

**Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act &
Youthful Offender Block Grant (JJCPA-YOBG)**

Consolidated Annual Plan

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Instructions:

Government Code Section 30061(b)(4) and Welfare & Institutions Code Section 1961(b) call for consolidation of the annual plans required for JJCPA and YOBG.

Please submit your most up-to-date consolidated plan.

The rest of this document is a standardized template for a consolidated county plan. If you find it helpful to use this template, please do so.

Your submission will be posted, as submitted, to the BSCC website.

Please e-mail your plan to:

JJCPA-YOBG@bscc.ca.gov

Juvenile Justice Plan

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Part I. Service Needs, Priorities & Strategy

Authority: Government Code Section 30061(b)(4)(A) The multiagency juvenile justice plan shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following components:

(i) An assessment of existing law enforcement, probation, education, mental health, health, social services, drug and alcohol, and youth services resources that specifically target at-risk juveniles, juvenile offenders, and their families.

(ii) An identification and prioritization of the neighborhoods, schools, and other areas in the community that face a significant public safety risk from juvenile crime, such as gang activity, daylight burglary, late-night robbery, vandalism, truancy, controlled substances sales, firearm-related violence, and juvenile substance abuse and alcohol use.

(iii) A local juvenile justice action strategy that provides for a continuum of responses to juvenile crime and delinquency and demonstrates a collaborative and integrated approach for implementing a system of swift, certain, and graduated responses for at-risk youth and juvenile offenders.

Government Code Section 30061(b)(4)(B)(ii) Collaborate and integrate services of all the resources set forth in clause (i) of subparagraph (A), to the extent appropriate.

A. Assessment of Existing Services

Include here an assessment of existing law enforcement, probation, education, mental health, health, social services, drug and alcohol, and youth services resources that specifically target at-risk juveniles, juvenile offenders, and their families.

The Juvenile Division offers a variety of Programs to meet each individual's specific treatment needs.

- The Merced County Juvenile Drug Court Treatment Program is a court supervised comprehensive drug and alcohol treatment program for youth who are Wards of the Court and for their parents/legal guardians. The program is a judicially supervised, four phase treatment program provided in partnership by Merced County Probation, Alcohol and Recovery Assistance for Teens (RAFT).
- The Merced County Juvenile Behavioral Health Court Program is a court supervised program for youth who have been diagnosed primarily with an Axis I mental illness and who are wards of the Juvenile Delinquency Court.
- The DoWith Program, offered by Aspiranet offers a unique blend of services including foster family support, adoption through foster care, services for foster youth transitioning to adulthood, mental health services, residential care, intensive home-based care, and community-based family resources. These "wraparound" services are designated to be flexible in nature and will consider, blend and incorporate the family's voice in the decision making process. The strengths of the family are utilized as the foundation of the planning process. The parent of the youth is given a parent partner

to assist the parent with the struggles of parenting troubled teens. Parent Partners are parents (mothers and fathers) who have first-hand experience with the Child Welfare system, and who have exhibited exceptional qualities in their own efforts to develop viable permanency plans for their children, an understanding of how the Child Welfare system works, an appreciation of what it takes to be successful, and personal qualities that lend themselves to collaboration on various levels. The DoWith Program offers twenty-four hour on call assistance with crisis intervention.

