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SOME LOW CLOUDS, THEN SUN **78 • 56** FORECAST, B6 | **SUNDAY, JULY 29, 2018** | santamariatimes.com

Reducing incarceration

-42%

Fewer youths in the juvenile probation system since 2013

Emphasis on juvenile rehabilitation programs taking center stage

GINA KIM
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A snapshot of 597 juveniles placed under probation supervision in Santa Barbara County in 2017 shows 53 were incarcerated in juvenile hall, a number 38 percent higher than the average in nearby counties.

The reason, according to Probation Department officials, is that the county uses fewer alternatives to incarceration for low-level offenders than comparable counties like San

Luis Obispo, Monterey, Santa Cruz and Ventura.

Incarcerating misdemeanor offenders, and exposing them to serious, high-risk criminals increases recidivism and ups the chances of them becoming more criminally sophisticated, said Kim Shean, deputy chief probation officer.

To bring the county more in line with the average and address priorities in the Renew '22 budget initiative, the Probation Department is reducing caseloads and diverting more low-level cases away from the court system.

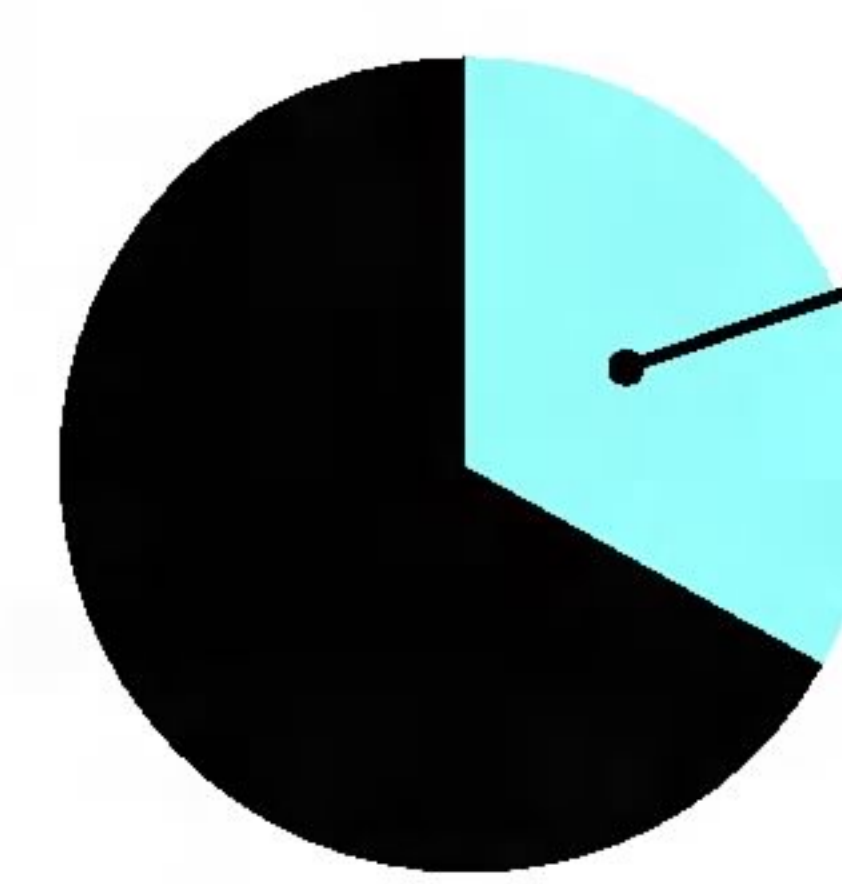
The process

Unlike adult court, juvenile court has always focused more on rehabili-

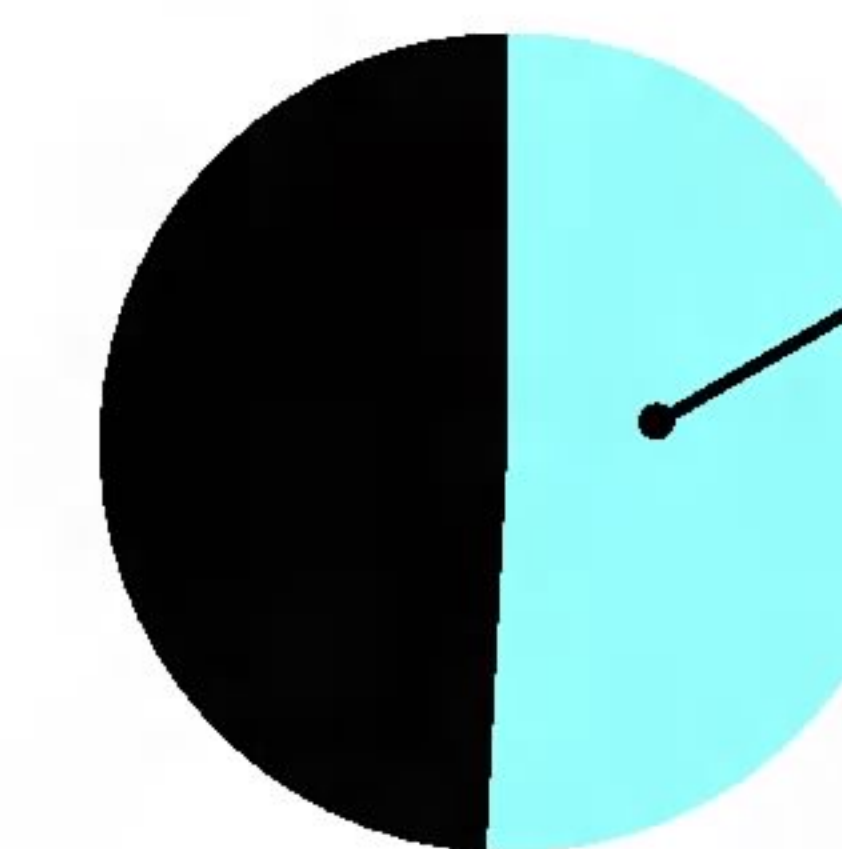
tation rather than punishment.

"It's always been in the code — juvenile consequences aren't about straight punishment; it's not like adult court where you look at the crime, then match it with the sentencing associated with that charge," said Judge Arthur Garcia, who presides over the Santa Maria Juvenile Court.

As a judge who's been on and off the bench at Juvenile Court for over two decades, Garcia has seen all types of cases, and the different trends of rehabilitative services come and go. He only deals with cases that the Probation Department feels are necessary to refer to the court after the district



