



Dually Involved Youth

The State Cannot Determine the Effectiveness of Efforts to Serve Youth Who Are Involved in Both the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems

Report 2015-115

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February 25, 2016

2015-115

The Governor of California
President pro Tempore of the Senate
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Governor and Legislative Leaders:

As requested by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, the California State Auditor presents this audit report concerning youth who are involved in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system (dually involved youth). This report concludes that, absent a requirement to do so, most of the counties we visited have not monitored outcomes to assess the effectiveness of their efforts with dually involved youth. For example, none of the counties tracked outcomes related to graduation rates for this population. While state law does not require state agencies to provide guidance or counties to track such information, best practice models recommend collecting data and tracking outcomes.

To better address the needs of dually involved youth, various national best practices suggest that agencies start by designing and implementing uniform data collection and reporting systems, identifying their population of dually involved youth, and then beginning to track certain attributes and outcomes such as information related to youths' delinquent activities, placements, and history of maltreatment. In California, state agencies have provided the counties with only limited guidance related to tracking dually involved youth. Specifically, the State has not defined key terms or established outcomes to track related to dually involved youth, thus it cannot monitor the outcomes for this population statewide. Furthermore, the State cannot perform a robust comparison between the populations of youth involved in dual status and nondual status counties.

Since the initial implementation of dual status protocols in January 2005, state law gives counties the option of developing local dual status protocols that designate certain youth as both dependents and wards of the court in order to maximize support for these children. Depending on the county in which they live, when youth who are already dependents of the court are adjudicated as wards of the court, they may either have their dependency case closed (crossover youth) or fall under the jurisdiction of both dependency and delinquency simultaneously (dual status youth). As of February 2016 the Judicial Council reports that 18 counties have adopted dual status protocols.

Based on our review of the outcomes and services reported in the case files of 166 youth who were adjudicated as dual status youth in three dual status counties (Los Angeles, Riverside, and Santa Clara) or as crossover youth in three nondual status counties (Alameda, Kern, and Sacramento), we found youth in the dual status counties appeared to have less juvenile justice involvement than those in the nondual status counties. However, the model that counties chose to use in serving dually involved youth did not appear to greatly affect the number of services offered or the outcomes achieved for these youth. In both types of counties, the number of services offered increased significantly after a youth's joint assessment hearing. Moreover, we noted that both dual and nondual status counties had similar outcomes related to out-of-home placements.

Respectfully submitted,



ELAINE M. HOWLE, CPA
State Auditor

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Summary

Results in Brief

State-level agencies have provided limited guidance to county agencies regarding youth who are involved in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system (dually involved youth) because state law does not require them to do so. As a result, counties have used their own discretion in determining the degree to which they track the population and outcomes of these youth. While the State does not mandate such tracking, best practice models recommend collecting data and tracking outcomes. Since January 2005 state law grants counties the option of developing local dual status protocols that designate certain youth as both dependents and wards of the court in order to maximize support for these children. Depending on the county in which they live, when youth who are already dependents of the court are adjudicated wards of the court, they may either have their dependency case closed (crossover youth) or fall under the jurisdiction of both dependency and delinquency simultaneously (dual status youth). Previously, state law required counties to terminate the dependency cases of youth in the child welfare system who were declared wards of the court, thus placing these youth within the sole jurisdiction of the counties' probation agencies. Before the law changed, California was one of only two states in the nation that did not use some form of dual status. As of February 2016 the Judicial Council reports that 18 counties have adopted dual status protocols. Six of these counties have populations greater than 1 million—the counties of Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Santa Clara. Collectively, these 18 counties represent 67 percent of the State's population.

Since the initial implementation of dual status protocols in 2005, state agencies have provided the counties with only limited guidance related to tracking dually involved youth. Specifically, the State has not defined key terms or established outcomes to track related to dually involved youth, thus it cannot monitor the outcomes for this population statewide. For example, our review of three counties that adopted dual status protocols (dual status counties)—Los Angeles, Riverside, and Santa Clara—and three nondual status counties—Alameda, Kern, and Sacramento—revealed that the six counties had different definitions for *recidivism*. Some counties define recidivism based on the period when the subsequent offense occurs as well as the severity of the offense. Specifically, counties' various definitions of the recidivism period included the youth's probationary period, the six-month period following disposition, the six-month period following the termination of the youth's probation, and the three-year period

Audit Highlights . . .

Our audit concerning youth who are involved in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system (dually involved youth) highlighted the following:

» *Since 2005 State agencies have provided limited guidance to county agencies related to tracking dually involved youth and cannot monitor the outcomes for this population statewide.*

- *Counties use their own discretion in determining the degree to which they track the population and outcomes of these youth.*

- *The outcomes counties track are likely not comparable, and therefore, it is difficult to measure the success of their efforts.*

» *To facilitate county tracking of dually involved youth, the State could require the California Department of Social Services to improve its statewide case management system's functionality.*

» *Five of the six counties we reviewed could not accurately identify the total number of youth they had declared as dually involved from January 2012 through December 2014—most of the counties use their own data systems for identifying this population which contain inaccurate or incomplete data.*

» *In reviewing the case files of 166 youth, we found that:*

- *Youth in dual status counties received more continuity of services from social workers and dependency attorneys than did the youth in nondual status counties.*

- *Counties provided little in the way of continuity of court appointed special advocates.*

following the youth's first entry into probation.¹ County definitions of *recidivism events* also differ, as some counties consider new sustained violations of probation as *recidivism* while others include only new citations and arrests. Until the State establishes standard definitions, the outcomes counties decide to track are unlikely to be comparable, making it difficult to determine the success of county efforts.

State law initially required the Judicial Council of California (Judicial Council), which is responsible for creating rules of court that litigants in juvenile court must follow, to collect data and prepare an evaluation of the counties' implementation of dual status protocols. However, this data collection requirement only applied to the two years following the State's first dual status case in 2005. The Judicial Council completed its evaluation and published its findings in a 2007 report. The report concluded that at the time of the study, counties were still in the formative stages of implementing their dual status protocols and that the Judicial Council could not yet assess the outcomes of dual status cases. Currently, counties are no longer required to submit their protocols to the Judicial Council, and the Judicial Council is no longer required to review them. Thus, the Judicial Council is no longer required to assess whether counties have appropriately addressed the need for data collection within their dual status protocols. Nevertheless, the Judicial Council established, by rule of court, a Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee (committee) that makes recommendations for improving the administration of justice in all cases involving marriage, family, or children, including issues specific to dually involved youth. Therefore, we believe that the Judicial Council is best positioned to facilitate discussions between state and county-level stakeholders.

In order to facilitate county tracking of dually involved youth, the State could require the California Department of Social Services (Social Services) to improve the functionality of the State's Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (statewide case management system). Various national best practice models suggest that agencies start by designing and implementing uniform data collection and reporting systems, identifying their population of dually involved youth, and then beginning to track certain attributes and outcomes. Social Services provided county child welfare service (CWS) agencies with some guidance pertaining

¹ A *disposition* is the action to be taken or treatment plan decided on by the court, after the court sustains a petition. A petition is a document filed by the district attorney alleging that a youth committed an offense. A judge will sustain a petition if he or she finds the allegations against the youth to be true. A sustained petition is similar to a finding of guilt in an adult criminal proceeding.

to dually involved youth in 2006, stating that it would provide instructions at a later date on documenting dual status cases within the statewide case management system. Although Social Services updated the system in 2010 to allow probation agencies to access the statewide case management system, it never provided instructions for documenting dual status cases. According to Social Services' Permanency Policy Bureau Chief (bureau chief), Social Services can improve the functionality of the statewide case management system to facilitate the identification of dually involved youth statewide. However, the bureau chief told us that for Social Services to implement such a change to the statewide case management system, the Legislature must sanction the change and reimburse counties for any increase in mandated county workload. Nevertheless, because county staff already use the statewide case management system to manage certain aspects of their cases, we do not believe implementing this change would result in a significant additional cost.

We noted that most of the counties we visited have not monitored outcomes to assess the effectiveness of their efforts with dually involved youth because they are not required to do so. For example, none of the counties tracked outcomes related to graduation rates for this population. Although Los Angeles County and Santa Clara County track some outcomes related to arrests, sustained petitions, and permanent placements for a small subset of their dually involved youth, the rest of the counties track these outcomes only for their broader population of youth in the juvenile justice system.

The counties we visited were unable to report outcomes specific to their population of dually involved youth because they cannot accurately identify these youth. Specifically, five of the six counties could not accurately identify the total number of youth they had declared as dually involved during our audit period—January 2012 through December 2014. Most of the counties we visited use their own data systems to identify this population; however, these data systems contain inaccurate or incomplete data. Counties are not required to maintain accurate and complete data on the outcome of joint assessment hearings, at which judges determine whether to place dually involved youth under the supervision of the county welfare or juvenile justice system. Thus, any observations about how frequently hearings result in a youth's formal involvement with the juvenile system might be reflective of errors, rather than differences in the counties' processes. Therefore, the State cannot perform a robust comparison between the populations of dually involved youth in dual status and nondual status counties. Despite these issues, we noted that four of the counties—Alameda, Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Santa Clara—that are implementing best practice models related to dually involved youth have recently started developing mechanisms to track these data.

We reviewed the outcomes and services reported in the case files of 166 youth who were adjudicated as dual status youth in the three dual status counties or as crossover youth in the three nondual status counties during our audit period. We found that a county's decision to implement dual status protocols did not appear to greatly affect the number of services offered or the outcomes achieved for these youth. Although the youth in the dual status counties appeared to have less juvenile justice involvement than those in the nondual status counties, we noted that both dual and nondual status counties had similar average numbers of out-of-home placements after a youth's joint assessment hearing. Furthermore, all six of the counties we visited provided a variety of services to dually involved youth, including mental health, substance abuse, youth development, and education services. Our review revealed that these youth typically received a significantly higher number of services after they became wards of the court in both dual status and nondual status counties. However, we also found that youth in dual status counties received more continuity of services from social workers and dependency attorneys than did the youth in nondual status counties because nondual status counties must close youths' dependency cases when they become wards of the court, whereas dual status counties may keep the youths' dependency cases open. We also noted that regardless of dual or nondual status, the counties provided little in the way of continuity of court appointed special advocates because few of the youth received those services before becoming wards.

Recommendations

To ensure that CWS and probation agencies are able to identify their populations of dually involved youth, the Legislature should require Social Services to do the following:

- Implement a function within the statewide case management system that will enable county CWS and probation agencies to identify dually involved youth.
- Issue guidance to the counties on how to use the statewide case management system to track joint assessment hearing information completely and consistently for these youth.

To better understand and serve the dually involved youth population, the Legislature should require the Judicial Council to work with county CWS and probation agencies and state representatives to establish a committee or work with an existing committee to do the following:

- Develop a common identifier counties can use to reconcile data across CWS and probation data systems statewide.
- Develop standardized definitions for terms related to the populations of youth involved in both the CWS and probation systems, such as dually involved, crossover, and dual status youth.
- Identify and define outcomes for counties to track for dually involved youth, such as outcomes related to recidivism and education.
- Establish baselines and goals for those outcomes.
- Share this information with the Legislature, so it can consider whether to require counties to utilize and track these elements.

If the State enacts data-related requirements, it should require the Judicial Council's committee to compile and publish county data two years after the start of county data collection requirements.

To identify their population of dually involved youth, CWS and probation agencies within each county should do the following:

- Designate the data system they will use for tracking the dates and results of joint assessment hearings.
- Provide guidance or training to staff on recording joint assessment hearing information consistently within the designated system.

Agency Comments

The counties and the Judicial Council generally agreed with our findings and recommendations. Alameda County and Social Services did not provide responses to the audit.

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Introduction

Background

According to the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, research indicates that youth who are aging out of the child welfare system have lower educational achievement and more often struggle in their early adult years with issues such as homelessness, behavioral health disorders, unemployment, and criminal justice involvement than do youth without child welfare involvement. In addition, recent research on youth who are involved with both the child welfare system (dependency) and the juvenile justice system (delinquency) has demonstrated that these dually involved youth have even worse outcomes than youth without cross-system involvement.

Juvenile dependency cases generally start when counties receive reports indicating that children are at risk of neglect or abuse. After conducting investigations, child welfare service (CWS) agencies may file court petitions alleging actual or immediate danger to youth in their counties. If the safety of these youth cannot be assured at home, they can be removed from parental custody and placed in protective court custody. Judges may declare youth dependents of the juvenile dependency court when their homes are unfit because of abuse, neglect, or cruelty. County CWS agencies also provide a full array of social and health services that focus on the safety and well-being of dependent youth. The text box defines key terms that describe dually involved youth as used in this report.

A youth's delinquency involvement may begin with a citation or when an officer arrests him or her. Juvenile delinquency cases generally begin when county district attorneys file petitions alleging that a youth has committed certain felonies, misdemeanors, or status offenses, such as truancy and curfew violations. At dispositional hearings, judges may declare the youth a ward of the juvenile delinquency court, allowing the court to make decisions about this youth in place of, or in addition to, his or her parents. The court may make decisions about the care, supervision, custody, conduct, and support of these youth, including medical treatment. County probation agencies (probation) enforce court orders, and may detain and provide services to those youth who are wards of the court. Depending on the county in which they live, when youth who are already dependents of the

Key Terminology as Used in This Report to Describe Dually Involved Youth

Dually Involved Youth—Youth who are involved with both the child welfare system (dependency) and the juvenile justice system (delinquency) regardless of whether the courts adjudicate them as dependents and wards simultaneously.

