

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP)
STEERING COMMITTEE KICK-OFF MEETING

FEBRUARY 9, 2026 12 NOON – 2:00 PM

WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

Kimberly De Serpa
Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisor

Gloria Carroll
Director of Family & Children's Services

Jose Flores
Director of Juvenile Probation Division

MEETING GOALS

- Orient attendees to their role as members of the 2026-2030 Santa Cruz County SIP Steering Committee.
- Learn how SIP strategies implemented since 2021 have improved outcomes for children & families served by Santa Cruz County's child welfare and juvenile probation systems.
- Understand the new strategy commitments for Santa Cruz County's 2026-2030 SIP and how they came to be.
- Surface ways that Steering Committee members can contribute to the success of the 2026-2030 SIP.

AGENDA

- Welcome & Opening Remarks
- Passing the Baton: From Prior to Current SIP Cycle
 - Review impact of 2021-2025 SIP improvement efforts
 - The Big Picture: How are SCC children & families doing?
- SIP Strategy Commitments for 2026-2030
 - Aftercare Enhancements
 - Improve Parent Engagement
 - Increase Networks of Support
- Inspiring One Another for the Road Ahead
- Closing & Next Steps



SANTA CRUZ CO. SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP) IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Gloria Carroll – Child Welfare Director

Claudia Herrera-Sandoval – Child Welfare Assistant Director

Bridget Semlek – Senior Human Services Analyst

Melissa Delgadillo – Child Welfare Program Manager

Stephanie Vikati – Child Welfare Program Manager

Yesenia Salinas – Child Welfare Program Manager

Denise Nickerson – Senior Human Services Analyst

Jose Flores – Juvenile Probation Division Director

Jimmy Cook – Juvenile Probation Assistant Division Director

Christine Berge – Juvenile Probation Senior Analyst

Diane Culcasi – Juvenile Probation Data Analyst

Belle Perez – Juvenile Probation Placement Supervisor

Casey Coneway – Business Analytics Manager

Leslie Ann Hay – Implementation Support Consultant

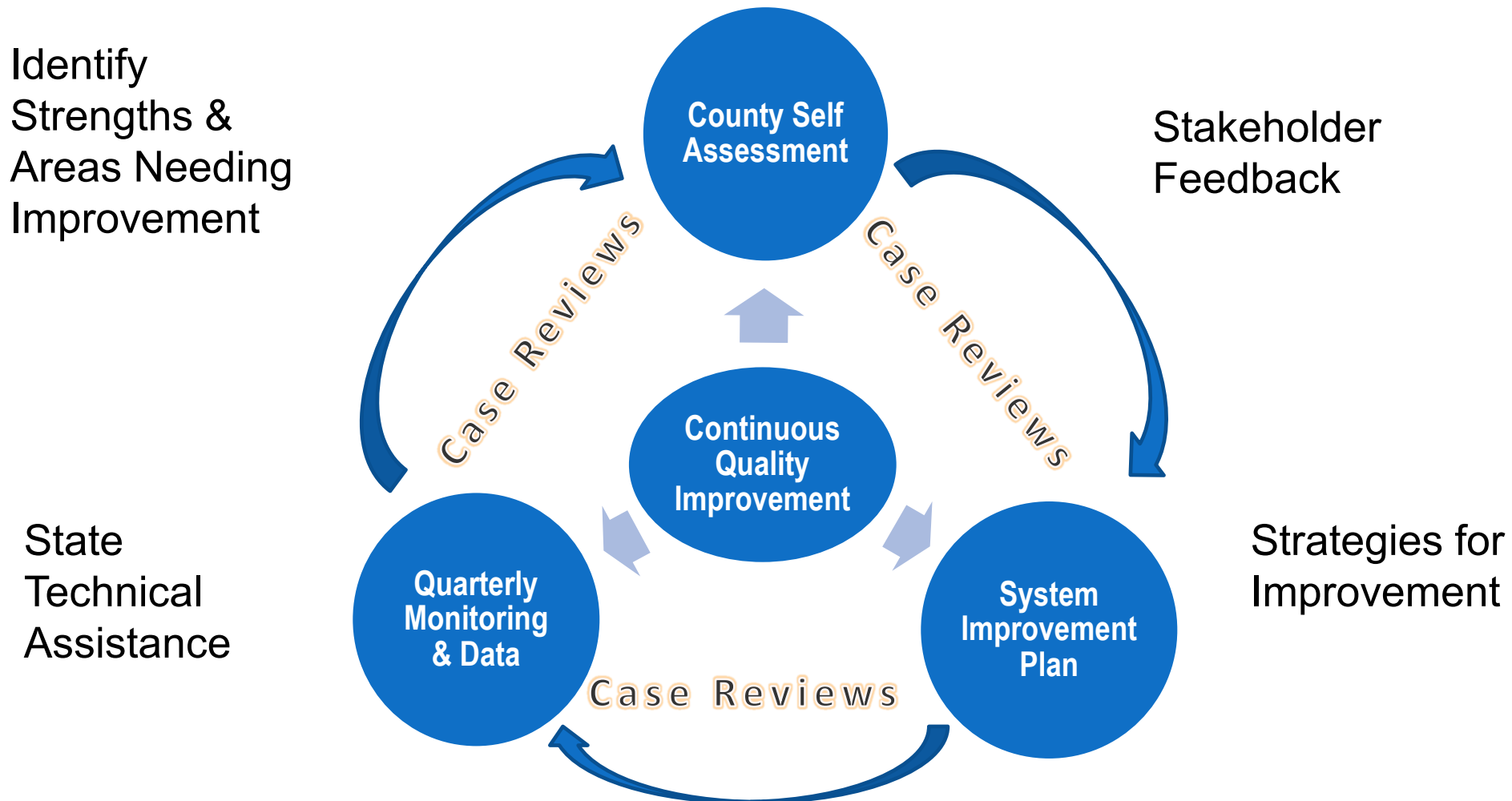


PASSING THE BATON:

FROM PRIOR TO CURRENT SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN CYCLE



CALIFORNIA – CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INTEGRATION



2021-2025 SIP STRATEGIES

Child Welfare Strategies

1. Improve father engagement
2. Enhance services to birth parents
3. Strengthen ICPM implementation
4. Increase placement capacity
5. Expand prevention services

Juvenile Probation Strategies

1. Improve support for parents of probation youth in care
2. Strengthen ICPM Implementation

KEY RESULTS FOR 2021-2025 SIP

Child
Welfare

Strategy 1 – Father Engagement

Accomplishments

- Established Family Finding Unit to increase identification, location and engagement of relatives—special focus on father’s side of family.
- Strengthened skills of FCS workforce for outreach, engagement and facilitating participation of fathers in child’s case plan.
- Improved locating & welcoming fathers into case planning & services.



- Continue addressing challenges in public/private system infrastructure to accommodate access & flexibility needs of fathers to fully participate in case planning and services.

KEY RESULTS FOR 2021-2025 SIP

Child
Welfare

Strategy 2 – Enhance Services to Birth Parents

Accomplishments

- Established Parent Partner program to provide peer support to birth parents during their involvement in child welfare.
- Higher proportion of children reunifying with parents (from 44% to 65%). Improved assessment & addressed parent needs (27% to 50%).
- Increased number of Family Maintenance cases closed successfully.



- Need for smoother transitions to supportive circumstances for families following case closure. All services tied to time parent involved in system contributing to potential vulnerabilities after exiting FCS.

Strategy 3 – Strengthen Implementation of ICPM

Accomplishments

- Fully implemented Safety Organized Practice with trauma-informed, strength-based assessments; effective teaming & collaboration; case plans informed by child & family voice and choice.
- Strengthened Child & Family Teaming with early, safety-focused CFT meetings before removal to avoid placement whenever possible.
- Established specialized FCS Unit of social workers trained as CFT meeting facilitators to build internal capacity for effective CFT practice.



- Bring more natural supports to the CFT table.
- Ensure all cases have CFT meetings throughout life of case—with a focus on aftercare from the start.

KEY RESULTS FOR 2021-2025 SIP

Child
Welfare

Strategy 4 – Increase Placement Capacity

Accomplishments

- Expanded pool of Resource Families willing to care for teens by 30 homes. Resulted in 95% of teens in need of care now in family homes.
- Implemented targeted recruitment & retention campaign to recruit, develop, train, support & retain families specializing in caring for teens.
- Fewer teens placed by default in congregate care settings (STRTPs) (from 13 to 3).



- Continue to build capacity, educate and provide support for Resource Parents to become birth parent allies and network of support members when feasible.

