

ENDING ENDLESS PROBATION

NATIONAL CENTER FOR YOUTH LAW AND
W. HAYWOOD BURNS INSTITUTE



Light March 2021

Summary

Probation is the most common court ordered outcome imposed on youth in juvenile court in California. Too often, youth are placed on probation for an unspecified amount of time, while under the microscope of overly burdensome and confusing probation conditions. Conditions are rarely individualized—or realistic—and are ultimately impediments to healthy youth development and rehabilitation. Furthermore, available data show that probation is more frequently imposed on youth of color, and for longer periods of time. Together, these practices trap many young people in the legal system for their entire adolescence, lead to further use of detention, and cause far more harm than good.¹ Youth needlessly spending years on probation limits their potential and wastes precious resources.

In the interests of youth well-being, justice, and equity, data and research support the case to pass legislation that would end endless probation in California. Pending legislation does just that. AB 503 (2021) would require that probation conditions are individually tailored, developmentally appropriate, and reasonable, and reduce the amount of time youth are on probation.

I. Excessive Time on Probation is Harmful and Systemically Racist

A growing body of research asserts that probation plays an outsized role in the youth legal system, causing excessive and unnecessary harm. The Annie E. Casey Foundation describes probation as “deeply flawed both in concept and execution” and points out that “juvenile probation lacks clarity about its goals and purpose.”²

In 2019, nearly 20,000 youth in California were placed on probation. The vast majority (87%) were youth of color.³ Currently, there is no law limiting the duration of wardship probation, nor a requirement for periodic court reviews for the majority of youth on probation. Although in some

"At fourteen years old, I was put on probation for a non-violent crime and what was supposed to be a year, was extended multiple times. While on probation, I was targeted and labeled for the way I identified, the way I dressed, and the friends I hung out with. Because of the labels that were placed on me by the system, getting stopped by the police for being in my community, would always end in another violation that would accumulate and cause my probation to get extended. At 17 years old, I was told by a judge I was not fixable and because of all the violations I had accumulated throughout the multiple years on probation, I was sent away from my family and everything I loved. Throughout my probation, I felt frustrated, like I was the only one trying to fight for myself. It was difficult to gain employment to provide for myself and my family and unless I was okay with my probation officer coming to my workplace, it was impossible. I was excluded from school events because of the tight restrictions that would not allow me anytime outside of my home if I was not in school. Putting restrictions on the amount of time someone is on probation is important because youth deserve a chance to succeed without the barriers of the system."

DRE MELGOZA, AGE 20
YOUNG WOMEN'S FREEDOM CENTER

cases, probation may provide youth access to services, historical reliance on probation for this purpose has hindered the development of non-punitive, community-based options. While probation was “originally designed and promoted as an alternative to imprisonment that would spare promising individuals from the ravages of institutionalization, [it] has served instead as a net-widener that expands formal supervision to low level-cases.”⁴

A. Lack of Statutory Protections Exacerbates Institutional Racism

The harmful impact of probation is even greater for youth of color, who are overrepresented in the system and are less likely to receive diversion.⁵ For youth of color, adolescence is too often derailed by criminalization. The margin of error society grants to youth of color is razor thin. This is true for youth of color who are simply exhibiting normal adolescent behavior, as well as those whose actions violate the law.

Relative to their share of the youth population, youth of color comprise a higher percentage of youth both placed on probation and detained for probation violations.⁶ In 2019 in California, Black youth were nearly nine times more likely than White youth to be placed on wardship probation, and Latino youth were more than two times as likely.⁷ Data provided by California counties revealed that, on average, White youth are kept on probation for less than 20 months, while Black youth are on probation for nearly 21 months and Latino youth for more than 25 months. Coupled with the data indicating youth of color are significantly more likely than White youth to be placed on wardship probation, youth of color are harmed by these practices at an alarming disparity. This data is further indication of our country’s long, unconscionable, and paternalistic tradition of using surveillance as a form of social control over youth of color.

B. Lack of Statutory Protections Perpetuates Lengthy Periods of Supervision and Justice by Geography

Analysis of the 18 counties that provided data in response to a Public Records Act request in 2020 revealed that young people in California are on non-custodial wardship probation for an average of nearly 2 years (23.3 months). The data also tells the story of justice by geography: the reality that treatment by the system varies depending on the county of jurisdiction. Youth in one county averaged over 2.5 years (28.5 months) on probation and youth in another faced an average of 6 months.

