard, T. C. (2018). Get Out! Black Male Suspensions in California Public Schools. San Diego, CA: Community College Equity Assessment Lab and the UCLA Black Male Institute.

For example, since the Los Angeles Unified School District adopted the *School Climate Bill of Rights* in 2013, there has been a notable shift in discipline measures: the number of suspensions dropped from 14,057 suspensions in 2011-2012 to 5,476 suspensions in 2014-2015. At the same time, graduation rates in the LAUSD have increased by 8% since the *Bill of Rights* was implemented. The BSS coalition pushed for a budget investment in Restorative Justice, which has since expanded to \$11 million in the district. Additionally, since the adoption of the Positive School Discipline resolution in Long Beach Unified School District, the number of suspensions dropped from 9,555 suspensions in 2011-2012 to 4,494 suspensions in 2014-2015. Faculties from 10 campuses took part in professional development training on restorative approaches to discipline.

Other related youth organizing efforts have also supported the development of positive school climate - from the construction of wellness centers in LA schools and equitable funding - all together disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline that has persisted for decades. In 2012, the Measure GG Campaign, spearheaded by the Social Justice Learning Institute, turned out Inglewood Voters to invest \$90 Million in Inglewood Public schools. Indeed, there have been strong efforts to increase investments in youth, both in and out of schools.

***While there has been ongoing advocacy and organizing to shift public systems, organizations have also been on the frontlines of providing alternatives to punitive systems through the delivery of direct services and programming.*** One example of the collective impact that organizations can have for youth development and support is the BLOOM Initiative. To disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, The California Community Foundation (CCF) launched the Building a Lifetime of Options and Opportunities for Men Initiative (BLOOM), a \$7 million, seven-year, collective impact initiative to address the overwhelming disparities in Black male youth involved in the juvenile justice system. BLOOM's program model involves a combination of culturally relevant education assistance, youth development, mentorship, and character development. The success and learnings of the BLOOM initiative, a collaboration between CCF, Social Justice Learning Institute and the Brotherhood Crusade, is based on the belief that these young men can thrive when public and private entities, community-based organizations, employer networks and families engage them constructively.

The BLOOM initiative is focused on going beyond traditional efforts for addressing the challenges facing probation-involved and high-risk young African American males. Rather than primarily emphasize the prevention of delinquency recidivism and other problem behaviors like violence, chronic absence, and poor academic performance, BLOOM seeks to build viable opportunity pathways for these young men. These opportunity pathways are aimed not only at completing high school but pursuing postsecondary success in higher education and employment, areas often considered out of reach for young disadvantaged males. The BLOOM programs have found that building opportunity pathways involves engaging the identity of young males, altering their mindsets, building social and cultural capital, and cultivating a sense of personal as well as social agency to change not only their own lives, but those of their communities. Now in its sixth year, BLOOM has provided an evidenced-based model that looks beyond traditional anti-recidivism and diversion work and focuses interventions on high school graduation, post-secondary completion, and a diverse workforce. In the 2016-2017 school year, the BLOOM initiative achieved a 100% graduation rate.

The BLOOM partners are currently focused on planning for significant scaling of their school-based service population in 2019 and beyond. This would expand BLOOM's reach across L.A. County to areas with high concentration of youth with unavailable youth development services. The BLOOM partners are presently exploring ways to collaborate with justice and school system leaders to match the BLOOM program models to where there is substantial unmet need. Specifically, the BLOOM partners are working towards solidifying public funding streams to support their school-based programming with L.A. County probation, school districts, LACOE and individual schools.

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## Existing Work

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There is much knowledge, success, ongoing work, and infrastructure to build on in Los Angeles to further transform justice systems and expand youth development countywide. Two coalitions in Los Angeles County have been working for many years to reduce the over-criminalization of youth behavior in school, community, and justice settings. The potential intersections of the coalitional work – with one historically focused on school climate and educational equity, and the other deeply engaged in probation and diversion reform – are powerful. Their current work is summarized below.

### Big Probation Change Coalition

#### History

Children’s Defense Fund-California, Youth Justice Coalition, Urban Peace Institute and Anti-Recidivism Coalition have been connecting and coordinating their existing work to build greater youth and community power at the county level to reduce the budget, scope and impact of punitive systems on youth and communities of color.