KEY RESULTS FOR 2021-2025 SIP

Child
Welfare

Strategy 5 – Expand Prevention Services

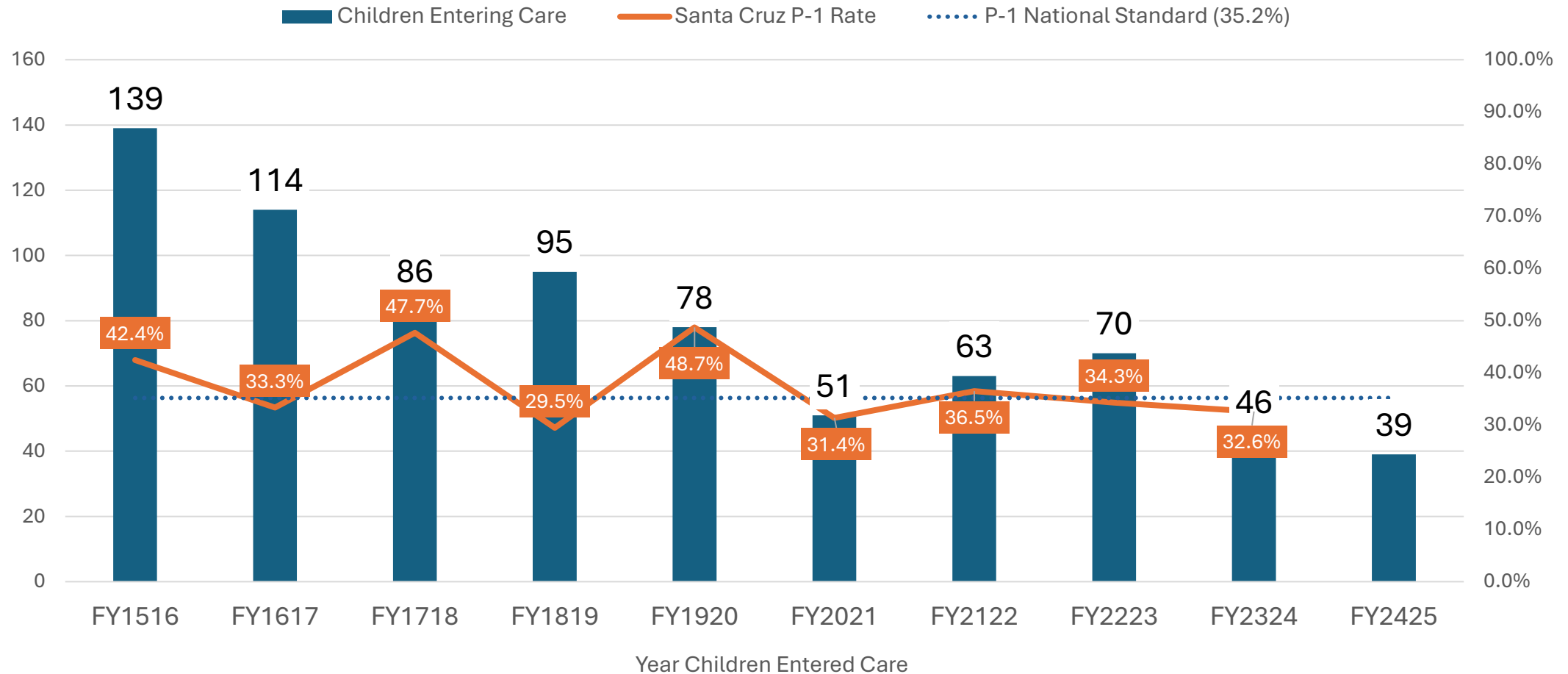
Accomplishments

- FCS & JPD opted into the Family First Prevention Services Act.
- Collaborated with a consortium of partners to develop a Comprehensive Prevention Plan (CPP) aimed at strengthening the protective capacity of vulnerable families in Santa Cruz County.
- Launched the Child, Youth & Family Wellbeing Cabinet consisting of a public-private partnership collaborative to guide CPP implementation.



- Align target populations planned for the CPP strategies with the service populations of program improvements planned for the 2026-2030 SIP.

Children Entering Care & Reaching Permanency Within 12 Months (P-1)



This table shows number of children (0-17) entering care, and the percentage of those children that reached permanency within 12 months of entering care (P-1). Dotted line is the national P-1 standard (35.2%).

The P-1 rate for FY2425 cannot be shown because the 12-month period to assess permanency has not ended yet.

Source: California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP)

2021-2025 SIP STRATEGIES

Child Welfare Strategies

1. Improve father engagement
2. Enhance services to birth parents
3. Strengthen ICPM implementation
4. Increase placement capacity
5. Expand prevention services

Juvenile Probation Strategies

1. Improve support for parents of probation youth in care
2. Strengthen ICPM Implementation

KEY ACTIVITIES OF 2021-2025 JP STRATEGIES

■ Strategy 1 – Parental Support

- Fully implemented Stable Transitions After Re-Entry (STAR) program
- Consistent completion of CANS tool for youth in placement including youth & family involvement in case plan development
- Continuous quality improvement assessment & feedback loops in place to ensure fidelity and adjustment of both these efforts

■ Strategy 2 – Strengthen Implementation of ICPM

- Established an agreement with juvenile justice partners to apply ICPM principles in decision-making and court orders related to probation youth
- Increased involvement of family and natural support network to better support youth in care and help stabilize youth at home
- Conducted several years of culture change to support family & youth engagement

RESULTS: 2021-2025 SIP TAKEAWAYS

Juvenile Probation

- Reduction in rates of entry into care for probation youth through increased use of diversion programs.
- Expanded skill-building and coaching of JP workforce & partners to promote ICPM-informed Child and Family Teaming practice.
- For probation youth in care, greater proportion are family-based, rather than non-family or institutional care.
- Older youth (> 18 yrs) are exiting from probation supervision to family-like settings with emotional and relational stability.