TECHNICAL VIOLATIONS LEAD TO YOUTH DETENTION

In 2013, 17 percent of youth in detention were there as a result of a technical violation of probation. National Juvenile Defender Center. Promoting Positive Development: The Critical Need to Reform Youth Probation Orders. (2016).

Two-thirds of California’s 58 counties were unable to produce data on how long youth were kept on wardship probation.⁸ The fact that so many probation departments were not able to produce this information is deeply concerning and showcases a lack of accountability regarding these decisions.

II. Excessive Conditions are Detrimental to Youth Development and Risk Deeper Justice System Involvement

The likelihood for youth to successfully complete an unnecessarily long probation program saddled with excessive conditions is low. This is particularly true for vulnerable children “in over-policed, under-resourced communities unable to meet their basic needs.”⁹ Juvenile Justice experts recommend probation conditions be limited, individually tailored, developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and strength-based. When youth are not able to be diverted from the system, probation departments should work with youth and family members to create individualized plans with the ultimate goal of achieving healthy development and accountability.¹⁰

A. Probation Must Be Developmentally Appropriate

The frequent use of probation pulls more youth into the juvenile justice system at a crucial stage in their development. Because the brain is not fully matured until age 25, risky behavior is common during adolescence, with most youth ultimately growing out of lawbreaking behavior without any intervention from the justice system.¹¹

Probation officers use surveillance to monitor a youth’s compliance with their conditions. As a result of probation’s emphasis on surveillance and catching a youth’s violation of conditions—conditions that a youth may find arbitrary because they do not understand them, or because the conditions are in no way connected to what brought the youth into contact with law enforcement—a “child’s perception of the legitimacy of the system will diminish, often leading to worse outcomes, such as increased recidivism.”¹² Significantly, “the developmental arc of the human brain shows why this heavy emphasis on surveillance and rule following does not succeed.”¹³

“At thirteen years old, I was charged with a misdemeanor and put on probation for a year. During that year, I was charged with a technical violation and my probation terms were extended. Rather than be provided with the support I needed as a teenager, I was punished and in and out of incarceration for struggling with mental health. Family issues made it difficult to stay home but tight probation policies forced me to choose between risking my freedom or struggling through it. These restrictions were frustrating and made it hard to participate in anything outside of what I knew. I could not attend school events and being gender non-conforming, I was criminalized and forced into the cycle of incarceration until I was finally dismissed on my eighteenth birthday. Probation terms should be considered on a case-by-case basis and it is important that restrictions are placed on these terms. Youth should not spend their entire teenage years in the system.”

ANGEL RODRIGUEZ, AGE 19
YOUNG WOMEN'S FREEDOM CENTER

B. Probation Conditions Must Be Individually Tailored

The California Supreme Court has determined that probation conditions (1) must have a relationship to the crime that was committed and (2) cannot require or forbid conduct which is not reasonably related to the crime committed or to “future criminality.”¹⁴

The Court also defined the meaning of “reasonable” in relation to probation conditions as “moderate, not excessive, not extreme, not demanding too much, well-balanced.”¹⁵ Despite this, youth are still burdened with excessive and arbitrary probation conditions which, research has shown, harms their development and prospects for rehabilitation.¹⁶

It is not unusual for youth to have to manage over 30 conditions of probation, which is “a near impossible number of rules for children to understand, follow, or even recall.”¹⁷ Due to the highly complex legal jargon utilized in courtrooms, research has found that youth struggle to both understand and remember the conditions imposed on them.¹⁸

Youth are often given probation conditions that are largely out of their control, including conditions that are contingent on other people’s conduct, such as parent attendance at counseling. Failing to fulfill these conditions can result in a technical violation, likely funneling the youth deeper into the criminal justice system which research shows can make it more likely for them to engage in delinquent behavior.¹⁹

Standard, boilerplate conditions that intend to foster pro-social behavior are problematic, particularly in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and regional shutdowns that disproportionately impact communities of color. For example, the common condition requiring a youth to “seek and maintain employment as directed by the Probation Officer” is extremely challenging to meet given the bleak outlook in service industries, like retail and restaurants, that frequently employ youth. As a result, all conditions should be evaluated based on their relevance, the opportunities the youth have to meet their requirements, and any external factors that might impact their success.