Dual Status Youth—Youth adjudicated simultaneously as a dependent child and a ward of the juvenile court.

Dependent Child of the Court—Youth who are under the primary responsibility of the dependency court because they have suffered—or there is a substantial risk they will suffer—abuse, neglect, or cruelty.

Ward of the Court—Youth who are under the primary responsibility of the delinquency court because they violated the law. If the delinquency court declares a youth a ward of the court, it may make orders for the care, supervision, custody, and support of the minor, including medical treatment.

Crossover Youth—Dependent youth who have had their dependency cases terminated after being adjudicated wards of the court.

Sources: Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform's *Crossover Youth Practice Model*, and Welfare and Institutions Code sections 241.1, 300, 602, 726, and 727.

Key Terminology Used in Juvenile Delinquency Court

Sustained Petition—A petition is a document filed by the district attorney alleging that a youth committed an offense. A judge will sustain a petition if he or she finds the allegations against the youth to be true. A sustained petition is similar to a finding of guilt in an adult criminal proceeding. A dismissed petition is similar to finding an adult not guilty.

Adjudication—A judge's determination as to whether a youth committed the charged offense. An *adjudicated* juvenile is akin to a *convicted* adult.

Disposition—The action to be taken or treatment plan decided on by the court. After the court sustains a petition, an adjudicated youth receives a disposition hearing and may be placed on probation and sent to a probation camp. If the judge determines the youth did not commit the charged offense, there will be no disposition hearing.

Sources: Legislative Analyst's Office, California Courts, the United States Department of Justice, First District Appellate Project, and Santa Clara Superior Court websites.

court are adjudicated wards of the court, they may either have their dependency case closed (crossover youth) or fall under the jurisdiction of both dependency and delinquency simultaneously (dual status youth). The text box defines certain key terms related to juvenile delinquency court proceedings, as used in this report.

Before 2005 state law required courts to determine which status was most appropriate for youth—dependency or delinquency; however, effective January 2005, the Legislature amended state law to grant each county the option of developing a dual status protocol that would permit the court to designate certain youth as dual status youth, i.e., simultaneously dependents and wards of the court. These dual status youth protocols are required to contain procedures to ensure both a seamless transition between dependency and wardship jurisdiction and a continuity of services. According to the bill analysis, before the law changed, California was one of only two states in the nation that did not use some form of dual status. As of February 2016, the Judicial Council reports that 18 counties have adopted dual

status protocols. Six of these counties have populations greater than 1 million—the counties of Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Santa Clara. Collectively, these 18 counties represent 67 percent of the state's population.

Roles of Local and State Entities

County CWS and probation agencies have different roles when it comes to serving dually involved youth. The child welfare system provides social workers and a group of services that include emergency response, family maintenance and reunification, and permanent placement. These services are designed to promote the well-being and best interests of youth by ensuring their safety, strengthening families to care for their children successfully, and finding permanent homes for youth when necessary. CWS agencies contract for services with health care, mental health, substance abuse, and education programs to ensure that youth and their families receive effective assistance. CWS agencies can also provide services to the families of these youth through family maintenance or reunification plans. Similar to CWS agencies, probation agencies also have the responsibility to provide care and treatment consistent with the youth's best interests, and family preservation or family reunification services when appropriate. However,

probation agencies also focus on rehabilitation of youth and the protection and safety of the public, and may consequently detain or incarcerate youth.

The State provides support to CWS and probation agencies as they serve dually involved youth. For example, the California Department of Social Services (Social Services) monitors and provides support to county CWS agencies through regulatory oversight, administration, and the development of program policies. Additionally, Social Services receives and distributes federal and state funding and oversees the operation of the statewide automated Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (statewide case management system). The statewide case management system is a tool all CWS and probation agencies can use to manage certain aspects of their cases. In establishing the statewide case management system, the Legislature intended to provide caseworkers a common database to effectively manage certain aspects of their cases. CWS and probation agencies can use this system for case management activities, service provision, and program management or documentation of case histories. For example, caseworkers can record client demographics, contacts, services delivered, and placement information. In addition, the legislation that allowed counties to develop dual status protocols required the Judicial Council of California (Judicial Council) to collect data and prepare an evaluation of counties' implementation of dual status protocols. However, this data collection requirement applied only to the two years following the State's first dual status case in 2005. The Judicial Council completed this evaluation and published its findings in a 2007 report. The report concluded that at the time of the study, counties were still in the formative stages of implementing their dual status protocols and that the Judicial Council could not yet assess the outcomes of dual status cases.

The Joint Assessment Process

Since 1990 state law has required each county's CWS and probation agencies to jointly develop written protocols (joint assessment protocols) to ensure appropriate local coordination in the assessment of youth who may fall within the jurisdiction of both the dependency and delinquency systems. Joint assessment protocols require consideration of the youth's prior involvement in either system, as well as his or her behavior, education, and home environment. Currently, whenever a youth appears to come within the description of both systems, state law requires social workers and probation officers to work together to make the initial determination of which status—dependency or delinquency—would best serve the needs of that youth and the protection of society. After determining the appropriate status for the youth,

probation officers and social workers present their recommendation to the court for consideration. Before 2005 judges were only able to adjudicate youth as either dependents or wards of the court. Courts were prevented from making youth simultaneously both dependents and wards of the court.

Beginning in 2005 state law allows county CWS and probation agencies, in consultation with the presiding judge of their juvenile court, to create dual status protocols. We refer to counties that do so as *dual status counties*. Juvenile court judges in dual status counties may declare a youth as dual status if the court deems it appropriate. However, even when a county has implemented a dual status protocol, its court can still adjudicate a dependent youth as a ward of the court and close his or her dependency case, similar to the process in a nondual status county. Figure 1 describes the typical process for adjudicating dually involved youth.

Legal Requirements for Dual Status Protocols

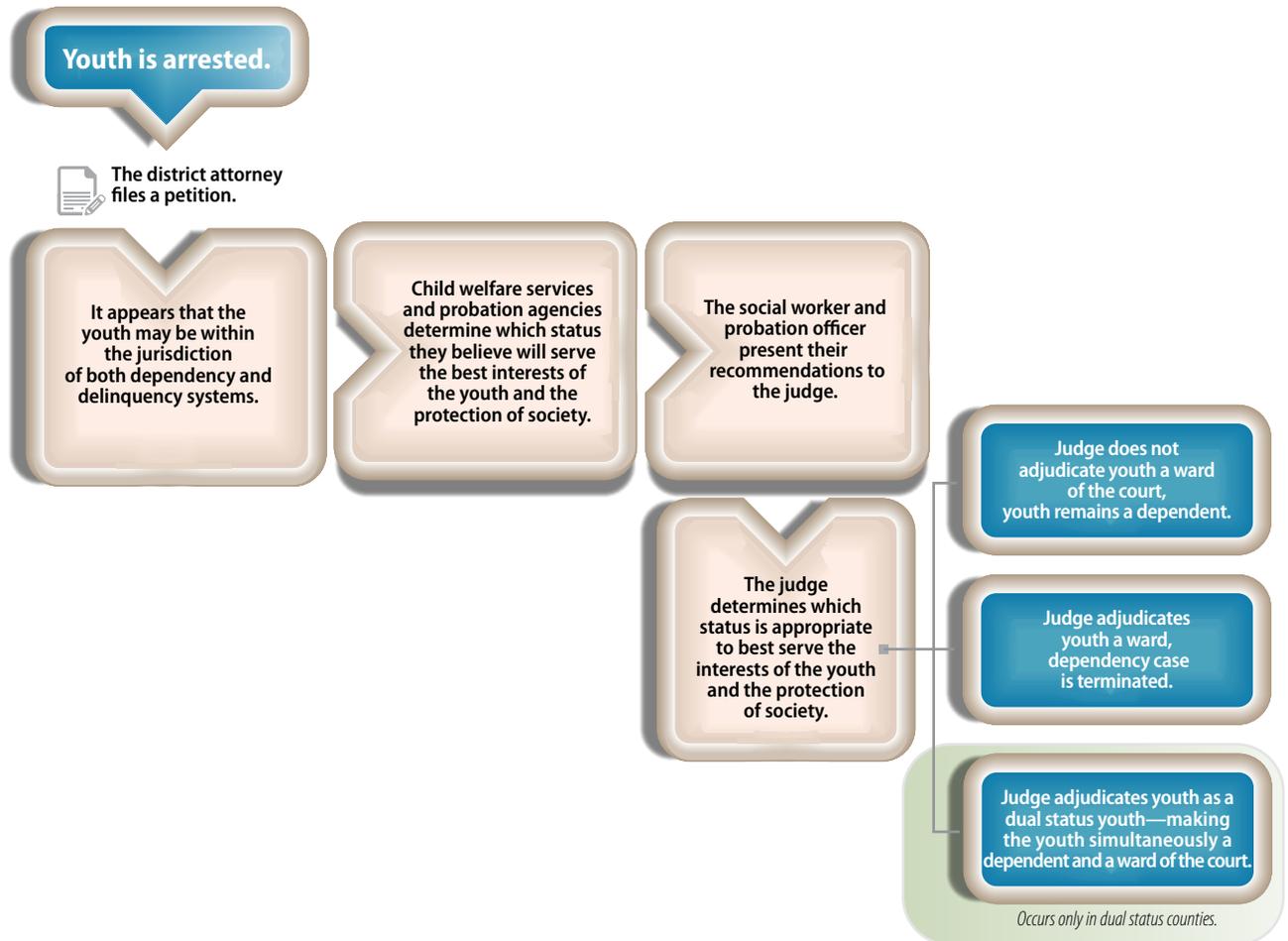
According to state law, a county's dual status protocols must include the following, among other things:

- A description of the process used to determine whether a youth is eligible for dual status consideration
- A description of the procedure the child welfare services and probation agencies will use to assess the need for dual supervision and the process to make joint recommendations to the court
- A provision for ensuring communication between juvenile court judges who oversee dependency and delinquency cases
- A decision of whether the county will use a *lead-agency* or *on-hold* model. If the lead-agency model is used, the protocol also needs a method for identifying which agency will be the lead

Source: Welfare and Institutions Code 241.1(e).

State law requires presiding judges of juvenile courts, chief probation officers, and CWS agency directors to sign the dual status protocols before declaring any youth as dual status in their counties. Dual status protocols must contain certain details about the county's dual status procedures, the key elements of which we describe in the text box. Counties that have dual status protocols can choose to adopt either a *lead-agency* model or an *on-hold* model. In counties that adopt a lead-agency model, the dual status protocols must include a method to identify which agency will be the lead agency. The lead agency will then be responsible for the youth's case management, court hearings, and court reports, but both the dependency and delinquency cases are still open to address the needs of the youth and his or her family. The on-hold model suspends the dependency case while the youth is a ward of the court. If it appears the court will soon terminate probation's jurisdiction but there is no safe home for that youth, the CWS and probation agencies jointly reassess the case and produce a recommendation to the court with regard to resuming the dependency case.

Figure 1
The Typical Process for Adjudicating Dually Involved Youth



Sources: Legislative Analyst's Office and Welfare and Institutions Code 241.1.

Funding Sources

The counties we visited—Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, and Santa Clara—receive a mix of federal, state, and local funding to cover their expenses related to child welfare and probation. For example, all of the counties receive federal Title IV-E funding to pay for foster care activities for eligible youth. In addition, all of the counties receive funding from the State, and the counties also use their general funds to cover additional costs. The counties we visited do not account for dually involved youth separately from other foster children or wards, but some counties have used private grants to help finance efforts specific to dually involved youth. For example, Sacramento County

received \$75,000 and Alameda County received \$375,000 from the Sierra Health Foundation during our audit period for work related to the foundation's best practice model for dually involved youth. Similarly, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation funded the National Council on Crime and Delinquency's delinquency prevention research project in Los Angeles County in 2013 through Georgetown University's best practice model.

Best Practices

We identified several best practice models for dually involved youth. These models aim to assist CWS and probation agencies in adopting practices and policies that better address the needs of dually involved youth. Four of the six counties we visited used one or more of the following three models during our audit period: Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps-Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration (Kennedy model), Georgetown University Crossover Youth Practice Model (Georgetown model), and Sierra Health Foundation's Positive Youth Justice Initiative (Sierra model). All three models recognize the importance of data collection, training, and cross-system cooperation.

The Kennedy model, established in 2004, promotes integration and cooperation between dependency and delinquency systems. Specifically, it provides guidance and technical assistance to agencies on developing a management structure, collecting and managing data, and establishing effective information-sharing guidelines. Santa Clara County began implementing this model in 2012.

The Georgetown model, established in 2007, addresses crossover youth by ensuring that CWS agencies work in coordination with the delinquency system to provide intensive services to address the needs and behaviors of youth. In addition, it advocates building on the strengths of youth and families to improve their lives and works with agencies in dual status and nondual status counties. Further, this model insists that both CWS and probation agencies use data to make all policy and practice decisions and that they must provide appropriate training to staff. Alameda County, Los Angeles County, and Sacramento County began implementing this model in 2013, 2010, and late 2014, respectively.

