

Positive Youth Justice Initiative Year 2 Evaluation Findings

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The Positive Youth Justice Initiative is a Sierra Health Foundation initiative managed by the Center for Health Program Management, with additional funding from The California Endowment and The California Wellness Foundation.



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Executive Summary

Positive Youth Justice Initiative: Background and Context

Sierra Health Foundation has long invested in the well-being of California's youth, recognizing that supporting young people to lead healthy lives and reach their full potential is central to the foundation's vision of long-term economic, social, and cultural health. Following years of on-the-ground experience in youth development, extensive research and preparation, and in the context of a favorable policy environment, the foundation launched the Positive Youth Justice Initiative (PYJI) in 2012.¹

PYJI aims to shift juvenile justice practice and policy by supporting California counties to design and implement system-level reforms to improve the health and well-being of crossover youth—youth who have been involved in the child welfare system and who are currently involved in the juvenile justice system. Through an approach that invests in youth, treats trauma, provides wraparound service delivery, and changes systems to strengthen local infrastructure and sustain the improvements, the initiative seeks to reduce barriers to crossover youths' successful transition to adulthood, as well as to address structural biases that exacerbate the over-representation of youth of color in county juvenile justice systems across the state.

In 2012, one-year planning grants were awarded to six counties to support the development of comprehensive, data-informed PYJI innovation plans. In October 2013, four of these counties—Alameda, San Diego, San Joaquin, and Solano—were awarded two-year implementation grants. In each county, public agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs), and community leaders work together with the support of PYJI technical assistance providers to change how their local systems view, screen, and provide services to crossover youth and their families.

Purpose and Scope of PYJI Evaluation

Sierra Health Foundation contracted with Resource Development Associates (RDA) to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation and early impact of PYJI in order to glean key lessons that the foundation can use to support counties in building systems that embrace positive youth justice. Recognizing that the literature on implementing and measuring systems change in the juvenile justice context is limited, the evaluation seeks not only to advise next steps in PYJI counties, but also to contribute to the juvenile justice field and inform future efforts in California and beyond.

The RDA evaluation team designed a **mixed-methods approach** to evaluate the implementation and initial impact of PYJI over a two-year time frame, with a focus on assessing the extent to which systems change how they work to support the youth under their jurisdictions. The evaluation team, in collaboration with Sierra Health Foundation, identified a series of data collection activities designed to produce a thorough understanding of implementation activities and strategies. These included: **key**

¹ The Positive Youth Justice Initiative is a Sierra Health Foundation initiative managed by the Center for Health Program Management, with additional funding from The California Endowment and The California Wellness Foundation.

informant interviews with PYJI leadership in each county; **focus groups with staff** from PYJI partner agencies and CBOs in each county; a **staff survey** that was disseminated to staff in PYJI partner agencies and CBOs; a **survey of youth and their caregivers**; and **focus groups with youth** in each county. The evaluation team also reviewed documentary data from each county and from the foundation, and met regularly with the Sierra Health Foundation PYJI team.

Year 2 Evaluation Findings

The evaluation team synthesized data from counties' implementation plans, progress reports, key informant interviews, focus groups, and surveys to highlight cross-cutting themes of effective practices and key challenges during PYJI implementation.

Year 2 Implementation Highlights

- All counties brought on **new partners** to support PYJI, particularly CBOs.
- All counties created **policies and procedures** including Graduated Sanctions and Rewards Matrices and made progress toward their implementation.
- All counties implemented **trauma-informed care training** with staff and partner agencies and some implemented trainings on positive youth development, gender-responsiveness, and racial and ethnic disparities.
- All counties observed that the juvenile justice system is approaching and/or interacting with youth in ways that are **increasingly aligned with PYJI elements**.

Effective Practices in Year 2

- **Using multiple strategies helped counties prioritize and promote culture change.** By clearly communicating support from executive leadership, creating concrete opportunities for line staff involvement, and broadly implementing trauma-informed care training, counties informed and engaged line staff in the mission and goals of PYJI.
- **Maintaining strong and invested leadership from executive and/or upper management facilitated collaboration and buy-in.** In Year 2 all counties continued to leverage leadership-level collaboration to advance PYJI implementation, and some expressed that this collaboration had trickled down to improve inter-agency communication among staff working directly with youth. Executive level support also fostered buy-in across multiple agencies and levels of staff. Those counties where executive level leadership remained consistent in Year 2 noted the benefits of this stability.
- **Designating a PYJI coordinator assisted in advancing partner relationships, promoting buy-in and culture shift among line staff, and managing the initiative's activities.** As in Year 1, all counties noted limited staff time as a key challenge in implementing PYJI. In Year 2, most counties were able to hire and/or leverage existing staff resources to support PYJI. Most counties reported that having a "PYJI Champion," coupled with executive leadership, supported communication among staff and partner agencies.

- **Defining clear roles and opportunities for involvement helped engage PYJI partner agencies.** All counties made progress in bringing on new partners for PYJI collaboration. Counties in which partnering agencies had specified roles expressed feeling invested in PYJI and articulated their respective agency's direct impact in working with crossover youth.
- **Engaging youth, family, and community in PYJI activities promoted awareness, strengthened team-based decision making, and identified new areas for incorporating youth voice.** In Year 2, all counties also engaged youth and family involvement in team-based case planning to at least some degree, and all PYJI counties engaged the broader community through community engagement forums. In some counties youth also played an active and consistent role in implementation—for example, serving as mentors for PYJI youth, and sharing their feedback about the court process with Probation and/or Court leadership.

Key Challenges in Year 2

- **Reliance on executive leadership to advance PYJI sometimes deterred initiative momentum.** Some PYJI partners expressed concern that the success of PYJI hinged on individual staff positions and personalities, and in some counties, unexpected staffing changes in prominent positions in some lead and partner agencies affected initiative progress by diminishing the involvement of leadership and communication with mid-level and line staff.
- **Confusion about roles and responsibilities limited the full participation of PYJI partners.** Some county PYJI partners conveyed confusion about roles and responsibilities for line staff in PYJI, which resulted in prioritizing their staff time for agency-specific work. Additionally, all counties expressed a desire for targeted training aligned with their agency's specific role in PYJI to mitigate confusion. Line staff from Child Welfare and Probation continued to observe challenges in coordination and priorities for their cases. Consequently, line staff suggested that counties identify representatives from each agency to work on strengthening communication and triaging crossover youth.
- **Emphasis on TIC training reduced counties' capacity to integrate and promote the other PYJI design elements.** While counties made progress in all PYJI design elements, the extent to which they emphasized and integrated each of the elements varied. When rolling out the initiative to staff, trauma-informed care—a national hot button issue with clear opportunities for professional development—was a natural starting point in counties' efforts to support culture change. Most counties approached the implementation of PYJI training consecutively, beginning with trauma-informed care in Year 1 and continuing this emphasis in Year 2. As a result, some counties noted that staff were less familiar with other PYJI elements such as positive youth development. In addition, most counties had not yet implemented new trainings or approaches to gender responsive services, and most also struggled to ensure crossover youth were being referred to accessible wraparound and other community-based services.
- **Departmental requirements for drafting, approving, and training staff in new policies and procedures resulted in lengthy processes to formalize changes in practices within and across systems.** Some counties explained that challenges have arisen in disseminating information about

policies and procedures to mid-level and line staff, and in ensuring that policies align across systems. In particular, dissemination of new policies and procedures for staff who are impacted by—but not directly involved in—PYJI remained a challenge.

- **Inconsistency in incorporating youth voices in programming and service delivery meant that youth still felt removed from the decision-making processes.** While counties made strides toward incorporating youth input in decision-making, most identified room for growth in the extent and consistency with which staff across and within systems engage youth. As in Year 1, some counties expressed challenges to gaining buy-in from families and identified mistrust of authority figures within these systems as a consistent barrier.
- **Longstanding barriers to data sharing continued to hinder agencies' ability to share useful information about youth across multiple systems.** All counties have made progress in their ability to collect data about crossover youth, and most now flag crossover youth in their data systems. Some counties are updating data sharing agreements with PYJI partner agencies and creating data-sharing memoranda of understanding with CBOs as well. At the same time, all counties continued to emphasize barriers to data sharing due to cross-platform information technology challenges and confidentiality concerns.

Introduction

Background and Context

Sierra Health Foundation has long invested in the well-being of California's youth, recognizing that supporting young people to lead healthy lives and reach their full potential is central to the foundation's vision of long-term economic, social, and cultural health. Following years of on-the-ground experience in youth development, extensive research and preparation, and in the context of a favorable policy environment, the foundation launched the Positive Youth Justice Initiative (PYJI) in 2012.²

PYJI aims to shift juvenile justice practice and policy by supporting California counties to design and implement system-level reforms to improve the health and well-being of crossover youth—youth who have been involved in the child welfare system and who are currently involved in the juvenile justice system. Through an approach that invests in youth, treats trauma, provides wraparound service delivery, and changes systems to strengthen local infrastructure and sustain the improvements, the initiative seeks to reduce barriers to crossover youths' successful transition to adulthood, as well as to address structural biases that exacerbate the over-representation of youth of color in county juvenile justice systems across the state.

In 2012, one-year planning grants were awarded to six counties to support the development of comprehensive, data-informed PYJI innovation plans. In October 2013, four of these counties—Alameda, San Diego, San Joaquin, and Solano—were awarded two-year implementation grants. In each county, public agencies, community based organizations, and community leaders work together with the support of PYJI technical assistance providers to change how their local systems view, screen, and provide services to crossover youth and their families.

Purpose and Scope of Evaluation

Sierra Health Foundation contracted with Resource Development Associates (RDA) to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation and early impact of PYJI. Recognizing that the literature on implementing and measuring systems change in the juvenile justice context is limited, the evaluation seeks not only to advise next steps in PYJI counties, but also to contribute to the juvenile justice field and inform future efforts in California and beyond.

Sierra Health Foundation recognizes that challenges are to be expected in the implementation of any major initiative. Thus rather than critically judging or comparing counties' performance, the evaluation aims to document what it takes to implement broad system-level changes in order to glean key lessons that the foundation can use to support counties in building systems that embrace positive youth justice. To this end, the evaluation focuses on three broad areas of inquiry, which will be discussed in greater detail in Section II: Evaluation Design and Methods.

² The Positive Youth Justice Initiative is a Sierra Health Foundation initiative managed by the Center for Health Program Management, with additional funding from The California Endowment and The California Wellness Foundation.

1. Successes and challenges of PYJI implementation;
2. System-level impacts of PYJI; and
3. Individual-level impacts of PYJI on youths' experience of the systems with which they interact.

Summary of Year 1 Evaluation

In documenting the status of counties' early-stage implementation, the Year 1 evaluation gleaned a number of cross-cutting strengths and challenges that counties experienced in implementing this far-reaching systems change initiative. The following are major highlights and areas of progress from the Year 1 evaluation.

Pre-Implementation Strengths

- Drawing on previous partnerships to support PYJI collaboration and implementation;
- Engaging in complementary system change efforts that align with PYJI elements; and
- Ensuring adherence to legislative regulations that incidentally support PYJI reformation.

Major Areas of Progress in Year 1

- Capitalizing on high levels of PYJI support and engagement from executive and upper management and some mid-level and line staff;
- Revising department procedures and training staff on new policies to improve work with crossover youth;
- Prioritizing staff training, particularly in trauma-informed care (TIC);
- Beginning to institutionalize PYJI elements in policies and procedures, such as agency contracts and job descriptions;
- Expanding access to wraparound services and creating formal partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) to improve access to services; and
- Implementing or enhancing team-based decision making.

Key Areas for Growth following Year 1

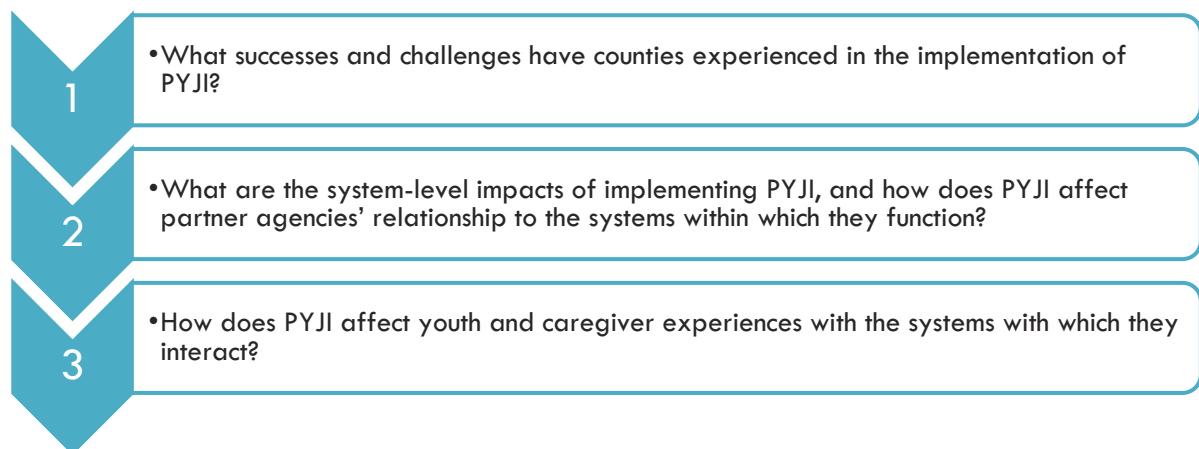
- Transitioning juvenile justice agencies from high-level philosophical support to concrete positive juvenile probation practices;
- Advancing multi-system processes for team-based decision making;
- Achieving meaningful engagement of Education and Child Welfare partners;
- Implementing PYJI elements in an integrated manner;
- Developing data sharing agreements and protocols to support data collection and data sharing for crossover youth;
- Incorporating youth voice in programming and service delivery; and
- Allocating resources for staffing and staff time to further support PYJI implementation.

Year 2 Evaluation

The Year 2 evaluation focuses on key successes and challenges during the second year of implementation. A comprehensive report in late 2015 will synthesize data across the two years to document progress toward actualizing systems change. The findings presented in this report reflect data from qualitative and quantitative data gathered from PYJI partner agencies and CBOs between December 2014 and June 2015, covering the first three quarters of Year 2 of PYJI implementation.

Evaluation Design and Methods

The RDA evaluation team designed a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the implementation and initial impact of PYJI over a two-year time frame. The high-level research questions that guide the evaluation focus on measuring changes in system-level operations, recognizing that while the ultimate goal of PYJI is to improve the outcomes of youth and families involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, counties will likely not see changes in youth outcomes in the two-year implementation period.



In this way, while the longer-term measure of this initiative's success will be improvements in youth health and well-being, this evaluation centers on assessing the extent to which systems change how they work to support the youth under their jurisdictions. To inform the evaluation questions and indicators, RDA conducted a literature and best practice review of evaluation studies and performance measures in relevant fields such as youth systems, criminal justice systems, and collaborative system-wide initiatives. This review focused on determining outcome domains and performance measures applicable to the scope and goals of PYJI.³

The evaluation design encompasses the following three components.

³ This review was presented in the Year 1 evaluation report and is available at the following link: http://www.sierrahealth.org/assets/PYJI/SHF_PYJI_Year_1_Evaluation_Performance_Measures_Literature_20150108.pdf. Domains of system change implementation included leadership vision and support; line staff vision and support; partnerships and collaboration; policies and procedures; data collection, sharing, and use; family and community engagement; training; and resources and sustainability.

Year 1 Implementation Evaluation

- The Year 1 evaluation focused on the first of the research questions described above, documenting the status of counties' early-stage implementation, as well as pre-implementation factors that may have influenced the progress of implementation. In addition, the Year 1 evaluation was intended to establish baseline indicators by which to assess the second and third research questions in Year 2.

Year 2 Implementation Evaluation

- The Year 2 evaluation assesses progress toward PYJI implementation in the second year of PYJI implementation; focusing on the same systems change domains as the first evaluation, the evaluation of the second year of the initiative's implementation seeks to document additional successes that counties have made toward implementing PYJ-aligned youth-serving systems, as well as new or ongoing challenges counties have experienced in these efforts.

Cumulative Implementation Evaluation

- At the end of 2015, RDA will produce a cumulative report that includes a synthesis of data across the two years in order to document progress toward actualizing systems change within County agencies and CBOs, as well as progress toward improving youth and caregiver experiences with services and programs across the initiative's implementation thus far.

Data Collection

The evaluation team, in collaboration with Sierra Health Foundation, identified an array of data collection activities with staff, youth, and caregivers designed to produce a thorough understanding of implementation activities both within and across counties. Because youth participation in juvenile justice and child welfare systems is often in flux, the evaluation was not designed to follow individual youth over time, but rather to capture a broad sense of youths' experiences with these systems over the course of PYJI implementation. Data collection activities in Year 2 included:

- **Key informant interviews** (KIIs) with PYJI leadership;
- **Focus groups** (FGs) with staff from PYJI partner agencies and CBOs in each county;
- An **online survey** for staff in PYJI partner agencies and CBOs;
- **Surveys** with youth and caregivers to assess their experiences with the systems with which they interact; and
- A **focus group** with youth in each county to hear from youth in their own words about their experiences with the systems with which they interact.⁴

In addition, RDA obtained documentary data from each county and from the foundation, including PYJI Implementation Plans and Progress Reports, and Sierra Health Foundation site visit notes. Regular meetings with the Sierra Health Foundation team also informed our understanding of PYJI implementation. See Appendix B for more detail about the evaluation activities and participants.

⁴ Sierra Health Foundation produced a brief summary of youth focus group findings, available at the following link: http://www.sierrahealth.org/assets/PYJI/PYJI_Youth_Voices_June_2015.pdf

Data Analysis

The RDA evaluation team analyzed the qualitative and quantitative data to identify key progress and challenges in implementation according to the domains of systems change implementation classified through the team's literature review.⁵ Where possible, the analysis also looked for key themes according to respondents' affiliation (lead agency, other public agency, or community-based partner) and position (director/manager or line staff). The evaluation team then analyzed findings across counties in order to highlight common areas of implementation progress and challenges across the four counties.

Limitations

As with any research, there are several limitations in the evaluation design and data collection that are important to keep in mind when reviewing findings.

- **Ability to attribute changes to PYJI.** Because PYJI counties are undertaking multiple initiatives and projects simultaneously, it is not possible to isolate whether changes have occurred as part of PYJI, as part of concurrent efforts, or both. In addition, it is not possible to fully isolate the progress that counties made or challenges they experienced in Year 2, as many activities that were implemented in Year 2 had already begun in Year 1. In order to address these limitations, the evaluation design includes substantial qualitative data, along with secondary sources such as documentary data and ongoing conversations with the Sierra Health Foundation project team, to allow the evaluation team to cross-reference data from multiple sources.
- **Reliance on self-reported information.** Interviews and focus groups rely on self-reported data, and as such, there is the possibility of recall bias or social desirability bias. The use of multiple data sources, as well as efforts to ensure that sources come from a diversity of agencies and perspectives, are designed to mitigate these limitations.
- **Inconsistency in participation.** Several limitations arose regarding the qualitative data collection in Year 2. First, due to several challenges in scheduling and recruitment, the makeup of the focus group participants was not consistent across counties. Surveys with staff, youth, and caregivers all had very different response rates across the four counties (see Appendix B). As such, it is important to keep in mind that the findings from these data collection efforts reflect the experiences of those who were engaged in and chose to respond to the survey, and may not be generalizable to all staff, crossover youth, or caregivers.
- **Variation in youth survey administration.** It is also important to consider potential bias in youth survey responses based on how the survey was administered. While the evaluation team made efforts to set up consistent administration procedures, the diverse contexts of the PYJI counties and their PYJI programs necessarily led to variations in survey administration. As some youth completed

⁵ Data analysis for this report sought to understand counties' progress and challenges in Year 2 of PYJI implementation. Our analysis therefore focused primarily on the data we collected during in Year 2, with the understanding that the cumulative evaluation, in the fall of 2015, will compare data across Years 1 and 2 to identify progress and system-level impacts.

the survey online while others completed a paper version, the different modes of administration may have affected youths' perceptions of the confidentiality of the survey. In addition, while all youth completed the survey independently, youth received the survey from different staff (in some cases probation officers and in other cases CBO providers), which may have influenced youths' responses.

Organization of the Report

What follows is the main section of the report, which presents cross-cutting findings on the strengths and challenges in implementation of PYJI according to key domains of system change. Appendix A includes county-level reports that highlight progress and challenges in implementation in each county, along with a summary of youth and caregiver perspectives. Appendix B provides detail on the participants in the key informant interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

Cross-Cutting Findings

This section explores key strengths and challenges that PYJI counties have experienced during the second year of implementation. The sub-sections below synthesize data from counties' implementation plans, progress reports, key informant interviews, focus groups, and surveys to highlight cross-cutting themes within key domains of systems change. As the primary objective of this evaluation is to evaluate the implementation of the overall initiative, the focus of this section is on cross-cutting themes, rather than on individual counties' progress. For information about each county's implementation plan and progress, see Appendix A.⁶

Overall Adoption and Rollout of PYJI

All counties are building upon their PYJI implementation plan and activities from Year 1. While counties are experiencing their own unique set of challenges and successes, all counties have made progress engaging new partners, formalizing processes to support PYJI, and seeing concrete changes in how they work with crossover youth. The box to the right highlights some of the key implementation accomplishments in Year 2.

As with Year 1 implementation, PYJI counties and their partners also experienced a number of challenges in their efforts to implement this initiative, many of which were similar to those they experience last year. Key challenges that continued from Year 1 included:

- Achieving widespread support for PYJI from all levels of staff;
- Ensuring participation in team-based decision making;
- Improving data collection and sharing;
- Establishing youth and family trust and involvement; and
- Leveraging resources to implement PYJI elements.

