

MEMORANDUM

FY 2022-2023 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 2022-2023. 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 21-22 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 22-23.

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 are exacerbated by the pandemic, including 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.

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.

CAB also recommends offering restorative justice programming for individuals serving time in custody at Marsh Creek and West County Detention Facilities.

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.

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.

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 supports for individuals with disabilities that are also impacted by the justice-system. Presently, services for those with disabilities are availability and accessible, no reentry specific resources have been allocated to address this need outside of AB 109 funded behavioral health services. CAB recommends CCP engage in public discussions on areas where accessibility and coordination of resources can be improved for those who are justice-involved and living with disabling conditions. Disability can come in many forms and without having a clear understanding of how many individuals among this population are in need of 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

It is of no surprise that gainful employment with livable wages and benefits is a cornerstone for reducing recidivism and ensuring anyone with a history of justice-involvement can take care of their families and sustain disengagement from the justice system long-term. Public sector jobs have traditionally served as the backbone for job security and income stability among the general workforce. Because of this recognition, ensuring equitable access to public sector jobs for those in reentry can lift whole families and communities out of poverty and on track to a stable life. CAB recommends the county develop an initiative to expand employment opportunities and hire among the reentry population similar to other efforts in neighboring counties such as Alameda and San Francisco counties who have exercised policy actions and invested in outreach to these communities as the need for public sector workers continue to grow. CAB welcomes public discussions on the ways in which the county can streamline opportunities for hiring and job placement among the justice-involved population.