

**ORANGE COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION
LAMOREAUX JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER
COMMISSION CONFERENCE ROOM – 2nd FLOOR
341 The City Drive, Orange, CA 92868
Wednesday February 4, 2026
9:00 a.m.**

AGENDA

- 1) CALL TO ORDER**
- 2) GUEST UPDATES**
- 3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
- 4) REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES/WORKING GROUPS**
- 5) REPORTS FROM INSPECTIONS/REVIEWS**
- 6) REPORTS FROM LIAISON ACTIVITIES & WEBINARS**
- 7) MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- 8) COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**
- 9) ADJOURNMENT**

**MINUTES OF ORANGE COUNTY
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION**

Wednesday February 4, 2026

The regular meeting of the Orange County Juvenile Justice Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chair Winder. The meeting was held at the Betty Lou Lamoreaux Juvenile Justice Center, 341 The City Drive, Orange, California, in the second floor Commission Conference Room.

COMMISSIONERS

PRESENT:

Amy Crowley
Denise Churchill, Vice Chair
Marcy Garfias
Judy Johnson
Silvestre Lopez
Connie Marshall
Lynda Perring
Ryan Rising (Teams)
Madelyn Rodriguez
Mary Lou Vachet
Steve Winder, Chair
Dolores Yost

COMMISSIONERS

ABSENT:

Dorothy Stafford

STAFF:

Lii Toelupe, Executive Administrative Assistant
Emily Sanchez, Legal Processing Specialist

GUESTS:

Kristal Valencia, Juvenile Court
Katie David, District Attorney
Arlene Speiser, Public Defender (Juvenile Justice)
Richard Cheung, Public Defender (Dependency)
Dana Stits, County Counsel
Maureen Mutch, Social Services Agency
Kristi Fiskum, Social Services Agency
Paola Bautista, Health Care Agency – Children & Youth Behavioral Services
Joie Roe, Health Care Agency, Juvenile Health Services
Jacqueline Cardenas, Department of Education Institutional Schools
Ann Valenzuela, California Community Care Licensing
Sergeant Theresa Pereyra, OC Sheriff's Department
Martha Franco, Juvenile Defenders
Brian Baron, Law Office of Harold LaFlamme
Jenny Leon, Court Appointed Special Advocates
Enrique Montiel, Orangewood Foundation
Laura Corona Marcum, Project Youth OCBF
Alison Jacques, Waymakers
Hether Benjamin, Waymakers
Jason Watts, Scholarship Prep Public Schools
Basti Lopez, Santiago Canyon College School District

COMMENTS BY THE JUVENILE COURT

Kristal Valencia, Court Operations Manager, reported no updates.

COMMENTS BY THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Katie David, District Attorney, reported that they continue to work with Cortech to transition to a paperless system and are nearing completion. Once finalized, law enforcement, Probation, and the District Attorney's Office will all submit filings electronically.

COMMENTS BY PUBLIC DEFENDER (JUVENILE JUSTICE)

Arlene Speiser, Supervising Public Defender, gave a shoutout to Katie David from the District Attorney's Office, noting the strong working relationship between both agencies and their shared commitment to the mission. She emphasized that her team is focused on addressing the gaps and needs of an increasingly chaotic world by leading with humility and remaining open to humanity. She highlighted that her office and team are vigilant and committed to carrying out their duties.

COMMENTS BY PUBLIC DEFENDER (JUVENILE DEPENDENCY)

Richard Cheung, Public Defender, reported that operations are going well. He noted the return of Judge Kang and the addition of Judge Azar, both of whom have experience in dependency matters, with Judge Azar previously serving as a dependency attorney. He also gave a shoutout to Dana Stits regarding the number of petitions filed, as well as to Family Preservation Services (SSA). He expressed appreciation for SSA and County Counsel's proactive work in resolving lower-level cases before they reach the court, therefore reducing unnecessary court involvement.

COMMENTS BY COUNTY COUNSEL

Dana Stits, Supervising Deputy, stated that his office represents SSA and social workers across six to seven dependency courtrooms. He expressed appreciation to the JJC for their continued efforts. Expanding on Richard Cheung's comments, he confirmed that case numbers are down due to SSA's proactive efforts. Approximately 3,200 adults and children at this time last year compared to fewer than 3,000 currently. He noted that staffing remains a challenge due to a hiring freeze and ongoing difficulties in attracting candidates to the work.