In addition, new challenges emerged in the second year of implementation, especially around the roles and responsibilities of various individuals and

Year 2 Implementation Highlights

- All counties brought on **new partners** to support PYJI, particularly CBOs.
- All counties created **policies and procedures** including Graduated Sanctions and Rewards Matrices and made progress toward their implementation.
- All counties implemented **trauma-informed care training** with staff and partner agencies and some implemented trainings on positive youth development, gender-responsiveness, and racial and ethnic disparities.
- All counties observed that the juvenile justice system is approaching and/or interacting with youth in ways that are **increasingly aligned with PYJI elements**.

⁶ Note: While the primary focus of this section is to highlight overall successes and challenges in implementation, rather than to quantify the accomplishments of PYJI counties, in general when referring to PYJI counties, "some" is used to indicate two counties, while "most" is used to refer to three counties.

agencies. In particular, all counties experienced confusion about the roles and responsibilities of County partner agencies in supporting PYJI and some counties reported less consistent involvement of executive leadership in Year 2.

Effective Practices in Year 2 Implementation

- Using multiple strategies helped counties prioritize and promote culture change.
- Maintaining strong and invested leadership from executive and/or upper management facilitated collaboration and buy-in.
- Designating a PYJI coordinator assisted in advancing partner relationships, promoting buy-in and culture shift among line staff, and managing the initiative's activities.
- Defining clear roles and opportunities for involvement helped engage PYJI partner agencies.
- Engaging youth, family, and community in PYJI activities promoted awareness, strengthened team-based decision making, and identified new areas for incorporating youth voice.

Key Challenges in Year 2 Implementation

- Reliance on executive leadership to advance PYJI sometimes deterred initiative momentum.
- Confusion about roles and responsibilities limited the full participation of PYJI partners.
- Emphasis on TIC training reduced counties' capacity to integrate and promote the other PYJI design elements.
- Departmental requirements for drafting, approving, and training staff in new policies and procedures resulted in lengthy processes to formalize changes in practice within and across systems.
- Inconsistency in incorporating youth voices in programming and service delivery meant that youth still largely felt removed from the decision-making processes.
- Longstanding barriers to data sharing continued to hinder agencies' ability to share useful information about youth across multiple systems.

The following sections highlight key strengths and challenges according to key domains of systems change: leadership vision and support; line staff vision and support; partnerships and collaboration; policies and procedures; data collection, sharing, and use; approach to services; youth, family, and community engagement; staff training in PYJI elements; and resources and sustainability.⁷

⁷ For greater detail on youth-level findings, Sierra Health Foundation produced a brief summary of youth focus group findings, available at the following link:

http://www.sierrahealth.org/assets/PYJI/PYJI_Youth_Voices_June_2015.pdf

Leadership Vision and Support

Consistent and invested executive leadership helped cultivate staff buy-in and supported collaboration with new and existing partners.

Strengths & Progress

Most counties identified that strong and invested leadership from executive and/or upper management continued in Year 2. Leadership from CBO and County partner agencies noted that high-level leadership from the PYJI lead agency had helped move the Probation Department toward broader culture shift and build confidence in the initiative. In one county, PYJI partners pointed out that consistency in leadership throughout the initiative supported their ability to partner successfully with the lead agency.

“For the first time in history, you had the police chief talking about inequality and race. I believe PYJI really was the vehicle that catapulted opening these issues and also finding a way to address and solve these issues.”

-CBO partner

Challenges & Opportunities

While County leadership voiced a high degree of buy-in for PYJI, as in Year 1, some lead and partner agencies experienced staff turnover at the leadership level during the initiative. They observed that this sometimes resulted in reduced involvement from leadership, less communication with mid-level and line staff about the direction of the initiative, and, as a result, less clarity about the expectations and responsibilities of staff and partner agencies. In particular, line staff from PYJI partner agencies explained that without clear direction from their agency’s executive leadership, they were uncertain of their organization’s role and expectations for PYJI. They underscored that if new leadership was not familiarized with PYJI, then line staff were more likely to focus on their competing work rather than continue their involvement in the initiative.

Line Staff Vision and Support

Meaningful opportunities for line staff involvement in PYJI decision making and planning helped foster buy-in, but some staff continued to experience uncertainty about changes that might result from PYJI.

Strengths & Progress

While the degree of line staff support and involvement in PYJI varied by county and across county agencies, all counties reported that buy-in and support for PYJI among line staff increased in Year 2. According to interviews and focus groups with leadership and line staff, some counties fostered line staff support by increasing the involvement of mid-level and line staff in PYJI activities. In these cases, counties provided opportunities for mid-level and line staff to join decision-making meetings and plan PYJI activities. In surveys, most line staff from Probation Departments agreed that PYJI had the potential to advance the juvenile justice system and policy and practice. Some CBO and County agencies also observed that PYJI-related activities have resulted in concrete changes in practice, with movement toward line staff utilizing a trauma-informed care (TIC) lens in their approach to crossover youth. In a

similar vein, a majority of youth survey respondents from all counties believed that they could easily get in touch with their probation officer, their probation officer listens to them and their family, and that their probation officer treats them fairly.

"We all have the idea that we want youth and families to be successful, but we have come at it from different attitudes. Now we are more on the same page."

-Probation officer

Challenges & Opportunities

While the inclusion of mid-level and line staff in PYJI increased in some counties, some County agencies observed that staff at all levels continued to experience a degree of confusion about their roles or expectations, as well as reservations about changes to their work load. Probation line staff from one county expressed feeling

that PYJI required a lot of work given the relatively small proportion of youth on probation who are crossover youth. Leadership from another county believed that because probation officers have several competing initiatives, it was sometimes difficult for them to decipher which initiative was a priority. County and partner agencies reported that when line staff were brought in to PYJI at a later point in implementation, this seemed to hinder their buy-in.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Partner agencies were more invested and involved when they clearly understood their role and felt included in PYJI planning and activities.

Strengths & Progress

Many counties formalized new partnerships, particularly with CBOs, by creating MOUs and interagency agreements to solidify PYJI alliances. To support collaboration, some county leadership provided venues for greater interaction between leadership and line staff from CBOs, Probation, and other PYJI partners. For example, in some counties, CBOs and partner agencies were invited to participate in decision-making meetings and join PYJI activities, such as youth-focused festivities that celebrated crossover youths' success in PYJI.

"We've moved from a CBO that you send your troubled kids; to a legitimate partner at the table."

-CBO leadership

Furthermore, some Probation Departments underscored the success of new arrangements to house staff from Behavioral Health and/or Social Services within their organizations, as it facilitated timely collaboration on crossover youths' cases and services. CBO leaders in some counties affirmed that greater collaboration had resulted in concrete changes in practice, noting that while prior to PYJI it was difficult to contact a probation officer about a case, there is now more frequent communication between CBO staff and probation officers. One CBO partner said that after inviting probation officers to attend their PYJI programs, she started receiving frequent follow-up communication from probation officers about their youth attending the program.

Challenges & Opportunities

Some counties conveyed that while there was a strong collaborative infrastructure for PYJI, leadership and line staff experienced some confusion about the roles and responsibilities of partner agencies as implementation continued into Year 2. Many county partner agencies, like Child Welfare, Education, and Behavioral Health reported that while they participated in the initial planning for PYJI and continued to attend PYJI executive level meetings, they felt generally unclear about how to further participate in PYJI. While many of these agencies indicated they were involved in initiatives with similar values to PYJI and indicated progress toward countywide culture change, they also noted that this led to some confusion in regard to their level of involvement in supporting what was sometimes deemed a “Probation reform.” In these cases, County agencies reported that because PYJI activities focused largely on activities and trainings for Probation staff, they were unclear of how their departments fit in the initiative. For example, one leader from a county partner agency wondered if the intention of PYJI was to be a cross-agency initiative or a Probation initiative. These agencies also noted limited involvement of their mid-level and line staff in PYJI, as they did not see direct impacts on their line staff.

In most counties, Child Welfare was visibly less involved in PYJI at the line-staff level. Additionally, some leadership and line staff in Child Welfare conveyed differing opinions about the appropriate level of involvement for their department. For example, most leadership in Child Welfare shared that a high

“If they [Sierra Health Foundation] are intending it to be beyond a Juvenile Justice reform, [they] have to create a way for Child Welfare to show up and be supportive. What does that work like for the Child Welfare? Otherwise, I think PYJI is a great way to reform the juvenile justice system.”

-County leadership

level of involvement from their line staff in PYJI was not necessary, but for differing reasons. In one county, Child Welfare leadership explained that the number of crossover youth their staff encountered was relatively small, so there was less of an opportunity to interface with Probation and PYJI. Child Welfare from another county shared that their line staff did not actively partake in PYJI, because there was not a clear opportunity for concrete involvement. Other Child Welfare leadership acknowledged that by their county’s definition, crossover youth did not have an active case in their system, thus leading them to feel their line staff’s involvement was unnecessary.

However, line staff from both Probation and Child Welfare felt Child Welfare line staff should be more involved in PYJI and observed continued challenges in cross-agency communication regarding 241.1 hearings—a key challenge in communication and coordination noted in Year 1 as well.

Similar to Year 1, some counties still reported limited involvement of education stakeholders in PYJI. CBO leadership from one county said that education stakeholders were frequently invited to participate in trainings and PYJI activities, but did not attend. Leadership from another county’s Office of Education voiced that they received invitations to some meetings, but were not included in executive level PYJI partner meetings and events. Youth and caregiver survey responses further highlight the importance of Education’s role in the reform. While a majority of youth and caregivers indicated that there is a teacher

or other adult at school who wants things to go well for youth, they emphasized limited consistency in how teachers and adults at schools actively support youth.

Policies and Procedures

Updating policies and procedures and providing training for staff helped counties achieve concrete changes in practice; however, the iterative process and departmental requirements meant that it was a lengthy process to formalize changes within and across systems.

Strengths & Progress

In all counties, both the PYJI lead agency and partner agencies created new policies and procedures to support PYJI in Year 2. The level of incorporation of policies and procedures varied across counties and partner agencies, and each county focused on different areas of policy and procedure development in Year 2 depending on their implementation priorities and the progress they had made in Year 1. In particular, all counties created Graduated Sanctions and Rewards Matrices and made progress toward their implementation. Another county revised their interview protocol for new or transferring probation officers to incorporate questions demonstrating PYD and TIC elements. Another county revised language in their contracts with new providers to ensure PYD elements were part of service delivery.

Challenges & Opportunities

While all counties continued to make progress toward developing or modifying policies and procedures, some counties experienced challenges in disseminating new or revised policies and procedures to mid-level and line staff. Line staff said that sometimes they receive revisions to policies and procedures, but not training on actual implementation. They underscored that it can take several iterations before the policies and procedures are finalized and that in the meantime they are not sure how to proceed. Staff in one county also highlighted challenges in putting new policies and procedures into practice due to limited resources. For example, Probation leadership described the difficulty of instituting alternatives to custody for PYJI youth when the menu of options is limited, stating that their department would make different decisions about crossover youth placement if they had better choices.

As in Year 1, counties also explained that it was difficult to secure changes in cross-system policies and procedures due to different underlying approaches and priorities. For example, one Probation leader explained that there is still resistance from Behavioral Health, CBOs, and Child Welfare embracing Probation as a partner of holistic and integrative care for crossover youth rather than an adversary. In counties in which PYJI was implemented as a pilot program, some agencies reported challenges in expanding changes to policies and procedures outside of the PYJI program.

Data Collection, Sharing, and Use

Counties' ability to identify crossover youth helped advance their use of data for decision making. However, all counties continued to experience obstacles to data sharing beyond existing MOUs.

Strengths & Progress

All counties can identify crossover youth in their respective data systems, and most now flag crossover youth for tracking and referral purposes. Some counties are updating data sharing agreements with PYJI partner agencies and creating data sharing memorandum of understandings (MOUs) with CBOs as well. In one county, Probation leadership created an interagency data sharing agreement across several agencies to support data collection on crossover youth. One county gave an example of how collecting and sharing data is improving their capacity to make data-informed decisions. Their Probation leadership created a qualitative case narrative and profile of crossover youth and shared that information with their PYJI partners in order to provide them with more detailed information about the youth they serve.

Challenges & Opportunities

All counties continued to emphasize barriers to data sharing due to cross-platform information technology challenges and confidentiality concerns, including differing opinions between agencies about what information is appropriate to share. Some PYJI partner agencies voiced that they were reluctant to share too much data with Probation, because they were concerned how an agency with a law enforcement lens might use the data.

Some counties noted that in some instances strong data-sharing agreements exist, but these agreements are often bi-lateral or unidirectional. For example, some county and PYJI partner agencies reported sharing data through edicts like Katie A, which requires data sharing between Behavioral Health and Child Welfare, but emphasized that this data sharing did not transcend all organizations, like Probation. Some CBO leadership voiced that the level of information they receive about a crossover youth's case was dependent on their relationship with individual Probation staff. Some CBO leadership and line staff further expressed frustration about receiving less background on crossover youth compared to other PYJI partners. Most counties identified data sharing as a long-standing challenge and some counties communicated wanting more technical assistance around strategies to overcome these barriers.

"It would be great if there was universal system we could all have and communicate with. Whenever we need to know something, we could just look it up, but unfortunately that's not the reality."

-Probation leadership

Approach to Services: Positive Youth Development, Trauma-Informed Care, Wraparound, Team-Based Decision Making, and Gender-Responsive Services

Counties moved from planning their approach to services to concrete delivery of services, using a combination of training, partnerships, policies and procedures, and team-based meetings. At the same time, trauma-informed care remained the most visible component of the initiative.

Strengths & Progress

In all counties, leadership and line staff observed that trauma-informed care (TIC) training for probation officers and PYJI partners served as the groundwork for bringing line staff into the initiative and sparking a change in their approach to service delivery. Some counties also provided training in positive youth development (PYD), racial and ethnic disparities and/or implicit bias, and gender-responsive services. Staff training will be further covered in the section below: “Staff Training in PYJI Elements.”

All counties have also implemented some type of meeting in which team-based decision-making occurs. According to the youth and caregiver surveys, a majority of youth in all counties reported that a parent or caregiver always or sometimes attends meetings with their probation officers. However, a much lower proportion reported that someone other than a parent or caregiver attended these meetings. Some counties also reported progress in expanding the number of slots available in their wraparound program to accommodate more youth. One county addressed their approach to gender-responsive services by implementing the Girls Health Screen in juvenile hall.⁸

Most counties either developed or continued a direct service component that was created specifically for PYJI and incorporated TIC, PYD, team-based decision-making, and referrals to direct services and/or wraparound services. One county, for example, now requires probation officers to refer their crossover youth to PYD youth support groups.

Challenges & Opportunities

Although most counties made progress toward incorporating all PYJI elements, staff clearly saw TIC as the emphasis and were less familiar with the other elements of PYJI. Similar to findings from Year 1, some counties continued to approach the implementation of PYJI elements separately. For example, one county focused primarily on education about TIC in Years 1 and 2 and are now transitioning to PYD education. In most counties, staff discussed the fewest changes in the area of gender-responsive services, though as in Year 1 some counties discussed gender-responsive efforts that were in place before PYJI. Some partners and staff who were less familiar with PYJI viewed the TIC trainings as the most tangible component and primary focus of PYJI; for many of them, PYJI was synonymous with TIC training.

⁸ The Girls Health Screen (GHS) is an evidence-based and gender-responsive medical screening tool developed for girls ages 11-17 who enter detention or other juvenile justice residential programs. The GHS is designed to improve the health of girls in the juvenile justice system by identifying, prioritizing, and addressing their physical and mental health needs.

In all counties, PYJI partners and CBOs reiterated a need for consistent shifts in culture across agencies and departments to support youth. PYJI partners underscored that the success of the initiative depends on the consistency of messaging youth receive from agencies and organizations, but observed that the degree to which line staff embody a punitive lens or a TIC lens depends largely on the individual probation officer, teacher, social worker, or service provider. This sentiment was shared by youth focus group participants, who emphasized that the way they are treated depends in large part on the individual staff person. Youth and caregiver survey respondents generally suggested that across youth serving systems, adults with whom they interact want things to go well for youth; however, their responses indicate minimal consistency across and within counties in how law enforcement officials, social workers, and teachers treat and approach youth. While most responded that these adults want things to go well for youth, there was less consistent agreement that they talk with youth about how what they've been through in their life has affected them (a survey question designed to capture whether staff are using a TIC approach) or tell them about programs that might be helpful to them. Youth and caregivers in all counties reported more positive feelings about their experiences with probation officers relative to their experiences with officers in juvenile hall and judges.

While all counties moved toward incorporating team-based decision making meetings, line staff in most counties identified wanting more participation in and frequency of team-based meetings with other departments. Similarly, in youth focus groups and surveys, the extent to which the youth had participated in multidisciplinary team meetings was unclear. Some youth focus group participants reported that they wished there were more open communication channels between themselves, their family, and their probation officer, with several youth indicating they wished their probation officers would communicate directly with them, rather than through their parents.

In addition, some counties still struggled to ensure crossover youth were being referred to and accessing wraparound and other community-based services. Probation leadership in these counties explained that their probation officers lack clarity about the services available and when to refer to which program. One member of Child Welfare leadership called attention to a concern that crossover youth are unable to properly access services because of the stigma of being referred from the Probation Department. He further explained that when children receive a label of being involved in the juvenile justice system, sometimes when they are referred to Behavioral Health or re-enter school, they are treated like a “difficult client” with whom providers might spend less time on follow-up and service delivery because they are perceived to be unmanageable.

Youth survey and focus group responses were mixed as to the benefit of the programs in which they are (or were) involved. Among this variation, youth in most counties expressed slightly more agreement that programs helped them do better in school and build skills for the future (a majority of youth in all counties) and that programs were a good fit for them (a majority of youth in most counties), and slightly

“They said [in PYD training] if you got a kid who loves baseball, get them involved in baseball, but we don’t have money to get them involved. What are the specific practical steps, other than verbal encouragement?”

-County line staff

less agreement that programs helped them get along with their family or become more involved with the community. In most counties, a majority of youth indicated they were not participating in any of the contracted wraparound or CBO providers.

Youth, Family, and Community Engagement

While counties made efforts to increase the engagement of youth, families, and the community, youth still largely felt removed from the decision-making processes.

Strengths & Progress

Counties indicated varying degrees of youth and family involvement in Year 2. In some counties, youth played an active and consistent role in Year 2 implementation—for example, one county hired formerly incarcerated youth to act as mentors for PYJI youth, while some counties created opportunities to publicly celebrate youth who have completed probation requirements at specific points in time. In some counties, the Probation Department offered youth the opportunity to share their feedback about the court process with Probation leadership and in one case Court leadership.

All counties engaged youth and families in team-based case planning to at least some degree, and many youth survey respondents reported that they provided input about the programs in which they would be involved. In one county, families participated in support meetings in which they had the opportunity to engage with other families in similar situations, share experiences, and problem solve together. Overall, caregiver survey respondents (in the two counties for which sufficient surveys were submitted) reported more positive feelings toward youth-serving systems than youth did.

“Part of the work we’ve done is such to make sure that the child’s voice is at the center of the table and the child feels empowered. Playing to their strengths leads to better outcomes.”

-County leadership

In Year 2, all PYJI counties also engaged the broader community through community forums. In one county, Probation created educational forums with youth panelists, which they held in neighborhoods where crossover youth lived to educate community members about crossover youth and how to support them. In another county, CBO leadership worked with Probation to hold a youth summit illustrating the journey of crossover youth and celebrating their accomplishments.

Challenges & Opportunities

Counties with Probation Departments as the PYJI lead agency noted that while they made progress in youth and family engagement in Year 2, there remains room for growth in the extent to which they bring youth voices to the table in service delivery. Several members of leadership and line staff in these counties highlighted a need for formal mechanisms to gather feedback on successes and challenges in service delivery, and youth and family satisfaction in interaction with service providers. While surveys from youth and caregivers reported some degree of participation in team-based meetings and decision making about programs, responses were mixed as to how much of a say they had in determining their

case plan. A majority of youth in all counties reported that their probation officer listens to them, while fewer youth indicated that judges listen to them when making decisions. Youth focus group participants and PYJI partners from CBOs and Behavioral Health also noted that the extent to which probation officers and social workers engaged youth still largely depends on the individual rather than on any systemic approaches within these institutions.

As in Year 1, some counties mentioned challenges in gaining buy-in from families and identified mistrust of authority figures within these systems as a consistent barrier. Respondents from the youth and caregiver survey further underscored this finding by communicating that their experiences in court and juvenile hall were less supportive than their experiences with out-of-custody probation officers. In some counties, perceptions of judges and juvenile hall were quite negative. Youth focus group participants described ways in which unfair, disproportionately harsh, and impersonal treatment have negatively impacted their experiences in various systems. Many youth reported believing that racism and favoritism have affected how they are treated. Most focus group participants who had spent time in juvenile hall voiced that punishment in juvenile hall felt disproportionate to their behavior and often seemed random and overly punitive. At the same time, in most counties a majority of survey respondents still agreed that judges made fair decisions and listened to their family when making decisions, that if they needed help there was an officer or other staff they could go to, and that they participated in activities or programs while in juvenile hall. Lastly, CBO staff continued to convey that many crossover youth and families struggle to meet basic needs, which can impact their level of participation in school or community-based activities.

Staff Training in PYJI Elements

Training in PYJI elements promoted greater understanding of crossover youth and inspired new approaches to interacting with youth.

Strengths & Progress

All counties implemented staff training as part of PYJI. Most counties shared that in particular, training in vicarious trauma deeply impacted staff's awareness of the ways in which they had internalized interactions with crossover youth and how this could impact their own mental health and wellbeing. Line staff from probation and CBOs described that as a result of this training, they understood the need to implement self-care into their work to prevent burnout. One county planned for a train-the-trainer model, in which TIC knowledge is passed on to new staff, ensuring the sustainability of PYJI elements. In response to staff confusion about the differences between various PYJI elements and when and how to use them, one county decided to revise their training series. This county integrated several PYJI elements into one training series instead of separating the elements into distinct trainings and found the practice effective.