#### Diversion

- The Board of Supervisors created a countywide diversion task force in January 2017 that was convened by the Department of Public Health and Impact Justice over 16 meetings, and included a number of community-based advocates and service-providers.
- The Taskforce created a blueprint to expand “pre-booking” youth diversion at the point of arrest, and establish an Office of Youth Diversion and Development (OYDD) to coordinate, resource and build the capacity of community-based diversion and youth development efforts across Los Angeles.
- The blueprint was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in late 2017 and a Youth Summit took place on March 1 to celebrate and launch OYDD and diversion implementation.
- A Steering Committee for OYDD has begun to meet since March 2018 to continue to inform the design and implementation of youth diversion.

### Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) and Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA)

- The Schiff–Cardenas Crime Prevention Act (Assembly Bill 1913) was passed by the California State Legislature in August 2000 to establish a juvenile justice funding source for California counties. Later termed the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act, the funds support the development and implementation of county juvenile justice plans that provide a “continuum of responses to juvenile crime and delinquency and demonstrates a collaborative and integrated approach for implementing a system of swift, certain, and graduated responses for at-risk youth and juvenile offenders.”
- Since 2001, Los Angeles has received approximately \$30 million each year, which is allocated by the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC). Its spending plan has remained mostly unchanged since that time.
- A number of county audits, media and advocacy have exposed JJCPA and JJCC for its lack of meaningful data collection, poor and incomplete governance, unspent money, and inequitable funding and contracting with CBOs. Over \$30 million of unspent JJCPA funds had accumulated as of December 2017.
- Advocacy resulted in a comprehensive JJCPA evaluation for the first time in 2017. Advocates helped to rewrite the evaluation design and build in participatory youth research, paving the groundwork for a new spending approach and plan into the future.

- Advocacy also resulted in the creation of a Community Advisory Committee to inform the work of the (Juvenile Justice Coordinating Committee (JJCC), as well as the addition of 10 community-based representatives to the JJCC. Efforts are underway to overhaul the plan this year. Representatives (both youth and adult advocates) from the Children’s Defense Fund-California, Youth Justice Coalition, Urban Peace Institute and Anti-Recidivism Coalition, Alma Family Services and Coalition for an Engaged Education now serve on the restructured JJCC.
- In January, the newly constituted JJCC voted to allocate \$12 million (\$3 million annually for the next four years) to the new Office of Youth Diversion and Development.
- In March, the JJCC approved allocating \$3.2 million through a new public-private partnership between the County and foundations to allocate JJCPA money to community-based organizations.
- Through JJCPA, Probation has explored partnerships with LAUSD and CBOs to develop and implement more effective approaches to diversion and trauma responsive youth development.

### Voluntary Probation and Community and School-based Alternatives

- Advocates have been monitoring and researching Probation problems, including the expansion of “voluntary” supervision of youth (over 11,000 in an April 2016 count) who had no prior probation/court involvement. About 80% of youth under voluntary supervision were referred for bad grades, truancy, lack of motivation and other school performance issues.
- Children’s Defense Fund-California, Youth Justice Coalition, Urban Peace Institute and Anti-Recidivism Coalition authored and released a report in February 2017 - *Minority Report* - about voluntary probation supervision under Welfare and Institutions Code - WIC - 236 (comparing the practice to predictive policing), and presented the findings to the Children’s Commission, the Board of Supervisors and Probation Commission. The Report further informed a “Probation Governance Study” by a research team, which then recommended that Probation eliminate the practice of voluntary probation.
- Focus groups with youth and parents/guardians about voluntary probation took place as part of the comprehensive JJCPA evaluation (conducted by Research Development Associates and the Youth Justice Coalition - including youth participatory action researchers) – and was the first concerted effort to hear about the impact of voluntary and formal probation by probation on community members.
- As a result of this work, Deputy Chief Probation Officer Sheila Mitchell announced at the Children’s Commission and JJCC meetings in February 2018 that voluntary probation in middle schools would end by April and in high schools by the end of the 2018 academic year.<sup>5</sup>

