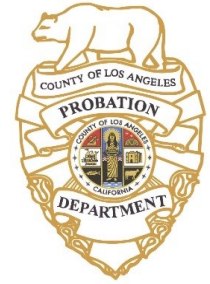




COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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TERRI L. McDONALD
Chief Probation Officer

August 28, 2017

The Honorable Raul Bocanegra
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2175
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Member Bocanegra:

AUDIT REQUEST OF THE USE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE CRIME PREVENTION ACT FUNDS BY THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

I am in receipt of a copy of your letter to Honorable Al Muratsuchi, Chair, Joint Legislative Audit Committee, dated August 14, 2017, requesting an audit of the use of Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funds by the County of Los Angeles.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Chief Probation Officer of the County of Los Angeles. I have been in this role since January 2017. In light of your request and mutual concern about this important issue, I would like to inform you of some of the key strategies undertaken by the County of Los Angeles pertaining to the use of JJCPA funds.

The use of JJCPA funds has been a high priority of the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors ("Board"), primarily in recognition of the problematic accumulation of substantial unspent revenues over the past few years, and the missed opportunity to provide critically-needed services. Consequently, pursuant to previous and recent Board-approved motions, the Probation Department is engaged in specific efforts to ensure effective utilization of these funds.

As a result of the Board-approved motions and current leadership focus, under the daily direction of Chief Deputy Sheila Mitchell, an experienced, nationally-recognized juvenile justice reform leader who joined the Department in late January, the following is an overview of the history and examples of the efforts to address the challenges related to the unexpended funds and ensure their most effective utilization.

Rebuild Lives and Provide for Healthier and Safer Communities

As noted in the County Auditor-Controller's March 2017 report, as of December 2016, there were approximately \$36.7 million in unspent JJCPA funds, of which \$20.2 million were committed to one-time programs or services. On April 18, 2017, the Board directed the Probation Department to provide quarterly reports on the status of implementing efforts to address the unspent JJCPA funds as well as ongoing program evaluation initiatives. In May 2017, there were approximately \$32.9 million in unspent funds.

Although there is a current unspent balance of approximately \$31 million, these funds have already been allocated to existing or new services and are pending CBO contract selection/designation. Thus, there are currently no unallocated JJCPA funds. For FY 2017-18, based on current and projected additional funding, we are prepared to spend up to \$44 million for critical services assuming we are able to complete contracts, and providers are able to expeditiously provide those services. We have identified the issues that contributed to the accumulation of unspent revenues and have taken the following steps to remedy the challenges:

- In March 2017, the Department established the JJCC Community Advisory Committee to ensure widespread input from community partners regarding service gaps and needs. This Committee meets monthly and is comprised of representatives from community providers, several JJCC members, and other County and City stakeholders.
- We re-established our JJCPA Accountability Committee whose primary responsibility is to track monthly referrals and operational expenditures to ensure timely reimbursement of requests by community-based organizations (CBOs) and County/City agencies, as historically, untimely billing has contributed to the accumulation of unspent funds. In addition, the Department's Contract Monitoring Unit will continue to reinforce the importance of timely invoice submissions and provide technical assistance, when appropriate.
- The Department has revisited the referral process after determining that aspects of the processes were onerous and rigid for contractors and Probation staff seeking services for youth and their families. Managerial focus and quality assurance efforts have been redirected to include regular checks and balances that readily determine the effectiveness and timeliness of the referral process.
- We are exploring the opportunity to expand our funding approach to include a public-private distribution partnership through various, well-established foundations. This approach would allow the various foundations to undertake some of the contracting processes and expedite the distribution of funds to community providers, as well as seek opportunities for matching funds for services.
- We have retained a consultant, Resource Development Associates, to conduct a comprehensive study of the current JJCPA system and overall programming. They will be developing recommendations on enhancing or modifying programs based on the needs of the current juvenile population. The evaluation has a 12-month timeline that will consist of the following four phases: 1) Landscape

analysis; 2) Program effectiveness; 3) Gap analysis and recommendations, and; 4) Project communication. The target date for completion is the spring of 2018.

Resource Development Associates will also be reviewing the effectiveness of the services to at-risk youth currently provided by deputy probation officers who have a caseload, at middle and high schools, under Welfare and Institutions Code 236. We recognize this program creates concerns about net widening and we want to determine, in an evidence-based fashion, whether the program does or does not have a direct correlation to prevent at-risk youth from entering the juvenile justice system, and thus contributing to the reduction of juvenile hall and camp populations. Consequently, we are awaiting a research-supported recommendation by the consultant regarding the continuation or modification of this program for the Board's consideration.

- The Probation Department increased its usage of Departmental Service Orders, a mechanism to transfer JJCPA funding to other County Departments for utilization and/or allocation to their CBOs to create multiple pathways to contract for services.
- On June 9, 2017, Probation released a Request for Statement of Qualifications for the Juvenile Justice Social Programs Services Master Agreement (MSA). As of August 22, 2017, Probation has received 64 responses and is currently reviewing the Statements of Qualifications. Of the Statements of Qualifications reviewed thus far, 28 qualify. In addition, new proposers may qualify at any time during the term of the MSA. The Department anticipates seeking Board approval in September 2017, to manage the MSA to establish and maintain a pool of qualified contractors that can provide services throughout the County. This strategy will expedite funding allocations to qualified agencies and organizations.

By fully implementing the above approaches, coupled with new leadership and strong oversight, I am confident that we will effectively address the challenge of not fully utilizing JJCPA funds to provide critically-needed services to our highest-risk youth. The Probation Department is committed to our Board, clients and communities to continually monitor and evaluate JJCPA programs and expenditures to provide quality, evidence-based services to the youth under our care.

I would like to invite you or your staff to visit some of our County of Los Angeles Probation Department community-based and internal programs funded by JJCPA funds for a first-hand experience of our current programs, and am available at your convenience to discuss this issue and our vision for the future of the County of Los Angeles Probation Department.

Sincerely,



Terri L. McDonald

Chief Probation Officer, County of Los Angeles