

**VENTURA COUNTY  
COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS PARTNERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION PLAN  
THROUGH FY 2021-2022**

Assembly Bill 109 (AB 109), the Public Safety Realignment Act, went into effect on October 1, 2011. This historic legislation changed the definition of a felony offense in California; shifted housing for lower-level offenders from state prisons to local jails; transferred the supervision of designated parolees from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to the local probation agency as “post release community supervision” (PRCS) offenders; and created a new form of supervision called Mandatory Supervision (MS).

AB 109 requires each county’s “Community Corrections Partnership” (CCP) to complete a realignment implementation plan. Ventura County’s Public Safety Realignment Implementation Plan (Plan) was originally initiated on September 27, 2011, with the last significant update in 2015.

Below are some highlights since 2011:

- Re-Entry Court – established new court for realignment offenders.
- Evidence-Based Sentencing – Probation includes results of the Ohio Risk and Needs Assessment (ORAS) in probation and sentencing reports in an effort to provide justice partners with recommendations that may be utilized in Evidence-Based Sentencing.
- Electronic Monitoring Unit (EMU) program - expanded to alleviate rising jail population due to passage of AB 109.
- Pre-Trial Supervision program – alternative to custody for low-risk offenders pending criminal proceedings. In July 2019, Ventura County was selected to participate in the Judicial Council of California’s Pretrial Pilot Program.
- Development of community-based organizations (CBOs) - Interface Children & Family Services (Interface) has been funded to develop CBOs’ capacity to provide evidence-based services to AB 109 offenders.
- Core Connection programs – contracted with Interface to administer a unique program that subcontracts with other CBOs to provide four major evidence-based services.
- Definition of recidivism - expanded Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) definition to gauge more completely the county’s progress in reducing recidivism.
- In-custody evidence-based programs – created more services for inmates in jail.
- Mandatory supervision - coordinated with courts to assist in understanding the use of split sentences as an option to incarceration.
- Realignment Data Dashboard – created a public safety realignment data hub that culls pertinent data from VCIJIS and County AB 109 programs to display outcomes.
- EVALCORP Research and Consulting (EVALCORP) has provided evaluations and assessments of AB 109 programs. EVALCORP also produced a strategic

plan to provide a roadmap for implementing countywide realignment efforts for fiscal years 2019/20–2021/22.

- Participated in the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative with the California State Association of Counties to adapt state-specific evidence-based policymaking strategies.
- Clients that score moderate to very high risk on the ORAS are required to participate in Moral Reconciliation Therapy.
- Medicated Assisted Treatment (MAT) has been utilized in the jail for realignment clients.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in March 2020, a “Stay Well at Home Order” was issued in Ventura County. As a result of these orders, court was closed; the jail limited bookings; zero bail was in effect; California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation released PRCS offenders early; in person contact was minimized, etc. Nonetheless, Ventura County’s realignment partners worked together to continue to deliver services.

#### **AB 109 Funding for FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022:**

Due to the COVID–19 pandemic, an in-depth review of AB 109 funding was not available for this implementation plan at the time of submission. The County of Ventura continues to evaluate the financial impacts of COVID-19 on State and Federal funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2022.

#### **AB 109 PROGRAMS, SERVICES AND HIGHLIGHTS FOR FY 2021-2022:**

##### **Sheriff’s Office:**

The Sheriff’s Office continues to advance their efforts to provide innovative and effective programs and opportunities to the inmate population. Enhanced services have been created to address the dramatic increase in inmates with serious mental illness. The Sheriff’s Office has maintained their Electronic Monitoring Unit (EMU) program, which moves low risk inmates out of custody, allowing greater flexibility in housing and accommodating inmates who are serving longer sentences. The EMU criteria has been adjusted to provide low-risk offenders nearing the end of their sentences an opportunity to seek employment and engage in out of custody programming, which will assist with their transition back to the community.

Since the onset of realignment, the Ventura County Jail has seen the population numbers of inmates with serious mental illnesses quadruple. There is an intense workload that comes with this specialized population, which can expose the Sheriff’s Office to litigation if steps are not taken to provide enhanced services. To address the challenges that come with this population, custody staff have been reallocated to develop a specialized unit to work directly with these inmates. The Sheriff’s Office also expanded Crisis Intervention Training to include custody staff.

