

## Youth Survey

Direct input from youth is essential to properly assess certain components of the program’s activities. In order to capture youth feedback, a youth survey was developed that includes data elements that map onto the following four activities: youth and family engagement, youth voice and choice, empowerment, and historical, cultural, and gender issues. In developing the survey, we first drew from common questions in other youth surveys (e.g., [Youth Thrive; Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium Youth-Adult Survey]). After reviewing these resources, the internal research team narrowed down the question items based on the specific activities in the logic model. Then, the National Center for Youth Law held several listening sessions with youth as well as with members of the CSEC Action Team’s Advisory Board<sup>1</sup> to identify the most appropriate questions, modify the wording of questions to make them youth-friendly and clear, and receive any additional feedback about the survey and how it should and could be used. Final revisions were made based on the feedback.

The survey is intended to promote the integration of youth feedback into probation practice and evaluation activities – both at the individual and program level. There are different ways that the survey can be used, therefore we have made it free to use and modify based on how a jurisdiction decides to use it. Primarily, we developed it for research and evaluation purposes, specifically to support the assessment of implementation fidelity of the Child Trafficking Unit. However, there is also great value in using the survey to inform and guide practice improvement for probation departments and other agencies including community-based organizations serving youth. In addition, there is potential to adapt the survey to be used in other agencies (e.g., child welfare, mental health, etc.). Youth participants in the listening sessions indicated that their input on how services are going in real time is not often sought; this survey tool can be used to fill that gap.

How the survey is used will influence the survey administration protocol. If the survey is used for research and evaluation, then the survey and its administration should be approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). This allows an external researcher or evaluator to collect and analyze the data, the results of which should be subsequently shared with probation in a de-identified format. If the survey is used internally for practice improvement, then the survey can be administered by the Probation Department without IRB approval. Either way, the purpose of the survey, who is receiving the information, and how the information will be used must be made clear to the youth respondent.

If used for real time practice improvement within an agency, some special considerations exist. First, if the survey data are collected and reviewed by probation (or another agency directly serving youth), youth may not be as willing or open in responding to the survey. Strategies to ensure that youth feedback is voluntary, safe to provide, and honest should be discussed in-depth prior to administration. For example, a Probation Department could identify one person, ideally a supervisor, in the department or a specialized unit to receive and review the data. This person can then share the feedback in an aggregated/de-identified form to the department/unit.

Second, youth participants in our listening sessions indicated a desire to have direct contact with a supervisor if their needs or concerns weren’t being addressed by their service providers or Probation Officer. Because of this, we included an optional open-ended question where a youth respondent could provide their contact information and ask for individual follow-up. If this is used, then clear protocols must be laid out regarding how and who will respond to youth to ensure that any urgent needs, including issues that may require mandatory reporting, are attended to in a timely fashion. It is possible, that a jurisdiction may want an external party, such as a community-based partner, advocacy organization, or ombudsman, to follow up with youth, as needed, in order to provide additional opportunities for youth to provide feedback in a confidential and safe way and to seek resolution of any identified issues. If a jurisdiction is not able to identify an appropriate process for responding to and addressing youth concerns, the open-ended question option should be excluded.

<sup>1</sup> <https://youthlaw.org/news/first-its-kind-advisory-board-led-survivors-csec>

Lastly, agencies should consider frequency of administration of the survey. If being used to inform ongoing, individual practice-level decisions, it should be administered regularly – such as every 3-6 months - to see if there is improvement over time. Ideally, there would also be a way to anonymously track individual responses over time (e.g., with anonymous unique identifiers) to monitor improvement or lack thereof, which could trigger a higher-level response as needed.

Overall, the hope with the youth survey is to provide an option and a resource for soliciting and incorporating youth feedback into both program evaluation and direct practice improvement. Youth who are marginalized, including through exploitation and system involvement, are often stripped of their power and control over what happens in their lives. Yet, they hold incredible knowledge and expertise about what they have experienced, and what they need to heal and thrive. This survey, as well as listening sessions and other methods for welcoming input from youth should be used, and the information heeded, to improve the programs and practices for young people.

Download a free,  
editable, Word  
Document version of  
the survey, [here](#).



# Youth Survey About Probation Services

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This survey was developed as part of a federally funded project to assess the service delivery model of a specialized unit in a Probation Department for youth experiencing commercial sexual exploitation. The survey is intended to promote the integration of youth feedback into Probation practice and evaluation activities. The survey can be freely used and/or modified, in part, to match the survey administration protocol of varying jurisdictions.