“When I was 17 I was placed on probation for over a year. While I was on probation I could not hang out with some of my friends, I was constantly stopped and searched by police on my way to school, and could not finish all my school assignments so I could graduate. My probation officer would not let me go to Sacramento to learn and experience advocacy with my high school FREE LA, which was a graduation requirement. Because of this, my graduation was delayed because I needed to fulfill that requirement, and the longer my graduation was delayed the longer they wanted to keep me on probation putting me in an impossible situation I felt I could not get out of. My probation was finally terminated right before my 19th birthday. Limiting probation terms and individualizing conditions are important because lengthy probation terms and overbearing conditions often hinder youth from completing school, maintaining jobs, and supporting our families as in my experience.”

JACOB "BLACC" JACKSON, AGE 19
YOUTH JUSTICE COALITION

C. Best Practices and Research Call for Rethinking Time and Conditions of Probation

Advancements in adolescent brain science prescribe ending endless probation. Probation conditions that are thoughtfully tailored to a particular youth's strengths or needs help ensure that each court-ordered requirement is geared toward positive youth development, thereby fulfilling the objectives of accountability and community safety.²⁰

Utilizing outdated risk assessment tools must be examined closely and questioned carefully, as such tools can perpetuate existing racial disparities that result from school-discipline, policing, prosecution practices and structural factors outside of a young person's control. Such assessment tools do not help achieve better life outcomes for the people that are subject to them; nor do they improve community conditions. Instead, they may be used as another way to legitimize the exercise of social control over Black and Brown bodies.

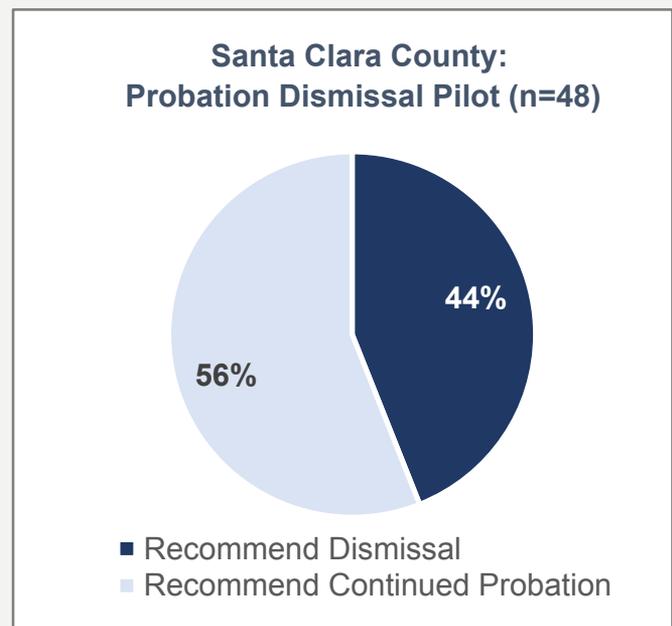
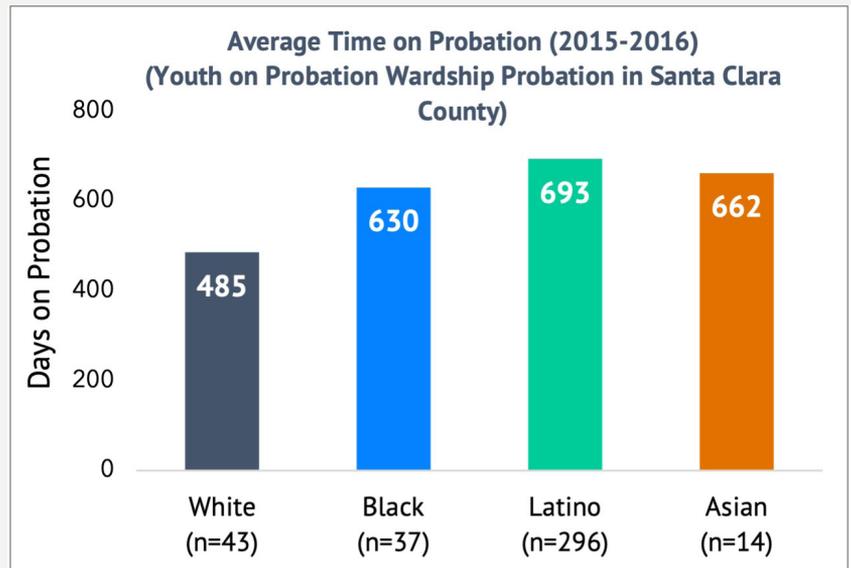
Research supports incentivizing program completion and creating options for courts to recognize and reward youth's positive progress. Creating statutory time periods for presumptive dismissal of youth probation permit judges to use their discretion based on a youth's individual circumstances in a strength-based manner rather than relying on a punitive system where youth regularly fall through the cracks and languish on probation for long periods of time. Such reforms can reduce the immense cost that probation places on society and youth's lives.

