

**Santa Cruz County Probation Department**

Juvenile  
Probation  
Division  
Annual  
Report

2023

Our **VISION** is a safe, equitable, and thriving community.

Our **MISSION** is to contribute to community well-being through positive engagement, connection to services, and support for those impacted by crime.

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**Introduction:** The Juvenile Division manages a range of services including investigation, diversion, pre- and post-adjudication services, community supervision, and out-of-home placement for referred youth. They oversee youth committed to Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTF) due to DJJ Realignment under SB 823. Collaboration with community partners ensures trauma-informed, culturally responsive support for youth, families, and public safety.

**Goals:** The Juvenile Division prioritizes public safety by reducing recidivism through enhancing the life skills and competencies of youth and families. This involves genuine engagement and partnerships with families and youth. Probation collaborates strategically with community stakeholders to provide culturally responsive supervision and services, supporting community safety as relied upon by the court and partners in juvenile justice.

The Juvenile Division utilizes the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM) as a form of engagement with youth and families. The ICPM is a model and framework for the shared values, core components, and standards of practice expected for those serving California’s children, youth, and families. It sets Child and Family Teaming (CFT) as a primary vehicle for team-based process to meet objectives of increasing life skills and family engagement, reducing recidivism, and reducing victimization.

**ICPM Guiding Practice Principles:**

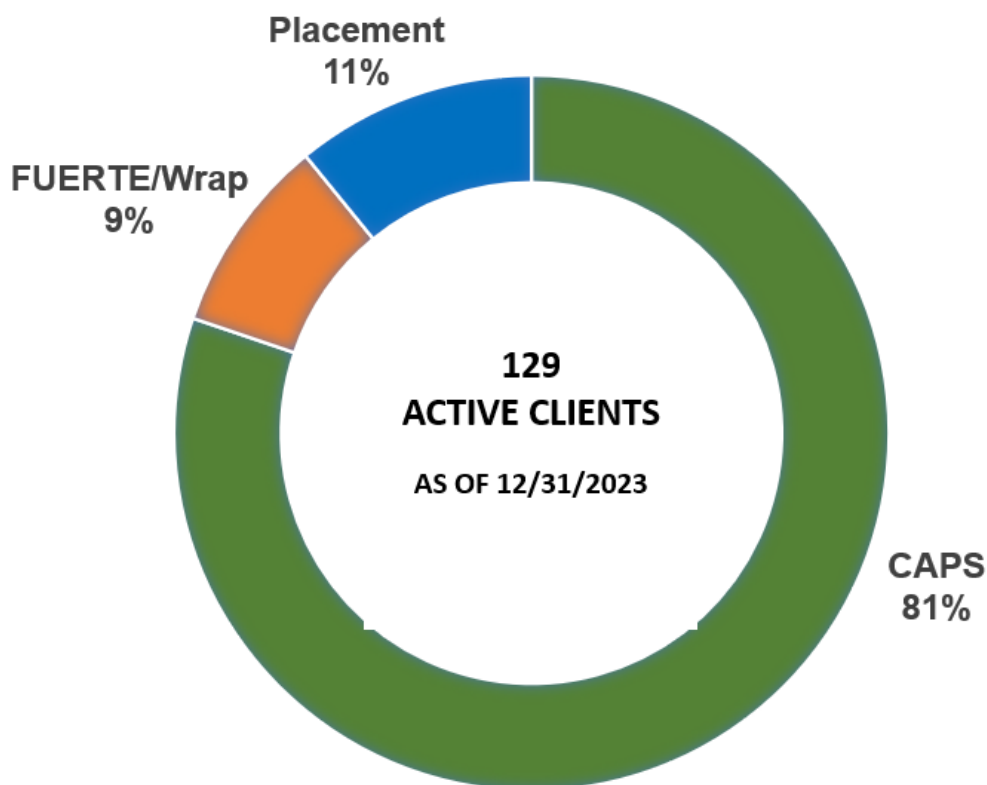
ICPM Values	ICPM Phases	ICPM Guiding Practice Principles
<p><b>Family-driven and Youth Guided:</b> Youth and family voices are solicited and respected.</p> <p><b>Community-Based:</b> Services are provided in the community.</p> <p><b>Culturally &amp; linguistically competent:</b> Services are provided in the family’s primary language. While valuing traditions, values, and heritage as sources of strength.</p>	<p>Engagement, Assessment, and Team Preparation</p> <p>Initial Service Planning</p> <p>Monitoring and Adapting</p> <p>Transition</p>	<p><b>Family voice and choice-</b> Each family member’s voice is important.</p> <p><b>Team-based-</b> Team consists of individuals agreed upon by the family.</p> <p><b>Natural supports-</b> Friends, neighbors, coworkers, church members, and others identified by family.</p> <p><b>Collaboration and integration-</b>Team shares responsibility in all aspects of plan development.</p> <p><b>Community-based-</b> Services and supports are accessible and available in the family’s community.</p> <p><b>Culturally respectful-</b> Plan supports achievement of goals for change that integrates the youth and family’s culture.</p> <p><b>Individualized-</b> Plan is built on strengths, needs, and interest of the family members.</p> <p><b>Strength-based-</b> Team will use family’s skills, knowledge and build upon the initial Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment.</p> <p><b>Persistence-</b> The team never gives up on youth or families. When met with resistance, the team will revisit the plan to identify any revisions.</p> <p><b>Outcome-based-</b> Team tracks goals and progress in plan and adjust as needed.</p>