COMMENTS BY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY

Kristi Fiskum, Deputy Division Director, reported that SSA continues to have a hiring freeze and has recently moved some staff to cover critical assignments. The Court Intake unit has been moved to the Emergency Response programs. OCFC received a call from CA Dept of Social Services and will receive a letter for lack of compliance for having children aged 0-6 remain at OCFC for longer than 30 days. The reasons are related to Court orders for sibling sets to remain together and School of Origin orders, and/or children with developmental delays with few placement options. Maureen Mutch, Senior Human Services Manager, shared that while the OCFC population is 60 days, there are 10 children in First Step now. She noted that while the population decreased in December 2025, it has since begun to rise. She shared that approximately 400 individuals attended the holiday event. Additionally, the Dana Point Women's Club donated funds for a Newport Harbor Holiday Lights Cruise event, which was attended by 35 children and 14 parents. Looking ahead, she stated that a Lunar New Year celebration is planned for February and will be fully funded through community-based resources. Black History Month will also be recognized, with a celebration scheduled for February 26, 2026.

BY HCA, CHILDREN & YOUTH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Paola Bautista, Program Manager II, reported no updates.

COMMENTS BY HCA, JUVENILE HEALTH SERVICES

Joie Roe, Supervising CNN, reported two pending retirements effective next month, including Dr. Sue, the primary pediatrician, and the full-time dentist. She stated that the department is working with HR to fill both positions. She also shared that Cal-AIM is scheduled to launch on April 1, 2026

and that HCA is collaborating closely with Probation, SSA, and CEGU to develop and finalize implementation. She noted that budget constraints have impacted staffing, resulting in several vacant positions, and that the department is working diligently to maintain continuity and quality of services. Joie Roe explained that for youth who are Medi-Cal eligible, Cal-AIM will ensure that a discharge plan is developed up to 90 days prior to release while the youth is still in custody. Individuals with lived experience will support youth with key transition needs, including obtaining identification, pursuing education and employment opportunities, and addressing behavioral health and medical needs.

COMMENTS BY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INSTITUTIONAL SCHOOLS

Jacqueline Cardenas, Executive Director, reported that Aja-Marie Cordova-Couso, Principal, is overseeing Areas 4 and 8 and described her as an exceptional and compassionate leader. She also noted that Dave Connor, Principal of Otto Fischer, is currently on leave.

COMMENTS BY CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY CARE LICENSING

Ann Valenzuela, Licensing Program Manager, reported no updates.

COMMENTS BY ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Sergeant Theresa Pereyra, OC Sheriff's Department, reported a significant increase in swatting and hoax calls, including bomb and shooting threats. Both the North and South divisions have been actively investigating these incidents. Many suspects have been located out of state, and the department is collaborating with the FBI and other agencies to bring them to justice. A substantial number of these incidents involve juveniles. In response, the Sheriff's Department is working with school districts to develop checklists for front office staff, linking online activities and clubs to potential risks. These measures aim to enhance student and staff safety and support law enforcement in responding quickly to threats.

COMMENTS BY JUVENILE DEFENDERS

Martha Franco, Attorney, reported that her office represents youth in Juvenile Justice and parents in Dependency Proceedings. In Juvenile Justice cases, matters are generally status quo. In Dependency cases, a new attorney from the Riverside County panel has joined their team, and she noted it is valuable to see her perspective, highlighting that the local system functions more effectively than Riverside's. She also mentioned that there are six levels of parent representation, and that the office continues to manage caseloads steadily.

COMMENTS BY LAW OFFICE OF HAROLD LAFLAMME (MINORS COUNSEL)

Brian Baron, Executive Director, reported that his office represents all minors in Dependency Proceedings, with overflow cases in Juvenile Justice and Grace Court. He shared positive updates, noting that the office is fully staffed, and case numbers remain steady.

COMMENTS BY CASA

Jenny Leon, Chief Program Officer, CASA, reported that she will be rotating with Regan Phillips, CEO, in attending these meetings. She noted that CASA receives a small amount of federal funding. National CASA has \$50,000 in federal funds, which require signing off on an executive order specifying only American children and gender-specific eligibility. CASA will comply with California law but is not comfortable signing the document with the current language. The overall CASA budget is \$7 million, and the \$50,000 is the only funding with restrictions. She noted that the waitlist remains high, with nearly 300 youth. In 2025, CASA brought in 18 new advocates and has served over 1,000 youth. The initial advocacy team provides support to youth on the waitlist, ensuring additional staff advocacy while they await assignment to a CASA volunteer. When assigned, volunteers can immediately begin supporting youth. CASA volunteers have also provided support to youth from Orangewood. The organization is finalizing a volunteer job description to better support this work.

