

Juvenile Justice Continuum Assessment - Analysis Plan

Purpose & Guiding Principles

This analysis plan is specifically designed to inform the Juvenile Justice Continuum Assessment (JJCA) by providing the analytic framework, metrics, and methods that will generate findings to guide the Comprehensive Multi-agency Juvenile Justice (CMJJ) process. The scope of this plan is limited to defining how data will be used to assess system performance, equity, and outcomes across the continuum. Most importantly, this plan elevates voices of youth and families within a clear analytic framework. It retains guiding principles from prior planning efforts (e.g., the Improving Outcomes for Youth initiative (IOYouth), CMJJ Plan) and integrates them into a structured evaluation design.

Ultimately, the Juvenile Justice Continuum Assessment (JJCA) is grounded in a commitment to serving as a reliable resource in support of a data-informed CMJJ Plan that keeps youth out of the justice system when possible, provides the right level of supervision and services when they are in the system, and helps young people successfully exit the system with brighter futures.

California and Federal Legislative Context

California's **Senate Bill (SB) 823** realigned responsibility for youth formerly committed to the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to counties, requiring the establishment of Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF) units.

*This analysis will examine detention and placement trends in light of SB 823 to ensure Sonoma County's practices align with least restrictive mandates. Similarly, the federal **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP, Title II)** requires monitoring of racial/ethnic disparities and protections for youth in custody; our analyses of ¹ and detention outcomes will directly support compliance with these federal standards.*

Our **Guiding Principles** were developed to chart the course for an approach to this assessment that was based on a sound evaluation design while maintaining fidelity to values for a culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and ethical approach. These principles shape how evaluation questions are framed and how findings will be interpreted in partnership with stakeholders.

- Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) framework to ensure interventions match youths' criminogenic needs and responsivity factors
- Reliance on evidence-based programs and practices that are trauma-informed and culturally responsive
- Commitment to equity and racial justice, addressing disparities at key decision points
- Youth and family engagement, evidenced by elevating youth voice in the assessment process
- Collaborative, data-driven decision-making across agencies
- Holding youth accountable while promoting positive development by utilizing evidence-based community-based programs as alternatives to punitive approaches.

¹ **Relative Risk Indices (RRI)** are a statistical measure that compares the risk of an outcome occurring in one group to the risk of it occurring in another group. For example, a relative risk of 1 indicates that the risk of the outcome is the same in both groups. A relative risk greater than 1 means the first group has a higher risk, while a relative risk less than 1 means the second group has a higher risk.

Scope & Framework

The assessment will examine the full juvenile justice continuum from first contact (e.g. referral or citation) through court processing, detention, supervision, program participation, and reentry. It adopts a **developmental approach**, recognizing that youths' needs differ by age (i.e., stage of development and cognitive capacity) and that early prevention/diversion is critical.

The framework is organized around key decision points and system components:

- **Front-End Decisions:** Arrests, referrals to probation, diversion eligibility and intake dispositions.
- **Detention and Alternatives:** Use of the Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI), secure detention (Juvenile Hall) admissions, and alternatives to detention (home supervision, electronic monitoring, etc.).
- **Court and Supervision:** Petitions filed, adjudications, dispositions (informal supervision, probation, Deferred Entry of Judgment, Secure Youth Treatment custody under SB 823, etc.), and the alignment of these with assessed risk levels.
- **Services and Programs:** Referrals to community-based organizations (CBOs) and evidence-based programs, program enrollment and completion, and service integration across agencies.
- **Youth Outcomes:** Short-term outcomes like compliance (violations, detention for technical reasons) and longer-term outcomes like recidivism (new offenses during and after supervision), as well as education or well-being indicators when available.
- **System Infrastructure:** Data capacity, interagency collaboration, and resource allocation efficiency (ensuring funds are used for effective practices). This includes examining how well Sonoma County uses data for continuous quality improvement and decision-making.

The analytical framework is guided by an evaluative logic model: if Sonoma County is implementing programs and practices according to evidence-based principles and legislative mandates, then we expect to see **continuous improvement in youth outcomes** (e.g., reduced reoffending, successful program completions), narrowing of disparities, and more efficient use of resources. Improvement will be assessed through comparison over time; for example, whether referral, detention, or recidivism rates are trending in a positive direction relative to prior years, rather than against a single fixed benchmark. The framework also incorporates the **“swift, certain, and fair” response model for behavior**, meaning the assessment will review whether graduated responses to misconduct are in place to minimize excessive use of confinement.

Integration of Guiding Principles: At each stage of the continuum, the assessment will check fidelity to the County's principles. For example, using the racial equity principle to examine front-end decision-making, we can ask if diversion decisions are made equitably for youth of color. In services, we can explore if programs are evidence-based and trauma-informed (effectiveness principle) and matched to individual risk/needs (RNR principle). In supervision, we use the youth voice principle to inquire whether youth and families are ethically engaged in goal-setting. This ensures the framework is not just about data points, but about the quality of practice at each stage.

Data-Driven and Narrative Blend: While data will be used to answer specific evaluation questions (outlined below), the framework remains narrative-friendly. Each section of analysis will be

introduced with explanatory context (e.g., describing how a referral flows through the system, or what a DRAI score means for a detention decision), so that readers who do not have high data literacy can understand the significance and engage in participatory evaluation practices, if possible.

Finally, the framework situates Sonoma County's trends in the broader context of state and national changes. For example, a sharp drop in referrals during 2020 was seen statewide due to the pandemic, and the subsequent rise (especially in serious offenses) is part of a post-pandemic pattern. This trend, of course, will need to be considered in the context of newest data available from June 2026. Legislative callouts (like SB 823 in the text box above) will appear alongside relevant sections to remind County decision-makers and partners how policy shifts shape local data. This approach ensures the assessment remains forward-looking – identifying not only what the data show, but why trends may be occurring and how the County might respond.