The Sierra model, established in 2012, is specific to the juvenile justice system. It supports California counties to transform their juvenile justice systems to improve the education, employment, social, and health outcomes of youth. The Sierra model's framework revolves around the idea that juvenile justice systems can better meet their public safety and rehabilitation goals by ensuring that their most

vulnerable youth achieve the behavioral, mental health, educational, and pro-social outcomes associated with healthy transitions to adulthood. Sacramento and Alameda counties both received planning grants for the Sierra model in 2012. However, according to Sacramento County’s assistant chief probation officer, the county dropped its implementation of this model after the initial grant planning phase and opted instead to consider the Georgetown model because the county felt that it offered more flexibility that better fit the county’s needs. Alameda County received an implementation grant in addition to the planning grant, but according to the deputy chief of juvenile services, the county chose not to participate in the next phase because it was focused on education and the county was already working with other educational partners.

Scope and Methodology

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee (audit committee) directed the California State Auditor to conduct an audit to determine how well counties are addressing the needs of crossover youth, including those with dual status. We list the objectives that the audit committee approved and the methods we used to address them in Table 1.

Table 1
Audit Objectives and the Methods Used to Address Them

AUDIT OBJECTIVE	METHOD
1 Review and evaluate the laws, rules, and regulations significant to the audit objectives.	We reviewed relevant laws, rules, regulations, and other background materials.
2 For a selection of six counties (three nondual status counties, one lead agency county, one county using the on-hold model for at least some of its cases, and Los Angeles County), compare the services provided to foster youth over the past three years who either were deemed to have dual status in the dependency and delinquency systems or had their dependency cases closed as a result of an open delinquency case (crossover youth). The comparison of services should include the county agency’s case management efforts to secure special education planning (if applicable) and health care services, including mental health counseling, as well as the extent of the agency’s permanency planning efforts.	<p>For all six counties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified the total number of dependent youth who were adjudicated as dual status youth (in dual status counties) or as wards of the court (in nondual status counties) as a result of joint assessment hearings in calendar years 2012, 2013, and 2014. • Of the youth identified above, judgmentally selected 30 from each county based on the following attributes: agency of origin, age, type of offense, and gender (10 cases per year). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note: Santa Clara County had only 16 dual status youth during our audit period; consequently, we were able to review only 16 dual status cases in that county. • Interviewed child welfare services (CWS) and probation staff to determine whether the agencies have procedures for coordinating effectively to ensure continuity of services. <p>For the cases selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared the services in the case plans and court hearing reports from just before the joint assessment hearing to the services provided after youth crossed over into delinquency to identify discontinued services. • Identified the person providing social worker, dependency attorney, or court appointed special advocate services to determine whether the same person continued to serve a particular youth before and after his or her joint assessment disposition hearing.

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AUDIT OBJECTIVE	METHOD
3 At the same selection of six counties as above, and to the extent possible, compare outcomes for crossover youth including, but not limited to, the following:	For the youth selected above:
a. Convictions and sentences for juvenile offenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified the length of time youth's delinquency cases were open.
b. Extent and length of time of criminal justice involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified the number of arrests following the youth's joint assessment hearings through the end of probation.
c. Recidivism rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determined whether youth had additional sustained petitions through the end of probation.
d. Rates of re-entry into foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We considered youth who had their cases closed as a result of a successful reunification, adoption, or other permanent placement to be capable of re-entry. <p>Of the 166 youth we tested, only 18 met this criteria, and only one of these reentered foster care.</p>
e. Number and types of placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determined the number and types of placements before and after youth's joint assessment dispositions.
f. Graduation rates from high school or its equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtained graduation or graduation equivalent status, or current education status from the county, when possible. If county did not have education information, requested the county agencies to work with their county office of education to obtain the information.
4 For the three dual status counties selected, examine the following:	For the three dual status counties:
a. How effectively the CWS and probation agencies, as well as juvenile justice courts and attorneys, are working together to meet the needs of crossover youth. Describe how these integrated partners maintain confidentiality while still effectively communicating needed information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewed social workers and probation officers to determine how they work with their counterparts to meet the needs of dual status youth. Obtained and reviewed each county's dual status protocols, and other relevant memoranda of understanding. Determined whether these documents address the issue of confidentiality. <p>These documents, in addition to provisions within state law, allow designated individuals, including CWS and probation staff, as well as juvenile justice courts and attorneys, access to a youth's case files.</p>
b. How well these three counties collect data on crossover youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed data collection efforts through addressing audit objectives 2 and 3.
c. How often and under what conditions foster youth are deemed to have dual status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified the number of dual status adjudications through addressing audit objective 2. Obtained and reviewed guidelines used by the agencies for recommending that youth be adjudicated as dual status youth.
d. What guidelines the three dual status counties are using and whether these guidelines are consistent with best practices used nationally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified best practices used nationally and interviewed relevant county staff to determine how the county developed its guidelines related to dual status youth. Reviewed documentation related to county guidelines and compared them to national best practices. <p>The counties' dual status protocols aligned with the guidelines of the best practice models related to collaboration between CWS and probation agencies. However, the best practice models were generally more exhaustive in their guidance, advocating for data collection and training, for example.</p>
e. The extent to which they have established and adhered to timelines for crossover youth's dual status determinations, reunification with their families, and/or efforts to ensure a more permanent placement for these children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed county protocols and identified whether the county had established timelines. <p>Only Los Angeles County had developed timelines related to dual status determinations. However, we found that court-established deadlines superseded the county timelines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For each case selected in audit objective 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed reunification efforts and dates for comparison to prescribed reunification timelines. Recorded dates for permanent placement efforts and permanent placements for comparison to prescribed permanent placement timelines. We reviewed laws that establish timelines for reunification and permanent placement efforts and compared them to hearing dates for the sample population. <p>Of the 166 cases we reviewed, we found five cases that did not meet reunification or permanency placement hearing timelines.</p>

AUDIT OBJECTIVE	METHOD
f. The continuity of dependency services, including maintaining the same court appointed special advocate, dependency attorney, and social worker.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See audit objective 2.
5 Ascertain why the three nondual status counties selected have chosen not to undertake dual status protocols.	<p>Interviewed key CWS and probation agency management to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand why the county chose not to undertake dual status protocols, and • Determine if the county reviewed any national best practice models. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtained and reviewed documentation related to this effort.
6 At the six selected counties, compare the training and management oversight social workers and applicable probation officers receive related to crossover youth, as well as any differences in funding that may be affecting the services that crossover youth receive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewed key staff to determine what training related to crossover youth, if any, was provided during the audit period. • Obtained and reviewed documentation to determine what trainings occurred. • Obtained and reviewed department policies and procedures outlining management oversight in each county. • Interviewed staff at each agency to understand what, if any, oversight management has provided related to crossover youth. • Reviewed case files in each county to determine if required oversight occurred during our audit period. • Obtained a high-level overview of the funding program for children involved with foster care and probation. • Interviewed key staff to understand how each agency funds its activities related to crossover or dual status youth and to determine whether they believe that the level of funding is sufficient given the service needs of these youth. • Assessed whether each county has sought additional sources of funding for dually involved youth.
7 Determine what progress has been made regarding the following concerns raised by the Judicial Council report required by Assembly Bill 129:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed the Judicial Council of California (Judicial Council) report to understand the concerns the report raised. The report relates to the implementation of dual status protocols.
a. Lack of communication and collaboration between agencies regarding specific responsibilities.	<p>For the three dual county status counties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed each county's process for resolving conflicts between agencies serving dually involved youth. <p>We found that all of the counties we visited have established procedures to facilitate effective communication and collaboration between their CWS and probation agencies.</p>
b. Misunderstanding and lack of knowledge among various participants in the dependency and delinquency systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewed CWS and probation staff to determine whether there was a misunderstanding and lack of knowledge. • Reviewed joint assessment reports as part of our case file testing to identify evidence of misunderstandings or a lack of knowledge between social workers and probation officers. <p>Although we noted a few anecdotes in which CWS and probation staff stated that misunderstandings still exist between the two agencies, we did not find sufficient evidence to indicate that this is a significant continuing issue.</p>
c. Lack of guidance from state-level agencies and the need for additional training on how dual status protocols should be implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewed key county staff to determine whether state guidance would be useful for developing protocols, conducting training, and improving outcomes. • Reviewed relevant state laws, rules, and regulations to determine what responsibilities each agency has as it relates to dually involved youth. • Interviewed key staff at the California Department of Social Services (Social Services) and the Judicial Council to determine whether they have fulfilled their responsibilities outlined in state laws, rules, and regulations. <p>We determined that both Social Services and the Judicial Council have fulfilled their legal responsibilities.</p>
8 Review and assess any other issues that are significant to the audit.	<p>We did not identify any other significant issues.</p>

Sources: California State Auditor's analysis of Joint Legislative Audit Committee audit request number 2015-115 and analysis of information and documentation identified in the table column titled Method.

Assessment of Data Reliability

In performing this audit, we obtained electronic data files extracted from the information systems listed in Table 2. The U.S. Government Accountability Office, whose standards we are statutorily required to follow, requires us to assess the sufficiency and appropriateness of computer-processed information that we use to support our findings, conclusions, or recommendations. Table 2 describes the analyses we conducted using data from these information systems, our methodology for testing them, and the conclusions we reached as to the reliability of the data. Although these determinations may affect the precision of the numbers we present, there is sufficient evidence in total to support our audit findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Table 2
Methods Used to Assess Data Reliability

INFORMATION SYSTEM	PURPOSE	METHOD AND RESULT	CONCLUSION
California Department of Social Services (Social Services) Child Welfare Services/ Case Management System (statewide case management system) Child welfare services case file data for the period of January 2012 through December 2014.	To determine the number of cases with joint assessment hearings that occurred between January 2012 and December 2014.	We performed data-set verification procedures and did not identify any issues. We reviewed existing information to determine what is already known about the data, and found that prior audit results indicate there are pervasive weaknesses in Social Services' general controls.	Not sufficiently reliable for the purpose of this audit. Although these determinations may affect the precision of the numbers we present, there is sufficient evidence in total to support our audit findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
Alameda County Probation Department 241.1 database Joint assessment hearing data for the period of January 2012 through December 2014.	To make a selection of 30 youth who had joint assessment hearings at which the court terminated the youth's dependency cases and adjudicated them as wards of the court.	The purpose for which we used the data did not require a data reliability assessment. However, we attempted to validate the completeness of the universe from which we made our selection of youth. We performed data-set verification procedures and did not identify any issues. To verify the completeness of Alameda County's joint assessment hearing data, we attempted to reconcile the total number of hearings reported in its 241.1 database to those recorded in Social Services' statewide case management system. We determined that the two data systems could not be materially reconciled. In addition, we reviewed the date and hearing results for a random selection of 29 youth's joint assessment hearings. We determined that Alameda County inaccurately recorded the hearing dates for two youth, and it did not record the hearing results for any of the 29 youth we reviewed.	Not complete for the purpose of this audit. Because no other source of this data exists, we made our selection of youth from this data system.

INFORMATION SYSTEM	PURPOSE	METHOD AND RESULT	CONCLUSION
<p>Kern County Probation Department Criminal Justice Information System Joint assessment hearing data for the period of January 2012 through December 2014.</p>	<p>To make a selection of 30 youth who had joint assessment hearings at which the court terminated the youth's dependency cases and adjudicated them as wards of the court.</p>	<p>The purpose for which we used the data did not require a data reliability assessment. However, we attempted to validate the completeness of the universe from which we made our selection of youth.</p> <p>We performed data-set verification procedures and did not identify any issues. To verify the completeness of Kern County's joint assessment hearing data, we attempted to reconcile the total number of hearings reported in its Criminal Justice Information System to those recorded in Social Services' statewide case management system. We determined that the two data systems could not be materially reconciled. In addition, we determined that the county did not use the system to record the hearing results for any of the youth. Although the county manually compiled the hearing results of these youth, our review of a random selection of 29 youth's joint assessment hearings revealed that the county inaccurately recorded the hearing results for one of the youth. In addition, we found five crossover youth were missing from Kern County's list of joint assessment hearings. For example, in one case, Kern County did not include a youth who had a joint assessment hearing and was declared a ward of the court.</p>	<p>Not complete for the purpose of this audit.</p> <p>Because no other source of this data exists, we made our selection of youth from this data system.</p>
<p>Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services 241.1 Web Application Joint assessment hearing data for the period of January 2012 through December 2014.</p>	<p>To make a selection of 30 youth who had joint assessment hearings at which the court adjudicated them as dual status youth.</p>	<p>The purpose for which we used the data did not require a data reliability assessment. However, we attempted to validate the completeness of the universe from which we made our selection of youth.</p> <p>We performed data-set verification procedures and did not identify any issues. To verify the completeness of Los Angeles County's joint assessment hearing data, we attempted to reconcile the total number of hearings reported in its 241.1 Web Application to those recorded in Social Services' statewide case management system. We determined that the two data systems could not be materially reconciled. In addition, we reviewed the date and hearing results for a random selection of 29 youth's joint assessment hearings. We determined that Los Angeles County inaccurately recorded the hearing dates or results for six of the 29 youth we reviewed.</p>	<p>Not complete for the purpose of this audit.</p> <p>Because no other source of this data exists, we made our selection of youth from this data system.</p>
<p>Riverside County Probation Department Juvenile and Adult Management System Joint assessment hearing data for the period of January 2012 through December 2014.</p>	<p>To make a selection of 30 youth who had joint assessment hearings at which the court adjudicated them as dual status youth.</p>	<p>The purpose for which we used the data did not require a data reliability assessment. However, we attempted to validate the completeness of the universe from which we made our selection of youth.</p> <p>We performed data-set verification procedures and did not identify any issues. To verify the completeness of Riverside County's joint assessment hearing data, we attempted to reconcile the total number of hearings reported in its Juvenile and Adult Management System to those recorded in Social Services' statewide case management system. We determined that the two data systems could not be materially reconciled. In addition, we asked Riverside County's child welfare services (CWS) agency to verify the probation department's list of unique youth who became dual status during our audit period against its own records after we found a number of errors in probation's list. This process reduced the probation department's list from 212 to 115 unique youth. Moreover, we reviewed the date and hearing results for select youth in the resulting list and found that Riverside County had inaccurately recorded the dates for five of the dual status youth's joint assessment hearings.</p>	<p>Not complete for the purpose of this audit.</p> <p>Because no other source of this data exists, we made our selection of youth from this data system.</p>

