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**URGENT ACTION NEEDED!**

**Please sign on by 2PM Today, Monday, March 16, 2020**

DEMAND EQUAL PROTECTION AND DUE PROCESS FOR YOUTH AND OTHERS  
UNDER PROBATION CUSTODY AND SUPERVISION

PLEASE ADD YOUR GROUP OR ORGANIZATION TO THIS LETTER.

SEND A LOGO BY 2PM TODAY TO:

[action@youth4justice.org](mailto:action@youth4justice.org)



March 16, 2020

Ray Leyva, Interim Probation Chief, Los Angeles County Probation Department  
Sheila Mitchell, Deputy Chief, Los Angeles County Probation Department  
Reaver Bingham, Deputy Chief, Los Angeles County Probation Department  
Hilda Solis, Los Angeles County Supervisor, District 1  
Mark Ridley Thomas, Los Angeles County Supervisor, District 2  
Sheila Kuehl, Los Angeles County Supervisor, District 3  
Janice Hahn, Los Angeles County Supervisor, District 4  
Katherine Barger, Los Angeles County Supervisor, District 5  
Jackie Lacey, Los Angeles County District Attorney

Ricardo Garcia, Public Defender, County of Los Angeles  
Kevin Brazile, Presiding Judge, Los Angeles Superior Court

Max Huntsman, Inspector General, Los Angeles County

Judge Peter Espinosa, Director, LA County Department of Health Services, Office of Diversion and Re-entry  
Refugio Valle, Director, LA County Division of Youth Diversion and Development  
Taylor Schooley, Senior Research and Policy Manager, LA County Division of Youth Diversion and Development

Eric Garcetti, Mayor, City of Los Angeles

Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California

Assemblymember Reginald Jones-Sawyer, Chair, California State Assembly Public Safety Committee

Senator Nancy Skinner, Chair, California State Senate Public Safety Committee

Senator Toni Atkins, President Pro-Tem, California State Senate

Assemblymember Anthony Rendon, Speaker, California State Assembly

*To the officials responsible for the health and safety of youth under the custody and supervision of LA County Probation, youth who are impacted by arrest and detention, as well as for those adults on field supervision:*

As organizations led by people currently and formerly on Probation, family members with loved ones inside, and/or organizations that serve system-involved youth and adults, we are writing to urge you to immediately enact these emergency procedures for young people under Probation custody and supervision, as well as for adults under Probation field supervision, in order to support everyone's health and safety, while also protecting their rights to due process, programming and family connection.

While we appreciate efforts that LA County Probation has taken to post protocols on the Department's website, the current protocols are severely lacking.

We do not feel that system-involved youth and adults, nor their families and communities, are protected against the health risks of COVID-19 when officials – from our municipal and county officials, the Governor, Congress, and the White House have made regular pronouncements to the media regarding containment, testing and treatment plans without mentioning the most vulnerable and invisible individuals – those who are under custody and supervision.

Given current, recent and historical examples of health epidemics within LA County's carceral settings, including outbreaks of Mumps, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis C, Staph infection, Valley Fever, H1N1 and HIV, we can expect that COVID-19 would spread much more quickly and with more devastating results in the closed, unsanitary, medically under-resourced, and often overcrowded conditions of youth and adult jails and prisons, residential treatment centers, placements and Probation area offices.

These conditions are exacerbated by the fact that health systems in carceral facilities are under-resourced and of poorer quality, and that the people detained and incarcerated represent a much higher population of medically vulnerable individuals often suffering compromised immune systems, medical conditions, and a lack of access to medical care throughout their lives.

Added to this, the LA County Sheriff's and Probation Departments have failed to create adequate evacuation and treatment planning in response to wildfires and contaminated water crises. The lack of planning and infrastructure during past emergencies leaves people inside, their families and the larger community even more concerned regarding the system's response to COVID-19.

In addition, this is a racial justice issue, given that over-policing and disparate treatment at every stage of the juvenile and adult systems has led LA County's juvenile halls and Probation camps (youth prisons) to be represented by 95% Black and Brown youth with similar racial disparities among youth and adults in placements or on Probation field supervision.