Piloting Early Termination: Santa Clara County Example

In 2017, the Santa Clara County Race Equity in Justice Systems (REJS) Workgroup identified time on probation as a target population for justice reform focused on equity. A 2015-2016 analysis of youth on wardship status probation in Santa Clara County, California found that youth on probation served almost two years under formal supervision. Compared to White youth, the average number of days on probation was 145 days longer for Black youth, 177 days longer for Asian youth, and 208 days longer for Latino youth.²¹

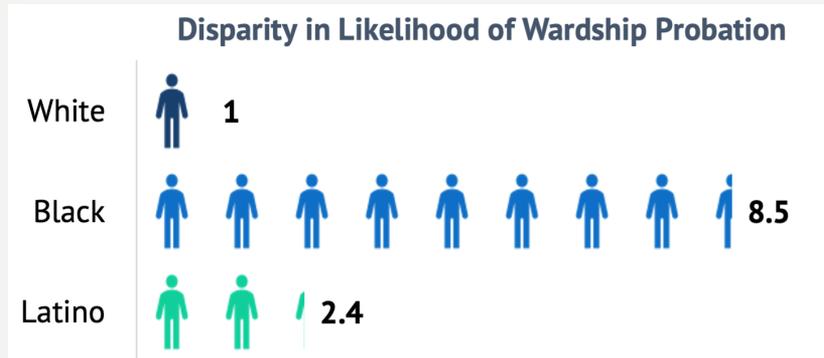
In March of 2018, Santa Clara County Probation piloted the use of a new tool to reduce time on probation, “Probation Dismissal Criteria.” The tool allows probation officers to assess academic and behavioral progress after the youth has been on probation for 6 months in order to recommend early termination from probation, or continued probation with a follow up review in 3 months. If a probation officer does not recommend probation dismissal, they highlight aspects of the case plan the young person needs to work on to justify continued supervision.

Early results from the pilot demonstrated that the approach will have a significant impact on decreasing lengthy probation terms in Santa Clara. When piloted with 48 youth on probation, probation staff recommended immediate probation termination in 44 percent of cases.



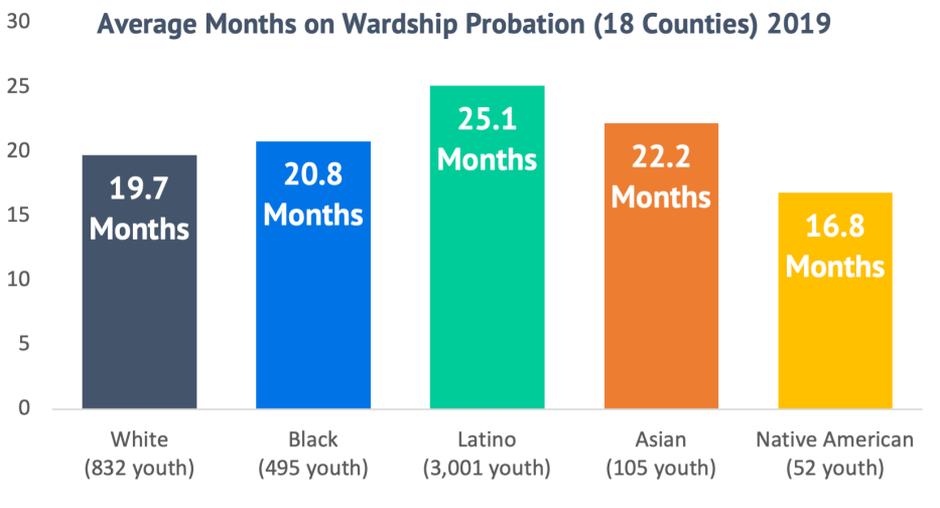
Key Data on California Youth

I. Youth of Color are More likely to be placed on Wardship Probation



Youth of color are significantly more likely than White youth to be placed on wardship probation. For every 1,000 White youth in California’s youth population (ages 12-17), 3 are placed on wardship probation. For every 1,000 Black youth, there are 25.3 placed on wardship probation. And for every 1,000 Latino youth, there are 7 placed on wardship probation. Comparing these rates, Black youth are 8.5 times more likely and Latino youth are more than 2 times as likely than White youth to be placed on wardship probation.