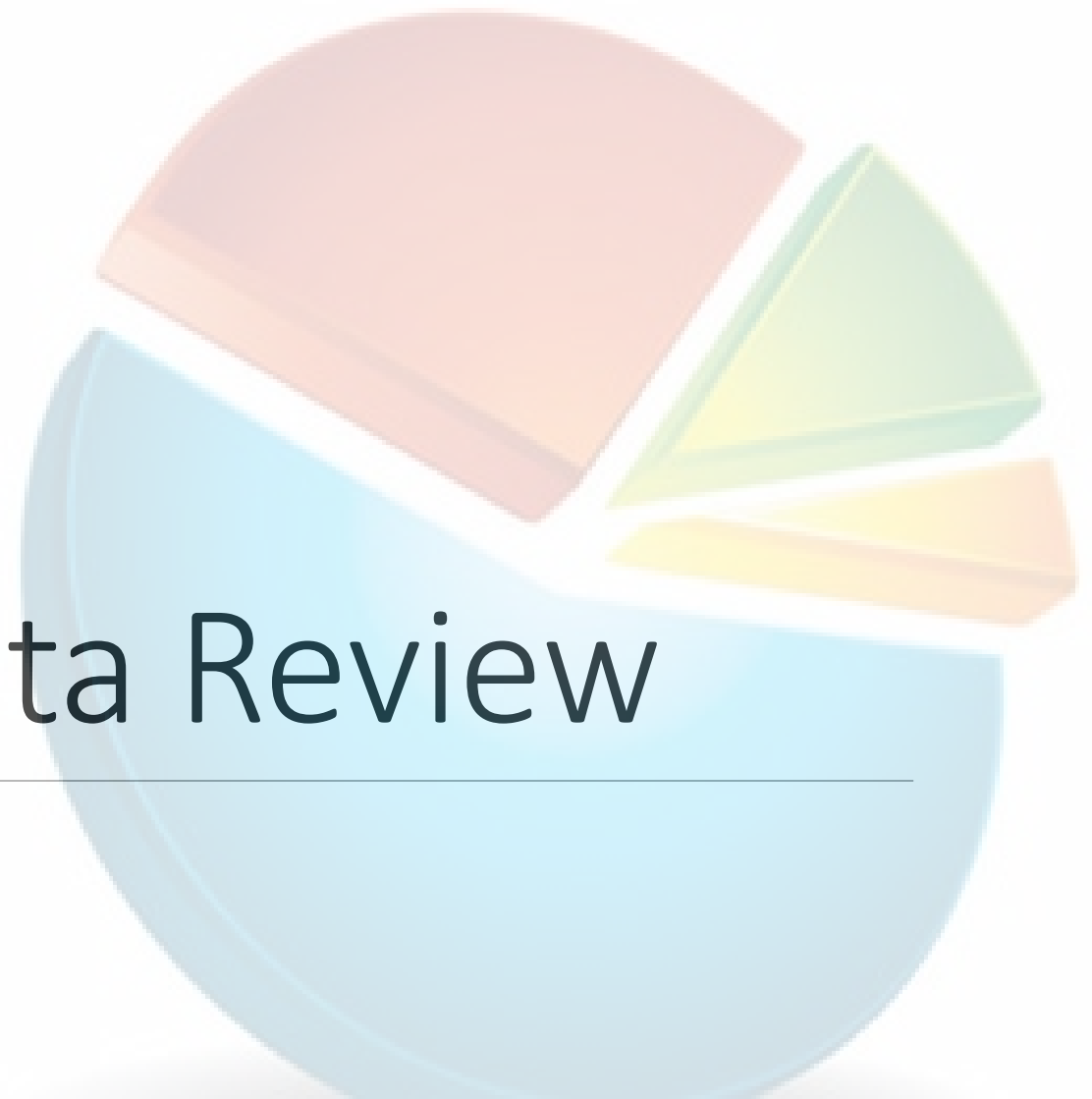
THE BIG PICTURE

CURRENT OUTCOMETRENDS INFORMING OUR WORK

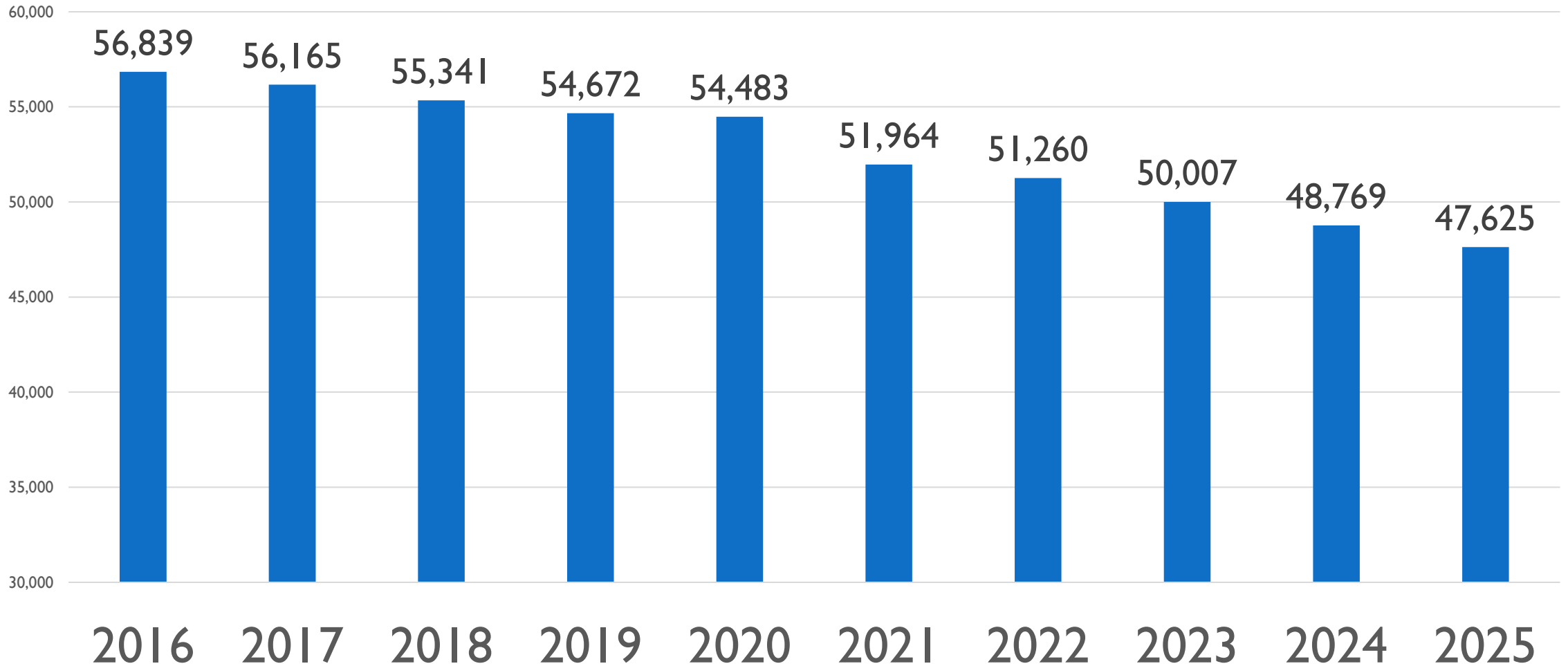




Child Welfare Data Review



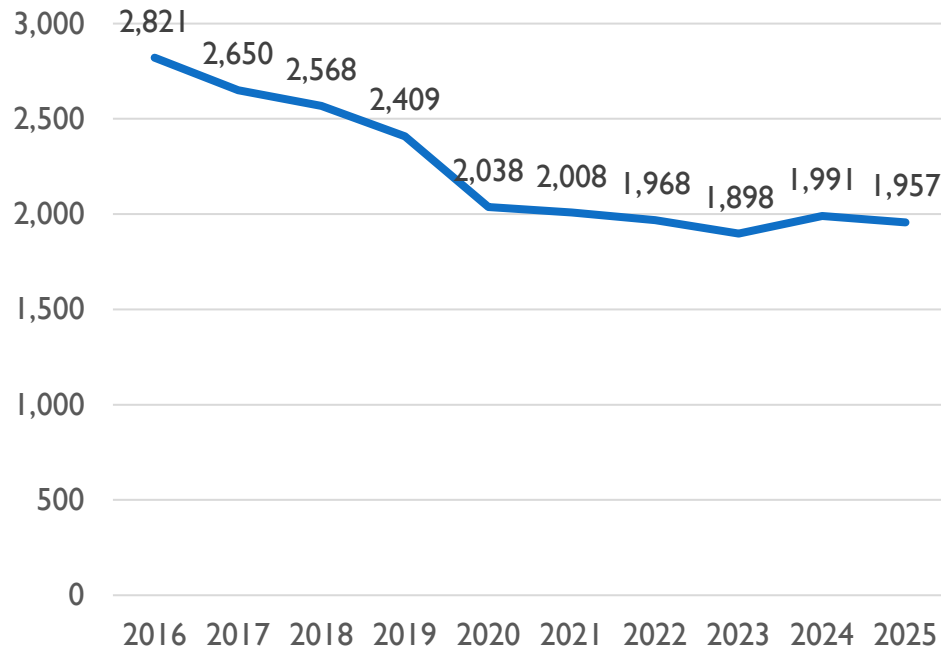
Santa Cruz County Child Population (0-17) Last 10 Years



Source: California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP)

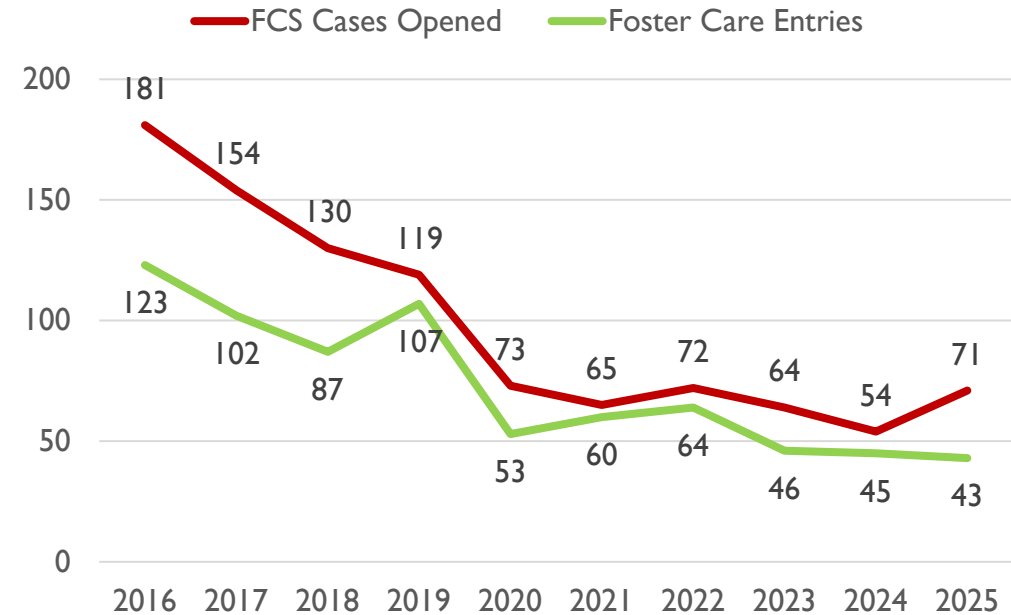
CHILD WELFARE 10-YEAR TRENDS

Children with Referrals



➤ 31% decline in children with allegations since 2016

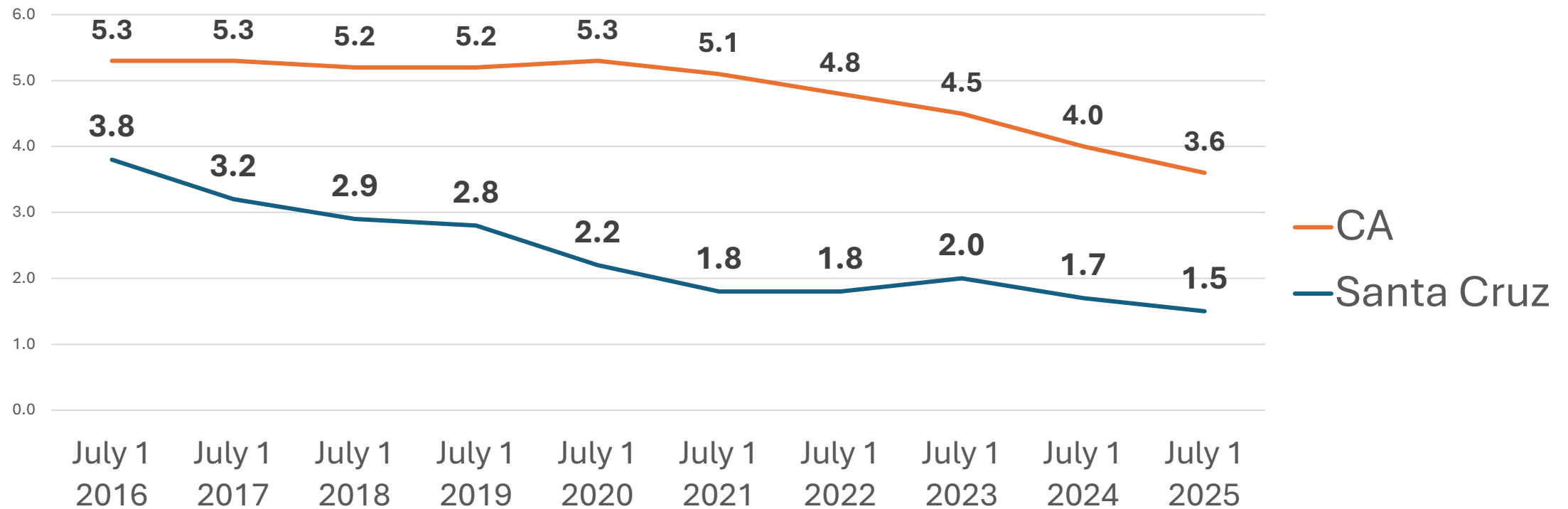
Cases Opened & Entries to Foster Care



➤ 65% decline in foster care entries since 2016

CHILDREN IN CARE PER 1,000 BY YEAR

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY vs STATE (POINT IN TIME COUNT)



This table shows number of children (0-17) in care per 1,000 children.

