

STATE SPENDING SOARS TO HISTORIC LEVELS AMID REORGANIZATION OF CALIFORNIA'S YOUTH CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM



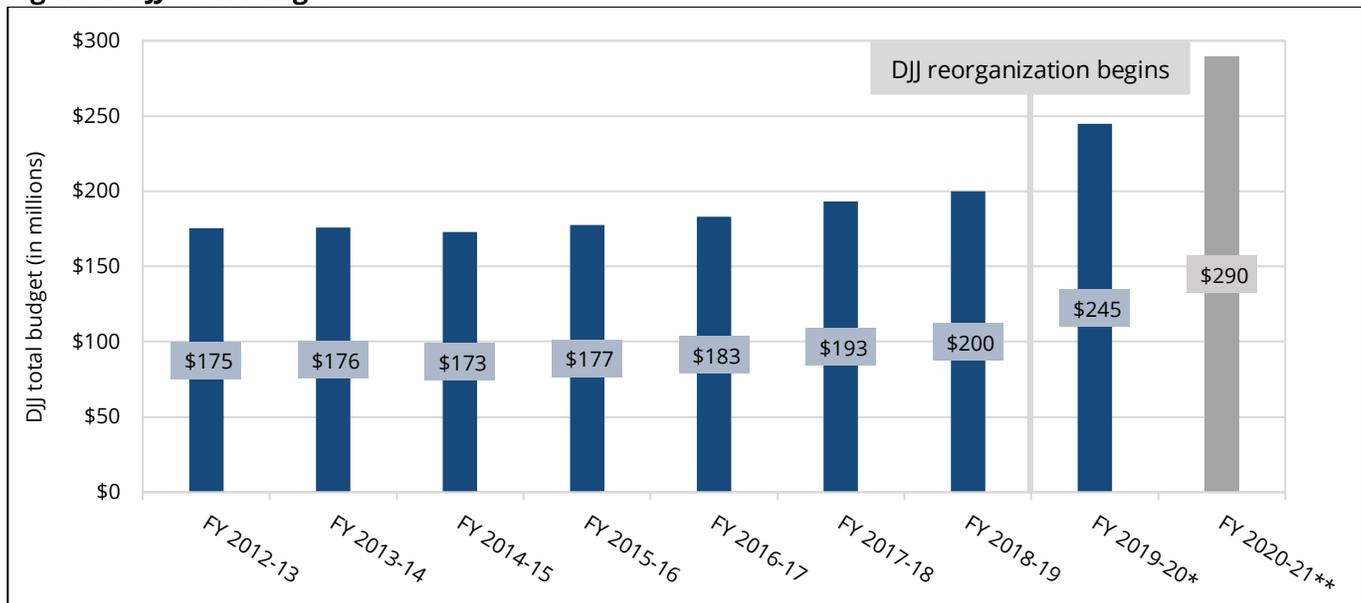
Maureen Washburn, Policy Analyst
Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice

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Fact Sheet

In January, California Governor Gavin Newsom released his proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21 and included a substantial increase in spending for the state's dangerous and prison-like youth correctional institutions, currently known as the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) (CJCJ, 2019; DOF, 2020a). If approved by the Legislature, state spending on DJJ will reach a record-setting \$336,000 per youth in FY 2020-21 with a total budget of nearly \$300 million (Figure 1) (DOF, 2020a). This proposed increase coincides with a planned reorganization of DJJ, which will transfer responsibility for the four state-run youth correctional facilities from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the state's prison system, into the California Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) (DOF, 2019; 2020a).

Figure 1. DJJ total budget



Source: DOF, 2014-2020; 2020a. *DOF estimates FY 2019-20 costs using population and cost information from the first half of the fiscal year. **Average daily population and the budget total for FY 2020-21 are proposed by Governor Newsom.