**Executive Summary**

In 2023, our staff focused on deepening their understanding of the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM) and its 10 principles for engaging with families and youth. The Juvenile Division adapted to evolving probation practices by renaming a unit as the Community, Engagement,

and Connections unit. Our supervision remains youth-centered, trauma-informed, and needs-driven, while promoting positive change and success for youth and families. Additionally, the Juvenile Division maintains effective supervision practices with nine Deputy Probation Officers supervised by four Supervising Probation Officers.

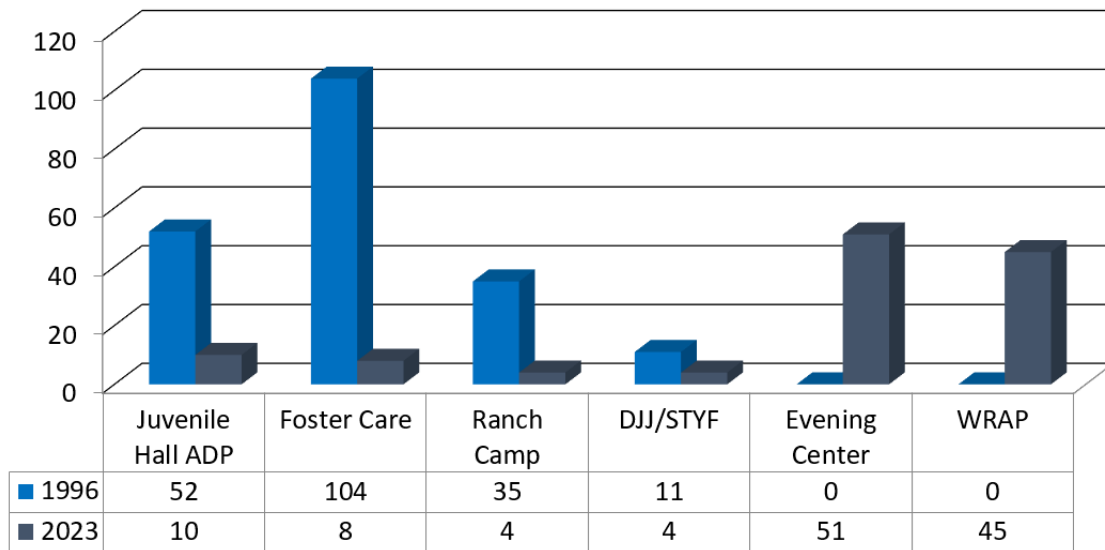
The following chart outlines caseload types and percentages in the Juvenile Division:



Our Connecting and Promoting Success (CAPS) caseload, covering 81% of supervised youth, employs a youth-centered, needs-driven approach for those on formal probation, aiming to enhance connections and promote success for youth and families. FUERTE/Wrap caseloads are specialized, focusing on family engagement and behavioral health services for youth at risk of out-of-home placement. These caseloads involve a team-based approach with a transitional specialist, a behavioral health clinician, and a probation officer. Placement caseloads oversee youth placed in various settings, including Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs, Ranch Camp, or Secure Youth Treatment Facilities, with placement decisions made by Juvenile Probation and ordered by the Juvenile Justice Court. This unit also oversees Non-Minor Dependent youth (ages 18-21), typically removed from home due to unmet behavioral and therapeutic needs despite wraparound services.

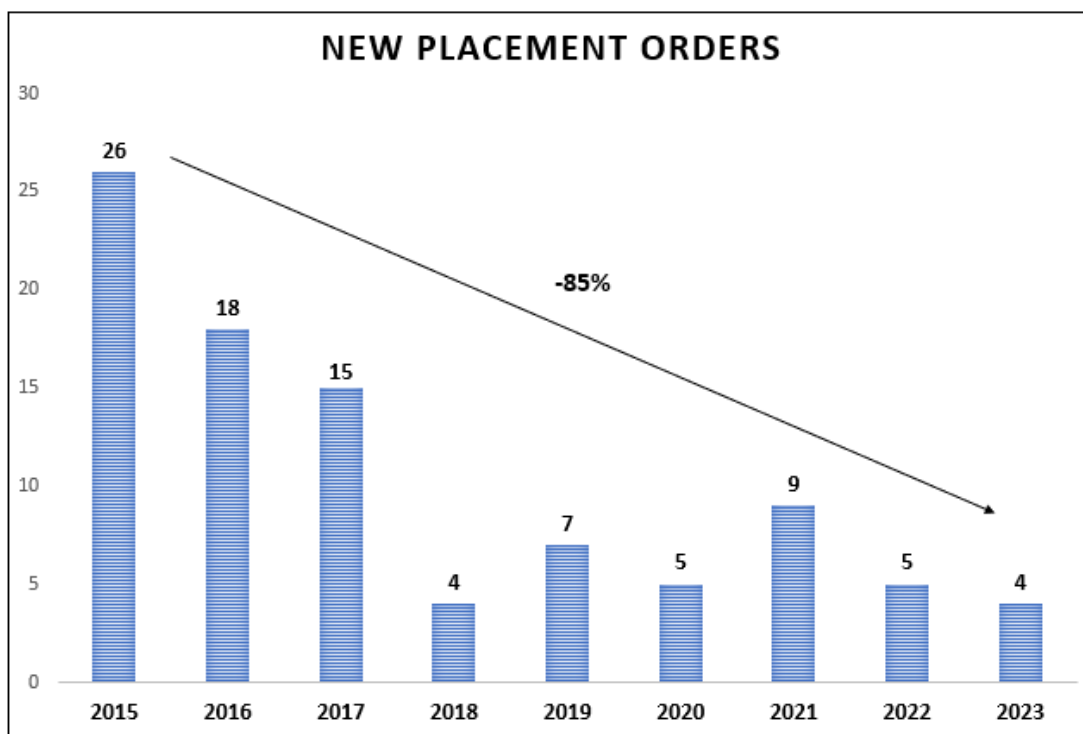
The following chart demonstrates how local alternatives like FUERTE/Wrap and the Luna Evening Center have reduced out-of-home placements for youth on supervision, keeping them in their homes. These intensive local programs, using evidence-based practices, effectively rehabilitate youth and families while generating significant community savings.