EMU has been a successful alternative to incarceration for low-risk offenders. The program was established early in the realignment process and remained a small but effective program for several years. The Sheriff's Office EMU program seeks maintains an average population of 50-60 inmates. There is room to develop this program further in order to provide even greater flexibility within the jails.

The Sheriff's Office dramatically increased the size and scope of their Moral Reconciliation Therapy treatment system. This program teaches and reinforces reasoned thinking and decision making while encouraging appropriate behavior and responses to stressors in society. Lastly, Wellpath has been contracted to provide this program to a larger population of inmates. Participation, success, and efficacy of the program are being monitored by an independent organization to ensure an evidence-based evaluation.

### **Probation Agency:**

As of November 2021, approximately 759 PRCS and MS offenders (includes those residing out of county) were actively supervised by deputy probation officers assigned to three regional offices (Oxnard, Ventura, and Simi Valley). Caseload sizes are capped at 40 - 55 offenders per deputy probation officer.

A comprehensive risk/needs assessment (ORAS) is completed on each offender to identify risk to reoffend in the community and identify criminogenic risk factors and other areas of need. The assessments are to be completed after release from prison for the PRCS offenders and provided to the Court at the time of sentencing for MS offenders to better inform the Court and assist in sentencing decision-making. In the field, deputy probation officers use the assessments to work with offenders to create, support and monitor individualized case plans targeting treatment to address moderate to high needs along with providing community supervision to ensure compliance with terms and conditions. A formalized graduated response and incentive system was implemented to enhance rewards for case plan successes and proportionate sanctions for non-compliance.

Deputy probation officers are part of a multi-disciplinary screening team which includes representatives from the Behavioral Health Department, Telecare, Alcohol and Drug Programs, and the Human Services Agency. Specialized assessments are completed, and referrals are made for mental health services and chemical dependency treatment. In addition, the Human Services Agency provides countywide employment and vocational training and services for those offenders appropriate for entering the workforce. This program, "Specialized Training and Employment Project for Success" (STEPS), has been recognized by the California State Association of Counties as an innovative approach to reduce recidivism among participants.

Each offender is monitored closely in the community by a "Probation/Police Supervision Team" which includes deputy probation officers and a police officer or deputy sheriff. These teams conduct unannounced home visits, employment checks, and community contacts with offenders to ensure compliance with community supervision terms. The Probation/Police Supervision Teams are knowledgeable in community resources and

services, and complete referrals to these organizations as needed. The Probation Agency's law enforcement partners include the Ventura Police Department, Simi Valley Police Department, and the Sheriff's Office. Oxnard Police Department's Crime Analysis Unit provides offender information and intelligence to deputy probation officers.

To better service offenders sentenced to MS, a deputy probation officer is assigned to the Todd Road and Main Jails to work closely with this population in custody. In this capacity, the Probation Agency conducts risk/needs assessments, works with the Sheriff's Office's Inmate Services to address risk factors through custody case plans, conducts cognitive behavioral interventions, and collaboratively works with offenders and their support systems to develop and implement re-entry case plans upon their release.

Furthering the use of best practices, the Probation Agency is part of the very successful Pre-trial Supervision program. As part of the program, the Probation Agency provides the court with evidence-based pre-trial risk assessments and meets with defendants who are released on their own recognizance to monitor their compliance with the terms and conditions of their supervised release. In July 2019, Ventura County was selected to participate in the Judicial Council of California's Pretrial Pilot Program. This program is operational seven days a week.

The Probation Agency also provides Re-entry Court with a deputy probation officer as part of a multi-disciplinary team consisting of representatives from the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, and the Behavioral Health Department. The Re-entry Court program serves as an alternative to custody sanction for violations of probation. Services include intensive court supervision and additional case plan management.

