

# Positive Youth Justice Initiative Year 1 Evaluation – Summary of Implementation in San Joaquin County

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## San Joaquin County

This summary reviews the implementation of the Positive Youth Justice Initiative (PYJI) in San Joaquin County during Year 1 of the initiative's implementation phase. The summary includes an overview of the County's implementation plan and structure; a synthesis of key strengths and challenges based on data from interviews, focus groups, and staff surveys; and a description of results from the Year 1 youth and caregiver surveys.

The Year 1 evaluation data collection included the following activities. The number in parentheses represents the number of respondents who participated in each of the activities or the number of focus groups that were conducted.

- Key informant interviews with PYJI leadership (7)
- Focus group with Probation and Child Welfare line staff (1)
- Focus group with community-based organization (CBO) leadership and line staff (1)
- Site Visit
- Documentary Data
- Staff Survey (67)
- Youth Survey (93)
- Caregiver Survey (65)

## Implementation Plan and Structure

### Implementation Plan

San Joaquin County's PYJI is led by the **San Joaquin County Probation Department**. The County's PYJI centers on broad system-level change designed to build organizational capacity and strengthen service delivery, with a focus on the county's medium- and higher risk crossover youth. As such, San Joaquin County has defined crossover youth as **youth who have experienced documented neglect, abuse and/or trauma, have a history in the child welfare and/or foster care system, and who are currently engaged in the juvenile justice system**. According to their July 2014 data report, in 2013, of the approximately 1300 youth on probation supervision (including informal supervision), 537 were identified as crossover.

In its implementation plan San Joaquin County discussed a number of key activities to enhance organizational capacity, including standardizing tracking of crossover youth in County agency databases, implementing multi-agency staff

### Implementation Highlights

During the first year of PYJI implementation, San Joaquin County:

- Expanded eligibility for wraparound services for moderate and high risk crossover youth
- Developed and planned for trainings on PYJI and trauma-informed care for probation officers and CPS caseworkers countywide
- Improved tracking and monitoring of crossover youth
- Purchased and prepared to implement the Girls Health Screen tool

trainings on positive youth development (PYD) and trauma-informed care (TIC), and developing new tools and protocols to support data-driven decision making. Cornerstones of the County's plan to strengthen services for crossover youth included expanding wraparound services to include broader eligibility, implementing the Girls Health Screen tool, and increasing engagement of community-based partners and crossover youth leaders in service planning and delivery.

### **Implementation Structure**

San Joaquin County's PYJI Executive Steering Committee is composed of leadership from Probation, Child Protective Services (CPS), Mental Health Services, Healthcare Services, Public Health, Correctional Health, County and City education stakeholders, as well as several community-based organizations (CBOs). The Steering Committee meets monthly, and has held several subcommittee meetings related to particular components of the County's PYJI plan. The planning and implementation process is facilitated by an external consultant and supported by a Management Analyst within Probation.

### **Pre-Implementation Context**

County and community-based PYJI partner leadership identified a number of pre-implementation strengths on the part of the County. For example, agency leadership reported a history of strong collaboration and inter-departmental partnerships in the County, particularly between Probation, Healthcare Services, and CBOs. Additionally, some leaders observed that CBOs are well-linked to the community, and thus have strong community trust and buy-in. Probation stakeholders also identified the strong collaboration between CPS and Behavioral Health Services (BHS) as a pre-implementation strength. Through Katie A settlement planning, BHS and CPS strengthened the procedures for mental health screening, assessment, and referral of all children and youth served by CPS and have improved coordination of services through the placement of children's mental health clinicians within the CPS offices.

At the time of San Joaquin County's implementation plan, Probation described strong data-gathering practices, along with an electronic case management system for youth. Probation was also already using a rewards and sanctions matrix, and all probation officers had been trained in motivational interviewing prior to the introduction of PYJI. In addition, CPS case managers were already trained in family team decision making and family engagement, and the County was providing coordinated wraparound services and exploring the expansion of wraparound eligibility for Probation youth. Mental Health Services clinicians had been trained in trauma-informed and gender-responsive care, including trauma-informed cognitive behavioral therapy and the Seeking Safety program for girls, and the Probation department was in the process of establishing a functional family therapy team with Mental Health Services.

