

High-Level Strategic Plan Overview: November 2024

The Department of Youth Development (DYD) is in the process of integrating recent feedback on a comprehensive Strategic Plan. This is anticipated to be a living document, guiding and communicating DYD’s priorities through 2030 with longer-term vision and systems-level evolution elements that provide an adaptable north star for sustainable innovation.

DYD is uniquely positioned to be able to add capacity to support collaborative problem-solving in 3 main areas:

1. Increasing knowledge and practice of strengths-based youth development among youth-serving agencies, organizations, and community members; including opportunities and models for culturally and developmentally responsive youth engagement, leadership, and co-design.
2. Supporting young people who fall through the cracks of existing systems because their needs are complex and intersectional, both by increasing access to resources that are not tied to specific system involvement and by collaborating with others on structural and systemic responses.
3. Acknowledging and creating initiatives to account for the legacy of youth incarceration in Los Angeles County and its impact on intergenerational wellbeing and safety.

DYD’s Strategic Plan is aligned with the [2024-2030 Los Angeles County Strategic Plan](#). In particular, DYD is one of two Departments created to address the County’s *Care First, Jails Last* priority. DYD’s Strategic Plan is also informed by and in alignment with the goals of the County’s [Prevention and Promotion Systems Governing Committee](#) (PPSGC) and Prevention and Promotion Implementation Coordination Team (PPCIT)

<b>Care First, Jails Last</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•DYD is responsible for operationalizing and implementing the Youth Justice Reimagined (YJR) vision for youth justice system reform and transformation.</li> <li>•The YJR vision includes a wide range of strategies that have informed DYD's Strategic Plan more broadly but overall includes intentional investment in care-first strategies that reduce youth justice system involvement.</li> </ul>
<b>Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Youth justice system involvement is one of the strongest predictors of adult justice system involvement throughout a person's lifetime.</li> <li>•DYD's efforts to prevent arrest, supervision, and incarceration for youth therefore directly contribute to the Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Priority's Strategic Goal to Reduce Adult First-Time Felony Convictions.</li> </ul>
<b>Child Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•DYD collaborates with the Office of Child Protection and Department of Children and Family Services to identify opportunities to address gaps in equitable access to solutions that improve the lives of children and families.</li> <li>•This includes efforts to increase pathways to youth development and diversion services for youth involved in the Child Welfare System, work to strengthen cross-sector support for youth with complex care needs, PPSGC / PPCIT goals, and more.</li> </ul>
<b>Poverty Alleviation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•DYD collaborates with the Poverty Alleviation Initiative and Department of Economic Opportunity to identify opportunities to strengthen pathways to employment and expand access to basic needs for young people.</li> <li>•This includes expanding opportunities through the Youth@Work program, exploring opportunities for guaranteed income initiatives, and more.</li> </ul>
<b>Homelessness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Young people who are impacted by the justice system experience increased risk for homelessness and housing instability, both short and long term.</li> <li>•DYD's efforts to prevent arrest, supervision, and incarceration for youth therefore directly contribute to the County's goals to expand and enhance services for people experiencing or at risk for homelessness.</li> </ul>
<b>Health Integration; Immigration; Sustainability; Environmental Justice &amp; Climate Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Evidence shows that when young people thrive, communities as a whole are healthier, safer, and more sustainable.</li> <li>•DYD therefore anticipates that our work to increase equitable access to youth development resources that help Los Angeles County's young people thrive will have positive impacts across all Board Priorities in the long term.</li> </ul>

## Section A: Population, Mission, Vision, and Values

In early 2024, DYD worked with staff and core partners to update the Department's mission, vision, and value statements.

