

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

AGENDA

- 1) CALL TO ORDER**
- 2) KEY STAKEHOLDERS 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 September 2, 2026

The regular meeting of the Orange County Juvenile Justice Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Vice Chair Churchill. 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:

Denise Churchill; Vice Chair
Judy Johnson
Anna Light (Teams)
Connie Marshall
Lynda Perring
Madelyn Rodriguez
Briel Sayago
Dorothy Stafford
Mary Lou Vachet

COMMISSIONERS

ABSENT:

Amy Crowley
Silvestre Lopez
Ryan Rising
Steve Winder, Chair
Dolores Yost

STAFF:

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

GUEST:

Kristi Fiskum, Deputy Director of Children & Family Services (Social Services Agency)
David Harper, Human Services Manager (Social Services Agency)
Michael Casteal, Assistant Division Director (Probation Department)
Dr. Maria Martinez-Poulin, Chief Alternative Education ACCESS (Department of Education)
Dawn Smith, Assistant Deputy Director of Children and Youth Services (Health Care Agency)

KEY STAKEHOLDER UPDATES

A. Social Services Agency

Kristi Fiskum, Deputy Director of Children & Family Services, shared that David Harper, Human Services Manager, who was present, was available for any questions. She provided an update on the transition to the new data system, noting that October 2026 remains the effective date. Kristi also provided an update on Orangewood, noting that the facility recently had a new generator installed. Although the installation took significantly longer than anticipated, the generator will allow Orangewood to maintain approximately seven days of normal operations during a power outage, Orangewood currently has 62 youth, compared to 48 the previous week. Kristi noted that the increase appears to be related to the start of the school year and that the population is expected to gradually increase through October. Kristi explained that the new tiered rate structure will change how foster care placements are funded. Currently, the rate is largely determined by the type of placement and where the child resides. Under the new system, funding will be based on each child's individual needs, with the assessed rate following the child

regardless of where they are placed. Each child will receive a Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment every six months. The assessment will determine the youth's tier, ranging from Tier 1 through Tier 3+, with higher tiers corresponding to higher reimbursement rates. Currently, approximately 4% of youth fall into tier 3+ category, but under the new system it is projected to be approximately 2.5%. Kristi stated that the change could significantly impact STRTPs financially. STRTPs could potentially have approximately \$4,000 less per child available to cover their operations. However, the administrative requirements and overall impact of the new system are not yet fully known. Kristi noted that Orangewood could potentially see an increase in its population if STRTPs are unable to continue accepting youth due to the reduced funding. Commissioner Johnson asked about the recent increase in altercations at Orangewood and whether there were additional factors contributing to the increase or steps that could be taken to reduce incidents. Commissioner Johnson also noted that the increase is concerning when considered in relation to the overall population. Commissioner Churchill referenced the June report concerning arrests and criminal charges filed. Kristi explained that staff make every effort to contact law enforcement only when there are significant safety concerns. Commissioner Johnson thanked Kristi for all that she and her team do to support and care for the youth at Orangewood.

B. Probation Department

Michael Casteal, Assistant Division Director provided several updates regarding staffing, education, youth activities, and upcoming programs. A new academy is currently underway with 31 new correctional officers expected to graduate in October. Once the new graduates complete the academy, the department is expected to be fully staffed, with most of the new officers assigned to Juvenile Hall. Staff at YLA are also fully staffed. Michael provided an update on the expansion of the college application contract. Although specific details could not yet be shared, the expansion will provide youth with additional educational options and access to more professors. One current barrier is the availability of laboratory courses, as conducting labs within the facilities can be difficult. The possibility of utilizing a mobile laboratory was discussed as a potential solution. The Youth Council recently hosted a Splash Bash, with 66 youth participating in the event. Activities included water sports, dunking chairs, an obstacle course, and a blindfolded duck hunt. He expressed that the youth are very excited about the upcoming essay and art contest. The Youth Transition Center construction remains on schedule, with completion anticipated in March 2027 and an early summer 2027 move-in. Prior to opening, staff plan to conduct a dry run with youth, during which they will test the facility's systems, and ensure that all equipment and functions are operational. Michael also reported that the contract for the Cell Dogs program has been approved. The four-week program will bring in shelter dogs and provide youth with the opportunity to work with the dogs throughout the program. Educational and vocational programming is also expanding, including opportunities in graphic design, culinary arts, medical billing, and construction. These programs will provide youth who completed their high school education with additional pathways to pursue a degree or enter trade and career-focused programs after graduation. Michael reported that approximately 43 youth are currently participating in college programs.

C. Department of Education

Dr. Maria Martinez-Poulin, Chief of Alternative Education, provided an update on the educational and career-focused programs being offered to youth. Students are typically with OCDE for 30, 60, or 90 days, and during that time, staff work to build competencies and develop the safety skills necessary for construction-related careers. The programs provide hands-on experience with both hand tools and power tools, as well as finishing, painting, and career exploration. Staff also work to help youth understand the skills and career opportunities associated with each course. The program is also expanding its documentation of youth achievements and extracurricular involvement. When youth receive certifications, awards, or recognition for accomplishments, such as speaking at a ceremony or participating in an essay contest, these achievements can now be documented on their transcripts. The goal is to demonstrate that youth are well-rounded and engaged in activities beyond their traditional coursework. Dr. Poulin also shared that they are working to establish a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to increase parent involvement and empower parents to take an active role in their children's education.