## Key Strengths and Progress in Implementation

### Support from Leadership and Line Staff

Key informant interviews with County agency leadership indicated excitement for PYJI, with leaders observing that the PYJI model encourages diverse stakeholders to join in the systems change process. Leadership emphasized PYJI has provided an opportunity to develop system-level capacities such as evidence-based practices and data-driven decision making, as well as the opportunity to strengthen previous partnerships, particularly between Mental Health Services and CPS, and CPS and CBOs. Community-based partner leadership noted that PYJI shows promise for aiding Probation and CPS in collaborating more effectively.

County agency leadership recalled being conscious of how best to roll out PYJI to line staff, wanting to ensure that line staff understand the purpose of each PYJI component before introducing new components. Probation leadership explained that they began to observe changes in staff mentality after they presented the definition of crossover youth and demonstrated the extent to which youth in the juvenile justice system meet the crossover youth definition. The County also invited senior and mid-level staff from PYJI partner agencies to a briefing on PYJI goals and objectives in April 2014. Probation and CPS line staff with whom the evaluation team spoke reported that they found PYJI concepts inspiring and exciting. One County leader shared:

*The trauma informed care issue [is] not new to licensed social workers in the behavioral health area, but how profoundly it is used is new to them. Learning more about this has been really interesting—everyone has bought into this.*

At the same time, only about half (49%) of County staff survey respondents indicated having heard of PYJI, although the relatively high number of respondents may mean that the survey was distributed to staff who may not have direct involvement with crossover youth or PYJI.

### Collaborative Planning Efforts

San Joaquin County reported carrying out a number of planning meetings with County agencies, community partners, and TA providers, with many more planned for the near future. In key informant interviews, leadership from across PYJI partners described strong communication between organizations participating at the task force level. A majority of staff survey respondents from County agencies also replied that they agree (25%) or somewhat agree (55%) that the agencies and organizations serving crossover youth in San Joaquin County collaborate effectively.

### Building Foundational Partnerships

As noted in their March 2014 progress report, much of San Joaquin's focus thus far has been centered on developing contractual agreements for training and technical assistance and developing partner agreements for information sharing and referral practices. Key progress in this area has included Probation's identification of two CBO partners under PYJI and the development of MOUs and scopes of work for their services. Additionally, the County reported that four partner agencies entered an

agreement to provide pre-wraparound services, and three partner agencies entered an agreement to implement the Girls Health Screen tool.

According to Probation leadership at the time of Sierra Health Foundation's April 2014 site visits, local partnerships are progressing well, and the Probation Department has met with its contracted CBOs to review their scopes of work and deliverables, both of which are focused on youth empowerment. As one County leader shared:

*The PYJI effort has brought both Mental Health Services and Child Welfare to the table with the primary CBOs that probation is involved with, and has enhanced our working relationships and awareness and linkages with those organizations that might have been much more peripheral to our operations pre-PYJI. Now, post-PYJI, we find ourselves engaging and accessing the CBOs and reaching out to them in a manner that we did not do before.*

Survey responses also indicate that County agencies and CBOs have relatively strong working relationships, with respondents from County agencies agreeing (36%) or somewhat agreeing (40%) that their agency has strong working relationships with CBOs. Likewise, all five respondents from CBOs agreed or somewhat agreed that their organization has strong working relationships with Probation, Child Welfare, and Behavioral Health Services.

San Joaquin County has also reported some successes with engaging youth, family, and the community in PYJI partnerships. According to the County's March 2014 progress report, youth were in attendance at three out of the five PYJI task force planning meetings, and youth from the PYJI youth development group attended community meetings to provide input and testimony around mental health needs of children and youth in the community.

### **Developing Operational Capacity**

Interviews with County leadership and the County's PYJI progress report highlight San Joaquin County's progress in developing policies and procedures, strengthening data capacity, and preparing for broad staff training under PYJI.

**Policies and Procedures.** PYJI leadership underscored that capacity building has been the chief focus of San Joaquin County's PYJI thus far. At the time of their progress report in March 2014, San Joaquin County had begun the process of identifying and developing new formal procedures related to PYJI, including 1) procedures for how and when probation officers should refer youth to youth development groups; and 2) procedures for how and when probation officers should refer youth to the county's new preventive and early wraparound services. At the same time, survey respondents from County agencies indicated mixed understandings of the extent to which their agency has created new policies and procedures for serving crossover youth, with about a quarter (27%) reporting they did not know if their agency had created any new policies or procedures.