### **District Attorney's Office:**

The District Attorney's realignment budget funds the equivalent of three full-time Deputy District Attorneys (DDA) and a portion of a Victim Advocate that is dedicated to handling cases affected by realignment. Core staffing remains assigned to handling Penal Code Section 1170(h) cases, parole hearings, victim services, and realignment programming. Direct supervisorial, legal support and indirect costs associated with public safety realignment positions are no longer supported by AB 109 revenues, though the services and costs cannot be eliminated. The passage of AB 109 legislation dramatically changed sentencing, custody, supervision, and revocation options for well over 700 different kinds of felony offenses described within a number of different codes (i.e., Business and Professions Code, Health and Safety Code, Government Code, Penal Code, and others). These changes have necessitated increases in training, policy and procedure development and other increases in workload related to realignment's impact on criminal filings, shaping appropriate alternative sentencing and intervention programs, participating in parole revocation proceedings and expanded victims' services responsibilities.

In 2020, the District Attorney's Office reviewed more than 1,450 1170(h) cases submitted by law enforcement and litigated more than 860 of those cases. The District Attorney's

Office also participated in nearly 200 parole and post release offender petitions in 2020. In addition to the parole and probation revocation hearings, a DDA participates in several specialty courts, such as the Homeless Court, Mental Health Court and Veterans Court, whose aim is to facilitate rehabilitation among targeted populations. As an example, Veterans Court connects veterans to needed treatment and services, which may include mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, vocational rehabilitation, or other life skills services and programs. Lastly, the Victim Advocate performs responsibilities formerly performed by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, such as ensuring victims are notified of appeal status, providing victim support at revocation hearings, developing an adequate plan to collect restitution from defendants, and helping to develop plans to ensure compliance with Marsy's Law when offenders are released on home detention or other alternative sentencing forums.

### **Public Defender:**

The Public Defender's (PD) realignment budget continues to include funding for three attorneys, two social workers, and one law clerk in order to absorb the impact of AB 109 on department operations. In addition to litigating AB 109 matters, the department also uses realignment funding to connect eligible clients to creative, non-jail treatment programs that promote rehabilitation and reduce recidivism. The Public Defender also continues to assist clients with re-entry into the community, also reducing the rate of recidivism.

Public Defender attorneys screen our PRCS, MS, and parole clients to identify those who would benefit from - and are willing to accept - treatment. The department's staff of social workers then works to find appropriate treatment at no cost to the client. Once an appropriate program has been identified, and subsequently approved by the justice partners, the Public Defender Investigator staff transport clients from jail directly to the program. Often, clients are released early for purposes of treatment, reducing jail overhead costs by lowering the number of jail beds occupied.

In 2020, the shutdowns and closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced the number of available treatment programs, and therefore the department struggled to find appropriate placements for clients during that year. However, now that most facilities have reopened, the department is again placing client in programs. Indeed, in 2021 we have already placed more clients in programs than we did in 2019. The number of clients we have assisted in finding treatment during the past three years are below:

2019: 163 placements

2020: 82 placements

2021 (as of December 2021): 178 placements

The PDs office continues to connect clients to specialty courts such as Homeless Court, Veteran's Court, Mental Health Court and Re-Entry Court, working in collaboration with

our justice partners (Probation, District Attorney, and Behavioral Health) to find rehabilitative services that will assist clients in returning to their families and their community. Homeless Court, for example, allows clients to reduce their court fines and fees by performing community service. Public Defender Law Clerks assist clients in clearing their records to make it easier for them to find jobs and housing.

Mandatory Supervision clients continue to be eligible for Re-Entry Court, another collaborative effort on the part of all justice partners to find appropriate evidence-based alternatives to incarceration. The goal is to ensure that clients are connected to appropriate services to address criminogenic issues so they can rejoin their families and the community and break the cycle of incarceration.

### **Community Based Organizations:**

The Core Connection team is a collaborative of community-based agencies with the shared goal of providing services to the AB109 population and their families in Ventura County. The mission of Core Connection is to remove barriers, increase awareness, and provide community support to individuals who have been incarcerated in order to promote successful reintegration and reduce recidivism.