*Specifically, we are urging LA County Probation and County officials to immediately do the following:*

1. Establish and advertise broadly a regular community webinar to field questions, concerns and solutions from people who are system involved, our families and communities.
2. Expand agency protocols to include these recommendations and share a revised COVID-19 plan for youth and adults on the Probation website, on the LA County Board of Supervisors website, on the Sheriff's (LASD) website, the Department of Health Services website, and posted and distributed as all juvenile halls, Probation camps, Youth Diversion and Development program hubs, Probation area offices, county jails, Sheriff's stations and municipal and school police department stations, area offices and jails.
3. Provide regular, online and phone updates on impact of COVID-19 on people under Probation supervision or custody and the County's response.
4. Cancel all Probation appointments at area offices, drug testing and mandated programs until the threat of COVID-19 infection has been eliminated. People should not be required to spend hours traveling to, traveling from, and waiting in administrative buildings for brief meetings with probation officers and related staff. Discharge people who no longer need supervision and allow others to check in by telephone.
5. Downsize the juvenile hall, camp, Dorothy Kirby and placement population through: (A) A moratorium on custody for all technical Probation violations; (B) A moratorium on custody for all misdemeanor and low-level felony arrests and bench warrants; (C) Releasing people detained at local, municipal police and school police facilities rather than transferring them to a juvenile hall for assessment; (D) Facilitate LA County's Division of Youth Development and Diversion (YDD) outreach to all 57 law enforcement agencies operating in LA County to YDD and its affiliated youth programs as an alternative to transporting youth to police stations and/or juvenile halls.
6. Ensure that all unhoused or under-housed youth (homeless or foster youth) be provided safe housing during the COVID-19 crisis, and extend these resources to their families if they are under the care of family members.
7. Petition the court to release all medically compromised / vulnerable people who remain detained or incarcerated due to a conviction in order to protect them from exposure.
8. Use teleconferencing and/or maintain physical court visits to ensure that youth have access to all court proceedings as calendared. (The Presiding Judge for the LA Superior Court – Kevin Brazile – stated Friday that judges have the authority to determine the calendar for their individual courtrooms in the County's 24 courthouses.)
9. Guarantee access to unlimited, free phone calls, Skype, Facetime and teleconferencing to provide reassurance to increase family connection and provide regular access to families worried about their loved ones inside.
10. Increase and more deeply clean facilities - (including clothing, bedding, dorms and cells), and use more effective disinfectants as prescribed in epidemiologists given the health emergency COVID-19 represents.
11. Ensure access for all staff and detained youth to disinfectant and – if recommended by health personnel or requested – to masks.
12. Release all youth detained on a misdemeanor charge or conviction or a technical Probation violation in order to reduce the population inside.

13. Physically separate all youth taken by law enforcement to a juvenile hall from other youth and immediately release them to parents/guardians unless 707b charges and/or youth safety prohibit it.
14. Remove all youth showing symptoms of COVID-19 from juvenile halls and camps immediately to a hospital or other medical facility for treatment and – if released by medical personnel - quarantined in their homes or another safe, non-carceral setting pending the results of testing. (Isolation practices can discourage youth from reporting on symptoms if they fear it will lead to physical isolation and sensory deprivation for extended time.
15. Similarly, move all medically vulnerable youth - (including but not limited to those with respiratory illnesses, and those with deficient immune systems due to either medication and/or medical conditions) who do remain detained in juvenile halls, camps, Dorothy Kirby and placements away from the rest of the population.
16. Communicate through a press conference, media advisory and written notices to all youth in Probation custody, to all people on Probation supervision, and to all their families regarding that LA County has established these revised Protocols and that LA County has a duty to care for the health, safety and due process rights of people directly impacted by court, arrest, detention and incarceration.
17. Establish and post the protocols for screening for a fever all staff, community members and delivery personnel entering facilities.
18. Establish and post the protocols and resources for testing and separation pending results of anyone who demonstrates symptoms and/or a fever.
19. Establish and post the protocols and resources for medical care, quarantining and evacuation to medical facilities for anyone who tests positive COVID-19 symptoms and/or fever.
20. Guarantee access to teleconferencing visits, court hearings and mail for all young people who remain in custody.

***We also urge the State of California to enact similar protocols within California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) prisons and Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) youth prisons.***

Please respond to this request in writing and/or through a meeting with our organizations immediately, given the crisis that COVID-19 represents.

Sincerely,

Youth Justice Coalition

PLEASE ADD YOUR GROUP OR ORGANIZATION TO THIS LETTER.

SEND A LOGO TO:

[action@youth4justice.org](mailto:action@youth4justice.org)

Thank you!!!



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Youth Justice Coalition

@ Chuco's Justice Center

On the border between South Central L.A. and Inglewood

One light west of Florence and Crenshaw

[1137 E. Redondo Blvd., Inglewood, CA 90302](http://1137.E.RedondoBlvd.Inglewood.CA.90302)

**323-235-4243** \* Fax: **323-846-9472**

[info@youth4justice.org](mailto:info@youth4justice.org)

[www.youth4justice.org](http://www.youth4justice.org)

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