While the project centers analysis of county data and collection of primary data (e.g., listening sessions), we also draw on prior analyses to provide historical context and baseline comparisons:

- **Decision Point Analysis – Detention Decisions (2023):** Documented racial disparities in detention and override practices, with Latino and Black youth disproportionately detained despite similar risk scores, and identified inconsistency in applying the DRAI.
- **Decision Point Analysis – New Referrals (2023):** Showed overrepresentation of Latino and Black youth at the referral stage, disproportionate school referrals for Latino youth, and harsher detention outcomes across referral sources.
- **IOYouth Action Plan (2023):** Established county goals to reduce disparities, expand diversion, improve coordination, strengthen youth/family engagement, and enhance data infrastructure.

The reports provide important benchmarks to track change over time and are useful context in development of evaluation questions, as they include input from County leadership and staff.

The Continuum Assessment is organized around the six Evaluation Questions (EQ1–EQ6) below that cover the major domains of interest. These questions balance broad system outcomes with focused inquiries into specific decision points or sub-populations. They were developed with consideration of the perspectives shared by County leadership and staff in recent County reports (primarily those named above) and in consultation with the newly formed CCJA subcommittee during the inaugural meeting in June 2025.

Each evaluation question identifies (1) what we aim to learn, (2) why it matters for Sonoma County, and (3) how it aligns with guiding principles such as equity, accountability, youth development, and the prioritization of evidence-based, community-based alternatives to detention.

EQ1 – Referral and Diversion

Evaluation Question: What are the trends and characteristics of juvenile referrals in Sonoma County, and to what extent are youth offered community-based diversion as an alternative to formal processing?

- **What we aim to learn:** How youth enter the system, including referral patterns, sources, and whether they are diverted into community-based alternatives instead of moving deeper into the justice system.
- **Why it matters:** Diversion is the most effective point to reduce unnecessary justice involvement and racial disparities, and to redirect youth into positive, community-based supports.
- **Guiding principles:** Equity and fairness; accountability, balanced with positive development; access to community-based diversion as a preferred alternative to detention.

EQ2 – Detention Decisions

Evaluation Question: How are detention decisions made at intake, and to what extent are evidence-based, community-based alternatives to detention utilized in practice?

- **What we aim to learn:** How detention decisions are guided by the DRAI, when overrides occur, and whether alternatives such as home supervision, electronic monitoring, or restorative community programs are consistently used.
- **Why it matters:** Secure detention should be reserved for only the highest-risk youth; alternatives can support accountability while maintaining ties to families, schools, and communities.
- **Guiding principles:** Least restrictive interventions; reliance on validated tools; expansion of community-based alternatives to detention.

EQ3 – Risk, Needs, and Supervision Alignment:

Evaluation Question: To what extent are supervision strategies and case planning aligned with assessed risks and needs, and do they incorporate community-based alternatives where appropriate?

- **What we aim to learn:** Whether high-risk youth are matched with intensive services, and whether lower-risk youth are kept out of over-supervision through community-based diversion or informal supervision.
- **Why it matters:** Aligning supervision with risk/needs prevents over-programming, reduces unnecessary system exposure, and ensures accountability is supported by community connections.
- **Guiding principles:** Evidence-based practice; promoting positive development; accountability through structured, community-based supports.

EQ4 – Services and Program Outcomes

Evaluation Question: What services and programs—including community-based alternatives—are youth referred to, who participates, and what outcomes are achieved?

- **What we aim to learn:** Whether community-based programs such as restorative justice, mentoring, and family therapy are accessible, equitably used, and effective in supporting youth success.
- **Why it matters:** Community-based services are often more effective and less disruptive than system-based interventions. Their outcomes provide a measure of both accountability and rehabilitation.
- **Guiding principles:** Community partnerships; cultural responsiveness; accountability paired with supportive alternatives to detention.

EQ5 – Youth Outcomes and Recidivism:

Evaluation Question: What outcomes do youth achieve during and after system involvement, and how effective are community-based alternatives in reducing recidivism² and supporting positive development?

- **What we aim to learn:** Whether youth avoid new offenses and achieve positive milestones, and whether outcomes differ between those placed in community-based alternatives versus more formal supervision or detention.
- **Why it matters:** Long-term success is measured not just by reduced recidivism, but by increased stability, education, and wellbeing—outcomes more likely achieved through community-based approaches.
- **Guiding principles:** Public safety; accountability balanced with opportunity; equity in long-term outcomes; reliance on community-based strategies.

EQ6 – System Resources and Continuous Improvement

Evaluation Question: How are resources, funding, and collaborative structures being used to sustain and expand community-based alternatives and strengthen Sonoma County’s juvenile justice continuum?

- **What we aim to learn:** How investments support prevention, diversion, and reentry through community-based partners, and whether these efforts reduce disparities and improve outcomes.
- **Why it matters:** Sustainable improvement depends on adequate resources for community-based alternatives and collaborative planning across agencies.
- **Guiding principles:** Collaboration; equity; data-driven decision-making; prioritization of community-based capacity.

These evaluation questions provide the backbone for the analysis. Each question will be answered with a mix of quantitative data and qualitative insights, as detailed in the following sections. The questions also intersect – for instance, findings on EQ1 (referrals) will inform understanding of EQ5 (recidivism) by establishing baseline offending trends. Together, they ensure a comprehensive assessment that is both granular (zooming into specific decision points) and holistic (seeing the “big picture” of system functioning).

² **Recidivism** will be defined consistent with the Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC) standard, including new referrals and adjudications during supervision and within one- and two-years post-supervision. Current data do not capture adult system outcomes or out-of-county events; these will be flagged as future data linkages.

We explore the approach to analysis for each evaluation question in the subsequent section, *Analysis by Evaluation Question*.

Data Sources and Analysis Approach

A distinct feature of this plan is the integration of youth and family voice. Four focus groups, two with youth and two with families, conducted in both English and Spanish will complement the quantitative data with lived experience. Youth and family perspectives will help interpret referral and diversion patterns, illuminate the human impact of detention decisions, contextualize supervision and service matching, and assess the accessibility and fairness of community-based programs. Their voices will not only illustrate the numbers but also reveal gaps and opportunities that administrative data alone cannot capture. Please refer to the ‘Qualitative Analysis’ subsection under *Analysis Methods* below for more detail.