Youths in Juvenile Hall in custody for a technical probation violation



Youths in Los Prietos Boys Camp whose most serious offense was a misdemeanor

SOURCE: Chief Probation Officer of California, Board of State and Community Corrections

Please see **REFORM**, Page A7

GRADUATION HELD FOR EXPLORERS AT RIGHETTI HIGH



FRANK COWAN, CONTRIBUTOR

Sheriff Bill Brown inspects an Explorer prior to the 2018 Central Coast Law Enforcement Explorer Academy graduation ceremony at Righetti High School on Saturday. Forty recruits from Santa Maria, Lompoc, Guadalupe and Santa Barbara received certificates for completing in the intense two-week training program. **See story on page B1.**

Pope accepts US cardinal's resignation

FRANCES D'EMILIO
Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — In a move seen as unprecedented, Pope Francis has effectively stripped U.S. prelate Theodore McCarrick of his cardinal's title following allegations of sexual abuse, including one involving an 11-year-old boy. The Vatican announced Saturday that Francis ordered McCarrick to conduct a "life of prayer and penance" before a church trial is held.

Breaking with past practice, Francis decided to act swiftly on the resignation offered by the emeritus archbishop of Washington, D.C., even before the accusations are investigated by church officials. McCarrick was previously one of the highest, most visible Catholic church officials in the United States and was heavily involved in the church's yearslong response to allegations of priestly abuse there.

Francis received McCarrick's letter offering to resign from the College of Cardinals on Friday evening, after a spate of allegations that the 88-year-old prelate had for years sexually abused boys and had sexual misconduct with adult seminarians.

The pope then ordered McCarrick's "suspension from the exercise of any public ministry, together with the obligation to remain in a house yet to be indicated to him, for a life of prayer and penance until the accusations made against him are examined in a regular canonical trial," the Vatican said.