D. Health Care Agency

Dawn Smith provided additional information regarding the tiered rate structure and behavioral health funding. She explained that under the new tiered rate structure, there are activity funds administered through Behavioral Health for youth in STRTPs. Dawn explained that the state has contracted with providers and trained them to determine whether families are eligible to access these activity funds. Under the new process, the state will use a provider directory to determine whether a family can be certified to access the funds. Clinicians within the system will be responsible for authorizing the use of the funds. HCA administrative staff have already received training on the process. The third-party entity selected by the state began administering this portion of the program on July 1. Dawn provided an update regarding behavioral health services that will be presented to the Board on September 15. The Behavioral Health Self-Service Act is intended to support youth with higher levels of need, and providers seeking approval will be presented to the Board. Approved providers will offer specialty mental health services. Dawn also discussed the new bundled payment model and noted that HCA is still determining what the new model will look like for providers. Dawn emphasized that HCA continues to collaborate with Social Services Agency (SSA), Probation, and OCDE to ensure that agencies are communicating and coordinating services for youth. She was asked about the potential reduction in Medi-Cal and CalOptima coverage and expressed concern that families could fall through the cracks as a result of changes to eligibility and enrollment requirements. Dawn acknowledged that changes to Medi-Cal coverage could affect how families access services. She explained that individuals who lose coverage may have difficulty accessing services, although HCA's system will continue to provide services to individuals who are otherwise eligible but become unfunded. Dawn expressed hope that youth will be impacted as little as possible. She noted that families may lose coverage if they do not complete the required renewal process, while individuals who remain traditionally eligible may reapply for coverage.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The August 19, 2026 minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES & WORKING GROUPS

A. Education

Commissioner Johnson reported that the committee will be meeting with Dr. Poulin on September 17, 2026.

B. Non-Institutional Placements

No updates to report.

C. Law Enforcement Agency

Commissioner Johnson reported there is only one Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) left to inspect. They will be visiting Newport Beach Police Department on September 10, 2026.

D. Legislation

No updates to report.

E. Essay and Art Contest

Commissioner Vachet provided an update regarding upcoming meetings and changes to the essay and art contest prizes. Following the JJC meeting, the committee will meet with representatives from Probation and the Department of Education to discuss upcoming changes. Due to funding limitations, the commission will no longer provide gift cards to youth. Instead, gift bags will be provided. The winners' dinner is also being planned and is expected to take place within two weeks of the ceremony. Commissioner Vachet provided an update on the upcoming youth art exhibition and her meeting with representatives from Santiago Canyon College (SCC), including the director of the art program. Commissioner Vachet will transport the artwork to SCC, and SCC will handle the installation. The exhibition is currently scheduled to run from October 29, 2026 through November 12, 2026, with the gallery open to visitors. Additional details regarding the exhibition will be provided once they are finalized.

F. Annual Report

No updates to report.

G. JJC/ Probation Book Club

- H. Commissioner Johnson shared her experience attending the book club for the first time and described it as a wonderful experience. Six youth from Unit T participated. Due to the heat, the group met outside in the patio area and is currently approximately halfway through *Once We Were Brothers*, a more serious novel about two young men who grow up together before their lives are impacted by war. Commissioner Johnson said she was impressed by the youth's engagement and enjoyed listening to them discuss the book. The youth participated in discussions using prepared questions and demonstrated thoughtful engagement with the material.

I. Substance Use Treatment Programs/Services

No updates to report.

J. High Needs Youth

No updates to report.

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

Commissioner Marshall noted that several positive comments and developments were shared during the key stakeholder's updates. She also reported that the committee has a meeting scheduled for September 9, 2026.

L. Reentry of Probation Youth

EAA Lii Toelupe provided an update regarding the upcoming facility tour. She is currently awaiting a response from Officer Beiger regarding scheduling and noted that September 16, 2026 is the tentative date for the tour.

REPORTS FROM LIAISON ACTIVITIES & WEBINARS

A) CSEC Prevention & Awareness Subcommittee

Commissioner Vachet attended the CSEC Prevention & Awareness Subcommittee meeting on August 13, 2026. Vachet shared an update on a new project being developed by Doreen and Sandy. They discussed the purpose and goals of the program and what it will entail. Commissioner Vachet also noted that the form they developed for the program is currently being utilized by Anaheim Hills Unified School District (AHUSD).

B) Court Improvement Committee Meeting

Commissioner Johnson attended the Court Improvement Committee meeting on August 20, 2026. Johnson shared that most of the information in the meeting was related to internal court administration that does not directly impact the JJC. However, there are approximately 140 bills currently being considered, including several that may impact juveniles. Sherry Clifford, Principal Operations Analyst, reviewed nine of these bills with the committee and provided an overview of their potential impact.

C) CCR SOC Coordination Steering Committee Meeting

Tabled to the next JJC meeting on September 16, 2026.