### Probation Governance and Oversight

- Many advocates served on a probation governance study advisory body, which released a final report in February 2018 that provides sweeping recommendations on how to transform the probation department and incorporates many of the recommendations of community-based groups.
- An October 2017 motion passed by the Board of Supervisors calls for the creation of a permanent oversight body and builds on the work of a 5-member workgroup throughout 2016 focused on the same issue. Another motion in May 2018 further adopted a process for creating the permanent oversight body and developing a plan for implementation of the many reform recommendations to-date.
- Advocates have continued to work with County Board offices to inform the development of a new “Reform and Implementation Team” tasked with creating a new Probation Oversight Commission and developing a comprehensive reform implementation plan for the Probation Department, that includes closing halls and camps.

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<sup>5</sup> JJCC Minutes, spring 2018, available through LA County Department of Probation

## Current Work and Goals

The coordinating groups and partner organizations have been and continue to be active in efforts to:

- Develop a countywide vision for juvenile justice through a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process that resulted in a report by Cal State-Los Angeles in March 2017.
- Create a comprehensive probation oversight mechanism.
- Develop and implement a countywide blueprint for expanding pre-booking diversion of youth - development completed, now in the stage of implementation.
- Expose and eliminate “voluntary probation supervision” of youth - won in the spring of 2018
- Shift spending on probation and other punishment systems towards effective youth development programs, targeting the approximate \$30 million of JJCPA funds that the County has received annually since 2001.
- Advocate for facility closure and shifting cost-savings to community-based alternatives with a goal of eventually ending youth detention and incarceration.
- Increase youth and community leadership and representation throughout justice system reform efforts, particularly in the diversion system implementation efforts, the JJCC and probation oversight.
- Building and coordinating coalitional leadership, capacity and strategy to engage across justice and diversion efforts throughout LA County.

## Members

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### Coalition Leaders and Partners

#### Coordinators:

Children’s Defense Fund-California  
Youth Justice Coalition  
Urban Peace Institute  
Anti-Recidivism Coalition

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#### Participants:

ACLU  
Alma Family Services  
Art for Incarcerated Youth  
California Conference on Equity and Justice  
Chamber of Commerce  
Coalition for Engaged Education  
Centinela Youth Services  
Homeboy Industries  
New Earth  
Public Counsel  
Social Justice Learning Institute

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## Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition

### History

Formed in 2011, BSS brings together 10 groups to improve outcomes for boys and young men of color by advocating for positive alternatives to punitive school discipline and reducing criminalization in LA County & the State of CA.

### School Climate Bill of Rights

- Members of the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition have continued to serve as vehicles for youth and parents to advocate on their own behalf and directly engage with decision makers, leading to dramatic education reforms. On May 14, 2013, the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education adopted the Board Resolution-2013 School Discipline Policy and School Climate Bill of Rights eliminating willful defiance as a suspendable offense in LAUSD, requiring schools to implement Restorative Justice and *School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support*, and other significant policy changes. Importantly, this resolution requested that staff review the current policies related to discipline, utilize alternatives to school suspension to correct student misconduct, and by 2020, develop and implement Restorative Justice practices as an alternative to traditional school discipline where appropriate.
- The Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition with allies (CADRE and Public Counsel) led the organizing and public engagement effort to build support for the *School Climate Bill of Rights* despite initial opposition from powerful forces.
- The *School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support* (SWPBIS) Taskforce was formed to work through some of the challenges schools faced in implementing the School Climate Bill of Rights. This Taskforce has been renewing their Discipline Bulletin to reflect the need for culturally relevant environments in schools and the role parents and families play in stronger schools and communities.

### Random Searches

- Schools LA Students Deserve is leading an effort to push the District to end the practice and policy of mandating schools to conduct random searches, spearheaded by LAPD. This coalition has faced challenges due to landscape shifts that have reinforced the need for random searches for the LAUSD school board including the shooting in Sal Castro Middle School in Westlake and the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas in Parkland, Florida.