II. Youth of Color are More likely to Spend a Longer Time on Wardship Probation

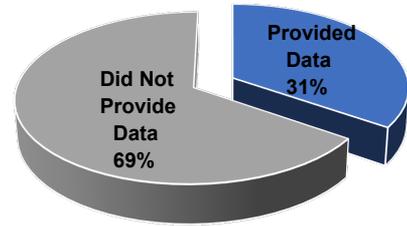


Youth of color are more likely to have a longer time under non-custodial probation supervision than White youth. Based on information collected as part of a Public Records Act (PRA) Request, White youth spend an average 19.7 months on probation, whereas Black youth spend 20.9 months, Latino youth spend 25.1 months and Asian youth spend 22.2 months.

III. Fewer than Half of California Counties Provided Data on Youths' Length of Stay on Probation

Only 18 of 58 county probation departments (31% of California Counties) were able to provide data on the length of time youth spend on non-custodial probation supervision.

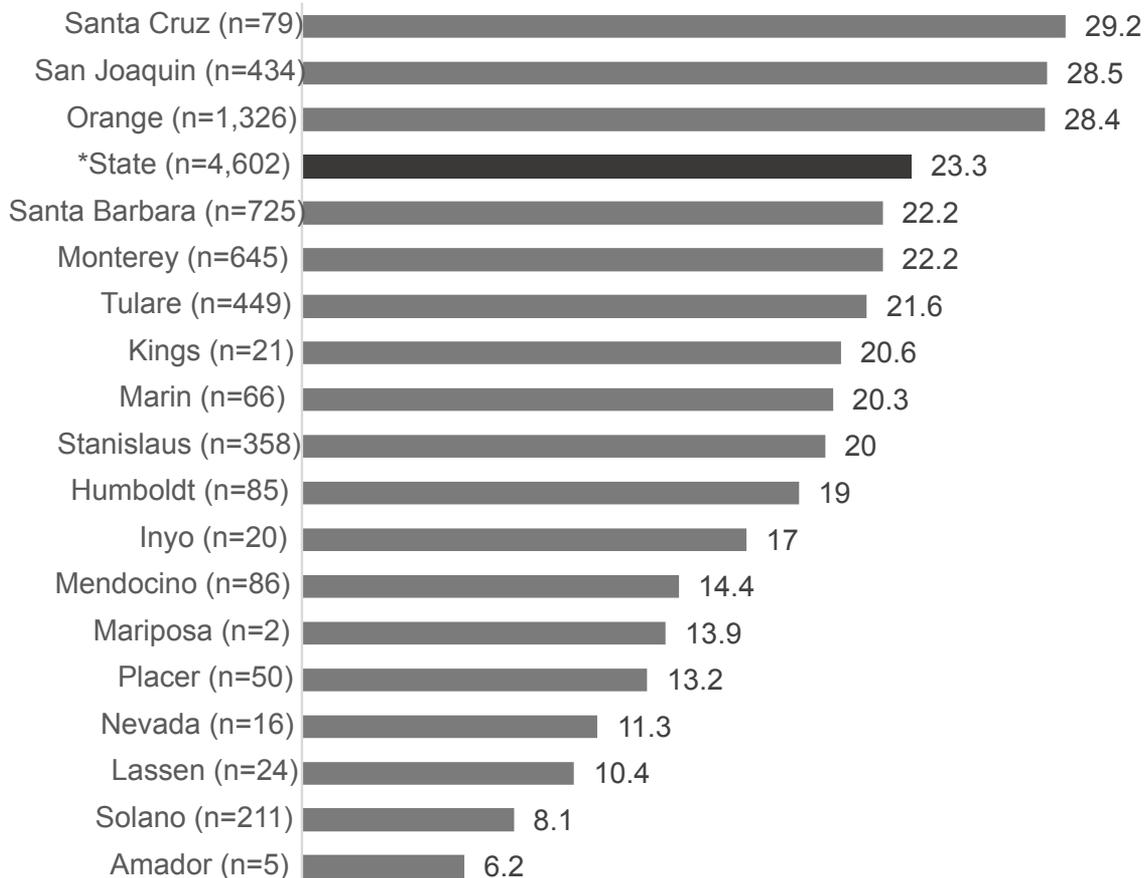
Percentage of Counties with Readily Available Data on Months on Probation