The analysis will leverage a range of Sonoma County data systems and reports, focusing on what is realistically available through County agencies³:

- **Integrated Case Management Data (IJS/Probation System):** Probation’s case management system provides data on referrals, demographics, charges, detention screenings, petitions, dispositions, and supervision history for each youth. This is the core source for system metrics (e.g., number of referrals per year, outcomes of each referral). We have data extracts for roughly the past 10 years, allowing trend analysis pre- and post-pandemic.
- **PACT Assessment Data:** The Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) is the risk/needs assessment used by Probation. PACT data provides each youth’s assessed risk level (low, moderate, high) and identifies key need areas (domains such as family, substance use, mental health, etc.). This will be used especially for EQ3 and EQ5 to analyze outcomes by risk level and to see if services address documented needs. Note: The PACT has been in use since 2013 and includes a “Residential PACT” variant for in-custody youth. Local validation of the tool has not yet been done, so the analysis will cautiously interpret PACT scores (treating them as one indicator rather than a definitive truth).
- **Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI) Data:** The Juvenile Hall intake screening results (DRAI scores, mandatory detention flags, and any overrides) will be analyzed to understand detention decisions. It is important to note that the DRAI has not yet been validated but validation of a post-revision tool is nearly complete. Each screening record indicates whether a youth was detained or released and if detained, whether it was due to a mandatory criterion or an override of the risk score. This data is crucial for EQ2. We will also use Detention utilization logs (daily population data) to see trends in the Juvenile Hall population (e.g., average daily population, length of stay).
- **Juvenile Justice Referral & Outcome Records:** Every referral (new law violation) includes info on how it was resolved: diverted (and to which program if applicable), handled informally, or petitioned to court. By linking referral records with outcome data, we can calculate diversion

³ Certain data are not yet available for analysis. These include school discipline data, CalAIM behavioral health records, and victim outcomes data. These sources are noted as intended future linkages, and findings from this assessment will explicitly flag where additional data would strengthen understanding of disparities, needs, and outcomes.

rates and identify any differences by offense type or youth characteristics. We also have data on juvenile petitions filed and sustained, including which cases involve WIC 707(b) offenses (the most serious violent offenses). This allows tracking the increase in serious offenses adjudicated (notably, 707(b) adjudications rose from <11 to 32 over the last two years). At the same time, it is important to note that the most recent data will be a critical part of analysis, to show a complete picture of trends over time and to provide recommendations based on current trends.

- **Supervision and Intervention Data:** We will compile data on all youth under supervision in a given period (for example, all youth supervised during FY 2023-24) to describe the population (counts by age, gender, race, etc. and by supervision type). We have recent summary data indicating an increase in youths on supervision by 26% from FY 22-23 to FY 23-24, which we will verify and use as baseline. Additionally, contracted service referral data (from the Probation program database) will track how many referrals were made to each CBO program and how many youth engaged.
- **CBO Program Outcome Data:** Many of Sonoma County's contracted providers track participant outcomes and provide annual reports. We will draw from the Service Provider Outcomes Report (FY 2023-24) for aggregated measures such as program completion rates, survey feedback, and short-term outcomes. In addition, we will include community-based alternatives to detention as a focal category, with outcome metrics that are tied to accountability (e.g., restitution paid, restorative conferencing completed) and positive development (e.g., school engagement, skill gains). This data will feed into EQ4 and EQ5, illustrating the effectiveness of services, while also aligning with the Guiding Principle of "holding youth accountable while promoting positive development by utilizing evidence-based community-based programs as alternatives to detention".
- **Recidivism Tracking Data:** A dedicated Juvenile Recidivism Analysis (2023) was completed, providing robust methodology and results that we will incorporate. It defines recidivism in two ways, new referrals (arrests) and new adjudications/convictions, and computes rates during supervision and after supervision. We will use this as a baseline for EQ5. For instance, the recidivism report found an 18.0% rate of new referrals during supervision and 10.1% rate of new adjudications during supervision (for youth who ended supervision 2014–2022). One year post-supervision, the new offense rate was much lower (~6%). We will update or replicate these calculations for the most recent cohorts as data allows, using the same definitions (aligned with the Chief Probation Officers of California CPOC definition).
- **External Data (Contextual):** Race and ethnicity data present a particular challenge in cross-system analysis. The Sonoma County Probation system collects race/ethnicity data at intake using self-report where possible, or officer observation if self-report is unavailable. Categories are not fully aligned with Census or federal reporting standards. By contrast, Census and American Community Survey (ACS) data allow individuals to select multiple racial categories, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) publishes population denominators through its EZAPO tool that apply internal allocation rules for multiracial youth. These allocation rules are not fully transparent and may assign youth to a single category for reporting purposes. As a result, when comparing Probation data to Census or EZAPO denominators to calculate Relative Rate Indices (RRI) or other disparity metrics, results should be interpreted with caution. Within-system analyses (e.g., the relative referral, detention, or diversion rates by race/ethnicity in Probation's own data) are reliable for identifying disparities in decision-making. However, cross-source comparisons (e.g., Probation referrals versus

Census youth population shares) are subject to definitional inconsistencies, particularly for youth identifying with multiple races. For this reason, the analysis will:

- Clearly document the categories used in each data source.
- State which denominator source (Census ACS or EZAPOP) is used for RRI calculations and why.
- Note that results for multiracial youth are likely underrepresented or redistributed in published population estimates, limiting precision of disparity measures.
- Where feasible, conduct sensitivity analysis to test the impact of different coding assumptions.