- **Population:** In alignment with the Office of Child Protection, DYD's focus population is informed by a Targeted Universalism approach to equity, which leads with those who are furthest away from a universal goal.
  - The Los Angeles County Code states that the purpose of DYD is to support the development of young people in Los Angeles County by coordinating and building capacity for a wide range of Youth Development services, opportunities, supports, and other efforts to the fullest extent permissible by law.
  - DYD's universal goal is therefore to improve wellbeing for all young people, with targeted strategies focused on prevention and equity-centered support for youth who experience the greatest barriers to accessing youth development services, such as youth who fall under the County's expanded definition of "Opportunity Youth" because of youth justice or child welfare system involvement or disconnection from school or work and young people living in under-resourced communities.
- **Mission:** The mission of DYD is to be a catalyst for transformation by providing innovative pathways to youth development through intersectional, anti-racist, youth-centered strategies so that all young people can access resources that nurture their growth, wellbeing, and connection to community.
- **Vision:** We envision a flourishing youth development ecosystem that builds safety and eliminates youth incarceration by ensuring young people have the tools they need to thrive.
- **Values:** Youth and Community Empowerment, Restorative Accountability, Anti-Violence, Anti-Racism, and Collaborative Innovation.

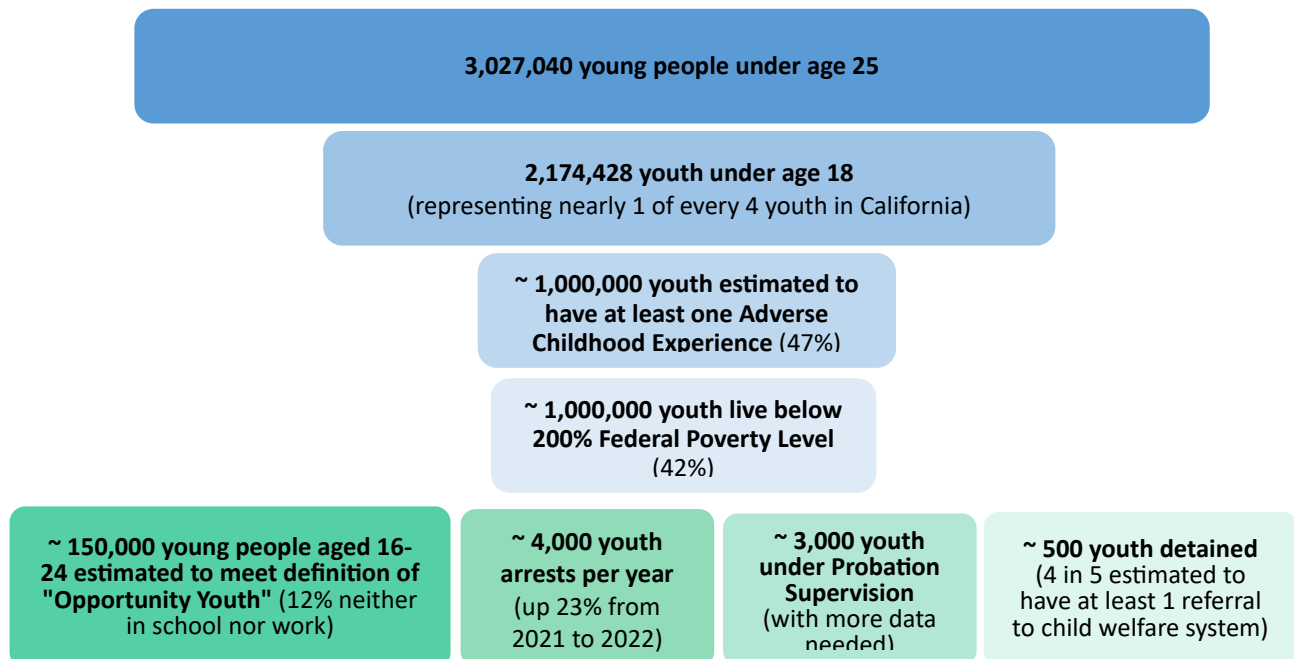
## Section B: Snapshot of Los Angeles County's Young People

DYD applies an equity lens and targeted universalist approach to prioritize youth development resources for young people who experience structural barriers to accessing youth development resources due to historic disinvestment and poverty, trauma, and systemic racism.

Although DYD's population generally includes all 3 million young people under the age of 25 in Los Angeles County, for example, we know that the nearly 1 million youth who live below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level are most likely to experience greater barriers and lower access to youth development activities such as culturally relevant mentorship, safe spaces for movement or mindfulness, and leadership development.