Please see **POPE**, Page A7

2 kids, great-grandma die in wildfire

JONATHAN J. COOPER AND BRIAN MELLEY
Associated Press

REDDING, Calif. — The death count from a rapidly growing Northern California wildfire rose to five Saturday after two young children and their great-grandmother who had been unaccounted for were confirmed dead.

"My babies are dead," Sherry Bledsoe said through tears after she and family members met

with Shasta County sheriff's deputies.

Bledsoe's two children, James Roberts, 5, and Emily Roberts, 4, were stranded with her grandmother Melody Bledsoe, 70, when walls of flames swept through the family's rural property Thursday on the outskirts of Redding.

The three were among more than a dozen people reported missing after the furious wind-driven blaze took residents by

surprise and leveled several neighborhoods.

Shasta County Sheriff Tom Bosenko said he expects to find several of those people alive and just out of touch with loved ones. Officers have gone to homes of several people reported missing and found cars gone — a strong indication they fled.

The fire sparked Monday by a vehicle in forested hills grew to 127 square miles. It pushed southwest of Redding, the largest

city in the region, toward the tiny communities of Ono, Igo and Gas Point, where scorching heat, winds and bone-dry conditions complicated firefighting efforts.

It's now the largest fire burning in California. The winds that aided firefighters in keeping the flames from more populated areas were propelling at a frightening rate in unpredictable directions.

Please see **WILDFIRES**, Page A8

Experts: Urban sprawl, climate change boost wildfire risk



NOAH BERGER, ASSOCIATED PRESS

A structure burns as the Carr fire races along Highway 299 on Thursday near Redding.

SUDHIN THANAWALA AND JONATHAN J. COOPER
Associated Press

REDDING — A fire that started in a rural community in Northern California underscored a new reality in the state when days later it suddenly roared through neighborhoods on the edge of the city of Redding: Urban areas are increasingly vulnerable to wildfires.

In the last year, neighborhoods in the Northern California wine country city of Santa Rosa and the Southern California beach city of Ventura have been devastated.

Hotter weather attributed to climate change is drying out vegetation, creating more intense

fires that spread quickly from rural areas to city subdivisions, climate and fire experts say. But they also blame municipalities that are expanding housing into previously undeveloped areas.

"There are just places where there should not be subdivisions," said Kurt Henke, a former fire chief in Sacramento who now serves as a consultant to fire organizations. "We're not talking about a single family who wants to build a house in the woods. I'm talking about subdivisions encroaching into the wild land urban interface that put them in the path of these destructive fires."

Henke wants more funding from the state legislature to de-

ploy firefighters to areas where conditions are ripe for fast-moving fires, so they can respond quickly if a blaze breaks out.

The fire that affected Redding — a city of about 92,000 people about 250 miles north of San Francisco — started Monday about 10 miles west of the city before sweeping Thursday through the historic Gold Rush town of Shasta and nearby Keswick. It then jumped the Sacramento River and took out subdivisions on the western edge of Redding.

Redding sits at the northern end of the agricultural Central Valley, surrounded by a scenic

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DISCOVER DIGITAL



See all the photos from Saturday's high school football Media Day

AT SANTAMARIATIMES.COM

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CLASSIFIED	E1	LOTTERY	A2	PUZZLES	C4, C5
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Reform

From A1

attorney files a petition. Not every criminal juvenile case is filed with juvenile court, he noted.

Often, the vast majority of youths sent to juvenile hall “don’t think it’s a punishment,” Garcia said. Depending on the nature of the case, he chooses to send the young offender to either juvenile hall or the Los Prietos Boys Camp, whichever the judge believes will offer the best rehabilitation.

Los Prietos is a 96-bed, residential, correctional and treatment facility for 13- to 18-year-old boys that’s located approximately 20 miles north of Santa Barbara on 17 acres in the Los Padres National Forest.

Garcia sees each case as unique, and doesn’t consider quotas when choosing Los Prietos or juvenile hall.

“I never focus on statistics; you choose each child’s case individually, thoroughly vet them on a case-by-case basis and consider all probation reports,” he said. “You find out who the child is throughout the process — look for behavioral explanations. It’s an insightful process into their home life, family relationship, trauma if any, gang affiliations or family members involved in gangs, substance abuse and everything else.”

