



**LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**
Celebrating 36 Years of Advocacy & Achievement

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June 1, 2020

TO: Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Chair
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FROM: Dr. Wendy B. Smith, Chair 
Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families

SUBJECT: **COVID-19 TESTING AT JUVENILE HALLS AND CAMPS**

The Commission for Children and Families urges the Board of Supervisors to take action to ensure that all youth in the County's juvenile halls and camps are tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible.

Over the last few weeks, our ad hoc Juvenile Justice Work Group engaged in a series of conversations with Deputy Director Brandon Nichols, other Probation staff and staff from the Departments of Mental Health and Health Services (Juvenile Court Health Services) to understand the evolving conditions of daily life for youth in these facilities. While we are pleased to see increased collaboration between these Departments and with the County Office of Education, we have also seen the number of youth with positive COVID tests slowly increase since regular testing of youth newly entering the juvenile halls began on May 4th. We are deeply concerned that current precautions remain inadequate in light of increasing knowledge about the pandemic and contagion in institutional settings.

The Department of Public Health has recently decided to institute universal testing of all youth in the halls and camps and a strategic plan is being developed to conduct testing for all youth at entry, at release, and at regular intervals during their stay in the county's juvenile justice facilities in phases. This plan needs to move forward expeditiously and with simultaneous testing of all three categories of youth. We would like to urge the immediate testing of all youth to better understand the scope of exposure within the juvenile halls and camps.

Each Supervisor

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We understand that implementation of the plan will require increased collaboration among relevant Departments, but we believe it is of the utmost importance to avoid a larger outbreak that the Probation Department may not be able to contain.

We commend the Board of Supervisors for its continued focus and attention on our most vulnerable youth and urge action to ensure the timely implementation of all the steps required to protect and support our youth.

You may contact me at wsmith@usc.edu or Commission executive director Dr. Tamara N. Hunter at huntet@dcss.lacounty.gov.

Enclosure

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Interim Chief Probation Officer, Probation Department
Director, Children and Family Services
Director, Department of Public Health
Executive Director, Office of Child Protection
Children's Deputies
Health Deputies

Our Mission

The Commission for Children and Families advises the Board of Supervisors on strengthening service delivery systems and enhancing partnerships to create safer and more secure futures for Los Angeles County's at-risk children and their families.