Reductions at all levels of Institutional care, while increasing capacity of community-based interventions....



In 2023, the Juvenile Division and court partners successfully reduced new out-of-home placements, with only eight placement orders issued, four of which were new. Supportive programming such as the Luna Y Sol Evening Center created after 1996 continue to support youth and families to address their needs. Emphasis remains on early identification of natural supports, starting in the Intake Unit and continuing throughout services. Moreover, the primary emphasis on Probation diversion, combined with active involvement of staff with youth and families, as well as collaboration with community partners, remains integral to reducing out-of-home placements.

Probation staff conducted 29 CFT meetings in 2023, empowering youth and families, along with their natural supports, to have a stronger say in case outcomes and probation strategies. These meetings involve professionals from county agencies and community organizations to collaborate on meeting youth and family needs, leading to an 85% decrease in overall placements, as shown in the graph below.



In 2023, the Juvenile Division continued to administer the Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS) by initiating use of the JAIS Case Plan. In addition to identifying a youth’s level of risk to reoffend, the JAIS has three goals:

- To help probation officers quickly establish appropriate supervision strategies based on youth strengths and needs, anticipated behaviors and attitudes, and the reasons for behaviors and attitudes.
- To provide probation officers with effective strategies for addressing unmet needs before they escalate into law violations.
- To reduce recidivism, which is defined as any youth receiving a subsequent adjudication while on active supervision (which was 6% in 2023)

Juvenile Probation Supervisors and Juvenile Division Managers are monitoring administration of the instrument for inter-rater reliability, a result of which 86% of all cases completed an initial assessment of moderate and high needs having received a full JAIS assessment. Additionally, the JAIS assessment is being reflected in court reports and in case staffing.

### Detention Alternatives Outcome Data

In 2023, the Juvenile Division continued its commitment to revolutionize juvenile justice by prioritizing alternatives to detention. Of all youth placed in alternative programs, 98% attended their next court appearance and avoided further offenses. The chart below illustrates the utilization of alternatives to detention upon contact with the juvenile system.

