



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Countywide Review Highlights Strengths, Next Steps for L.A. County Department of Youth Development's Reentry Action for Youth Program

Preliminary results will help DYD build on what's working, so more young people come home ready to succeed and communities grow safer

LOS ANGELES, CA — Each year, hundreds of justice-involved youth return to their homes and communities across Los Angeles County—and the support they receive plays a critical role in shaping the region's public safety and community well-being. Today, the L.A. County Department of Youth Development (DYD) released preliminary findings from an independent evaluation of Reentry Action for Youth (RAY), a flagship program that pairs young people ages 12–25 with community resources and mentors with lived experience.

Researchers from Neighborhood Safety Advocates, Inc. presented the early results to service providers, justice system leaders, and funders at South L.A.'s Earvin "Magic" Johnson Recreation Center. Based on over 41 hours of interviews with RAY's 20 lead agencies, mentors, youth, families, judges, Probation Department officials, and Public Defenders, the review highlighted RAY's empathetic, lived-experience mentors as its greatest strength.

"RAY reflects the belief that all young people deserve opportunities to thrive, including after justice system involvement, in the communities in which they live," said David J. Carroll, Director of the Department of Youth Development. "This review reflects what we heard from the people closest to the work: young people, families, mentors and our justice system partners. We're going to use these lessons to strengthen RAY so every investment does the most good."

Researchers also shared preliminary recommendations to strengthen RAY, including focusing the program on young people who would otherwise face detention, matching the intensity of support to each young person's needs, expanding training and support for mentors, and streamlining referrals across courts, the Probation Department and other County partners.

Each RAY participant is paired with a mentor who has lived experience and receives about one year of dedicated case management and access to resources such as housing, education, employment, healthcare and stipends for basic needs.

"The DYD RAY program is a model for the nation," said Jeff Fleischer, Executive Director of Neighborhood Safety Advocates, Inc. "The mentors are truly the backbone of the program and are one of the reasons that

we're getting really good outcomes. Because they have real, lived experiences, they're able to establish trusting relationships and they're true guides for the kids in the community."

From March 2025 through September 2026, RAY received nearly 1,000 referrals, approximately half of which have come through legal defense partners. The program utilizes 20 local providers and 60 mentors across L.A. County and in 2025 expanded to the Inglewood Courthouse, giving youth and families immediate, on-site access to mentorship and community-based care.

Justice system partners underscored the critical role RAY plays in diverting young people away from repeat court involvement and toward positive developmental pathways.

"DYD is a critical justice partner, and we are fortunate to have welcomed DYD's RAY program to the Inglewood Courthouse," said Judge Miguel T. Espinoza, Supervising Judge of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County's Juvenile Justice Division. "It gives judges a reliable, care-first alternative to detention that addresses the root causes of justice system-involvement. The RAY program operates on a simple premise - if kids are properly supported in the community, we can count on them to thrive – and that's exactly what we're seeing at the Inglewood Courthouse."

Following the presentation, providers, mentors, youth and justice partners joined a town hall discussion on who RAY should serve, how to tailor support to each young person, and how to better support mentors.

"What makes this program different is that they're consistent and they actually show that they care," said Yasmine, a RAY youth participant. "I think the most valuable part of the program is the support, so I know that when I come to [my mentor] and tell them I want to do something, they actually take the steps to help me get there."

The complete report by Neighborhood Safety Advocates, Inc. will be available in November on the [Department of Youth Development data and reports webpage](#). To learn more about RAY outcomes, participant experiences, and system-wide impact, view the RAY First Year Report at bit.ly/1yearofray. Pictures from today's RAY convening are attached below.

About the Department of Youth Development (DYD)

The Los Angeles County Department of Youth Development was established to lead, support, and coordinate equity-focused, care-first youth development services across L.A. County. DYD works to divert young people from justice system involvement and foster thriving, resilient communities. Learn more at [DYD.LA](https://dyd.la).

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Contact: David Stevenson,
Senior Public Information Specialist
Los Angeles County Department of Youth Development
DStevenson@dyd.lacounty.gov



DYD Director David J. Carroll



Jeff Fleischer, Executive Director of Neighborhood Safety Advocates, Inc.



Judge Miguel T. Espinoza, Supervising Judge of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County's Juvenile Justice Division



Yasmine, RAY program participant



RAY Mentor-Mentee panel discussion



RAY convening of youth, mentors, partner organizations and justice partners