D) Harm Reduction Webinar Training

Commissioner Marshall attended the Harm Reduction Webinar Training on August 27, 2026. Marshall shared highlights from the Harm Reduction Webinar Training. She noted that when working with youth who are using drugs, focusing on smaller, achievable goals can be more effective than expecting immediate abstinence. She explained that telling a youth simply not to use drugs can cause the conversation to end, whereas asking open-ended questions, such as whether they know what is in the substance they are using, can help keep the conversation going and create an opportunity for more productive dialogue. The training emphasized that reaching long-term goals often requires taking smaller steps. The presentation also discussed the impact of trauma and brain development, including how youth may weigh risk versus reward and respond from a place of survival. Commissioner Marshall noted that conversations with youth should focus on their dreams and goals and treat them as individuals rather than defining them solely by their drug use.

Building a relationship and encouraging positive goals can create a more productive approach to helping youth make healthier choices.

E) CSEC Steering Placement Subcommittee Meeting

Tabled to the next JJC meeting on September 16, 2026.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/WEBINARS/INSPECTIONS

Commissioners Lopez and Vachet are planning to attend the Essay and Art Contest meeting on September 2, 2026.

Commissioner Churchill is planning to attend the CWSIP meeting on September 3, 2026.

Commissioners Marshall, Johnson, Lopez, Stafford, Vachet and Winder are planning to attend the Education/Vocational Programs and Services for Post-Graduate System-Involved Youth meeting on September 9, 2026.

Commissioners Crowley, Vachet and Yost are planning to attend the CA CWC – Youth Justice Committee meeting on September 9, 2026.

Commissioners Vachet and Yost are planning to attend the CSEC Prevention & Awareness Subcommittee meeting on September 10, 2026.

Commissioners Crowley and Winder are planning to attend the CJJCC Monthly meeting on September 14, 2026.

Commissioners Johnson, Marshall, Winder, Vachet and Yost are planning to attend the JJC Education Committee with OCDE Administrators meeting on September 17, 2026.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Churchill reported that she had asked SSA about the outcomes of youth who step down from group homes and where those youth are currently placed. Kristi Fiskum subsequently worked with the SSA Research Department to obtain information for the JJC. The JJC received a report that reviewed youth placements over several years, allowing researchers to examine where youth were during the first six months after leaving a group home and where they were as of June 30, 2026. The report included 113 youth who had a placement during the period reviewed. Higher levels of care included Level 4 placements, such as medical or psychiatric care, Juvenile Hall, or placements outside of care. Lower levels of care included Levels 3, 2, and 1, as well as outcomes such as returning home or being adopted. Of the 113 youth, 57 moved to a lower level of care within the first month after leaving their group home. However, approximately half of the youth subsequently moved to a higher level of care. The report also indicated that an additional 12 youth later moved to a lower level of care. Among the youth who moved to a lower level of care, approximately 21% subsequently required another placement, 12% were reunified with family, and 26% had been reunified with family as of June 30, 2026. Commissioner Churchill discussed the possibility of receiving similar reports on an annual basis. It was noted that this analysis was completed as a one-time report, so it is not yet known whether it can be provided annually. Commissioners agreed that the report provides a valuable baseline that can be used

for comparison in future reports and may help the JJC better understand outcomes for youth transitioning from higher levels of care.

Commissioner Perring provided an update regarding a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Olive Crest for two newly constructed apartment buildings. The buildings contain a total of 16 units, with eight units in each building. Each apartment has the same layout, including two bedrooms, a large bathroom, a refrigerator, stove, and sink. The apartments are intended to provide housing for youth who have been involved in the foster care system. Commissioner Perring attended the ceremonial ribbon-cutting and highlighted the significant contributions from the donors who helped make the project possible. She commended Olive Crest for its efforts to address the needs of youth transitioning out of the foster care system and emphasized the value these housing opportunities provide to the youth being served. Commissioner Perring noted that Olive Crest plans to expand this housing concept to four different locations, including one in Las Vegas.

Commissioner Johnson discussed an upcoming visit to Newport Beach Police Department and suggested asking about the federal Department of Homeland Security grant the department received. She noted that Newport Beach received approximately \$130,000 in grant funding.

Commissioner Johnson also discussed the expansion of free breakfast programs for children attending Fullerton schools. She noted that with anticipated changes and cutbacks affecting families receiving CalFresh benefits, these programs could become increasingly important in ensuring children have access to meals.

Commissioner Johnson also reflected on the new tiered payment structure and the potential impact of the additional funding available to families caring for youth. She noted that approximately \$6,000 per month is a significant amount of financial support for families who take in and care for youth and could make a meaningful difference for families who may otherwise struggle to provide care.

Commissioner Johnson also shared an article discussing the delayed diagnosis of autism in girls.

Commissioner Johnson shared an article examining the highest and lowest levels of pay in relation to college degrees and other factors. She suggested that the article could be reviewed and discussed by the appropriate subcommittee.

CLOSED SESSION

The executive session was convened from 10:46 am. – 11:07 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

Denise Churchill

Denise Churchill, Vice Chair