## **2023 Detention Alternative Success Rate**

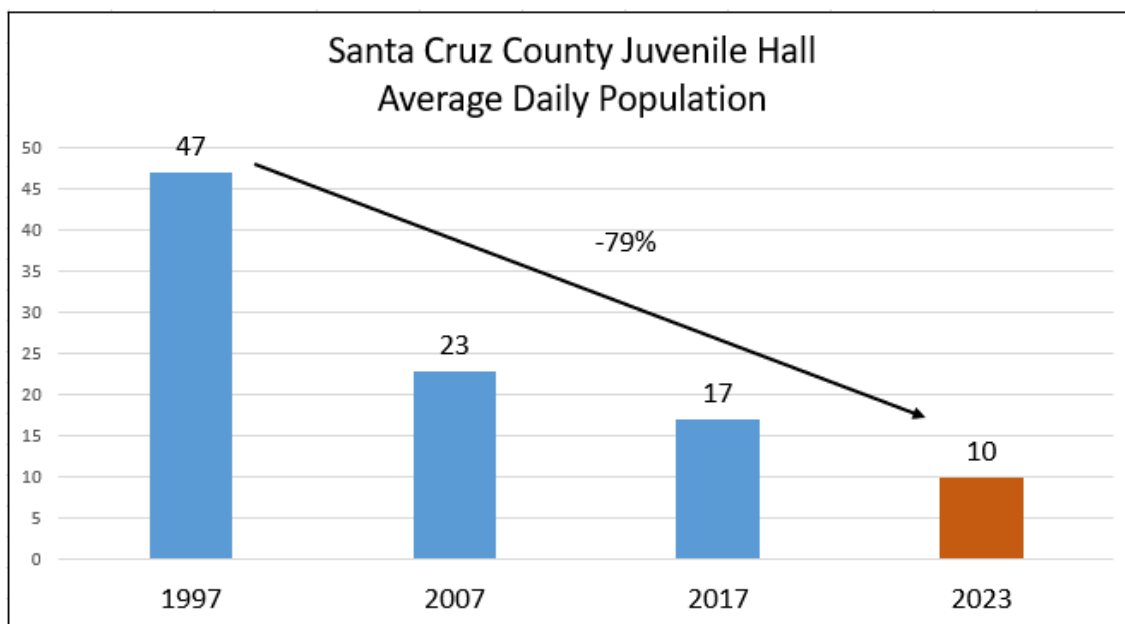


**98% Successful Completions**

Since 1999, the Juvenile Division has led the way in reducing juvenile detention, serving as a model site for the Annie E. Casey Foundation's (AECF) Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). This initiative aims to eliminate unnecessary detention, enhance data-driven decision-making, streamline court processing, establish risk-based detention criteria, expand community-based alternatives, improve confinement conditions, address disproportionate minority contact, and cater to the needs of special populations. Our division has hosted delegations from across the nation and globe to learn from our successful practices. In 2019, we were honored with the National JDAI Distinguished System Leadership Award. Going forward, the Probation Department remains dedicated to upholding JDAI's core strategies and advancing reform efforts.

Probation places significant emphasis on diverting youth from the Juvenile Justice system by collaborating with law enforcement agencies and community-based organizations. Together, we are working on fostering a community of practice which is aimed at identifying and implementing early diversion initiatives. These initiatives impact the need for a youth's detention.

Our intentional work to safely reduce the use of unnecessary detention and increase community capacity continues to have a positive impact on the average daily population (ADP) of the Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall. As is illustrated in the following chart, the ADP in 1997 was 47 youth in detention, exceeding our rated capacity of 42. In 2023, the ADP was 10, or down 79% from 1997:



### Legislative Reform, and Programs

Outlined below is a summary of the current legislations and programs the Juvenile Division is involved with and community partners working together to enhance services to youth:

Below is a concise overview of recent legislative changes, programs, and collaborative efforts of the Juvenile Division and its community partners aimed at bolstering youth services:

#### **Senate Bill 823 – Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Realignment**

For nearly two decades, California has enacted a series of legislative and voter-approved measures designed to reduce commitments of youth to the state juvenile and adult systems by reducing reliance on incarceration and expanding community-based options for youth. To further reach this goal, the state has aligned the responsibility for managing all youth under the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code section 602 to local jurisdictions. Effective June 30, 2023, all DJJ facilities were closed. The closure to DJJ required us to identify a host county to house our returning youth from DJJ and youth adjudicated to SYTF, as our facility is not structurally capable of housing them. Our department made vast efforts to keep our youth close to their home county. However, our neighboring counties continue to be unable to host our youth. In 2021, we went into contract with Sonoma County Probation as our host county. Our partnership has been one of success, as Sonoma is currently housing three of our youth and supported the transition of our youth returning from DJJ. A second contract with Merced County was secured as a secondary option due to Sonoma County Probation requiring a temporary freeze on new admission due to staffing shortages, which has been a common theme throughout the state.

To support the successful implementation of this transition and on-going programming and interventions, the State established effective July 1, 2021, the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) within the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS). OYCR is responsible for (1) developing a report on youth outcomes; (2) identifying policy recommendations for improved outcomes and integrated programs and services to best support delinquent youth;

(3) identifying and disseminating best practices to help inform rehabilitative and restorative youth practices, including education, diversion, re-entry, religious and victims' services; and (4) providing technical assistance as requested to develop and expand local youth diversion opportunities to meet the varied needs of the delinquent youth population, including but not limited to, sex offender, substance abuse, and mental health treatment. OYCR has further fulfilled statutory obligations of an Ombudsperson who is tasked to oversee and investigate any youth complaints in all institutional settings.