In FY 2020-2021, the Core Connection team at Interface continued to function as the reentry coordination agency. Ongoing services include coordination of service referrals with the CBO reentry providers, serving as a liaison between CBOs and the Probation Agency, providing a quality assurance function for the subcontracted agencies and providing community capacity building around reentry issues. Contracts were renewed with existing providers selected to deliver Moral Reconciliation Therapy, Reentry Case Management, Restorative Justice Accountability Group, Trauma Treatment Services, Sober Living and Specialized Treatment Services. Due to continued COVID-19 impacts, Restorative Justice services were never re-introduced in-custody. All services provided by the Core Connection Partnership continue to be available in English and Spanish. In FY 2020-2021 of 448 referrals (individual clients may have been referred or re-referred to more than one service). Core Connection service partners completed 191 new initial intakes, 148 intakes for previously active clients and 234 clients successfully complete services.

During FY 2020-2021, Core Connection offered several capacity-building events, forums, and trainings. These were held virtually for the service partners in order to call attention to issues and services that are important to the reentry community. Additional capacity building was provided virtually for each Probation Agency area office for probation officers, and as needed to individual officers and service providers.

Interface has developed an internal Training, Grants and Evaluation department, to prepare a structured monitoring and evaluation system for the Core Connection program to support data on outcomes for FY 2020-2021. The results of this evaluation will be utilized to inform service delivery and operation improvement.

### **Human Services Agency:**

County of Ventura Human Services Agency (HSA) Adult Family Services (AFS) Department provides employment services via the Specialized Training and Employment Project for Success (STEPS) program. Referrals into the program are made directly by probation officers after they assess whether the client is an appropriate candidate for the program. Upon entering the STEPS program, clients complete an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) that assesses for job skills, career objectives, barriers to employment, and supportive services. The IEP is also used to develop an Individualized Service Plan (ISP) addressing his/her unique needs. In addition to being provided with job readiness (e.g., job application completion, resume completion, interview skills, etc.), job search, and job placement assistance, STEPS program participants are provided with assistance in meeting other basic needs so that they can secure a job (e.g., with clothing or medical care, as needed). STEPS program staff identify and build relationships with employers throughout the county to ensure successful job placement.

### **Behavioral Health Department:**

For FY 2020-2021, Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) clinicians provided 369 total assessments for the AB 109 population and served 354 unique clients. To continue serving the mental health and substance use disorder treatment needs of the PRCS offenders, VCBH has three co-located clinicians with mental health and substance abuse assessment and treatment experience at the Probation Agency's regional sites. VCBH also can do in-custody assessments in cooperation with the Sheriff's Office. This interagency collaboration supports a one-stop evaluation and referral process. In addition to screening, triage, and assessment, the VCBH clinicians provide motivational interviewing, psychoeducation and support, referrals to appropriate services and supports, care coordination, and follow-up.

For substance use treatment services, in addition to the six county-operated clinics, VCBH contracts with Alternative Action Programs (AAP), HealthRIGHT 360, Tarzana Treatment Centers, Aegis Treatment Centers, and Western Pacific Med Corp. Alternative Action Programs provides population specific, evidence-based outpatient treatment in Oxnard, Ventura, Simi Valley, and in-custody at Todd Road Jail. All outpatient VCBH and AAP services include individualized assessment, treatment planning, group and individual counseling, medication assisted treatment (MAT), and Recovery Services. Both HealthRIGHT 360 and Tarzana Treatment Centers provide withdrawal management (detox), and three levels of acute stabilization and residential services (Clinically Managed Low-Intensity, Clinically Managed Population-Specific High-Intensity, and Clinically Managed High-Intensity) for clients meeting medical necessity. Aegis Treatment Centers and Western Pacific Med Corp provide medication-based opioid/narcotic treatment for opioid use disorder. During FY 2020-2021, 1,766 unique clients received NTP services at Aegis or Western Pacific. During FY 2020-2021 a total of 2,752 unique clients were served throughout the entire VCBH Substance Use Services Network.

For mental health treatment services, VCBH contracts with Telecare. Telecare provides a two-tiered program with a capacity to treat up to 45 AB 109 clients. Mental Health services are provided in accordance with the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) model. Behavioral Health continues to be committed to treating individuals in the least restrictive setting possible; however, some funding is available for those who may require a higher level of care.