As in Year 1, in counties that held cross-agency trainings, leadership and line staff appreciated having the rare opportunity to interact and learn with their PYJI partner agencies. Line staff acknowledged that the trainings facilitated their ability to “put a face to a name” which ultimately promoted ongoing communication between agencies.

Challenges & Opportunities

While most counties implemented trainings around PYD and TIC, line staff and partner agencies reported that the emphasis was mostly on TIC. Some line staff and PYJI partners explained that they did not feel they had significant understanding of PYD. Some partner agencies discussed a lack of clarity about how their agencies fit in to the training series or PYJI, and all counties wanted more targeted training aligned with their agencies' specific roles in PYJI. For example, leadership from Child Welfare articulated that their position in developing TIC practices would naturally differ from those of Probation, and requested targeted training in how to support their department's specific integration of PYJI elements.

"We should definitely have training in self-care. People are at a loss of what [to] do. How does a department on a day-to-day basis help support people working in the office, knowing what they hear and see with their cases?"

- County line staff

In addition, while most counties reported having a solid understanding of TIC, some identified barriers to incorporating the theoretical knowledge they gained into a service approach for crossover youth. In these cases, CBO line staff said that, while the training provided information about how trauma impacts crossover youth, it would be beneficial to have more training about specific interventions for working with these youth. Most county agencies and PYJI partners also said they would benefit from more support and training related to vicarious trauma and how staff can engage in self-care practices to cope with hearing about the traumatic experiences of the youth and families they serve.

Resources and Sustainability

Counties emphasized that allocating sufficient staffing and staff time is crucial to PYJI sustainability.

Strengths & Progress

In Year 2, most counties were able to hire and/or leverage existing staff resources to support PYJI. Several agencies have hired new staff and contracted with new organizations to support PYJI, including bringing in youth mentors and contracting with new CBOs at school sites. In some counties, Probation

"I really hope Probation sticks with this [PYJI]; I'm afraid they'll lose credibility if this is another thing that goes by the wayside. If it stays around, it will create a tipping point."

-County leadership

Department leadership leveraged staff from partner agencies through other initiatives. For example, in one county Probation leadership receives updates and a detailed history on crossover youth from an in-house Child Welfare Liaison. Another county's Probation Department has housed mental health providers onsite to help with case planning and participate in team-based decision meetings. Counties continued to depend heavily on their designated staff for the coordination of the initiative and management. PYJI partners and county agencies mentioned that the staff designated as

"PYJI Coordinator" became the glue in leveraging relationships, communicating PYJI activities, and soliciting buy-in countywide. Most counties reported that the PYJI Coordinator was also often the

county's "PYJI Champion," and having this staff person, coupled with support from executive leadership, promoted PYJI rollout among staff and partner agencies.

Counties have also considered ways to leverage county, state, and federal resources from other initiatives and activities that align with PYJI. For example, one county's Probation Department reallocated their funds to keep their PYJI Coordinator position funded after the grant period. Another county provided funding for their County Office of Education to expand their initiative and incorporated funding for PYJI staff into their Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

Challenges & Opportunities

While Sierra Health Foundation designed PYJI with the assumption that the initiative would ultimately provide a cost savings to the counties, many counties raised concerns about current costs to their systems. As in Year 1, both management and line staff shared that PYJI required substantial time and effort to be successful. All counties continued to highlight limited staff time as a key barrier to implementing PYJI, specifying that many aspects of the initiative, including additional trainings, data tracking, and team decision making meetings require additional staff time. In one county, Probation and PYJI partner agencies described concern that PYJI was growing larger than anyone anticipated, and there was not enough staff to support the continued growth. Line staff from most counties said that PYJI added additional duties to their caseloads without adding significant resources.

Also continuing from Year 1, counties voiced particular challenges with the amount of staff time required for the coordination and management of the initiative. Several PYJI Coordinators continued to feel that given the amount of work required for PYJI, they should be solely dedicated to the initiative. Additionally, some PYJI Coordinators and line staff suggested there should be an entire PYJI team to support the initiative, as even having one staff person solely dedicated to PYJI was not enough.

Furthermore, leadership from one county voiced concern about relying heavily on individual leadership to drive the initiative and underscored the importance of creating system-level changes that would remain intact regardless of executive leadership. For example, one lead agency attributed many of their PYJI successes, such as personal relationships with crossover youth and rewarding communication with PYJI partner agencies, to the passion and dedication of several key members of leadership and line staff. In one example, when one person left his position, both the lead and partner agencies reported experiencing the absence of the individual's disposition and approach.

"We're talking about undoing generations of normalized practice that have hurt a community. It's not going to happen overnight and over two years. There needs to be more support, resources, and training."

-PYJI partner

For counties implementing pilot or small-scale PYJI programs, staff indicated that while they had made great progress in implementing direct services for their identified crossover youth, they were concerned about whether the program had the resources to expand or sustain past the life of the grant. In a similar vein, CBOs voiced fear that if lead agencies did not plan for sustainability, PYJI progress would essentially

be undermined or replaced by another initiative. Many CBOs and PYJI partner agencies stressed that it would take time to see real system-level changes and indicated their hope that regardless of funding, lead agencies would continue the work.

In larger counties, PYJI Partners and County leadership alike stated that the PYJI funds did not match the level of engagement necessary to reach crossover youth or the amount of staff time needed for successful PYJI implementation. While some agencies reported drawing on funding sources such as Probation Department funds or Title IV-E, many expressed concern about obtaining the necessary resources to finance their contracts with CBOs and partner agencies. Some counties also raised concerns about having the necessary resources to sustain and expand the system-level changes they are implementing under PYJI in the long term.

Perspectives on the Role of Sierra Health Foundation

Overall, lead agency leadership continued to share positive feedback about their experiences working with Sierra Health Foundation. Leadership from some counties emphasized the benefit of the Learning Communities in brainstorming and planning their PYJI activities, while also voicing the need for additional targeted county-specific technical assistance. For example, one interview participant discussed her hope that Sierra Health would provide more support on strategies for a superagency MOU that will allow a successful data sharing platform. Another county described Sierra Health as an accessible “thought partner” that supports their goals and helps them meet their needs. At the same time, one lead agency explained that it would have been helpful to receive more directive guidance about the focus of PYJI and expectations of the Probation Department. Ultimately this county felt pulled in different directions and struggled to communicate effectively with Sierra Health and TA providers, which led to the delay of some of their implementation efforts. A number of PYJI partner agencies also wanted more direction and clarity about their expected roles and responsibilities.

Regarding the TA offered through PYJI, leadership from one county commented that the new TA model was essential to supporting and tracking their agency’s PYJI activities and ultimately helped their grant reporting efforts. In Year 2, all counties reported accessing TA from David Muhammad to develop their Graduated Sanctions and Rewards Matrices. One participant explained that instead of generic templates and memos, it would have also been helpful if Sierra Health had tailored their TA tools to match the needs and implementation plans of each county. This participant added that an intensive readiness assessment would be helpful in creating and modifying TA tools. All counties elaborated on difficulties adhering to the timeline required to produce comprehensive reports and wished they had more information about reporting and evaluation deadlines in advance.

Counties reported mixed utilization of PYJI evaluation products. All counties said they read the Year 1 report, and some utilized the evaluation report to inform their implementation plans. One county used the Year 1 report to facilitate conversations with their contracted CBO providers. One county suggested having Sierra Health or a TA provider review the evaluation findings with executive leadership from the lead agency to drive updates to the implementation plan.

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Alameda County

This summary reviews the implementation of the Positive Youth Justice Initiative (PYJI) in Alameda County during Year 2 of the initiative's implementation phase. The summary includes an overview of the County's implementation and structure; a synthesis of key strengths and challenges based on data from interviews, focus groups, staff surveys, and documentary data; and a description of results from the Year 2 youth and caregiver surveys and youth focus groups.

The Year 2 evaluation data collection included the following activities. The number in parentheses represents the number of respondents who participated in each of the activities. See Appendix B for more detail about the evaluation participants.

- Key Informant Interviews with PYJI Leadership (7)
- Focus Group with Probation Supervisors (7)
- Focus Group with CBO Providers (6)
- Staff Survey (41)
- Youth Survey (27)
- Caregiver Survey (2)
- Documentary Data

Implementation Plan and Structure

Implementation Plan

The **Alameda County Probation Department (ACPD)** is the lead agency for Alameda County's PYJI. The County's PYJI implementation plan sets out a path for broad-based system reform with goals of creating a more youth-centered, gender-responsive, data-driven, and culturally-sensitive system for crossover youth. As such, the County's PYJI encompasses countywide, multi-system activities with a focus on providing training in trauma-informed care (TIC); developing data systems and capacity; expanding the use of wraparound services for crossover youth; changing practices in Probation to increase the use of informal probation and diversion programs for crossover youth; and involving youth and families in screening and planning for out-of-home placement.

Implementation Highlights

During the second year of PYJI implementation, Alameda County:

- Began piloting the New Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI) in the Juvenile Field Services Division and Juvenile Facilities
- Revised Graduated Sanctions and Rewards Matrix and began development of Incentives Grid
- Created a Crossover Youth Fact Sheet and GIS Mapping tool
- Developed a Train-the-Trainer Model for TIC training in summer 2015
- Expanded number of Wraparound slots from 47 to 57 to accommodate crossover youth

Alameda County has defined crossover youth as **youth with an active probation case, or contact with law enforcement through a Notice to Appear (NTA), who have had an active child welfare case or a**

substantiated allegation of abuse or neglect within the last five years. According to their July 2015 data report, in 2014, of the 2,162 youth on probation supervision (including informal supervision), 211 were identified as crossover youth.

Implementation Structure

Alameda County's PYJI is housed under the Juvenile Justice Partnership (JJP), a pre-existing collaborative comprised of executive leadership from 12 County agencies. The initial PYJI planning and implementation structure was led by two co-chairs, the Deputy Chief Probation Officer for Juvenile Services and the Social Services Administration (SSA)-Child Welfare Services Director, and supported by a dedicated PYJI Project Manager within Probation. In Year 2 of implementation, Probation became the sole lead for PYJI. Planning and implementation for PYJI activities is carried out via a committee structure, with PYJI sub-committees responsible for identifying, recommending, and implementing PYJI activities. Sub-committees meet monthly and are currently chaired by mid-level leadership from Probation. Membership includes representatives from PYJI partner organizations and other interested stakeholders.

Alameda County Key Strengths and Progress

- Greater involvement of mid-level and line staff
- Integration of trauma-informed care into culture and concrete practices
- Communication and coordination with partner agencies
- Progress toward improved operational capacity

Alameda County Key Challenges and Opportunities

- Clarity and consistency in roles and responsibilities
- Support and involvement of line staff
- Staff training and confidence in Positive Youth Development (PYD)
- Barriers to operational capacity for service delivery

Key Strengths and Progress in Implementation

Greater Involvement of Mid-Level and Line Staff

In Year 2 of implementation, Probation transitioned the leadership of the county's PYJI workgroups from Division Directors to 12 Probation Unit Supervisors. Probation felt that including more staff at the mid-management level would not only increase participation and buy in from mid-level managers, but also impact the level of involvement and buy-in at the line staff level.

Leadership from PYJI partnering agencies shared in key informant interviews that the shift in workgroup leadership significantly impacted the commitment of the Unit Supervisors and the progress of the PYJI workgroups. One CBO leader shared:

They [co-chairs] are doing such a great job, they've blossomed and have been more engaged, active, and excited. I know they are bringing that to their units directly instead of high leadership.

Furthermore, in focus groups with Probation Unit Supervisors, participants acknowledged that increasing both their probation officers' and their own involvement in PYJI in Year 2 had promoted greater awareness about PYJI, offered leadership opportunities, and supported them in integrating the PYJI philosophy in their work. For example, line-staff and mid-level staff joined executive leadership in a trip to the New York City Department of Probation to learn about their neighborhood-based probation services (Neighborhood Opportunity Networks, or NeONs) to gather insight on how Alameda County might incorporate NeONs in the future. According to interviews with Probation, the trip to New York City inspired a culture shift from viewing NeONs as solely a location to understanding NeON as a philosophical approach embodying PYJI principles.

In an effort to foster greater familiarity with PYJI among line staff, the initiative's Trauma Work Group conducted an interactive meeting with Juvenile Institution Officers, probation officers, clinicians, and community providers in which participants worked together to develop common trauma-informed practices for probation-involved youth in Alameda County. County leadership agreed that this activity was a powerful step toward gaining buy-in from line staff and informing concrete actions related to TIC practices.

Survey responses also indicated widespread awareness of PYJI, with 90% of probation line staff respondents having heard of PYJI and (78%) of CBO line staff having heard of PYJI. Additionally, about 65% of probation respondents offered some level of agreement that leadership in their agency communicates with staff about changes related to PYJI, with 47% reporting that they somewhat agreed, and 18 % reporting they agreed.

Integration of Trauma-Informed Care into Culture and Concrete Practices

Alameda County held a variety of TIC PYJI-supported training activities and invited representatives from Probation, Child Welfare, Behavioral Health, the Public Defender's Office, the Public Health Department, and the Delinquency Prevention Network— Probation's contracted network of youth-serving CBOs. In nearly every focus group and key informant interview, Probation and other County agencies discussed the positive impact of the TIC training. Many participants indicated that these trainings fostered a new awareness of how to interact with crossover youth. Probation articulated that the trainings have informed how they conduct supervision with youth. One Probation leader observed:

It's very difficult to move from a compliance model of supervision to a support service model. We've done a good job in the short period of time doing it.

"We all have the idea that we want youth and families to be successful, but we have come at it from different attitudes. Now we are more on the same page."

– Probation staff

Further, Probation supervisors noted that they are now

working with the District Attorney's office to divert crossover youth cases and that they feel more empowered to advocate for youth to receive social services from Child Welfare. Leadership from Behavioral Health Services reported that after the TIC training they began sending clinical workers to each Juvenile Hall Unit to spend four hours on site every day. Staff survey responses also suggest that Probation and CBOs have a reasonable understanding of TIC practices. The majority of Probation line staff somewhat agreed (36%) or agreed (46%) that they feel well trained to implement TIC practices in their work with crossover youth. CBO line staff reported even higher confidence, with 33% reporting they somewhat agreed and 67% reporting they agreed.

Communication and Coordination with Partner Agencies

According to key informant interviews with County leadership, Probation is including a wider network of youth-serving CBOs and parent voices in both the PYJI work groups and PYJI activities. In key informant interviews and focus groups, CBOs involved in the DPN noted a substantial shift in the degree to which the Probation Department sought and utilized their expertise in working with youth and families.

In key informant interviews, Probation and County leadership made a point of clarifying the distinction between collaboration and communication, explaining that while many of the PYJI partners have a history of collaboration through other initiatives, the level of actual communication has varied among different partners. Leadership reported that PYJI has enhanced the level of communication among agencies with a long history of collaboration, describing that the relationships developed in the PYJI work groups have made it easier for staff from different agencies to communicate about youth. One leader from BHS communicated:

Probation turns to us in a different way as result of the PYJI. It helped build trust that hadn't been there, because we hadn't worked as close on an administrative interagency project that brought us all together in a common goal.

In addition, throughout interviews with leadership and staff, a consistent theme emerged surrounding the impact of concurrent or pre-existing initiatives and practices in the County. It is worth noting that while these initiatives and practices were not directly related to PYJI, staff felt they impacted communication, service capacity, and concrete changes for crossover youth. For example, leadership from Probation explained the addition of a Child Welfare Liaison staff, who is housed in and funded by Probation, has resulted in probation officers receiving a thorough history on crossover youth. According to Probation, Probation works with the Liaison on the Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS) to determine if a youth has an open case in child welfare. If a case is open, then the liaison connects the probation officer to a supervisor on that case.

In addition, leadership from the court explained that the County's participation in the Georgetown University Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) built the foundation for the

"Part of the work we've done is such to make sure that the child's voice is at the center of the table and the child feels empowered. Playing to their strengths leads to better outcomes."

– Court leadership

planning of the Crossover Youth Diversion Program, which provides diversion opportunities for youth involved in a wide range of delinquency of cases. The program is now in the stage of creating a service delivery plan to ensure that Social Services and Probation provide a distinct and tailored approach for crossover youth.

Improving Access to Youth and Family Services

Leadership from PYJI agencies described progress toward service delivery improvements for both youth and family. Through contracts with Project Permanence and Lincoln Child Center, Probation is able to refer crossover youth and their families to case management services. According to Probation, BHS increased the number of slots available for crossover youth to receive wraparound services. Probation is working toward incorporating youth and caregiver voice in their Screening for Out of home Services (SOS) Committee meetings. Leadership from Probation shared:

The great modification we're making to that process [SOS meetings] is integrating the crossover youth and their parent and caregivers. So they can be apprised of the conversation, where youth may be placed, and get a jump start on reentry planning and having a supporting network.

As part of their efforts to improve services for crossover youth and their families, the Probation PYJI team planned to conduct a pilot program specifically for crossover youth and their caregivers in the summer of 2015 to evaluate strengths and barriers of Multidisciplinary Team (MDT). This pilot will inform recommendations to Probation leadership about the use of MDTs moving forward.

A majority of staff survey respondents reported that the county promotes youth and family participation in services. The majority of Probation (90%) and CBO (81%) respondents at least somewhat agreed that the agencies and organizations serving crossover youth promote youth and family participation in service provision. However, fewer CBO respondents stated firm agreement (24%) compared to Probation respondents (40%).

Progress toward Improved Operational Capacity

Data Collection and Use

PYJI leadership and management from agencies including Probation, SSA, and Alameda County Office of Education highlighted the county's progress toward accessing and analyzing data on crossover youth. Since PYJI Implementation, Probation has updated their case management system and petition charging sheets to include a mechanism to indicate whether or not a youth is a crossover youth. According to Probation, the ability to flag crossover youth had increased the Department's ability identify proper resources and make referrals for youth. One County leader shared:

We're further along than we were two years ago, when you look at the things they've implemented to improve the work.... We know who crossover kids are. Our data is amazing.

During key informant interviews, Probation discussed creating a Crossover Youth Alameda County fact sheet and a qualitative comprehensive profile of crossover youth to inform practice and strategies. In progress reports from October 2014-March 2015, Probation reported partnering with the Public Health Department to develop a GIS map of Alameda County youth on probation. According to the report, the GIS map will inform the planning and decision making toward neighborhood-based probation services or pilot NeON.

Case Planning Tools

According to interview participants from the Probation focus group, Probation staff utilized case planning tools and data to inform case planning more frequently than in the past. Probation leadership and line-staff specifically highlighted successfully using the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) Risk Assessment, the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) risk needs assessment, and the Imminent Risk and Reasonable Candidacy Declaration for youth on probation.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

Clarity and Consistency in Roles and Responsibilities

Probation and County agencies observed that decreased involvement of executive level leadership from partner agencies, along with staff turnover at the leadership and line staff levels, led to some confusion about the roles and responsibilities of PYJI partner agencies. First, according to BHS leadership, once PYJI partners realized that PYJI was intended to target youth currently on probation—unlike the Georgetown University’s Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM), which is focused on preventing youth from being dually involved—partner agencies viewed Probation Department as the main focus of the initiative. As a result,

“It isn’t going to be one agency that drives this. Everyone has to work together in a collaborative and respectful way with a common goal of better outcomes for kids; and people who are willing to see and accept that they can do better.”

– County partner

Probation took more of a lead role and partner agencies began to see PYJI as a “Probation initiative.” In addition, leadership from PYJI partner agencies noted that when Unit Supervisors took over the work groups, executive level leadership from partner agencies also sent lower-level staff to replace them and reported overall less involvement in PYJI. In addition, some PYJI partner agencies noted that turnover in their executive leadership impacted the continuity of their agency’s participation in PYJI:

One of our biggest challenges has been lack of continuity [of leadership]. Not that you can expect that everyone can be in the same place year after year, but you have to have continuity [of] commitment. This [PYJI] is worth it. We signed on to do this and it is a priority.

Mid-level Probation staff voiced some frustration about the decreased role of Social Services in PYJI and the impact on communication between the two departments. Similar to Year 1, leadership from Probation observed that while communication is strong at the leadership level, the two departments

continue to disagree over their respective roles and responsibilities in serving youth, as well as over who should have the primary responsibility for particular youth. At the same time, leadership from Social Services described not having a clear understanding of how Child Welfare staff should be concretely involved in PYJI, given that most PYJI youth do not have current involvement in the child welfare system. Leadership from Probation and Social Services also suggested that Social Services had less involvement in Year 2 because they have already reformed their department and completed PYJI equivalent work such as incorporating team decision making (TDM), youth voices, and parent advocates.

Leadership from BHS and ACOE also confirmed that their departments were less involved in PYJI in Year 2. BHS leadership mentioned staff capacity as a barrier to the amount of work needed to implement PYJI. ACOE leadership described that they did not always feel included in PYJI activities, in addition to difficulties balancing the PYJI meeting schedules with competing work priorities.

Support and Involvement of Line Staff

While interviews and focus group findings point to Alameda County's progress toward a culture shift among mid-level and line-level staff, PYJI partners noted that effects of the initial rollout of PYJI still impacted their satisfaction with the initiative. In focus groups with Probation, mid-level staff expressed dissatisfaction with the inclusivity of the initial PYJI rollout and wanted more direct communication about how it would impact their work. Additionally, Probation staff said they felt pressured to put on several trainings, share information with their line staff, and gain their buy-in with unclear direction. Survey respondents also indicated that the rollout of PYJI was generally dissatisfactory. Over a third of Probation respondents disagreed (18%) or somewhat disagreed (18%) that they feel satisfied with how PYJI has been rolled out in their agency, with 35% reporting that they do not know. Director- and manager-level respondents were also not satisfied, with 7% reporting they disagreed and 33% reporting they somewhat disagreed. Half (50%) of line staff reported they did not know their level of satisfaction with PYJI rollout, suggesting that they may still not be aware of how PYJI has been rolled out in their agency.