- The WeCan Program, also offered by Aspiranet, provides an intensive individual based clinical approach for youth who have complex emotional, behavioral or mental health needs; however, this Program also offers a parent partner.
- The Bear Creek Academy Long Term Program (BCA/LTP) and Bear Creek Academy Youth Treatment Programs (BCA/YTP) consist of youth who have been given the opportunity by the Juvenile Delinquency Court to enter a coordinated system of care with the goal of breaking old patterns that have resulted in negative and destructive behavior. The program(s) offer a system of educational and evidenced based program elements that teach the youth new patterns for dealing with stimulus which previously resulted in antisocial and delinquent behavior. The program(s) teach positive social skills, correct thinking, moral and ethical values, and strategies for successful community intervention
- Youth who are committed to the Bear Creek Academy (BCA) Short Term Program are given the opportunity by the Juvenile Delinquency Court to enter a coordinated system of care with the goal of breaking destructive behavior patterns. Youth who are committed to this program are taught positive social skills, corrective thinking, ethical values, and strategies for successful community interaction. This Program is point based and youth receive points for pro-social behavior(s) and for attending school/programming. Youth are committed to the BCA Short Term Program by levels. The maximum points each youth can earn per day is 50. A Level One Commitment is 500 points, Level Two Commitment is 1500 points and a Level Three Commitment is 3000 points.
- Parents of youth who have been ordered to Out-of-Home Placement are ordered to attend the Parents Supporting Parents (PSP) support group which is facilitated by the Merced County Probation Department. This program is designed to help parents develop and strengthen their parental skills in order to facilitate the development of their own parental support system. The overall goal is for the parents to learn effective communication skills, learn how to set clear limitations on their child's behavior, and manage family conflicts without the intervention of probation.
- The Redirect Program provides information to children and parents regarding community resources that are available to families to prevent deeper involvement in the Probation/Court system. The purpose of the Redirect Program is to empower parents to become more effective in their parenting by clarifying their rights and responsibilities and their children's rights and responsibilities. The target population for this group is youth 12 to 18 years of age who have parents/guardians/or a caring adult who is engaged in the life of the youth. This program is a collaborative effort amongst community justice partners including but not limited to: Merced County Probation Department, Field Services and Detention, Merced

County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Merced County Public Defender's Office, Merced County District Attorney's Office, various Law Enforcement Agencies, Merced County Public Health, Merced County Child Welfare and Merced County Office of Education.

- Supportive Ongoing Services (S.O.S) is a multidisciplinary team that meets weekly to assist families in problem solving and securing agency resource. The team consists of Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Merced County Public Health, Merced County Probation, Merced Educators, Merced County Child Welfare, Parent Partners, and Central Valley Regional Center. The ultimate goal for S.O.S. is to keep families together by building on family strengths and providing coordinated resources. All agencies and families have access to S.O.S. Referrals to S.O.S. are routed to a single source and families are scheduled to attend a meeting with resources providers who are typically already connected to the family. Information is exchanged and a plan is developed for the youth. A follow-up meeting is scheduled to ensure successes of the plan.
- The Merced County Youth Accountability Board (YAB) is a volunteer organization which was originally formed by citizens who are concerned with the problems of escalating juvenile delinquency and the disintegration of the family. YAB provides services to first-time juvenile offenders who would otherwise be under-served due to the lack of city and county resources. The volunteers strive to strengthen the community by supporting parents in their attempts to raise their children to be successful, law-abiding citizens and to teach children the need to be accountable for their actions. If found appropriate, youth are referred to YAB by the Merced County Probation Department. This is a voluntary program, so the offenders and their parents have the option of participating in this program or going through the normal channels available through the juvenile justice system. Should the youth choose to accept this option, the family meets with a Social Investigator to review the circumstances surrounding the offense. The Social Investigator also obtains pertinent information about the youth, including academic and social behaviors. Following the initial interview with the Social Investigator, the youth is then scheduled for a "hearing" before a YAB Panel comprised of five volunteers from the community. During the hearing, the youth and his/her parent(s) are given the opportunity to speak, along with the social investigator. The panel can then ask questions for further clarification, if needed. The panel then meets in a closed session to develop a unique contract which outlines a set of conditions the juvenile must meet and complete within a specified time frame. Once all of the conditions of the contract are met, the youth's record with the Probation Department is then purged. Should the youth fail to complete all of the terms in the contract or re-offend during the time frame of the contract, the youth is referred back to the juvenile justice system.

Services and programs will be provided to prepare youth and their families to make responsible decisions and lifestyle changes. Accomplishing these goals will involve the following activities:

- Continuing the development of the continuum of care, through the development of prevention, treatment, and aftercare components.

- Stressing prevention and suppression, encourage and support prevention and intervention services at the front end of the system.
- Involving government and private agencies in all activities.
- Engaging families in these goals.
- Continuing the commitment to future planning and collaborative work.
- Improving services to under-served communities/populations.
- Information sharing by collaborative partners for case management and evaluation and developing empirical indicators that allow evaluation of outcome measures.

Describe what approach will be used to facilitate collaboration amongst the organizations listed above and support the integration of services.

Merced County has developed existing continuum of services that strongly emphasizes collaboration across agency boundaries toward reducing crime and delinquency for delinquent and pre-delinquent youth. The County has a history of developing such inter-agency projects through dedication of pre-existing resources and maximizing external funding through a range of projects.

