



Yolo County Public Defender
Fighting for Justice



Young Adult Court Proposal

October 2023

Future Request for Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) Funds

County partners anticipate requesting at a future meeting that the CCP allocate \$197,631 from its Innovation Fund to partially fund a new and innovative pilot program called Young Adult Court (YAC). The full cost of launching year-one of YAC is \$272,631. The Probation Department intends to match \$75,000 of this request from its Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG).

Problem Statements

Young adults are different and therefore require a different response.

The latest neuroscience shows that young adults are fundamentally different from older adults. This is because the prefrontal cortex of the brain is not fully developed until the age of 25. Essentially, this means that young people's lack of maturity can be seen in their increased impulsivity and risk taking, their increased vulnerability to negative influences from their environment (an environment that they are largely unable to control), and their poor decisions which are less likely to be signs of poor moral character but rather signs of their developmental stage. In addition to impaired cognitive functioning and decision making due to their still-developing brain, many young people lack basic stability and protective factors that support healthy growth. They may have poor familial or social support, lack adequate housing, be under-educated, and have minimal employment histories. They may additionally be trauma survivors and struggle from substance use and/or mental health disorders. The traditional legal system is not adequately equipped to support young people through this critical stage of development, leaving young people at risk of not transitioning successfully into adulthood.

In this age group, persons of color are overrepresented in the local criminal legal system.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, the Yolo County District Attorney's Office received for prosecution approximately 70-80 new cases per month concerning young adults between the ages of 18 to 25.¹ Of these 70-80 referrals for prosecution per month, approximately 75%

¹ [Yolo County District Attorney's Office, Measures for Justice Data Portal](#)

were persons of color.² By focusing on this population, Yolo County can take affirmative steps to reduce the overrepresentation of persons of color in its criminal legal system.

Alignment with CCP Strategic Plan

This proposal is a strategy aligned with the 2023-2025 CCP Strategic Plan. Specifically, Goal C. of the plan calls for evaluating collaborative courts to identify gaps and needs unaddressed by current programming and to expand collaborative court opportunities as needed. Goal B. calls for identifying and implementing additional restorative justice opportunities.

Overview

YAC will be a collaborative, problem-solving court that will provide judicially supervised, individualized treatment plans that are developmentally appropriate, trauma informed, and culturally competent. The goal is to support young adults through this critical developmental stage to help ensure they transition to healthy adults.

Eligible candidates for YAC will be between the ages of 18-24 (adults under the age of 25), with a moderate to high risk of recidivism, and high criminogenic needs. Participants with a felony arrest who are at risk of incarceration will be given priority.

Partner agencies include the Superior Court, Probation Department, Public Defender's Office (and other defense attorneys if representing a participant), District Attorney's Office, Health and Human Services Agency, and one or more community-based organizations.

In the first year, YAC will serve approximately 15 persons at any given time (15 slots).

YAC will be a highly structured, phased program lasting a minimum of 18 months, followed by 6 months of after-care program. Graduates will be formally recognized in a celebratory ceremony accompanied by dismissal of the legal action.

Structure and Responsibilities

YAC will be a collaborative effort of partner agencies. Every agency on the team will have dedicated assigned members who will work together to achieve the common goal of helping young adults to successfully complete their individualized treatment plans, and gain assets to transform themselves and enter adulthood equipped to lead healthy and productive lives.

YAC will be grounded in research on transitional aged youth brain development. Admittance will follow a general framework consisting of a referral, review of legal eligibility, assessment, a suitability finding, delivery of services in a phased treatment model, followed by graduation. Unsuccessful terminations can result in traditional prosecution and sanctions.

² Ibid.

The judge will preside over YAC court proceedings, review progress reports, conduct bi-weekly case conferences in court, and promote consensus-based problem solving. Based on recommendations from the team, the judge will impose behavior rewards and consequences.

The probation officer will maintain a YAC caseload and assist participants to comply with the terms and conditions of probation or supervision, support public safety, and connect participants to necessary services. Supervision will utilize a motivational approach that is individualized to the special needs of the YAC population.

The Public Defender's Office (and other defense counsel if representing a participant) will represent and counsel the participants at all court proceedings, using a collaborative approach that focuses on protecting the participants' constitutional rights, helping them understand YAC expectations, and assisting them to successfully comply with program requirements while mitigating the legal outcome of their case.

The District Attorney's Office will review criminal histories, consult with victims, pursue restitution, and determine the legal disposition of the case upon entry to YAC. Participants may be admitted pre-plea, on a deferred entry of judgment basis, or after being placed on probation. The least punitive option consistent with public safety will generally be pursued. As part of the collaborative team, the prosecutor will make recommendations as to rewards and sanctions for treatment progress.

The Health and Human Services Agency's existing programs and expertise will be leveraged for "high need" participants who require full-service partnership or similar services.

A community-based organization will provide comprehensive case management services that are developmentally appropriate, trauma informed, strength based, and client centered. The dedicated case manager will ensure clients' needs are identified and met through appropriate therapeutic assessments and community treatment and be the principal liaison between treatment service providers and the YAC court team.

For some participants there will be a restorative justice component. The existing Restorative Justice Partnership program and/or another community-based provider are options to provide this service.

Data and Outcomes

Data that will be tracked include referrals, acceptances and declinations, treatment services delivered, hospital bed days reduced (where appropriate), jail days avoided, arrests, reduction of risk factors, increase of protective factors, and achievement of individualized goals as set out in the case plan or that the young adults have identified for themselves.

Outcomes that will be tracked include reduced recidivism, increased employment acquisition and retention, increased educational achievement, reduced substance use, increased development of life skills, increased awareness and utilization of community resources, increased housing stability, increased wellness outcomes, and reduced representation of persons of color in the criminal legal system.

Funding

Year-one will be considered the pilot year. The only funding requested in year-one will be used to support the services of the selected community-based treatment providers and to provide direct incentives and support to YAC participants.

County partners, and the Court, will use existing personnel and resources during the pilot year. Partners may request funding in subsequent years if expansion of the program is desired or based on lessons learned during the pilot year.

YAC Budget

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Sample CBO positions | <u>FTE</u> | |
| Director of Youth and Family Services | 0.10 | \$ 10,548 |
| Youth and Family Specialist | 1.00 | \$ 71,199 |
| Peer Support Advocate | <u>1.00</u> | <u>\$ 50,078</u> |
| Total Salaries | 2.10 | \$132,825 |
| Benefits @ 25% | | \$ 33,206 |
| Total Salaries and Benefits | | \$166,031 |
| | | |
| CBO Operating Expenses* | | \$ 21,696 |
| CBO Admin Costs @ 15% | | \$ 24,904 |
| Participant Incentives | | \$ 10,000 |
| Direct to Participant Costs** | | \$ 40,000 |
| Restorative Justice | | \$ 10,000 |
| Total Operating Costs | | \$106,600 |
| | | |
| Total YAC Budget | | \$272,631 |
| Less Probation YOBG Match | | - \$ 75,000 |
| CCP Request | | <u>\$197,631</u> |

**Sample CBO operating expenses include occupancy/ mortgage/ depreciation, facility maintenance, utilities, cell phones, travel, office supplies, IT – computers, staff training/ development.*

***Direct to participant costs include supports for housing, employment, education, etc.*