



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

# PRIT

PROBATION REFORM & IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

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2018-19 PROGRAM REPORT

The central graphic features a stylized bridge archway framing the official seal of Los Angeles County, California. Below the seal, the text 'LOS ANGELES COUNTY' is centered above the large, bold letters 'PRIT'. Underneath 'PRIT', the text 'PROBATION REFORM & IMPLEMENTATION TEAM' is centered, followed by a thin horizontal line and the text '2018-19 PROGRAM REPORT'.



## A letter from Saúl Sarabia

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On behalf of the members of the Probation Reform and Implementation Team (PRIT), I want to express our deep appreciation to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for having entrusted us the responsibility of deepening community participation in the County's Justice Reform effort. Your decision to elevate the systemic reform of the nation's largest probation department as a cornerstone of justice reform in LA County foreshadowed a national urgency to ensure that probation systems function as effective alternatives, not revolving doors, to prison.

Since August 2018, when PRIT kicked off its inquiry into the pathways that might best achieve the Board's historic decision to create a civilian oversight body for the LA County Probation Department, we have heard from thousands of constituents. In the pages that follow you will see a reflection of a small slice of the diverse voices who attended 14 meetings both at the Hall of Administration and in all five Supervisorial districts. We are honored to have had the opportunity to listen and synthesize their perspectives into three concrete reports that reflect community wisdom and subject matter expertise to support the LA County Probation Department to become the best in the country.

We are extremely proud of the collaboration between the appointees and the public servants from the Probation Department, the Office of County Counsel, and the Chief Executive Office on the PRIT. We thank your Board for empowering the PRIT to increase public literacy on the need for probation reform, to support the change agents within the Probation Department, and for creating a venue for the leadership development of those harmed by systemic gaps to help the County achieve community healing and public safety.

Respectfully submitted,

**Saúl Sarabia, Chairperson**  
**Probation Reform and Implementation Team**

**Alexander Sanchez, 1st District Appointee**  
**Cyn Yamashiro, 2nd District Appointee**  
**Dr. Sheila Balkan, 3rd District Appointee**  
**José Osuna, 4th District Appointee**  
**Mack Jenkins, 5th District Appointee**



## Los Angeles County Probation Reform and Implementation Team

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On May 1, 2018, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established the Probation Reform and Implementation Team (PRIT), as part of an ongoing focused effort to reform the LA County Probation Department. The team is charged with transforming the existing Probation Commission into a Probation Oversight Commission (POC) and coordinating existing recommendations for systemic reform of the Probation Department into a comprehensive plan.

### Proposed Mission Statement for Probation Oversight Commission

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*The mission of the Probation Oversight Commission is to re-imagine probation services in the County of Los Angeles to achieve accountability, transparency, and healing of the people served by and working for the Probation Department. The POC creates pathways for community engagement to foster trust between the community and the Probation Department. The POC ensures adherence to the highest ethics and the proper stewardship of public funds to support Probation in achieving the best outcomes for youth and adults on Probation.*

**“I don’t think it can be overstated how important this is to the quality of life of these young people who are in this system, and for the communities of which they are a part. So to get this right is important.”**

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas,  
Second District

# Probation Reform Implementation Team

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## Saúl Sarabia, **Chairperson**

For over 25 years, Saúl has participated in social movements that seek to transform society. He works to end structural racism, and discrimination of all kinds, by developing leaders, teaching, and engaging in collective action to change laws.

Since 2003, he has trained residents and students to fight injustice by partnering them to work for social change. Together, they have challenged racism in the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina, supported formerly incarcerated people to build power to change laws that discriminate against them, and helped undocumented college students build a voice and a social movement.

Saúl has served as a human rights advocate in Central America, a welfare rights advocate for homeless families in San Pedro, CA, and a community organizer in South Los Angeles.

Today, he works to enhance the capacity and impact of change agents as Founder and Director of Solidarity Consulting.