### School Suspensions: Senate Bill 607

- Since 2016, advocates have been pushing to eliminate willful defiance as a suspendable offense for all K-12 grades in the state of CA. The bill now only covers grades K-8, which includes charter schools. The bill has been enrolled, however, it is awaiting the final signature from Governor Brown.

### Student Equity Need Index

- Building off of the 2014 win led by the Equity Alliance for LA's Kids (Advancement Project, Community Coalition, InnerCity Struggle) that secured an initial commitment from the LAUSD Board of Education to commit Local Control Funding Formula dollars to the highest need schools by utilizing a Student Equity Need Index (SENI) - youth and parent organizing continued into 2018 to hold the District accountable to implementation of the SENI.
- On April 10, 2018, the LAUSD School Board voted 7-0 to pass the "Equity is Justice 2.0: Moving toward a New Direction" Resolution. This resolution ensures that LAUSD uses an "equity-based funding formula" based on the Student Equity Need Index (SENI) that takes into account Target Student Populations, Academic Factors, and Community Indicators including exposure to gun violence and asthma rates.

- Starting in 2018-2019, \$25 million dollars will be allocated to the highest and high-need elementary schools, and highest and high-need middle and high schools not receiving Reed or School Innovation Funds.
- Beginning 2019-2020, \$263 million will be allocated to all highest and high-need elementary, middle, and high schools. The next step is to participate in the working group that is tasked with developing the “Menu of Options” which will target dollars to evidence-based and community-informed services and positions.

### Healthy Kids Zone

- LAUSD is piloting a “Healthy Kids Zone” initiative starting with a partnership to look at public safety within a half-mile radius of a school. The first iteration is a partnership with Community Health Council (CHC) at John C. Fremont High School. This initiative has created assessments of the built environment around the campus to assess needs and assets in the neighborhood. Partners involved include CD9, LA Promise, LA County Department of County Health, LA Neighborhood Land Trust, LA Trust for Children’s Health, Community Coalition, and CADRE.
- Prior to this initiative, LA’s Best, the Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Department (RAP), US Soccer Foundation, Anthem Foundation and Target partnered with Brotherhood Crusade to develop and launch a Healthy Kids Zone: Schools as Community Hubs of Health initiative at 16 LAUSD schools and 3 RAP community centers.
- In a related and parallel effort, in 2014, InnerCity Struggle organized youth and families to build support for and won the passage of the “Wellness Centers Now!” resolution securing \$50 million for the construction of new comprehensive wellness centers in high need schools in LAUSD. This initiative contributes to increasing health-related holistic supports for youth of color.

### Civic and Community Engagement

- Organizing and civic engagement groups locally and across the state have been piloting and leading non-partisan civic engagement efforts and strategies focused on historically disengaged and ignored communities. Through coalition efforts like California Calls, tens of thousands of new and occasional voters have been engaged in critical youth-impacting initiatives. In connection with these efforts, California has seen a series of propositions that have created greater positive investments in child-serving systems i.e. Propositions 30 & 55, and further shifts towards prevention models over punishment to address public safety i.e. the passage of Propositions 47 and 57.
- The passage of Proposition 30 directly led to California's ability to create and fund the Local Control Funding Formula, which has resulted in \$1 billion in additional dollars annually to LAUSD to address the highest needs students in the District. This created the conditions for the “Equity is Justice” policy wins at the LAUSD.
- Parent and Youth Organizing groups that include InnerCity Struggle, Community Coalition and Khmer Girls in Action have also piloted and participated in statewide efforts that seek to address the chronic disengagement and low voter turnout among young Californians. As part of efforts with Y-Vote, now called Power California, these groups have leveraged numerous strategies to register and pre-register eligible youth to vote using methods that include sophisticated text-message campaigns, social media strategies, and direct outreach at campuses and other venues that have high youth and young adult traffic. This has led to thousands of eligible young voters between the ages of 17 to 35 to become first time pre-registered and registered voters.
- Youth and parent organizing groups also have partnered to lead strategic investigative efforts that ensure that the voices and experiences of impacted communities are what drive and inform policy efforts. For example, in 2017 organizing groups that include InnerCity Struggle and Community Coalition in partnership with The California Endowment and FM3 led the “Southern California Voter Attitudes

