



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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**DATE:** September 30, 2025

**18**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### **SUBJECT**

**RECEIVE THE PROBATION WORKLOAD STUDY FINAL REPORT (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

### **OVERVIEW**

In recent years, the San Diego County Probation Department (Probation) has experienced a combination of operational and workforce challenges, including difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified staff, evolving workload demands, and increased reliance on overtime to maintain service levels. These factors, along with the high-stress nature of probation work, have raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of staffing models and the potential impact on staff wellness and service delivery.

On February 27, 2024 (16), the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the San Diego County Probation Department (Probation) to conduct an impartial departmental review of staff workloads by an independent consultant with no previous working relationship with Probation, and to collaborate with key managers, line personnel, and labor leaders as a part of this process. Upon completion of the study, the Board requested that Probation return with the final Workload Study Report and share any key findings. On August 23, 2024, Probation provided the Board with a 180-day report back on the progress of this initiative. This update outlined the study's initial activities and stakeholder engagement efforts. Additionally, on February 13, 2025, Probation provided another update to the Board highlighting ongoing data analysis, preliminary observations, and next steps toward the final report, as well as Department efforts regarding wellness.

Since the initiation of this study, Probation has made significant strides in recruitment, launching innovative campaigns and expanding incentives to attract qualified candidates. Following the launch of a multimedia hiring campaign, along with the consolidation of two classifications into a single, higher classification, and close collaboration with labor partners, Probation reduced its vacancy rate from a high of approximately 19% in October 2023 to less than 7% as of July 2025. This progress reflects sustained investment in workforce stability and organizational capacity.

To build on this momentum, focus has been expanded to include strategies that support retention and promote overall staff well-being. In parallel with this evaluation, Probation has already taken steps to address key operational pressures identified in the study, such as reviewing institutional

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staffing models and maintaining efforts to exceed Title 15 minimum standards. As of the end of Fiscal Year 2024-25, overall overtime hours declined by 21% compared to the prior fiscal year, reflecting gains in staffing and institutional coverage. Probation also maintains strong case management and workload reporting practices that support ongoing workload evaluation.

Recognizing that a healthy, resilient workforce is essential to high-quality service delivery and safer communities, the final report reflects the continued investment by the Board toward public safety and commitment to staff well-being. Today’s action requests the Board of Supervisors to receive the Workload Study Consultation Services Final Report prepared by Veterans United Solutions, LLC (VUS).

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

Receive the Workload Study Consultation Services Final Report, prepared by Veterans United Solutions, LLC.

**EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The Probation Workload Study advances equity by supporting a data-driven approach to public safety that prioritizes individualized, rehabilitative responses over punitive measures. By identifying gaps and opportunities in current service delivery, this study helps ensure that resources might be allocated more effectively and equitably across diverse Probation populations.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The action today contributes to the County of San Diego’s sustainability goals of protecting the health and wellbeing of staff, improving operational efficiency, and ensuring equitable service delivery. Through investing in organizational capacity, it improves the work environment and livelihood of those who serve, which in turn, impacts the quality of service received by the public.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

N/A

**BACKGROUND**

The San Diego County Probation Department (Probation) plays a vital role in supporting public safety by supervising justice-involved youth and adults and coordinating with County departments, the criminal justice system, and community-based organizations to provide rehabilitative services. These services are designed to promote community safety, reduce recidivism, and support client restoration and reintegration. In recent years, Probation has faced challenges in recruiting and retaining critical staff due in part to the high demands of the position, with officers regularly managing high stress situations. Persistent operational challenges, including staff recruitment and

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retention, evolving workload demands, high rates of mandatory overtime, and organizational stressors have impacted staff well-being.

On February 27, 2024 (16), as part of the Board of Supervisors' (Board) support for Probation's recruitment and retention efforts, the Board directed Probation to conduct an impartial departmental review of staff workloads through an external consultant with no prior working relationship with the department. Upon completion of the report, Probation was directed to return to the Board with the report and key findings. Veteran's United Solutions, LLC (VUS) was selected through a competitive procurement process managed by the Department of Purchasing and Contracting. The firm began work on October 16, 2024, and concluded the project on April 30, 2025. During the study, Probation provided the Board with two interim updates. On August 23, 2024, the first update outlined the consultant's initial engagement activities and stakeholder outreach. On February 13, 2025, the second update summarized the data analysis underway, early observations from interviews and site visits, anticipated focus areas for the final report, as well as Department efforts regarding wellness.

***Workload Study***

Consistent with Board direction, the workload study was guided by two primary objectives described in the final report: 1) organizational alignment and 2) sustainable evaluation. Organizational alignment was defined in the report as the compatibility between goals, objectives, activities and values, practices, and behaviors. Sustainable evaluation was described as the Department's ability to monitor and assess performance to ensure it is fulfilling its mission and vision. These objectives reflect the Board's intent that the study should not only evaluate current workload distribution but also provide recommendations for sustainable systems change, ensuring Probation can continue to fulfill its mission while adapting to evolving public safety needs.

VUS applied a mixed-methods evaluation approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative research included interviews with department leaders, managers, line personnel, labor organizations including the San Diego County Probation Officers Association (POA) and the Supervising Probation Officers Association (SPOA), and observations from facility visits. The quantitative component included an evaluation of annual reports, organizational charts, caseload data, institutional staffing data and overtime data. VUS also conducted a comparative analysis of other probation agencies, highlighting both strengths and opportunities. While the study noted that San Diego County Probation is relatively well-resourced and aligned with peer agencies in its focus on restorative justice, it also recommended continued engagement with other departments to explore best practices and support continuous improvement.

