

Positive Youth Justice Initiative Year 2 Evaluation Findings: Solano County

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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 **Error! Reference source not found.** 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, including improving data practices and systems;

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*)

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 crossover youth in Solano County. Most Probation respondents (88%) somewhat agreed or agreed that agencies and organizations serving crossover youth collaborate

"[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

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

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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.