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Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act

Weak Oversight Has Hindered Its Meaningful Implementation

Background

For over 20 years, the State has allocated funding to counties under the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) to reduce juvenile crime and delinquency by implementing crime prevention strategies. Each county must establish a Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (Coordinating Council) made up of a variety of local agencies and community groups, to develop an annual comprehensive multiagency juvenile justice plan (comprehensive plan). Each county must submit its comprehensive plan and a separate year-end report—describing the county's programs, outcomes, and expenses—to the Board of State and Community Corrections (Community Corrections) who publishes the information on its website and annually reports the information to decision-makers.

Our Key Recommendations

We recommended that the Legislature do the following:

- Require counties to identify how they serve at-risk* youth by defining at-risk youth in their plans and require Community Corrections to review those definitions to ensure they are adequate.
- Require Community Corrections to review county comprehensive plans to ensure that the information is accurate and plans comply with requirements.
- Identify a process for restricting counties' spending of JJCPA funding to ensure counties comply with requirements and prohibit counties from spending JJCPA funds if they have not established Coordinating Councils.

We recommended that Community Corrections require Coordinating Councils to specify changes to the plans or explain why no changes are needed, and that they ensure information counties submit is accurate.

Counties should determine and include in their year-end reports details about the effectiveness of programs using JJCPA funds and should collect data on program participants.

Key Findings

- Although required to use Coordinating Councils in developing annual comprehensive plans, some of the five counties we reviewed did not: one county has not had a Council since 2009 and two did not have all the required representatives during fiscal years 2013–14 through 2017–18.
- Most counties we reviewed had outdated or inadequate comprehensive plans.
 - » Despite significant changes in the juvenile justice landscape, most of the counties we reviewed had made only minimal changes to their plans over the last 20 years.
 - » Four of the counties failed to define the types of youth they consider to be at risk* or to identify risk factors that put those youth at risk, which hinders the counties' ability to describe in their plans resources available or strategies for responding to those youth.
- Although counties can use JJCPA funds for any element of response to juvenile crime that has been proven effective, four counties used most of their funds on programs operated by their probation departments.
- Counties failed to report to Community Corrections about the effectiveness of their JJCPA programs—counties cannot determine if participants benefited from JJCPA-funded programs due to incomplete or inaccurate data on participants in the programs.
- Community Corrections has not provided adequate oversight over JJCPA—it does not review information counties submit and counties continue to receive funding despite noncompliance with certain requirements.
- Because a portion of the JJCPA funding counties receive can change from year to year, it is difficult for counties to anticipate and plan for their total funding.

* AB 413 (Chapter 800, Statutes of 2019) deleted the term "at-risk" used to describe youth for purposes of various provisions in the California Education and Penal Codes and replaced it with the term "at-promise." However, the term "at-risk" currently remains in JJCPA as part of the California Government Code.