Cohorts and Time Frame. The assessment will primarily examine data from the last 10 years (2014–2025) to capture trends over time and recent changes, including

- Trend analyses (for referrals, detention, etc.) will use annual fiscal year data. We will highlight key breakpoints (e.g., pre-2019 vs. pandemic vs. recent uptick).
- Cohort analyses for recidivism will follow standard practice, e.g., youth who terminated probation in a given range and tracking their outcomes for 12 and 24 months after.
- For program outcomes, the focus is the most recent full fiscal year (2023-24), with comparisons to prior years as needed to show changes in utilization or success rates.
- Some specific analyses, like the RRI for racial disparities, will cover 2014–2023 as in the preliminary decision point reports.
- Where appropriate, we will combine multiple years to ensure sample sizes are sufficient for subgroup analysis (acknowledging that some groups such as Native American youth have very low numbers annually), while acknowledging that results for multiracial youth are likely underrepresented or redistributed in published population estimates, limiting precision of disparity measures.

Analysis Methods. A mix of descriptive statistics, trend analysis, and comparative measures will be used in the analysis, including:

- Descriptive Statistics: We will produce tables and graphs for simple metrics (counts, percentages, means). For instance, a chart of total referrals per year with a line indicating felony vs misdemeanor breakdown, showing the post-2020 rise in felonies
- Trend and Time-Series Analysis: Using year-by-year data, we will identify significant changes or continuities (e.g., the steep drop in 2020 referrals and subsequent rebound). Where data allows, we may compute a line of best fit or annual percentage change.
- Comparative Analysis: We will compare subgroups using percentage point differences and RRIs. The RRI method, as described, isolates disparities at each stage. We will include visual aids (similar to those in the preliminary disparity reports) showing, for example, how Hispanic youth referral rates compare to white youth over time.
- Stratified Outcomes and Confidence Intervals: Borrowing from the Juvenile Recidivism Analysis, we will present stratified recidivism rates and their 95% confidence intervals to assess which differences are statistically meaningful. This approach will be used for recidivism

and possibly for other outcomes if sample sizes permit (e.g., comparing completion rates of programs by demographic).

- **Survival Analysis:** The recidivism report employed survival analysis to examine time to reoffense. If resources permit, we will include a survival curve showing the probability of remaining offense-free over time after supervision, which adds insight into how quickly recidivism occurs when it does. This is a more advanced method and would be included in an appendix if conducted.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** In addition to administrative data, the analysis will include qualitative insights gathered from four focus groups with youth and families. These discussions will be conducted in English and Spanish and facilitated by bilingual staff. Thematic analysis will be used to identify common experiences, concerns, and recommendations. Findings will be integrated alongside quantitative results to provide context and ensure the voices of youth and families directly inform system assessment. Also, while not a primary data source listed, stakeholder input (e.g., perceptions of gaps in services, or youth describing their experience in programs) will be qualitatively analyzed for themes. These narratives will illustrate and contextualize the numbers in the report.

Units of Analysis. To improve clarity, analyses will consistently define the unit of analysis being applied. Distinguishing these units avoids confusion between counts of events and counts of individual youth.

- **Referral level:** Each case brought to Probation for intake. One youth may have multiple referrals across time.
- **Offense level:** Each charge or allegation associated with a referral; used to examine offense types and severity.
- **Youth level:** A unique individual youth, used for demographic analyses, recidivism, and service engagement.

Note: Results will specify whether they are case-based or offense-based. Case-based analyses will classify youth by the most serious charge within a referral event, aligning with California reporting standards. Offense-based analyses will include all charges associated with a referral to allow finer-grained assessment of offense types. Each figure and table will indicate the unit of analysis used to ensure clarity and transparency.

Treatment of Overrides. For detention decision analyses, Sonoma County's Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI) will be examined both for recommendations and for instances where staff override the tool. Analyses will distinguish between:

- **Mandatory holds** (detention required by policy, such as for certain violent offenses or outstanding warrants).
- **Discretionary overrides** (detention imposed despite a release recommendation, or release granted despite a detention recommendation).

Where data are available, reasons for overrides (e.g., community safety concerns, lack of available placement, no parent/guardian available) will be described. This distinction is critical to understanding whether discretion reinforces or mitigates disparities.

Daily Population Snapshots. Juvenile Hall and Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF) utilization will be measured using daily population snapshots, which record the number of youth in custody on a given day. By averaging these daily counts across a reporting period, we will calculate the Average

Daily Population (ADP). For Length of Stay (LOS), we will calculate both median and average durations of custody episodes, disaggregated by reason for detention (pre-adjudication, post-disposition, or SYTF commitment). These measures provide a more accurate picture of system capacity and youth experience than admission counts alone.

Validity and Reliability Considerations. The team will be mindful of data quality. For example, race and ethnicity data in the Probation system has limitations – it records only one race/ethnicity choice per youth and is often officer-observed, not self-reported. We will document these limitations and, where feasible, cross-check with other sources (like aggregate Census-based estimates used in RRI). Where sample sizes are very small (for instance, fewer than 10 cases for a subgroup), we will interpret results with caution or suppress detailed reporting to avoid drawing unreliable conclusions.

Lastly, in final reporting and presentations, the data and methodology will be summarized in the report in a reader-friendly way, possibly with a matrix linking each Evaluation Question to specific data sources, indicators, and analysis methods. This provides a clear roadmap for reviewers, ensures transparency about how each question will be answered, and improves opportunity for participatory evaluation with youth and their families.

Foundational Resources to Inform Analysis Approach

Decision Point Analysis – Detention Decisions

- Showed persistent racial disparities in detention and override practices, with Latino and Black youth disproportionately detained despite similar risk scores.
- Identified inconsistent application of the DRAI, policy-driven mandatory holds, and a lack of alternatives to detention.

Decision Point Analysis – New Referrals:

- Demonstrated that inequities begin at the referral stage, with Latino and Black youth overrepresented and more likely to be detained across all referral sources, including schools and law enforcement.
- Found that school referrals disproportionately involve Latino students (73% of school referrals) and often lead to more punitive outcomes.

Sonoma County IOYouth Action Plan:

- Provides a county-endorsed framework to address inequities, expand diversion, improve system coordination, and strengthen youth/family engagement.
- Emphasizes culturally responsive services, data-driven decision-making, and sustainable community partnerships.

Each evaluation question guides a specific part of the analysis. For each question, we explain the focus, describe what will be measured, identify the data sources, and outline the analysis approach. Technical details (like statistical tools) are included, but written in an accessible way so all readers, whether community members, providers, or funders, can follow the story of how we will answer each question.