IV. County by County Analysis of Time on Probation Reinforces “Justice by Geography”

The amount of time youth spend on Community Supervision Probation varies significantly across the state. Whereas youth spend, on average, more than 28 months on probation in Santa Cruz, San Joaquin, and Orange Counties, they spend, on average, significantly less time in Lassen, Solano and Amador Counties.

Average Months on Community Supervision Probation by County (number of youth)



Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to improve outcomes for youth by minimizing time on probation and tailoring conditions to meet youth needs.²²

Recommendation 1: Presumption of probation termination at 6 months

California should create a presumption that youth will be terminated from probation supervision after six months.²³ An extension of probation supervision should only be granted if the court determines (on the record) that there is clear and convincing evidence showing that extending probation for an additional six months is in the youth's best interest.

Recommendation 2: Tailor probation conditions to youth needs

The number, complexity, and scope of probation conditions that youth face determine their ability to successfully complete probation. Conditions that promote participation in evidence-based therapeutic or skill-building programming offer more engaging options for youth and are in line with effective recidivism reduction strategies. Jurisdictions should eliminate standard one-size fits all lists of conditions, and instead create a small number of developmentally appropriate conditions tied to individual youth success. Where continued services are needed, services should be provided outside of the probation system rather than extending youth's time on probation.

Conclusion

The longer young people spend on probation, entangled in a complex web of confusing rules, the greater their risk of deeper system involvement and poorer life outcomes. If probation in California is intended to have a positive impact on youth, it cannot go on indefinitely. California has the opportunity to end endless probation by passing AB 503 (2021). AB 503 would require that every youth on probation must have a hearing at six months, with a rebuttable presumption in favor of termination, unless the court can show on the record that it is in the youth best interest to continue for an additional six months, with the goal of helping youth succeed in meeting a small set of individualized goals.