Towards Investing in Youth”<sup>6</sup> community survey, which spoke directly to 300 voters in South Los Angeles and Boyle Heights. Key findings revealed strong voter alignment to increase positive youth investment specifically in the City of LA over punitive based approaches, such as incarceration. Building from this, Community Coalition polled over 2,000 youth revealing that youth overwhelmingly want to see greater investments in trauma support in their schools, paid internships and jobs, improved school facilities, and after school programming, like tutoring.<sup>7</sup>

## LGBTQ Youth and Gender Justice

- Through a partnership with Liberty Hill, the Genders and Sexualities Alliance Network, the Youth Justice Coalition, and the National Foster Youth Institute came together as the LA County Queer and Trans Youth Taskforce to make recommendations to the LA County's LGBTQ youth subcommittee. These recommendations included building county-wide supports for LGBTQ youth in the most vulnerable parts of the county, and current work is happening to ensure that various county departments such as Health, Mental Health, Public Health, Children & Family Services and Probation are adopting supports for LGBTQ youth.
- The Genders and Sexualities Alliance Network, along with Latino Equality Alliance and the LGBT Center, worked to pass a resolution in LAUSD to help build support and resources for queer, trans and gender non conforming students
- The Genders and Sexualities Alliance Network co-sponsored and actively supported the passing of state legislation and local implementation of the FAIR act, which mandates that LGBTQ history be added to the California State Standards for K-12, as well as the CA Healthy Youth Act, which integrates the instruction of comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention education.

## Current Work and Strategic Compass

Brothers, Sons, Selves (BSS) seeks to end the school-to-prison pipeline for all students. The BSS vision is that local government and other agencies remove barriers to self-actualization for boys and men of color, ensure that trans and queer students feel supported and lifted in this process, and that all young people are loved and given the opportunity to live confidently without needing to harm themselves or others.

### BSS is focusing on the following:

- Cultivating a leadership pipeline focused on building skills among 50+ male and male-identifying youth of color capable of leading local and countywide efforts on their own behalf.
- Complete the BSS strategy plan that is informed by the leadership of its 10 member organizations, BSS youth leaders, and community stakeholders.
- Conduct a survey with 2,000 youth across L.A. County that informs BSS about its goals and priorities.
- In solidarity with the Probation Coalition, wage a campaign to redistribute funds within the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) that could be moved to community-based organizations/community reinvestments - e.g. Wellness Centers.

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<sup>6</sup> “Southern California Voter Attitudes Toward Investing in Youth”.

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/maria+survey/16524e434cf6a438?projector=1&messagePartId=0.1>. The California Endowment, Fairbank Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3). April 2-13, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> “People’s Poll”. Community Coalition. May 2017

- Transform the manners in which the county invests and interacts with youth by getting the commitment of L.A. County decision makers to adopt an LA County Youth Bill of Rights that sets guidelines that dictate the conditions for youth support and general well-being not rooted in punitive approaches.
- Create space for youth to develop healthy masculinities to help shift the narrative regarding boys and young men of color. Work to rid our communities of fear based & deficit based mentality that serves as the foundation for violence and poverty that plagues our neighborhoods, and limits the potential of our people to self-actualize.
- Create a shift in the public discourse around the criminalization of boys and young men of color that emphasize creating healthy and supportive learning and community environments.
- Strengthen school climate policies and practices, in LAUSD and LBUSD that promote equity and reflect the priorities of impacted boys and men of color.
- BSS is engaged in statewide legislative efforts to eliminate “willful defiance” as grounds for suspension and expulsion and instead focus on keeping youth in schools with positive school climates. The coalition is a co-sponsor of Senate Bill 607 sponsored by Nancy Skinner.