Source: California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP)

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE, BY ETHNICITY

JULY 1 POINT IN TIME COUNT

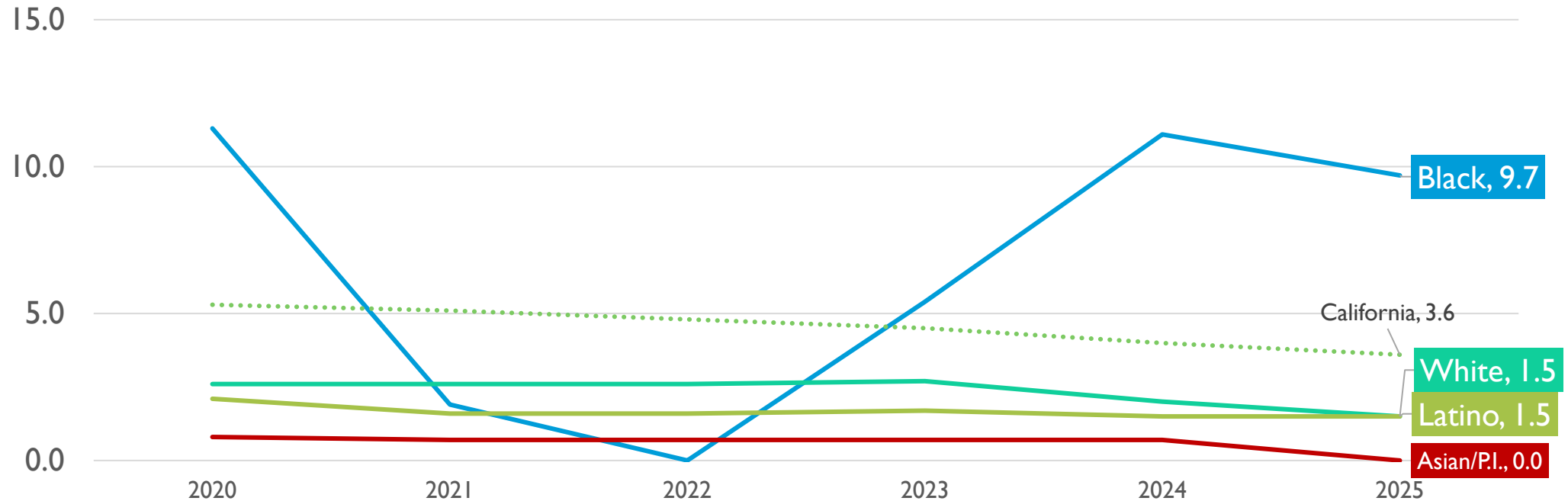
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Latino	85	70	64	61	59	56
White	67	63	57	56	43	33
Asian/P.I.	*	*	*	*	*	*
Nat Amer	*	*	*	*	*	*
Black	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total	162	138	126	125	112	95

This table shows the number of Santa Cruz County children in care on July 1 each year by ethnicity.

*Less than 10 children

Source: California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP)

CHILDREN IN CARE PER 1,000, BY ETHNICITY



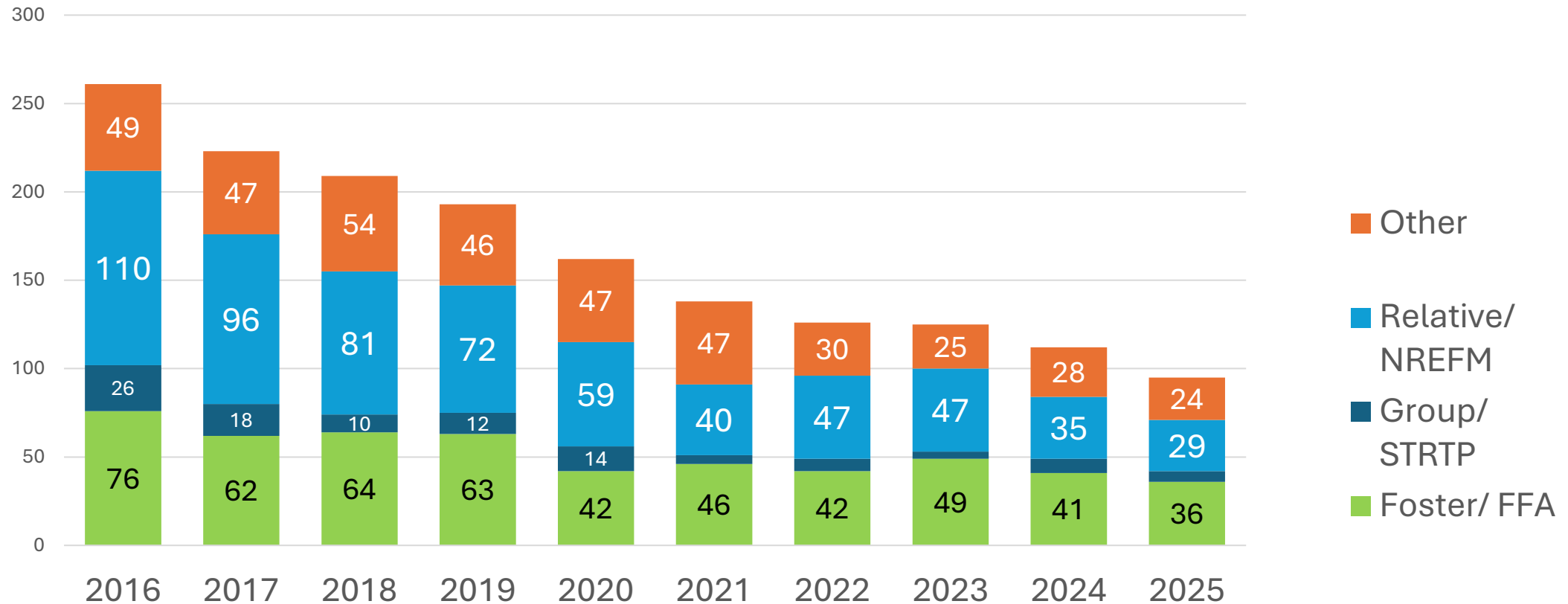
This table shows the number of Santa Cruz County children in care (placement) per 1,000 by ethnic group.

Note: The overall county rate is 1.5 per 1,000. Native American rates are not shown because the rates vary widely due to the small number of children (<3), and to include them would make it difficult to observe differences between other groups.

Source: California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP)

ALL CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE BY PLACEMENT TYPE

JULY 1 POINT IN TIME COUNT

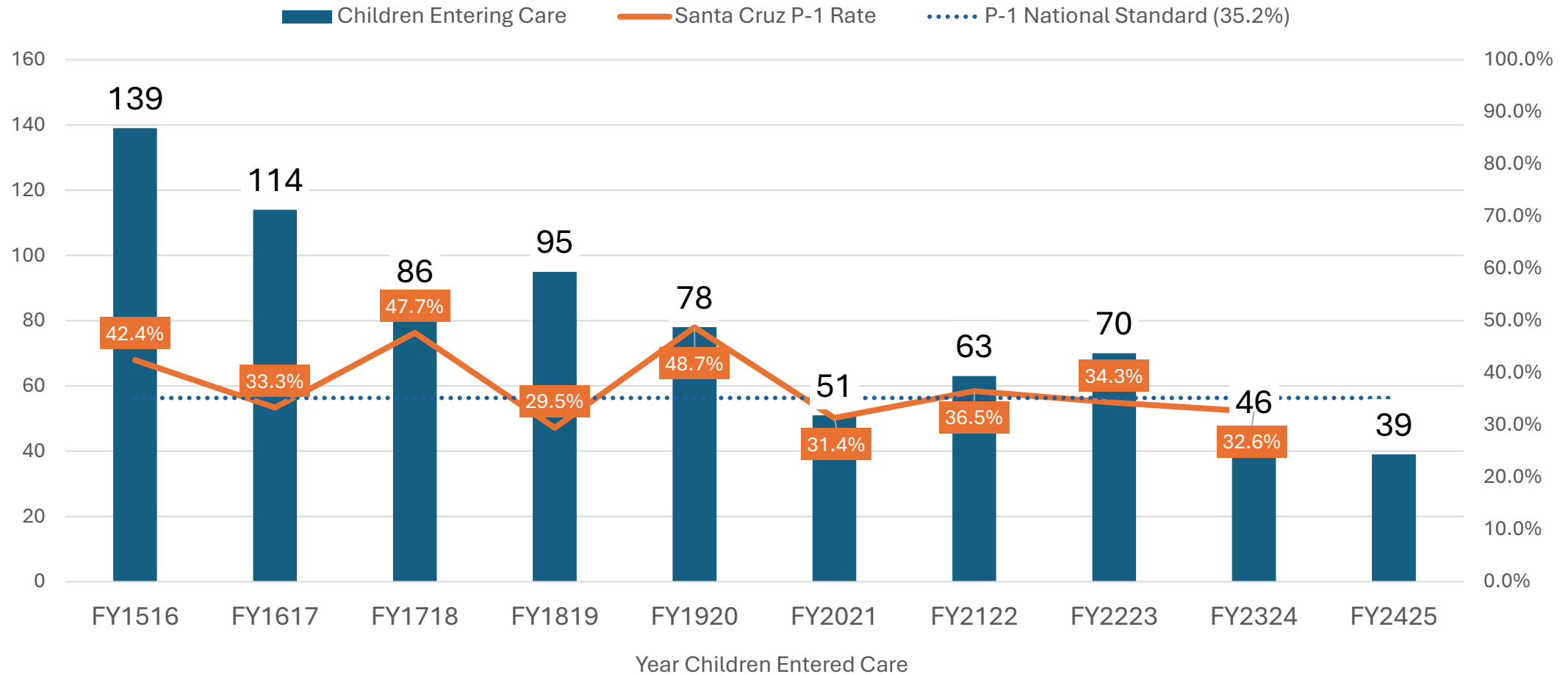


“Other” placements include Supervised Independent Living Program, Transitional Housing, Pre-adoption, and Trial Home Visit.