Despite numerous leadership and name changes throughout DJJ's decades-long history, recent research indicates that the system continues to expose youth to violence and trauma (CJCJ, 2019). According to DJJ's own data, staff use physical force against youth at increasingly high rates and young people experience or witness fights, riots, or beatings on a regular basis (CDCR, 2020a; CJCJ, 2019). Youth recently released from the institutions describe having felt isolated at DJJ and unprepared for life after release (CJCJ, 2019). These conditions are endemic to DJJ's model of juvenile justice, which places large numbers of youth in outdated facilities¹ that do not conform to modern best practices (AECF, 2014; CJCJ, 2019). The outcomes for youth sent to DJJ are dismal: 76 percent are rearrested, 51 percent are convicted of a new offense, and 29 percent return to DJJ or a state prison within three years of their initial release (CDCR, 2019).

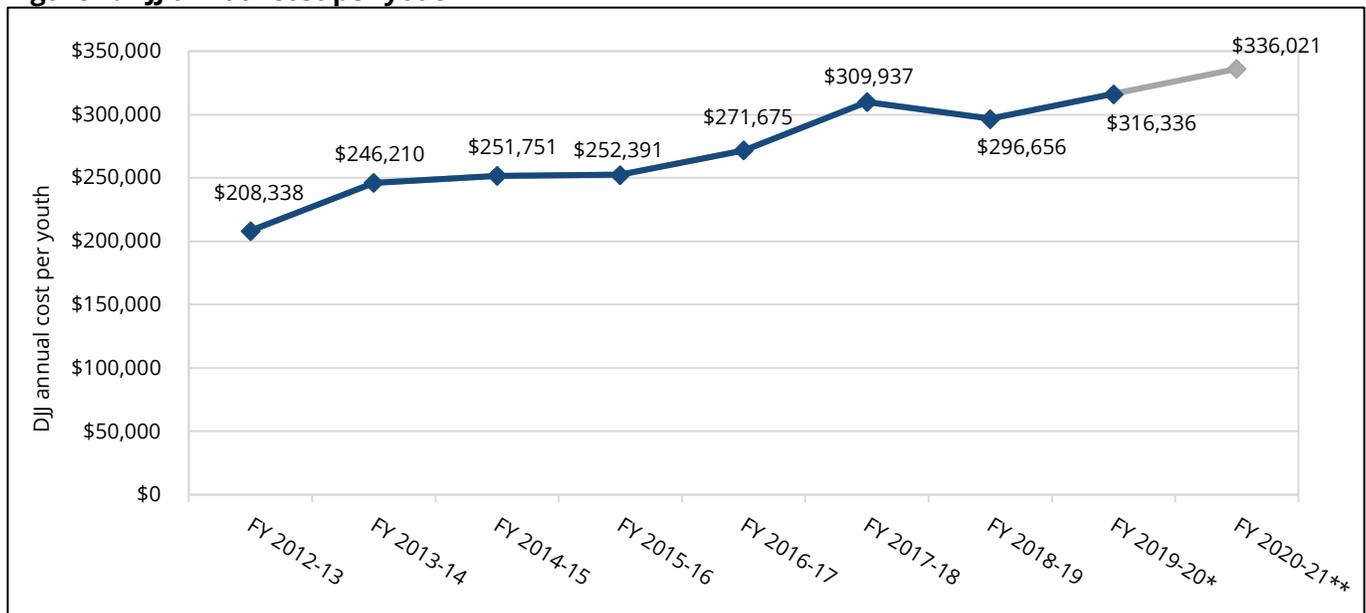
¹ The facilities were constructed in 1945 (Pine Grove Conservation Camp), 1962 (Ventura Youth Correctional Facility), 1966 (O.H. Close Youth Correctional Facility), and 1991 (N.A. Chaderjian Youth Correctional Facility) (CDCR, 2020; LAO, 2004).

Although state taxpayers will incur tens of millions of dollars in new costs amid DJJ’s move to HHSA, budget projections fail to account for the far greater human cost of the transition, which will be borne primarily by youth, their families, and their communities. Bolstering DJJ in the FY 2020-21 budget, despite compelling evidence of its failure, would deepen California’s reliance on a broken system and place another generation of young people at risk of harmful state confinement.