Appendix A: Juvenile Probation Limits by State

| | Judge Discr. | Time Limited Probation in Years | | | | | Graduated Offense Class Based | Not to Exceed _ Birthday | Other | Probation Length Statute |
|----|--------------|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | |
| AL | X | | | | | | | | Ala.Code 1975 § 12-15-215 | |
| AK | | | X | | | | 19th | | AS § 47.12.120 | |
| AZ | | X | | | | | | | A.R.S. § 8-341 | |
| AR | X | | | | | | | | A.C.A. § 9-27-330 | |
| CA | X | | | | | | | | Cal.Welf. & Inst.Code § 727 | |
| CO | X | | X | | | | | | C.R.S.A. § 19-2-925 | |
| CT | X | | | | | | | | C.G.S.A. § 46b-140 | |
| DE | X | | | | | | | | 10 Del.C. § 1009 | |
| DC | X | | | | | | | | DC ST § 16-2320 | |
| FL | | | | | | | | X | F.S.A. § 985.435 | |
| GA | X | | | | | | | | Ga. Code Ann., § 15-11-601 | |
| HI | X | | | | | | | | HRS § 571-48 | |
| ID | | | | X | | | 21st | | I.C. § 20-520 | |
| IL | | | | | X | | 21st | | 705 ILCS 405/5-715 | |
| IN | X | | | | | | | | IC 31-37-19-1 | |
| IA | X | | | | | | 18th | | I.C.A. § 232.53 | |
| KS | | | | | | | | X | K.S.A. 38-2361 | |
| KY | | | | | | X | | | KRS § 635.060 | |
| LA | | | | | | X | 21st | | LSA-Ch.C. Art. 898-900 | |
| ME | | | | X | | X | | | 15 M.R.S.A. § 3314-A; 17-A M.R.S.A. § 1202 | |
| MD | X | | | | | | | | MD Code, Courts and Jud.Pro. § 3-8A-19 | |
| MA | X | | | | | | 18th | | M.G.L.A. 119 § 58 | |
| MI | X | | | | | | | | M.C.L.A. 712A.18 | |
| MN | X | | | | | | | | M.S.A. § 260B.198 | |
| MS | X | | | | | | | | Miss. Code Ann. § 43-21-605 | |
| MO | X | | | | | | | | V.A.M.S. 211.181 | |
| MT | X | | | | | | | | MCA 41-5-1512 | |
| NE | X | | | | | | | | Neb.Rev.St. § 43-286 | |
| NV | | | | | | | | X | Informal Supervision- § N.R.S. 62C.200 | |
| NH | X | | | | | | 18th | | N.H. Rev. Stat. § 169-B:19 | |
| NJ | | | | X | | | | | N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-43 | |
| NM | X | | | | | | | | N. M. S. A. 1978, § 32A-2-19 | |
| NY | | | X | | | | | | § 353.2. Probation | |
| NC | | X | X | | | | | | N.C.G.S.A. § 7B-2510 | |
| ND | X | | | | | | | | NDCC, 27-20-31 | |
| OH | X | | | | | | | | R.C. § 2152.19 | |
| OK | X | | | | | | | | 10A Okl.St. Ann. § 2-2-503 | |
| OR | | | | | X | | 23rd | | O.R.S. § 419C.504 | |
| PA | X | | | | | | | | 42 Pa.C.S.A. § 6352 | |
| RI | X | | | | | | | | Gen.Laws 1956, § 14-1-32 | |
| SC | X | | | | | | 18th | | Code 1976 § 63-19-1410 | |
| SD | | X | | | | | | | SDCL § 26-8C-14 | |
| TN | X | | | | | | | | T. C. A. § 37-1-131 | |
| TX | X | | | | | | 18th | | V.T.C.A., Family Code § 54.04 | |
| UT | | | | | | | | X | Judicial Administration Rule 7-304 | |
| VT | X | | | | | | | | 33 V.S.A. § 5262 | |
| VA | X | | | | | | | | VA Code Ann. § 16.1-278.8 | |
| WA | X | | | | | | | | RCWA 13.40.160 | |
| WV | X | | | | | | | | W. Va. Code, § 49-4-714 | |
| WI | X | | | | | | | | W.S.A. 938.34 | |
| WY | | | | | | | 21st | X | § W.S.1977 § 14-6-247 | |