“STRTP”: Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program

Source: California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP)

Children Entering Care & Reaching Permanency Within 12 Months (P-1)

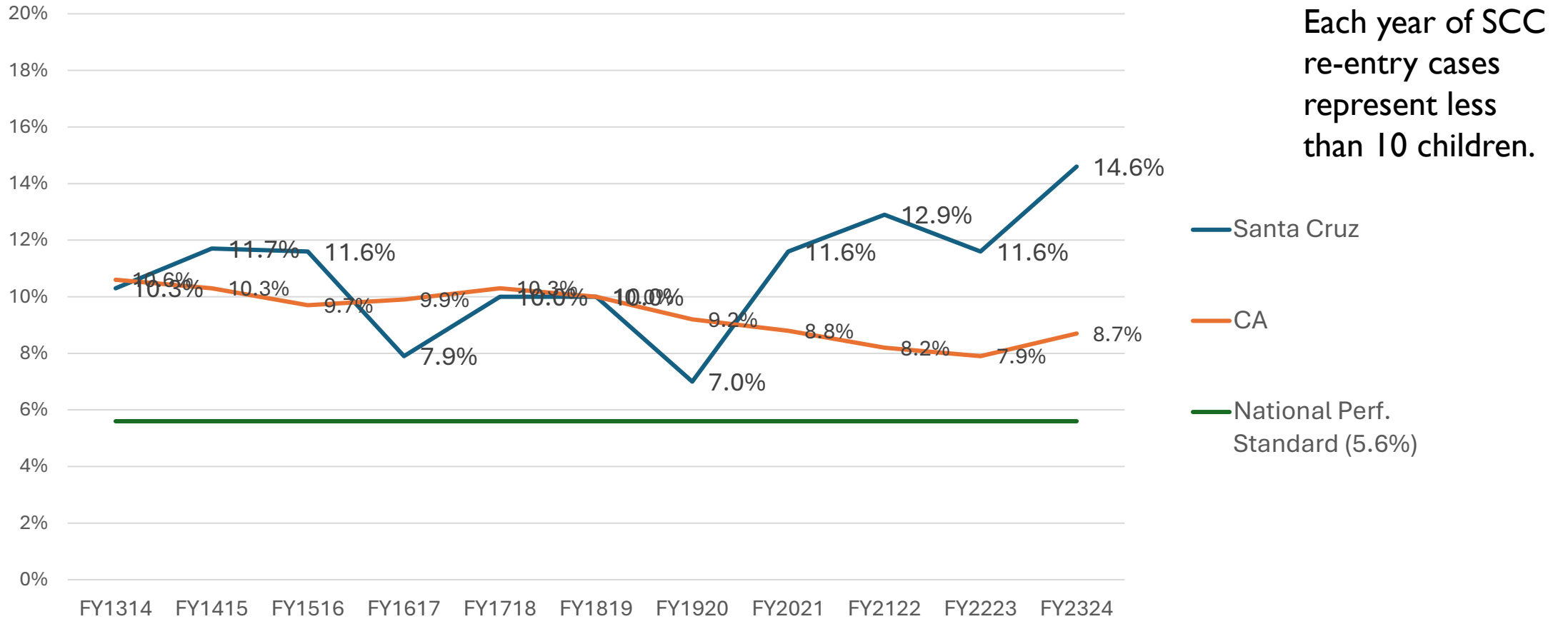


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Source: California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP)

RE-ENTRY TO FOSTER CARE WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF EXIT (P-4)



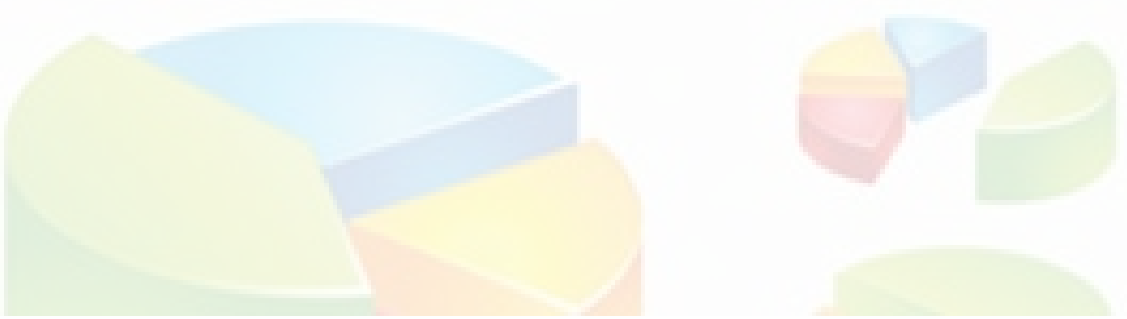
This table shows the % of Santa Cruz County children that re-entered foster care within 12 months of being discharged to permanency.

Source: California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP)

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT CHILD WELFARE YOUTH WHO RE-ENTER CARE?

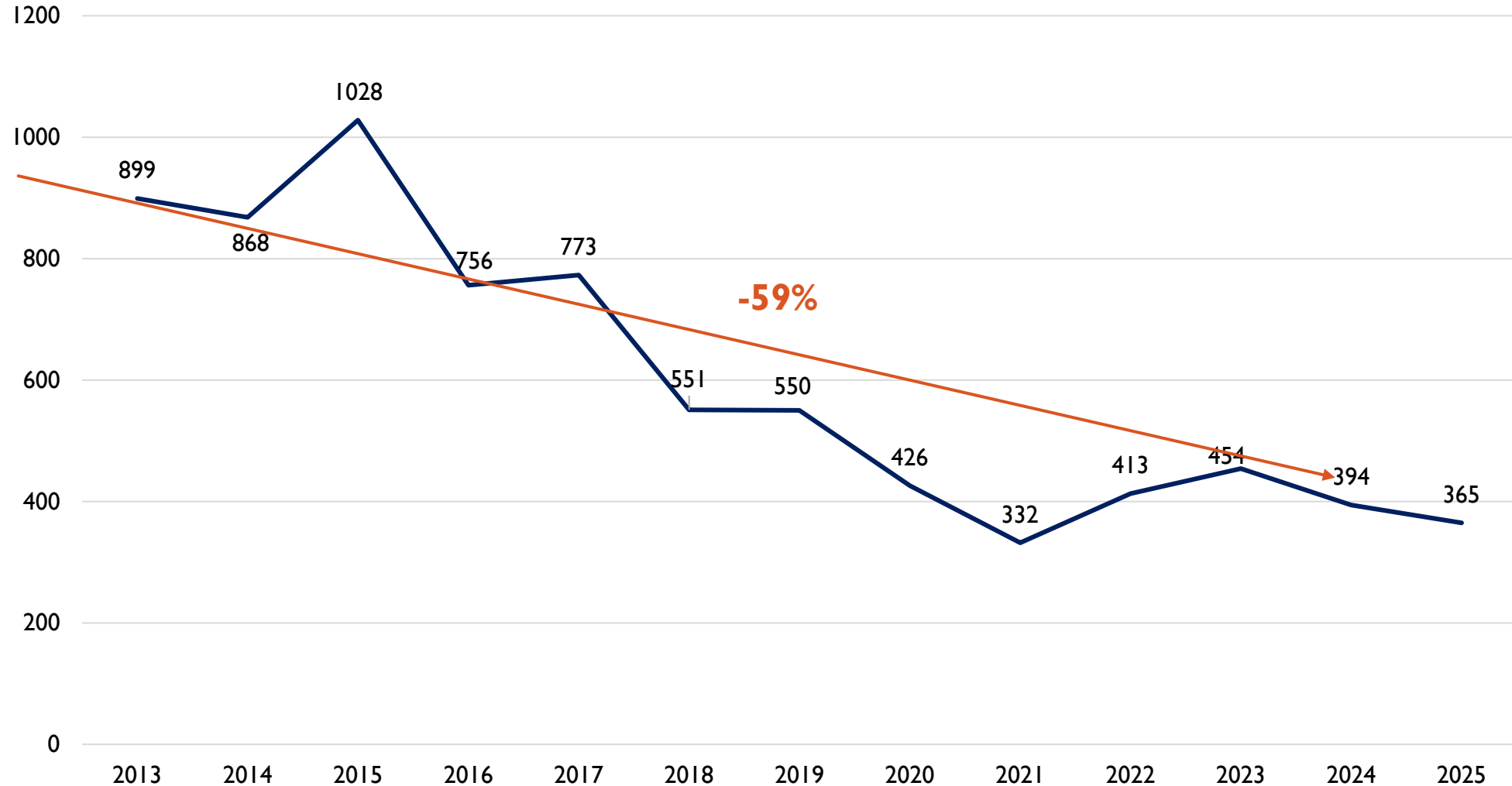
- The number of children re-entering care is small. 100% of them were children who reunified with their parents.
- Reasons for re-entry are often due to complex, persistent parental needs (e.g., substance use disorder + chronic mental health conditions).
- Contributing to these re-entries is the lack of strong hand-offs to post-reunification services or other supportive interventions at the time of exit.



