

Today, I am excited to share the promising findings from the first comprehensive, external evaluation of the County's Youth Diversion and Development Program. The evidence is undeniable: community-based youth diversion and development works.

The evaluation shows that 95% of youth who enroll in diversion avoid future contact with the legal system. Enrolled youth also experience significant improvements in five protective factors: emotional regulation, school engagement, social support, conflict resolution, and caring adult relationships. Compared to the costs of court and arrest, diversion generates approximately \$40,000 in net savings per youth, with total program savings of about \$300 million between 2017 and 2026. Investments in youth benefit us all, both now and into the future as young people grow into adulthood.

Since its inception, the diversion program has offered an alternative path for youth who have come into negative contact with law enforcement. Designed in collaboration with youth leaders, community providers, and County partners, this program connects young people with the individualized support they need to grow and take accountability for their actions.

This evaluation also highlights the need for improved equity in referral and enrollment, particularly for Black youth who face disproportionate and unjust barriers to diversion. Although Black youth who enroll in diversion see equal or higher success rates than their peers, they are still more likely to be arrested instead of referred and less likely to enroll in services. By working together to increase equitable access to alternatives to arrest, we can make Los Angeles County a better, safer place for us all. The evaluation, conducted by RDA Consulting, includes outcomes, equity, and cost benefit analyses, as well as Youth Participatory Action Research that centered youth voices and made the evaluation even more meaningful. To read the full evaluation and learn more about the program's network of community-based providers and referral partners, visit: <https://dyd.lacounty.gov/diversion/>.

Stay tuned over the next several months as we share more about these important findings and offer more opportunities for you all to engage with the stories uplifted by this evaluation.

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