COMMENTS BY ORANGEWOOD FOUNDATION

Enrique Montiel, Program Director, Orangewood Foundation, reported that they recently opened the Probation Pathway Program and hold monthly meetings with Probation staff. Youth can decide whether they would like to participate. The program supports both foster youth and probation-involved youth, with the foundation providing ongoing guidance and resources to participants.

COMMENTS BY PROJECT YOUTH OCBF

Laura Corona Marcum, CEO, Project Youth OCBF, reported that 2025 was a complex year, but the organization had one of its most successful years in terms of youth served and private funding raised. She noted that some projects are sunsetting as federal funding has decreased, with certain government contracts having been the key to funding. Nearly 500 youth were served through the diversion program. A highlight included merging substance use services with the diversion program, as diversion youth are often impacted by these issues. All youth are screened for risk upon entry. Of referrals, about 60% came from probation, and 40% came from school districts, counselors, and therapists. Project Youth also launched a parent enrichment program, consisting of 4–5 workshops co-designed by parents and caregivers. The organization's largest event of the year featured a mariachi celebration, with over 100 youth and volunteers and 500 gifts distributed. Additionally, the College and Career Success Program continues to support youth in post-secondary pathways, with 91 students participating in the college program last year.

COMMENTS BY WAYMAKERS

Hether Benjamin, Chief Program Officer, Waymakers, reported on the organization's collaborative work with courts, juvenile diversion programs, and crisis shelters. She highlighted that one of Waymakers' smaller programs had a significant impact through outreach, support, and education for youth and probation-involved individuals. The program exceeded expectations, serving 76 parents despite initially planning for 30. Pre-assessments and post-assessments showed an 89% increase in family functioning and resilience and a 90% increase in nurturing behaviors. The program includes a 10-week parenting course and an opportunity to become a mentor if they complete 14-weeks.

COMMENTS BY SCHOLARSHIP PREP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Jason Watts, Executive Director, reported that the organization is in its 10th year, with a predominant focus on supporting youth experiencing homelessness. He noted that approximately 25% of youth in Santa Ana face homelessness and expressed hope that Scholarship Prep can contribute further to addressing this need. The organization currently serves about 560 students in total.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The January 21, 2026 minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES & WORKING GROUPS

A. Education

No updates to report.

B. Non-Institutional Placements

No updates to report.

C. Law Enforcement Agency

Commissioner Vachet suggested reviewing the format used by OYCR for inspection forms and noted that feedback was received from law enforcement regarding their experience with the inspection process.

D. Legislation

No updates to report.

E. Essay and Art Contest

Commissioner Vachet reported on the recent debrief meeting, which was attended by Probation / Department of Education and JJC. A new schedule was established, with the 2026 Essay and Art Contest to take place in October rather than November. Discussions are ongoing regarding how to integrate the art component into the process. Regarding the recognition dinner, Commissioner Vachet explained that discussions with Probation were necessary to obtain approval for providing gift baskets. The dinner is scheduled for Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at YLA. The event will be a formal setting, with commissioners serving dinner. The guest count will be capped at 20 attendees: 8 youth, 4 Probation staff, and 8 commissioners. It was noted that because youth do not have commissary access and cannot easily use gift cards, the plan is to reduce the gift card amount and increase the gift basket budget, which will include toiletries and snacks.

F. Annual Report

Commissioner Johnson reported that plans and assignments have been finalized. Commissioners Crowley and Lopez have been asked to prepare the write-up for the Book Club section of the annual report. The goal is to complete and print the report by the end of March, ideally before inspections begin.

G. JJC/ Probation Book Club

Commissioner Crowley received approval from Probation to include the visions boards created by the youth in the next annual report.

H. Substance Use Treatment Programs/Services

Commissioner Garfias requested follow-up with HCA on the BeWell campus's request for proposal (RFP). She also suggested inviting a representative to attend a future meeting as a guest speaker.

I. Away from Care

No updates to report.

J. Educational/Vocational Programs and Services for Post-Graduate System-Involved Youth

No updates to report.