INFORMATION SYSTEM	PURPOSE	METHOD AND RESULT	CONCLUSION
Sacramento County Probation Department Person Information Program Joint assessment hearing data for the period of January 2012 through December 2014.	To make a selection of 30 youth who had joint assessment hearings at which the court terminated the youth's dependency cases and adjudicated them as wards of the court.	<p>The purpose for which we used the data did not require a data reliability assessment. However, we attempted to validate the completeness of the universe from which we made our selection of youth.</p> <p>To verify the completeness of Sacramento County's joint assessment hearing data, we attempted to reconcile the total number of hearings reported in its Person Information Program to those recorded in Social Services' statewide case management system. However, Sacramento County was unable to identify the number of joint assessment hearings that occurred during our audit period because its CWS and probation agencies' data systems do not actively track this information. As a result, Sacramento County's CWS and probation staff had to rely on a list of potential crossover youth obtained from Social Services' statewide case management system and manually review case files within its Person Information Program to identify which youth had actually crossed over. The county ultimately identified 64 crossover youths whose dependency cases were closed during our audit period.</p>	<p>Not complete for the purpose of this audit.</p> <p>Because no other source of this data exists, we made our selection of youth from this population.</p>
Santa Clara County Dually Involved Youth Unit 241.1 liaison's spreadsheet Joint assessment hearing data for the period of January 2012 through December 2014.	To make a selection of 30 youth who had joint assessment hearings at which the court adjudicated them as dual status youth.	<p>The purpose for which we used the data did not require a data reliability assessment. However, we attempted to validate the completeness of the universe from which we made our selection of youth.</p> <p>We performed data-set verification procedures and did not identify any issues. To verify the completeness of Santa Clara County's joint assessment hearing data, we attempted to reconcile the total number of hearings reported in its 241.1 liaison's spreadsheet to those recorded in Social Services' statewide case management system. We determined that the two data systems could not be materially reconciled. In addition, we compared the date and hearing results for a random selection of 29 youth's joint assessment hearings from the 241.1 liaison's spreadsheet with the county's records and found that the county inaccurately recorded the hearing date for one of the youth.</p>	<p>We were unable to determine whether the universe from which we made our selection was complete.</p> <p>Because no other source of this data exists, we made our selection of youth from this population.</p>

Sources: California State Auditor's analysis of various documents, interviews, and data obtained from the California Department of Social Services and the counties of Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, and Santa Clara.

Audit Results

A Lack of State Guidance Has Limited the State's and Counties' Ability to Assess the Outcomes of Dually Involved Youth

Since the initial implementation of dual status protocols in 2005, state-level agencies have provided limited guidance to county agencies regarding youth who are involved in both the child welfare system and juvenile justice system (dually involved youth) because state law does not require them to do so. As a result, counties have used their own discretion in determining the degree to which they track the population and outcomes of these youth. For example, the three dual status counties—Los Angeles, Riverside, and Santa Clara—and three nondual status counties—Alameda, Kern, and Sacramento—we reviewed have not generally monitored outcomes to assess the effectiveness of their efforts on behalf of this population because they are not required to do so. In addition, most of the counties had significant problems identifying their population of dually involved youth when we asked them to provide such a list. This inability prevents the State and counties from effectively monitoring the outcomes of these youth. Despite these issues, four of the counties we visited have taken additional steps directly aimed at improving their programs that serve dually involved youth.

The State Provides Counties With Limited Guidance and Resources for Tracking and Comparing the Outcomes of Dually Involved Youth

Although the California Department of Social Services (Social Services) interacts to some extent with county child welfare services (CWS) and probation agencies on issues related to the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, it has provided them limited guidance specific to dually involved youth. The ability of Social Services to oversee the counties' efforts is limited because dually involved youth are served by multiple systems and it has not been given the responsibility of overseeing the county agencies' efforts to serve these youth. Although Social Services oversees county CWS agencies, it does not have the authority to require county probation agencies to collect data related to dually involved youth.

Similarly, state law initially required the Judicial Council of California (Judicial Council), which is responsible for creating rules of court that litigants in juvenile court must follow, to collect data and prepare an evaluation of the counties' implementation of dual status protocols. However, this data collection requirement applied to only the two years following the State's first dual status case in 2005. The Judicial Council completed its evaluation and published its findings in a 2007 report. Counties are no longer

required to submit their protocols to the Judicial Council, and the Judicial Council is no longer required to review them. Thus, the Judicial Council is no longer required to assess whether counties have appropriately addressed the need for data collection within their dual status protocols. However, the Judicial Council established, by rule of court, a Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee that makes recommendations for improving the administration of justice in all cases involving marriage, family, or children, including issues affecting dually involved youth. Therefore, we believe that the Judicial Council is best positioned for facilitating discussions between state and county-level stakeholders.

Nevertheless, the Judicial Council voluntarily provides counties with assistance, even though it is not legally required to do so and does not receive any funding for such efforts. According to a supervising attorney at the Judicial Council, the Judicial Council has provided case-by-case assistance to counties who were thinking about developing dual status protocols. For example, until 2010, the Judicial Council led regular conference calls to address questions that counties had about developing or implementing dual status protocols. The supervising attorney stated, however, that the Judicial Council discontinued the conference calls because of staffing issues and a lack of interest from local courts and justice partners. Additionally, in 2014 the Judicial Council worked with Santa Clara County when it was considering transitioning from an on-hold dual status model to a lead-agency dual status model. The Judicial Council provides assistance only to those counties that actively seek its support, thus some counties may be unaware of this resource.

Because the State has not defined key terms or established outcomes to track related to dually involved youth, it cannot monitor the outcomes for this population statewide. Specifically, the counties we visited had varying definitions for *recidivism* and *reunification*.² This prevents the State from being able to compare outcomes in these areas across counties. The six counties we visited have different definitions for recidivism based on the period when the subsequent offense occurs, as well as the severity of the offense. For example, county definitions of the recidivism period include the youth's probationary period, the six-month period following the youth's disposition, and the three-year period following the youth's first entry into probation. Further, county definitions of recidivism

² We also noted that the counties we visited define *crossover youth* and *dually involved youth* differently. For example, Los Angeles County defines crossover youth as any youth who has experienced maltreatment and engaged in delinquency. Thus, this definition would encompass all youth who are in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, even if they are not declared wards of the court. In contrast, Riverside defines them as youth with open dependency cases who are declared wards of the court at joint assessment hearings.

events differ; some count new sustained violations of probation while others count only new citations and arrests. In July 2011, the Chief Probation Officers of California—a professional association—adopted a universal definition of recidivism as a subsequent criminal adjudication/conviction while on probation supervision. However, our review found that not all of the counties used this definition. Until the State establishes standard definitions, the outcomes counties decide to track are not likely to be comparable.

Social Services provided counties with some guidance pertaining to dually involved youth in 2006, when it last published an All County Information Notice (information notice) regarding dual status protocols. That information notice provided CWS and probation agencies guidance on funding eligibility and programmatic issues, and it noted the need for system upgrades, but it did not provide guidance about how to track data for dually involved youth in the State’s Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (statewide case management system). The information notice stated that Social Services would improve the statewide case management system to address limitations and that it would provide instructions at a later date on documenting dual status cases. Although Social Services updated the system in 2010 to allow probation agencies to access the statewide case management system, it never provided instructions on documenting dual status cases. According to a policy analyst in Social Services’ Concurrent Planning Policy Unit, Social Services did not follow up on this matter because it encountered unforeseen technological issues after the information notice was issued. Nevertheless, Social Services could have improved the statewide case management system to identify and track specific child welfare information, such as youth who are declared dual status.

Various national best practice models suggest that agencies start by designing and implementing uniform data collection and reporting systems, identifying their population of dually involved youth, and then beginning to track certain attributes and outcomes, which we present in the text box. Social Services is able to create special project codes within the statewide case management system that are designed to identify and track specific child welfare information. Nevertheless, it has not developed project codes that are specific to dually involved youth, even though establishing such codes within the statewide case management system would provide a readily available mechanism for the State and counties to identify the population of dually involved youth.

Best Practice Models Advocate Tracking the Following Information on Dually Involved Youth

- The number and percentage of youth who become dually involved
- The circumstances in which youth become dually involved
- Demographic information
- Information related to youths’
 - Delinquent activities, including number of arrests and rates of recidivism
 - Placements
 - History of maltreatment

Sources: Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform’s Crossover Youth Practice Model and Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps’ Models for Change program.

According to Social Services' Permanency Policy Bureau Chief (bureau chief), Social Services can create and implement optional or mandatory special project codes statewide. However, the bureau chief told us that for Social Services to implement special project codes that are mandatory for the counties to use, the State must sanction the change through statute, and reimburse counties for any resulting increase in mandated county workload. Social Services also stated that it is in the process of creating a new statewide case management system incrementally over the next five years. A manager on the project to replace the legacy system stated that the new system could allow counties to track dually involved youth, most likely without the use of special project codes. He said that the Legislature would still need to sanction a requirement for counties to record data on dually involved youth and that this would involve reimbursement of county costs. He expects that a module capable of identifying and tracking dually involved youth will be phased in by the end of fiscal year 2019–20. Nevertheless, because county staff already use the statewide case management system to manage certain aspects of their cases, we do not believe implementing this change would result in a significant additional cost.

Further exacerbating these problems is the fact that the counties' data systems lack a common identifier, such as a social security number, which could be used to reconcile data that CWS and probation agencies record or to link information on youth who transfer between counties. According to Sacramento County probation's senior information technology analyst, probation officers are not required to obtain a youth's social security number, so this information is not always recorded. She further explained that probation officers encounter many youth who do not know their social security number, refuse to provide it, or may not even have one. As a result, county staff may try to rely on other information to identify youth across agencies, even though these data may be prone to error. Because CWS and probation agencies statewide are unable to reconcile their data systems, they cannot accurately identify their population of dually involved youth or readily track this population's outcomes.

Because CWS and probation agencies statewide are unable to reconcile their data systems, they cannot accurately identify their population of dually involved youth or readily track this population's outcomes.

The State and Counties Cannot Track Outcomes Specific to Dually Involved Youth

The State has not identified key outcomes for dually involved youth, so most of the counties we visited have not tracked outcomes or established baselines to assess the effectiveness of their efforts related to this population. Although the counties report certain outcomes to receive federal funding, the counties typically track these outcomes for their entire population of dependents or wards. In general, county CWS and probation agencies reported that

they track outcomes related to child safety, permanency, reduced out-of-home care, juvenile justice involvement and child well-being. These outcomes, however, relate to the counties' entire populations of youth who require CWS or probation services and are not tracked separately for dually involved youth. Similarly, Sacramento County's probation agency tracks outcomes related to recidivism for its entire population of youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system, but does not separately track this information for dually involved youth. As a result, the tracked outcomes for probation may include youth who never had a dependency case. Moreover, Sacramento County's probation agency uses a definition of recidivism that is different from other counties' probation agencies, as previously mentioned. Thus, counties must be able to identify their population of dually involved youth and use standardized definitions before they can use these tracked outcomes to assess the effectiveness of their efforts in serving this population.

Most of the six counties we reviewed also could not accurately identify those youth who have had their dependency cases terminated after being adjudicated wards of the court (crossover youth) or those youth who have been adjudicated as both dependents and wards of the court (dual status youth). Specifically, we found that five counties could not accurately or completely identify the dates or results of joint assessment hearings, at which judges determine whether to place dually involved youth within the jurisdiction of the county welfare or juvenile justice system. Without this information, the counties cannot identify their population of dually involved youth, and the State cannot determine whether dual status counties subject dependents of the court to the juvenile justice system less frequently than nondual status counties. Although Social Services provides text fields in which counties' CWS staff can track the results of joint assessment hearings within its statewide case management system, counties are not required to enter hearing information into these fields. All the counties we reviewed used these fields to some extent; however, their entries were often inconsistent or incomplete. As a result, most of the counties we reviewed had to rely on their own data systems, instead of the statewide case management system, to identify their crossover or dual status youth when we asked them for this information. Disparities between the State's and counties' records of joint assessment hearings, as shown in Table 3 on the following page, underscore a statewide problem in reliably identifying this population.