### **Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)**

California Assembly Bill 153 (AB 153) authorized both federal Title IV-E and State Block Grant (SBG) expenditures for prevention services. In 2022, the County of Santa Cruz Human Services Department (HSD) Family and Children's Services (FCS), and Probation Department Leadership opted in a partnership, which is locally known as the Comprehensive Prevention Plan (CPP).

The CPP presents an unprecedented opportunity to move collectively "upstream," focusing resources and efforts on children, youth, and families before they are involved with Child Welfare, Juvenile Probation, or other systems, and to greatly reduce negative outcomes for children, youth, and families through effective primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. The purpose of the project is to create a Comprehensive Prevention Plan (CPP) that will be used as a countywide blueprint for building and enhancing a system of prevention programs, practices, and policies over the next five years. In June 2023, the state approved our county's local CPP plan.

### **Luna Evening Center (LEC)**

The Luna Evening Center (LEC) is a collaborative effort between Probation, community organizations, and county agencies. It offers support to probation-involved youth struggling with issues such as court orders, substance use, and behavioral challenges. LEC provides a structured afterschool environment where youth can address decision-making factors and receive coaching for better choices. It serves as a short-term, community-based intervention, providing an alternative to detention in Juvenile Hall for probation violations.

The LEC operates Monday through Friday from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., providing snacks and dinner. Staff offer transportation, picking up and safely returning each youth home. The program accommodates up to 8 individuals at a time, led by probation and County Behavioral Health staff. Activities and services follow a weekly schedule, addressing identified needs through assessments and evidence-based practices.

### **Student Success Project – (SSP)**

In 2018, the Probation Department partnered with the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (COE) to pilot a project aimed at enhancing prevention and educational success for south county students. This initiative focused on implementing social/emotional responses to student behavior, assessing needs, and providing tailored services.

In 2019, collaborating with the Student Success Project, the pilot resulted in increased credit earning and school retention through engagement activities. Initially tested at Sequoia and Freedom, the project expanded to include Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD). Three additional school sites—Renaissance, New School, and Pajaro Valley High School—were included, with six probation officers assigned to these schools. Officers utilized motivational interviewing and Effective Practices In Community Supervision (EPICS) to improve outcomes.



The Student Success Project was funded from 2019 to 2022 by the Justice Assistance Grant in partnership with Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office, Community Action Board, and County Office of Education. The grant actively continued throughout Covid, meeting the needs of students and families virtually and in person.

In 2023, a second round of grant funding from the Justice Assistance Grant allowed scaling of the Student Success Project to Rolling Hills and E.A. Hall Middle Schools, partnering with the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office and Community Action Board (CAB) to advance prevention and diversion efforts.

### **Luna Y Sol Center**

Since 2022, the Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, known as "Alcance," has operated the Luna y Sol "Hub," a one-stop service center. This hub facilitates partnerships between community-based organizations (CBOs) and Probation to provide comprehensive, trauma-informed, and culturally relevant services for at-risk Latino youth and their families. These services, including prevention and support, will expand through increased collaboration with CBOs, anchoring at the Luna y Sol Hub one to two days a week.

### **Aztecas Youth Soccer Academy (Aztecas)**

Developed in 2008, this program has grown and remains enormously popular with probation and diversion involved youth. Aztecas is a pro-social mentorship program that reclaims the lives of at-risk/at-risk young people who often struggle with gangs, violence, poverty, and drugs. Aztecas serves both probation and non-probation involved young people. The program is rooted in soccer and community to support and provide opportunities for youth to succeed in our community.

The program operates a 'Clubhouse' in Watsonville, offering a safe space for youth to engage in pro-social activities, academic support, and leadership opportunities. Services include tutoring, health education, and advisory panels. Participants also coordinate community service projects. Snacks and meals are provided. Aztecas aims to foster academic success and community involvement, serving as a prevention, intervention, and diversion program.

Aztecas annually hosts a two-week soccer camp for youth aged 6-14. In 2023, the camp served 221 young participants and received support from various community and law enforcement partners. Alongside assistance from the Probation Department, Aztecas secures grants and donations to enhance youth engagement.