Staff Training and Confidence in Positive Youth Development (PYD)

Some PYJI leadership reported that while TIC was the primary focus in Year 2, the integration of PYD was a secondary focus (Note: Probation is rolling out PYD training in July). Some focus group participants recommended advanced training on the practical integration of TIC and PYD practices. Staff survey findings suggest that even though PYJI has increased probation line staffs' awareness of TIC, fewer line staff felt trained to provide PYD-informed services with crossover youth. Two thirds of probation line staff somewhat agreed (33%) or agreed (33%) that they feel well trained to provide PYD services. One half of CBO line staff somewhat agreed (33%) or agreed (17%).

Barriers to Operational Capacity for Service Delivery

Staff Turnover during Initiative

As mentioned above, leadership from PYJI agencies noted the staff turnover in leadership during PYJI was a barrier to success. Probation leadership shared that personnel changes in the Probation Department led to confusion on the direction of PYJI. CBOs further underscored that staff turnover in the Probation Department was a particular challenge for youth who, as a result, had several different probation officers in short amount of time. They indicated that youth received varying messages from probation officers, some of whom continue to take a punitive approach to supervision, while other have a trauma informed approach. In key informant interviews, leadership from ACOE discussed that having several directors throughout the initiative had lessened their level of involvement in PYJI and obscured their role in providing support.

“Personnel changes led to confusion of direction of PYJI. If I could do it differently, we would have spent more time preparing the line staff and having them more robustly involved...instead of bringing more partners to the table.”

– County leadership

Data Sharing

Nearly all County and community-based partner staff conveyed that data sharing is still an obstacle and there is work to be done toward creating a formal process for data sharing. CBOs also discussed the need for increased collaboration on streamlining case planning data tools across all PYJI partners and youth-serving organizations. Over a third of probation respondents disagreed (15%) or somewhat disagreed (20%) that the agencies and organization serving crossover youth collect and share data effectively, with 45% reporting they somewhat agreed and 20% reporting they agreed. Similarly, almost a half of CBO participants disagreed (10%) or somewhat disagreed (38%), with 48% indicating they somewhat agreed and only 5% reporting they agreed. Director- and manager-level respondents were less satisfied with the County’s data sharing, with 56% reporting that they disagreed or somewhat disagreed that agencies and organizations collect and share data effectively, compared to 32% of line staff respondents. Forty-four percent of directors and managers indicated that they somewhat agreed with this statement, though none indicated that they agreed.

Youth Experiences

Twenty-seven youth and two caregivers responded to the survey.⁹ Six youth participated in the youth focus group.

Key Findings

- Across youth serving systems, most youth indicated that adults want things to go well for them.
- At the same time, youth indicated limited consistency in the extent to which these adults talk with them about how things they have been through in their life affect them, or about programs that might be helpful to them—questions designed to capture whether adults exemplified a TIC or PYD approach, respectively.
- Overall, youth responses regarding their experiences with law enforcement officials and teachers were mixed, while their responses about experiences with caseworkers were more positive.

Experience with Juvenile Justice System

Youth responses regarding their feelings toward supervisory probation officers, judges, and officers in juvenile hall were mixed. Overall, youth reported having somewhat more positive experiences with supervisory probation officers than with judges and officers in juvenile hall and indicated that supervisory probation officers usually treat them fairly. Survey responses also indicated that probation officers seem to use a team-based approach with youth.

- Three-quarters (75%) of youth said that it is very true or mostly true that their supervisory probation officer wants things to go well for them and treats them fairly, and approximately two-thirds (68%) reported that they can easily get in touch with their probation officer.
- Close to two-thirds (63%) of youth said that it is very true or mostly true that officers in juvenile hall want things to go well for them, but less than half (47%) expressed that it is very true or mostly true that officers in juvenile hall treat them fairly.
- Two-thirds (67%) of youth indicated it is very true or mostly true that the judge made a fair decision in their case, while approximately one out of five respondents (22%) perceived this not to be true at all.
- Under half (44%) of youth indicated that it is very true or mostly true that judges listen to them when making decisions, while a majority (60%) responded this way about whether judges listen to their family when making decisions.
- Nearly all (91%) of youth responded that they always, or sometimes, have a caregiver present when they meet with their probation officer, and close to half (48%) of youth reported having

⁹ This was not a sufficient number of caregivers to include in the analysis; findings only include youth responses.

someone other than their caregiver (case workers or social workers, mentors, doctors, as well as other individuals) at the meetings as well.

While a majority of youth respondents expressed that law enforcement officers want things to go well for them, most also conveyed that law enforcement officials do not consistently talk with them about how the things they have been through in their life affect them, or about programs that might be helpful to them—questions designed to capture whether adults exemplified a TIC or PYD approach, respectively.

- Close to two-thirds (63%) of youth specified that it is not at all true or only a little bit true that their supervisory probation officer talks with them about how what they have been through in their life affects them.
- About half (53%) of youth reported that it is not at all true or only a little bit true that their probation officer tells them about programs that might be helpful to them.
- Almost half (45%) of youth responded that it is not at all true or only a little bit that they had an officer or staff person they could talk to in juvenile hall, and nearly the same proportion (42%) responded this way about whether they discussed a plan with a staff person for when they were released from juvenile hall.

The mixed feelings toward law enforcement officials among survey respondents align with what focus group participants conveyed. Youth focus group participants communicated that experiences with probation officers largely depended on specific officers, rather than a systemic approach to supervision, and that while some officers in juvenile hall treated them well, others gave some youth preferential treatment and even manipulated them by asking them to do unethical things, such as fight other youth, in exchange for preferential treatment.

Experience with Child Welfare System

Youth survey respondents generally demonstrated more positive feelings toward caseworkers compared to adults in other youth serving systems. Among eight respondents with a current caseworker:

- Three-quarters (75%) responded that it is very true or mostly true that their caseworker listens to them and the same proportion reported that that their caseworker wants things to go well for them.
- Three-quarters (75%) expressed that it is very true or mostly true that they can easily get in touch with their social worker and the same proportion reported that that their caseworker tells them about programs that may be helpful to them.
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) responded that it is very true or mostly true that their caseworker talks with them about how what they have been through in their life affects them, and the same proportion reported that their caseworker listens to their family.

Experience with School

Youth commented that adults at school want things to go well for them, but do not necessarily talk with them about their life experiences or programs that might be helpful to them. Of the youth enrolled in school:

- Close to 70% indicated that it is very true or mostly true that there are adults at school that want things to go well for them.
- At the same time, over half (56%) responded that it is not at all true or only a little true that there is an adult at school that talks with them about how what they have been through affects them, and the same proportion reported that there is an adult at school who tells them about programs that may be helpful to them.

Youth in focus groups described that while the school system as a whole does not support youth on probation, there are several teachers and staff members who have worked with them individually to help them graduate and improve their grades.

Experience with Programs

Despite the majority of youth indicating that a judge or probation officer decided which programs they participated in, youth did report some inclusion in the decision-making process.

- Over three-quarters (78%) of youth who participated in programs responded that a judge or probation officer decided what programs they would participate in.
- At the same time, over half (61%) of survey respondents indicated that they had input in the decision, and two-thirds (67%) indicated that their family had input.

Overall, youth responses were mixed regarding the degree to which program participation supported them.

- Two-thirds (67%) of survey respondents indicated that it is very true or mostly true that the programs they are involved with are a good fit, and over half (61%) indicated that it is very true or mostly true that that programs help build skills that will help them in the future.
- On the other hand, less than half (44%) reported that it is very true or mostly true that the programs they are involved with help their relationships with family, or help them become more involved in the community.

Student focus group participants asserted that the support they received at REACH's Soulciety program motivated them and helped guide them moving forward.

Overall Support from Adults

Youth conveyed that they felt somewhat supported by the adults in their life. Most youth expressed that adults in their life respect them, but the extent to which this was true varied.

- Approximately one-quarter (26%) of youth responded a little bit true, 44% responded mostly true, and 26% responded very true to this statement. Another 4% (one youth) responded that they do not feel the adults in their life respect them.
- Over three-quarters (78%) of youth indicated that it is very true or mostly true that if they need help to do better in school they know where to find it.
- Close to half of youth (44%) held that it is not at all true or only a little true that they have people they can talk to when they are feeling sad or lonely.

San Diego County

This summary reviews the implementation of the Positive Youth Justice Initiative (PYJI) in San Diego County during Year 2 of the initiative's implementation phase. The summary includes an overview of the County's implementation and structure; a synthesis of key strengths and challenges based on data from interviews, focus groups, staff surveys, and documentary data; and a description of results from the Year 2 youth and caregiver surveys and youth focus groups.

The Year 2 evaluation data collection included the following activities. The number in parentheses represents the number of respondents who participated in each of the activities. See Appendix B for more detail about the evaluation participants.

- Key Informant Interviews with PYJI Leadership (8)
- Group interviews with PYJI Team (4)
- Key Informant Interviews with Wraparound providers (2)
- Staff Survey (33)
- Youth Survey (35)
- Caregiver Survey (23)
- Documentary Data

Implementation Plan and Structure

Implementation Plan

San Diego County's PYJI is led by the **San Diego County Probation Department** and housed within the Probation Department's Breaking Cycles division, a family-centered division with a team approach to juvenile delinquency prevention and intervention. San Diego County's PYJI is a pilot project that initially focused on neighborhoods within two zip codes with the highest number of youth involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. San Diego experienced unexpected difficulty identifying enough eligible youth to fill the participating probation officers' caseloads. Due to this challenge, San Diego expanded the geographic reach of their pilot to include a total of eight zip codes in Year 2 of implementation. The PYJI pilot program was designed to include four key staff members: two probation officers, a Youth and Family Counselor, and a Juvenile Recovery Specialist ("PYJI team").

Implementation Highlights

During the second year of PYJI implementation, San Diego County:

- Expanded the PYJI pilot program to serve a total of 8 zip codes
- Provided positive youth development (PYD) training to 23 staff
- Drafted the Incentives and Graduated Responses Matrix
- Continued to facilitate Family Involvement Team (FIT) meetings with the youth and families participating in the pilot program
- Updated probation templates for reporting to court to align with PYJI elements
- Attended Southeast Collaborative Meetings
- Conducted PYJI presentations at Breaking Cycles Program Manager's meeting, California Mental Health Council
- Finalized contract with Children's Initiative to create Customer Satisfaction Surveys and partner with school districts and workforce development programs

Each probation officer has their caseload limited to 25 youth, allowing a maximum of 50 youth to participate in the program at any one time. The pilot is intended to pave the way for countywide implementation in the future. San Diego's PYJI approach also includes a countywide training component for providers that work with crossover youth.

San Diego County's PYJI program was designed to complement the County's existing Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM); while CYPM youth have an active child welfare case (dual status), the County has defined PYJI youth as **youth in the probation system who have had prior contact with child welfare and are no longer receiving active services through a Child Welfare caseworker**. The Probation Department is currently developing a system to track the number of crossover youth based on its PYJI definition; currently, only those youth who are assigned to the PYJI pilot program are identified in the Probation data system. According to the Department's July 2015 data report, of the 4,712 youth on probation supervision in 2014, 41 participated in the PYJI pilot program.

Implementation Structure

The PYJI Leadership Team, which draws on existing structures built under the CYPM, is comprised of San Diego County Probation, Child Welfare Services (CWS), Behavioral Health Services (BHS), the Public Defender's Office, the District Attorney's Office, and representatives from three community-based organizations (CBOs). The leadership team convenes at the bi-monthly CYPM Guiding Coalition Workgroup meeting. The County established a subcommittee of the PYJI leadership team to develop and establish TIC training for staff. A team of Probation leadership meets weekly to discuss implementation progress and challenges, with participation from other members of the PYJI leadership team on an as needed basis.

San Diego County Key Strengths and Progress

- Collaboration with existing and new partners
- Integration of PYJI elements in pilot program
- Progress toward broader culture change

San Diego County Key Challenges and Opportunities

- Staff skills and training
- Collaboration within and beyond PYJI pilot
- Sustainability and expansion of PYJI model

Key Strengths and Progress in Implementation

Collaboration with Existing and New Partners

Similar to the Year 1 evaluation, in Year 2 County leadership described that the County has benefited from longstanding collaboration and philosophical alignment among leadership from County agencies, particularly Probation and Child Welfare Services. Leadership also continued to underscore the importance of having PYJI build upon the collaboration and team-based approach established through CYPM. Leadership from participating County agencies, PYJI team members, and staff survey respondents emphasized that interagency collaboration is a key strength of their County.

County leadership, PYJI team members, and staff survey respondents observed that while collaboration was already strong, PYJI has strengthened the collaborative relationships between the PYJI partner agencies. For example, County leadership and the PYJI team emphasized that including multiple PYJI partners in the Probation Department's TIC trainings supported relationship building and increased philosophical alignment between the different agencies and organizations serving crossover and PYJI youth. County leadership also described how regular collaborative meetings and PYJI presentations have helped partner agency leadership remain integrated in PYJI even though they are not involved in the daily implementation of the pilot program.

In order to reinforce interagency relationships and data sharing, Probation leadership also reported that the Department was considering developing an MOU between Probation and their educational and justice partners, including Health and Human Services, Public Defender, and District Attorney. In addition, the Probation Department recently finalized a contract with the Children's Initiative to assist Probation in establishing partnerships with workforce development programs and the school districts in the PYJI service area to increase awareness of crossover youth and identify additional services to support them.

All staff survey respondents in Year 2 reported that they at least somewhat agreed that the agencies and organizations serving crossover youth in San Diego collaborate effectively. Over half (53%) of probation respondents reported they agreed that the agencies and organizations collaborate effectively with 47% reporting they somewhat agreed. Fewer respondents from other PYJI partner agencies and CBOs reported they agreed (42% and 33% respectively), with most reporting they somewhat agreed (58% and 67% respectively).

Integration of PYJI Elements in Pilot Program

County leadership and PYJI team members noted several ways in which the San Diego PYJI pilot program offers a model for how probation supervision can better address the needs of youth who have experienced trauma due to circumstances in their family or neighborhood or their past involvement with child welfare. Thus far, three PYJI youth have successfully terminated probation. While the pilot program is still new, County leadership and the PYJI team reported that they believe participating in the program has benefited youth and their families and will help prevent youth from returning to the criminal justice system.

The pilot program integrates multiple components of PYJI in its service delivery, including a team-based approach, TIC and PYD practices, wraparound services, and youth- and family-centered care. County leadership and PYJI team members discussed how each of these components contributes to the success of the pilot program.

Team-Based Approach and Wraparound Services

County leadership and the PYJI team described that the members of the PYJI team and contracted wraparound providers take a team-based approach with the youth and families involved in PYJI. As part of this model, the youth's probation officer, the Juvenile Recovery Specialist, the Youth and Family Counselor, and any wraparound providers come together to developing a treatment plan and participate in Family Involvement Team (FIT) meetings with youth and their families. If a youth is receiving services from a wraparound provider, a Wraparound Care Coordinator works with the PYJI team to help coordinate the treatment plan. Probation leadership noted that Probation has expanded wraparound slots in Year 2 and plans to expand wrap slots further in Fiscal Year 2015-16.

"We get involved with what's going on with them at school...we actually go to the meeting and we integrate what's going on with the school and our case plan."

- Probation officer

Probation leadership and PYJI team members emphasized that the team-based approach is possible because the PYJI probation officers have smaller caseloads, which allows them to provide more attention to each youth and family and to engage in meetings with youths' school and wraparound providers. Smaller caseloads also enable the team to be more creative in supporting youth. For example, the Juvenile Recovery Specialist and Youth and Family Counselor started facilitating mock job interviews with youth to support them in accessing employment. Probation leadership and line staff commented:

I feel it works out well because you get three perspectives on how to help the youth. Having a united front for the youth, so they can see there are a whole bunch of different people here to help me.

We aren't just passing kids off to therapy or the wrap services team...we're still actively involved with the case manager on the wrap services and finding out how is the family dealing with these situations and are we giving them enough opportunities and skills to learn new ways of doing things.

Focus on Trauma-Informed Care

PYJI team members emphasized that approaching youth and families from a trauma-informed care (TIC) framework—as well as utilizing motivational interviewing and Integrative Behavioral Intervention Strategies (IBIS), approaches the Probation Department adopted prior to PYJI—shifts the focus from “What did you do wrong?” to “What happened to you?” and allows for a more empathetic response to youths' behavior. One probation officer shared:

*When we go out with them it's not just like, 'Hey how are you doing? You're fine? Okay.'
Now we are sitting down with them and talking to them and asking how school is going
and how are things going on at home and what are they doing during school break.*

The PYJI team also discussed how the implementation of a family support group extends the TIC approach by addressing family members' need for support and guidance:

[The group] is not only something for families to come and figure out these are the things that are going on with my child, but [also] gaining support from other parents that are going through some of the same situations to help them negotiate and navigate through this probation process.

PYD and Youth and Family Involvement

PYJI team members pointed to building relationships with youth and their families through the services described above is an important part of their role in supporting youth. PYJI team members also noted that the family services offered through the pilot program also have the potential to support a youth's siblings, who may also have a history of involvement with the child welfare or juvenile justice system. PYJI team members described instances where they had the opportunity to work with a youth who had family members, typically a caregiver or sibling, with previous criminal justice interaction. PYJI team members explained how forging these relationships can be challenging, but that the PYJI model allows the family to have a different and more positive experience with these systems.

"It is showing that interest and showing that we actually care and that's the big piece, you are showing these youth that you care about them and you want them to do better and make changes."

- Probation officer

Wraparound providers proactively involve youth and families by assigning family and youth partners to the PYJI caseload. Their role is to provide emotional support and case management, assist families and youth in out of home placement when this arises, and support youth and families in having a voice in their treatment plan. Probation leadership and PYJI team members also explained that the program has provided youth with options for meeting court requirements that are more individualized and less expensive for the youth, such as completing an anti-theft or anger management curriculum with their therapist over the course of several sessions rather than attending a one-day training. Probation leadership also tasked the Children's Initiative with creating entry and exit Customer Satisfaction Surveys to administer to the youth and families participating in the pilot program.

Progress toward Broader Culture Change

County-Wide Training and Policies and Procedures

In addition to implementing the PYJI pilot program, the Probation Department has worked to integrate the PYJI philosophy and approach across the Department and other agencies by providing TIC training to its staff and partners. In Year 2, the Probation Department provided TIC training to 434 staff, mostly

from its Juvenile, Adult, and Institutions division as well as its community partners. In January, the department trained 23 staff, including the PYJI pilot program team, in PYD. Probation is considering implementing a train-the-trainer approach to build staff capacity in PYD principles. The PYJI team has also participated in webinars on topics relevant to their role in the program.

County leadership and PYJI team members reported that the TIC trainings have increased their awareness of the trauma and mental health issues experienced by the individuals involved in the justice system and have helped the juvenile justice system partners perceive youth differently. (Very few probation officers not directly involved with the PYJI pilot program participated in the evaluation, so it is only possible to report County leadership and partners' perspectives on these changes.) One wraparound provider observed that as a department, *"The Probation Department has been a lot more collaborative with our wraparound program recently,"* noting greater participation from probation officers in service coordination and team-based meetings. Leadership from a PYJI partner agency shared:

I think the introduction of TIC has really opened people's eyes in the court...and the justice system to a different way of looking at the behaviors of youth, and there really is a big focus on diversion with our youth. [The training has] broadened everyone's thoughts of when someone needs to be in the juvenile justice system.

Staff surveys (which included several non-PYJI probation officers) also corroborated that San Diego has begun to establish buy-in for PYJI among broader Probation staff and other County and CBO partners. All staff survey respondents at least somewhat agreed that PYJI has the potential to advance juvenile justice system policy and practice. The majority of Probation respondents reported that they somewhat agreed (50%) or agreed (33%) that the changes due to PYJI will personally benefit them in their work, with 17% indicating that they did not know if the changes would benefit them. All respondents from other PYJI partner agencies somewhat agreed (30%) or agreed (70%) that PYJI would personally benefit them. Likewise, most CBO respondents somewhat agreed (17%) or agreed (67%), with 17% reporting they did not know.

In Year 2, Probation Department also made progress in developing an Incentives and Graduated Response Matrix that its plans to implement throughout its Juvenile Division. The Probation Department also built its community resource directory into its case management system, allowing for a more streamlined referral process that ensures probation officers refer youth to the intended programs and helps hold contracted agencies accountable. Apart from but related to PYJI, Probation leadership explained that the Probation Department has also helped to support culture change through its performance appraisal process, which includes opportunities for supervisors to monitor interactions between deputy probation officers and the youth on their caseloads.

County leadership were generally positive about the data sharing occurring between Probation, Health and Human Services, and the other PYJI partner agencies. County leadership and PYJI team members affirmed that they were able to access the data relevant to their roles and agency, whether it be for administrative planning or case management. All Probation survey respondents somewhat agreed (47%) or agreed (53%) that the agencies and organizations serving crossover youth in San Diego collect and

share data effectively. Survey respondents from CBOs and County agencies beyond Probation were less positive about the County's current data sharing, but still most respondents reported that they at least somewhat agreed. Over half (58%) of respondents from other agencies somewhat agreed (58%), with 33% indicating they agreed (33%) and 8% indicating they somewhat disagreed. Only 17% of CBO respondents reported they agreed, with 83% reporting they somewhat agreed.

Expansion of PYJI Model beyond Pilot Area

County leadership, PYJI team members, and staff survey respondents emphasized that they would like to see the PYJI pilot program model expanded throughout the county. Probation leadership and PYJI team members identified the team-based approach as a key element that could be incorporated into general supervision. County leadership generally voiced agreement that San Diego is "well positioned" to promote the sustainability and expansion of the PYJI pilot program. San Diego also has firm support for juvenile justice reform from the Board of Supervisors, particularly Supervisor Ron Roberts who oversees the district that includes the PYJI pilot program zip codes.