**Data Capacity.** PYJI leadership reported that San Joaquin's Juvenile Justice Information System has been updated to include a query tab to indicate crossover youth status. The County also noted in its progress

report that agencies were in the process of drafting an interagency MOU concerning information sharing for crossover youth; the MOU should be executed during the next reporting period. The progress report also relayed that community-based partners are increasing their data collection activities and that information sharing agreements with CBOs are in process. Almost half (49%) of survey respondents from County agencies replied that their agency shares data with other agencies serving crossover youth to some extent or to a great extent. The same percentage of respondents noted that their agencies have adapted their data and reporting systems to track crossover youth during the past 12 months. Likewise, three out of the five respondents from CBOs indicated that, to some or to a great extent, their organization has engaged in data sharing and adapted their data and reporting systems to track crossover youth during the past year.

**Staff Training.** PYJI leadership explained that much of San Joaquin County's efforts have focused on planning and preparation for staff training, including a number of trainings on TIC, youth mental health first aid, and the Girls Health Screen tool for various levels of staff from PYJI partner agencies. During evaluation team site visits in March 2014, Probation and other agency leadership expressed excitement about these learning opportunities, especially the TIC and the Girls Health Screen tool. Staff from Probation, Mental Health, the Public Defender's Office, and Correctional Health have since attended training sessions on TIC. Staff survey responses point to growing familiarity among County staff about key elements of PYJI, though the survey did not assess whether this training was part of PYJI or prior efforts. At the time of the staff survey, slightly more than half of respondents from County agencies reported that their agencies had to some or a great extent participated in trainings related to PYD (57%), TIC (53%), or wraparound services (56%). Sixty-six percent of County survey respondents replied that TIC had been introduced in their agency and 64% replied that they have heard about the application of PYD in their agency. Responses from CBO staff also suggest a high degree of training in and familiarity with PYJI elements among CBOs, though again, participation in such training may not be as a result of PYJI. All respondents from CBOs reported that their organizations have participated in training related to PYD to a great extent, and four out of five respondents indicated that their organizations have participated in training related to wraparound services and TIC to some or a great extent.

**Sustainable Funding.** Probation leadership specified that the County has leveraged public funds to cover wraparound services, though respondents were unclear exactly how these funds were being used. Probation has also leveraged funding from the County's Second Chance Act Grant to extend TIC training opportunities to staff.

### Preparing for Improvements in Service Delivery

As noted above, at the time of their March 2014 progress report, San Joaquin's efforts had been focused primarily on preparation for service provision, in particular, scheduling and planning staff trainings and capacity building events, as well as extensive consultation with TA providers. Thus far, changes to service delivery have centered on the expansion of wraparound services to include three levels: "preventive wrap," "pre-wrap," and "traditional wrap." Probation leadership described these efforts to enhance wraparound service provision as a means to bring in wraparound services at an earlier stage of supervision, rather than waiting until a youth reaches placement. Leadership observed that since PYJI

implementation began, Probation has been consistently making wraparound referrals and CPS wraparound referrals are increasing. As part of the creation of new services under PYJI, according to the progress report, San Joaquin County was planning to initiate Positive Youth Development Groups for crossover youth in the summer of 2014.

In general, a majority of County agency staff reported that they agreed (23%) or somewhat agreed (62%) that the agencies and organizations serving crossover youth in San Joaquin County effectively carry out referrals and linkages. Survey responses suggest that County and CBO staff have a relatively high level of understanding of the service delivery system, although the percentages of staff indicating that they *somewhat* agreed with each survey item underscores a need for continued efforts in this area. A majority of survey respondents from County agencies replied that they agreed (41%) or somewhat agreed (44%) that they understand the formal referral process for wraparound services. Most respondents from County agencies also agreed or somewhat agreed that they know where (87%) and how (89%) to refer youth to support services. All five respondents from CBOs agreed or somewhat agreed that they understand the formal referral process for wraparound services and know where or how to refer youth for support services.