## Acknowledgements

This survey was developed by Carly B. Dierkhising, PhD, Mae Ackerman-Brimberg, MSW, JD, Bo-Kyung Elizabeth Kim, MSW, PhD, Erin French, JD, & Jacquelyne Sandoval, MSW with input from CSEC Action Team Advisory Board Members Ashley Chesney, Executive Director for Set Free Monterey Bay and Reshay Collier, lived experience expert; former Survivor Leadership Academy for Youth (SLAY) members, Layyana Hawkins, teacher, Jewell Stewart and Catherine Calvillo, and Michelle Guymon, Director of the Los Angeles County Probation Department's Child Trafficking Unit.

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For questions about the use or development of this survey please contact:

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# Feedback on Probation Services



**Your voice, opinions, and feelings matter.** This survey was created to help the Probation Department understand how best to work with you and other young people. It includes topics such as youth and family engagement, collaboration, youth voice and choice, and services/resources. Your answers will be used to help your probation officer serve you better. Your answers may also be used to make changes that may help other youth in the future.



**Taking this survey is voluntary,** which means you do not have to take this survey if you don't want to. If at any point you decide you do not want to take the survey, you can stop. You may skip any question that you don't want to answer.



**This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers.** It is important you answer each question honestly. This survey may take you less than 10 minutes, but you may take as much time as you need.



**This survey is anonymous, meaning that no one will know if you took the survey.** Your probation officer will not know whether you took the survey, and they will not see any of your individual answers. The information in this survey will be going to [a supervisor/designated person in the Probation Department]. The purpose of [ ] receiving your responses is to make sure that everything is going okay with young people on Probation, to address problems, and/or highlight successes that young people bring up in the survey.

*[Recommended addition for agencies/communities/organizations that are able to follow up with youth.]*

**If you have questions or want to talk to someone,** towards the end of the survey there is a section where you may ask for resources or to talk to someone about things that came up in the survey. If you wish, you may give your name and contact information so that someone can follow up with you.

## Youth and Family Engagement

Circle the answer choice that tells us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My probation officer tries to build a relationship with me.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel supported by my probation officer.	1	2	3	4	5
My probation officer tries to build relationships with my family and other important people in my life.	1	2	3	4	5

**I feel my probation officer contacts me (check one box):**

- Too much
- Just the right amount
- Not often enough
- Never

## Collaboration

Circle the answer choice that tells us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I know that there is a team of people supporting me.	1	2	3	4	5
I know where to go or who to reach if I have a problem.	1	2	3	4	5
When people on my team say they are going to do something to help me, they follow through.	1	2	3	4	5

**The person/people that I feel supported by are my: (check all that apply)**

- Probation Officer
- Social Worker
- Advocate
- Case Manager
- Therapist/Clinician
- Parent/Relative/Caregiver
- None of the above
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Youth Voice and Choice

Circle the answer choice that tells us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel comfortable talking to my probation officer about my opinions on decisions in my life (e.g., where I want to live, school).	1	2	3	4	5
I am given all the information I need to make decisions in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
My probation officer respects my input and ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
I help set my own goals.	1	2	3	4	5
My probation officer celebrates my achievements and strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't feel judged when I share my concerns or ideas with my team.	1	2	3	4	5

## Services/Resources

Circle the answer choice that tells us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My probation officer connects me with services and resources I need or want.	1	2	3	4	5
If a program, provider, or service is not working for me, I feel comfortable talking to my probation officer to get it changed.	1	2	3	4	5
There are services and resources I have asked for but am still not getting.	1	2	3	4	5

## Race/Ethnicity, Culture and Gender

Circle the answer choice that tells us how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My probation officer is respectful of my gender identity.	1	2	3	4	5
My probation officer is respectful of my sexual orientation.	1	2	3	4	5
My probation officer uses my correct name and pronouns.	1	2	3	4	5



**My probation officer connects me to:**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Services and activities related to my racial, ethnic, or cultural background (ex. skin and hair care, foods from my culture, connection to community elders, rituals/ceremonies).	1	2	3	4	5
Service providers who look like me, if I request it.	1	2	3	4	5
Service providers that speak the language I prefer using.	1	2	3	4	5
People and activities related to my religious or spiritual background and practices (e.g., church, temple, mosque, elders, rituals/ceremonies).	1	2	3	4	5

**Is there anything else you want to tell us about your probation officer or about Probation?**

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## Optional

[Addition for agencies/communities/organizations that plan to follow up with youth]

**This is totally optional.**

**If you would like someone from [Probation] to follow up with you about anything from this survey, please include your name and contact information.**

<hr/>
Your name
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Your phone number
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Your email address