



RIVERSIDE COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Riverside County Reaches Settlement in ACLU lawsuit *Settlement provides for Youth Diversion Program and Increases Investment in Community-Based Intervention*

RIVERSIDE, CA – The Riverside County Probation Department reached a settlement in a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The suit pertained to a youth diversion program to which parents, schools, resource officers and local law enforcement refer youth exhibiting at-risk behavior.

As part of the settlement agreement, the Probation Department will change how youth are referred to Youth Accountability Teams (YAT). In addition, Riverside County will provide an investment of nearly \$8 million dollars over five years into community-based organizations that deliver critical programs aimed to help at-risk youth. The department will also invest in annual training for the YAT program and conduct regular oversight through the County's Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council.

“Through this settlement we will continue the positive work we do while enhancing our investment in local communities to guide youth toward positive choices and away from the juvenile justice system altogether,” said Chief Probation Officer Mark Hake. “The YAT program has always been about getting youth and their families the help they need. We are committed to continuing this goal and look forward to enhanced community partnerships.”

Since its establishment in 2000, the YAT program has produced positive outcomes for more than 10,000 at-risk youth. Approximately 83 percent of youth who completed the YAT program were not convicted of any crimes in the three years following completion according to a report by California State University, San Bernardino.

Youth Accountability Teams were created to provide effective intervention for at-risk youth by providing services and support to youth and their families. Participants and parents are able to take part in counseling, mentoring and engage in positive social activities. Counseling services available include substance abuse, anger management and individual treatment.

“The number one goal within our department is to help youth succeed. That includes ensuring their rights are protected and rehabilitative resources are available,” Chief Hake said. “We are pleased that by fostering dialogue and listening to the concerns of all parties that we can move forward and continue to help youth in our community.”

The Probation Department makes concerted and successful efforts to keep Riverside County youth out of the juvenile justice system. Since 2009, the department has decreased annual youth detentions by 63 percent. Of the 72,378 youth referred to Probation by local law enforcement in that period, 84 percent were diverted from detention and safely treated in our community under the care and supervision of the Probation Department.

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