Table 3
Comparison of State and County Reported Data for 2012 Through 2014

COUNTY	CHILD WELFARE SERVICES / CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (STATEWIDE CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM)	COUNTY DATABASES
	NUMBER OF CASES WITH JOINT ASSESSMENT HEARINGS	NUMBER OF CASES WITH JOINT ASSESSMENT HEARINGS
Nondual Status		
Alameda	187	145
Kern	11	111
Sacramento	49	Not Available*
Dual Status		
Los Angeles	1,829	2,450
Riverside	256	212
Santa Clara	133	257

Sources: California Department of Social Services' statewide case management system and various databases used by the counties of Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, and Santa Clara.

Note: In general, these data systems were not complete for the purposes of this audit. For additional detail, see Table 2, Methods Used to Assess Data Reliability, beginning on page 16.

* Sacramento County's probation agency could not create a list of joint assessment hearings that occurred between January 2012 and December 2014 because it does not track sufficient information related to these hearings.

We noted that the counties of Alameda, Kern, and Sacramento could not accurately determine the total number of cases with joint assessment hearings or the results of those hearings because they did not always track this information. As a result, these three counties could not accurately identify their population of crossover youth and dual status youth. We identified errors in the counties' lists, in which Alameda identified 48, Kern County identified 73, and Sacramento identified 57 crossover youth who were adjudicated between January 2012 and December 2014. Although the counties of Los Angeles and Riverside had data systems that contain the dates and results of joint assessment hearings, we noted that these data systems also had inaccurate or incomplete information, thus preventing them from identifying their entire population of dually involved youth. According to the lists they provided, Los Angeles identified 793 and Riverside identified 115 dual status youth who were adjudicated between January 2012 and December 2014. The actual population of these youth is unknown because the counties are not required to maintain accurate and complete data on the outcome of joint assessment hearings. As a result, any observations on how frequently the hearings result in youth's formal involvement with the juvenile system might be reflective of errors, rather than differences in the counties' processes. Thus, the State cannot perform a robust comparison between the population of dually involved youth in dual status and nondual status counties.

Of the six counties we reviewed, Santa Clara was the only county that did not miscategorize the dually involved youth we tested. This happened because Santa Clara County has established its own system for logging all joint assessment hearings and the results of those hearings. Of the 257 joint assessment hearings recorded, 16 hearings resulted in the youth being declared dual status youth. According to Santa Clara's dually involved youth liaison, the county relies upon its own system more often than the statewide case management system because its own system is more readily available, contains more detailed court hearing data, and has additional functionality. For example, Santa Clara's system tracks notes that the dually involved youth liaison takes during each hearing, and allows staff to cross reference data and identify specific data trends. Nevertheless, Santa Clara County did not begin tracking outcomes for this population until July 2014.

The counties we visited explained that tracking certain outcomes for dually involved youth was difficult due to the nature of the cases. For example, none of the six counties we visited track high school graduation rates for their entire population of dually involved youth. According to Sacramento County probation's human services program planner, the county's probation agency does not have complete graduation data in its system, and the County Office of Education may not have information on youth who transfer to private schools and out-of-state schools that are not part of the statewide student database. In addition, Kern County's probation division director stated that once a youth's probation case is terminated, the agency no longer has the authority to track information related to that youth. Because the counties are not always able to track graduation information for their dually involved youth, they cannot determine whether they successfully met this critical educational goal.

Moreover, the State cannot compare some outcomes across counties because counties do not use the statewide case management system consistently. For example, we noted that probation officers in two counties recorded inaccurate data within the statewide case management system during our audit period. Specifically, probation officers in Alameda and Sacramento counties recorded in the statewide case management system that family reunification was the case plan goal for several youth; however, court records, which contain the actual case plan goal, indicated that the counties were not actually working towards reunifying these youth. Instead, the court had set different goals for these youth, such as emancipation or permanent placement. According to the division chief of Sacramento County's probation agency, the agency has trained its clerical staff to select family reunification as the case plan goal when initially inputting youth's information into the statewide case management system, even though the actual

The State cannot compare some outcomes across counties because counties do not use the statewide case management system consistently.

case plan may end up with a different goal. Similarly, Alameda County's probation division director explained that its court clerks input family reunification as the case plan goal when its court orders a youth to out-of-home placement. Further, Alameda's placement unit supervisor stated that the delinquency court judge does not order family reunification specifically. She explained that when the judge orders out-of-home placement, the probation officers will automatically look for family members with whom to reunify the youth as a first option. Although the State's primary goal is to reunify a youth with his or her family, when appropriate, it is essential for county staff to accurately record and update the youth's case plan goal in the statewide case management system so that information on goals and outcomes can be compared across counties.

Some Counties Have Recently Taken Steps to Improve Their Processes for Serving Dually Involved Youth

Despite limited state guidance, the counties of Alameda, Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Santa Clara are taking steps to monitor outcomes for dually involved youth.

Despite limited state guidance, four of the counties we visited are in the process of implementing best practice models, which emphasize using data to make policy and practice decisions and providing additional training to staff. The counties of Alameda, Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Santa Clara are taking steps to monitor outcomes for dually involved youth. For example, in 2013 Los Angeles began tracking some information for its dually involved youth, such as mental health and substance abuse services received, new arrests, and educational status. Nevertheless, so far Los Angeles has tracked outcomes only for a subset of its dually involved youth as part of its research collaboration with California State University, Los Angeles. For example, Los Angeles County tracked the arrests of 11 dual status youth, which represents roughly 1 percent of the county's estimated population of dual status youth. However, this effort is a first step in providing the county's executive management with the information necessary to monitor the effectiveness of its efforts to serve these youth.

The other three counties have made less progress than Los Angeles County because they have only recently started implementing the data tracking aspect of the best practice models. For example, Santa Clara began its data tracking efforts in 2014. Its current efforts monitor type of placement, mental health and substance abuse services received, and arrests and sustained petitions, among other outcomes. Additionally, rather than tracking the outcomes only for yes or no type questions, Santa Clara's database is designed to measure incremental changes. For example, instead of tracking whether or not the youth was enrolled in school, the desired measure tracks the number of eligible school days in the last semester compared to the number of days the youth attended.

However this monitoring is limited to youth assigned to the county's dually involved youth unit—a relatively small portion of its total dually involved youth population. The counties of Alameda and Sacramento have started implementing best practice models more recently than Santa Clara, and as a result, they are only in the initial planning stages of identifying the data they would like to monitor. According to the assistant director of Alameda's CWS agency, data tracking will be discussed as part of its implementation efforts for the Georgetown University Crossover Youth Practice Model in the coming year. Similarly, Sacramento County's human services program planner stated that the county's CWS and probation agencies formed a committee in April 2015 with representatives from the Sacramento County Office of Education and Sacramento County's Behavioral Health Services. She explained that the committee is working to create a system that will integrate and provide reports on data from all four agencies' data systems.

Even though some counties did not implement best practice models, all of the counties we visited provided training to their CWS and probation staff related to dually involved youth. Specifically, all of the counties provided training either on the joint assessment process or on county-specific procedures for capturing data related to dually involved youth. In addition, we noted that all three dual status counties and two of the nondual status counties we visited provided cross-training between their CWS and probation staff on topics related to dually involved youth. Although Kern County, the third nondual status county, did not provide such specific cross-training for dually involved youth, the assistant director of Kern County's CWS agency stated that CWS staff have provided training to probation staff on topics related to placement services.

The Model That Counties Chose to Use in Serving Dually Involved Youth Did Not Appear to Greatly Affect the Outcomes and Services for This Population

Although the counties we visited did little to monitor the outcomes for dually involved youth, our review of 166 case files from across the counties indicated that dual status youth in dual status counties performed somewhat better than crossover youth in nondual status counties for some outcomes, while nondual status counties performed equally well for others. The Joint Legislative Audit Committee directed us to compare certain outcomes for dually involved youth, as described in the Scope and Methodology. Based on our review, we noted that on average the dual status counties had shorter lengths of juvenile justice involvement, fewer arrests, and a lower recidivism rate than nondual status counties. However, both dual and nondual status counties had similar average numbers

Even though some counties did not implement best practice models, all of the counties we visited provided training to their CWS and probation staff related to dually involved youth.

of out-of-home placements after a youth's joint assessment hearing. Furthermore, all six of the counties we visited provided a variety of services to dually involved youth, including mental health, substance abuse, youth development, and education services. Our review revealed that these youth typically received a significantly higher number of services after they became wards of the court in both dual status and nondual status counties. However, we also found that youth in dual status counties received more continuity of services from social workers than youth in nondual status counties because nondual status counties must close the youth's dependency case when they become wards of the court, whereas dual status counties may keep those dependency cases open.

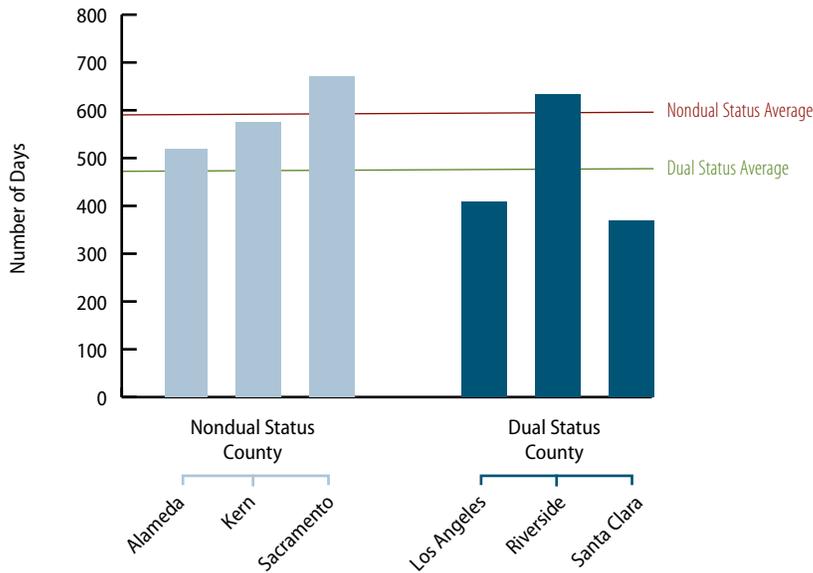
Dual Status Youth Appeared to Have Less Involvement with the Juvenile Justice System Than Crossover Youth

Our review of 166 case files indicated that youth in the dual status counties we visited had more successful outcomes on average related to juvenile justice than youth in nondual status counties. Best practice models define successful outcomes for juvenile justice as including a reduction in the length of juvenile justice involvement and a decline in delinquent behavior. Specifically, the Sierra Health Foundation's Positive Youth Justice Initiative states that repeat delinquent behavior has negative long-term effects for dually involved youth. We measured juvenile justice involvement from the date youth were declared wards of the court to the date their probation ended. We also reviewed the number of arrests and the recidivism rate for our selection in the six counties. Using these three outcomes, dual status counties appeared to perform better in the area of juvenile justice involvement.

As shown in Figure 2, youth at the dual status counties we visited spent fewer days in the juvenile justice system than youth at nondual status counties. On average, dual status youth spent roughly 470 days in the juvenile justice system, whereas crossover youth in nondual status counties spent roughly 590 days in the juvenile justice system. With certain exceptions, until a youth turns 21, the court decides whether he or she remains in the juvenile justice system. Therefore, it is ultimately up to the discretion of the judges within each county to decide when to terminate a probation case.

On average, dual status youth spent roughly 470 days in the juvenile justice system, whereas crossover youth in nondual status counties spent roughly 590 days in the juvenile justice system.

Figure 2
Average Length of Juvenile Justice Involvement in Days

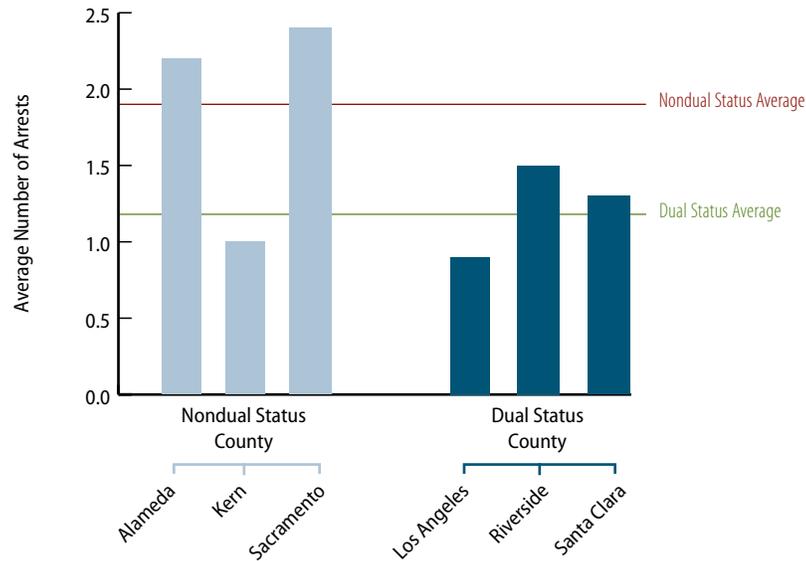


Sources: California State Auditor’s review of case files at Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, and Santa Clara counties for selected dually involved youth.