Probation leadership also observed that PYJI-engaged agencies are working well together around TIC. Probation leadership shared that they will be adding (and that other agencies are considering) the Girls Health Screen tool for all girls booked in juvenile hall to support identification of youth for TIC and wraparound referrals. TA providers distinguished one of San Joaquin's major strengths at the time of the implementation plan as its willingness to implement the gender-responsiveness component of PYJI. CBO staff who participated in focus groups also noted that they feel well prepared to implement PYJI elements as applicable to their service areas.

## Key Challenges and Opportunities

### Time Required for Implementation Start-Up

As San Joaquin's PYJI team explained in their progress report, the amount of time the County spent on startup tasks—such as hiring, budgeting, and contract negotiations with service providers and trainers—meant that the County began PYJI implementation later than anticipated. Child Welfare leadership added that fixed funding and increasing regulatory requirements have prevented additional hiring and exacerbated demands placed on staff. Leadership from County agencies including Mental Health and Child Welfare reported that during this time there was a lack of clarity around the timeline for implementation.

### Permeation of PYJI Information and Philosophy

While many PYJI stakeholders described the successes of leadership and partnerships under PYJI implementation, some County and CBO stakeholders observed that the Probation Department has not yet achieved the degree of culture shift needed to move the department from a more traditional view of supervision to one more consistent with PYD, youth and family engagement, and partnerships with



CBOs. Various PYJI stakeholders also specified a need for expanded partnerships with the school system, the juvenile court system, law enforcement, and faith-based organizations.

In addition, while leadership at PYJI partner agencies conveyed high levels of engagement with PYJI, line staff from multiple County agencies and CBOs expressed less engagement with and understanding of PYJI. For example, at the time of focus groups conducted in March 2014, Probation and Child Welfare line staff had not yet been involved in PYJI implementation, and some focus group participants shared that they were not clear about the County's operational definition of crossover youth. About half (49%) of the staff survey respondents from County agencies reported having heard of PYJI.

### **Strengthening Partnerships and Collaboration**

While leadership and line staff from County agencies and CBOs affirmed that partnerships and collaboration are generally strong, findings from key informant interviews, focus groups, and the staff survey suggest that this is an area for continued development. For example, while a majority of survey respondents from County agencies reported at least partial agreement that strong working relationships exist between agencies and organizations serving crossover youth, and that these agencies and organizations collaborate effectively, it is worth noting that more respondents indicated they somewhat agreed (55%) than agreed (25%) that agencies and organizations collaborate effectively. About one-third to a half of respondents indicated they agreed that their agency had a strong working relationships with Probation (54%), Child Welfare (40%), Behavioral Health Services (40%), Youth and Family Services (38%), Law Enforcement (36%), and CBOs (43%). For each of these agencies, similar percentages of respondents reported that they somewhat agreed that their agency had a strong working relationships.

Stakeholders identified several areas in which relationships and collaboration could be improved. For example, line staff from Probation and CPS discussed several challenges with communication and information sharing, particularly when dealing with 241.1 joint assessment hearings; in these cases, stakeholders noted that there can sometimes be an “us versus them” mentality in determining which agency—Probation or CPS—should have responsibility for a particular youth's case. County staff responses to the survey appeared to underscore these tensions, with about one-third of staff survey respondents from Probation (36%) and CPS (30%) agreeing that their agency has a strong working relationship with the other. Another 46% of Probation and 50% of CPS reported that they somewhat agreed that they had a strong working relationship, while 18% of Probation and 20% of CPS staff disagreed.

County and CBO stakeholders also expressed conflicting views about the degree to which CBOs had been integrated into the PYJI partnership. For the most part, County leadership described CBOs as being relatively well integrated into the PYJI partnership. Although CBO leadership and staff agreed that the County had made efforts to involve CBOs in PYJI, many discussed ways in which CBOs could be included more fully in the PYJI partnership, both in terms of their role and their funding allocation. CBO line staff also observed that referrals from Probation to Youth Development Group partners and other CBOs are not yet running as smoothly as they could be, and would benefit from increased clarification and formalization.

