

# YOUTH DIVERSION PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION SUMMARY

RDA Consulting completed a process and implementation evaluation of the Department of Youth Development (DYD) Youth Diversion and Development program in late 2022, including a Youth Participatory Action (YPAR) process. High-level findings and recommendations are summarized here. Deeper analysis on outcomes, equity, and cost will be completed by early 2024.

## REFERRALS AND ENROLLMENT

- Law enforcement partners referred 41% of legally eligible youth. The percentage of eligible youth arrests referred to diversion currently varies from 20% to 70% between law enforcement agencies.
- Law enforcement partners appropriately refer most formal referrals, although of the 2,496 referrals analyzed, 54 low-level misdemeanors, status offenses, and curfew violations may represent increased system involvement for youth who would have otherwise been counseled and released.
- Youth said that the time that it took to get referred varied. Many shared that it was immediate but others said the referral did not come for a couple of weeks.
- Youth and families first heard about diversion from law enforcement and shared the information they received was specifically about the legal benefits of enrolling and successfully completing the program.

**20-70%**  
**ELIGIBLE YOUTH  
 REFERRED**

*Diversion  
 rates varied  
 from 20-70%  
 between law  
 enforcement  
 agencies*

*"It helped with really accepting myself again, really bringing back my relationship with my parents, slowly getting my parents' trust back."*

*Youth Focus Group Participant*

## SERVICE DELIVERY AND IMPACT ON YOUTH

- Youth and family members described diversion as valuable and impactful.
- Youth, families, and service providers highlighted the individualization of the care plans as a positive aspect of their diversion experiences. Utilizing a strengths-based approach, youth work toward their goals in ways that they are excited about.
- The set of services available to each youth may differ because of their geographic location. This was of particular concern for providers in outlying areas of the County which lack the abundance of resources present in other areas like San Fernando Valley and the City of LA.
- Although some youth found the program requirements to be burdensome, they recognized the environments at their local providers to be safe and supportive, and diversion overall as a better opportunity than formal system involvement.

## COORDINATION AND SUPPORT

- The support provided to programs through DYD-sponsored training opportunities ensures that DYD is actively supporting the providers with the implementation of the model and with evidence-informed and evidence-based practices to use in their daily interactions with youth.
- The diversion model has also been able to grow because it has embraced an online case management system, which comes with a set of challenges, but is a step in the right direction of streamlining how youth can be referred to services effectively and efficiently.



# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS



## REFERRALS

- Continue to work with diversion partners to improve consistency and reduce disparity and inequity in the referral process.
- Utilize materials created by the YPAR team that explain diversion to youth and families so they have an explanation of what diversion services are and what to anticipate when providers contact them.

01



## ENROLLMENT

- Consider standardized language for outreach materials that ensures diversion is a choice and excludes coercive language.
- Evaluate intake procedures and tools for their relevancy to the data needed to monitor program goals and youth outcomes, as well as assisting providers in making programmatic decisions.

02



## SERVICE DELIVERY

- Increase subject-matter expertise among staff related to the menu of youth development services that should be offered by providers.
- Implement follow-up coaching to ensure that training is being applied with fidelity.

03



## DATA

- Address issues with web-based referral and case management system to make it more user friendly, allow for greater transparency, and allow for providers to be able to use the system to its full potential.
- Collaborate with partners to improve the data collection and monitoring process.

04



## COMMUNICATION

- Establish regular and ongoing meetings that occur at least monthly with all partners to discuss diversion and problem solve issues, share success stories, and discuss data.

05