

As we step into a new season of growth and collaboration, I am happy to share the filling of two crucial positions: DYD's Branch Directors, opportunities to engage with Youth Development Networks, an update on our partnership with the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC), exciting news about increased access to youth diversion services, and the remarkable contributions of our Credible Messengers in supporting detained youth during the holiday season and beyond.

We also want to give special recognition to [Coro Fellow](#), Ashley Ceballos-Hernandez! Ashley joined DYD for the month of January and made incredible contributions to our reentry work in a short time. We wish her the best in her future endeavors.

Below the DYD updates, our partners have provided additional information and opportunities to get involved. Thank you for your continued support and engagement!

New Branch Directors

Please join us in welcoming DYD's first two Branch Directors, Taylor Schooley and Patricia Soung, both exceptional leaders in youth development and youth justice reform! Taylor Schooley has taken on a new leadership role within DYD as the Director of the Coordination and Innovation Branch. Throughout her time with the Department of Public Health, Department of Health Services, Chief Executive Office, and DYD, Taylor has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to evidence-informed, equitable investment in youth development. In this new role, Taylor will oversee DYD's research and evaluation, policy and special projects, as well as narrative strategy and collaborative innovation.

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Patricia Soung is joining the DYD team as the Director of the Reentry, Housing, and Employment Branch. Patricia brings over 20 years of experience practicing law and leading work to reform juvenile and criminal justice systems and increase investments in youth development. In this new role, Patricia will oversee DYD's support for justice-involved youth, including the Credible Messenger transformative mentorship program, programming in juvenile hall and camp facilities, community-based reentry programs, decarceration efforts, increased access to housing and employment, and more.

DYD + YJAG Steering Committee

We are grateful to everyone who participated in our Youth Development Network Public Workgroups in South LA, East LA, the Antelope Valley, Pacoima, and Long Beach in 2023. Please stay tuned for more opportunities to engage with us throughout the year! In the meantime, we invite you to Join the DYD and the Youth Justice Advisory Group (YJAG) in our quarterly Steering Committee meetings.

[Register now to join us at the next meeting on Zoom on February 21, 2024.](#)

JJCC Partnership

DYD is happy to share that we are partnering with the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) and Probation Department to support evaluation for prevention programs funded by the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA).

Together, we are ensuring that young people served by prevention programs are not required to share Personally Identifiable Information (PII) with the JJCC and Probation. Protecting against unnecessary access to PII is informed by best practices in youth development evaluation.

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We are proud to be able to support in this way and look forward to being able to share strong data that measures the success of youth-focused prevention efforts while maintaining data protections.

DYD is beginning this effort with the Ready to Rise Program, a public private partnership supported by the California Community Foundation, Liberty Hill Foundation, and Probation Department that has reached approximately 50 youth-serving organizations and 25,000 youth in its first several years. Through this renewed partnership, Ready to Rise will receive a minimum of \$50 million over the next seven years to continue to build networks of community-based resources that help youth heal, develop, and thrive. The Department of Youth Development is looking forward to supporting additional JJCPA-funded prevention programs in the coming months.

Diversion Access and Expansion

DYD is proud to be part of a new venture with County partners to improve access to community-based youth diversion services for legally eligible youth at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall. As we continue to work to ensure youth have access to diversion as early as possible, this partnership will address current gaps in access for eligible youth who may still be arrested and taken to juvenile hall. Evidence shows us that young people are far more likely to succeed and less likely to come into future contact with the justice system when they are able to enroll in diversion programs, so we are grateful to be collaborating with the Probation Department, the District Attorney's Office, and the Probation Oversight Commission.

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As part of DYD's ongoing work to expand youth diversion countywide, the diversion team has successfully executed a Partnership Agreement with the Los Angeles Police Department, allowing DYD to become the sole youth diversion provider for all LAPD community stations. Additionally, DYD is working with nearly 20 additional law enforcement agencies, and 4 additional diversion partners as we seek to complete our Countywide Diversion Network.

Support for Justice-Involved Youth

We want to give a special shout out to DYD's Credible Messenger partners from [Anti-Recidivism Coalition](#), [Healing Dialogue and Action](#), and [Young Women's Freedom Center](#)! The Credible Messengers went above and beyond by continuing services during the holiday season. This commitment prevented disruptions in services for young people and provided additional support at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall, Campus Kilpatrick, Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall, and in the community.

Credible Messengers hosted holiday events, distributed gifts, organized healing circles, and spent time with young people during what can be a difficult time for incarcerated youth. DYD was also able to provide support to Credible Messengers from HDA to visit nearly 20 youth at fire camp in Northern California over the holidays. DYD is grateful for the care and community that the Credible Messengers provided during a time when these young individuals were away from their families and friends, many for the first time.

Credible Messengers continue to play a crucial role in guiding and mentoring young people both inside and outside juvenile facilities. When the young people they work with are released, Credible Messengers support their successful reintegration, picking up mentees when they are released and supporting them through the process of obtaining housing, clothing, driver's licenses, and IDs.

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From organizing softball games to leading hiking and camping trips, they help youth build social skills and create meaningful connections in their communities. Credible Messengers also continue their healing focused and restorative justice work, creating opportunities for youth to reflect on and repair harm. We are looking forward to being able to share more about the expansion of the Credible Messenger mentorship model to support even more young people in the coming months!