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## Alex Sanchez, **First District**

Alex Sanchez is an internationally recognized peacemaker and co-founder of Homies Unidos in Los Angeles where he has developed and implemented innovative violence prevention and intervention programs since 1998 and has also led the organization as Executive Director since 2006. An outspoken community leader, Alex's commitment to disenfranchised youth and their families in the Latino and largely Central American communities of the Pico Union, Westlake and Koreatown areas of Los Angeles, is rooted in his own personal journey that includes having been a gang-involved youth.

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## Cyn Yamashiro, **Second District**

Cyn Yamashiro has dedicated his professional career to representing and serving individuals charged with crimes. He studied Economics at UCLA before attending Law School at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. He finished his career as a public defender as a long cause trial deputy and served as a trainer and supervised the juvenile office in Compton, CA. Cyn was recruited to Loyola Law School to create one of the first legal clinics on the West Coast dedicated to criminal defense. At Loyola Law School, he taught courses in advanced criminal litigation skills, trial advocacy, criminal law and juvenile delinquency law. Cyn Yamashiro is L.A. County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas' appointee to the Los Angeles County Probation Commission, where he served as president for two years.



### Dr. Sheila Balkan, **Third District**

Dr. Balkan has a doctorate in Sociology from UCLA with an emphasis on criminology, deviant behavior and mental illness. Dr. Balkan has served as a research consultant for the Los Angeles County Probation Department, the Los Angeles Department of Mental Health Social Services, and the “gang unit” for Los Angeles County. She has taught various Sociology courses at UCLA and Los Angeles Valley College. In addition to her many years of research experience, she holds a private investigator’s license in the State of California.

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### Jose Osuna, **Fourth District**

Jose Osuna is the Principal Consultant for Osuna Consulting. Prior to founding Osuna Consulting, Osuna was the Director of External Affairs at Homeboy Industries, a position he held as part of the executive management team with the organization. Osuna continues to work in partnership with Homeboy Industries on numerous special projects, including the Global Homeboy Network, and most recently, establishing a Homeboy Alumni Network. Before working in external affairs, Osuna was the Director of Employment Services, as well as the head of the Solar Panel Installation Training and Certification Program - both at Homeboy Industries.

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### Mack Jenkins, **Fifth District**

Mr. Jenkins served as Chief Probation Officer for San Diego County from 2007 to 2016. He currently serves as Senior Policy Advisor to the Justice Reinvestment team at the Council for State Governments.

In his role at CSG, Mr. Jenkins leverages nearly 40 years of criminal justice experience to assist supervision agencies in states across the country in adopting best practices to reduce recidivism and increase public safety.

Mr. Jenkins’s role at the CSG Justice Center comes on the heels of his retirement from the San Diego County (California) Probation Department, here he worked since 2007 managing the supervision of approximately 2,000 adults and 2,000 juveniles involved with the criminal justice system.

**“Whoever sits on the POC has to legitimately care...  
they must be committed to the vision that has been  
articulated here and care about it.”**

Mack Jenkins,  
5th District Appointee

# Probation Reform Implementation Team

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In addition to appointing 5 individuals with extensive expertise and personal experience with rehabilitation, public safety, and the justice system, the BOS assigned 3 departments to the PRIT. The public servants from these key County departments brought indispensable knowledge regarding the intricacies of County government to the PRIT, enhancing the deliberations and decision making by the volunteer appointees. This synergy was an essential component to produce meaningful recommendations and an achievable road map for systemic reform. The departments represented on the PRIT include:



## Los Angeles County Probation Department

The mission of L.A. County Probation is to rebuild lives and provide for healthier and safer communities.

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## Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office

The Chief Executive Office is helping to bring transformative change to the nation's most populous county through ambitious initiatives that are improving life for all of our residents.

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## Los Angeles Office of the County Counsel

The Office of the Los Angeles County Counsel provides legal advice to the Board of Supervisors, county departments and other county entities in the nation's largest and most diverse county.