At the same time, “you can’t just simply say you can’t lock the child up ... you also have to consider public safety concerns if a serious offense was committed,” Garcia said.

“But is locking a child up the first thing you do? No.”

Unique outcomes

There are always youths who flourish at Los Prietos, juvenile hall, group homes or wherever they’re sent, as well as some who end up having more issues. The results vary from child to child, the judge said.

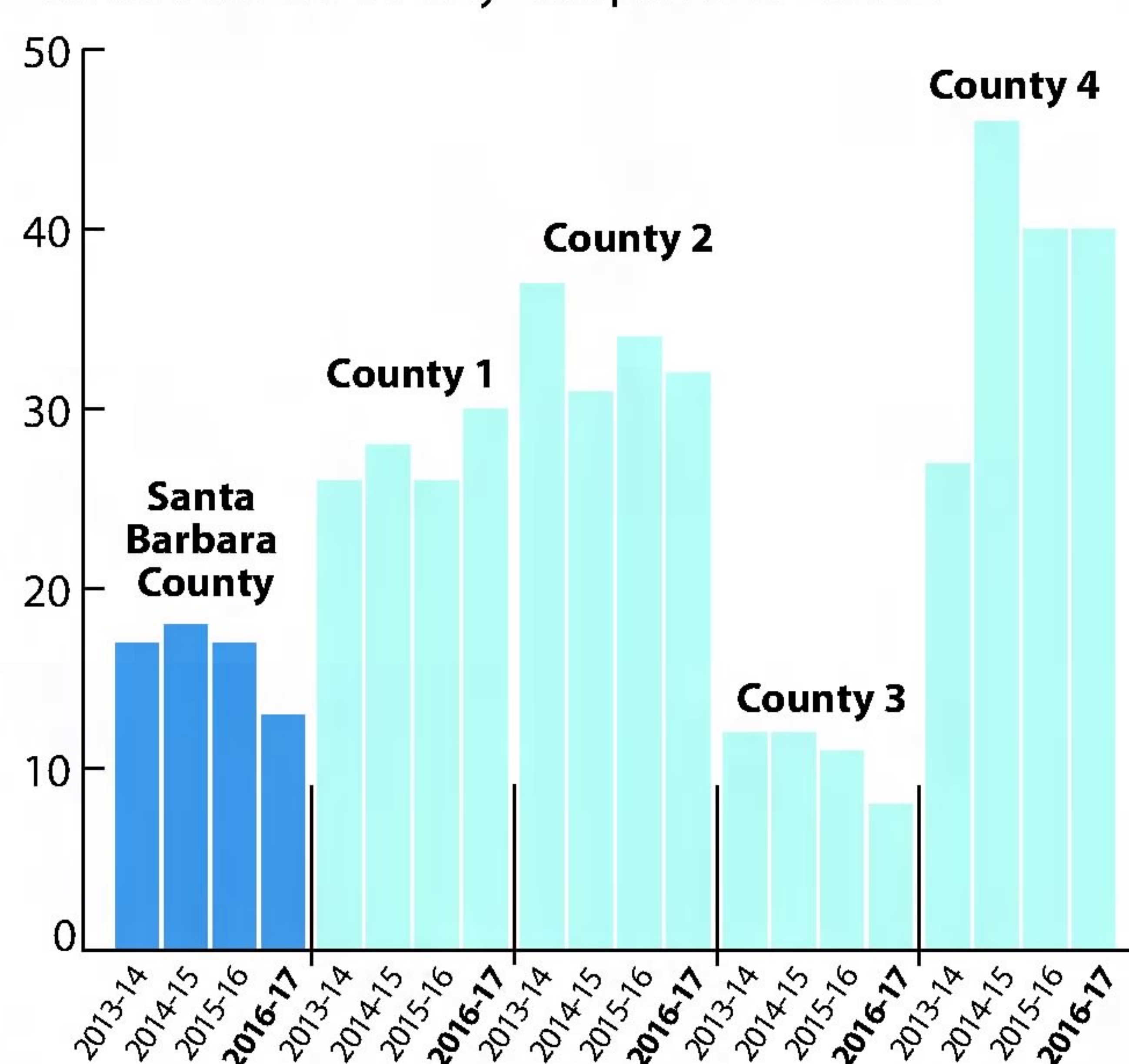
“Some rise above everything after completing a group home program and some are easily influenced and vulnerable to relapse, then revert back to their old ways,” Garcia said.