K. Reentry of Probation Youth

Commissioners reported there is a meeting on February 18, 2026.

REPORTS FROM LIAISON ACTIVITIES & WEBINARS

A. UCI Youth Adult Court Local Advisory Committee

Commissioner Marshall attended the UCI Youth Adult Court Local Advisory Committee meeting on January 9, 2026. She reported that UCI and the Young Adult Court are developing a partnership to conduct a research project evaluating the Young Adult Court program. The purpose is to assess pressing needs and identify best practices for implementation. UCI will lead the research component, while the Young Adult Court operates the program. The program serves young adults ages 18 to 25 and is not a drug treatment court. Rather than focusing solely on substance use, the program emphasizes reintegration into society through a mental health-centered, trauma-informed approach and risk-reduction strategies. Participants reside in a home in Fullerton, which currently houses six young adults. The program is part of the adult court system, not juvenile court, and has specific eligibility criteria. The duration of the program ranges from 12 to 18 months. Commissioner Marshall noted that additional updates will be provided next quarter as the program progresses.

B. Youth Reentry Subcommittee Meeting HIRE

Commissioner Marshall attended the Youth Reentry Subcommittee Meeting on January 14, 2026. She shared that Logan Altman, Chief Impact Officer of Foster Greatness, served as a speaker. Foster Greatness is a "social enterprise", not a nonprofit, focused on supporting individuals impacted by the foster care system. The organization provides services to populations experiencing homelessness, including employment readiness, workforce connections, peer support opportunities, and access to free and low-cost local resources. The organization supports individuals who have experienced foster care and incarceration and hosts community events while connecting participants to employment opportunities in various fields. Foster Greatness also partners with companies such as Sephora, Disney, and Pixar to create product kits and employment pathways. The organization operates nationwide and emphasizes that individuals never "age out" of their

support network. Commissioner Marshall noted that Mr. Altman may be an beneficial guest speaker for a future meeting.

C. OYCR Youth Justice Action Webinar

Commissioners Winder and Johnson attended the OYCR Youth Justice Action Webinar on January 22, 2026. Commissioner Winder outlined key legislative themes, including advancing community-based alternatives to incarceration, strengthening and expanding educational opportunities for youth involved in the system, and promoting individualized, developmentally appropriate approaches to youth services and rehabilitation.

Commissioner Winder discussed several new legislative updates impacting youth and the juvenile justice system. Among them, AB 243 authorizes county welfare departments to provide sworn affidavits for foster youth and justice-involved youth to assist them in obtaining financial aid. He also referenced broader legislative changes affecting juvenile justice coordination, judicial discretion, youth programs, and firearm-related prohibitions, as well as recent case law developments. In particular, he talked about *In re H.T.*, which affirmed that the juvenile court has the authority to order probation to pay for a youth's support and maintenance when appropriate, such as in situations where the youth is unable to access community housing or a probation step-down facility.

D. Know Better, Do Better Conference

Commissioners Vachet and Winder attended the Know Better, Do Better Conference on January 26, 2026. Commissioner Vachet described the event as great and engaging, with a larger turnout this time of 659 youth. Held in the gym, the event maintained high energy and enthusiasm, with the organizers skillfully engaging middle school participants and creating a pep-rally atmosphere. All the booths were well-received and focused on community-based organization resources.

E. FKCE Advisory Meeting

Commissioner Vachet attended the FKCE Advisory meeting on January 27, 2026. She reported on Foster Kinship Care trainings offered through Saddleback. Lii has shared a flyer outlining the programs. Prior to COVID-19, attendance was in person only, but the courses are now available online. Twelve new classes have been added, and many community-based programs are included. The trainings provide valuable guidance for parents on handling various parenting challenges and are consistently informative, offered in both English and Spanish.

F. Lunch and Learn: Special Education Training

Commissioner Vachet attended the Lunch and Learn Special Education training on January 28, 2026. She shared that it was a very detailed session held in Department L21, which provided an advocacy-focused overview of Special Education 101. The training was aimed at courtroom participants, including attorneys, and covered key topics such as what to look for, questions to ask, and practices that should not be tolerated. The session emphasized special education rights and encouraged active participation in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Lii distributed the program materials.