**"The Probation Reform Implementation Team has been working many months on the important task of establishing effective oversight of LA's Probation Department, the largest department in the country.**

**I am very appreciative of its diligent and committed work, as well as its extensive engagement of community stakeholders so that this report would reflect the ideas of all the different stakeholders who are part of our Probation system. I look forward to having the opportunity to dive deeply into the report's recommendations."**

Supervisor Sheila Kuehl,  
Third District

# PRIT

## Probation Reform & Implementation Team

### PROBATION REFORM AND IMPLEMENTATION TEAM (PRIT)

TEMPORARY ENTITY (6 - 9 MONTHS)

Defines the Structure of the Probation Oversight Commission (POC) and a Blueprint for Reform

#### MANDATES



Transforms the Probation Commission (PC) to the Probation Oversight Commission



Synthesizes/Prioritizes Existing Recommendations to Reform the Probation Department



Drafts a Plan for Reform to be Reflected in the Probation Department's Strategic Plan

#### FUNCTIONS

- Draft Board policy reflecting POC's independence and draft ordinances that define POC's oversight authority
- Develop a Mission Statement for the POC
- Expand oversight of current Probation Commission to include adults
- Develop structure of POC mirroring the Sheriff's Civilian Oversight Commission
- Provide the POC with access to information, a vehicle to conduct investigations, and a mechanism to conduct facilities inspection
- Require the POC to operate in a transparent manner by embracing robust community engagement
- Develop guidelines for qualifications of POC Commissioners, staff and other appointees
- Draft agreements between Office of Inspector General (OIG), Probation Department, and POC

### PROBATION OVERSIGHT COMMISSION (POC)

PERMANENT INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT ENTITY

Ensures Transparency and Public Accountability of the Probation Department

#### MANDATES



Conducts Investigations



Provides Active Oversight/Monitoring



Secures Robust Community Engagement

#### FUNCTIONS

- Ensure reform efforts are initiated and institutionalized throughout the Probation Department
- Provide periodic reports on status of reform to the Board and Community
- Make recommendations to the Board and advise the Probation Department on operational policies/procedures and systemic issues in service delivery or outcomes for juveniles and adults
- Request information from the Probation Department regarding issues which the POC monitors for the Board
- Direct the OIG to conduct investigations and supervise/evaluate all work performed by the OIG for the POC
- Serve as liaison and mediator between Probation Department and community
- Ensure public access to information and engage the community meaningfully, including hosting town halls and forums
- Provide a forum for submission of complaints by residents/ stakeholders



## Community Engagement

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The Probation Reform and Implementation Team held 14 public meetings all around Los Angeles County—drawing as many as 200 people at a given time. The open dialogue and engagement provided PRIT concrete ideas to consider in making final recommendations for the proposed Probation Oversight Commission (POC), the reform plan to monitor systemic reform of the Probation Department, and the elimination of pepper spray from LA County juvenile halls to ensure humane treatment.







“As someone who survived Los Angeles County’s juvenile probation camps in the 1980s, as well as a current mentor to probationers of all ages, I think it’s essential that the POC have robust powers, funding, and staffing to heal this County from the systemic failure to rehabilitate people under the jurisdiction of Probation”

Alex Sanchez,  
First District Appointee



# Timeline



August 15, 2018  
Kick-Off: First Public Meeting



May 1, 2019  
*Special Hearing*: Submit recommendations of Safety and Pepper Spray to BOS and Probation Department



May 20, 2019  
PRIT Votes on Final Proposal for Oversight Design



June 12, 2019  
PRIT Votes on a final systematic reform plan and recommendations



June 13, 2019  
PRIT hosts community forum to unveil Oversight Design



June 18, 2019  
PRIT presents final reform plan to BOS

# Key Recommendations

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Key recommendations in the PRIT's proposed design of the advisory POC include its ability to do the following (but not limited to):

## **Subpoena Power**

The PRIT recommended innovations that deepen the role of community members in achieving accountability and transparency. They include involving former Probationers on the oversight staff to resolve service complaints, identify root causes and trends by tracking resolution of issues, and to serve as the face of the POC in the community. The PRIT also recommended a replication of the County's participatory budgeting model from youth funding streams to adult funding streams, creating youth councils, and an annual Data and Statistics Town Hall to promote public literacy of the functioning of the Department and progress on systemic reform.