Note: Calculated as the number of days from the date that youth was adjudicated a ward of the court to the earlier of the date the court terminated the youth’s probation case or June 30, 2015.

The shorter length of juvenile justice involvement we observed in dual status counties may be a reflection of the lower arrest rate of dual status youth we observed compared to crossover youth. Specifically, our review of 76 cases at dual status counties revealed that 46 youth, or 61 percent, were arrested at least once after becoming wards of the court. In contrast, of the 90 crossover cases we reviewed at nondual status counties, 62 youth, or 69 percent, were arrested at some point after becoming wards of the court. As indicated in Figure 3 on the following page, the youth in dual status counties were arrested an average of 1.2 times, while youth in nondual status counties were arrested an average of 1.9 times. We found that Los Angeles County had the lowest average number of arrests, while Sacramento County had the highest average number. According to Sacramento probation’s division chief, youth who cross over from dependency into delinquency tend to commit multiple crimes and, in most cases, have multiple contacts with the county before crossing over. In addition, he explained that Sacramento follows a restorative justice philosophy of ensuring that the victim of a crime is made whole. As such, a youth on probation who has completed all court-ordered services but has not fully paid court-ordered restitution will remain on probation until restitution is paid, thus increasing the length of juvenile justice involvement.

Figure 3
Average Number of Arrests After Joint Assessment Hearing



Sources: California State Auditor's review of case files at Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, and Santa Clara counties for selected dually involved youth.

Although the number of arrests may affect recidivism rates, we noted a narrower gap in recidivism-related rates between dual status and nondual status counties. Of the six counties we visited, three had at least 50 percent of their youth recidivate. As described in the Introduction, after an officer cites or arrests a youth, the district attorney determines whether to file a petition, sending the case to court for a judge to review and determine whether to sustain the petition. We defined *recidivism* as including only youth who received sustained petitions while they were wards of the court through the end of probation.³ As shown in Table 4, one dual status county, Santa Clara, and two nondual status counties, Alameda and Sacramento, had at least a 50 percent recidivism rate for the cases we tested.

Los Angeles County had the lowest recidivism rate of the counties we tested. As Table 4 shows, only 30 percent of the youth we tested in Los Angeles County recidivated within our audit period. According to Los Angeles County probation's director of the Northeast Juvenile Justice Center, drawing conclusions to a specific cause is very difficult; however, he believes that a combination of factors may contribute to the lower rate of recidivism. These

³ The Chief Probation Officers of California adopted a similar definition of recidivism in 2011. Specifically, they define *recidivism* as a subsequent criminal adjudication/conviction while on probation supervision.

factors include, but are not limited to, the following: the increase in diversion programs; the increase in community based services; the increase in aftercare services and targeted interventions based on risk and need. According to the placement unit supervisor at Kern County, the placement unit has put considerable effort into identifying youth’s specific needs, and it has trained the group homes it uses to address those specific needs. He stated that since the group homes provide youth with services specific to these needs, it reduces their risk of recidivating.

Table 4
Recidivism Rate and Average Number of Sustained Petitions

COUNTY	PERCENT OF YOUTH WHO RECIDIVATED	AVERAGE NUMBER OF SUSTAINED PETITIONS PER YOUTH
Nondual Status		
Alameda	53%	1.0
Kern	40%	0.7
Sacramento	50%	0.8
Dual Status		
Los Angeles	30%	0.4
Riverside	47%	0.9
Santa Clara	50%	1.1
Total for Nondual Status	48%	0.8
Total for Dual Status	42%	0.8

Sources: California State Auditor’s review of case files at Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, and Santa Clara counties for selected dually involved youth.

The Rates and Types of Out-of-Home Placement for Dually Involved Youth Appear to Be Similar in Dual and Nondual Status Counties

Youth in both dual and nondual status counties had a similar average annual number of out-of-home placements after their joint assessment hearings. Out-of-home placements include living arrangements such as foster homes, group homes, or relatives’ homes. Specifically, we found that youth were placed an average of 1.9 times per year after their joint assessment hearings in nondual status counties and 2.1 times per year in dual status counties. As mentioned in the Introduction, both CWS and probation agencies have a responsibility to provide youth with safe placements when they cannot safely live at home. In nondual status counties, once youth cross over to probation’s jurisdiction, probation officers identify the placements for the youth while they serve their time on probation. Probation officers have the option of placing youth in foster homes, relatives’ homes, group homes, or more restrictive

in-custody placements such as ranches, camps, or Department of Juvenile Justice facilities. For all six of the counties we visited, youth were most often placed in group homes for at least part of their probation. Of the youth we reviewed in nondual status counties, 81 percent were placed in group homes at some point after their joint assessment hearings, compared to 57 percent of the youth we reviewed in dual status counties. In nondual status counties, no other placement type exceeded 12 percent, while in dual status counties the next most common placement types that youth experienced were in-custody placements, such as ranches and camps, at 25 percent, and foster homes, at 20 percent.

The Number and Continuity of Services Appear to Be Similar in Dual Status and Nondual Status Counties

Services Counties Offer to Dually Involved Youth May Include:

Mental Health Services

- Counseling, psychological testing, therapy

Substance Abuse Services

- Counseling, drug testing, support groups

Youth Development Intervention Services

- Anger management, gang prevention, independent living

Education Services

- Attendance monitoring, individualized education plans

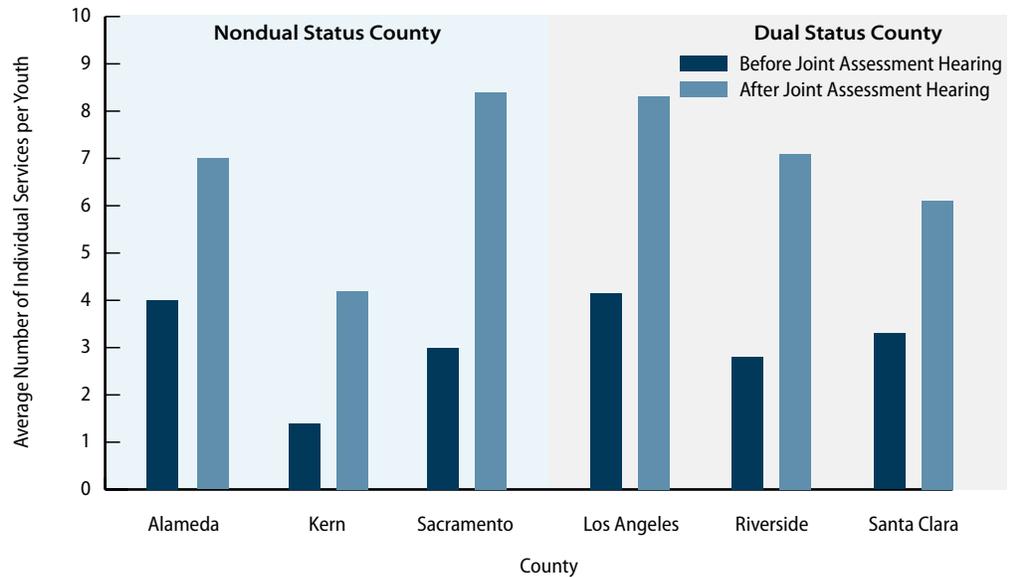
Sources: Minute orders, court reports, and case plans in the counties of Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, and Santa Clara.

Youth typically received more services after they became wards of the court in both the dual status and nondual status counties we reviewed. As the text box illustrates, counties provided a variety of services to dependents and wards. State regulations require that before youth cross over, their social workers determine what services they need, include these services in case plans, and record what services the youth actually receive in case plan updates. After the court adjudicates dependent youth as wards of the court, probation officers reassess the services these youth need. Probation officers must create case plans that include the services to be provided. We reviewed case plans, case notes, status review reports, and other court reports to determine the number of mental health, substance abuse, youth development intervention, or educational services (services) counties provided before and after adjudication.

As shown in Figure 4, the average number of services that counties provided to youth increased after joint assessment hearings in both dual status and nondual status counties. For example, Sacramento County youth received on average 3.0 services before their joint assessment hearings and 8.4 services afterward. According to Sacramento's assistant chief probation officer, when a youth crosses over from dependency to delinquency, the focus of the system shifts. Specifically, the reason youth are involved in dependency relates to the actions of their parents, but when these same youth cross over to delinquency, it is because of actions of the youth themselves. Therefore, the system shifts its focus to the youth's behavior and how to best

work with them. Dual status youth at Riverside County also had a significant increase in services, from 2.8 services on average before their joint assessment hearings to 7.1 services afterward. According to Riverside County’s supervising probation officer, youth who solely have a dependency or delinquency matter would receive a finite number of services from a singular agency. When they have an emergent issue that requires the attention of a second agency—usually leading to a dual status designation—the case merits increased services. Finally, similar to youth in other counties, youth in Kern County—despite having the lowest average number of services—saw the highest percent increase in services after their joint assessment hearings.

Figure 4
Average Number of Individual Services per Youth Before and After Joint Assessment Hearing



Sources: California State Auditor’s review of case files at Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, and Santa Clara counties for selected dually involved youth.

Furthermore, youth tended to receive additional types of services after their joint assessment hearings, regardless of whether they lived in a dual status or nondual status county. Table 5 on the following page shows the number of dually involved youth in each county who received at least one service in one of four categories. At Riverside County, for example, 23 youth received mental health services before their joint assessment while 30 youth received mental health services afterward, an increase of 30 percent. We saw the biggest increases in substance abuse services and youth development intervention services. At Kern County, for example, only two youth received substance abuse services before their joint

assessment hearing, but 26 youth received substance abuse services after crossing over to probation, an increase of 1,200 percent. Similarly, in Sacramento County, three youth received youth development intervention services before their joint assessment, but 24 youth received youth development intervention services after crossing over to probation, an increase of 700 percent.

Table 5
Number of Youth in Each County Who Were Provided Any Services in the Category,
Before and After Their Joint Assessment Hearings

COUNTY AND NUMBER OF CASES TESTED	MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES			SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES			YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION SERVICES			EDUCATION SERVICES		
	BEFORE	AFTER	PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE	BEFORE	AFTER	PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE	BEFORE	AFTER	PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE	BEFORE	AFTER	PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE
	JOINT ASSESSMENT HEARING	JOINT ASSESSMENT HEARING		JOINT ASSESSMENT HEARING	JOINT ASSESSMENT HEARING		JOINT ASSESSMENT HEARING	JOINT ASSESSMENT HEARING				
Nondual Status Counties												
Alameda—30	23	25	9%	9	20	122%	13	21	62%	18	21	17%
Kern—30	14	26	86%	2	26	1,200%	12	24	100%	3	8	167%
Sacramento—30	24	25	4%	7	19	171%	3	24	700%	20	28	40%
Dual Status Counties												
Los Angeles—30	26	27	4%	13	23	77%	16	28	75%	25	29	16%
Riverside—30	23	30	30%	12	26	117%	11	27	145%	9	16	78%
Santa Clara—16	15	14	(7)%	6	14	133%	7	13	86%	9	9	0%

Sources: California State Auditor's review of case files at Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, and Santa Clara counties for selected dually involved youth.

In addition to more youth receiving more types of services, youth also generally received a greater number of each type of service after their joint assessment. For example, a youth in Riverside County received outpatient substance abuse services before her joint assessment hearing. After her joint assessment hearing, she continued to receive outpatient substance abuse services but also received additional substance abuse services, including drug testing, substance abuse counseling, and substance abuse education. We also noted instances in which counties did not continue providing youth with the services they received before crossing over. We found that, taken together, the six counties discontinued on average 16 percent of the services they had provided to youth before the joint assessment hearings. However, the counties appear to have mitigated these discontinuances with the significant increase in the number and types of services already discussed. For example, one youth in Alameda County received substance abuse education and substance abuse counseling before crossing over, but the county stopped providing him with these services after his joint assessment hearing. Although the youth lost these two services, he gained

several new services, such as behavioral therapy, drug testing, and job training. The counties taken together increased the number of services they provided by 132 percent, on average.

Although youth generally received a significant increase in services, we found there was little continuity of involvement by court appointed special advocate (CASA) volunteers in both dual and nondual status counties mostly because tested youth generally did not have a CASA before becoming involved with probation. As shown in Table 6, continuity of CASA involvement did not exceed 3 percent in any of the counties. Judges appoint CASAs to watch over and advocate for abused and neglected youth, and CASAs typically stay with each case until it is closed and the youth is placed in a safe, permanent home. Our review revealed that only 15 of the 166 youth we tested had a CASA before their joint assessment hearing. A Santa Clara social services program manager explained that, although the CASA program encourages engagement with all dependent youth, younger children tend to receive CASA involvement more often than older youth. Youth whose cases we reviewed were generally in their late teens. Further, the assistant director of Alameda’s CWS agency explained that Alameda County has low availability of CASAs—only about 186 CASA volunteers serve approximately 1,600 dependent youth. She explained that it is hard to get these volunteers because of the time commitment the job requires. Additionally, according to a probation division director at Alameda, CASAs are only used by Alameda’s CWS agency. She explained that delinquency judges are able to appoint CASAs, but typically do not.

