

MEMORANDUM

FY 2024-2025 Policy & Budget Recommendations-

Community Advisory Board to the Contra Costa County Community Corrections Partnership

Introduction

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) would like to submit the following memorandum to the Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) for consideration and request public discussion of CAB's proposed policy and budget recommendations for fiscal year 2024-2025. CAB recognizes CCP for its ongoing support and attention to CAB's recommendations over the years and will continue to work in partnership with CCP members and members of the Board of Supervisors to refine, enhance, and improve our local criminal justice system.

CAB also commends the CCP, the Public Protection Committee, and CAO staff for their thoughtful and serious review of our FY 22-23- policy recommendations. We plan to continue working with all relevant stakeholders to see through the implementation of our prior year's recommendations as well as build upon them for FY 24-25.

Building from CAB's policy platform, which states:

As County residents and representatives of the community, we want a fair and effective justice system in Contra Costa County. Our approach to policy rests on four pillars:

- *We want to invest in what works.*
- *We believe that true justice requires social justice.*
- *We believe that incarceration should serve as a last resort.*
- *We believe that safety for all depends on justice for all.*

Our membership recommends the following:

RECOMMENDATION #1:

Continue investments in housing services by expanding the pool of reentry-specific housing

Due to the impending effects and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, CAB recognizes the importance of sustaining safe and stable housing for vulnerable populations. We wish to reassert our previously recommended policy solution involving the expansion of housing services and options to address the ever growing and evolving housing needs of the reentry population, particularly as they continue to be exacerbated by the pandemic, and lack of affordable housing for clients, funding, and capacity issues. Evident in the survey's feedback is the need for an increase in housing availability or

dedicated permanent supportive housing tailored for individuals with justice system involvement, and justice-involved populations living with disabilities, and/or significant behavioral health challenges.

There is a dire need for stable housing options that also provide substance use and mental health wraparound services and streamlining transitions from jail to community by providing access to immediate housing at the point of release.

We continue to highlight our concerns with utilizing one predominant housing model – transitional housing through sober living environments (SLE) as the primary source of housing for the reentry population. We are proposing that AB 109 investments be prioritized for services that utilize a housing first approach, as this is best practice within the housing field, and offer flexible housing options in addition to transitional living. We need to build upon and/or replicate existing flexible funding models to expand housing assistance. Flexible funding models would allow for provider access to an array of housing assistance (i.e., hotel vouchers, rapid rehousing, resources to cover past due rents, etc.) that would stabilize a justice-impacted individual/family. More flexible funding would provide people with the support needed at the first hint of housing instability unique to their individual housing needs and prevent them from nearing the point of crisis to provide a pathway to permanent housing.

RECOMMENDATION #2:

Expand the use of alternatives to incarceration including diversion and restorative justice programs, and ensure equitable access to these programs

CAB recognizes the significance of improving our local justice system and reducing incarceration through the use of alternative programming that provide individuals who have committed low to moderate level offenses, opportunities to course correct and receive access to critical resources at important decision points along the criminal justice system continuum. Diversion and restorative justice programs have been widely used internationally as proven solutions for decarceration and reintegrating individuals back into society successfully.

We commend our County's various law enforcement agencies and reentry service providers who have adopted these practices either as agencywide policy or as formal programs. CAB recommends the CCP consider introducing expanding diversion and restorative justice opportunities countywide by reviewing an inventory of existing programs and policies, implement programs where needed, and establish a policy that ensures that any adopted diversionary and/or restorative justice practice and program make every effort to ensure equitable access to these opportunities across race/ethnicity,

gender, age, ability, etc. To ensure and monitor the accessibility to these types of programs, we are also recommending ongoing public discussions and reporting of the demographic breakdowns of referrals, admissions, and completions of individuals participating in these programs. We recommend the intention of using a victim centered restorative justice practice approach when appropriate.

CAB also recommends offering restorative justice programming for individuals serving time in custody at Marsh Creek and West County Detention Facilities. Let's not forget adding programs for young adult TAY populations.