## **Investigations and Inspections**

The ability to conduct robust, independent investigation of matters deemed material to the POC, and to collaborate with the County Inspector General for complex and confidential investigations. The POC will closely monitor the conditions of confinement and the quality of treatment and programming offered to probationers.

## **Power to Compel/Access to Information**

The power to compel documents, data, and direct testimony as a swift, fair and reliable mechanism to ensure the Probation Oversight Commission can make sound recommendations to the Board and Probation Department.

To view the full report and details on all of the recommendations visit:  
[prit.lacounty.gov](http://prit.lacounty.gov)





## Overview

# Prit Recommendations for the Probation Oversight Commission

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The Probation Reform and Implementation Team's recommendations for the powers and authorities the Probation Oversight Commission include 10 areas:

1. **Advising the Board and the Probation Department**
2. **Policy and Practice Review and Assessments**
3. **Inspections**
4. **Investigations**
5. **Independent Grievance Process**
6. **Power to Compel (Subpoena)**
7. **Public Reporting and Meetings**
8. **Public Engagement**
9. **Composition**
10. **Provisions to Structure and Establish the POC**



## Overview

# Probation Systemic Reform Plan

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A primary function of the POC will be to monitor the Probation Department's progress in achieving systemic reform. The Board of Supervisors authorized the PRIT to synthesize hundreds of recommendations into this systemic reform plan. The PRIT organized the recommendations into a comprehensive, integrated plan for systemic reform that includes deadlines, metrics, performance indicators, and expected outcomes in 8 priority areas:

1. Juvenile Outcomes
2. Juvenile Facilities
3. Mission, Vision, and Values
4. Organizational Restructuring
5. Community Partnerships & Service Delivery
6. Staffing, Hiring, and Training
7. Data & Information Technology
8. Structured Decision Making



## Overview

# Special Hearing Recommendations for the Phased Elimination of Pepper Spray and to Ensure Humane Treatment in Juvenile Justice Facilities:

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In February 2019, the Board voted unanimously to eliminate the use of the chemical agent oleoresin capsicum ('pepper spray') from juvenile halls and camps. The Board charged the PRIT with convening a Special Hearing designed to solicit community input on achieving these goals safely and expeditiously. The PRIT synthesized the suggestions from hundreds of probation officers, youth and adults with experience in detention, mental health professionals, and other subject matter experts into a final report that helped shape the Probation Department's plan of action to execute the Board's mandate. The PRIT's final report includes 15 recommendations responding to 2 Board motions directing the PRIT to draw on the insights from the Special Hearing:

**Part One:** Features recommendations to meet ongoing needs to achieve the Board's goal of rehabilitation of youth, by centering trauma-informed practices, and meeting the mental health needs in LA's juvenile justice facilities.

**Part Two:** Contains recommendations, including a time line in distinct stages with concrete benchmarks, to implement the Board's unanimous decision to eliminate pepper spray from LA County juvenile justice facilities.

To read the PRIT's final report and recommendations, visit:  
[www.prit.lacounty.gov](http://www.prit.lacounty.gov)

# Closing Statement

The PRIT reviewed hundreds of documents including, but not limited to, existing recommendations from previous working groups and a comprehensive survey of national oversight organizations, in search of best practices. As we determine the appropriate first steps in erecting the POC, we know through the level of learning, passion, and analysis that was brought into our process, that the POC will also benefit by serving as an ongoing point of connection for the systems leaders, directly impacted residents, and Probation staff and its labor representatives and County taxpayers.

This synthesis reflects your appointees' best thinking after organizing many of the meetings around the existing recommendation areas that emerged from the Board's previous investments. This includes hundreds of collective hours by the national and local experts, including the RDA advisory committee.

The PRIT process has been a reflection of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' far-reaching commitment to justice reform. It reminded all of us that systems change requires both the rigor of analysis and a deep faith in each other. We thank the community members who responded to the call to action by challenging their skepticism and trust that the Board's next steps will strengthen renewed hope in the community that positive transformation is achievable in the nation's largest system of County governance.



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