## Ensuring Operational Capacity

As mentioned above, at the time of its progress report San Joaquin County was in the process of formalizing policies and procedures related to PYJI. Stakeholders involved in managing PYJI planning and implementation explained that while progress had been made, the process of ensuring that new procedures are vetted and that policies align across systems takes time. They noted that challenges can arise in ensuring that policies align across systems when these systems operate from different underlying approaches—for example, the Juvenile Court judicial policies may not align with PYJI. Probation officers also commented that at times, they are unclear about the expected course of action for a youth's case, even when procedures and protocols exist. Staff survey results also demonstrate some uncertainty about the extent to which agencies have created new policies and procedures for serving crossover youth in the past 12 months: 28% of County agencies respondents indicated their agency made no or limited progress in the creation of new policies and procedures, 45% reported some or great progress, and 27% reported they did not know what progress was made.

San Joaquin County agencies and community-based stakeholders are also conscious of the need for increased support in sharing and working with data, noting that data collection on crossover youth was still in its preliminary stages at the time of the progress report. Stakeholders explained that differences in Probation and CPS data platforms have complicated data sharing efforts. Staff survey results also pointed to data collection and sharing as an area for further improvement. While 25% of staff survey respondents from County agencies replied that they agreed that the agencies and organizations serving crossover youth in San Joaquin collect and share data effectively, 40% somewhat agreed, and 36% disagreed or somewhat disagreed. Likewise, respondents from both County agencies and CBOs conveyed mixed perspectives about the extent to which their agency or organization has adapted forms or reporting tools to be consistent across agencies.

A number of stakeholders identified challenges in developing sufficient capacity for service provision. Leadership across County agencies noted that their agencies have limited time and staffing available to support PYJI efforts, and line staff also voiced apprehension about the additional time commitments of PYJI responsibilities. Leadership also commented that filling preexisting vacancies in a timely fashion can be challenging. Speaking to the importance of San Joaquin's planned staff trainings, at the time of the staff survey, over one-third (36%) of respondents from County agencies reported that they disagreed (11%) or somewhat disagreed (25%) that staff in their agency were well trained to support crossover youth.

County staff also noted that, in the process of turning the PYJI conversations into implementation, the scope of systems change and culture change contemplated under PYJI can be overwhelming and various levels of Probation staff feel burdened by the demands of their new roles and tasks with PYJI. Some County leadership expressed concern that the length of PYJI funding is insufficient to execute the degree of systems change desired.

## Implementing Service Delivery

As noted above, at the time of data collection for this report, San Joaquin County was in the process of setting the groundwork for many of the planned changes to PYJI service provision. With regard to the pre-existing system of services, County and CBO line staff identified mental health services as an area for improvement, including increasing the availability of youth-centered mental health services and improving engagement in mental health services for youth being released from detention.

## Youth and Caregiver Experiences: Survey Data

### Respondent Description

In San Joaquin County, 93 youth and 65 caregivers responded to the youth and caregiver surveys, out of the approximately 530 crossover youth under probation supervision. The ages of youth respondents ranged from ages 13 to 18 and the mean age was 17. Males comprised 81% of the youth respondents and females comprised 19%. The most common ethnicity was Hispanic/Latino, representing 53% of the youth respondents, followed by White/Caucasian (30%), African American/Black (29%), Native American/Alaskan Indian (10%), Asian or Pacific Islander (7%), and other ethnicities (4%).

Caregivers were primarily made up of mothers (63%), fathers (11%), and grandmothers (5%). Females comprised 74% of caregivers and males represented 26%. Forty-seven percent of caregivers were Hispanic/Latino (47%), followed by White/Caucasian (39%), African American/Black (18%), Native American/Alaskan Indian (11%), other ethnicities (5%), and Asian or Pacific Islander (2%).

Nearly all youth (99%) reported currently having a probation officer. All caregivers also reported that their child has a probation officer. Less than one-quarter (17%) of youth replied that they currently have a social worker through Child Welfare. Of the youth that did not report currently having a social worker, 18% indicated they have had one in the past. Fifteen percent of caregivers indicated that their child currently has a social worker. Nearly all youth (98%) and caregivers (97%) responded that they (or their child) were currently in school. Probation officers assumed primary responsibility for administering the survey in San Joaquin County, and nearly all youth (95%) reported hearing about this survey from their probation officer.