EQ1 – Referral and Diversion

Expanded Evaluation Questions: What are the patterns and outcomes at the front end of the system? Who is entering the system, and under what circumstances are youth diverted or formally processed? How often are referrals directed into community-based diversion programs versus custodial options?

- **Focus:** This is the “front door” of the juvenile justice system. We will examine overall trends in referrals (e.g., changes in volume and offense types⁴), the use of diversion and informal handling, and whether these decisions are equitable across groups.
- **Data sources:** Probation referral records, Juvenile Hall intake logs, law enforcement referral flags, and Census/EZAPOP data for comparison to population baselines. Note that while schools and other entities may indirectly contribute, these are not coded in administrative data; referrals are therefore recorded solely from law enforcement as the originating source.
- **Key Metrics:**
 - Referral counts and trends (by year, type of offense, severity).
 - Proportion of youth diverted into community-based alternatives (e.g., restorative justice, mentoring, youth panels).
 - Racial/ethnic disparities in referrals and diversion (Relative Rate Indices).
 - Referral demographics (age, gender, race/ethnicity) and geographic distribution (by neighborhood/zip code when available).
- **Analysis approach:** Trend charts and tables will show changes in referral patterns, while subgroup comparisons will highlight disparities. Geographic analysis will be exploratory due to limits in address data. Note: Intake decision analyses will exclude referrals for youth who were already on active supervision at the time of the new referral, as these cases follow different decision pathways. This ensures analyses reflect only true “entry-point” decisions at the front end of the system. Diversion outcomes will be tracked, including whether youth complete community-based interventions.
- **Youth and Family Voice:** Youth and families can describe how initial encounters with law enforcement unfolded (e.g., at schools, in the community) and how they perceived fairness, clarity, and options offered at the referral stage. Family accounts will also highlight whether diversion pathways feel supportive or punitive, and how community-based alternatives impact accountability and growth.

⁴ E.g., felony vs. misdemeanor, violent vs. property

EQ2 – Detention Decisions

Expanded Evaluation Questions: How are decisions to detain youth made, and are alternatives to detention being utilized effectively and fairly? When a youth is brought to Juvenile Hall, who is detained and who is released, and why?

- **Focus:** This question looks at how intake decisions are made at Juvenile Hall. We will distinguish between youth who must be detained under mandatory criteria and those detained due to overrides of the Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI). A key focus is whether alternatives to detention are used fairly and consistently.
- **Data sources:** DRAI assessments, override logs, Juvenile Hall booking/release data, records of alternatives such as home supervision or electronic monitoring.
- **Key Metrics⁵:**
 - Detention rates by DRAI score
 - Mandatory vs. discretionary detentions, with override reasons (noting coding inconsistencies)
 - Percentage of detention-eligible youth diverted into community-based alternatives, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and risk level
 - Juvenile Hall population statistics, including average daily population (ADP) and length of stay (LOS)
- **Analysis approach:** Cross-tabulations will compare risk scores with outcomes. Disparities will be assessed with RRs. Average Daily Population (ADP) and length of stay (LOS) will be tracked through descriptive statistics, with caution on interpreting overrides given data limitations. Measures of LOS and ADP will be based on daily population snapshots to ensure accuracy over time. LOS will be calculated as total days in custody per case. Cases involving temporary release followed by return to custody will be documented, with methods for counting LOS clearly described in the final report.
- **Youth and Family Voice:** Youth focus groups will provide perspectives on the experience of intake at Juvenile Hall, perceptions of fairness in the detention decision, and whether alternatives felt accessible. Families may describe challenges in supporting release options (e.g., needing stable housing or supervision) and barriers to accessing community-based alternatives.

EQ3 – Risk, Needs, and Supervision Alignment:

Expanded Evaluation Questions: To what extent are youth matched with the appropriate level and type of supervision based on their risks and needs? Are high-risk youth receiving more intensive intervention? Are lower-risk youth being appropriately diverted or placed on minimal supervision?

- **Focus:** This question examines whether the system matches youth to the right level of supervision and services, with particular attention to how caseload type (low/moderate vs. high) and standards for supervision intensity manifest in practice. The frequency of contact with probation officers is a key indicator of intensity.

⁵ Detention analyses will explicitly distinguish between mandatory holds (as defined in policy) and discretionary overrides of the Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI). Override decisions will be flagged and summarized, with reasons reported where available. Because override reason coding is inconsistent, findings will be interpreted with caution and limitations will be noted in the report.

- **Data sources:** PACT (Positive Achievement Change Tool) assessments, probation supervision records (including caseload type assignment and contact logs), program assignment data, case plans.
- **Key Metrics:**
 - Distribution of youth by risk level and corresponding caseload type (low/moderate vs. high).
 - Frequency of probation officer (PO) contacts by caseload type, compared to policy standards.
 - Needs domains flagged in PACT (e.g., family, peers, school, substance use) will be treated as indicators, not diagnoses.⁶
 - Supervision type (informal probation, formal probation, SB 823 commitments) by risk/needs profile.
 - Access to community-based alternatives for lower-risk youth.
- **Analysis approach:**
 - Cross-tabulations of risk level and caseload assignment to test alignment. Comparison of PO contact frequency to supervision standards, disaggregated by caseload type. Frequency analysis of needs domains and corresponding service referrals. Subgroup comparisons (race/ethnicity, gender, geography) to check for disparities in assignment to caseload type and access to alternatives.
 - Analyses of supervision will account for the complexity of Deferred Entry of Judgment (DEOJ) cases, where youth may move in and out of formal supervision pathways. To capture supervision patterns comprehensively, we will also produce “continuous supervision tables” showing periods of supervision across referral events, rather than treating each referral independently.
 - Beyond supervision intensity and needs alignment, analysis will consider whether interactions between youth and probation staff foster trust and connection. Supportive relationships with probation officers and other adults can strengthen accountability and motivation for change. Youth and family perspectives on communication, respect, and encouragement complement quantitative data on supervision practices, offering insight into whether the system promotes engagement rather than compliance alone.
- **Youth and Family Voice:** Youth can describe their supervision experience, including frequency and quality of PO contact, and how well supervision levels match their needs. Families may discuss whether probation expectations felt realistic and supportive, or overly burdensome.