- A commitment to addressing the problems of youth through on-going development of an Interagency Youth Services Council.
- A continuum of care, using graduated services and programs ranging from prevention and intervention to incapacitation.
- Collaborative and integrative service delivery through such programs as the Supportive Ongoing Services (SOS), ReDirect, and wraparound services as provided by Aspiranet (DoWith and WeCan).
- Programs recognizing the need to deal with the multiple causes and problems leading to at-risk and high-risk behavior.

B. Identifying and Prioritizing Focus Areas

Identify and prioritize the neighborhoods, schools, and other areas of the county that face the most significant public safety risk from juvenile crime.

The problems of at-risk and high-risk youth in Merced County are much like jurisdictions throughout the country. Previous research has shown those youth who exhibit the greatest risk factors are best served in prevention programs.

At-risk and high-risk youth are composed of individuals who meet the following problem criteria:

- School: Those with truancy and attendance issues; those with behavior and adjustment problems; those in danger of failing; and youth either dropping out or in danger of dropping out.
- Family: Those youth residing with families in conflict (including violence

and abuse in the home); children of substance abusers; and those whose parents lack fundamental parenting skills. Family issues are often a precursor to youth failing to attend school.

- Community (Anti-social peers and premature independence): Those youth involved in gang or gang-like activities; those youth who are at-risk of developing attachments to anti-social friends and norms, and engaging in activities outside convention; those exhibiting signs of early independence through rebelliousness and early initiation into problem behaviors such as truancy; and those out of parental control, and/or suffering from a mental health disorder such as depression, anxiety, and trauma impairing their normal functioning. These youth are typically the most likely to avoid the educational system.
- Sexual activity and resulting parenthood: Youth, who engage in sexual activity, often resulting in early parenthood, create a range of problems for themselves and their children.

The department has identified service gaps countywide:

- The need for additional gang prevention;
- Vocational training;
- Transportation barriers continue to limit service delivery and access in the unincorporated and rural areas of the County;
- Lack of Community Based Organizations;
- Lack of local services/resources;
- Lack of affordable recreational/team sports for youth and children;
- Inadequate recreational activities for youth and children.

C. Juvenile Justice Action Strategy

Describe your county's juvenile justice action strategy. Include an explanation of your county's continuum of responses to juvenile crime and delinquency as well as a description of the approach used to ensure a collaborative and integrated approach for implementing a system of swift, certain, and graduated responses for at-risk youth and juvenile offenders.

The Merced County Juvenile Services Division has expanded services through several initiatives and continues to work to develop practices that align with Evidence Base Practices (EBP). Data collection has shown fewer youth are being placed on formal probation and fewer violations are being filed in juvenile court.

The department has put significant focus on training staff both evidence based practices and officer safety skills. Much of the success of turning troubled youth around and keeping the community safe can be attributed to our hard-working, well trained and dedicated staff.

The Juvenile Services Division oversees all juvenile matters referred to the Probation Department by other law enforcement agencies in Merced County. Juvenile Court Intake staff process hundreds of referrals from law enforcement agencies for youths alleged to have committed law violations, those who are

beyond parental control, curfew violators, truants or runaways. A determination is made whether the youthful offenders will be referred to the Juvenile Court for prosecution, placed on informal probation, diverted or reprimanded with the case closed. A deputy district attorney assigned to the Juvenile Services Division determines charges to file. The juvenile court investigators are responsible for compiling dispositional reports for the court.

For many first time offenders, a face-to-face interview is conducted along with their families. Support and guidance for parents is given in the form of a referral to parenting education classes and other community based resources. In some cases the youth may be referred to informal probation services for a period of six months.

Part II. Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA)

Authority: Government Code Section 30061(b)(4)(B) Programs, strategies, and system enhancements proposed to be funded under this chapter shall satisfy all of the following requirements:

(i) Be based on programs and approaches that have been demonstrated to be effective in reducing delinquency and addressing juvenile crime for any elements of response to juvenile crime and delinquency, including prevention, intervention, suppression, and incapacitation.

(iii) – Employ information sharing systems to ensure that county actions are fully coordinated, and designed to provide data for measuring the success of juvenile justice programs and strategies.”