We know that achieving our universal goal of wellbeing for all youth in Los Angeles County will take a village. DYD will continue to work collaboratively with our partners to resolve gaps in availability of and access to the youth development resources that all young people deserve.

### Visualizing Data About Young People in Los Angeles County:



### Why Include a Focus on Justice-Impacted Youth?

Los Angeles County has historically been the largest incarcerator of youth in the United States. In Los Angeles County, youth justice system involvement has had an outsized impact on equity and wellbeing that follows young people throughout their lifetime and across generations, negatively impacting communities as a whole.

Even a first-time arrest has serious negative impact on youth development and wellbeing, reducing health, educational, employment, and other outcomes. Recent longitudinal studies have shown that this impact is long-term and leads to reduced adult economic attainment, physical mental health, and even early mortality.

This type of negative impact therefore has a long history of disproportionate harm for Black, indigenous, and other youth of color. Although Black youth represent only 7% of the total population of youth under age 18, for example, they are approximately 40% of youth impacted by the County’s youth justice system. The Children’s Data Network’s research on the intersection between the youth justice and child welfare systems shows that Black youth, and Black girls in particular, are also dramatically overrepresented in the population of “crossover youth” who are impacted by both the criminal legal system and the child welfare system.

As overall numbers of youth arrested and detained each year have decreased in recent decades, this inequitable harm for Black, indigenous, and other youth of color has become even more severe. This unintended consequence of previous reform efforts further highlights the need for new solutions that intentionally and explicitly addresses the structural drivers and root causes of system involvement.

### Section C: Keeping the Youth Justice Reimagined Vision Updated

In late 2020, the Board unanimously adopted the core vision and values of a collaborative Youth Justice Work Group’s report, titled “Youth Justice Reimagined” (YJR), but acknowledged that there were budget, legal, and legislative analyses that would need to be completed to inform the Work Group’s phased recommendations.



At its core, YJR is a vision for creating something new: a transformative, care-first environment for the County’s young people that prioritizes structural investment in youth development as an effective, equitable solution to public safety.

Although most of the phased recommendations of YJR have moved forward with close alignment to what was envisioned in 2020, legal and legislative analysis later conducted by County Counsel revealed a legislative barrier to the transition of functions from Probation to another agency by 2025.

While this analysis impacts the timing of the specific goal to transition functions, it does not prevent the County from moving the many other elements of YJR forward.

YJR’s Major Categories of Phased Implementation	Status of YJR Phase 1: Anticipated 11/20 – 7/22	Status of YJR Phase 2: Anticipated 7/22 – 1/24	Notes on YJR Phase 3: Anticipated 1/24 – 7/25
Build Youth Development Infrastructure	DYD successfully launched in July 2022 ✓	Initial investments in Youth Development Networks complete as of mid-2024 ✓	Focus on expanding sustainable prevention infrastructure
Create Spaces for Shared Learning	Ongoing ✓	Ongoing ✓	Establish process for shared countywide priorities
Expand Diversion and Restorative Practices	Expansion took longer than anticipated but is now complete ✓	DYD continues to identify opportunities to increase access ✓	Focus on increasing capacity for restorative practices to repair harm
Enhance Support for System-Involved Youth *	Collaborative planning began as planned ✓	Initial investments in reentry complete as of mid-2024 ✓	Focus on Safe Healing Centers and other alternatives to incarceration
Formalize Collaboration, Planning, & Oversight	Ongoing ✓	Ongoing ✓	Focus on sustainable countywide engagement

\* Legislative analysis shifted the timeline of recommendations in this category related to transitioning functions under the jurisdiction of the Chief of Probation to another agency but did not impact other recommendations around establishing alternatives, increasing supportive services, and reducing the footprint of youth justice system involvement through prevention and decarceration.

**Section D: Key Elements of DYD’s Strategic Plan: Four Strategic Directions Over Time**

DYD’s approach to strategic planning is inspired by a [futurist model](#) that reflects a combination of both shorter-term steps and strategies as well as longer-term visioning that guides evolution over time.

DYD’s futurist Strategic Plan strives to plan for the kind of sustainable, structural innovation required to solve complex social problems. This enables planning towards long-term vision and impact while also accounting for the fact that shorter-term tactics and strategies necessarily involve more data, evidence, and certainty than long-term vision and systems-level evolution.