### **Local Law Enforcement:**

As of November 2021, Ventura County currently has approximately 759 PRCS and MS offenders residing in the community. From October 2011 to November 2021, there have been 8,436 flash incarcerations and 13,891 probable cause bookings.

A balanced approach with this population has been most effective in reducing recidivism, targeting short-term (length of supervision) prevention and suppression efforts and long-term behavioral change through evidence-based practices, assessments, and treatment. The partnership between local law enforcement and the Probation Agency allows agencies to timely share and distribute critical information, work together in the field to enforce terms of supervision, and track and maintain contact with offenders allowing for enhanced community monitoring and targeted treatment referrals.

The partnership between the Probation Agency, the Sheriff's Office and the cities of Oxnard, Ventura, and Simi Valley have been strong and successful since realignment. One law enforcement officer from the Sheriff's Office, Ventura and Simi Valley is embedded with the corresponding probation field units. Absent this direct team approach, a greater burden would be placed on both the Probation Agency and local law enforcement to obtain information on offenders and coordinate resources in the community. Continued success of this partnership is a vital part of maintaining the prevention/suppression strategy within the desired balanced approach to supervision. The partnership between the Probation Agency and the city of Oxnard has transitioned from a law enforcement officer embedded with a probation field unit to the implementation of two crime analysis data technicians. Unfortunately, this partnership was suspended due to staffing issues.

### **EVALUATION OF AB 109 PROGRAMS:**

On behalf of the Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) the Probation Agency contracted with EVALCORP Research and Consulting (EVALCORP) to develop a revised Strategic Plan for the CCP in order to provide a roadmap for implementing countywide realignment efforts for FYs 2019/20–2021/22. The Strategic Plan was finalized in July 2019 and provides an overview of the county's AB 109 program's assets and gaps. The CCP assembled an "Exploratory Committee" made up of representatives from the partnering agencies. The Exploratory Committee was tasked with reviewing AB 109 programs and their efficacy utilizing the Strategic Plan and pending analyses from EVALCORP on recidivism of subpopulations and services impacts.



In December 2019, EVALCORP produced the analysis by subpopulation and cohort groups from FY 2011/2012 to 2015/2016. The analysis concluded that 56% (n = 1,828) of offenders across the three offender subpopulations (PRCS, MS and jail only) recidivated within three years of release from custody; 77% of the new arrests were misdemeanor level offenses; and 22% were felonies. Of these offenses, an average of 43% were for drug offenses across subpopulations.

In February 2021, EVALCORP presented their report on AB109 Service and Recidivism Findings to the CCP. Since the start of realignment through to June 2019, a total of 2,456 PROs and 900 MS clients have received or been referred for services. Mental Health Services were provided to 11% of the PROs and 10% of the MS clients. The primary mental health diagnosis was mood disorder, followed by psychotic and anxiety disorders. Of those referred for mental health services, 66% of the PROs and 63% of the MS clients completed services. There was a 52% recidivism rate among those who did not receive any mental health services. The recidivism rate for clients who completed substance abuse treatment was 46%, while those that did not complete treatment recidivated at 74%. Those clients that participated in the STEPS program had a 47% recidivism rate. The recidivism rate for clients that completed CORE was 38%.

In August 2021, the Budget and Exploratory Subcommittees were merged into a new Program Review and Development Subcommittee. This subcommittee will review and evaluate programming and services for clients, formulate the budgets for the fiscal year, and make recommendations on how to efficiently utilize AB109 funding.

## **OUTLOOK:**

As in years past, Ventura County public safety agencies, local law enforcement entities, health/human service departments, Superior Court, and community-based providers continued to collaborate in a comprehensive effort to reduce recidivism among this high-risk, high-need population. The goals of the CCP continue to be to reduce recidivism; reduce criminogenic needs of clients; enhance their ability to successfully re-enter into society; and community safety.

To improve on this effort, the CCP approved the formation of the Program Review and Development Subcommittee to review the strategic plan, programming and services, and further analyses of subpopulations and services impact.

In 2022, the CCP will continue its ongoing review of local efforts to ensure Ventura County is moving in the right direction.