- **The DJJ budget may increase by nearly \$100 million amid the agency’s reorganization.**

Under the Governor’s proposal, DJJ’s annual budget would increase to nearly \$300 million in FY 2020-21, a 65 percent rise over FY 2012-13 spending (Figure 1). This upward trend in correctional spending defies existing patterns in the juvenile justice system, which has seen unprecedented declines in youth arrests, referrals to probation, and detentions (BSCC, 2020; DOJ, 2019). For example, between 2012 and 2018, California experienced a 22 percent decline in youth felony arrests and a 20 percent reduction in DJJ’s population (FY 2012-13 vs. FY 2018-19), but state spending on the DJJ institutions rose by 14 percent (DOF, 2014; 2020; DOJ, 2019a). If the Legislature were to adopt the Governor’s most recent budget proposal, the state would increase total spending by approximately \$90 million as part of DJJ’s transition to HHSA (FY 2020-21 budget vs. FY 2018-19 budget) (DOF, 2020; 2020a).

Figure 2. DJJ annual cost per youth



Sources: DOF, 2014-2020; 2020a. *DOF estimates FY 2019-20 costs using population and cost information from the first half of the fiscal year. **Average daily population and the budget total for FY 2020-21 are proposed by Governor Newsom.

- **The proposed budget would result in a record-setting \$336,021 per youth at DJJ in FY 2020-21.**

DJJ’s per youth costs have soared in recent years and could reach an all-time high of \$336,021 in FY 2020-21 (Figure 2) (DOF, 2020). In past years, rising per capita costs were largely the result of stagnant spending that failed to keep pace with rapidly declining youth populations. However, per capita costs are expected to rise in FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21 in spite of projected increases in the population due to the substantial growth in DJJ’s total budget (Figure 1, Figure 3).

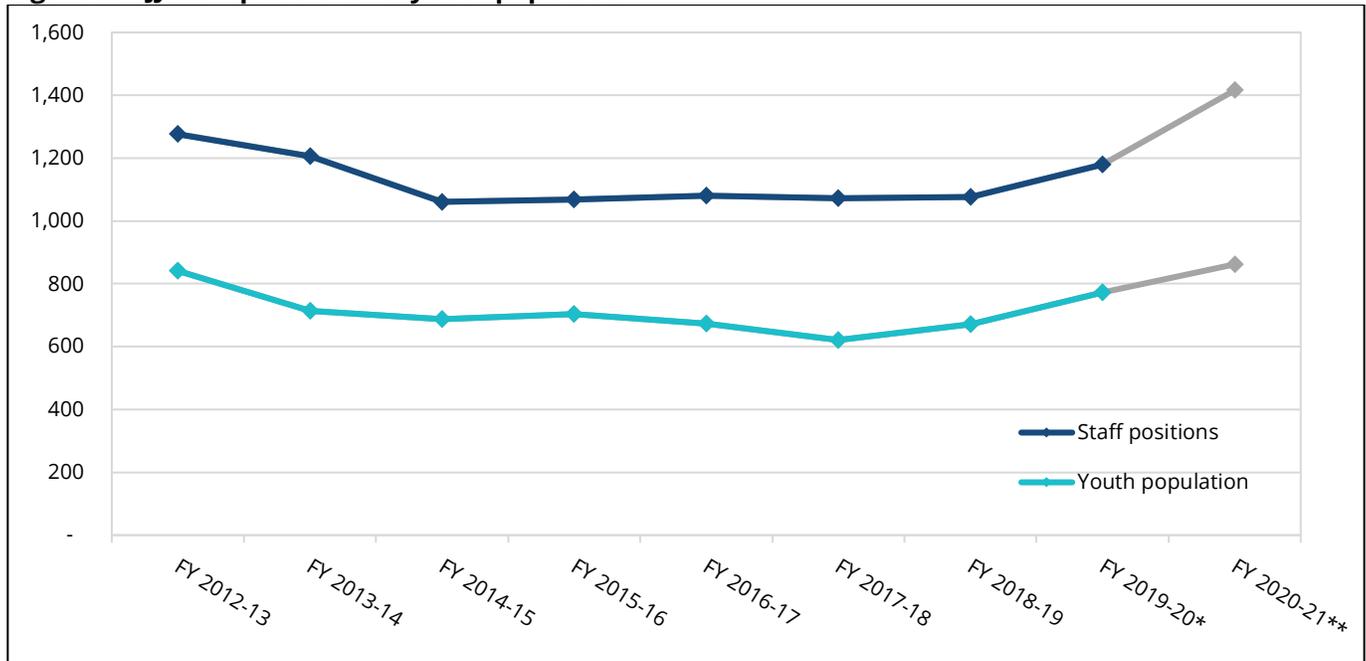
The high cost of DJJ stands in sharp contrast to per capita spending on other services and programs for young people. For example, tuition at Stanford, one of the state’s most expensive private universities, costs about \$50,000 per year, meaning that for the amount taxpayers spend on one youth in a DJJ institution, they could pay for a year of higher education at Stanford for at least six young people (Stanford University, 2020).