**DYD’s Guiding North Stars:**



**DYD’s Strategic Directions:**



**Summary of DYD’s Strategic Directions Over Time:**

*The full Strategic Plan will be published on DYD’s website before the end of 2024 and will include much more detail about specific, measurable milestones for each Strategic Direction over time.*

<b>Strategic Directions:</b>	<b>1-2 Years: Short-Term Tactics, 2025-2026</b>	<b>3-5 Years: Mid-Term Strategies, 2027-2029</b>	<b>&gt;5 Years: Long-Term Vision, 2030+</b>
<b>1.</b> Los Angeles County Becomes a Model for Equity-Centered Administration and Coordination of Youth Development Services.	Build administrative infrastructure and collaboration for equity, efficiency, and growth.	Refine systems, policies, and processes that support improved service delivery and expanded workforce.	DYD serves as a model for best practices in equity-centered governance.
<b>2.</b> Los Angeles County Achieves Shared Understanding and Policy Support for Effective Youth Development Practices.	Launch a Youth Development Learning Collaborative and expand narrative strategy to uplift youth-centered evidence.	Increase knowledge and support to improve buy-in for evidence-informed youth development practices and policies across disciplines.	DYD resolves social and structural barriers to ensure youth development’s positive impact is equitable and sustainable.
<b>3.</b> All Young People Can Access a Local Youth Development Network for Resources They Need and Want.	Expand investments in regional Youth Development Networks and Youth Centers.	Support multiple thriving Youth Development Networks with healing-centered 24-hour crisis response.	All young people have access to a continuum of local resources they want and need.
<b>4.</b> All Young People Can Access Restorative Alternatives to Expulsion, Arrest, and Court.	Expand alternatives to expulsion and arrest, including restorative practices countywide.	Increase referrals so most legally eligible youth arrests are diverted and work to expand eligibility.	All young people have access to diversion and restorative practices that address root causes.
<b>5.</b> Community Wellbeing and Safety are Improved by Strategies that Reduce and Eliminate Youth Incarceration.	Expand strategies that reduce harm for justice-involved youth and build alternatives to incarceration.	Expand successful alternatives to youth incarceration and effectively end incarceration for girls and gender expansive youth.	All young people have access to the community-based support they need to avoid incarceration.

**Strengths, Ways to Improve, Opportunities, Threats, and Priorities for Inclusion and Equity**

*This SWOT(IE) analysis, which adds an inclusion and equity lens and is included to provide an example of barriers and opportunities most likely to impact the success of DYD’s goals.*

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Ways to Grow</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>	<b>Inclusion and Equity Priorities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core values are aligned with evidence of promising practices and help the Department build meaningful trust with youth and partners</li> <li>• DYD’s team and partnerships are strong and growing</li> <li>• Quantitative and qualitative program results show that the Department’s youth development models are effective, equitable, replicable and cost saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build sufficient administrative infrastructure along with limited overall staff capacity delays implementation</li> <li>• Need for strategic education and training for staff and partners to deepen knowledge of best practices and equity</li> <li>• Statutory barriers, including accessing multi-disciplinary team information</li> <li>• Partner buy-in to lead efforts to support justice-involved youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen pathways for youth engagement, employment, and leadership</li> <li>• Strengthen partnerships with allies at community, City, County, State, and National levels</li> <li>• Advance narrative strategy and shared learning</li> <li>• Continue to equitably shrink the footprint of youth justice system involvement</li> <li>• Advance sustainable investment in communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of sufficient administrative infrastructure and limited staff capacity</li> <li>• Lack of sustainable funding</li> <li>• Lack of clarity and awareness of DYD’s role, vision, and added value</li> <li>• Lack of connection to and acceptance by existing agencies and initiatives</li> <li>• Shift in political will away from evidence-informed alternatives to youth justice system involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen structures and processes for youth and community participation and meaningful co-design</li> <li>• Continue to improve and prioritize equity and inclusion based on regular and transparent data</li> <li>• Continue to focus on structural and systemic equity</li> </ul>