For many low-level offenses, diversion is usually a successful and safe practice, he said.

“Most children I contact with through the legal system get straightened out,

Diversion options

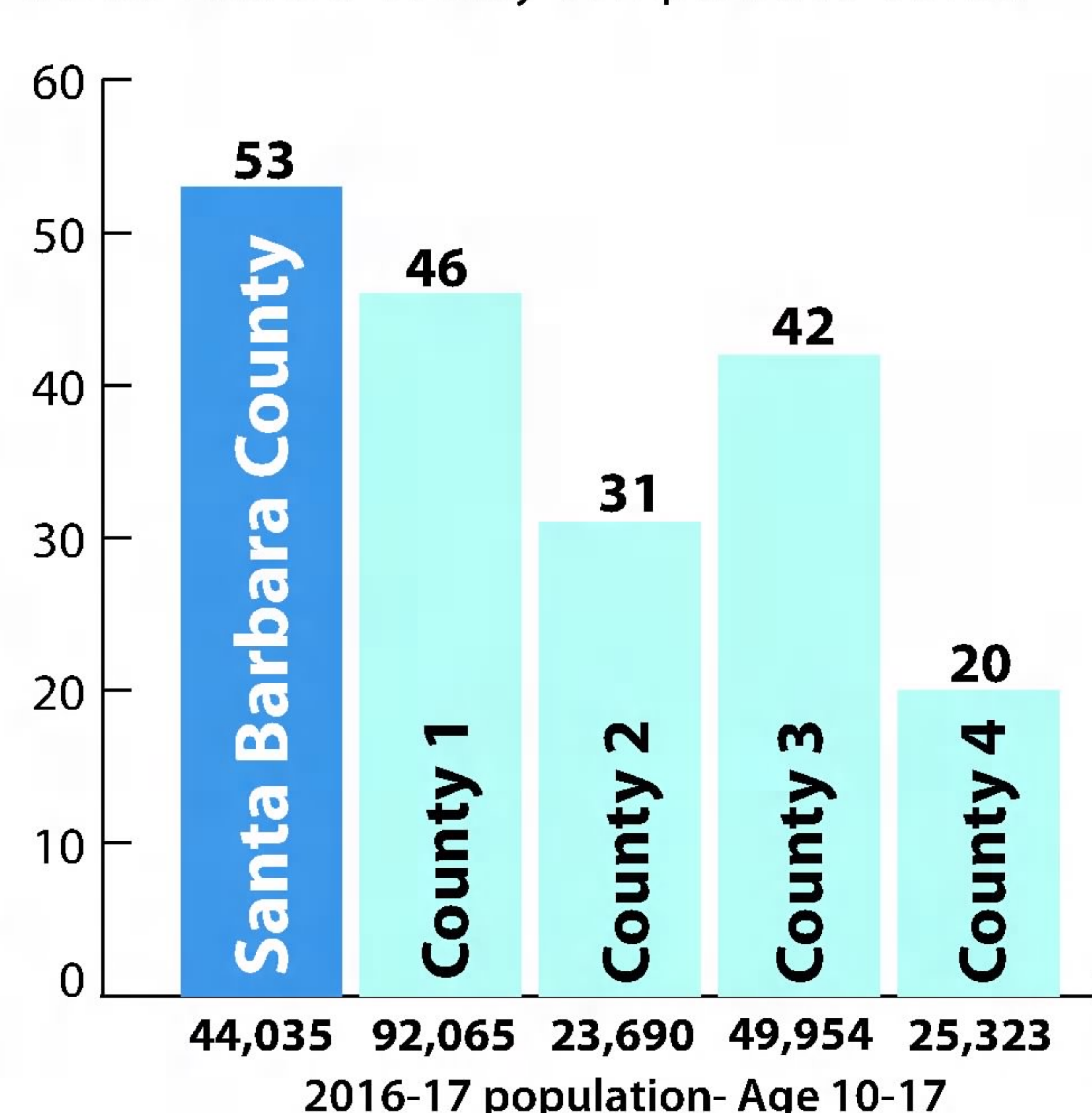
Percent using categories other than wardship
Santa Barbara County compared to others



SOURCE: Chief Probation Officer of California

Juvenile Hall population

Santa Barbara County compared to others



SOURCE: Board of State and Community Corrections

and there’s a high success rate for petitions that are given diversion programs as their sentence instead of incarceration.”