### **Line of Sight for the Future of the Work**

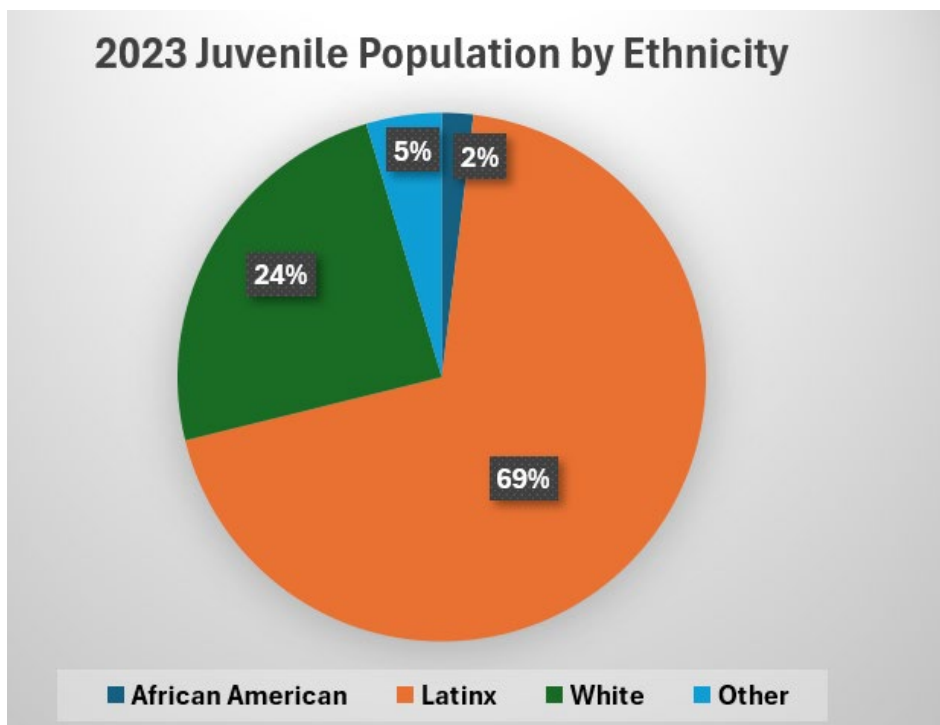
Our Juvenile Division continues to be committed to centering equity and decreasing disparities in our system. Our efforts are supported by our continuing partnership with the AECF. In 2022, our Juvenile Division Director enrolled in the first, Santa Cruz County Results Count Leadership Program in concert with other county leaders. The program is designed to strengthen leadership capacity and align contributions to center equity and accelerate equitable results for all people in the County with a focus on our most burdened populations. This continued partnership had allowed our Juvenile Division Director to further expand use of the Results Count Framework by deepening foundational knowledge through participation in the AECF 2022-2023 Results Count Practitioners Program (RCP2), which helps leaders increase their application of the Results Count

framework, tools, and practices to achieve equitable results for young people, families, and communities.