### Youth and Caregiver Responses

Youth and caregivers reported mostly positive responses about their experiences and relationships with their probation officers. A majority of youth (84%) and caregivers (75%) indicated that it is very true that their probation officer wants things to go well for them, and nearly two-thirds of caregivers (62%) replied that it is very true that their child's probation officer talks with their child about how what they have been through has affected them, a survey question designed to capture whether staff are using a TIC approach. Youth responses revealed more ambivalence about this with one-third (34%) of youth responding that it is very true, one-third (33%) responding that it is mostly true, one-quarter (28%) responding it is a little bit true, and 6% responding it is not at all true that their probation officer talks with them about how what they've been through has affected them. Similarly, 65% of caregivers

indicated it is very true that their child's probation officer tells them about programs that might help them, while among youth only 46% replied that this is very true and 11% replied that this is not at all true. Most youth and caregivers (71%) reported that they can easily get in touch with their probation officer if they need to.

Among those who indicated having a social worker, youth and caregiver responses revealed mixed feelings about their experiences and relationships with their social worker. While 56% of caregivers and 40% of youth responded that it is very true that their social worker wants things to go well for them, 7% of youth and 22% of caregivers responded it is not true at all. Similarly, 27% of youth reported that it is very true that their social worker talks with them about how what they have been through affects them; however 20% of youth replied that it is not at all true. In addition, 40% of youth indicated that it is not at all true that their social worker tells them about programs that might be helpful. Youth and caregivers reported mixed responses as to whether they can easily contact their social worker if they need to.

Caregivers generally reported positive experiences and relationships with teachers or adults at their child's school, while youth respondents expressed mixed feelings about these relationships. A majority of youth (67%) and caregivers (73%) responded that it is very true that teachers or adults at school want things to go well for them. However, although 63% of caregivers responded that teacher or adults at school talk to their child about how what they have been through affects them, youth responses suggested mixed feelings, with 41% of youth indicating this is very true, but 18% indicating that this is not true at all.

Interestingly, 91% of caregivers reported that families are involved in deciding the kinds of services that would be helpful for their child, but only 16% of youth replied that their family is involved. A majority of youth (79%) affirmed that probation officers, social workers, and other adults ask them what kind of programs they want to participate in.

More than half of youth (57%) and about two-thirds of caregivers (64%) reported that there is a group of people that they (or their child) can meet with to decide what types of programs would be helpful, a survey question designed to assess whether youth and families were involved in team-based case planning meetings. Most youth (80%) and caregivers (82%) identified probation officers as part of this group. Teachers were also identified by a majority of youth (54%) and caregivers (56%), and therapists, doctors, and mentors were also identified by about 30% of youth and caregivers as part of this group. A slightly higher percentage of youth (28%) identified social workers as part of the group than caregivers did (20%). It should be noted that while this survey question was designed to capture information about team-based decision making, it may not have been clear that a "group of people" referred to participants in *joint* meetings.

Youth and caregivers both identified a variety of programs in which the youth participate. Over half of youth (56%) and caregivers (60%) reported that youth participate in therapy or counseling. Programs to help youth succeed in school was the next most commonly indicated program, identified by 50% of youth and 46% of caregivers. More youth (41%) than caregivers (22%) reported that youth participated in afterschool programs. About one-third of youth identified that they participated in job training or

internships (34%), activities at their church or temple, or help in the community (35%). Fifteen percent of youth reported participating in services through Victor Community Services, the County's wraparound service provider. Similar percentages of youth and caregivers responded that they participate in programs through Community Partnership for Families (5%) and Father and Families of San Joaquin (5%).

Overall, youth and caregivers reported mixed feelings about the programs the youth participate in, with youth expressing slightly less positive opinions about the programs they participate in than caregivers. Over one-quarter of youth (27%) and 20% of caregivers replied that it is not at all true that the programs in which they participate help them in school. A sizeable minority of caregivers indicated it is very true (43%) the programs helped their child get more involved in their community, while 34% of youth indicated that it is not at all true.

A majority of youth responded that it is very true (42%) or mostly true (38%) that adults in their life respect them. About half of youth (48%) and caregivers (51%) reported that it is very true that when they are feeling lonely there people they can talk to who can help them; however 14% youth and 16% of caregivers reported that this was not at all true. Sixty percent of youth and 53% of caregivers indicated that it is very true that if they need help in school they know where to find it.