There have been a lot of buzzwords surrounding research backing juvenile justice reform, Garcia said, noting that Santa Barbara County’s Probation Department does a good job finding diversionary alternatives to incarceration.

“They always focus on words like ‘rehabilitation,’ ‘least-restrictive forms of detention,’ ‘engaging families’ and most currently, ‘evidence-based assessment,’ which are rehabilitative resources backed by research

that produces objective results for the child’s outcome after an offense occurred,” Garcia said.

While evidence-based assessment isn’t really a new method, the Probation Department “has always been innovative when looking for new methods to criminal justice reform,” he added. “We want to keep up with the national trends, and it’s always good to question your practices and see how you size up against other entities that are employing the methods we haven’t tried yet.”

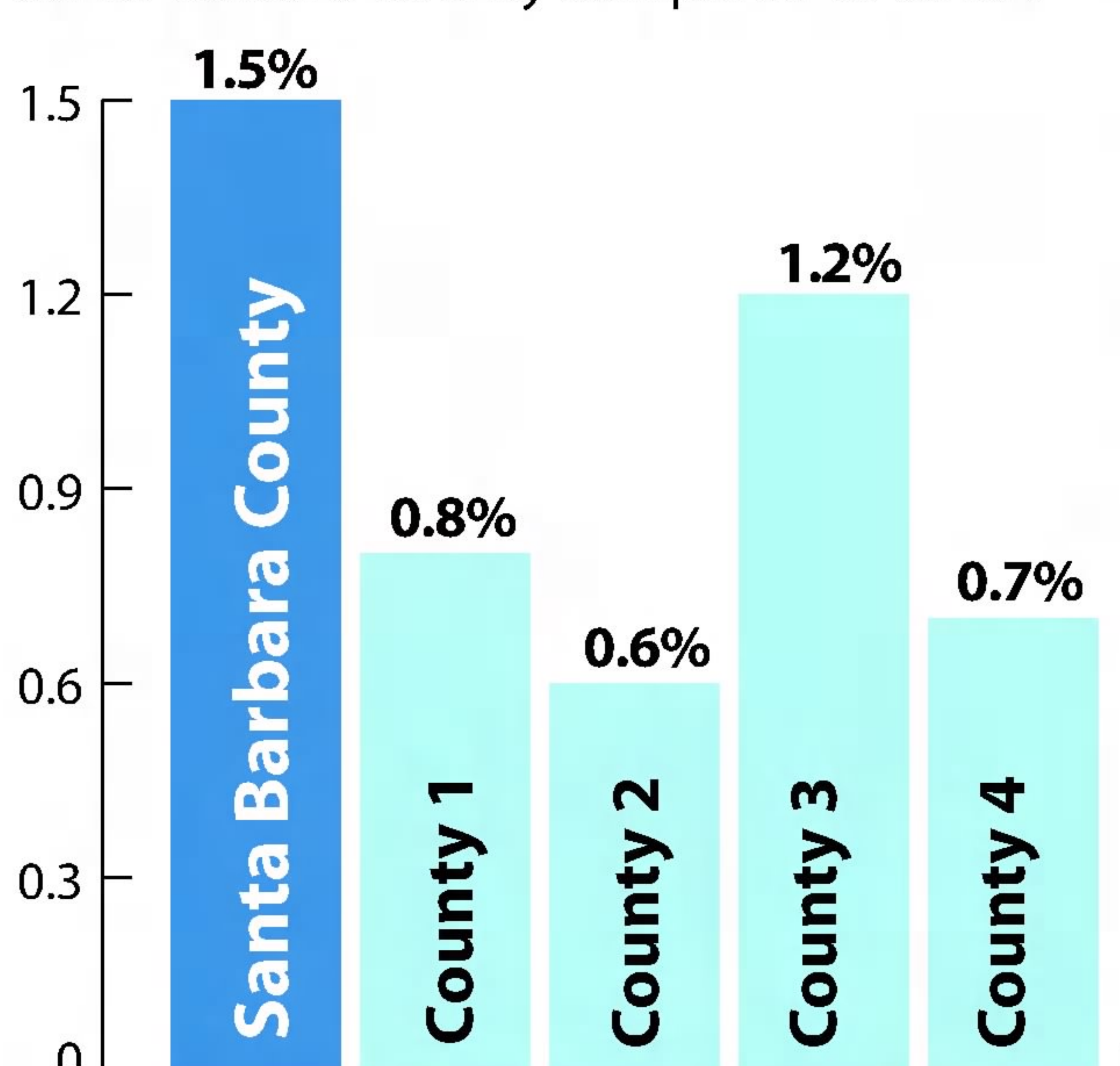
Looking at numbers

In August 2017, out of the 597 kids under probation supervision, early findings

Supervised juveniles

Percent ages 10-17, in 2016-17

Santa Barbara County compared to others



SOURCE: Department of Finance

show that a third of the youth in juvenile hall were in custody for a technical probation violation, and the most serious offense for over 50 percent of kids in Los Prietos was a misdemeanor, according to Shean.

“There were a substantial amount of youth when we did this study that were made ward of the court for misdemeanor offenses that could’ve been considered for some type of diversionary options,” Shean said.

“In our county, 1.5 percent of all youth ages 10 to 17 back in 2017 were under probation supervision, and that’s such a high number,” Shean added. “That’s when we had our big aha! moment and realized that new interventions could be used to address the issue.”

“Does juvenile hall always have to be the answer?”

New programs

According to the August 2017 data on juveniles who were made wards of the court for misdemeanor offenses, 86 percent were Hispanic, 8 percent were white, 4 percent were black and 2 percent were other. For those incarcerated in juvenile hall, 89 percent were Hispanic, 5 percent were black and 5 percent were white.

“The reason we don’t categorize juveniles facing felonies was because we felt they were the appropriate youth who should be on probation or court wardship,” Shean said. “We primarily looked at those facing misdemeanors who were incarcerated