### EQUITY



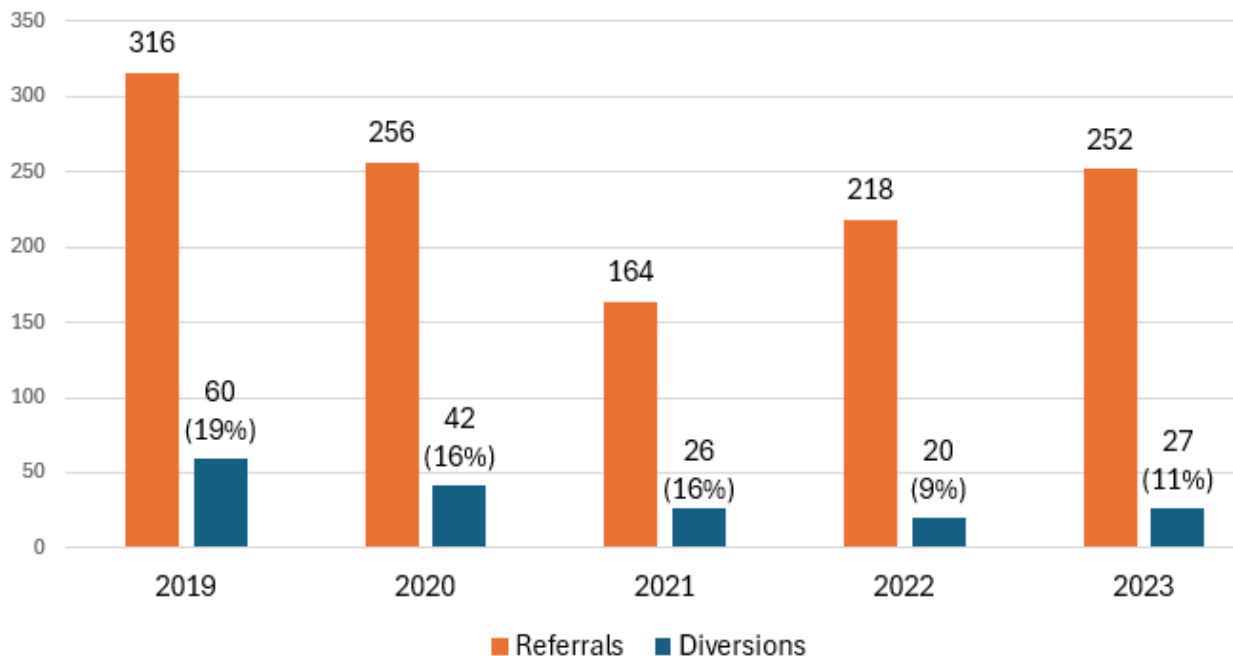
In 2023, Santa Cruz County Probation applied for and was one of four national delegations to be selected to participate in AECF's Applied Leadership Network (ALN). The ALN is focused on advancing the skills of community and juvenile justice practitioners to build partnerships and together lead justice reforms and system transformation. The delegation from Santa Cruz County is made up of various disciplines from Watsonville Police Department, Family and Children Services, United Way, Community Action Board, the Public Defender's Office, and Probation form the Santa Cruz team. The ALN team alongside a back at home team is focused on centering equity and partnering with other justice partners to increase diversion opportunities for our Latinx youth who are disproportionately overrepresented in our juvenile justice system.



This past year flooding caused by atmospheric rivers impacted our community and youth’s ability to attend prom. Our department and partners held a drive to provide prom dresses, shoes, suits, and various accessories to support high school students’ ability to attend their proms. Additionally, our department expanded community engagement by meeting families in the agricultural fields with community partners to provide access to educational resources and support services.

The following chart illustrates our trend line and affirms our line of sight for the future of our work.

### Latinx Referrals and Diversions



Over the past five years, there has been a 42% decline in Latinx diversions. However, in 2023, there was a continued focus on equity and expanding diversion opportunities, exemplified by the addition of a second probation officer to the Intake Unit with a specific focus on diversions. As a result of these collective efforts from 2022 to 2023, there was an increase of 22% in the number of Latinx youth diverted from the Juvenile Justice system.



In response to the request from families for prosocial activities in safe spaces, the department developed *Family Night* in 2021 which serves as a prevention and diversion program. The department has partnered with PVPISA to facilitate *Family Night* programming.

Families participate in two sessions, one which is Paint Night where they spend time bonding as a family drawing art. The second session is a resource night where families identify a topic of their choice to receive information and resources. Each session families are provided with a warm meal prior to their activity. In December families have a holiday celebration and were treated to a special performance by a local young Mariachi Band from Watsonville, Mariachi ILusion. Family Night runs throughout the year and this past year has served 144 families.