## Members

### Coalition Leaders and Partners

#### Coalition Anchors:

InnerCity Struggle  
Community Coalition  
Khmer Girls in Action

#### Member Organizations:

Brotherhood Crusade  
Children’s Defense Fund-California  
East LA YMCA  
Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network  
Labor/Community Strategy Center  
Social Justice Learning Institute  
Youth Justice Coalition

## EXISTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In our analysis, the efforts to shrink the reach and size of the justice system, and build up youth development in communities, schools and other public systems must happen simultaneously and in coordination. The following goals and objectives aggregate what various organizations and coalitions have defined, already advanced and recognize require further power and resources to build transformative justice for youth in Los Angeles:

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### GOAL 1: Reducing youth contact with, shrink and transform the justice system

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- 1) **Reducing youth contact** with Probation and other law enforcement (including eliminating WIC 236 voluntary supervision and diverting as many youth as possible);
  - 2) **Shrinking the probation system**, including closing county juvenile halls/camps, with the ultimate goal of eliminating youth incarceration;
  - 3) **Transforming Probation practice**, including training, hiring, contracting, etc. to provide youth development supports to system-involved youth;
  - 4) **Creating strong County oversight** and decision-making mechanisms regarding justice system-impacted youth;
  - 5) **Transform the manners in which law enforcement interacts with youth** by getting the commitment of L.A. County decision makers to adopt an LA County Youth Bill of Rights that sets guidelines that dictate the conditions of pre-arrest interactions.
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### GOAL 2: Building a youth development system and increasing system accountability

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- 1) **Reinvesting** spending from punishment systems – especially the probation system – toward effective youth development programs, especially community-based, owned and operated programs, including redirecting Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funds, California Marijuana Tax Fund, City of Los Angeles Community Reinvestment Fund and other funds that are earmarked for “youth delinquency intervention” or youth/community development;
- 2) **Increasing public investment** at the city and county levels towards programs that support and strengthen youth opportunities in school and gainful employment by shifting the narrative around public resource allocation, building out civic engagement strategies and organizing low-income communities of color to hold decision makers accountable around equitable public investments in needed community-identified programming;
- 3) **Developing and expanding effective community-based youth development** to advance healthy, supportive learning and community environments that promote positive outcomes for youth of color, and to divert youth from school push-out, ticketing, arrest, court, detention, and incarceration;
- 4) **Developing meaningful community leadership** throughout probation and justice related decisions specifically, including through community representation on the JJCC and the Community Advisory Committee to the JJCC;

- 5) **Shifting narratives** about youth development as a public safety strategy and what youth of color deserve;

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### GOAL 3: Building Youth and Community Power

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- 1) **Cultivating a youth leadership pipeline through organizing trainings and leadership opportunities** focused on building skills among youth of color, including immigrant, foster, systems impacted, and LGBTQ youth, to self-actualize, self-aspire and lead local and statewide efforts, and in coalition and alliance spaces to win campaigns on their own behalf; and
- 2) **Support a community organizing and advocacy strategy** that cultivates the leadership of parents, families, communities, and adult advocates to influence systems to invest in the well-being of youth of color
- 3) **Provide youth leaders the support needed to address trauma**, both on the individual level and the systems level, in order to maximize their health outcomes

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### GOAL 1 PRIORITIES: REDUCE YOUTH CONTACT WITH, SHRINK AND TRANSFORM THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

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Reduce youth contact with probation/justice system	Shrink and transform probation system	Transform probation practice	Create strong County oversight
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divert youth from justice system as early as possible</li> <li>• Push for and create alternatives for punitive discipline policies (e.g. suspensions, expulsions, random searches, arrests) in schools</li> <li>• Reduce probation supervision overall, including ensuring the elimination of “voluntary probation” supervision</li> <li>• Shift the narrative about probation impact and effectiveness and benefits of alternatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure closure of majority of camps</li> <li>• Advocate for closing at least one juvenile hall</li> <li>• Repurpose facilities based on community led planning</li> <li>• Re-direct probation funds towards youth development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate and provide training for strengths-based youth development approaches throughout probation practices, including implementing with fidelity the “LA Model” that was implemented in 2017 for camps to better support the safety and development of incarcerated youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for and inform the design of a robust probation oversight commission</li> <li>• Improve Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council governance</li> <li>• Build community representation into and around oversight bodies, including the JJCC, diversion steering committee and probation oversight commission</li> </ul>

