



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY PREVENTION AND POPULATION HEALTH TASK FORCE

**COMMUNITY PREVENTION AND
POPULATION HEALTH TASK FORCE**

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**Damon Nagami
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May 31, 2022

Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office
211 West Temple Street
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Los Angeles, CA 90012

COMMUNITY PREVENTION AND POPULATION HEALTH TASK FORCE'S SUPPORT OF THE RESTORATIVE ENHANCED DIVERSION FOR YOUTH (REDY) PROGRAM

Dear District Attorney's Office,

As members of the Los Angeles County Community Prevention and Population Health Task Force (Task Force), we commend you and your office on the policy outlined in your November 2021 launch of the pre-filing diversion program for youth known as the Restorative Enhanced Diversion for Youth (REDY) program. We are confident that this restorative justice model will prove effective toward supporting public health, safety, and community healing, as it will provide essential services to those youth under the age of 18 who have been involved in the justice system.

The Task Force is comprised of a group of community advocates who are organized under the auspices of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH). The Task Force exists to promote health, equity, and community well-being in Los Angeles County with a focus on population health improvement. As a Task Force, we offer recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, the Health Agency, and the Department of Public Health on public health priorities, initiatives and practices that will achieve health equity and healthy communities. To that end, the members of the Task Force are particularly concerned with highlighting and putting forward key recommendations to the Board of Supervisors and critical County partners which impact the public's health and address health inequities and racial disparities.

As a Task Force committed to effective, racially just and *prevention-first* approaches to improving community health, safety and wellbeing, we want to emphasize the critical importance of prioritizing County resources to provide the essentials of health in marginalized and under-resourced Black, Brown, Asian and Indigenous communities. Among these priorities, we are particularly concerned about the status of youth in the carceral/detention system.

Community Prevention and Population Health Task Force Members:

Sonya Young Aadam · Manal Aboelata · Everardo Alvizo · Tamika Butler · Betzabel Estudillo · Dahlia Ferlito
Michelle Fluke · Cathy Friedman · Nancy Halpern Ibrahim · Anisha Hingorani · Nomsa Khalfani · Jim Mangia
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As you well know, a bulk of research points to the negative effects of incarcerating youth offenders. Incarcerating youth has little positive impact in reducing crime. Incarcerated youth face disproportionately higher morbidity and higher mortality compared to the general adolescent population. Dental health, reproductive health, and mental health needs are particularly high, likely as a result of lower access to care, engagement in high-risk behaviors, and underlying health disparities. Violence exposure and injury also contribute to the health disparities seen in this population. Further, juvenile incarceration itself is an important determinant of health, likely correlating with worse health and social functioning across the life span. (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2015.09.004>) Finally, among the many negative effects of incarcerating young people is the fact that incarceration fails to address both the young person's developmental and criminogenic needs. (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2013.01.007>)

We believe that REDY will promote equity as it addresses racial disparity within the criminal legal system and aims to curtail mass incarceration by diverting young people. Youth deserve the opportunity to be connected with services that support their development, encourage accountability for their actions, and keep them away from jails and prisons.

We, therefore, applaud your policies around restorative justice for youth, increasing their likelihood for health, stability and rehabilitation instead of recidivism. We wish to support you as you begin implementation. Please add us to your outreach and networking efforts. We wish to hear of your progress as the program moves forward. Please contact our staff liaison, Jocelyn Ramirez, at jramirez@ph.lacounty.gov.

Sincerely,



Damon Nagami,
Task Force Co-Chair



Theresa (Missy) Nitescu, MS, RDN, CHSP
Task Force Co-Chair

Cc: Board Health Deputies
Board Justice Deputies
Dr. Barbara Ferrer, Director, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
Community Prevention and Population Health Task Force