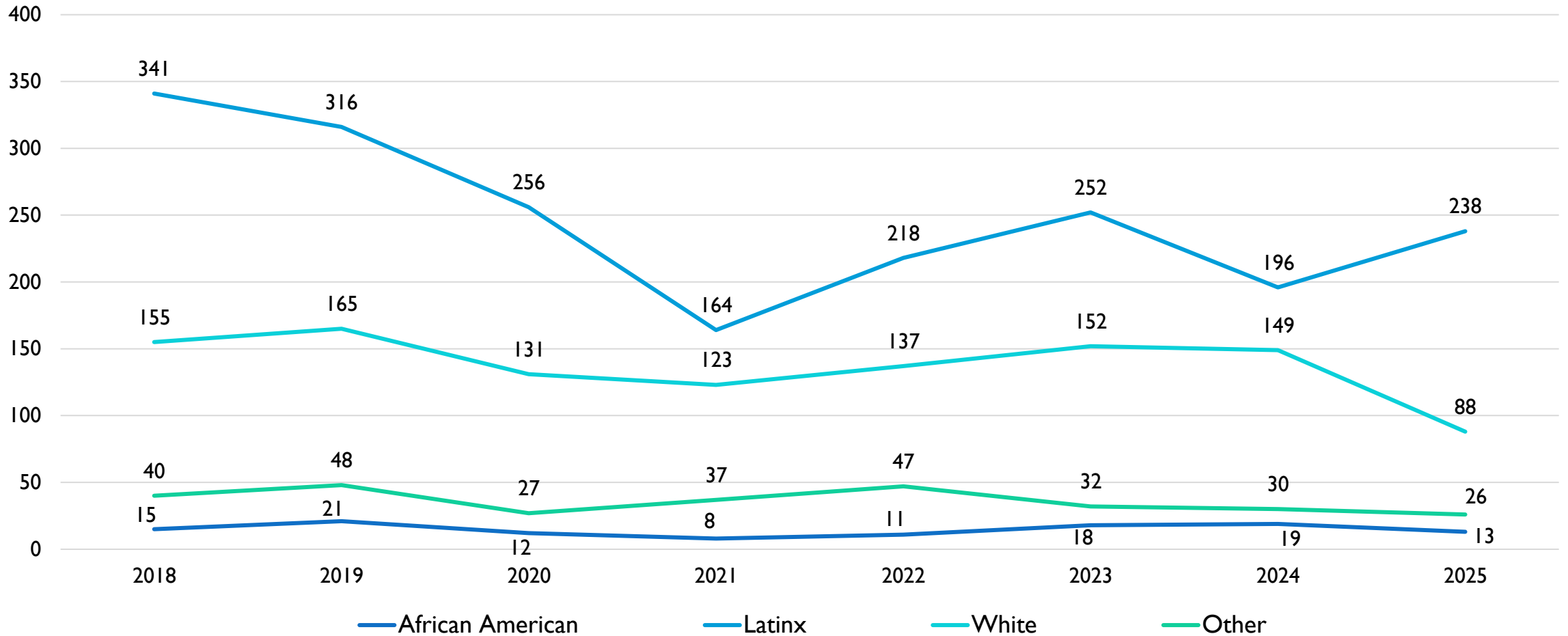


Probation Data Review

LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRESTS & CITATIONS OF YOUTH



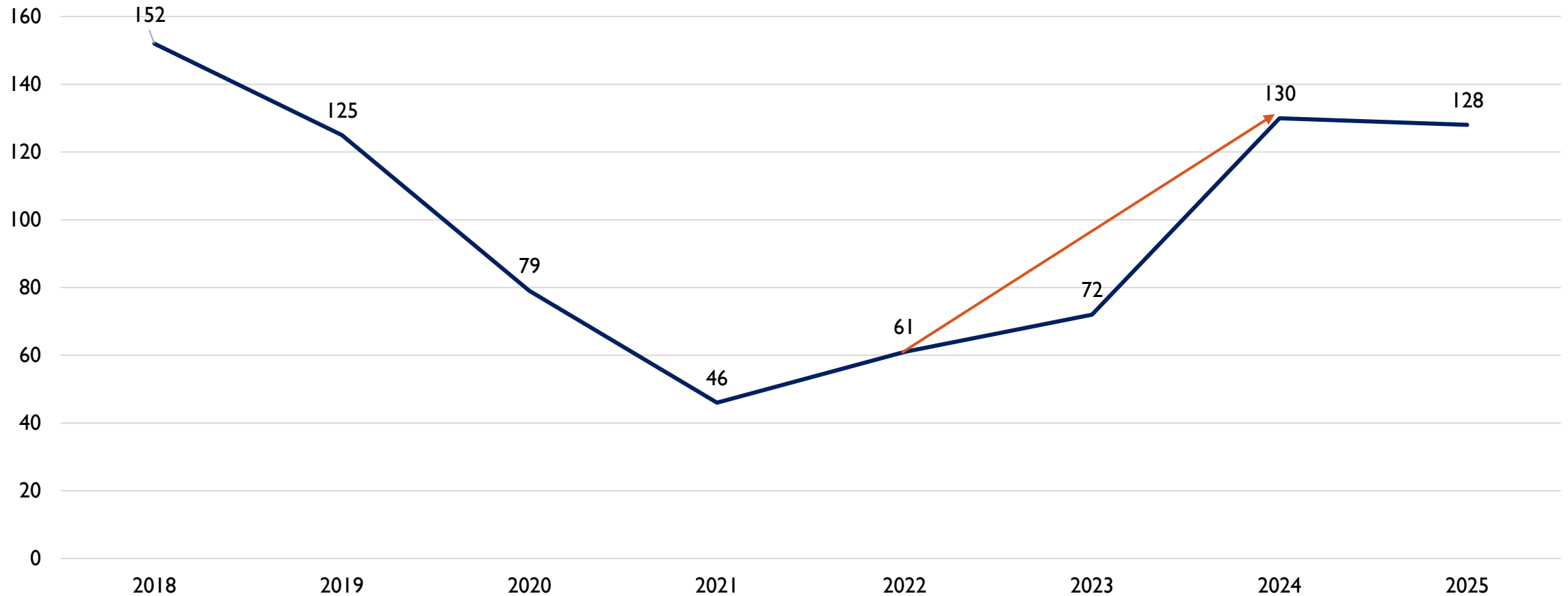
ARRESTS & CITATIONS OF YOUTH BY ETHNICITY



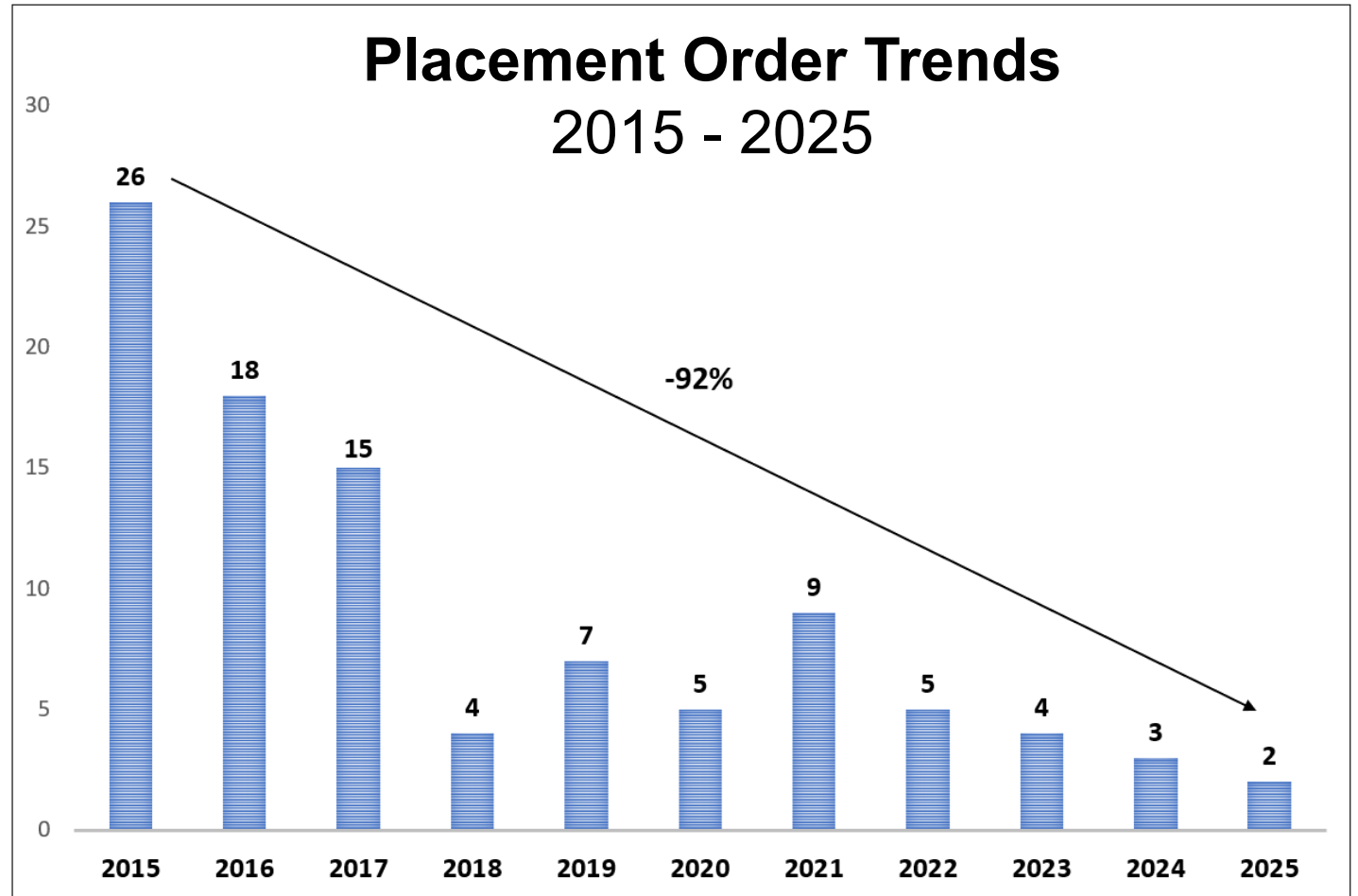
PROBATION YOUTH PLACED ON DIVERSION

2022 – 2023 = 18% Increase

2023 – 2024 = 81% Increase



OVER LAST 10 YEARS,
NEW PLACEMENT
ORDERS FOR
PROBATION YOUTH
HAVE DECLINED BY
92%



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT PROBATION YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE?