## GOAL 2 PRIORITIES: BUILD A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Reinvest spending from punishment systems towards effective youth development programs	Increase investments in youth development programs	Develop and expand community-based youth development	Shift narrative about public safety, justice approaches and youth development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift justice spending, to youth development infrastructure and programs (including to the new youth diversion development office)</li> <li>• Ensure access to dollars through clear, fair and transparent budgeting, solicitation and contracting processes</li> <li>• Ensure equitable distribution of public dollars to acutely impacted communities by creating and winning support for a Justice Equity Need Index modeled after the Student Equity Need Index</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase new public and private investments for youth development</li> <li>• Create public/private learning communities to facilitate continuous program improvement</li> <li>• Build a youth base and youth leadership through action-based research projects focused on identifying priority investments for the creation of a Justice Equity Need Index</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and expand County youth development and diversion department</li> <li>• Expand and strengthen effective community-based youth development providers as alternatives to the justice system, through funding and capacity-building</li> <li>• Expand positive school climate efforts, resources, programs, and positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote youth development as a health and public safety strategy, and challenge punitive discipline, suspensions, expulsions, the reliance on law enforcement, probation and courts to create safe communities</li> <li>• Create Youth Bill of Rights</li> </ul>

## GOAL 3 PRIORITIES: BUILDING YOUTH AND COMMUNITY POWER

<p><b>Cultivating a youth leadership pipeline through organizing trainings and leadership opportunities</b> focused on building skills among youth of color to help youth, including immigrant, foster, systems impacted, and LGBTQ youth, self-actualize, self-aspire and lead local and statewide efforts, and in coalition and alliance spaces to win campaigns on their own behalf</p>	<p><b>Support a community organizing and advocacy strategy</b> that cultivates the leadership of parents, families, communities, and adult advocates to influence systems to invest in the well-being of youth of color</p>	<p><b>Provide youth leaders the support needed to address trauma</b>, both on the individual level and the systems level, in order to maximize their health outcomes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cultivate a leadership pipeline focused on building skills among youth of color capable of engaging hundreds of their peers in leading local and countywide efforts on their own behalf.</li> <li>● Engage youth in a learning process to better understand the LA county functions, decision makers, and department functions.</li> <li>● Engage youth to develop communications &amp; messaging, political development, campaign framework &amp; execution, and organizing 101 to advance the policy campaigns.</li> <li>● Involve youth leaders in developing and implementing strategic plan &amp; subsequent campaign goals, advocacy and organizing strategies and timeline.</li> <li>● Train youth to develop and sharpen their public speaking and writing skills to elevate their voices and engage decision makers in schools and elected offices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organize and develop the leadership of parents and community members so they can have a strong voice in engaging decision-makers and calling for greater investments for youth and communities of color</li> <li>● Engage and convene partners and key allies to develop inside outside strategies to system change</li> <li>● Identify and build stronger alliances with organizations who work primarily with system impacted youth, community members and parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evaluate the level of personal/professional growth of youth leaders and bonds developed with other young leaders in the coalition.</li> <li>● Monitor organizing skills learned/applied and level of engagement with their peers (at school and community).</li> <li>● Youth advocate for increased funding for wellness centers, school counselors, and nurses who can support all students.</li> <li>● Provide youth with healing and resilience-building via workshops, mentoring, referrals to counseling and ongoing dialogue about gender, sex, and patriarchy and how it permeates our society and institutions and leads to rigid gender roles and norms around masculinity.</li> <li>● Youth leaders use their (and their peers’) lived experiences to develop narrative depicting trauma, including violence, poverty, racism, and discrimination, and toxic stress that makes them easy targets for the criminal justice system.</li> </ul>

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## INTERSECTIONS OF GOALS AND SYSTEMS

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## STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Moving forward, we believe there are opportunities to connect and align existing and potential work among organizations and coalitions to advance the goals of reducing justice system contacts and redirecting money away from punishment approaches and towards youth development. Our strengths and opportunities lie in the following areas:

### MOMENTUM AND POWER EXISTS

- Over the last several years, youth of color with adult allies have advanced significant policy reforms and re-directed resources to challenge criminalization of youth of color.
- Youth organizing and advocacy efforts have resulted in game changing policy victories in LA County, LA City and the LAUSD that can be coordinated and aligned to advance a vision for youth justice and youth development.
- There are existing efforts and strong relationships among groups through a probation coalition to transform and reduce the reach of probation and other law enforcement in Los Angeles County, unlock spending on ineffective punitive practices, and build a positive youth development system in County infrastructure and in communities.