EQ4 – Services and Program Outcomes

Expanded Evaluation Questions: How are community-based services being utilized, and what outcomes are youth achieving in these programs? Are youth getting the help they need, and does the data show improvements as a result of these services?

⁶ Findings from the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) will be treated as indicators of potential needs. In particular, mental health and substance use “flags” should be understood as prompts for further assessment, not as equivalent to clinical diagnoses. This distinction will be made clear in both analysis and reporting.

- **Focus:** This analysis focuses on services delivered by community-based organizations (CBOs), including therapy, restorative justice, skills training, mentoring, and family interventions.
- **Data sources:** Service provider reports, probation referral records, program completion data, participant/family surveys. Note: Service data from community-based organizations (CBOs) reflect community-delivered programming and do not capture the full scope of in-custody programming. Programming provided inside Juvenile Hall is inconsistently recorded and will be described narratively where information is available. In addition, historical service catalog data contain gaps that limit our ability to fully track longitudinal availability of programs.
- **Key Metrics:**
 - Number and type of referrals to CBOs.
 - Service participation rates by demographics.
 - Completion/success rates.
 - Reported outcomes (skills gained, goals met, improved family functioning).
 - Gaps in service availability (e.g., rural areas, specialized needs).
- **Analysis approach:** Descriptive statistics will show how many youth access and complete services. Subgroup comparisons will identify disparities. Qualitative feedback from participants will be analyzed for themes. Programming delivered inside Juvenile Hall will be reported narratively, as data are less consistent.
 - Evaluation of community-based programs will assess not only participation and completion rates but also how effectively they build trusted relationships and foster belonging. Mentorship, restorative justice, and culturally grounded programs that emphasize relational connection will be key focus areas. Qualitative data from focus groups will help assess whether these services feel safe, responsive, and meaningful, providing a fuller picture of program quality and impact beyond attendance or completion.
- **Youth and Family Voice:** Youth can speak to the relevance, accessibility, and impact of community-based services. Families may describe whether programs supported youth growth, accountability, and reduced risk behaviors, or whether they felt mismatched to needs. Both groups will have opportunity to speak to the cultural and linguistic responsiveness to their needs.

EQ5 – Youth Outcomes and Recidivism

Evaluation Question: What are the short- and longer-term outcomes for youth, including recidivism and positive milestones?

- **Focus:** This analysis measures whether youth succeed in avoiding new offenses and achieving positive developmental milestones during and after probation supervision. It also examines whether outcomes differ by supervision level, demographics, or participation in community-based alternatives versus detention.
- **Data sources:** Probation case closure records, referral/adjudication data, recidivism tracking datasets, service provider outcome reports, education data (where available).
- **Metrics:**
 - Recidivism (CPOC standard definition):

- During supervision: new referrals and adjudications before case closure.
 - After supervision: new referrals and adjudications at one-year and two-year intervals.
- Probation compliance measures such as technical violations.
- Positive milestones: school re-engagement, graduation, or employment outcomes (where available).
- Comparative outcomes: youth who completed community-based alternatives vs. those detained or under higher-intensity supervision.
- **Analysis approach:**
 - Cohort creation of youth exiting supervision, tracked for outcomes at each interval. Use of survival analysis to illustrate the probability of remaining offense-free over time. Stratification of outcomes by risk level, race/ethnicity, gender, age, and offense category. Confidence intervals reported to determine whether differences between groups are statistically meaningful. Narrative context on compliance and milestone data to complement quantitative analysis.
 - Analysis of outcomes will extend beyond recidivism to include indicators of relational stability and community integration. Youth and family narratives about mentorship, belonging, and connection will be analyzed as markers of resilience and sustained progress. Where possible, these qualitative insights will be examined alongside quantitative outcomes—such as school re-engagement or employment—to illustrate how positive relationships contribute to long-term success and reduced reoffending.
- **Limitations:**
 - Current datasets do not capture adult recidivism or offenses committed outside of Sonoma County. These gaps will be clearly documented so that findings are not misinterpreted as a full measure of youth outcomes.
 - Some positive milestone data (e.g., school progress) are inconsistently available and will be treated as exploratory indicators rather than definitive outcomes.
- **Youth and Family Voice:** Youth can describe challenges and successes during and after supervision, including staying out of trouble, re-engaging in school, or finding employment. Families may share how probation impacted stability, family relationships, and opportunities for positive development.

EQ6 – System Resources and Continuous Improvement

Evaluation Question: How effectively is Sonoma County using its resources to achieve outcomes, and how is data used to guide decisions? Does Sonoma County have the policies, partnerships, and data infrastructure to continually improve the juvenile justice system?

- **Focus:** This question looks inward at how the system invests and organizes itself to sustain a balanced continuum. In addition to examining resource allocation and data capacity, it will also evaluate the role of CBO partnerships in supporting alternatives to detention, culturally responsive services, and continuous improvement.
- **Data sources:** JJCPA and YOBG funding reports, PIE team documentation, Probation staffing records, JJCC meeting notes, system modernization plans, and CBO outcome reports.
- **Metrics:**
 - Allocation of funds across prevention, diversion, community-based programs, and custody.

- Investments in CBO contracts and the share of funds flowing to community providers.
- Range and type of services delivered by CBOs (e.g., restorative justice, mentoring, family therapy).
- Indicators of collaboration: frequency of joint planning, referrals across systems, or co-facilitation of youth/family supports.
- Evaluation and analytic capacity (e.g., PIE team staffing, data sharing with CBOs).
- Compliance with state/federal mandates.
- **Analysis approach:**
 - Descriptive analysis of how resources are distributed across the continuum, including the proportion going to CBOs.
 - Qualitative review of collaborative structures (JJCC subcommittees, Child & Family Teams, partnerships with schools or behavioral health).
 - Thematic analysis of how CBOs contribute to system goals, including barriers they face (e.g., limited capacity, funding cycles, data reporting burdens).
 - Assessment of whether CBO partnerships expand equitable access to community-based alternatives and help reduce disparities.
- **Youth and Family Voice:** Youth and families can provide feedback on how well the system's investments reflect community needs, including accessibility of services, equity in diversion, and the perceived impact of funded programs.