in the hall, as they were the target group we wanted to use newer, evidence-based assessment tools and other diversionary intervention programs as alternatives that are both culture- and gender responsive.”

An example of a culture-based cognitive behavioral therapy program the county plans to fund and implement is El Joven Noble, a trauma-informed, culturally sensitive program that guides youth through their “rites of passage” process while focusing on the prevention of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, gang activity and domestic violence.

“We’re funding El Joven Noble, along with many other evidence-based treatment interventions like after-care mentoring, so that when the teens are done with the program, we don’t just send them back out in the community,” said Holly Benton, deputy chief probation officer overseeing the juvenile division. “Three months after they finish the program, they’ll have a mentor assigned to them who can continue supporting them.”

Benton added: “Our new programs and probation staff training will focus a lot on family dynamics, engaging parents with their child, and only use our detention options for youth where it’s most appropriate — whether they’re a risk to the community or even themselves.”

In an effort to address the racial/ethnic disparity found

in its juvenile justice system, Santa Barbara County has been receiving funding for the last four years from the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) to review its discipline policies and practices in all major high school districts in the county.

Additionally, the grant allows the county to study the potential correlation between kindergarten readiness, high school discipline reports and involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Regardless of a child’s circumstances, the Probation Department won’t hesitate to use Los Prietos Boys Camp or the juvenile hall when assessing whether a youth is a risk to public safety if diversion doesn’t work.

“The point of our new methods, along with trying to keep up with the rest of the state in juvenile rehabilitation, is trying to see whether or not juvenile hall or court is really needed, and if we can deal with the issues in the community instead,” said Karyn Milligan, research and special projects manager for the county’s Probation Department.

“We’re hoping to reduce caseloads, juvenile hall population and getting the right kids to Los Prietos which may include older, criminally-sophisticated kids that have to be out of the community.”