- Average age of youth in probation placement was 16 years 10 months (2021-2025)
- 75 -80% of probation youth entering foster care were Latinx
- 44 total youth entered care in last 5 years... Yet 32 of these youth are with family today:
 - 47% – achieved permanency under age 18
 - 53% – returned to family between ages of 18-21 years



SIP STRATEGIES

PRIORITIES FOR FCS AND JPD FOR 2026-2030



WHAT INFORMED THE 2026-2030 SIP?

**Stakeholder
Meetings**

Peer Review

**Outcome
Data & Trends**

Focus Groups

**Environmental
Scan**

**Prevention
Focus**

CURRENT STATUS OF SIP

- 2026-2030 SIP approved by the California Department of Social Services
- 2026-2030 SIP docketed on Feb 24th Board of Supervisors meeting for approval
- Implementation Leads assigned for each SIP strategy
- Implementation planning activities underway



SIP STRATEGIES AND LEADS

STRATEGY	LEAD
1. Aftercare Enhancements – Enhance aftercare planning and connection to prevention providers by preparing families for exiting the system from the start.	Yesenia Salinas (FCS)
2. Improve Parent Engagement – Better engage parents in meeting individualized case goals through targeted educational and support activities.	Stephanie Vikati (FCS)
3. Increase Networks of Support – Expand the circle of natural and community-based support for every family entering the system.	Melissa Delgadillo (FCS)
4. Promote Family Connections – Strengthen community & family support networks to promote permanency for probation youth.	Jimmy Cook (JPD)

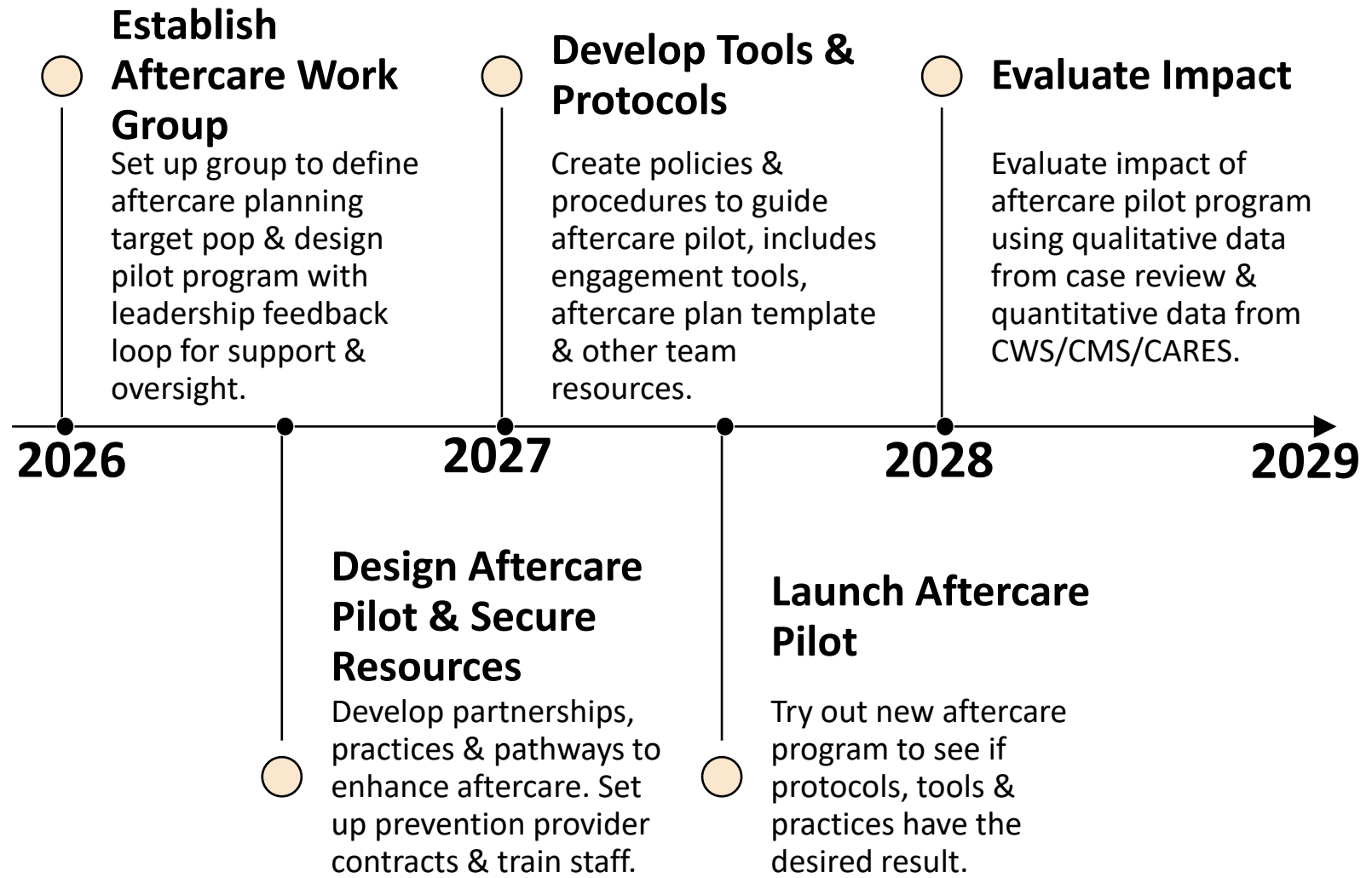
A COMMITMENT TO IMPACT RACIAL DISPARITY

Utilizing a racial equity framework for implementing the SIP Strategies by:

- Raising awareness of implicit and explicit biases in individuals, policies and agency culture that may negatively impact outcomes.
- Promoting a workplace culture committed to inclusion, equity and belonging.
- Aligning policies, procedures, and practices with principles of fairness and equity to better serve populations harmed by historic trauma, systemic racism, and prejudice.