Together, the six evaluation questions provide a structured framework for examining Sonoma County's juvenile justice continuum from beginning to end. Each question illuminates a different stage of the system:

- how youth enter through referrals and diversion;
- how decisions are made about detention;
- how supervision is aligned to risks and needs;
- how services and programs are delivered;
- what outcomes youth experience during and after involvement; and
- how resources, partnerships, and data are used to drive system improvement.

The analysis plan ensures that each stage is assessed with a balance of technical rigor and accessibility. Statistical tools such as Relative Rate Indices, stratification, survival analysis, and confidence intervals will provide reliable measures of disparity and effectiveness. At the same time, the inclusion of qualitative data, narrative context, and plain-language presentation will ensure that findings are understandable to stakeholders at every level, from funders and policymakers to community-based partners, youth advocates, and the youth and families themselves. Focus groups and a participatory approach will provide first-hand accounts that contextualize the data, bringing forward lived experience as evidence alongside administrative records.

A central thread across all evaluation questions is the role of evidence-based, community-based alternatives to detention. Each question includes metrics to capture not only whether alternatives are available, but whether they are equitably applied, effective in promoting accountability, and supportive of positive youth development. By explicitly embedding this principle, the analysis reflects Sonoma County's commitment to holding youth accountable in ways that keep them connected to their families, schools, and communities. The direct voices of youth and families will highlight whether these alternatives feel supportive, accessible, and fair, ensuring that the County evaluates not only system performance, but also the human impact of its practices.

Ultimately, the Analysis by Evaluation Question section does more than outline methods. It builds a roadmap that connects guiding principles to practical indicators and data-driven inquiry. The findings will not be viewed in isolation but as interrelated evidence that speaks to the strength of Sonoma County's continuum, the gaps that remain, and the opportunities for continued collaboration and investment. By integrating statistical analysis with youth and family perspectives, the assessment strengthens its ability to generate actionable insights that are grounded both in data and lived experience.

This comprehensive, principle-driven approach ensures that the assessment will generate actionable insights that inform decision-making and strengthen the County's ability to support its youth fairly, effectively, and sustainably.

Limitations

While the plan aims to be comprehensive, we acknowledge several **limitations and caveats** in the data and analysis:

- **Data Gaps – “Intended Future Sources”:** Some aspects of youth success are not captured by current County datasets. For example, we lack systematic data on **victim outcomes** (such as victim satisfaction or restitution completion) – an important aspect of restorative justice that we intend to include in the future through surveys or OYCR reports. Similarly, **school performance and discipline records** for probation youth are not directly linked; we rely on proxies like attendance from programs (KKIS) rather than district-wide data. We have flagged these as *intended future data sources* to pursue via data-sharing agreements with education agencies. **CalAIM health outcomes** (such as use of mental health or substance use treatment funded by Medicaid) are another future source – currently, confidentiality (e.g., as strengthened by laws like AB 1184 on health information privacy) limits Probation’s access to these records, but establishing consent-based information sharing could enable tracking of treatment engagement. We clearly mark such references in the plan so readers know when a data point is aspirational. For now, these areas will be discussed qualitatively (or simply noted as gaps) rather than measured. Referral source data are also limited, as all referrals are coded as originating from law enforcement; indirect sources such as schools are not separately captured. This constrains analysis of “school-based referrals” and will require qualitative accounts from youth and families to fill in context.
- **Small Sample Sizes:** Sonoma’s juvenile population is relatively small, especially when broken into subgroups (e.g., certain races or low-frequency events like 707(b) offenses). Where numbers are low, percentages can fluctuate year to year. For instance, the American Indian youth group in many analyses had very few individuals, yielding wide confidence intervals (e.g., 33% recidivism $\pm 20\%$ for that group). We exercise caution by aggregating years for trends and by not drawing firm conclusions from small N statistics. In some charts or tables, we may omit data for groups with extremely low counts to avoid misleading results or breaching confidentiality.
- **Data Quality and Consistency:** The administrative data comes from multiple sources with varying data entry practices. Race and ethnicity recording is one noted issue: the Probation system historically allowed only a single race field, which may undercount multi-racial identities and misrepresent ethnicity. Plans are underway to improve this (new systems will allow multi-select), but our analysis of past data inherits those limitations. We will transparently communicate these caveats in any disparity findings. Comparisons with Census or OJJDP EZAPO data will also be presented cautiously, given differences in how multi-racial youth are categorized. In addition, offense categories have been updated over time in the Probation dataset. We will document these changes and apply consistent grouping rules to ensure comparability across years. While the County is planning to replace its case management system in the near future, this is not expected to disrupt the present project. To safeguard consistency, we will rely on stable historical data exports and will cross-verify key metrics (such as referral counts) against existing annual reports.
- **Inconsistency in override coding:** For detention decisions, mandatory versus override categories are coded, but override reason codes are inconsistently applied, which limits our ability to analyze why overrides occur. Juvenile Hall population analyses will rely on daily population snapshots to calculate Average Daily Population (ADP) and length-of-stay (LOS);

this method does not fully capture temporary releases or case-by-case variation, which will be noted in interpretation.