Government Code Section 30061(b)(4)(A) The multiagency juvenile justice plan shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following components:

(iv) A description of the programs, strategies, or system enhancements that are proposed to be funded pursuant to this subparagraph.

A. Information Sharing and Data

Describe your information systems and their ability to facilitate the sharing of data across agencies within your county. Describe the data obtained through these systems and how those data are used to measure the success of juvenile justice programs and strategies.

Merced County has an internal system that manages the juvenile population. Different reports are available to access and can be shared with agencies within the County.

B. Funded Programs, Strategies and/or System Enhancements

Using the template on the next page, describe each program, strategy and/or system enhancement that will be supported with funding from JJPCA, identifying anything that is co-funded with Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG) moneys.

JJCPA Funded Program, Strategy and/or System Enhancement

This template should be copied as many times as needed to capture every program, strategy and system enhancement you plan to fund next year.

Program Name:

Juvenile Field Supervision Services

Evidence Upon Which It Is Based:

The officers assigned to the Juvenile Field Supervision Services Unit utilize the Positive Achievement Change Tool in order to determine what level of supervision a youth will receive. Supervision by risk level is a fundamental principle of evidence based supervision that is supported by extensive research.

Description:

Since the inception of the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA), the Merced County Probation Department has utilized the allocation for school-based supervision. The initial focus was to supervise juvenile probationers and to provide prevention and intervention services to other students who exhibit at-risk behaviors such as truancy, tardiness, and poor academics. Over time, the various school districts evolved the utilization of the deputy probation officers more for campus security and ADA purposes, rather than utilizing evidence-based approaches for addressing youthful offender behavior.

In 2013, the Merced County Probation Department presented a modification to employ a three-pronged approach to addressing juvenile delinquency: 1. Caseload reduction; 2. Assign minors to caseloads based on risk and need; 3. Provide cognitive behavioral services to address dynamic needs. First, the probation department intends to employ evidence based supervision practices. Professionals recognized for identifying these practices, including the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), recommend minor to staff ratios of between 15 and 50:1. APPA's 2006 publication, *Caseload Standards for Probation and Parole*, was authored by Bill Burrell, Associate Professor, Temple University. Burrell recommends 15:1 ratios for highest risk, 30:1 for moderate to high, 100:1 for low, and no supervision for lowest (administrative supervision in those cases).

In 2013, deputy probation officers supervised between 60 and 75 juvenile offenders. Caseload assignment did not distinguish between level of risk or

offense nor are the assignments offender-need specific. The timing for the modification was perfect for the implementation of the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT). According to the probation department's vendor:

"The PACT identifies not only the areas (domains) in which the juvenile is most at risk, but just as importantly, those in which he or she has strengths (protective factors) which can be built upon to help turn the youth's life around. Risk and protective factors in this instrument include both static and dynamic characteristics. The benefit of measuring both factors and characteristics is that a juvenile justice professional is better able to match a child's current needs with the appropriate programs and services. This comprehensive assessment instrument measures a youth's risk and protective factors in the following 12 domains: Criminal History, School, Use of Free Time, Employment, Relationships, Family, Living Arrangements, Alcohol and Drugs, Mental Health, Attitudes/Behaviors, Aggression, and Skills. Assessment of criminogenic risk factors and treatment directed toward changing dynamic characteristics provides the best chance of reducing recidivism."

Once all current juvenile probationers in Merced County have a PACT assessment, they will be assigned to supervision caseloads based on their level to reoffend and their specific needs. Additionally, without utilizing JJCPA funds, at least one administrative caseload will be developed for those minors whose risk does not justify active or intensive supervision. Each of the officers currently funded by JJCPA will be assigned workspaces within the confines of the juvenile probation office, rather than being stationed solely on campuses. The officers will still have a presence on various campuses; however, the focus will be more on providing proven intervention services rather than serving as school resource and truancy officers.

Lastly, the probation department will employ programs for juvenile offenders designed to address dynamic needs to modify the behavior of those who rate moderate-to-high risk. Officers will be certified to employ a cognitive behavior curriculum, such as *Thinking for a Change*.

In summary, the modification to the Merced County Probation Department's JJCPA program has improved how we address rates of a recidivism, incarceration, restitution, and community service, as well as continue to address school attendance and academic achievement.