In addition to San Diego's history of juvenile justice and child welfare reform efforts, the County is currently engaged in multiple new initiatives that complement and support its PYJI goals, including Title IV funding that will increase the wraparound service slots available, and a State of California Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction (MIOCR) grant that will support the administration of the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAISY) to assess the behavioral health needs of all youth entering the system. Probation is also working to establish an in-custody Juvenile Justice Mental Health Specialty Unit to better support youth with intensive mental health needs, and the County is partnering with a community partner to establish intensive mental health services in the community. Leadership also emphasized that San Diego has invested in studying decision points in the system that contribute to racial/ethnic disparities and implemented programs to address these failings, such as a Cultural Broker Program that provides support to African American families involved in the child welfare system by acting as a "translator" between families and their social worker.

Challenges and Opportunities

Staff Skills and Training

While County leadership and PYJI team members noted that the TIC and PYD trainings facilitated by the Probation Department have increased awareness of the trauma and mental health issues experienced by many youth on probation, the PYJI team reported that additional training is needed to support the implementation of TIC and PYD practices in their daily work with crossover youth. PYJI team members discussed the need for support and training related to vicarious trauma and how staff can engage in self-care practices to cope with hearing about the traumatic experiences of the youth and families they serve:

We should definitely have training in self-care. People are at a loss of what [to] do. How does a department on a day-to-day basis help support people working in the office, knowing what they hear and see with their cases?

Leadership connected to the Court system described the need for TIC training that is specific to law enforcement and the court that would provide police officers, lawyers, and judges with an understanding of how their language and actions can impact youth along with strategies for utilizing TIC practices in their specific roles. PYJI team members also voiced a need for additional trainings on PYD that focus on practical strategies that staff can utilize to implement PYD: *“What are the specific practical steps, other than the verbal encouragement?”* PYJI team members also noted that they have requested training on wraparound service delivery.

“What are the specific practical steps, other than the verbal encouragement?”

- Probation officer

Staff survey responses also showed while all Probation line staff agreed that they feel well trained to implement TIC practices in their work with crossover youth, the majority reported that they somewhat agreed (63%) rather than agreed (38%). Similarly, half of Probation line staff reported that they somewhat agreed (50%) that they feel well trained to provide PYD-informed services, with 38% indicating that they agreed and 13% indicating that they somewhat disagreed. Compared

to Probation staff, staff from other County agencies offered lower levels of agreement that they felt well trained to support crossover youth.

Collaboration within and beyond PYJI Pilot

Challenges due to Staffing Changes

County leadership and PYJI team members addressed the impact of staffing changes early in the implementation period, as Probation staff in three key leadership positions retired. County leadership acknowledged that this staff turnover impacted the rate of progress the County was able to make toward its PYJI goals, citing the loss of institutional knowledge and the time needed to train and onboard new staff to their roles within PYJI as factors impacting implementation. County leadership attributed the success of the PYJI pilot program despite the leadership turnover to the dedication, commitment, and stability of the PYJI team. PYJI team members as well as County leadership believed that now that there is stable staffing, the department is in a better position to move the initiative forward:

The probation officers have stayed constant. [They are] highly committed to this approach and model and motivated, as well as their team members. That is one way we’ve been able to withstand the turnover. [I’m] not saying it hasn’t slowed us down, because it has in some areas, but staff involved haven’t waived in their commitment.

At the same time, PYJI team members recalled at times feeling like “a boat on our own,” and conveyed that they would have benefited from greater “communication and direction from leadership” related to the procedures they were supposed to follow under the PYJI pilot program, such as how to respond to probation violations and provide incentives within the PYJI framework. PYJI team members also expressed anxiety regarding the future of the PYJI pilot program after PYJI Phase I ends in October.

Defining Roles on Executive Team

While PYJI leadership generally believed that CYPM, PYJI, and other collaborative efforts have helped County agencies move toward a more united philosophy around justice-involved youth, some County leadership identified continued challenges in defining the roles of the different agencies involved in PYJI. One member of PYJI leadership explained that defining each agency's role is important to prevent *"problems due to lack of understanding and misunderstanding of some statutory obligations and mission mandates."* Leadership from Health and Human Services felt some confusion regarding the role of Child Welfare Services in PYJI implementation, given that PYJI youth are not currently active in the child welfare system. While Child Welfare Services remains involved as a PYJI partner agency through attending meetings and participating in planning and strategizing, leadership noted that it remains unclear in what capacity, if at all, social workers in the child welfare system should be involved in the pilot program implementation:

One of the things that wasn't clear to me last year that isn't clear this year...is you have a youth that's active to probation that has had a child welfare experience or placement, but is not currently involved with us, so when we come to the table to support, what are we there to say? Are we looking historically at their last case plan? Their record with us? Do we interject based on what their experience has been? That part hasn't been 100% clear to me.

Role of and Coordination with Wraparound Providers

Among the PYJI team, staff generally felt that they have been able to effectively define and communicate each team member's role in supporting the youth and their family. However, they discussed some challenges related to defining the role of the wraparound providers in relation to the roles of the probation officer, Juvenile Recovery Specialist, and Youth and Family Counselor. One wraparound provider explained that additional coordination would benefit youth who are receiving services from multiple providers:

[We're] trying to make more distinction between the probation officer and wraparound providers and everyone else involved. It sort of seems that the [PYJI] youth I worked with had a lot of different people. He had a therapist through PYJI, a substance abuse person through PYJI, a probation officer, and then there was us with our wrap team, which was me and a skills trainer he worked with. [There are] a lot of moving parts, and coordinating better would have probably made a little more sense for him.

County-Wide Coordination beyond Pilot Program

PYJI team members, wraparound providers, and staff survey respondents reported that team-based case planning and collaboration are less consistent outside of the PYJI pilot program. One wraparound provider explained that the level of involvement of probation officers can vary greatly and that communication "gets more sporadic" when additional organizations beyond probation are involved. PYJI team members and wraparound providers emphasized that outside of PYJI, probation officers' caseloads

can limit their ability to participate in multidisciplinary team meetings and engage collaboratively with line staff from other agencies, such as child welfare, wrap providers, and schools. One wraparound provider also noted that in some situations youth are not assigned to a specific probation officer, but are rather supervised by whichever probation officer is available at a particular time, which hinders a coordinated approach to services.

“The [PYJI] youth I worked with had a lot of different people.... [There are] a lot of moving parts, and coordinating better would have probably made a little more sense for him.

– CBO line staff

PYJI team members and wraparound providers noted that communication about a youth’s case may not always involve all of the parties who could provide beneficial input. They noted areas where some partners were missing from the table, as well as other instances of miscommunication, which they felt ultimately resulted in youths’ needs not being met. PYJI team members and wraparound providers explained:

It is obvious there is collaboration among various agencies. As time goes on, the CYPM, PYJI is improving. Yet there are also occasions where the collaboration is limited to only a couple of folks rather than a team of individuals who have information about a youth... such as CASA, teacher/school and others who have had interactions with the youth beyond a social worker and probation officer.

There is sometimes miscommunication between departments. Some do more and some less than others. Depending on the need of youth, for example, sometimes youth are having some mental health issues that need to be addressed, but that [is] not given the priority because of the situation or funding or other issues.

Data Collection, Sharing, and Use

Interviews with Probation leadership and PYJI team members suggested that while data sharing is occurring, a formal approach to multi-system data sharing, particularly at the case management level, has not been established. PYJI team members explained that while Probation staff involved in CYPM have direct access to Child Welfare’s case management system, PYJI staff do not. Instead, PYJI staff receive a brief description of a youth’s history with Child Welfare Services (CWS), but do not receive information regarding the outcome of CWS investigations or the extent and type of contact youth had with the child welfare system. PYJI team members specified that having this information would be beneficial because they could “understand what kind of services and tools that we are helping them gain to overcome the trauma and history that probably led them to that criminal behavior.” They also explained that they do not want to put youth in the position to recount their own history.

At the time of the implementation plan, TA providers recommended that the County develop a mechanism to identify and track the number of crossover youth in the juvenile justice system. While Probation created fields in the Probation Case management System (PCMS) to flag whether youth are participating in the PYJI or CYPM programs, the department has not established a mechanism to track youth who are eligible, but not currently enrolled in the PYJI program. Probation leadership noted that

the County has also experienced delays incorporating its new risk assessment tool that was developed by the San Diego Risk and Resiliency Committee into its PCMS due to limited IT staffing capacity.

Sustainability and Expansion of PYJI Model

While San Diego has a number of ongoing and new efforts that lay a foundation for expanding PYJI, one challenge to expansion that County leadership identified is how to effectively communicate about PYJI more broadly to ensure all line staff, as well as leadership, are aware and familiar with the PYJI program and principles. Interviews with leadership, the PYJI team, and wraparound providers suggested that line staff, including wraparound providers and child welfare case workers, only become aware of PYJI through their interactions with the PYJI team and that their understanding can be superficial. Along these lines, a higher percent of director- and manager-level respondents (64%) than line staff respondents (46%) reported that they agreed that PYJI has the potential to advance juvenile justice system policy and practice. Even more pronounced, 86% of director- and manager-level respondents agreed that PYJI brings needed changes to their county, compared to 39% of line staff.

Interview participants also observed gaps in the services available to youth on probation. County leadership, PYJI team members, wraparound providers, and staff survey respondents stated that there are limited resources available to address the transportation, food, housing, mental health, job training, recreational and sports opportunities, and mentorship needs of youth and their families:

There is a big gap there with the 17/18/19 year old population. [They] leave their parents' home, but don't necessarily have a good place to go to get on their feet. [We need more] programs to provide the skills they need to be successful adults.

Youth and Caregiver Experiences

Thirty-five youth and 23 caregivers responded to the survey. Nine youth participated in the youth focus group.

Key Findings

- Across youth serving systems, youth and caregivers generally affirmed that the staff with whom they interact want things to go well for youth.
- However, their responses indicate minimal consistency across and within systems in how these adults treat and approach youth.
- Across all areas, youth tended to share more negative feedback in focus groups than in the youth surveys, and youth communicated more negative feelings than caregivers.

Experience with Juvenile Justice System

Youth and caregivers shared mixed experiences with the juvenile justice system, expressing more positive experiences with supervisory probation officers compared to judges and probation officers in

juvenile hall. While many youth and caregivers indicated that staff in the juvenile justice system want things to go well for youth, over one-third also perceived their treatment to be unfair or inconsistent.

The majority of survey respondents indicated that supervisory probation officers were supportive and used a team-based approach.

- Most youth (80%) and caregivers (90%) responded that it is very true or mostly true that their/their child's probation officer wants things to go well for them/their child.
- Almost all youth (94%) and caregivers (95%) indicated that their/their child's probation officer tells them/their child about programs that might be helpful to them—a question designed to capture whether staff exemplified a PYD approach.
- Over three-quarters of youth (78%) and caregivers (86%) suggested that it is very true or mostly true that probation officers talk with them/their child about how what they have been through affects them—a question designed to capture whether staff exemplified a TIC approach.
- Almost all youth (97%) and caregivers (91%) reported always or sometimes having a caregiver present when they/their child meet with their probation officer, and over half of youth (55%) and caregivers (62%) reported that they always or sometimes have someone other than themselves (mentors, therapists, social workers, and teachers) at probation meetings.

Survey respondents conveyed that their experiences in court and juvenile hall were less supportive than experiences with out-of-custody probation officers, although a majority still conveyed positive responses.

- Over three-quarters of youth (76%) and caregivers (86%) indicated that it is very true or mostly true that the decision the judge made on their/their child's case was fair.
- More than half of youth (64%) and 86% of caregivers reported that it is very true or mostly true that the judge listens to them/their child when making decisions.
- Over three-quarters of youth (76%) and caregivers (80%) reported that it is very true or mostly true that the judge listens to their family when making decisions.
- Approximately three-quarters of youth (76%) who had been in juvenile hall conveyed that it is mostly true or somewhat true that officers in juvenile hall want them to succeed, and over half (62%) conveyed the same about having talked with an officer about a plan for when they got out. Over eighty percent of youth (86%) also indicated that it is very true or mostly true that they had an officer or other staff person they could go to in juvenile hall.

Overall, caregivers' survey responses echoed youth responses, but were somewhat more positive. For instance, a higher percentage of caregivers stated that probation officers want things to go well for their child, that the decision the judge made on their child's case was fair, and that officers talked to their child about a plan for when they got out of juvenile hall.

In contrast to survey responses, youth perceptions in the December 2014 youth focus group were predominantly negative. Focus group participants shared mostly negative experiences with probation

officers, noting that they do not have significant relationships with their probation officers and that their probation officers do not ask for their input when making decisions (although focus group participants were asked to speak about their current experience with probation, it is possible that some reflected on past experiences with probation officers, rather than their PYJI probation officers). Youth also observed that judges and juvenile hall staff tend to treat youth in an unfair and punitive manner.

Experience with School

Youth and caregivers reported mixed experiences as well as limited consistency in how teachers and adults at school respond to youth, and focus group participants expressed some negative experiences. While many youth and caregivers indicated that adults at school want things to go well for youth, they less frequently reported that adults at school actively support youth by talking with them about their life or programs they might join.

- Over half of youth (58%) and over three-quarters of caregivers (86%) responded that it is very true or mostly true that there are teachers or other adults at school that want things to go well for them/their child.
- Approximately half of youth (49%) and one-quarter of caregivers (24%) indicated that it is not at all true or only a little true that a teacher or another adult talks with them about how their/their child's life experiences have affected them.
- More than one-third of youth (39%) and nearly one-third of caregivers (29%) expressed that it is not at all true or only a little true that a teacher or another adult at school informs them of programs that may help them.

In focus groups, students' responses about their experiences with teachers were also mixed. On the one hand, some student focus group participants reported that many teachers were aware of their probation status and treated them differently as a result, including calling or threatening to call their probation officers rather than a parent or caregiver when they got in trouble. On the other hand, some participants noted that some of their teachers encourage them to do well in school and to pursue college.

Experience with Programs

Youth and caregivers indicated some inclusion in decision making about the programs youth participate in, this despite the majority conveying that a judge or their (their child's) probation officer decided which programs they (their child) would participate in.

- Almost all program participants (97%) and 80% of caregivers indicated that a judge or their/their child's probation officers decided which programs youth participated in.

These findings align with those from focus groups where youth reported that they did not have much choice in the programs they participated in.

- At the same time, over half of youth (56%) and 40% of caregivers said that youth helped decide what programs they would participate in, and nearly two-thirds of youth (61%) and caregivers (65%) said that caregivers helped decide what programs youth would participate in.

Responses were mixed regarding the extent to which programs had been helpful, although ultimately a majority of youth noted that program services helped them. Among youth participating in programs:

- Nearly three-quarters (70%) suggested that it is very true or mostly true that the programs they are (or were) involved with are a good fit.
- Two-thirds (67%) indicated that it is very true or mostly true that the programs that they are (or were) involved with help them build skills for the future.
- Over half (60%) suggested that it is very true or mostly true that the programs they are (or were) involved with help them do better in school and improve their relationships with family.
- Half (50%) said that it is very true or mostly true that program services helped them to become more involved in the community.

This contradicted some of what youth shared in focus groups, where some youth explained that their programs were not tailored to their offenses or needs. Caregivers conveyed similar overall sentiments to youth, although their responses indicated that they viewed program services as somewhat more beneficial than what youth perceived them to be. For instance, almost all caregivers responded that it is mostly true or very true that their child has access to programs and services that help him/her to be emotionally healthy (95%) and to do well in school (90%).

Overall Support from Adults

Overall youth stated that they felt supported and respected by the adults in their life, though the extent to which they felt respected varied. In regard to whether the adults in their life respect them:

- Nearly one-quarter (21%) responded a little bit true, 41% responded mostly true, and 38% responded very true.
- Almost all youth (94%) agreed it is mostly true or very true that if they need help in school they know where to find it.
- Over three-quarters youth (82%) indicated that it is mostly true or very true that when they are feeling sad or lonely there are people they can talk to.

San Joaquin County

This summary reviews the implementation of the Positive Youth Justice Initiative (PYJI) in San Joaquin County during Year 2 of the initiative's implementation phase. The summary includes an overview of the County's implementation and structure; a synthesis of key strengths and challenges based on data from interviews, focus groups, staff surveys, and documentary data; and a description of results from the Year 2 youth and caregiver surveys and youth focus groups.

The Year 2 evaluation data collection included the following activities. The number in parentheses represents the number of respondents who participated in each of the activities. See Appendix B for more detail about the evaluation participants.

- Key Informant Interviews with PYJI Leadership (8)
- Focus Group with County Line Staff (10)
- Focus Group with CBO Leadership and Line Staff (6)
- Staff Survey (110)
- Youth Survey (61)
- Caregiver Survey (22)
- Documentary Data

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 2015 data report, in 2014, of the 1,059 youth on probation supervision (including informal supervision), 677 were identified as crossover youth.

In its implementation plan San Joaquin County discussed a number of key activities to enhance organizational capacity, including standardizing

Implementation Highlights

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

- Initiated Youth Development Groups at 3 partnering community- based organizations
- Created quarterly PYJI orientations for crossover youth and families that are referred to the Youth Development Groups
- Initiated monthly meetings between PYJI leadership from Probation and community-based organizations
- Updated Probation policies and procedures to include PYJI elements
- Conducted trainings on PYD and TIC for probation and partnering agencies
- Implemented the Girls Health Screen tool
- Created a PYJI Interagency agreement with 17 agencies serving crossover youth
- PYJI Learning Communities hosted by Probation Department

tracking of crossover youth in County agency databases, implementing multi-agency staff 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. In Year 2, a key component of the County's implementation plan was to initiate Positive Youth Development Groups—supportive groups for crossover youth facilitated by the Probation Department's contracted community-based organizations (CBOs).

Implementation Structure

San Joaquin County's PYJI Executive Steering Committee is comprised 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 CBOs. The Steering Committee meets monthly and has held several subcommittee meetings related to particular components of the County's PYJI plan. The implementation process is facilitated by an external consultant and supported by a Management Analyst within Probation.

San Joaquin County Key Strengths and Progress

- Continued leadership support and collaboration
- Increased inclusion of and support from line staff
- Collaborative approach to achieve concrete changes in practice
- Formalization of PYJI elements in policies and procedures

San Joaquin County Key Challenges and Opportunities

- Line staff buy-in and skills
- Involvement of county partner agencies
- Communications and data sharing among partners
- Sustainability and resources for expansion

Key Strengths and Progress in Implementation

Continued Leadership Support and Collaboration

Key informant interviews with County agency leadership indicated that as in Year 1, San Joaquin County benefited from its pre-existing collaborative relationships. Leadership from County and community-based partners observed that the consistency in leadership throughout the initiative, coupled with longstanding consistency in leadership in Probation, Child Protective Services, and Wraparound Services contributed to the success and partnership of agencies in Year 2 of implementation.

In May 2015, Probation created a PYJI interagency agreement with representatives from Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health, Employment and Economic Development, Health Care Services (Child Welfare), District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, County Office of Education, Stockton Unified School District, Public Health Services, Chamber of Commerce, Superior Court, Wraparound Service Providers, and the three partnering PYJI CBOs. In this agreement, the partners agreed to be active members of the Executive Steering Committee, commit to including youth voice in implementation activities, collect and data related to PYJI services, and maintain confidentiality of information shared through PYJI.

As an example of collaboration supporting Year 2 implementation, conversations with the Probation Chief, leadership from CPS, and community-based partners surfaced a need for greater family support of crossover youth. The departments and CBOs worked together to create a Parent Partner position whose role is to contact families of children attending the Youth Development Groups and conduct a needs assessment of necessary resources and support. Leadership from the PYJI wraparound service provider, Victor Community Services, allocated funding for a Parent Partner position fully dedicated to PYJI.

Increased Inclusion of and Support from Line Staff

Probation leadership acknowledged that increasing buy-in for PYJI among line staff was one of several priorities in Year 2, and both leadership and line staff highlighted that the County had made progress in this area. Leadership from multiple County and community-based agencies reported experiencing a shift in how Probation staff viewed and interacted with youth, observing that probation officers were starting to move from the punitive lens of, "What did you do?" to the trauma-informed care (TIC) lens of "What happened to you?" Leadership from Behavioral Health Services shared:

What I see is that stigma is getting reduced. It is a shift with Probation certainly—I can see that. It is nice to see professionals' eyes light up when they talk about youth. That is different than what's happened in the past; it's like they are part of it [stigma reduction] and they believe they are making a difference—and they are.

County agency leadership and community-based partners recalled that direct involvement from top leadership to support PYJI, including consistent participation of the Chief of Probation in PYJI Executive Steering Committee meetings; regular interfacing with CBOs; and PYJI community events helped to foster buy-in and support from line staff and partner agencies. CBO leadership reported that because Probation leadership embodied a consumer and family friendly philosophy, PYJI elements had started to trickle down to line staff.

In addition to the role of high-level leadership support in fostering culture change, Probation leadership shared their belief that when mid-level and line staff had more opportunities for involvement in decision making meetings and activities for PYJI, they became more invested in their work. In order to facilitate these opportunities for involvement, Probation initiated a supervisor symposium for

"It is nice to see professionals' eyes light up when they talk about youth. That is different than what's happened in the past."

- County leadership

first-level supervisors, in which supervisors had the opportunity to brainstorm ways to better serve crossover youth. These meetings led to the creation of a release form with the Office of Education to facilitate more expeditious school re-enrollment and plans for a library at the juvenile detention facility in the summer. Probation line staff were also invited to attend the Executive Steering Committee meetings that had been previously reserved for leadership.