G. CWC Youth Justice Committee

Commissioners Yost and Churchill attended the CWC Youth Justice Committee meeting on January 28, 2026. Commissioner Yost provided an update on recent legislation and related initiatives. She highlighted AB 188, which supports realignment by providing community resources and increased funding, aligning with AB 118's goals of reducing incarceration in state facilities. The discussion included the restriction of probation to one year and an overview of data collection efforts. A speaker, Ernesto, from Kindful Restoration, shared insights on developing a community-based organization aimed at making prison environments more humane and extending that approach to the community. The organization received a grant from OYCR and support from Riverside and San Bernardino counties and qualified for a Medi-Cal contract. Another key focus was forming a database to track reentry, address racial disparities, and collect data on

demographics, challenges, and outcomes. Discussion emphasized the need to group and make the data accessible while ensuring anonymity, and considered whether protections such as HIPAA should apply. Commissioner Churchill noted the importance of coordinating with existing efforts to avoid duplicating information. The conversation also touched on defining youth justice diversion programs and assessing how resources are being allocated.

H. CSEC Steering Committee Meeting

Commissioners Vachet, Winder and Yost attended the CSEC Steering Committee meeting on January 29, 2026. Commissioner Winder reported that this recent session focused on data and program updates. Loan English discussed data collection efforts in collaboration with UCI and noted that there is no additional funding for this year. Judge Arthur reported that there are currently 37 youth in Grace Court and highlighted that AB 1376 may affect these numbers unless youth are dual-status. Countywide, there have been 156 referrals for sex trafficking, 142 of which involved youth from Orange County, many with prior exploitation investigations. A new law enforcement liaison, Lt. Phillips, was introduced. The Police Department is prioritizing additional programs, including STEP, and noted that anti-loitering laws can be used to address harbor and beach areas. Commissioner Vachet shared the Prevention Committee has established protocols for junior high and high schools to help districts understand roles and responsibilities in addressing trafficking. Participation by school districts is voluntary. Josie Feemster, Regional Coordinator with PACT, gave a presentation regarding their work with county agencies combating sex trafficking of minors. A 12-minute video on trafficking within families was presented during the session; commissioners will be provided with a link to access the video.

I. JRC Graduation

Commissioner Perring attended the JRC Graduation on January 29, 2026. She shared that a youth's essay during the recent graduation was impressive. The youth had faced numerous setbacks in his journey but expressed resilience, stating in his essay that he has learned he will never give up on himself. Overall, the graduation was described as a very positive event.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/WEBINARS/INSPECTIONS

Commissioners Vachet and Yost are planning to attend the HIRE Reentry meeting on February 4, 2026.

Commissioners Churchill and Perring are planning to attend the CWSIP Meeting on February 5, 2026.

Commissioners Crowley and Winder are planning to attend the Project Kinship Photo Project meeting on February 7, 2026.

Commissioners Churchill, Crowley and Winder are planning to attend the CJJCC Monthly meeting on February 9, 2026.

Commissioner Vachet is planning to attend the ERDD meeting on February 11, 2026.

Commissioners Vachet and Yost are planning to attend the CSEC Prevention and Awareness Subcommittee on February 12, 2026.

Commissioners Crowley, Rising, Marshall, Vachet, Winder and Yost are planning to attend the California Story movie event on February 12, 2026.

Commissioner Crowley is planning to attend the OYCR Youth Justice Action Webinar on February 17, 2026.

Commissioners Churchill, Marshall, Stafford, Vachet and Winder are planning to attend the OC FFA Forum meeting on February 17, 2026.

Commissioners Crowley, Perring, Rising, Stafford, Vachet, Winder and Yost are planning to attend the Reentry of Probation Youth on February 18, 2026.

Commissioner Johnson is planning to attend the CAST policy meeting on February 18, 2026.

Commissioners Crowley, Johnson, Lopez, Rodriguez, Vachet and Winder are planning to attend the 2025 Essay and Art Contest Winners Dinner on February 18, 2026.

Commissioners Johnson and Winder are planning to attend the Court Improvement Committee meeting on February 19, 2026.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Rodriguez reported that Rady Children's Health recently ended gender-affirming care services, which impacts CHOC, despite prior agreements to continue them. She noted that approximately 30% of youth in foster care identify as LGBTQ, representing diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

**MINUTES OF ORANGE COUNTY
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION**

**February 4, 2026
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CLOSED SESSION

The executive session was convened from 11:31 am. – 11:43 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:43 a.m.

Steve Winder

Steve Winder, Chair