Improvements, changes to come

The county has made a lot of progress in the last four months, Shean said, and has fewer teens housed in juvenile hall or Los Prietos than there were in August 2017 when Shean and her staff first culled their data.

This summer, there are 28 kids in juvenile hall and 29 enrolled at Los Prietos, Shean said. Those numbers vacillate as the Probation Department has tried implementing new practices to keep both numbers down.

Last year, a total of 597 kids were under the department’s supervision, but that number has since been cut by over 100 to 498 kids, Shean said.

“It’s an extreme improvement, saves money and helps probation staff divert their resources wherever else more may be needed.”

Gina Kim covers crime and courts for Santa Maria Times. Follow her on Twitter @gina_k210

Pope

From A1

The McCarrick case posed a test of the pontiff’s recently declared resolve to battle what he called a “culture of cover-up” of similar abuses in the Catholic church’s hierarchy.

McCarrick had already been removed from public ministry since June 20, pending a full investigation into allegations that he fondled a teenager more than 40 years ago in New York City. McCarrick has denied these allegations.

Another alleged victim, James, says McCarrick exposed himself to him when he was 11 and continued a sexually abusive relationship with him for more than two decades. McCarrick has not responded publicly to these accusations.

Asking to be identified by only his first name to protect his family’s privacy, James told The Associated Press on Saturday that he hopes the pope’s approval of McCarrick’s resignation will help other victims “become free.”

“Basically, truth always prevails,” said James, who lives in Virginia. “Thankfully, everybody in today’s

world is more understanding of the harm done by individual priests, and now we can start to heal.”

McCarrick’s alleged sexual misconduct with adults was reportedly brought to the Vatican’s attention years ago, including before McCarrick was appointed to the prestigious archbishop post in the U.S. capital in 2000 by then-pontiff John Paul II.

Two dioceses in New Jersey, Newark and Metuchen, say they have settled two of three complaints of misconduct by McCarrick toward adults.

The Vatican on Saturday didn’t say where McCarrick would be confined nor when a church trial might begin, and its brief statement did not even allude to the grave accusations against the prelate.

McCarrick rose steadily and swiftly up the U.S. church’s ranks, from auxiliary bishop in New York City, to bishop in Metuchen, to archbishop of Newark, and then to Archbishop of Washington, D.C.

A Catholic University canon law expert, Kurt Martens, noted this was the first time an order of penance and prayer had been issued before a church trial.

Other U.S. Catholics who

follow sexual abuse scandals hailed stripping McCarrick of his cardinal’s rank as an unprecedented shift in how the Vatican has dealt with allegations against top churchmen.

“The Vatican almost never moves at this speed,” said Terence McKiernan, of BishopAccountability.org, Inc., a Massachusetts-based group that tracks clergy sexual abuse cases.

The pope appears to “understand the gravity of the situation and further harm to the Catholic church’s status,” he told the AP.

McKiernan wondered if the church investigation will

reveal who among its hierarchy knew about the sex allegations against McCarrick and whether the Vatican will move to punish those clerics as well. He noted that the Vatican statement didn’t spell out why the pope was disciplining the cardinal.

“We’re still in the old world,” McKiernan said, referring to the Vatican’s avoidance of details about the abuse allegations against McCarrick. “(Still) it’s a remarkable development.”

In the case of Scottish Cardinal Keith O’Brien, accused by former seminarians in 2013 of sexual misconduct, Francis only

accepted his resignation after the Vatican’s top abuse prosecutor conducted a full investigation, two years after the first revelations, and after the prelate himself relinquished the privileges that come with a cardinal’s rank.

O’Brien, who died earlier this year, still remained a cardinal, however.

The Rev. James Martin, editor-at large at America Magazine, which covers church issues, noted in a tweet that Bernard Law was allowed to stay a cardinal

after he resigned as Boston archbishop, following revelations that he had sanctioned the systematic cover-up of pedophile priests while presiding over that U.S. diocese.

After resigning from his Boston post, Law was transferred to a prestigious job at a Rome basilica, an appointment that triggered outrage from many abuse survivors. That happened under Pope John Paul II, who was widely considered to have underestimated the scope of the sex abuse scandals worldwide.



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