Survey findings lend support to findings that staff from Probation and CBOs believe PYJI is an important initiative that will positively impact the juvenile justice system and their own work within it. Over three-quarters of survey respondents from probation reported that they somewhat agreed (23%) or agreed (54%) that PYJI has the potential to advance juvenile justice system policy and practice. Nearly all (94%) CBO staff agreed that PYJI has the potential to advance juvenile justice system policy and practice. In addition, Probation and CBO staff who participated in the staff survey largely indicated that they were satisfied with how PYJI has been rolled out in their agency or organization. Almost three-quarters of respondents from Probation reported they somewhat agreed (34%) or agreed (40%) that they feel satisfied with how PYJI has been rolled out in their agency, and 84% of respondents from CBOs indicated they somewhat agreed (11%) or agreed (74%).

Collaborative Approach to Achieve Concrete Changes in Practice

Team-Based Decision Making

Leadership from County agencies and community-based partners indicated that the County has both prioritized and made progress in implementing team-based decision making meetings. Probation leadership described the implementation of team-based decision meetings at the Juvenile Detention Center in which youth-serving agencies (e.g., social workers, behavioral health specialists) meet with family members and crossover youth to work on case planning for youth during and post custody. Probation also continued to leverage their pre-existing partnership with Behavioral Health Services, through which on-site clinicians at the Probation Department are able to join in case planning meetings.

"In the beginning of PYJI, we couldn't get a PO on the phone, and now we have a few that are incredibly responsive, and coming to training, events, and groups. It's a slow progress."

- CBO leadership

Additionally, Probation leadership initiated a monthly CBO meeting for its contracted service providers, in which CBOs met with Probation's PYJI coordinator to discuss referral issues, share resources, and collaborate on activities. As one CBO leader shared:

[A]ll the CBOS meet with Probation and talk about what's going on, how are referrals going. That wasn't going on at first; we were a little bit siloed. But once [the CBO meeting] became a requirement, it helped us be collaborative with each other and for Probation to understand our needs.

Survey findings indicate that Probation (93%), CBOs (80%), and other PYJI partner agencies (75%) at least somewhat agreed that the agencies and organizations serving crossover youth in San Joaquin

collaborate effectively. In focus groups and interviews, CBOs reported feeling like legitimate partners with Probation in the implementation and design of PYJI. Partner agencies that were involved early on in the planning of PYJI also had strong participation during the implementation.

Integration of TIC in Practice

County agencies reported that the TIC and PYD trainings the County held for Probation and partner agency staff had a significant impact on how line staff interacted with crossover youth. Probation leadership noted the impact of TIC on their department and observed that probation officers were Survey findings underscored the inclusion of TIC, with a majority of survey respondents from Probation (92%) and CBOs (85%) reporting that they have heard about TIC being introduced in their agency or organization.

While many County partnering agencies reported that the TIC lens was already in alignment with their core values and practices as youth-serving agencies, they did note that the training opened up new discussions about vicarious trauma and engaging staff in self-care. Other partner agencies even implemented new internal training practices after receiving PYJI-supported TIC training. Leadership from CPS shared:

We made [TIC training] mandatory. We had 120 child welfare workers and 90 or more of them in attendance of the series; three-fourths of staff took the TIC training. Once we did that, I set [out to] redesign our foster care parent training and seek more training for staff. That would not have happened without the PYJI focus—that was clearly the catalyst.

Incorporation of PYD and Youth Involvement

Most staff survey respondents from probation (96%) and CBOs (85%) reported that they have heard about the application of PYD in their agency or organization. In Year 2 of PYJI implementation, San Joaquin County initiated PYJI Youth Development Groups, in which crossover youth attend weekly group sessions and receive incentives for their attendance. According to CBO leadership, Youth Development Groups provide a safe, non-judgmental environment in which crossover youth can connect with each other, engage in culturally enriching practices, and work on college and career readiness.

The structure of the groups is inclusive of many partners. Probation holds an orientation for youth and their families in which they explain what the group sessions entail, select a CBO service provider based on the type of services and location, and Parent Partner offers guidance and support. CBOs and Probation are working in tandem to track monthly attendance in the youth development groups. This in turn has led to increased referrals and follow-up by Probation Officers to encourage participation.

Interviews with CBO line staff indicated that the youth development groups seemed to improve trust between youth and authority figures, and shift their view of probation. One leader in the Probation Department described a situation in which she assigned a probation officer the task of bringing an incentive to one of the crossover youth. She recalled that the youth said, “*I thought my PO was going to*

arrest me, and he gave me a Baskin Robbins gift card!” The County also integrated youth participation into its model by including a former crossover youth at the Youth Development Group orientation, and several of the contracted CBOs hire youth as mentors or staff.

Continued Partnership with Wraparound Services

County partner agencies and Probation shared that the increased use of different levels of wraparound services, which began in Year 1, has enhanced how youth on probation are served, as youth are referred to services earlier on in their case flow. Both County partner agencies and Probation reported an increase in referrals to pre-wraparound services as well as increased identification of alternatives to out of home placement for crossover youth. Nearly all survey respondents from Probation somewhat agreed (33%) or agreed (63%) that they understand the referral process to get youth into formal wraparound services.

Formalization of PYJI Elements in Policies and Procedures

PYJI leadership has made a number of concrete changes to their policies and procedures to include PYJI elements. Several of these changes included updating Juvenile Probation policies to reflect trauma informed assessment, screening, and programming, incorporating a youth and family orientation into the referral process for Youth Development Groups, implementing the Girls Health Screening tool and screening all girls in Juvenile Hall.

Probation leadership emphasized that the sustainability of the initiative has been their main focus during Year 2 of implementation. To this end, Probation leadership incorporated best practices for TIC and PYD in their department’s policies and procedures in the following areas: Assessment, Investigations, Supervision, and Placement units, and the Department plans to revise policies and procedures for Detention Intake and Camp Aftercare. In order to support the implementation of these changes, unit supervisors were involved in reviewing and revising the policies and procedures, updating their job duties, and training line staff on the new policies and procedures.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

Line Staff Buy-in and Skills

While leadership and line staff noted substantial culture shift among probation officers, they also observed some remaining hesitation to fully embracing PYJI. Some Probation leadership hypothesized that this was due to the later involvement of Probation line staff in PYJI implementation. One survey respondent commented:

I believe we are still not fully on board with our organization fully accepting PYJI. The line staff still have reservations and are resistant to embrace PYJI philosophies, fully. I think the line staff should have been included in the planning phases and on the Executive Steering Committee from the beginning. Their buy-in is critical to the success of the paradigm change.

County and partner agencies reported that earlier involvement in the planning stages of PYJI seemed to bolster their respective organizations' involvement at the implementation stages and impacted buy-in among their staff. The varying level of involvement of staff in the planning of PYJI was also seen in survey findings: over half of survey respondents from Probation indicated that they disagreed (41%) or somewhat disagreed (12%) that they were actively involved in the planning for the new policies and procedures related to PYJI (15% somewhat agreed and 24% agreed). Conversely, almost two-thirds of survey respondents from CBOs reported they somewhat agreed (36%) or agreed (37%) that they were involved in the planning.

Some focus group participants also identified a gap in staff training on how to integrate TIC into practice. Staff survey findings suggest that even though PYJI has increased probation officers' awareness of PYD and TIC, most staff do not feel confident in their ability to implement these practices. While 67% of line staff from probation somewhat agreed that they feel well trained to implement TIC practices in their work with crossover youth, only 19% reported that they agreed. Similarly, 70% of line staff from probation somewhat agreed that they feel well trained to provide PYD-informed services with crossover youth, while 19% reported that they agreed. Conversely, most staff from CBOs agreed (71%) that they feel well trained to implement TIC practices and provide PYD-informed services, with 29% reporting that they somewhat agree.

Involvement of County Partner Agencies

As previously indicated, San Joaquin County has many strong partnerships across agencies and CBOs. However, participants in the key informant interviews, focus groups, and the staff survey observed that there was room for development. While many of the partner agencies sit on the Executive Steering Committee meetings, several reported that the Steering Committee was their agency's only involvement in PYJI. Staff survey respondents also indicated that PYJI partner agencies were less involved with PYJI

"There is a school to prison pipeline, we need to get the school district on board and it's not going to be something we can do overnight."

- CBO leadership

than Probation and CBOs. While nearly all of Probation line staff (96%) and all CBO line staff (100%) reported hearing about PYJI, less than a third (30%) of line staff from other PYJI partner agencies indicated that they had heard of PYJI.

According to interviews with PYJI leadership, County partner agencies that were less involved in the planning year or did not have specific roles or responsibilities continued to have limited involvement in Year 2 implementation. Some agencies specified that they did not have the funding to dedicate staff to PYJI. For example, leadership from the County Office of Education, which joined the partnership after the initiative had started, reported that they did not have designated staff for PYJI. CBO partners acknowledged the importance of having the school districts involved, but noted that it would take time to increase school participation in PYJI. Leadership from Child Welfare indicated that only top level leadership are familiar with PYJI and that CPS line staff likely would not interface with PYJI unless they worked with youth involved in some level of Probation.

Staff survey findings also demonstrated more limited involvement of line staff from County partner agencies, with only about a quarter of staff from these agencies reporting that they somewhat agreed (10%) or agreed (15%) that leadership from their agency regularly communicates with staff about changes related to PYJI, and 44% responding that they do not know.

Communication and Data Sharing among Partners

While leadership and line staff highlighted effective communication between many PYJI partners, particularly Probation and CBOs, line staff from Probation and CPS discussed continued challenges with communication, especially around the need to clarify roles and responsibilities related to 241.1 joint assessment hearings and dual status cases. County staff from the focus group recommended that CPS and Probation identify representatives from each agency to work on strengthening communication and triaging crossover youth through resourcing committees prior to 241.1 joint assessment hearings.

Agencies also reported differing degrees of data sharing. Some CBOs reported receiving only basic information on crossover youths' histories because of privacy regulations, while other CBOs reported having complete access to crossover youth mental health records because of data sharing agreements with the youths' providers. Additionally, while edicts like the Katie A settlement required data sharing between Child Welfare and Mental Health, other agencies that are not party to the settlement and do not have established data sharing MOUs, such as CPS and Probation, tend to engage in informal case-by case data sharing.

“Obviously, there is a huge communication issue between Probation and CPS and we have to make the alliance stronger, but what one person is going to be elected on both sides to work out these kinks? There needs to be a better understanding or relationship.”

- County line staff

Staff from a variety of agencies noted that while Probation can identify crossover youth, other systems like CPS and Behavioral Health Services do not have a formal way to identify crossover youth. In this vein, a higher percent of survey respondents from Probation (81%) reported that they at least somewhat agree that the agencies and organizations serving crossover youth in San Joaquin collect and share data effectively, compared to survey respondents from CBOs (65%) and other partner PYJI agencies (64%).

“Death by Success”: Sustainability and Resources for Expansion

Leadership from Probation and CBOs reported an increase of excitement and interest around PYJI activities in Year 2. More referrals from probation officers have led to more crossover youth attending the Youth Development Groups. At the same time, leadership and line staff voiced concern that a system-change initiative like PYJI would take ongoing resources, training, and time to achieve concrete and sustainable changes in practice. Participants from CBOs reported that because PYJI was attempting to dismantle years of punitive practices that it would also take equal time if not more to shift culture that actually leads to changes in concrete practices. According to interviews, as PYJI grows and becomes more successful, more resources and increased staff support is needed to support these growing efforts:

It's getting to a point where PYJI has grown bigger than anybody anticipated here, and I don't think anyone realized it was going to get this big. It's too big for one person.

As previously mentioned, many partnering agencies reported that they are less involved in PYJI because the grant does not fund their participation or ability to leverage staff time to support the initiative. In survey responses and focus groups, line staff reported that PYJI has created more work for staff and that more resources are needed. Additionally, in key informant interviews and focus groups, staff reported having competing duties to their PYJI work and many respondents suggested having more staff designated for PYJI work.

Some leadership from partner agencies reported having challenges hiring staff qualified for the PYJI initiative. Because PYJI elements are infused with a TIC and PYD lens, partnering agencies reported issues staffing for the initiative when interviewees demonstrated having a philosophies not in alignment with PYJI.

While Probation leadership reported allocating funding to sustain the initiative within the Probation Department, they stated their concern sustaining for PYJI outside of their budget, particularly around funding the partnering CBOs running the youth development groups. Some county partnering agencies are leveraging their own resources to support the initiative, but reported feeling that those arrangements might not be sustainable if their funding streams were to shift.

Youth and Caregiver Experiences

Sixty-one youth and 22 caregivers responded to the survey. Nine youth participated in the youth focus group.

Key Findings

- Across youth serving systems, youth and caregivers generally reported that that the adults with whom they interact want things to go well for youth.
- At the same time, they also suggested that these adults do not consistently talk with youth about how things they have been through affect them, or about programs that might be helpful to them—questions designed to capture whether adults exemplified a TIC or PYD approach, respectively.
- While youth and caregiver responses aligned in some respects, overall, caregivers identified more positive feelings about their experiences with adults across systems, other than for caseworkers who they felt ambivalence toward. Across all areas, youth survey responses and focus group responses were generally aligned.

Experience with Juvenile Justice System

Youth and caregivers shared very positive feelings toward supervisory probation officials in their survey responses, reporting that these officers wanted things to go well for youth and talked with youth about their life experiences and programs that might be helpful.

- Almost all youth (95%) and caregivers (100%) responded that it is very true or mostly true that their supervisory probation officer wants things to go well for them/their child.
- Almost all youth (98%) and caregivers (100%) responded that that it is very true or mostly true that their child's supervisory probation officer treats them/their child fairly.
- Nearly two-thirds of youth (65%) and over three-quarters of caregivers (81%) indicated that that is very true or mostly true that their/their child's probation officer talks with them about how what they have been through affects them—a question designed to capture whether probation officers exemplified a TIC approach.
- Over three-quarters of youth (79%) and caregivers (83%) expressed that it is mostly true or very true that probation officers are easy to get in touch with. Similar proportions of youth (81%) and caregivers (83%) reported that probation officers tell youth about programs that might be helpful to them—a question designed to capture whether probation officers exemplified a PYD approach.

Youth and caregivers survey responses suggested that probation officers used somewhat of a team-based approach.

- Over half of youth respondents (62%) and over three-quarters of caregivers (83%) reported always or sometimes having a caregiver present at meetings with their (their child's) probation officer.
- Considerably less than half of youth (38%) and caregivers (30%) reported having someone other than their caregivers (social workers or caseworkers and therapists, as well teachers and mentors, among others) at the meetings as well.

Youth and caregiver responses toward judges and officers in juvenile hall did not align; youth responses about their experiences with judges and probation officers in juvenile hall were mixed, while caregivers reported mostly positive feelings.

- While most (82%) youth indicated that that it is very true or mostly true that the decisions made by judges on their case were fair, almost half of youth also expressed that it is not at all true, or only a little true, that judges listen to them (48%) or their family (37%) when making decisions.
- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of youth responded that it is mostly true or somewhat true that officers in juvenile hall want them to succeed, but at least one-quarter suggested that it is not at all true or only a little bit true that they were treated fairly by officers in juvenile hall (25%),

had an officer (or other staff person) they could go to in juvenile hall (34%), or talked to an officer (or staff person) about a plan for when they got out (41%).

- Over three-quarters of caregivers (80%) conveyed that the decisions made by judges on their case were mostly fair or totally fair, and that is very true or mostly true that judges listen to them (82%) and their children (82%) when making decisions. Similarly, the majority of caregivers articulated mostly positive feelings about officers' work with their children in juvenile hall.

Youth perceptions captured from the youth focus group mostly aligned with survey responses. Many of the youth focus group participants communicated positive perceptions of supervisory probation officers, although they elaborated that relationships with probation officers largely depended on specific probation officers, and discussed some negative experiences with probation officers such as having a difficult time contacting them, feeling like their probation officer did not care about their wellbeing, and having their probation officers show up at their school. Similar to survey respondents, youth focus group participants described having mixed experiences with officers in juvenile hall; they described some officers in juvenile hall were "cool," viewing youth as individuals and treating them fairly, while others administered punishment that felt random and disproportionate to their behavior.

Experience with Child Welfare System

Caregivers indicated mostly ambivalence toward caseworkers, while youth provided more positive feelings about their experiences with caseworkers. However, youth and caregivers alike reported that caseworkers did not talk with youth about how what they have been through in their life affects them, or about programs that may be helpful to them.

- Most youth (85%) stated that it is very true or mostly true that social workers listen to them, and almost all youth (95%) responded this way about whether social workers want things to go well for them (95%). Only two-thirds of caregivers (67%) remarked the same way.
- Approximately one-third of youth (36%) and caregivers (33%) reported that it is not at all true or only a little true that their/their child's social worker talks to them about how what they/their child has been through affects them.
- Approximately one-third of youth (32%) and half of caregivers (50%) responded that it is not at all true or only a little true that their/their child's social worker tells them about programs that might be helpful to them/their child.

Experience with School

Youth and caregivers reported mostly positive feelings about how teachers and adults at school respond to youth, although caregivers' responses were more positive overall.

- Over three-quarters of caregivers responded that it is very true or mostly true that there is an adult at school that wants things to go well for their child (94%), informs their child of programs

that may be helpful to them (82%), and talks with their child about how their experiences affect their life (76%).

- Youth survey responses echoed caregivers' responses, although nearly one-quarter (24%) of youth indicated that there is not an adult at their school that talks with them about the effects of their life experiences, 14% indicated that there is not an adult that at schools that tells them about programs, and 4% indicated that there is not an adult at school that wants things to go well for them.

In addition, focus groups findings demonstrated that some youth felt that teachers treated them differently because of their probation status, especially in schools where there are not many students on probation.

Experience with Programs

Despite indicating that a judge or probation officer ultimately decided what programs youth participate in, youth and caregivers also indicated some inclusion in the decision making process.

- Almost all youth (90%) and caregivers (90%) reported that the programs they/their child participated in were determined by a judge or probation officer.
- Over half of youth (60%) and caregivers (53%) indicated that youth helped decide what programs they participate in, and 43% of youth and nearly three-quarters of caregivers (72%) of indicated that caregivers helped decide what programs youth participate in.

Youth focus group participants also suggested that their probation officers told them which programs they would participate in. Youth in focus groups commented that they largely appreciated the programs they were involved in, and many observed that the various programs provided them with emotional support, helped them develop new skills, and shifted how they think about themselves and their lives. Overall, youth and caregiver survey respondents shared this sentiment.

- Over three-quarters of youth (79%) and caregivers (86%) suggested that it is mostly true or very true that the programs they/their child are (or were) involved in are a good fit.
- Most youth (87%) and caregivers (86%) of caregivers believed that it is very true or mostly true that the programs they/their child are (or were) involved with help them/their child build skills for the future.
- Nearly three-quarters of youth (73%) and almost all caregivers (90%) expressed that the programs they/their child are (or were) involved with help them/their child improve their relationships with family.
- Nearly three-quarters of youth (70%) and almost all caregivers (95%) expressed that the programs they/their child are (or were) involved with help them/their child do better in school.

Overall Support from Adults

Overall, youth respondents indicated that they felt supported by the adults in their life.

- Most youth suggested that it is very true or mostly true that the adults in their life respect them (89%), that when they are feeling sad or lonely there are people who can help them (87%), and if they need help in school they know where to find it (90%).

Solano County

This summary reviews the implementation of the Positive Youth Justice Initiative (PYJI) in Solano County during Year 2 of the initiative's implementation phase. The summary includes an overview of the County's implementation and structure; a synthesis of key strengths and challenges based on data from interviews, focus groups, staff surveys, and documentary data; and a description of results from the Year 2 youth and caregiver surveys and youth focus groups.

The Year 2 evaluation data collection included the following activities. The number in parentheses represents the number of respondents who participated in each of the activities. See Appendix B for more detail about the evaluation participants.

- Key Informant Interviews with PYJI Leadership (7)
- Focus Group with VCUSD and County Staff (12)
- Focus Group with CBO Staff (3)
- Staff Survey (13)
- Youth Survey (13)
- Caregiver Survey (0)
- Documentary Data

Implementation Plan and Structure

Implementation Plan

Distinct among the PYJI counties, Solano County's PYJI is led by the **Vallejo City Unified School District** (VCUSD) and focuses on crossover youth in the city of Vallejo. Solano County defines crossover youth as **young people who are currently engaged in the juvenile justice system and have a current or prior case history or referral to the child welfare system**. According to their July 2015 data report, in 2014, of the 213 youth on probation supervision in the city of Vallejo (including informal supervision), 103 were crossover youth.

In addition to a model of school-based services for crossover youth, which centered on hiring a Positive Youth Justice (PYJ) Liaison to work directly with youth, engage families, and facilitate communication between youth-serving agencies, VCUSD's implementation plan outlined a number of operational capacity goals to support PYJI,

Implementation Highlights

During the second year of PYJI implementation, Solano County:

- Provided training to VCUSD school staff and Solano's juvenile probation officers in TIC, PYD, restorative justice, and implicit bias (*VCUSD*)
- Strengthened multidisciplinary participation in the SST process using the PYJ Liaison (*VCUSD*)
- Developed a Response Matrix in the Juvenile Field Services Division (*Probation Department*)
- Entered into a contract with ALDEA for Family Functional Therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy (*Probation Department*)
- Allocated funding to the Solano County Office of Education (SCOE) to begin expanding PYJI (*VCUSD*)
- Held third annual Positive Youth Justice Summit (*VCUSD*)

including improving data practices and systems; developing an incentives and sanctions matrix; training PYJI partners in PYJI elements; restructuring preexisting student success team (SST) meetings to better incorporate PYJI principles and partners; and improving and formalizing referral mechanisms between schools and the Probation Department. In its Year 2 implementation plan VCUSD allocated funding to the Solano County Office of Education (SCOE) to begin expanding PYJI to other school districts in the county.

Implementation Structure

VCUSD created a PYJI taskforce to carry out planning and implementation. The taskforce comprises leadership from VCUSD, Solano County Probation Department (SCPD), Solano County Office of Education (SCOE), Solano County Health and Social Services Department (H&SS, which includes Child Welfare Services and Behavioral/Mental Health), Kaiser Permanente, the UC Davis Center for Community School Partnerships, and two student representatives. The PYJI planning and implementation process is managed by VCUSD's Director of Partnerships & Community Engagement.