Table 6
Percentage of Cases With Continuity of Staff for All Counties

	PERCENTAGE OF CASES WITH CONTINUITY OF SOCIAL WORKER	PERCENTAGE OF CASES WITH CONTINUITY OF ATTORNEY	PERCENTAGE OF CASES WITH CONTINUITY OF ADVOCATE
Nondual Status			
Alameda	NA*	7%	3%
Kern	NA*	40	0
Sacramento	NA*	0	3
Dual Status			
Los Angeles	53%	83	0
Riverside	30	30	0
Santa Clara	13	0	0

Sources: California State Auditor’s review of case files at Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, and Santa Clara counties for selected dually involved youth.

* Nondual status counties we visited close dependency cases when youth are adjudicated wards. Consequently, social workers are not assigned to the youth during their probation, and continuity is not possible.

The probation agencies in nondual status counties tended to increase family reunification services when youth crossed over, while their counterparts in dual status counties tended to decrease these efforts.

A County's Model for Dually Involved Youth Appeared to Affect Family Reunification Services and Continuity of Some Staff

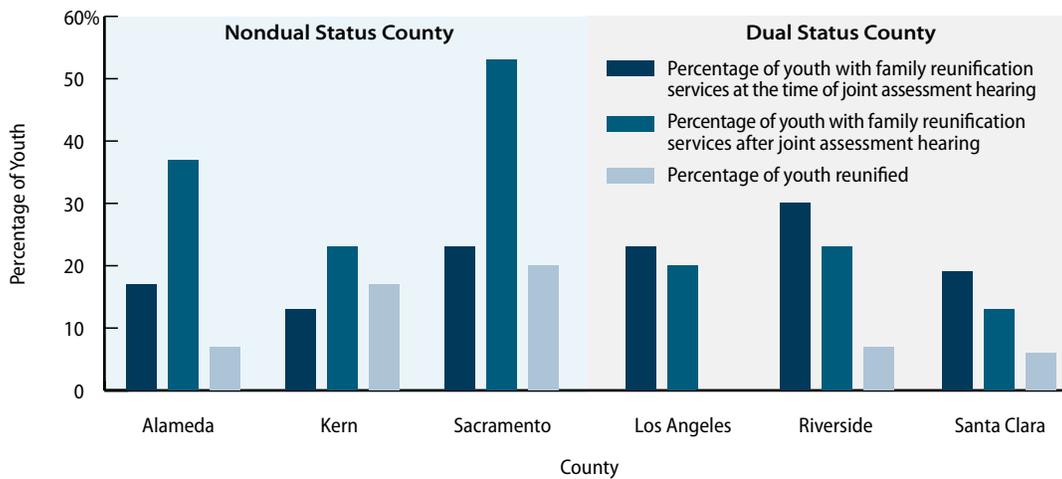
Our review of 166 case files indicated that family reunification services increased after youth became wards of the court in nondual status counties. Across all six counties, most of the youth whose cases we reviewed did not have ongoing orders for family reunification at the time of their joint assessment hearing; however, our review indicated that the probation agencies in nondual status counties tended to increase family reunification services when youth crossed over, while their counterparts in dual status counties tended to decrease these efforts. A potential cause for this difference is that in dual status counties, CWS remains involved and the county may not seek to reopen family reunification services if the dependency court has terminated family reunification services in the past. In contrast, nondual status counties close the CWS case, and in some situations probation may seek family reunification services despite the dependency court's earlier decision to terminate family reunification efforts. For example, in one case we reviewed in Kern County, the CWS agency discontinued a dependent youth's family reunification services in March 2011. In August 2012, at the youth's joint assessment hearing, the court terminated the youth's dependency case and declared her a ward of the court. Probation then reopened family reunification services for the youth and her family. Probation assessed this to be appropriate because the youth's mother was participating in counseling and parenting classes. Probation reunified the youth with her mother in March 2013.

As shown in Figure 5, Sacramento County provided family reunification services to approximately 53 percent of the youth in our selection after their joint assessment hearings. According to the probation division chief for Sacramento County, if families are willing to work with the department and participate in family reunification services, reunification will be the target outcome. He said that once parents have shown a desire to participate, probation makes every attempt to achieve reunification and that only in cases where dependency has terminated parental rights will Sacramento probation not actively pursue reunification. He further stated that frequently cases come to probation from CWS with a case plan goal other than family reunification, but that probation likes to evaluate each case on its own merits and look at the case with fresh eyes.

In contrast, Figure 5 also shows that the percentage of youth in dual status counties who received family reunification services decreased after joint assessment hearings. In dual status counties, CWS agencies may act as the lead agencies for cases that originated in dependency. Because state regulations require social workers to consider family reunification services as a first option when

determining case plan goals, CWS staff may have already pursued and terminated reunification services by the time youth are declared dual status. According to a probation division director at Riverside County, when youth are declared dual status and put into a delinquency placement, probation officers initially work to address the treatment needs of the youth rather than trying to reunify the youth with his or her parents. If the parents have custody rights, probation officers consider family reunification later, after the youth has been receiving services. Despite the varying rates of family reunification services, both dual status and nondual status counties had a low percentage of youth who were actually reunified; only about 10 percent of the 166 cases we reviewed resulted in successful reunification.

Figure 5
Percentage of Youth With Family Reunification Services and Outcomes



Sources: California State Auditor's review of case files at Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, and Santa Clara counties for selected dually involved youth.

In addition, our review revealed that the lead-agency dual status model appears to have stronger continuity of social workers than the on-hold dual status model and the nondual status model. As we show in Table 6 on page 35, only youth in dual status counties were able to retain their social workers after their joint assessment hearings because their dependency cases usually remained active in those counties. Los Angeles and Riverside, both lead-agency dual status model counties, had higher rates of continuity after the joint assessment hearings than Santa Clara, which used the on-hold dual status model for most of the audit period. Of the 16 dual status youth we reviewed in Santa Clara, 13 were on-hold dual status, while the remaining three were lead-agency dual status. Santa Clara—originally an on-hold dual status county—

began declaring youth as lead-agency dual status in August 2014, toward the end of our audit period. Santa Clara only had continuity of social workers for its lead-agency dual status youth. This is consistent with what we expected from the on-hold dual status model because the dependency case is suspended, similar to what occurs in the nondual status counties. Specifically, in nondual status counties, social workers do not continue serving youth after their joint assessment hearings because their dependency cases close at that time.

Further, our review revealed that a county's use of the lead-agency dual status model may affect a youth's continuity of attorney more significantly than a county's on-hold dual status or nondual status model. As we show in Table 6 on page 35, youth in the counties of Kern, Los Angeles, and Riverside had stronger continuity of attorneys than the other counties. The youth whose cases we reviewed in Los Angeles County had an 83 percent rate of attorney continuity before, during, and after their joint assessment hearings. Contrary to what we expected for a nondual status county, Kern had a 40 percent continuity of attorneys. A division director at Kern's probation agency explained that Kern County's public defender's office and indigent defense programs both assign attorneys to the juvenile court, which hears both delinquency and dependency cases. If a dependent youth crosses over to delinquency, the attorney assignment will not change as long as there are no conflicts.

Recommendations

To ensure that county CWS and probation agencies are able to identify their populations of dually involved youth, the Legislature should require Social Services to do the following:

- Implement a function within the statewide case management system that will enable county CWS and probation agencies to identify dually involved youth.
- Issue guidance to the counties on how to use the statewide case management system to track joint assessment hearing information completely and consistently for these youth.

To better understand and serve the dually involved youth population, the Legislature should require the Judicial Council to work with county CWS and probation agencies and state representatives to establish a committee, or to work with an existing committee, to do the following:

- Develop a common identifier counties can use to reconcile data across CWS and probation data systems statewide.
- Develop standardized definitions for terms related to the populations of youth involved in both the CWS and probation systems, such as dually involved, crossover, and dual status youth.
- Identify and define outcomes for counties to track for dually involved youth, such as outcomes related to recidivism and education.
- Establish baselines and goals for those outcomes.
- Share the common identifier, definitions, and outcomes with the Legislature, for their consideration to require counties to utilize and track these elements.

If the State enacts data-related requirements, it should require the Judicial Council's committee to compile and publish county data two years after the start of county data collection requirements.

Alameda County and Sacramento County probation departments should update their existing procedures to ensure that their staff are accurately recording family reunification service components within the statewide case management system.

To identify their population of dually involved youth, CWS and probation agencies within each county should do the following:

- Designate the data system they will use for tracking the dates and results of joint assessment hearings.
- Provide guidance or training to staff on recording joint assessment hearing information consistently within the designated system.

We conducted this audit under the authority vested in the California State Auditor by section 8543 et seq. of the California Government Code and according to generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives specified in the Scope and Methodology section of the report. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Respectfully submitted,



ELAINE M. HOWLE, CPA
State Auditor

Date: February 25, 2016

Staff: Jim Sandberg Larsen, CPA, CPFO, Audit Principal
Sharon Best
Andrew J. Lee
Brianna J. Carlson
Nate Jones, CFE
Aren Knighton, MPA
Erin Satterwhite, MBA
Caroline Julia von Wurden

Legal Counsel: Stephanie Ramirez-Ridgeway, Sr. Staff Counsel

For questions regarding the contents of this report, please contact Margarita Fernández, Chief of Public Affairs, at 916.445.0255.



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

455 Golden Gate Avenue • San Francisco, California 94102-3688
Telephone 415-865-4200 • Fax 415-865-4205 • TDD 415-865-4272

TANI G. CANTIL-SAKAUYE
Chief Justice of California
Chair of the Judicial Council

MARTIN HOSHINO
Administrative Director

February 5, 2016

Ms. Elaine M. Howle
State Auditor
Bureau of State Audits
555 Capitol Mall, Suite 300
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: Dual Status Youth—Audit 2015-115

Dear Ms. Howle:

This letter is in response to your audit report and recommendations concerning the Judicial Council with regard to dual status youth, particularly crossover youth. The findings and recommendations are of interest to the council and the courts, given the council's sponsorship of Assembly Bill 129 (Cohn; Stats. 2004, ch. 468), which first created the option for counties to establish dual jurisdiction over youth with child welfare and delinquency issues to better serve these youth and their families coming to the attention of the court initially through either the child welfare or juvenile justice system.

As your report notes, the Judicial Council was actively involved in providing support to the courts and their county partners as they opted to implement the legislation, and the council collected data and reported to the Legislature in 2007 on the early stages of that implementation.

The council remains interested in ensuring that courts are able to serve these youth, and council staff remain available to provide technical assistance to any court or county seeking to adopt or modify a dual status protocol.

If directed by the Legislature, the council has the expertise and is prepared to work with an existing committee or group to fulfill the recommendations of the audit regarding data collection and definition, provided the Legislature can make available the resources needed to accomplish those tasks.

Ms. Elaine M. Howle
February 5, 2016
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The Judicial Council is experienced at establishing standardized outcome measures and definitions in both juvenile dependency and juvenile delinquency. These projects were undertaken as part of the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care and the Judicial Council's Juvenile Delinquency Court Assessment.¹ Our experience was that this work is valuable but also costly and time-consuming. Both projects utilized the work of consultants and subject matter experts in the courts and counties. This involved original data collection through file review and analysis of case management data. Given the current status of court and probation case management systems, an expert group beginning this work would also want to consider approaches such as probabilistic matching of existing data sets before establishing data collection requirements.

We would also note that while there is a case management system that collects data on a statewide basis for the child welfare system, there is no comparable system for juvenile justice data. The Legislature recently directed the Board of State and Community Corrections to assemble a Juvenile Justice Data Working Group, which submitted its final report and recommendations to the Legislature earlier this year.² That report documents the lack of a statewide system and the resultant problems in measuring recidivism or evaluating different programs and processes in the juvenile justice system. Given these shortcomings we would simply note that it may be difficult for recommendations on dual status data collection to be implemented by a council committee on a timely basis without an effective statewide data system for collecting juvenile justice-related data and outcomes.

We agree that it is critical that California's courts as well as child welfare and juvenile justice county agencies better understand and serve the dually involved youth population. These youth and their families come to the attention of the court initially through either the child welfare or juvenile justice system, and state and local government must strive to serve them and achieve successful outcomes.

Sincerely,



Martin Hoshino
Administrative Director
Judicial Council of California

¹ Judicial Council of Cal., Implementation Guide to Juvenile Dependency Court Performance Measures (Jan. 2009), <http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/Combined-impguide010709.pdf>

Judicial Council of Cal., *Juvenile Delinquency Court Performance Measurement as an Evidence-Based Practice* (Dec. 2012), http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/JD_Performance_asEBP.pdf.

² See *Rebuilding California's Juvenile Justice Data System: Recommendations to Improve Data Collection, Performance Measures and Outcomes for California Youth, Report to the Legislature, January 2016*, <http://www.bscc.ca.gov/downloads/JJDWG%20Report%20FINAL%201-11-16.pdf>.

