

June 28, 2021

**Memo to:** Expanding Community Alternatives Committee

Attention: James Bell, Burns Institute, Consultant

**From:** Margaret Brodtkin, Chair Program Committee, Juvenile Probation Commission

**Re:** Housing needs of JPD population age 18 and over

## **BACKGROUND**

On April 29 and May 27, the Program Committee of the Juvenile Probation Commission conducted two meetings to address the needs of youth ages 18 and over in the juvenile probation system. Below are key points made in the meetings.

## **POPULATION**

Transitional age young adults are between the ages of 18 and 24 and are referred to in this memo as "taya." According to the April monthly statistics presented to the JPD Commission in June 2021, youth over age 18 currently comprise 56% of the young people in the Juvenile Probation system. These youth fall into two groups:

- 32% (105 youth) are in the extended foster care system receiving AB12 benefits as a result of legislation which allows youth who have been made dependents of the court to receive transitional benefits from age 18 to age 21 (passed in 2012). These are youth who have been on Probation at one time but are no longer on probation.
- 24% (80 youth) are still on probation under the supervision of the Juvenile Probation Department even though they are age 18 through 24 because their arrest occurred while a minor.

Because these two categories of youth are legally adults, they often have different emotional, educational, employment, housing, and legal needs from younger youth. They are also likely to require a higher level of autonomy.

## **HOUSING NEEDS**

For many of these young people, inadequate housing is a major barrier to their becoming successful productive and independent adults. While youth on AB12 and youth still on probation have access to somewhat different services, they are all at risk of homeless because the housing system is fragmented, bureaucratic and inadequately funded. Furthermore, it is no agency's responsibility to ensure that adequate housing is available. Our system must increase support for the housing options below and ensure that there is an entity responsible for creating and sustaining these beds:

- **Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILPs)** – A SILP is the least restrictive housing option, (only available to AB12 youth). The young person develops a housing plan; the plan is approved and supervised by a social worker who works for JPD; and the young person receives a monthly stipend from the state (approximately \$1000 a month). Many JPD youth utilize this option but struggle to find affordable housing. Because of the San Francisco housing market, a larger stipend is necessary to make this option viable and prevent homelessness. The increased stipend should be subsidized through the city's General Fund.
- **Licensed transitional housing** - Licensed transitional housing is a provider-based, supervised housing and supportive services program that includes regular contact with a case manager and staff regularly available on site. This is very often the best option for the young people in the JPD system. There is a waitlist currently for these beds in San Francisco. Some youth get discouraged by the wait and then settle for less appropriate housing. We need to develop much more of this type of housing.

- **Congregate housing for youth still on Probation** – Judges struggle to approve housing options for youth who have completed high school prior to age 18 and are no longer eligible for their group home (STRTP) but who are still on probation and in need of a structured living environment.
- **Family housing with additional supports** – Some youth are best served by living with family members or in homes of non-family members. Often the person providing the home requires additional resources to ensure a stable housing situation.

Each young person’s housing needs are unique – so a new system requires a continuum of options that are readily available. Some of the “taya” are parents and that impacts their housing needs. Others have been ordered to live outside San Francisco so we must find housing across the Bay and elsewhere. Some youth require a short-term housing situation for an assessment period while they figure out their more long-term housing (and other) needs.

We do not know exactly how many “taya” need which types of housing. A committee of community experts, advocates and JPD staff is being convened by JPD to assess the specific number and types of “beds” that are needed and will report to the Program Committee as soon as this assessment is completed.

Two community agencies, Larkin Street Services and Third Street Youth Center and Clinic, both with a high level of expertise in housing services specifically for “taya,” attended the Program Committee meeting and expressed their eagerness and ability to provide new services to meet the needs of youth in the JPD system if resources were available.

#### **OTHER NEEDS**

In addition to housing, other services must be targeted to the unique needs of the “taya” population, from things like helping young people get a social security card, to access to job training, to intensive mental health support. CBOs are ideally positioned to help young people with these needs. San Francisco has invested a great deal in services for young adults, but JPD often fails to fully utilize them.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Change city policies and procedures so that JPD “taya” are prioritized in the “Rapid Re-housing” system established by the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (DHS).  
Rationale: DHS acknowledges that it does not serve the JPD “taya” population well in its Coordinated Entry System and that these young people are often not considered officially “homeless” and are therefore denied timely housing services. This must change.
- Use a portion of SF’s “Prop C” \$300M a year to earmark and dedicate transitional, independent, and congregate beds specifically to “taya” in the JPD system.  
Rationale: Many of the taya in the JPD system do not get the housing services they need. Some end up on long waiting lists. Unless beds are explicitly earmarked for these youth, whether they get the housing or not is just random. It should also be noted that the Adult Probation Department provides housing directly to its clients. A similar system is one strategy that could be put in place in juvenile probation.
- Evaluate the potential benefits of moving the responsibility of serving youth receiving AB12 benefits from JPD to Human Services Agency.  
Rationale: The Human Services Agency is a less stigmatizing agency than JPD. These young adults are not on probation and may ultimately be better served outside a law enforcement agency and through one that is focused solely on public welfare. It would also place responsibility for all of San Francisco’s non-minor dependents under one department’s auspices to ensure greater accountability of care.

- Ensure that every “taya” in the JPD system is connected to at least one community agency which will develop a long-term caring relationship with the young person and help them on a path towards autonomy and a strong connection with the community.  
Rationale: SF has invested a great deal in a community-based system of care for young adults. The probation system is often too disconnected from the “taya” service delivery system and does not help connect youth to appropriate services.

### **SUMMARY**

Our system of services must pay more attention to the unique needs of transitional age young adults in the juvenile probation system, especially since they are over half of the people in the system. Housing is a key need that must be met as it is a major barrier in young people achieving independence. There should be an ongoing means of funding, coordinating, and overseeing a housing system for the “taya” youth in the JPD system.

### **COMMENTS FROM JPD ON NEED:**

There is a need for 15 – 20 additional beds for transitional age young adults at any given time.

There is a need for housing resources for probation clients ages 17.5 – 18, and a need for a “bridge” from STRTP or foster care to transitional housing. There are challenges in having programs accept clients that have extensive, serious criminal histories or stay-away orders. There is a need for more options in and out of county and the need for more dedicated spots for our clients, like what Adult Probation has. From the AB12 perspective, some clients are not ready to live on their own. Clients may be breaking the rules and are eventually being discharged from housing after several attempts to correct poor behavior. Also, there are clients who are aging out and limited THP + slots. There is also a need for emergency housing for clients who lose their housing for one reason or another. We also need to have spots available for temporary solutions until a more stable option becomes available.