Solano County Key Strengths and Progress

- Leadership, collaboration, and promotion of PYJI
- Cultures shift and coordination among line staff
- Integration of PYJI elements in VCUSD school-based model
- Progress toward sustainability and expansion

Solano County Key Challenges and Opportunities

- Involvement and buy-in from key partners
- Availability and coordination of services
- System-wide expansion and sustainability
- Progress toward improved operational capacity

Key Strengths and Progress in Implementation

Leadership Collaboration and Promotion of PYJI

County leadership and staff survey respondents emphasized that strong working relationships between leadership from VCUSD, Solano County Office of Education, and Probation continued to support PYJI implementation in Year 2, both through the PYJI Leadership Taskforce and other collaborative bodies that support education and juvenile justice reform in Solano County. Staff survey respondents reported strong collaboration between the agencies and organizations serving

"[That's a] big part of why we've had these successes and why this has been a positive thing overall. It obviously starts with the leadership."

- District leadership

crossover youth in Solano County. Most Probation respondents (88%) somewhat agreed or agreed that agencies and organizations serving crossover youth collaborate effectively, and all respondents from the other participating organizations and agencies somewhat agreed or agreed.

Leadership from VCUSD, SCOE, and Probation described that through these relationships, VCUSD leadership was able to keep other agencies apprised of PYJI activities and, in this way, foster buy-in across agencies and levels of staff. VCUSD leadership stated that the VCUSD Superintendent and the Probation Chief have continued to champion PYJI, providing their staff with a clear vision. VCUSD also integrates PYJI elements in its hiring practices by asking interview candidates for administrative and teaching staff positions, to describe their understanding of TIC and PYD. Leadership from VCUSD and Probation shared:

The leadership—[there is a] great relationship between the Probation Chief and the Superintendent. It starts there. Leadership is very willing to meet with CBOs hand in hand with the school district. [That's a] big part of why we've had these successes and why this has been a positive thing overall. It obviously starts with the leadership.

In surveys, staff generally reported satisfaction with how PYJI had been rolled out in their agency or organization. All respondents reported they somewhat agreed or agreed that they were satisfied with how PYJI has been rolled out. Nearly all Probation respondents (88%) somewhat agreed or agreed that leadership in their agency regularly communicates with staff about change related to PYJI, with 13% reporting they disagreed. Half of respondents from other organizations and agencies (50%) somewhat agreed or agreed, with a quarter somewhat disagreeing and a quarter reporting they did not know.

Culture Shift and Coordination among Line Staff

In Year 2 the District helped support culture change by providing PYJI-aligned training to VCUSD school staff and Solano's juvenile probation officers, including TIC, PYD, and restorative justice training, as well as training on racial and ethnic disparities and implicit bias. VCUSD school staff participated in several half-day trainings throughout the school year.

County leadership reported that the trainings have raised awareness of the needs of crossover youth as well as the impact of trauma among PYJI partner agencies. Probation officers discussed how the TIC and PYD trainings changed their perspective on youths' behavior. One probation officer explained the impact on her supervision practices

once she *"started learning about trauma and the brain and substance use and the brain and the age youth are at...how growth stops at a particular traumatic age."* She admitted:

"I never gave it that much in depth thought [before]—what all leans toward disobedience in children. We were brought up to think that some kids are just bad.... [The] training did impact how quickly I would violate youth."

- Probation officer

I never gave it that much in depth thought [before]—what all leans toward disobedience in children. We were brought up to think that some kids are just bad.... [The] training did impact how quickly I would violate youth [on probation].

Leadership and line staff highlighted the interrelationship between growing collaboration and culture shift in Year 2. Probation officers and school officials received messaging from leadership about PYJI philosophies, while at the same time coming together more frequently in SST meetings. As they began to see tangible results of a team-based approach, this further solidified their buy-in to the PYJI approach:

Staff that work with Vallejo clients, they think it's a great thing—they think it's something that's helpful to them as probation officers because there is a lot more collaboration with the School District and the School District is looking at these kids differently.

Integration of PYJI Elements in VCUSD School-Based Model

Leadership and staff both observed that in Vallejo high schools, PYJI improved students' and families' experience by enhancing communication, coordination, and service delivery approaches among the various systems with which youth interact. Specifically, leadership and staff from VCUSD and Probation identified a team-based approach, youth and family involvement, and the incorporation of trauma-informed and positive youth development (PYD) practices as elements that contributed to a successful model. Staff also emphasized the critical role the District's Positive Youth Justice (PYJ) Liaison, a position hired in Year 1 to serve as a liaison between youth-serving systems, played in promoting the multiple PYJI elements.

Team-Based Approach

VCUSD and Probation leadership noted that PYJI has brought about greater alignment and coordination in how the Probation and School systems engage youth and their families. They noted that while there is still work to do in consistently developing and following student case plans, they have made great progress in Year 2:

I think we've come a long way in team-based decisions. A lot of this originates at the school; we (Probation) are involved in hearings at school and issues we were not normally a part of. Now we are sitting at the table. Our officers can advocate for our youth and also know what is happening in the schools. That has brought us closer together.

VCUSD and Probation leadership and staff highlighted the role of the school-based PYJ Liaison in advocating for youth and fostering communication and collaboration among all staff serving youth: teachers, academic support providers (ASP), and probation officers. Both probation officers and ASPs saw the PYJ Liaison as a source of support and agreed that he made their own jobs easier by facilitating communication and coordinating the student support team (SST) meetings for crossover youth. He

played a vital role in establishing a strength-based tone for these meetings and in getting all involved parties on the same page to best serve the student. Leadership and line staff from Probation and VCUSD schools shared:

[His] role was to coordinate services at schools. [We] had system set up that if a probation officer had a crossover youth on their caseload that needed services, [the PYJ Liaison] would set up an SST and get everyone that needed to be there and that could help figure out what services they needed.

In addition to strengthening the SST process for crossover youth, VCUSD and SCOE established a team-based approach to facilitating youths' transition from juvenile hall to their school sites. VCUSD and SCOE developed a transition process in Year 1, which they fully implemented in VCUSD in Year 2, whereby an education transition specialist employed by SCOE meets with youth after they are admitted to juvenile hall to develop a transition plan and facilitate re-enrollment in school more quickly after their release. The PYJ Liaison played an important role in supporting the transition process through partnership with the education transition specialist. He attended transition meetings, promoted family involvement in these meetings, provided support to youth and their families, and scheduled SST meetings to connect youth to services.

Youth and Family Involvement

Probation officers and ASPs explained that the PYJ Liaison continued to build upon the successes of Year 1 by fostering relationships, trust, and communication between various parties (probation officers, ASPs, youth, and families); helped engage families and encouraged their participation in SST meetings and transition planning meetings; and worked to establish connections between ASPs and youth, so that they could benefit from additional support and services. As noted in Year 1, many felt it was important that the PYJ Liaison was a black man who grew up in the same community as many of the youth he served:

Parents felt better coming to SST meetings because they didn't feel like their parenting was under attack. [The PYJ Liaison] was the one reaching out to parent rather than someone from school or probation.

Trauma-Informed and Positive Youth Development (PYD) Practices

"He would tell me all about my kid's moods.... This helped me because I could then ask students about things and get more involved in their inner life.

- School staff

Probation officers and ASPs explained that the PYJ Liaison understood youth and what was going on for them, which helped probation officers and academic support providers connect with and support youth. Through relationship building and advocacy, the PYJ Liaison was able to help teachers, probation officers, ASPs, school administrators, and other staff take a more trauma-informed and PYD approach to their work with youth. Additionally, while teachers often did not necessarily know whether youth were crossover youth, they

were aware that youth were working with the PYJ Liaison and could therefore use the PYJ Liaison as a source of support. Probation officers and ASPs shared:

The SST meeting I sat in, [the PYJ Liaison] set the tone: 'We are going to talk about student's strengths and we are going to talk about how to help this student be successful.'

Probation officers also reported that the PYJ Liaison helped them be more patient and creative in their approach with youth. For example, when probation officers thought a youth was violating probation or needed to return to juvenile hall, the PYJ Liaison advocated for youth and helped negotiate to a plan to either delay or prevent violations or detention. He also attended and testified at court hearings for a number of crossover youth, with staff observing a tangible impact on the outcome of some cases:

With one particular youth, there were times when I wanted to take him back to Court and have him detained because his residential situation was bad and he was entrenched with gangs, but [the PYJ Liaison] would go to his home and help him. And it kept him out of hall from a few times.

[The PYJ Liaison] did help a lot. He was middle man, a buffer. In Probation, we get frustrated with kids and he'd say, give me a week or two and then if not, we'll go with your game plan.

VCUSD leadership, probation officers, and ASPs explained that the strong relationships the PYJ Liaison built with youth were vital for helping youth navigate emotionally charged situations and make decisions that were aligned with their long-term needs and goals. For example, he was able to calm down youth who were upset and to mediate fights between youth. This support helped protect youths' safety and prevent the need for additional disciplinary actions. In addition to individual mentoring and support, in Year 2 the PYJ Liaison facilitated activities and groups during the school day as well as after school. For example, during 5th period at PYJI high school sites, crossover youth had group meetings during which the PYJ Liaison would offer support.

VCUSD has also continued to leverage a number of other programs and interventions aligned with PYJI principles. These include job and internship placements for crossover youth up, mentorship for students experiencing behavioral challenges, and late-night recreational opportunities. Many programs are co-located at school site Family Resource Centers at schools also provide support for basic needs. The district also partners with two CBOs that offer several PYD programs during and after school that focus on reaching at-risk youth who are not involved in the juvenile justice system. Programs include Botvin's Life Skills, Restorative Justice Circles, a youth leadership program, and parenting support for pregnant and parenting youth. The integration of Family Resource Centers (FRCs) at school sites as part of the FSCS model also offers resources to youth and their families.

Progress toward Sustainability and Expansion

VCUSD has continued to leverage formal operational practices established in Year 1. Probation continues to track crossover youth in their case management system, which enabled them to monitor the number of crossover youth in Vallejo and county-wide. This practice, along with an MOU with the School District, allows Probation to ensure crossover youth are referred to PYJI and to other supportive services. VCUSD has also taken steps to institutionalize PYJI by including a stipend for a PYJ Liaison at every elementary school site into the District's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). In addition to elementary school liaisons, VCUSD plans to have two high school PYJ Liaisons next year.

In Year 2 VCUSD took steps to expand PYJI beyond Vallejo to other parts of the County. A key change has been greater involvement of the Solano County Office of Education (SCOE). In Year 2, VCUSD allocated funding to SCOE to integrate PYJI elements with other aligned efforts that were already in process. SCOE's primary focus has been to expand the juvenile hall transition process established in VCUSD to other school districts in the county so that all youth are reenrolled immediately at their school site following release from juvenile hall and have access to services to prevent them from returning to juvenile hall. SCOE is also helping school districts implement TIC, PYD, restorative justice, and positive behavioral interventions; Fairfield Unified School District and Vacaville Unified School District have each made a three-year commitment to implement these frameworks through extensive training. Probation leadership also suggested wanting to expand the model for SST meetings established at VCUSD throughout the County, which would include expanding the practice of having probation officers actively and consistently engaged in SST meetings.

The Probation Department also took steps to integrate PYJI elements into its department-wide practices. Probation developed a Response Matrix in the Juvenile Field Services Division that includes a Graduated Sanctions and Rewards Matrix along with guidelines on how to use it. Apart from but related to PYJI, in Year 2 the Probation Department also entered into a contract with a community-based provider, ALDEA, for Family Functional Therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy.

The annual Positive Youth Justice Summits have continued to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to learn more about PYJI, engage together in workshops, hear from a youth panel, and gain additional professional development from participating in trainings and hearing well-known speakers present. In addition, all of Solano County's juvenile probation officers were invited to participate in PYJI trainings. Apart from but related to PYJI, in Year 2 the Probation Department also began training all juvenile staff using a curriculum developed by George Mason University that focuses on implementing evidence based practices, strength-based approaches to supervising youth, and youth and family engagement.

Leadership noted that strong collaborative relationships and philosophical alignment among VCUSD, SCOE, Probation, and other partner agencies set the groundwork for expansion. Several members of County and VCUSD leadership observed ways in which collaboration has enabled discussions about concrete changes in practice. For example, one County partner shared:

I think because of [PYJI] there has been a degree of discussions about policy decisions of how many kids we'd try to treat in-custody opposed to outside of custody for truancy

issues [that would not have happened otherwise]. [There is] more exchange of ideas because of it.

Most survey respondents indicated that they support PYJI and believe it will benefit the County and their own work. The majority (88%) of Probation survey respondents agreed that PYJI has the potential to advance juvenile justice system policy and practice, with 13% reporting they did not know. All survey respondents from other agencies and organizations somewhat agreed or agreed. Most Probation staff also affirmed some level of agreement that the changes due to PYJI would personally benefit them in their work, with 88% indicating they somewhat agreed or agreed, and 13% reporting they did not know. Similarly 75% of respondents from other organizations and agencies somewhat agreed or agreed, and 25% reported they did not know.

Challenges and Opportunities

Involvement and Buy-in from Key Partners

While probation officers and ASPs noted that there has been greater teacher buy-in in Year 2 as a result of the PYJI aligned professional development offered by VCUSD and the work of the PYJ Liaison, they indicated that some teachers continue to struggle to understand how trauma and poverty can impact students' behavior and learning.

Court leadership voiced cautious support for PYJI and indicated that judges would benefit from additional data about what approaches work best for youth:

I think the general debate for a judge is the kid comes in and commits this crime or that crime, probation wants to keep him at home and implement PYJI—does the judge do that or ship him off to a group home somewhere else? Will you have a better outcome sending him out of the environment or keeping him in the environment with services?

Due to changes in leadership, the Health and Social Services (H&SS) Department has been less involved in PYJI in Year 2, and VCUSD leadership noted that they hope to strengthen their relationship with (H&SS) moving forward. The superintendent of VCUSD has begun meeting with the new director of H&SS and plans to establish partnerships to provide more mental health services to youth and families.

While messaging from leadership and department-wide training have helped bring probation officers on board, Probation leadership acknowledged that because probation officers in Vallejo are most involved with PYJI in Vallejo schools, they are more bought in than staff from other parts of the county.

“People’s belief system is always a challenge when you run against people in system work with youth who don’t have the same vision or understanding.”

-VCUSD leadership

Availability and Coordination of Services

As in Year 1, County leadership, staff survey respondents, and focus group participants from Student Support, Probation, and CBOs concurred that there are limited services available to support crossover youth and their families. Solano County continues to experience challenges in expanding and increasing the use of County wraparound services. Probation leadership noted that there are very few dedicated wraparound slots for probation youth. The department hopes that through utilizing PYJI technical assistance they may be able to increase access to funding streams to alleviate the costs of wraparound and therefore allow more youth to benefit.

County leadership and focus group participants (ASPs, probation officers, and CBOs) observed that while VCUSD and CBOs provide a number of positive programs for youth, overall there are limited resources available in Solano County. They noted that this presents challenges for supporting crossover youth and their families, offering choices to youth and families, and sustaining and expanding PYJI. VCUSD's CBOs partners also reported very few referrals from Probation:

The training was all great; however, after the training, it appeared that the services to match were very limited.

There isn't a lot of programs out there. Not a variety. So a lot of kids go to a lot of the same programs. Not a lot of options and choice.

As with Year 1, gaps and shortages discussed by County leadership, survey respondents, and focus group participants included basic needs (food, transportation, housing), workforce development; mental health, behavioral, and substance abuse services for youth and families; PYD and positive recreational activities; and afterschool and summer programs. Court leadership also noted that the County has limited options for placing kids out of the home.

System-Wide Expansion and Sustainability

Leadership and line staff noted that while support and momentum for PYJI has been strong, there remain some concerns to achieving sustainable, system-wide change, both within VCUSD and Solano County more broadly. Respondents identified challenges and opportunities related to staffing, training, data sharing, and funding.

Staffing and Staff Capacity

Solano County has relied heavily on certain members of leadership and staff to drive PYJI. Leadership and line staff emphasized the key role that VCUSD and Probation leadership have played in promoting the PYJI philosophy and approach, leading one member of leadership to wonder, *"If we all left, what would be carried on?"*

Within Vallejo, PYJI has relied heavily on the PYJ Liaison to strength communication and collaboration between school staff and probation officers, foster family involvement in team meetings, facilitate students' transition from juvenile hall to school, and mentor and support youth. Toward the end of the

2014-2015 school year, the PYJ Liaison left his position. Most staff participating in the focus group remarked that without the PYJ Liaison, communication between the educational transition specialist and school staff, such as academic support providers, became more challenging, especially at schools with a larger student body. Staff observed difficulties connecting with youth, coordinating SST meetings, and engaging families and supporting their involvement:

It's like you get used to it, and then it drops. And the kids don't know me as well as he did.

It's a little more difficult because I have 1,800 kids at my school. So when our kids transition back to high school without [the PYJ Liaison], that's another hat I have to put on in addition to what I'm doing.

Surveys with probation officers also identified staff training as another opportunity for building capacity. While most respondents (71%) somewhat agreed or agreed that they were well trained to implement TIC practices in their work with crossover youth, 29% somewhat disagreed. Likewise, while over half (57%) of probation officers somewhat agreed or agreed that they feel well trained to provide PYD informed services with crossover youth, 43% somewhat disagreed.

System-Wide Changes in Policies and Procedures

"The work is getting to a place to where some real decisions have to be made through policies."

- VCUSD leadership

VCUSD and Probation leadership spoke about the need to update Probation and District policies and procedures to reflect TIC and PYD and ensure that PYJI principals continue to be implemented regardless of the current leadership. However, Probation leadership explained that one challenge to updating juvenile probation policies and procedures is PYJI is only focused on Vallejo. It would be challenging to have separate Probation policies and procedures for Vallejo and the rest of the County, making changes to the formal policies and procedures unrealistic at this point in time. In addition, while some practices have changed in Probation, leadership noted that this has been largely at the level of changes in practices or procedures, largely through training, and has not been codified in policy. VCUSD leadership shared:

The work is getting to a place to where some real decisions have to be made through policies...I think we've hit the ceiling in regards to changing some basic things, and now we've gotten to place where real decisions are going to [need to be made about] how business is conducted specifically in the areas of PYD and Trauma.

Information and Data Sharing

Probation, SCOE, and CBO leadership noted that while data sharing occurs between PYJI partner agencies, it is often unidirectional, and an integrated, system-wide approach to data sharing beyond VCUSD has not been established. Probation leadership explained that while they provide data to VCUSD,

they do not have access to VCUSD's Aeries data system. Probation leadership also noted that internal staffing capacity limits their ability to access data. Leadership from SCOE touched on confidentiality concerns, explaining that it may be best that SCOE continues to act as the "conduit for data sharing" between juvenile hall and the school districts. Within schools, there is not a systematic way for ASPs to receive direct communication when a student leaves or re-enrolls in school. CBOs also noted that while they receive some information from schools, they often do not know whether a youth is involved with Probation. One County leader shared:

I certainly think information sharing is [a barrier to creating a coordinated system of services] I think the better understanding we have of the other systems, the better we are able to chip away at that barrier.

Survey responses also suggest this is a continued area for growth. Nearly 40% of Probation survey respondents and 40% of staff from other agencies disagreed or somewhat disagreed that the agencies and organizations serving crossover youth in Solano collect and share data effectively.

Funding

VCUSD leadership emphasized that education funding has increased recently due to California's new Local Control Funding Formula. However, VCUSD may need to seek additional grants to sustain the initiative because many of the efforts fall "outside the purview of education funding." As SCOE works to expand the transition process to ensure youth quickly reenroll at their school site following release from juvenile hall, they noted that hiring additional education transition support specialists would help support this initiative, but there is limited funding available to support this.

Over the past several years, Juvenile Probation has experienced Title IV-E funding cuts as well as other funding cuts. This has resulted in the number of juvenile probation officers being reduced by about half. Staffing capacity can pose challenges for participation in SST meetings, and leadership noted that any future funding cuts may impact the success of PYJI. Probation leadership also noted that there is limited funding available to provide services for lower-risk youth, which they identified as another key reason that partnerships with school districts and community partners is critical:

[Probation's] ability is to impact those that present the most risk as well as the next level down. And sometimes those just entering the system don't get the help they need. We don't have the resources to serve or treat them, so we're looking at involving more school districts.

CBO leadership also observed that as a whole, Solano County is not as well funded as many neighboring counties. They cited limited funding avenues for CBOs, such as support from foundations and corporations, which they felt impacted the overall availability and variety of services for youth.

Youth Experiences

Thirteen youth responded to the youth survey and six youth participated in the youth focus group. No caregivers completed the survey.

Key Findings

- Across youth serving systems, youth generally expressed that the staff with whom they interact want things to go well for them.
- At the same time, youth respondents less frequently reported that adults talk with them about how things they have been through in their life affect them—a question designed to capture whether adults exemplified a TIC approach.
- Overall, youth shared more negative than positive feelings about their experiences with law enforcement officials, describing especially negative feelings about their experiences with judges and officers in juvenile hall.

Experiences with Juvenile Justice System

Youth survey responses were mixed regarding their experiences with supervisory probation officers and mostly negative regarding their experiences with judges and officers in juvenile hall.

- Most youth (90%) conveyed that it is very true or mostly true that their probation officer wants things to go well for them.
- Three-quarters of youth (75%) reported that it is only a little bit true that their probation officer talks with them about how what they have been through affects them, and half (50%) suggested that it is a little bit true that their probation officer tells them about programs that may be helpful to them—questions designed to capture whether adults exemplified a TIC or PYD approach, respectively.
- Nearly one-third (30%) of respondents indicated that they cannot easily get in touch with their probation officer if they need to.

