

State JJ Update for 2020.

The big news this year is that the State is closing all its Juvenile Facilities. No more youth will be referred, beginning Jan.1, 2021. Instead the Bill, SB 823 which closes the Division of Juvenile Justice establishes a Juvenile Justice Realignment Block Grant program to provide county-based custody, care, and supervision of the youth who are thus realigned to their home counties. The bill appropriates funds from the General Fund & specifies how those funds would be allocated to counties. As CJCJ notes 'California's next chapter in youth justice must hold county systems accountable, put an end to the transfer of youth into adult criminal court, and invest in communities'.

The bill reduces, from 25 to 23, in most cases, the age until which a youth can be held in the State facilities, or adjudicated by the Juvenile court.

SB 823 would repeal specified provisions that authorize the detention of minors in an adult facility. The bill would instead require any person whose case originated in juvenile court to remain in a county juvenile facility until they turn 25 years of age ,with certain exceptions.

Previous law required the Department of Justice to collect criminal justice data from agencies and present an annual report to the Governor containing the criminal statistics of the preceding calendar year. The law allowed the department to serve as a statistical and research agency to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the Division of Juvenile Justice.

SB 823 requires the Department of Justice to submit a plan for the replacement of the Juvenile Court and Probation Statistical System with a modern database and reporting system. The bill also requires the department to convene a working group consisting of key stakeholders, as provided, for this purpose.

SB 823 would also appropriate moneys from the General Fund to the Youth Programs and Facilities Grant Program, to be administered by the Board of State and Community Corrections, to award one-time grants, to counties for the purpose of providing resources for infrastructure related needs and improvements to assist counties in the development of a local continuum of care.

AB 901 (Gipson) would delete the authority of County Probation Departments and Juvenile Courts from dealing with 601's, that is status offenders: juveniles who are truant, or have discipline problems at school or at home. habitually refusing to obey the reasonable and proper orders or directions of their parents or teachers

Chronic absenteeism is where the school to prison pipeline starts. This pipeline refers to policies and practices that push students out of school and into the juvenile and criminal justice system. These include zero-tolerance discipline policies and court involvement for minor offenses at school. These affect children of color disproportionately.

AB 1235 The California Community Care Facilities Act, provided for the licensing and regulation of runaway and homeless youth shelters by the State Department of Social Services. Previously the law required these shelters to offer short-term, 24-hour, nonmedical care and supervision and personal services to homeless and runaway youth, who voluntarily enter the shelter. The law also defined “short-term” to mean no more than 21 consecutive days.

AB1235 renames these facilities “Homeless Youth Prevention Centers,” and expands the categories of youth for which the center is required to provide services to also include youth at risk of homelessness and youth exhibiting status offender behavior. It also expands the definition of “short-term” to mean no more than 90 consecutive days,

Federal funding from the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act allows youth to stay at the shelters for 21 nights, and that time limit carried over into California law. This was insufficient to meet the needs for many youth who need longer stays to reunite with families, locate relatives for safe, stable housing, or find safe alternatives. On any given night in California, shelters are discharging youth after 21 nights and then readmitting them after 24-hours as a new client to stay compliant with the regulations. AB 1235 updates this class of Community Care Facilities to better reflect the realities faced by youth and the work of runaway and homeless youth shelters.

SB 150: Improving Access to the Chafee Education and Training Voucher will speed up the distribution of Chafee awards by authorizing the California Student Aid Commission to “over award” the grant at the beginning of the school year, enabling students to receive additional funds when funds are needed most. The bill would also replace the Chafee grant’s existing Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirement with one that is more flexible and takes into account the unique circumstances of foster youth.

SB 716 requires that county probation department ensure that juveniles with a high school diploma or California high school equivalency certificate who are in, a juvenile hall, ranch, camp, or forestry camp have access to, and can choose to participate in, public postsecondary academic and career technical courses and programs offered online, for which they are eligible.