Currently, the Juvenile Field Services Unit consists of seven (7) Deputy Probation Officers and one (1) Supervising Probation Officer who work in partnership with various law-enforcement and community service agencies in the supervision of juvenile high-risk, moderate-risk, and low risk offenders. The average caseload size of aforementioned caseloads is approximately 15 cases.

Part III. Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG)

Authority: Welfare & Institutions Code Section 1961(a) – On or before May 1 of each year, each county shall prepare and submit to the Board of State and Community Corrections a Juvenile Justice Development Plan on its proposed programs, strategies, and system enhancements for the next fiscal year from the Youthful Offender Block Grant Fund described in Section 1951. The plan shall include all of the following:

(1) A description of the programs, placements, services, strategies, and system enhancements to be funded by the block grant allocation pursuant to this chapter, including, but not limited to, the programs, tools, and strategies outlined in Section 1960.

(2) A description of how the plan relates to or supports the county’s overall strategy for dealing with youthful offenders who have not committed an offense described in subdivision (b) of Section 707, and who are no longer eligible for commitment to the Division of Juvenile Facilities under Section 733 as of September 1, 2007.

(3) A description of any regional agreements or arrangements to be supported by the block grant allocation pursuant to this chapter.

(4) A description of how the programs, placements, services, or strategies identified in the plan coordinate with multiagency juvenile justice plans and programs under paragraph (4) of subdivision (b) of Section 30061 of the Government Code.

A. Strategy for Non-707(b) Offenders

Describe your county’s overall strategy for dealing with non-707(b) youthful offenders who are not eligible for commitment to the Division of Juvenile Justice. Explain how this Plan relates to or supports that strategy.

Merced County operates a 60 bed camp program, the Bear Creek Academy (BCA). 30 beds are dedicated to the Long Term and Youth Treatment Programs. The BCA programs are point-based with up to five phases. The program period is one to two years, depending on which program is utilized. Program elements include vocational education, alcohol and drug education, mental health counseling, cognitive and life skills development. Participants will eventually earn home visits that will include GPS services. The final phase of the program will include aftercare to effectively transition youth into the community once released from the facility. A re-entry plan will be developed for each participant. Case management will be provided by an assigned probation officer, to ensure adherence to the re-entry plan.

B. Regional Agreements

Describe any regional agreements or arrangements to be supported with YOBG funds.

YOBG funds offset the cost of staff and operating expenses associated with the 30

beds identified solely for the Bear Creek Academy Long Term and Youth Treatment Programs. This is a one to two year camp program located inside the Juvenile Justice Correctional Complex.

C. Funded Programs, Placements, Services, Strategies and/or System Enhancements

Using the template on the next page, describe the programs, placements, services, strategies, and system enhancements to be funded through the YOBG program. Explain how they complement or coordinate with the programs, strategies and system enhancements to be funded through the JJCPA program.

YOBG Funded Program, Placement, Service, Strategy and/or System Enhancement

This template should be copied as many times as needed to capture every program, placement, service, strategy, and system enhancement you plan to fund next year.

Program Name:

Bear Creek Academy (BCA) Long Term and Youth Treatment Programs

Nature of Coordination with JJCPA:

The Bear Creek Academy consists of two Deputy Probation Officers who are funded by YOBG. The officers assigned to the BCA participate in the Review Board for youth who are assigned to the BCA Program. The Review Board consists of two Deputy Probation Officers, a Supervising Juvenile Institutions Officer and a Program Manager. The group meets weekly to discuss and review all academy movement and disciplinary actions that resulted in loss of points in the academy. The Review Board will convene a special hearing if the regular board meeting is not within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. The Review Board will consider return to custody and the length of stay and the conditions under which the youth will be released to the After Care Phase.

Description:

Merced County operates a 60 bed camp program, the Bear Creek Academy (BCA). 30 beds are dedicated to the Long Term and Youth Treatment Programs. The BCA programs are point-based with up to five phases. The program period is one to two years, depending on which program is utilized. Program elements include vocational education, alcohol and drug education, mental health counseling, cognitive and life skills development. Participants will eventually earn home visits that will include GPS services. The final phase of the program will include aftercare to effectively transition youth into the community once released from the facility. A re-entry plan will be developed for each participant. Case management will be provided by an assigned probation officer, to ensure adherence to the re-entry plan.