- The BSS Coalition has experience and successes in decriminalizing boys and young men of color through youth organizing and leadership development, and possesses strong relationships with schools and local education agencies. There is increasing alignment between the Probation and BSS coalitions around reducing the criminalization of youth across settings and increasing and redirecting investments in community-based youth development.
- There are groups with bases of youth leaders within the BSS and Probation coalitions that are ready to engage in transformative work.

### **DIVERSITY EXISTS**

- There are diverse skill-sets among organizations in Los Angeles County, including in youth service provision, youth leadership development, base-building and power-building, policy research and advocacy, and legal analysis.
- There is also expertise and understanding about various systems (schools, foster care, probation, County government) and their politics, players and dynamics.
- The organizations represent diverse geographies particularly from some of the highest need communities and local connections (although there are also gaps given the expansiveness of the County).
- The organizations also work with a range of youth at different points in justice systems – from the front end at diversion (including in schools, kinship and foster care) through incarceration, and from the “lowest risk” to serious offense/“highest risk.”

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## **STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT AND INVEST IN**

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- Policy research and development
- Action-based research led by youth and parents
- Advocacy
- Policy action campaigns
- Youth and community organizing, including leadership development and power-building
- Coalition-building and collaboration
- Integration of community leadership in County strategies and decision-making bodies
- Investment in inside power building strategies so the organizations can identify and build stronger alliances with key decision makers at the LAUSD, LA City and LA County Communications and narrative work to shift the public discourse
- Capacity-building to strengthen youth development infrastructure, service provision and community programming for youth
- Evaluation of alliance building, capacity building and policy advocacy campaigns
- Youth power (vocational life and social) and competency-based skills development
- Youth development interventions as alternatives to punitive policies and practices

## SUMMARY – AND STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT AND INVEST IN

VISION:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Healthy, safe and productive youth and communities</b></li> <li>• <b>Robust, accountable public systems serving youth</b></li> <li>• <b>Racial equity</b></li> </ul>		
GOALS	PRIORITIES	STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce youth contact with the justice system, from punitive discipline and arrest and incarceration</li> <li>• Shrink size and spending of justice system</li> <li>• Reallocate public funds towards youth development</li> <li>• Create a countywide youth development system that includes community-based programs for prevention, diversion and alternatives to incarceration</li> <li>• Shift narrative about public safety and youth of color</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate WIC 236 voluntary supervision and divert as many youth as possible</li> <li>• Shrink probation system, through hall/camp closures and facility repurposing</li> <li>• Redirect probation dollars to youth development</li> <li>• Transform probation practices, through advocacy and training on strengths-based youth development approaches</li> <li>• Create a robust probation oversight commission, improve Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council governance, and increase community representation across oversight bodies</li> <li>• Shift JJCPA and other county money to youth development infrastructure and programs, and ensure access to dollars</li> <li>• Increase new public and private investments for youth development</li> <li>• Create and expand County’s first youth development and diversion department</li> <li>• Expand and strengthen effective community-based youth development service providers</li> <li>• Promote youth development as a health and public safety strategy</li> <li>• Push for and create alternatives to punitive discipline policies (e.g. suspensions, expulsions, arrests) in schools</li> <li>• Ensure equitable distribution of public dollars (LCFF, Prop 47, JJCP, dollars) to acutely impacted communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy research and development</li> <li>• Action-based research led by youth and parents</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Youth and community organizing</li> <li>• Youth power (vocational life and social) and competency-based skills development</li> <li>• Coalition-building and collaboration</li> <li>• Youth and community leadership development</li> <li>• Community leadership in county strategies and decision-making bodies</li> <li>• Communications and narrative work</li> <li>• Capacity-building for youth development infrastructure and service provision</li> <li>• Identifying allies and building power with key decision makers at LAUSD, LA City, Long Beach City, and LA County</li> </ul>

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