- **Staff far exceed youth in the DJJ facilities, driving up state costs.**

The Governor’s Budget proposes a substantial increase in funded staff positions as part of DJJ’s transition into the HHSA. Under the Governor’s plan, DJJ would increase its workforce by 31 percent over FY 2018-19 levels, employing more than 1,400 full-time staff in FY 2020-21 (Figure 3) (DOF, 2020; 2020a). With a projected youth population of 862,

staff would far outnumber young people at a ratio of 1.6 DJJ staff for every one youth in the institutions (DOF, 2020a). Despite a high staff count, relatively few DJJ employees provide direct care to youth. An analysis of data from June 2017 through May 2018 found that youths' living units are staffed at a ratio of one staff for every five youth during the day and one staff for every 20 youth at night, which exceeds the national standard for safe nighttime staffing: one staff for every 16 youth (AECF, 2014; CJCJ, 2019). Importantly, DJJ staff positions often go unfilled—data from October 2018 through September 2019 show that DJJ averaged a 16 percent vacancy rate—meaning that any planned increase in staffing could simply augment the number of vacant positions at DJJ (CDCR, 2020a).

Figure 3. DJJ staff positions vs. youth population



Sources: DOF, 2014-2020; 2020a. *DOF estimates FY 2019-20 costs using population and cost information from the first half of the fiscal year. **Average daily population and the budget total for FY 2020-21 are proposed by Governor Newsom.

- **Counties pay just 7 percent of the true cost of DJJ, leaving the remainder to the state.**

Currently, counties are required to contribute just \$24,000 for each youth they commit to DJJ, leaving approximately \$312,000 (93% of the cost) to be paid by taxpayers statewide (DOF, 2020a; SB 1021, 2012). The result is extreme disparities in county reliance on DJJ, with some counties sending a large share of their justice-involved youth population to the state system, while others prioritize local services and programs, committing few or no youth to DJJ (see the Appendix for a list of counties' disparate rates of DJJ confinement). In effect, California's most self-sufficient counties are required to subsidize the high cost of DJJ to support the small number of counties that are most dependent on the state system for managing their high-needs youth. For example, on December 31, 2019, 17 counties had no youth at DJJ and 14 counties had fewer than five youth, while nine counties, including Contra Costa, Monterey, Riverside, and Tulare, had at least twice the statewide rate of youth at DJJ (per 1,000 felony arrests) (CDCR, 2020b; DOJ, 2019a). With annual spending of \$336,000 per youth, these nine counties alone would cost taxpayers nearly \$60 million (CDCR, 2020b; DOF, 2020a). Importantly, these counties already receive more than \$30 million from the state to support local facilities and services for justice-involved youth (BSCC, 2019).

The state's latest attempt at reorganizing its youth correctional system includes funding for additional staff positions, an employee training program, and new initiatives (DOF, 2019; 2020a). Yet it provides no safeguards against abuse and no plan for moving youth from antiquated facilities into settings that are more conducive to healing. Increasing state spending on DJJ, despite its long record of mistreating youth, ignores the lessons of history and erodes California's progress towards providing individualized treatment for youth where it is most effective: close to their loved ones and communities.