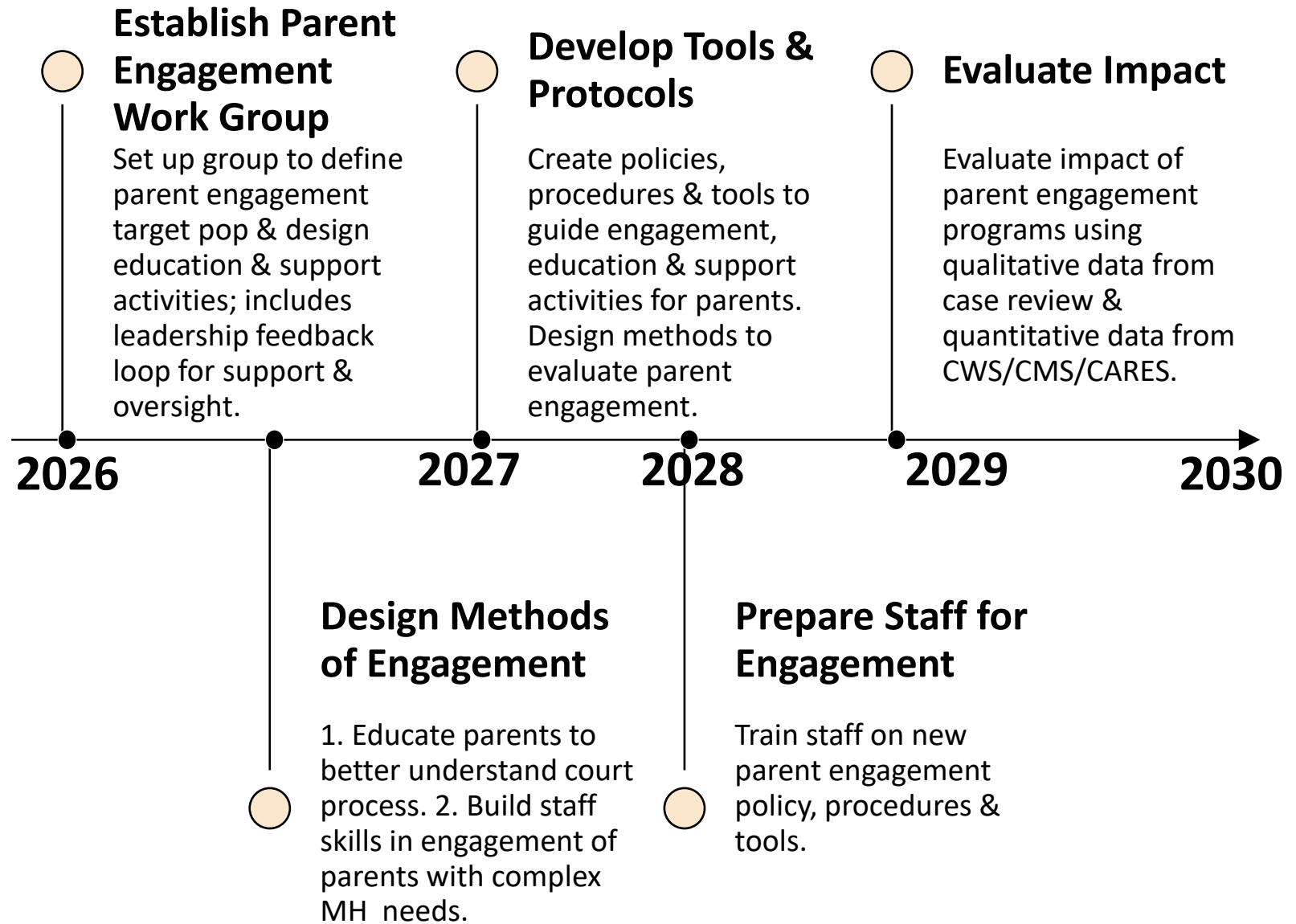
SIP Strategy #1: Aftercare Enhancements

Lead:
Yesenia Salinas



SIP Strategy #2: Improve Parent Engagement

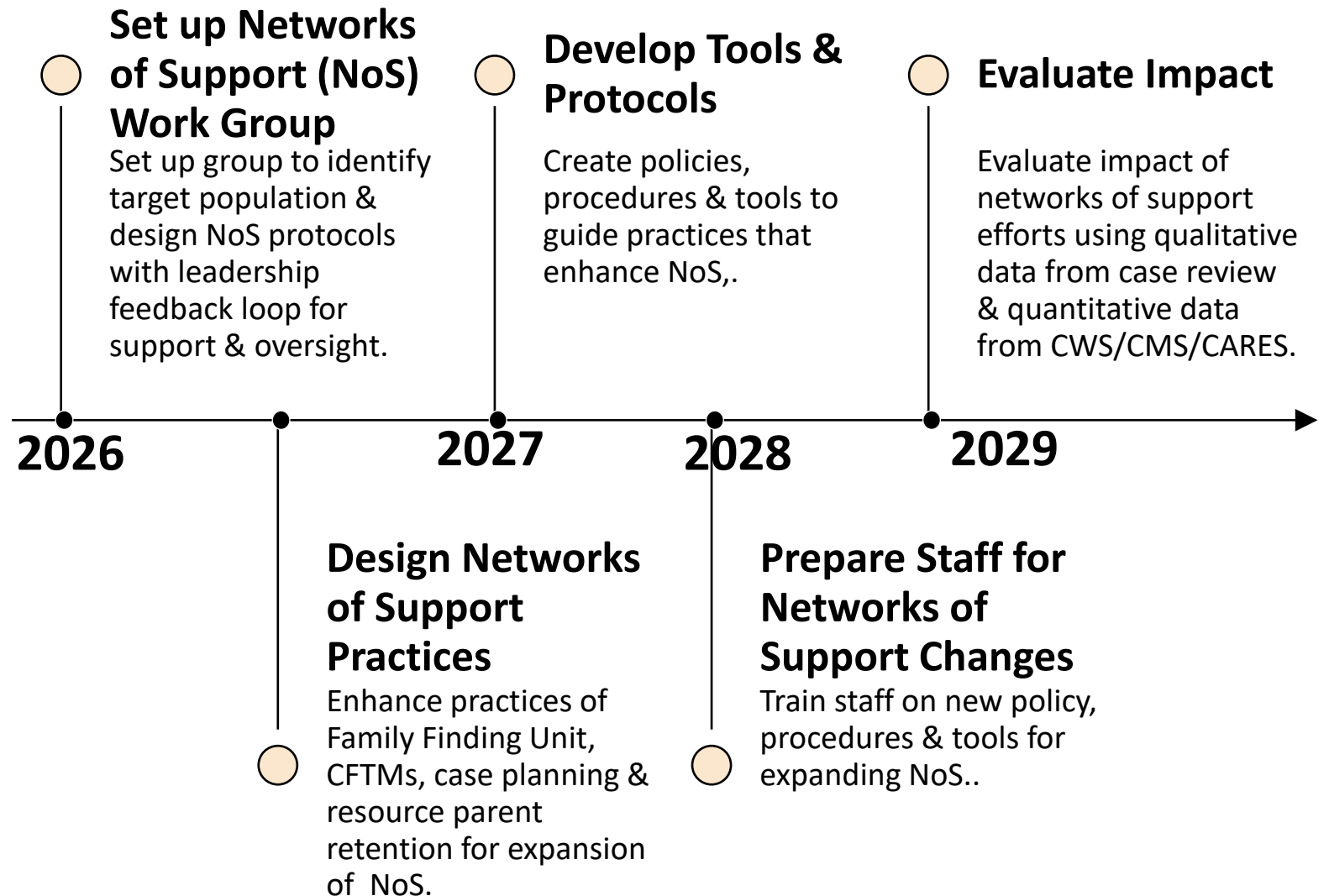
Lead:
Stephanie Vikati



SIP Strategy #3:

Increase Networks of Support

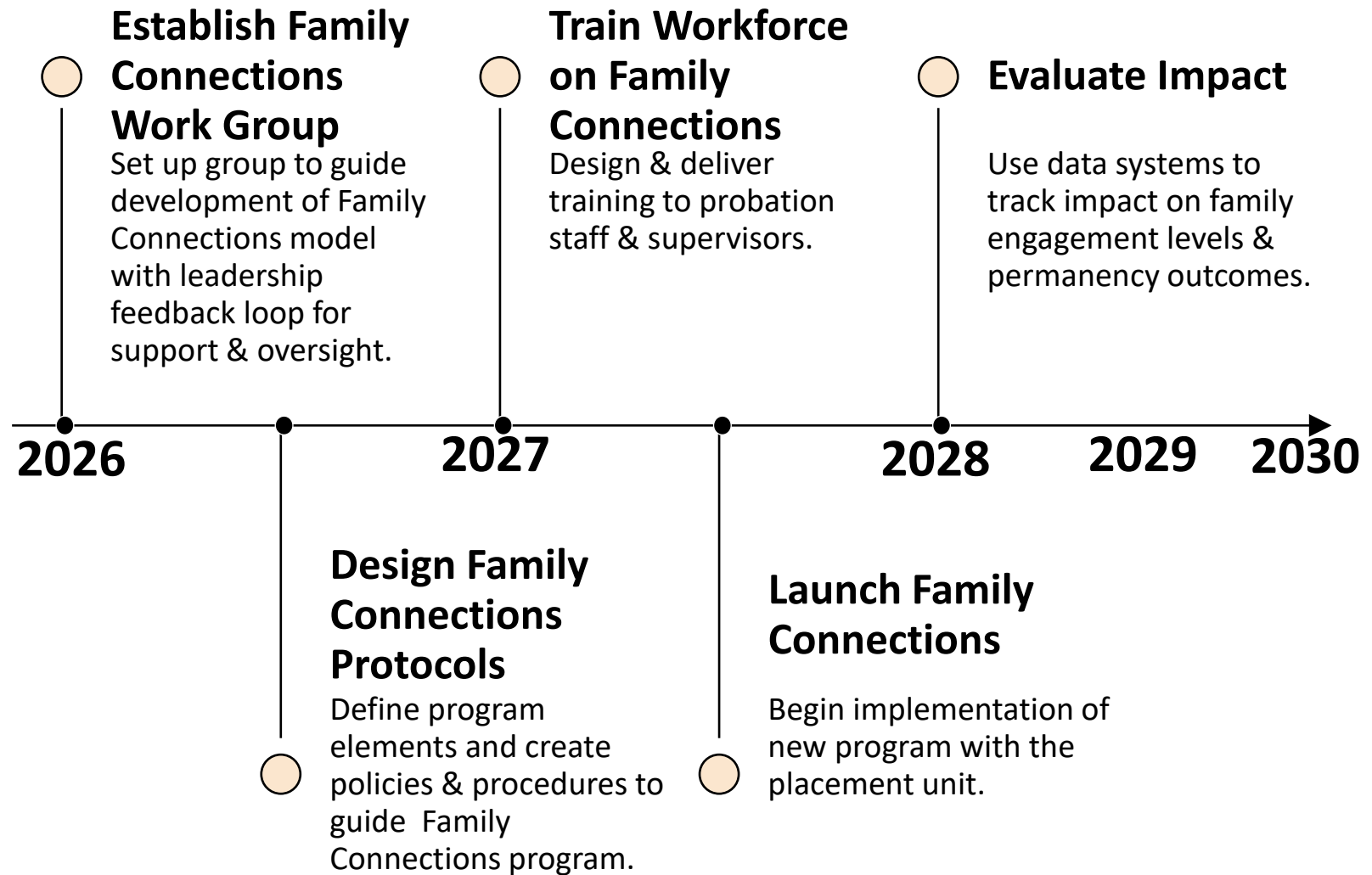
Lead:
Melissa Delgadillo



SIP Strategy #4:

Promote Family Connections for Probation Youth

Lead:
Jimmy Cook



PREPARING FOR 5-YEAR TIME HORIZON

- Understanding your role as a SIP Steering Committee member
- Calendar of Meetings
 - Quarterly, 2nd Monday of Month, 2026 – 2030
 - In Person at Simpkins Family Center
- Implementation support to Leads during Year 1

PREPARING FOR 5-YEAR TIME HORIZON

The role of the Santa Cruz County
SIP Steering Committee is to...

Advisors

...collectively apply expertise, critical thinking, and insights through quarterly consultation and input on the progress of SIP strategy implementation.

Progress Monitors

Accountability Partners

Cheer Leaders

PREPARING FOR 5-YEAR TIME HORIZON

Mark Your Calendar



2026 Meeting Dates:

- Monday, May 11, 2026
- Monday, August 10, 2026
- Monday, November 9, 2026

**All at 12:00pm – 1:30pm
at Simpkins Center**

**See Calendar
Handout for All
Meeting Dates**



INSPIRATION FOR THE ROAD AHEAD:

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

2026-2030 SIP STRATEGIES

1. Aftercare Enhancements
2. Improve Parent Engagement
3. Increase Networks of Support
4. Family Connections for JPD Youth

- What would successful achievement of this strategy look like?
- What can you, your colleagues, or your agency do to contribute to this strategy's success?



HIGHLIGHTS FROM DISCUSSIONS

2026-2030 SIP STRATEGIES

1. Aftercare Enhancements
2. Improve Parent Engagement
3. Increase Networks of Support
4. Family Connections for JPD Youth

- What would successful achievement of this strategy look like?



- What can you, your colleagues, or your agency do to contribute to this strategy's success?



WRAP UP

CLOSURE & NEXT STEPS



THANK YOU



- Next Meeting Date for SIP Steering Committee:
 - Mon. May 11, 2026, 12pm – 1:30pm
 - In Person at Simpkins Center
- Information from discussions will be shared with Strategy Workgroups
- Closing remarks