RECOMMENDATION #3:

Ensure all reentry programs and services are adaptable to a racial equity lens, are trauma-informed, and are culturally competent and responsive to the communities being served.

With the county's growing effort to codify racial justice and equity across all facets of the county government structure, CAB believes similar attention such be given to AB 109 funded programs and services. CAB recommends that all reentry programs and services demonstrate racial inclusion and equity and are responsive to the population's trauma histories and cultural backgrounds. We are encouraging the CCP to have public discussions on how this can be done in conjunction with the work of the Racial Justice Oversight Body and the creation of the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. CAB supports all efforts to ensure equitable access to and outcomes of funded services that are sensitive and responsive to the historical and unique needs of the communities these programs are intended to serve.

CAB is particularly proud of the effort provided by a member to include "Implicit Bias Training" for County employees & Board/Commission participants. This effort should bring a clearer lens to those who serve to those being served! As in past years, CAB has conducted its annual AB 109 Survey of County Agencies & CBO's to get the pulse of their needs. This year, CAB has championed a unique emphasis on the need for the focus on "Pre/Post Release Individuals". CAB recently initiated a first-ever survey of those individuals and the responses have been overwhelming and encouraging. We are currently reviewing and assessing those responses.

RECOMMENDATION #4:

Support the development of a data strategy coordinated by the Office of Reentry and Justice to improve data collection, analysis and evaluation of programs and services, and the impact of AB 109 funding on the reentry population.

CAB commends the CCP and Board of Supervisors' continuous support of the expansion of the

Office of Reentry and Justice's operations and stewardship of important partnerships and collaborations with our local justice system actors and stakeholders. CAB also commends the Probation Department for supporting ORJ's integration within its agency and its continuous support for bringing the community's vision of this Office into fruition. With ORJ's growing research and evaluation team and CAB recognizing the increasing demand and call for more analysis of the AB 109's impact in our community, we support ORJ's effort to establish a data strategy that will strive to address the data needs of the AB 109 collaborative involving every AB 109 funded county agency and CBO partner. This is a major undertaking and will require ongoing and long-standing partnerships across multiple stakeholders to begin answering questions relating to impact and long-term outcomes of the communities served through AB 109 resources. We recommend the CCP's full support of this effort through membership participation where needed.

It's important to call-out the ORJ's growing analytical approach to determining our path forward. Collection of data is key. We can now highlight the annual surveys and most notable is the recent Pre/Post Release Survey. With the expansion of the ORJ Office, they now have the bandwidth to engage in these vital efforts.

RECOMMENDATION #5:

Increase targeted support and expand community-based resources for individuals with disabilities that are also justice-system involved, to include persons with physical and developmental disabilities, as well as those experiencing co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders.

CAB acknowledges the growing need for specialized support for individuals with disabilities that are also impacted by the justice-system. Presently, services for those with disabilities are available and accessible, no reentry specific resources have been allocated to address this need outside of AB 109 funded behavioral health services. CAB survey has highlighted the need to connect individuals in custody to resources post and pre-release. CAB recommends CCP establish a continuity of services after release for those utilizing behavioral health services, housing, healthcare, and reestablishing peer mentorship programs. CAB recognizes the need to provide social services (or establish a team of clinical social workers to work with individuals with behavioral health needs while in-custody, at release, and through reentry. We are encouraging the CCP to have public discussions on areas where accessibility and coordination of resources can be improved for those who are justice-involved and living with disabling conditions. This can be done in conjunction with the work of the Behavioral Health Services and the creation of the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. CAB recommends the creation of a formal referral system (required by all CCC re-entry providers) that provides a continuity of care and

services to ensure adequate resources and funding are made available for post release and those returning to the community with chronic mental and health care needs or any disabling condition.

Disability can come in many forms and without having a clear understanding of how many individuals among this population need services and how these services can be coordinated and integrated to better respond to their needs is a missed opportunity to support successful reintegration and reducing recidivism. CAB welcomes more discussion and an opportunity to work in partnership with CCP members to look at this issue more in depth.

