

Transforming Youth Justice from Punishment to Healing: An Overview of the 2025 Department of Juvenile Justice Realignment Report

Kamilah Holloway, MA

Judge Katherine Lucero

Level

Intermediate

Room

Track

Juvenile/Legal/Policy, Administration & Legislation

CE

CPA/BBS/CJER/MCLE

Bio

Kamilah Holloway, MA is a dynamic and innovative leader in program evaluation and implementation and has had a career in civil service that spans over 18 years. She has a passion for researching promising practices in the areas of behavioral health, physical health, and the justice system. Over the years, Kamilah has collaborated with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to identify, address, and reduce inequities and disparities within State-wide and local programs and communities. Additionally, Kamilah has a passion for data transparency and collaborations that inform policy and drive change. She is dedicated to reducing the overrepresentation of California's most vulnerable populations in the justice system and ensuring that they have equal access to high quality and culturally appropriate services for their behavioral health and physical health needs. She is also dedicated to informing governing bodies regarding systemic inequities and transformational change to ensure that all Californians have an opportunity to thrive. Ms. Holloway received both a master's degree in industrial and organizational (I/O) Psychology and a bachelor's degree in psychology from California State University, Sacramento.

Judge Katherine Lucero (ret.) is a visionary and compassionate legal expert in systems that involve families in crisis. Her 22-year background in Family Court, Dependency Court, and the Juvenile Justice Court gives her a broad scope and diverse experience in all facets of how children, youth and families experience court systems. System accountability to support human transformation is at the heart of her leadership. She brings her expertise in trauma informed, therapeutic court systems that are culturally respectful, gender honoring and emphasize healing families to OYCR. She is a national trainer, educator, and speaker on such issues as Judicial Leadership, Domestic Violence and Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice Dual Diagnosis Courts, Dually Involved Youth (DIY) Courts, Family Drug Courts, Collaborative & Trauma Informed Court Systems, and the Disproportionate Impact of the Child Welfare System on Children of Color. She is a published author, is a certified Life Coach, and believes in the resilience of the human spirit based on her own experience with familial addiction. She obtained her B.A. in Political Science from the University of California at Davis, and her Juris Doctorate from Syracuse College of Law, and in 2023 was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws from San Jose State University.

Narrative

In 2020, the State of California enacted Senate Bill 823 (SB 823), creating a historic opportunity to fundamentally re-envision youth justice by shifting from state-level incarceration to locally driven, health-based approaches to healing and community reintegration. This legislation responded to long-standing critiques by advocates of the state-run youth justice system, offering a path to care closer to a youth's community. July 2025 marks two years since the full closure of DJJ facilities across the state. To-date, there is a wide range of activity associated with DJJ realignment: critical milestones have been met through innovative work and productive partnerships, while ongoing challenges have impacted the work at the state and local levels. The Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) has progressed in its role of practice and policy technical assistance for the realigned youth justice system, including offering technical assistance, creating relationships, and sharing best practices throughout the state. Key milestones have been achieved to advance the goals of SB 823.

This session will explore the results of an in-depth evaluation of the first two years of DJJ realignment, conducted by OYCR's research partner Applied Survey Research (ASR), that informed the 2025 DJJ Realignment Report. ASR developed an evaluation framework informed by the expert knowledge of key strategic partners, insights from similar initiatives enacted in other states, and the voices of youth themselves. Join us to reflect on the key takeaways from the DJJ realignment evaluation report, highlight key challenges and successes, and engage in meaningful dialogue about opportunities for ongoing improvement.

Learning Objectives

1. Describe two implications of SB 823 and DJJ realignment after 2 years of implementation, reflecting on intersections between youth justice, education, public health and child welfare
2. Explain the findings from the 2025 DJJ Realignment Report, highlighting evidence of the shift from punishment to accountability
3. Discuss three collaborative opportunities for sustainable reform across the youth justice system