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Appendix. Youth felony arrests, commitment rates, and estimated DJJ costs, by county

County	Youth felony arrests (2018)	DJJ population (Dec 31, 2019)	DJJ population per 1,000 felony arrests	Potential cost (DJJ pop. x \$336,021)
Alameda	830	10	12.0	\$3,360,210
Alpine	1	0	0.0	\$0
Amador	1	0	0.0	\$0
Butte	102	9	88.2	\$3,024,189
Calaveras	9	1	111.1	\$336,021
Colusa	3	0	0.0	\$0
Contra Costa	316	34	107.6	\$11,424,714
Del Norte	8	0	0.0	\$0
El Dorado	34	0	0.0	\$0
Fresno	596	40	67.1	\$13,440,840
Glenn	6	0	0.0	\$0
Humboldt	37	2	54.1	\$672,042
Imperial	57	8	140.4	\$2,688,168
Inyo	8	0	0.0	\$0
Kern	504	39	77.4	\$13,104,819
Kings	124	14	112.9	\$4,704,294
Lake	23	1	43.5	\$336,021
Lassen	23	0	0.0	\$0
Los Angeles	3,943	167	42.4	\$56,115,507
Madera	73	4	54.8	\$1,344,084
Marin	103	1	9.7	\$336,021
Mariposa	0	0	-	\$0
Mendocino	84	2	23.8	\$672,042
Merced	226	12	53.1	\$4,032,252
Modoc	5	0	0.0	\$0
Mono	1	0	0.0	\$0
Monterey	226	32	141.6	\$10,752,672
Napa	52	1	19.2	\$336,021
Nevada	50	0	0.0	\$0
Orange	825	9	10.9	\$3,024,189
Placer	125	1	8.0	\$336,021
Plumas	6	0	0.0	\$0
Riverside	524	50	95.4	\$16,801,050
Sacramento	639	49	76.7	\$16,465,029
San Benito	20	0	0.0	\$0
San Bernardino	1,556	42	27.0	\$14,112,882
San Diego	1,178	47	39.9	\$15,792,987
San Francisco	485	8	16.5	\$2,688,168
San Joaquin	564	30	53.2	\$10,080,630

County	Youth felony arrests (2018)	DJJ population (Dec 31, 2019)	DJJ population per 1,000 felony arrests	Potential cost (DJJ pop. x \$336,021)
San Luis Obispo	61	2	32.8	\$672,042
San Mateo	299	7	23.4	\$2,352,147
Santa Barbara	285	6	21.1	\$2,016,126
Santa Clara	1,187	33	27.8	\$11,088,693
Santa Cruz	141	7	49.6	\$2,352,147
Shasta	58	1	17.2	\$336,021
Sierra	1	0	0.0	\$0
Siskiyou	6	0	0.0	\$0
Solano	224	14	62.5	\$4,704,294
Sonoma	195	13	66.7	\$4,368,273
Stanislaus	425	17	40.0	\$5,712,357
Sutter	43	5	116.3	\$1,680,105
Tehama	28	1	35.7	\$336,021
Trinity	2	1	500.0	\$336,021
Tulare	306	31	101.3	\$10,416,651
Tuolumne	19	0	0.0	\$0
Ventura	476	4	8.4	\$1,344,084
Yolo	92	5	54.3	\$1,680,105
Yuba	50	4	80.0	\$1,344,084
Total	17,265	764	44.3	\$256,720,044

Source: CDCR (2020b); DOF (2020); DOJ (2019a). Note: The sum of county cost estimates (\$256,720,044) is less than the total FY 2020-21 budget for DJJ given that county costs are derived from 2019 populations. Populations are expected to increase in FY 2020-21, as shown in Figure 3.

Please note: Jurisdictions submit their data to the official statewide or national databases maintained by appointed governmental bodies. While every effort is made to review data for accuracy and to correct information upon revision, CJCJ cannot be responsible for data reporting errors made at the county, state, or national level.

Contact: For more information about this topic or to schedule an interview, please contact CJCJ Communications at (415) 621-5661 x 103 or cjcjmedia@cjcc.org.