- **Attribution and Causality:** This is an assessment, not a controlled experiment. We can observe outcomes and trends, but we often cannot pin down **causality**. For example, if recidivism fell in 2021, was it due to a program or due to external factors (like pandemic conditions)? If Hispanic youth have higher recidivism, is it due to differential needs or program access? We will avoid attributing changes to specific interventions without clear evidence. Instead, we identify associations and potential influences. Where possible, we use comparison data (statewide trends, etc.) to contextualize whether Sonoma County's changes mirror broader patterns or stand out.
- **Focus on Available Metrics:** The plan emphasizes what is realistically measurable with current data. This means some broader outcomes (like long-term well-being, employment success in adulthood, reduced overall system involvement) might not be fully captured. We focus on readily available metrics such as recidivism, completion rates, etc., as proxies for ultimate outcomes. Readers should note that a low recidivism rate doesn't automatically mean a youth is thriving (they might still struggle in school or with their mental health). The Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) provides useful indicators of risk and need, but its "flags" for mental health and substance use are not diagnoses; they signal areas for further assessment. The assessment also incorporates **youth and family voice** through four focus groups (two youth, two family, in English and Spanish), which provide essential context and lived experience; these perspectives are qualitative and illustrative, not generalizable to the entire population.
- **Timeline and Dynamic Nature:** The data analyzed will be the most recent at the time (likely up to mid-2025). However, the system is dynamic – new laws (like those referenced in legislation callouts) and emerging trends could quickly change the landscape. For example, if a new state grant enables a program in 2026, it won't show in our data but will be on the horizon. We highlight known upcoming changes (like the new case management system implementation) so that readers understand the findings are a baseline, not an endpoint.
- **Analytical Assumptions:** In disparity analyses, we assumed **baseline population proportions** from available sources (using 2020 youth population as denominator for 2021-23 RRI as population data wasn't updated). Such assumptions, while necessary, introduce a small margin of error (e.g., Sonoma County's youth population might have changed slightly by 2023). We also assume that all relevant events are captured in our system; as noted, out-of-county events are not, which likely leads us to slightly undercount recidivism into adult systems. Deferred Entry of Judgment (DEOJ) supervision cases are especially complex, as youth may shift between informal, formal, and deferred statuses. Where possible, we will use continuous supervision tables to minimize misclassification, but this remains a limitation. These technical details will be documented so that the integrity of conclusions can be assessed by technical readers.

We will clearly articulate these limitations in the report (likely in a dedicated section like this). By being upfront, we set realistic expectations and also outline areas for future improvement (which can segue into recommendations). None of these limitations undermine the value of the findings, but they remind stakeholders to consider them in context. For instance, if we see racial disparities in outcomes, the race data issue suggests the disparity might even be under- or over-stated; or if we

see program success, we temper it with the recognition that not all success is captured by our metrics.

This Juvenile Justice Continuum Assessment Plan for Sonoma County merges storytelling with analytics – honoring the voices and context behind the numbers while maintaining a rigorous evaluation structure. By retaining a narrative tone and grounding it in data from recent studies and reports, the plan provides a roadmap for understanding where we are now (with evidence of successes and challenges) and where we need to focus next. To this end, the JJCA supports Sonoma County’s mission to improve outcomes for youth, allocate resources wisely, and ensure a just and effective system that wins the confidence of the whole community.

Appendix I: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Question, Purpose	Indicators / Metrics	Data Sources	Analysis Methods	Youth & Family Voice
EQ1 - Referral & Diversion: What are the patterns and outcomes at the front end of the system? <i>Purpose: To understand entry points, equity, and the use of community-based diversion programs.</i>	• Referral counts • Demographics • RRI • Diversion eligibility & completion • Geographic concentration	• Probation referral data • IJS • Census/EZAPOP	• Descriptive statistics • Trend/time-series • RRI • Exploratory mapping	• Youth/family accounts of referral experience • Barriers to diversion • Awareness of alternatives
EQ2 - Detention Decisions: How are detention decisions made, and are alternatives used effectively? <i>Purpose: to assess fairness and transparency; evaluate the use of least-restrictive community-based options.</i>	• DRAI scores • Detention vs release • Mandatory vs overrides • Override reason codes • ADP & LOS	• Detention logs • DRAI data • Juvenile Hall daily snapshots	• Cross-tab (risk vs decision) • RRI • LOS/ADP from snapshots	• Perceptions of fairness at intake • Family capacity to support alternatives • Understanding of detention decisions
EQ3 - Risk, Needs, & Supervision Alignment: Are youth matched with supervision that fits their risks and needs? <i>Purpose: to evaluate how supervision intensity and services align with risk/needs principles.</i>	• PACT risk/needs • Caseload type (low/mod vs high) • PO contact frequency • Supervision type (informal/formal/DEOJ)	• PACT data • Probation caseload assignments • Supervision logs	• Cross-tab (risk vs caseload type) • Compare PO contacts vs standards • Needs (service alignment)	• Perceptions of supervision intensity • Relationship with POs • Alignment of supports with needs
EQ4 - Services & Program Outcomes: What services are youth accessing, and what outcomes are achieved? <i>Purpose: assess effectiveness, equity of community-based services as detention alternatives</i>	• CBO referrals • Participation & completion rates • Program outcomes	• CBO service data • JJCPA/YOBG reports • Service provider outcome reports	• Descriptive stats • Subgroup comparisons • Qualitative thematic integration	• Accessibility of services • Barriers to participation • Perceived value and outcomes of programs • Adult/community support
EQ5 - Youth Outcomes & Recidivism: What are the short- and longer-term outcomes for youth? <i>Purpose: to measure system success in preventing reoffending and supporting positive youth development.</i>	• CPOC-defined recidivism • Survival analysis curves • Probation compliance • School re-engagement / graduation	• Recidivism dataset • Probation case files • Education proxies (KKIS, program records)	• Cohort tracking • Stratification • Survival analysis • Confidence intervals	• Youth/family definitions of success • Reentry challenges • Accountability and positive milestones
EQ6 - System Resources & Continuous Improvement: How effectively are resources and partnerships used? <i>Purpose: to evaluate sustainability of system resources, CBO partnerships, and infrastructure.</i>	• JJCPA/YOBG allocations • Share invested in CBOs • Partnership activity • Analytic capacity improvements	• JJCPA/YOBG annual plans • PIE team records • CBO partnership documents	• Descriptive analysis of funding • Document review • Thematic analysis of collaboration	• Community trust in system fairness • Perceptions of investment in alternatives vs detention