RECOMMENDATION #6:

Expand county employment opportunities and hiring among justice-involved population

This priority remains as one of CAB's recommendations due to its importance in the success of individuals returning to our community. The opportunity to earn a livable wage to support themselves and their family is vital to reduce recidivism across the County. CAB recommends the county develop an initiative to utilize the Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County to train the Human Resources Department, Contra Costa County Risk Management, and hiring managers to expand employment opportunities and hiring practices for the reentry population. In addition, there are county departments who have employed individuals with justice system involvement. It is imperative to identify the process of how those departments created employment opportunities for the justice-involved populations then replicate the process in other sectors of the county to increase county employment opportunities for individuals impacted by justice system.

Through policy actions, Contra Costa can increase the number of public employees who have been justice-involved, signaling a trust that our rehabilitation system is working to meet everyone's needs. CAB welcomes public discussions on the ways in which the county can streamline opportunities for hiring and job placement among the justice-involved population. An assessment should be completed to identify what departments can expand employment opportunities for individuals with justice system involvement and prioritize the hiring of the justice-involved population.

Additionally, CAB documented the need for additional funds in employment services to meet the increased costs experienced in our community through increasing wages for participants. As the cost of living continues to increase in California, individuals cannot be expected to live multiple weeks or months while participating in training programs that do not offer enough money to address their basic needs. The County should explore innovative ways to support the transition to gainful employment through wrap-around services, flexible spending for providers to combat one off barriers, and guaranteed income.

RECOMMENDATION #7:

Additional investment and programming to expand pre and post release coordinated services

A gap in the ability to serve individuals before they are released to return home was expressed by all departments. This barrier leads to many people leaving the prison system without a plan for housing, employment, medical care, and other necessities. Contra Costa County has made tremendous efforts to support those individuals and we recommend the County explores more ways to provide these services before someone is released from custody. The individual leaving custody as well as the community who will support their return home should be provided the resources necessary to be successful. This can include training and education for families, financial support for housing, and case management to help navigate access to available supportive services. Contra Costa can set each person up for success by increasing coordination amongst service providers to yield a detailed and integrated support plan that utilizes the resources available in the County.

CAB recommends the continued alignment of investment in data driven and research-based interventions. By creating a pathway for individuals to access the network of supportive services Contra Costa has to offer at the onset, all departments can better serve the individual. The County should continue to explore ways to support and fund innovative programs that work across departments to ensure all needs of the individual are being met.

MEMORANDUM

FY 2025-2026 Policy & Budget Recommendations-

Community Advisory Board to the Contra Costa County Community Corrections Partnership

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) would like to submit the following memorandum to the Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) for consideration and request public discussion of CAB's proposed policy and budget recommendations for fiscal year 2025-2026. CAB recognizes CCP for its ongoing support and attention to CAB's recommendations over the years and will continue to work in partnership with CCP members and members of the Board of Supervisors to refine, enhance, and improve our local criminal justice system.

CAB also commends the CCP, the Public Protection Committee, and CAO staff for their thoughtful and serious review of CAB's recommendations to allocate \$15M in excess funds. We look forward to continuing to work to strengthen the outcomes of interventions in the County through research and advocacy.

Building from CAB's policy platform, which states:

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- *We believe that incarceration should serve as a last resort.*
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Due to the comprehensive report submitted in May and September CAB would like to reiterate our recommendations for continual and increased investment in the four priority areas:

1. Expanding housing services for justice-involved individuals
2. Expanding behavioral health support for justice-involved individuals
3. Increasing employment opportunities for reentry population
4. Enhancing pre-release engagement services

CAB understands that the current budget projections anticipate a reduction in funding from the state and would like to maintain the current level of investment in community programs with a standard cost of living adjustment comparable to the county department's increases.

CAB is committed to ensuring the voices of the AB 109 population are amplified through our work and their needs are being met through County investments. As CAB continues to increase opportunities for more public involvement, we encourage the CCP, PPC, and CAO staff to share ideas and areas of focus to ensure we are in alignment.

Thank you for your consideration,
CAB Members 2024