Ms. Elaine M. Howle
February 5, 2016
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MH/AF/tk

cc: Jody Patel, Chief of Staff, Judicial Council

Millicent Tidwell, Chief Operating Officer, Judicial Council

Diane Nunn, Director, Center for Families, Children & the Courts, Judicial Council

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Kern County Administrative Office



County Administrative Center

1115 Truxtun Avenue, Fifth Floor • Bakersfield, CA 93301-4639
Telephone 661-868-3198 • FAX 661-868-3190 • TTY Relay 800-735-2929

JOHN NILON
County Administrative Officer

February 5, 2016

California State Auditor
Elaine M. Howle
621 Capitol Mall, Suite 1200
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Howle:

Transmitted here within is the response to the California State Auditor's redacted draft report entitled Dually Involved Youth. The response was a collaborative effort with each of the County departments that manage the operations. The County Administrative Office, Department of Human Services, and Probation Department collaborated and are in concurrence with this response.

California State Auditor's Recommendations

To identify their population of dually involved youth, Child Welfare Services (CWS) and probation agencies within each county should do the following:

- Designate the data system they will use for tracking the dates and results of joint assessment hearings.
- Provide guidance or training to staff on recording joint assessment hearing information consistently within the designated system.

Kern County's Response

The California State Auditor's report is substantially correct and the County Probation and Human Services Departments concur that the two recommendations regarding both the tracking of WIC 241.1 Joint Assessments data as well as staff training to ensure this data is properly captured should be addressed. Prior to the audit it was not a practice in Kern County to track WIC 241.1 Joint Assessments and outcomes in any data base. However, since the County was made aware of it during the interview process the County has already implemented changes to rectify this matter. Probation Department staff have been instructed and trained to ensure this information is now entered into the CWS/CMS. Moving forward the County will train new staff and verify this process is continued.

The County appreciates the opportunity to share with the California State Auditor's office information regarding crossover youth in Kern County. Providing the highest level of services possible to this population is of utmost importance. The Department of Human Services and Probation Department have instituted evidence based assessments to create effective individualized case plans and have increased the evidence based treatment County youth receive. However, the County is always eager to make improvements when possible and therefore again express appreciation for your review and input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Nilon for".

John Nilon
County Administrative Officer

JN/KB/DHS Probation Crossover Audit Transmittal

cc: Department of Human Services
Probation

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PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

County of Los Angeles DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

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Fifth District

February 5, 2016

Elaine M. Howle, CPA *
State Auditor
621 Capitol Mall, Suite 1200
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Howle:

This is in response to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee request for "Dually Involved Youth: The State Cannot Determine the Effectiveness of Efforts to Serve Youth Who Are Involved in Both the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems" report.

Los Angeles County agrees with the recommendation of one designated data system to track the dates and results of joint assessment hearings. Regretfully, we do not have such a system and when this system is developed, Los Angeles County Departments of Children and Family Services and Probation, will provide guidance and training to our staff on recording joint assessment hearing information consistently within the designated system.

①

If you have any questions please call me, or your staff may contact Diane Iglesias, Senior Deputy Director, at (213) 351-5711.

Sincerely,

PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

CALVIN REMINGTON
Interim Chief Probation Officer

PLB:DI:RRS:lj

* California State Auditor's comment appears on page 49.

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Comment

CALIFORNIA STATE AUDITOR'S COMMENT ON THE RESPONSE FROM LOS ANGELES COUNTY

To provide clarity and perspective, we are commenting on Los Angeles County's response to our audit. The number below corresponds to the number we have placed in the margin of Los Angeles County's response.

Los Angeles County stated that it does not have a designated data system to track the dates and results of joint assessment hearings, but mentioned the development of one. Therefore, we look forward to the county's 60-day response to learn more about this proposed system and the timeframe for its development and implementation.

①

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February 2016



JAY E. ORR
COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICER

COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

GEORGE A. JOHNSON
CHIEF ASSISTANT COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICER

ROB FIELD
ASSISTANT COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICER
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

MICHAEL T. STOCK
ASSISTANT COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICER
HUMAN RESOURCES

ZAREH SARRAFIAN
ASSISTANT COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICER
HEALTH SYSTEMS

PAUL MCDONNELL
COUNTY FINANCE DIRECTOR

February 4, 2016

Andrew Lee, Team Leader
California State Auditor
621 Capitol Mall, Suite 1200
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Lee,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this review and to respond to the recommendations.

As noted in the report, the Dual Status program was optional for counties to implement. Riverside County' Department of Public Social Services and Probation Department proactively chose to implement this Dual Status option in 2006. The two agencies worked together in consultation with the Juvenile Court to create a protocol, joint court report writing guidelines, and a system for communication to coordinate services unique for this population. Both Probation and DPSS provided training to their respective staff specific to serving Dual Status youth. DPSS and Probation currently have 115 youth designated as Dual Status. This represents about 2% of the 5,838 children in foster care and 5% of 2,092 youth under Probation supervision.

The purpose of the State's 2015 audit/review was to assess whether outcomes for children and families were better as a result of the Dual Status program. We recognize the limitations that the auditors faced in completing this assessment and appreciate their recognition that counties have not received the direction needed nor do we have a system of record where the data can be collected and reported in a consistent manner. Despite these limitations, Riverside County took the initiative to design and implement our own tracking systems to allow us to communicate with one another, and to best support our Dual Status youth and their families.

The review identified the following recommendations for Riverside County, to which we have included responses below.

Recommendation 1: Designate a data system used to track dates and results of joint assessment hearings.

Response: Probation is a dual-entry agency: staff must enter data into the Probation Juvenile and Adult Management System (JAMS) as well as the Child Welfare System/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). The capacity to enter more data into CWS/CMS will improve with coming technical improvements, assisting in Dual Status

**Response to California State Audit
February 4, 2016****Page 2**

tracking within the limitations of the existing application. In the meantime, both agencies will continue to refine current systems to link the youth both agencies serve, in addition to designating a data system used to track dates and results of joint assessment hearings.

Recommendation 2: Provide guidance or training to staff on recording joint assessment hearing information consistently within the designated system.

Response: Both DPSS and Probation currently train new staff on Joint Assessments (Welfare & Institutions Code 241.1) and Dual Status recommendations. A joint training is scheduled for March 2016. DPSS and Probation have identified improvements that will enhance coordination and communication related to the court hearings when a W&IC 241.1 Joint Assessment is ordered. In addition, staff will be trained on recording joint assessment hearing information within a designated system agreed upon by both DPSS and Probation.

Please let us know if there is any additional information needed.

Sincerely,



Mark Hake
Chief Probation Officer



Susan von Zabern
Director, DPSS

Health and Human Services
Sherri Z. Heller, Ed.D



Probation Department
Lee Seale, Chief Probation Officer

County of Sacramento

February 5, 2016

Ms. Elaine M. Howle, CPA
California State Auditor
621 Capitol Mall, Suite 1200
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Dually Involved Youth: The State Cannot Determine the Effectiveness of Efforts to Serve Youth Who Are Involved in Both the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems

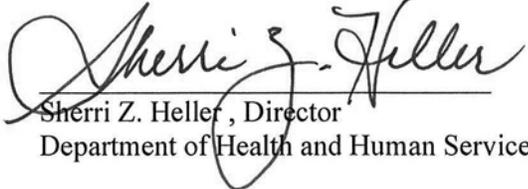
Dear Ms. Howle:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and respond to a redacted version of this report. We appreciate the interest of the California State Auditor and the California Legislature in this very important issue.

As your report notes, it is well-established that youth who have been abused or neglected face a heightened risk of “crossing over” into the juvenile justice system. Sacramento County is committed to doing everything it can do to intervene early with these youth to interrupt this trajectory. To that end, in late 2014, a team of County leadership alongside the Presiding Judge of our Juvenile Court, embarked on an eight-day program at Georgetown University’s Center for Juvenile Justice Reform to begin a focused commitment toward better serving youth involved in both dependency and delinquency systems. This initiative – known as the Crossover Youth Practice Model and identified as a “best practice” in your report – represents a substantial countywide commitment to improve inter-departmental collaboration, cross-system reporting, and standardized outcomes and, as such, will take years to fully achieve. As noted in your report, we are working toward an integrated data-sharing system across multiple County departments, including education and behavioral health, but this is a large-scale undertaking and we fully acknowledge that the bulk of our work is still to be done. We agree with the recommendations in your report and will implement them as part of this effort.

In the meantime, we are heartened by your report’s confirmation that Sacramento County is “providing a variety of services to dually involved youth, including mental health, substance abuse, youth development, and education services.” We are proud of the treatment and services that Sacramento County provides to our youth. Here again, though, we believe that there are improvements that we can make to better divert young people away from the criminal justice system. We look forward to doing so.

Sincerely,



Sherri Z. Heller, Director
Department of Health and Human Services



Lee Seale, Chief Probation Officer
Probation Department

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February 2016

County of Santa Clara

Office of the County Executive

County Government Center, East Wing
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose, California 95110
(408) 299-5105



February 5, 2016

Ms. Elaine M. Howle, State Auditor *
California State Auditor
621 Capitol Mall, Suite 1200
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Howle:

Please accept this letter as Santa Clara County's response to the California State Auditor's report entitled, "Dually Involved Youth: The State Cannot Determine the Effectiveness of Efforts to Serve Youth Who Are Involved in Both the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems." This audit was conducted at the direction of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee of the California Legislature.

The report indicates that there is insufficient definitional and operational consistency between counties and inadequate alignment of data to make meaningful determinations about what models are most effective to serve this population of youth. As the report clearly delineates, there are myriad strategies being employed to serve these young people and their families, with varying results.

Santa Clara County chose to spend a significant amount of time both defining the Dually Involved Youth (DIY) target population and crafting our intervention model. As a result, due solely to the period of time under review by this audit, only three of the sixteen cases examined in Santa Clara County were served under this intervention model. As with the launch of any new program, there are many lessons learned and modifications required over the course of the first six months to a year. The initial cohort of youth served under this new intervention model were the youth who had deeply penetrated both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems and whose ability to reunify or make significant progress was much more challenging than youth with less system involvement.

Santa Clara County uses the "Kennedy" model as described in the audit report and received eighteen months of intensive technical assistance from the Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps. A robust team of high-level stakeholders, including community representatives in addition to system representatives, have been meeting monthly for over three years to design and implement this model. There are also three sub-committees of this team, comprised of both leadership members and many others, which focus on legal issues, data and evaluation, and resource development.

Santa Clara uses the broadest definition of Dually Involved Youth (DIY), defined as any youth who have experienced significant abuse or neglect at ANY point in their lives, and who are engaging in

Letter to Ms. Elaine M. Howle, State Auditor
February 5, 2016
Page 2 of 2

criminal behavior. This broad definition is intentional, based on the recognition that the trauma a youth experiences when young, even if his/her life stabilizes, often results in significant emotional and behavioral problems when the youth reaches adolescence. Understanding this dynamic, and jointly intervening earlier, when a DIY is engaging in criminal activity, is intended to prevent further penetration into either system. Santa Clara County's goal is to create integrated responses for all DIY, regardless of their system status.

The following are the two recommendations of the audit report: "To identify their population of Dually Involved Youth, CWS and probation agencies within each county should do the following:

1. Designate the data system they will use for tracking the dates and results of joint assessment hearings.
2. Provide guidance or training to staff on recording joint assessment hearing information consistently within the designated system."

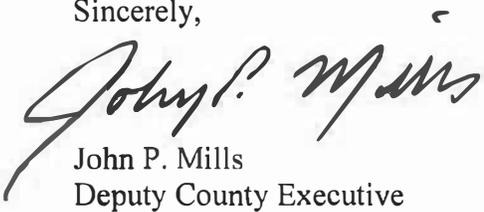
Santa Clara County Response:

① *There is no one unified system identified by the State to document in the manner that is indicated in the report. CWS has a state-mandated database, and Probation uses a separate database for all cases, except for those cases involving placements, which are contained within the CWS database. In order for jurisdictions to have a required unified database, additional resources and more interoperability between the databases would be necessary.*

In the meantime, Santa Clara County has developed expected outcomes and sixty-eight (68) data variables to track that are anticipated to speak to these outcomes. However, Santa Clara County is in the early data collection phase, and sufficient time has not yet elapsed to evaluate all of these expected outcomes.

We would like to thank the California State Auditor for the thoughtful work on this report. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via phone at (408) 299-5116 or via email at john.mills@ceo.sccgov.org.

Sincerely,



John P. Mills
Deputy County Executive

JPM:kr

Comment

CALIFORNIA STATE AUDITOR'S COMMENT ON THE RESPONSE FROM SANTA CLARA COUNTY

To provide clarity and perspective, we are commenting on Santa Clara County's response to our audit. The number below corresponds to the number we have placed in the margin of Santa Clara County's response.

We agree with Santa Clara County's statement that child welfare service (CWS) agencies and probation agencies use separate databases; however, this does not prevent Santa Clara County from designating one data system which it will use to track the dates and results of joint assessment hearings. Furthermore, if it chooses to do so, Santa Clara County can continue to use its current system for logging all joint assessment hearings and the results of those hearings.

①