Most youth also reported that their probation officer used somewhat of a team-based approach in their meetings.

- 91% reported that their parents or caregivers sometimes or always attended probations meetings.
- Approximately one-third (36%) reported that a therapist or someone else sometimes attended their probation meetings as well.

Youth survey respondents cited very negative feelings toward judges in Solano County.

- All youth expressed that it is not at all true or only a little true that the judge listens to them when making decisions.

- Almost all youth (92%) responded that it is not at all true or only a little true that the judge listens to their family when making decisions.
- Nearly three-quarters of youth (70%) suggested that it is not at all true or only a little true that the judge made a fair decision on their case.

Youth also conveyed mostly negative feelings about their experiences with officers in juvenile hall.

- Although nearly three-quarters (70%) of youth responded that it is very true that officers in juvenile hall want them to succeed, half (50%) also indicated that it is not at all true or only a little true that officers in juvenile hall treat them fairly.
- Over one-third (40%) of youth did not feel like they had an officer or staff person they could talk to in juvenile hall, and nearly two-thirds (60%) of youth expressed that it was not at all true or only a little true that an officer or staff person talked to them about a plan for when they got out of juvenile hall.

Youth focus group responses mostly aligned with youth survey responses. Youth focus group participants reported that their relationships with probation officers largely depended on the specific officers, and that despite some positive experiences, they perceived the juvenile justice system to be unfair as a whole.

Experience with School

Youth survey and focus group respondents had mixed responses regarding their experiences with adults at school.

- Most youth survey respondents (82%) conveyed that it is very true or mostly true that there are adults at school that want things to go well for them.
- Approximately half (55%) of youth survey respondents stated it is not at all true or only a little true that there is an adult at school that talks with them about how what they have been through affects them, and half suggested the same about programs that might be helpful to them (50%).

Youth focus groups participants named a few teachers and school administrators who have helped them, but most reported that the PYJ Liaison was their greatest source of support at school. Participants noted that there are differences between the high schools in Vallejo in terms of the school environment and the support available, and youth from one high school did not recall receiving any support from their school in transitioning back to school from juvenile hall.

Experience with Programs

Youth discussed that they had no input on which programs they participated in, and that the programs they participated in were not very helpful, although some youth highlighted positive experiences.

- All youth survey responses indicated that a judge or probation officer decided what programs they would participate in, and that they had no input into this decision (40% indicated their family had input).
- Over half (55%) suggested that it is not at all true or only a little true that the programs they attend are (or were) a good fit.
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) indicated that it is not at all true, or only a little true, that programs helped them build better relationships with their family or become more involved with the community.
- Close to two-thirds (60%) of youth survey respondents did convey that programs helped them do better in school and over half (55%) conveyed they helped them build skills that would help them in the future.

The perceptions of youth focus group participants mostly aligned with these findings, as these youth expressed that the only programs they attended were court mandated, and that they did not think programs were relevant, engaging, or beneficial.

Overall Support from Adults

Overall, youth conveyed that they felt somewhat supported by adults in their life. Most youth believed that the adults in their life respect them, but the extent to which this was true varied.

- One-quarter (25%) responded a little bit true, 17% responded mostly true, and 42% responded very true to this statement. Another 17% responded that they do not feel the adults in their life respect them.
- Two-thirds (67%) of youth responded that it is not at all true or only a little true that there are people they can talk to when they are feeling sad or lonely, and more than one-third (36%) responded that it is not at all true or only a little true that they know where to go to find help at school if they need it.

Appendix B: Evaluation Methods and Participants

This Appendix details the data collection activities carried out in each county, the number of participants, and the analytic methods the evaluation team used.

Summary of Data Collection

The following table lists the number of participants in each county's respective data collection activities. Greater detail about the participants is provided below.

Table 1. Summary of Data Collection by County

Alameda County	San Diego County	San Joaquin County	Solano County
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership KIIs (7) • FG with Probation Supervisors (7) • FG with CBO Providers (6) • Staff Survey (41) • Youth Survey (27) • Caregiver Survey (2) • Documentary Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership KIIs (8) • Group interviews with PYJI Team (4) • Interviews with Wraparound providers (2) • Staff Survey (33) • Youth Survey (35) • Caregiver Survey (23) • Documentary Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership KIIs (8) • FG with County Line Staff (10) • FG with CBO Leadership and Line Staff (6) • Staff Survey (110) • Youth Survey (61) • Caregiver Survey (22) • Documentary Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership KIIs (7) • FG with VCUSD and County Staff (12) • FG with CBO Staff (3) • Staff Survey (13) • Youth Survey (13) • Caregiver Survey (0) • Documentary Data

Analytic Approach and Limitations

The RDA evaluation team coded all qualitative data thematically, coding for implementation progress and challenges, PYJI elements¹⁰, and domains of systems change implementation¹¹ classified through the team's literature review. Where possible, we also coded for specific public agencies, community-partners, and staff level. Through this approach, we were able to identify progress and challenges in implementation across PYJI elements and performance measure domains, as well as differences in responses within and between PYJI partner agencies.

The evaluation team analyzed staff surveys according to respondents' affiliation (lead agency, other public agency, or community-based partner) and position (director/manager or line staff). We then triangulated survey findings with findings from interviews and focus groups with staff. It is important to note that because of wide variations in the number of respondents in different counties as well as from different PYJI partners, surveys were analyzed primarily to ascertain trends within counties, in contrast to qualitative data which was analyzed for trends within and across counties. The evaluation team analyzed youth and caregiver surveys primarily to understand trends within counties. We then

¹⁰ PYJI elements included positive youth development, trauma-informed care, wraparound services, team-based decision making, and gender responsive services.

¹¹ Domains of system change implementation included leadership vision and support; line staff vision and support; partnerships and collaboration; policies and procedures; data collection, sharing, and use; family and community engagement; training; and resources and sustainability.

compared survey findings with findings from the youth focus groups, which were included in a previous memo.¹²

Limitations

As with any research, there are several limitations in the evaluation design and data collection that are important to keep in mind when reviewing findings.

- **Ability to attribute changes to PYJI.** Because PYJI counties are undertaking multiple initiatives and projects simultaneously, it is not possible to isolate whether changes have occurred as part of PYJI, as part of concurrent efforts, or both. In addition, it is not possible to fully isolate the progress that counties made or challenges they experienced in Year 2, as many activities that were implemented in Year 2 had already begun in Year 1. In order to address these limitations, the evaluation design includes substantial qualitative data, along with secondary sources such as documentary data and ongoing conversations with the Sierra Health Foundation project team, to allow the evaluation team to cross-reference data from multiple sources. For example, RDA used key informant interviews and focus groups to understand each county's pre-implementation context and ask informants to identify specific changes that have occurred as part of PYJI and in Year 2. This assisted the evaluation team in attributing activities and outcomes to activities carried out under the initiative.
- **Reliance on self-reported information.** Interviews and focus groups rely on self-reported data, and as such, there is the possibility of recall bias or social desirability bias. The use of multiple data sources, as well as efforts to ensure that sources come from a diversity of agencies and perspectives, are designed to mitigate these limitations.
- **Inconsistency in participation.** Several limitations arose regarding the qualitative data collection in Year 2. First, due to several challenges in scheduling and recruitment, the makeup of the focus group participants was not consistent across counties. For example, staff focus group participants ranged from middle management to line staff. In addition, the agencies and organizations staff represented varied greatly, with some focus groups including staff from only one or two PYJI partners and others including more diverse representation. With regard to the surveys with staff, youth, and caregivers, all three surveys also had very different response rates across the four counties, with some counties reaching high proportions of their population, and others reaching much smaller proportions. As such, it is important to keep in mind that the findings from these data collection efforts reflect the experiences of those who were engaged in and chose to respond to the survey, and may not be generalizable to all staff, crossover youth, or caregivers.
- **Variation in youth survey administration.** It is also important to consider potential bias in youth survey responses based on how the survey was administered. While the evaluation team made efforts to set up consistent administration procedures, the diverse contexts of the PYJI counties and their PYJI programs necessarily led to variations in survey administration. As some youth completed

¹² Sierra Health Foundation produced a brief summary of youth focus group findings, available at the following link: http://www.sierrahealth.org/assets/PYJI/PYJI_Youth_Voices_June_2015.pdf

the survey online while others completed a paper version, the different modes of administration may have affected youths' perceptions of the confidentiality of the survey. In addition, while all youth completed the survey independently, youth received the survey from different staff (in some cases probation officers and in other cases CBO providers), which may have influenced youths' responses.

Leadership Key Informant Interview Participants

Alameda County

1. Chief Probation Officer, *Alameda County Probation Department*
2. Management Analyst (PYJI Coordinator), *Alameda County Probation Department*
3. Children Systems of Care Director, *Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) Health Care Services (HCS)*
4. Director, *Social Services Agency (SSA)/Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)*
5. Judge, *Alameda County Superior Court, Juvenile Courts*
6. Foster Youth Services, *Alameda County Office of Education*
7. Administrator, *CBO Partner*

San Diego County

1. Chief Probation Officer, *San Diego County Probation Department*
2. Deputy Chief Probation Officer (Juvenile Hall), *San Diego County Probation Department*
3. Supervising Probation Officer/PYJI Coordinator, *San Diego County Probation Department*
4. Child Welfare Director, *Health & Human Services Agency*
5. Deputy District Attorney – Juvenile, *District Attorney's Office*
6. Behavioral Health Services Administrator, *Behavioral Health Services*
7. Associate Director, *Children's Initiative*
8. Senior Policy Advisor, *Board of Supervisors, Supervisor Ron Roberts*

San Joaquin County

1. Chief Probation Officer, *San Joaquin County Probation Department*
2. PYJI Coordinator/ Evaluation Liaison, *San Joaquin County Probation Department*
3. Deputy Director, *Child Welfare Services, Human Services Agency*
4. Interim Deputy Director Children and Youth Services, *Behavioral Health Department*
5. Family Vision Supervisor, *Victor Community Support Services*
6. Executive Director, *Fathers and Families of San Joaquin*
7. Director, *California Partnership for Families*
8. Foster Youth Services Director, *San Joaquin County Office of Education*

Solano County

1. Superintendent, *Vallejo City Unified School District*
2. Director of Partnerships & Community Engagement, *Vallejo City Unified School District*
3. Assistant Superintendent, *Solano County Office of Education*

4. Chief Probation Officer, *Solano County Probation Department*
5. Supervising Deputy Probation Officer, *Solano County Probation Department*
6. Judge, *Superior Court, Solano County*
7. Executive Director, *Fighting Back Partnerships (CBO Representative)*

Staff Focus Group Participants

Alameda County

1. Probation Unit Supervisors (7 participants)
2. CBO Staff (6 participants from 3 CBOs)

San Diego County (Group Interviews)

1. PYJI Probation Officers (2)
2. YFC and JRS (2)
3. Wraparound Provider – San Diego Center for Children (1)
4. Wraparound Provider – Fred Finch Youth Center (1)

San Joaquin County

1. County Staff (10 participants from Probation, CPS, and Behavioral Health)
2. CBO Staff (6 participants from 4 CBOs)

Solano County

- VCUSD and County Staff (12 participants, Probation Officers/Supervisors, Academic Support Providers, Juvenile Hall)
- CBO Staff (3 participants from 1 CBO)

Staff Survey Participants

Alameda County

Total: 41

- Probation Department: 19
- Other Public Agencies: 1
- CBOs: 21

San Diego County

Total: 33

- Probation Department: 15
- Other Public Agencies: 12
- CBOs: 6

San Joaquin County

Total: 110

- Probation Department: 41
- Other Public Agencies: 49
- CBOs: 20

Solano County

Total: 13

- Probation Department: 8
- Other Public Agencies: 3
- CBOs: 2

Youth and Caregiver Survey Participants

Surveys were disseminated by the PYJI evaluation liaison in each county. Youth and caregiver surveys were available in English and in Spanish, and both versions were available online and in paper.

Alameda County

Total: 29

- Youth: 27
- Caregivers¹³: 2

In Alameda County, the youth survey was disseminated by community-based organizations that are part of the Delinquency Prevention Network (DPN). The age of youth respondents ranged from ages 14 to 19 with a mean of 17. Two-thirds were male, and youth most commonly identified as Hispanic/Latino (48%), followed by African American (30%), Asian or Pacific Islander (15%), White/Caucasian (11%), American Indian/Native Alaskan (7%), and other ethnicities (7%). Seventy-eight percent of respondents reported living with a parent/caregiver. Other respondents reported living with another family member (7%), a group home (7%), foster care (4%), and independent living (4%). Many youth respondents heard about the survey from a staff member at a community based organization (62%), while others heard about it from a counselor or therapist (31%) or a case worker/case manager (4%). Seventy-five percent of youth indicated they were in school, and 37% indicated they currently have a social worker or case worker (30% also responded that they had one in the past).

The majority of youth reported having a probation officer at some point in time (93%), and 78% reported currently having a probation officer.¹⁴ Twenty-three of the twenty-seven youth respondents (85%) had been in juvenile hall at least once, and 59% had been in juvenile hall at least twice. Thirty-

¹³ This was not a sufficient number of responses to include in the analysis, so this report only includes youth responses.

¹⁴ All PYJI youth are supposed to be on Probation. It is possible that because the survey was disseminated via the DPN, some youth who responded to the survey did not meet the County's definition of crossover youth.

seven percent of youth indicated they had a case worker or social worker currently. Approximately three-quarters of youth were enrolled in school. All but one respondent participated in at least one county program, and over 80% participated in three or more programs. The programs youth participated in included job training or internship programs (93%), therapy or counseling services (78%), tutoring groups (63%), anger management programs (63%), mentoring programs (44%), and drug treatment programs (41%). Only one youth had participated at a program with the Lincoln Center.

San Diego County

Total: 58

- Youth: 35
- Caregivers: 23

In San Diego County, the youth survey was disseminated by the PYJI team (probation officers, Youth and Family Counselor, Juvenile Recovery Specialist). The age of youth ranged from ages 12 to 18 with a mean of 15. Males comprised 82% of youth respondents while females comprised 18%. The majority of youth respondents identified as Hispanic/Latino (70%), followed by African American (27%), Asian or Pacific Islander (6%), American Indian/Native Alaskan (6%), and White/Caucasian (3%). Most also reported living with their caregiver (85%), while 12% reported living with another family member, and 3% reported living with someone else. The majority of youth respondents heard about the survey through their probation officer (79%) while another 18% heard about it through a counselor or therapist. Thirty-four of the thirty-five respondents (97%) indicated that they were in school. Only three youth respondents, or 9%, reported having a social worker or case worker through Child Welfare, although 35% of youth respondents reported having a social worker in the past.

The majority of caregivers who responded to the survey were female (68%). Most reported being the youth's mother. Other relationships included father, grandmother, grandfather, aunt, and sister. Similar to youth respondents, the majority of caregivers identified as Hispanic/Latino (68%), followed by African American/Black (18%), other ethnicities (9%), and American Indian/Native Alaskan (5%).

All surveyed youth reported having a probation officer at some point in time, and all but one reported currently having a probation officer (97%). 83% of youth respondents had been in juvenile hall at least once. Most youth respondents (94%) participated in programs and services. Overall, over 80% of youth reported participating in therapy or counseling services, either currently or in the past. Approximately 50% reported participating in tutoring groups, while approximately 44% reported participating in anger management programs and 38% reported participating in drug treatment programs. Another 35% reported participating in mentoring programs while 24% reported participated in job training or internship programs. More than half of youth respondents reported participating in groups with other youth on probation, and over 60% reported participating in three or more total programs. Less than 10% of youth were sure that they participated in programs with Fred Finch (9%) or Families Forward (6%).

Youth responses mostly mirrored those given by their caregivers; 100% of caregivers reported having a child on probation at some point in time, and 96% reported having a child currently on probation. The majority of caregivers (91%) indicated their children are in school. Five of the twenty-two caregivers

who were surveyed indicated their children had a social worker or case worker through Child Welfare, representing a larger percentage (23%) than indicated by youth (9%).¹⁵ Of the caregivers who replied that their children do not currently have a social worker, 10% noted that their child had one in the past.

San Joaquin County

Total: 83

- Youth: 61
- Caregivers: 22

In San Joaquin County, the youth survey was disseminated by probation officers. The age of youth ranged from ages 15 to 20 with a mean of 17. Males comprised 77% of youth respondents while females comprised 23%. Youth respondents most commonly identified as Hispanic/Latino (48%), followed by White/Caucasian (30%), African American (26%), American Indian/Native Alaskan (10%), other ethnicities (6%), and Asian or Pacific Islander (2%). Forty-four percent of youth respondents reported living in a group home and 31% reported living with their parent/caregiver. Approximately 10 % reported living in independent living, while approximately 3% reported living with another family member and 12% reported living in some other setting.

The vast majority of caregivers who responded to the survey were female (91%), and most reported being the youth's mother (7 caregivers did not respond). Other relationships included grandmother and mother-in-law. Similar to youth respondents, caregivers most commonly identified as Hispanic/Latino (52%), follow by White/Caucasian (38%), African American/Black (19%), Asian or Pacific Islander (10%).

All the youth who responded (sixty) reported having a probation officer at some point in time, and all but two reported currently having a probation officer (97%). Fifty-nine of the sixty-one youth respondents had been in juvenile hall at least once, and 82% had been in juvenile hall at least twice. All youth respondents participated in at least one county program. Almost 90% of youth reported participating in therapy or counseling services, either currently or in the past. Over 50% reported participating in drug treatment programs (59%), anger management programs (69%), and/or tutoring groups (57%), while approximately 40-45% reported participating in mentoring programs or job training or internship programs. Over 70% of youth respondents reported participating in groups with other youth on probation, and over 75% reported participating in three or more total programs. Approximately one-third of youth participated in programs with Fathers and Families of San Joaquin and/or Victor Community Services and approximately 14% participated in programs with Community Partnerships for Families. Less than 5% of youth reported never having participated in any program services.

The majority of youth respondents heard about the survey through their probation officer (69%) while others also heard about it through their counselor or therapist, case manager/case worker, or someone else. Ninety percent indicated that they were in school. Approximately 33% of youth respondents

¹⁵ PYJI participants in San Diego County are not meant to have current involvement in the Child Welfare system. It is unclear why a portion of participants identified having a social worker.

reported currently having a social worker or case worker through Child Welfare, while another 7% of youth respondents reported having a social worker in the past.

For the most part, youth responses aligned with those given by their caregivers; 95% of caregivers reported having a child currently on probation. Contrary to youth responses, one caregiver, or approximately 5%, reported that their child has never had a probation officer. The majority of caregivers (95%) indicated their children are in school. Six of twenty-two caregivers (27%) indicated their child has a social worker or case worker, while another 19% reported their child has had one in the past.

Solano County

Total: 13

- Youth: 13
- Caregivers: 0

In Solano County, the youth survey was disseminated by the PYJ Liaison. The age of youth respondents ranged from ages 15 to 17 with a mean of 16. Seventy percent were male, and youth most commonly identified as African American (90%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (20%), White/Caucasian (10%), and American Indian/Native Alaskan (10%). Ninety percent of respondents reported living with a parent/caregiver and 10% reported living with another family member. The majority of youth respondents heard about the survey from someone at school (60%), their counselor or therapist (20%), the PYJ Liaison (10%), or someone else (10%). All youth participants indicated that they were in school. One of six youth who responded reported currently having a caseworker or social worker, while another reported she or he had one in the past.

All youth reported having a probation officer at some point in time, and all but two reported currently having a probation officer (85%). Ten of eleven youth had been in juvenile hall at least once (eight had been to juvenile hall at least twice). One youth respondent who reported (currently) having a social worker.¹⁶ All respondents were enrolled in school. All but one respondent participated in at least one county program. The programs youth participated in included tutoring groups (67%), therapy or counseling services (58%), drug treatment programs (58%), mentoring programs, (50%) anger management programs, (42%), and job training or internship programs (25%). Half of youth indicated they participated in programs with ALDEA.

Youth Focus Group Participants

The evaluation team also conducted focus groups with youth in each county in November and December 2014 to gather feedback about youth experiences in their own words.

Alameda County

Six youth participated in the Alameda County PYJ Youth Focus Group. Youth were recruited to participate in the focus group through Soulciety, a paid job training program located at the REACH

¹⁶ We do not report on this youth's responses in order to protect the anonymity of the survey respondent.

Ashland Youth Center. One participant was female, and participants' ages ranged from 16 to 19. One participant was on adult probation and the other five were currently on or had recently been on juvenile probation. Five of the six participants had spent time incarcerated.

San Diego County

Nine youth participated in the San Diego PYJI Youth Focus Group. The PYJI Evaluation Liaison recruited the youth from the PYJI pilot program to participate in the focus group. Four youth were female. Participants' ages ranged from 13 to 17 years, with most between 15 and 17 years. Four youth had been on probation for less than a year, four had been on probation for a year, and one had been on probation for three years.

San Joaquin County

Nine youth participated in the San Joaquin County PYJI Youth Focus Group. The PYJI Evaluation Liaison worked with the two community-based organizations (CBOs) contracted through PYJI to recruit youth for the focus group, and many of the youth were enrolled in the county's first round of PYJI youth groups, which are being carried out by the two CBOs. Four of the youth were female. Participants' ages ranged from 15 to 19 years. Not all youth reported how long they had been on probation, but their experience on probation ranged from less than a year to four years. Youth generally had experience with more than one probation officer.

Solano County

Six youth participated in the Solano County PYJI Youth Focus Group. The Director of Partnerships & Community Engagement at Vallejo City Unified School District and the PYJI Liaison recruited youth to participate in the focus group. All but one youth was male. One youth was in 10th grade, three were in 11th grade, and two were in 12th grade. Two youth were enrolled at the Vallejo Education Academy (VEA) alternative school, while four youth were from Vallejo High School. Two youth had been on probation for less than a year, two had been on probation for a year, and two had been on probation for three or more years.