Endnotes

- 1 The Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Transforming Juvenile Probation: A Vision for Getting It Right.” (2018).
- 2 *Id.*
- 3 Office of the Attorney General, California Department of Justice (DOJ). (2019). Juvenile Justice in California, at <https://data-openjustice.doj.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/Juvenile%20Justice%20In%20CA%202019.pdf>
- 4 The Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Transforming Juvenile Probation: A Vision for Getting It Right.” (2018). Michelle S. Phelps, Ending Mass Probation: Sentencing, Supervision, and Revocation. 28(1) *The Future of Children*, 125-146 (2018).
- 5 Bala, N. et al., “Promoting Equity with Youth Diversion” (2019). At: <https://www.rstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/178.pdf>
- 6 The Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Transforming Juvenile Probation: A Vision for Getting It Right.” (2018).
- 7 Wardship data from Office of the Attorney General, California Department of Justice (DOJ). (2019). Juvenile Justice in California, at <https://data-openjustice.doj.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/Juvenile%20Justice%20In%20CA%202019.pdf>. Youth population data from Puzzanhera, C., Sladky, A. and Kang, W. (2020). “Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2019.” At: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>. Disparity gap calculated by the W. Haywood Burns Institute (BI) and the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL).
- 8 Records received through Public Records Act Request to all California counties by the W. Haywood Burns Institute (BI) and the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL) in 2020 (on file). Data were requested on average and median length of stay for youth exiting probation between January 1, 2018 and the date of the request (July 2020). In some cases, counties provided average length of stay on probation broken down by race and ethnicity, including the number of youth that were included in the sample. If lengths of stay were not provided directly by the counties, data were analyzed by BI and NCYL based on de-identified raw data provided by the counties.
- 9 Michelle S. Phelps, Ending Mass Probation: Sentencing, Supervision, and Revocation. 28(1) *The Future of Children*, 125-146 (2018).
- 10 See National Juvenile Defender Center, Promoting Positive Development, The Critical Need to Reform Youth Probation (2016), http://www.njjn.org/uploads/digital-library/Promoting_Positive_Development.pdf.
- 11 Annie E. Casey Foundation, Transforming Juvenile Probation A Vision for Getting it Right (2018).
- 12 National Juvenile Defender Center, Promoting Positive Development, The Critical Need to Reform Youth Probation (2016), http://www.njjn.org/uploads/digital-library/Promoting_Positive_Development.pdf; George Timberlake, *OP-ED: The Makings of a Good Juvenile Probation Officer*, Juvenile Justice Information Exchange (June 4, 2014), <https://jjie.org/2014/06/04/op-ed-the-makings-of-a-good-juvenile-probation-officer/>.
- 13 Annie E. Casey Foundation, Transforming Juvenile Probation A Vision for Getting it Right (2018).
- 14 The California Supreme Court’s recent ruling *In Re Ricardo P* applied the United States Supreme Court Case *People v. Lent* test for determining which probation conditions may be imposed on a youth. *In re Ricardo P.*, 7 Cal. 5th 1113, 446 P.3d 747 (2019), *as modified* (Aug. 28, 2019) *citing People v. Lent*, 15 Cal. 3d 481, 541 P.2d 545 (1975).
- 15 *In re Ricardo P.*, 7 Cal. 5th 1113, 446 P.3d 747 (2019), *as modified* (Aug. 28, 2019) *citing People v. Lent*, 15 Cal. 3d 481, 541 P.2d 545 (1975).
- 16 See Stephen Handelman “How Juvenile Probation Lands More Youths in Jail,” October 26, 2020. Retrieved from <https://thecrimereport.org/2020/10/26/how-juvenile-probation-lands-more-youths-in-jail/#>.
- 17 National Juvenile Defender Center, Promoting Positive Development, The Critical Need to Reform Youth Probation (2016), http://www.njjn.org/uploads/digital-library/Promoting_Positive_Development.pdf.
- 18 *Id.*
- 19 Anthony Petrosino et al., Formal System Processing of Juveniles: Effects on Delinquency. (The Campbell Collaboration, 2010).
- 20 National Juvenile Defender Center, Promoting Positive Development, The Critical Need to Reform Youth Probation (2016), http://www.njjn.org/uploads/digital-library/Promoting_Positive_Development.pdf.
- 21 W. Haywood Burns Institute. “Term on Probation Subcommittee Updates.” (Race Equity in Justice Systems Workgroup: 2018).

- 22 While the focus of this paper is on length of time on probation and conditions, it is critical to remember that the vast majority of youth are best served outside the legal system altogether. States should reduce the number of youth on any form of probation by formalizing and expanding diversion options pre- and post-adjudication, so they are not available for just a lucky few youth based on geography, but that diversion is part of the systematic way we respond to adolescent youth misbehavior.
- 23 Moreover, states and counties should promote early and successful termination of probation by incentivizing successful completion and creating options for courts to recognize positive progress. Limits should not serve as a default length but rather a ceiling that we should strive not to reach.

National Center for Youth Law

- *Dafna Gozani, Senior Policy Attorney*

The National Center for Youth Law is a non-profit law firm focused on transforming the multiple public systems serving vulnerable children—including child welfare, juvenile justice, education, mental health, and public health—such that these children receive the supports they need to advance and thrive. The National Center for Youth Law’s Youth Justice Initiative (YJI) is committed to transforming our country’s approach to youth justice. Our goal is to ensure that when youth come in contact with the juvenile justice system, they are met with equitable, community-driven, health-centered supports that achieve the best possible outcomes for themselves, their families, and their communities. Our mission is to lift up youth voice, public health expertise, and community-based organizations to fill the void created by the current punitive approach to juvenile justice. youthlaw.org.



W. Haywood Burns Institute (BI)

- *Laura Ridolfi, Policy Director*
- *Anna Wong, Senior Policy Associate*



The W. Haywood Burns Institute (BI) is a black-led national, non-profit with a diverse team of bold visionaries, working to transform the administration of justice. Always challenging racial hierarchy and the social control of communities of color by the justice sector and other public systems, BI employs strategies and tactics to establish a community centered approach of justice administration that is anchored in structural well-being. This community centered well-being paradigm is represented by a system of public policies, institutional and inclusive practices, cultural representations, and other norms that work to strengthen families, communities and individual well-being for positive life outcomes. burnsinstitute.org

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