***Key Findings and Recommendations***

VUS concluded their study by providing several key findings and recommendations aimed at strengthening caseload management, workforce wellness, and operational efficiency:

- Refine scheduling practices and establish overtime policies to support operational efficiency and staff wellness.

***Current Status:*** Staffing models are being reviewed to help address overtime and support operational efficiencies.

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- While both Institutional Services facilities exceed the minimum standards set by Title 15, the report concluded that these standards do not fully reflect the operational complexity of 24/7 juvenile facilities.

***Current Status:** Probation continues to apply a level of staffing which supports effective programming for youth and their families with evidence-based practices and exceeds Title 15 minimum staffing standards in its juvenile institutions.*

- Engage with the court system to define minimum requirements for adult and juvenile investigative reports and to identify opportunities to streamline report content. Standardize internal reports to improve consistency and reduce staff workload. VUS noted that the Department currently provides substantially more detail in court reports than peer agencies reviewed in the study.

***Current Status:** Probation has established a workgroup with the court and justice partners with the goal to promote best practices and reduce inefficiencies related to Pre-Sentence Investigation reporting.*

- Support recommendations through improved caseload data collection to enhance data quality and support the successful implementation of a sustainable evaluation model.

***Current Status:** Probation prioritizes improvements to workload analysis and reporting as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen data quality, optimize case management, and support sustainable evaluation practices.*

Additional recommendations were proposed, with an understanding of the challenges of retaining staff given the demands of the positions, to better align the Department's strategy, processes, resources, and organizational capacity.

***Department Strengths Highlighted in the Study***

The consultant's findings also affirmed several of the Probation's existing strengths. VUS noted the professionalism, dedication, and skill of the workforce, as well as the Department's commitment to balancing accountability with service connection and engagement. The study acknowledged Probation's proactive approach to meeting court needs and exceeding Title 15 minimum staffing standards in its institutional facilities. Additionally, VUS recognized leadership's efforts to mitigate overtime by adjusting staffing models and identified strong alignment between the Department's mission and its day-to-day practices. These findings reinforce the value of ongoing initiatives and provide a strong foundation for targeted improvements.

VUS observed that Probation is staffed by committed professionals who support community safety through client engagement and accountability. Staff connect individuals to essential services, such as education, employment assistance, counseling, and treatment programs, while ensuring accountability for meeting court-ordered obligations, complying with supervision requirements, and progress toward rehabilitation. VUS found the Probation's workforce to be a dedicated team managed by experienced, caring leaders.

***Labor Feedback***

Representatives from the San Diego County Probation Officers Association (POA) and the Supervising Probation Officers Association (SPOA) provided operational insight into the study's

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findings. The POA expressed appreciation for the independent staffing study, noting that many of its conclusions align with observations shared over the years through labor-management discussions. They acknowledged Probation's efforts to address staffing needs and agreed that opportunities remain to further optimize resources. The POA suggested refining workload tracking systems, ensuring organizational charts accurately reflect assignments, and continuing to evaluate scheduling and staffing models, particularly in juvenile institutions, to help further reduce overtime, enhance program delivery, and support staff wellness.

The SPOA highlighted that San Diego County's pre-sentence reports are regarded statewide as a model and described ongoing collaboration with the courts to streamline referrals and reduce unnecessary reports. They also noted staffing imbalances between the Youth Transition Campus (YTC) and the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility (EMJDF) relative to relief factor models and recommended factoring in specialized supervision needs.

Both associations emphasized that accurate workload tracking, equitable resource allocation, and targeted staffing adjustments are essential to improving efficiency, reducing overtime, and promoting employee well-being. Their perspectives provide valuable operational context for interpreting the study's findings and guiding continued implementation.

***Additional Opportunities***

While the final report addressed the study's central goals, several elements from the Scope of Work, such as development of performance baselines, identification of internal barriers to alignment, or strategies to promote cross-division collaboration, could benefit from being more fully developed. These areas may offer opportunities for further review and can be informed by the data and observations included in the report.

Internally, in collaboration with the Public Safety Executive Office, this work has begun. In addition to participating in this independent evaluation, Probation conducts an internal workload and resource review annually. This ongoing effort is used to prioritize the alignment of staffing and resources with areas of greatest operational need, identify ongoing and emerging risks, assess the impact of new operational requirements, and integrate evolving best practices. The findings from the VUS workload study will inform and enhance this process moving forward.

The study categorized key findings in the areas of caseload management, institutional staffing and overtime. VUS provided recommendations to support leadership decision-making that advances organizational alignment and sustainable evaluation. Certain objectives, such as strategies to promote shared ownership of job duties or the establishment of a long-term evaluation framework, were addressed at a conceptual level and may benefit from additional internal development. The Department will leverage the report's data and recommendations to support future planning in these areas.

**CONCLUSION**

Probation values the collaborative efforts of department staff, labor and the VUS team in the development of this study and acknowledges the Board's continued support and engagement. There may be areas where additional context, clarification or operational knowledge could strengthen the applicability of certain recommendations in the study. Some study components,

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such as developing performance baselines, identifying internal barriers to alignment, and advancing cross-divisional collaboration strategies, were not extensively covered in the final report. These areas present opportunities for continued internal review using the data and observations already gathered.

Probation is actively reviewing the study's recommendations, identifying those that can be implemented, reinforcing improvements already underway, and expanding existing efforts to further support staff wellness, including strategies to manage institutional staffing levels and reduce overtime. The Department also continues internal work to refine scheduling practices, monitor resource allocation, and support reporting to sustain ongoing evaluation.

The report reaffirmed the dedication, professionalism, and resilience of Probation's workforce, even amid resource constraints and operational pressures. The Department will return to the Board if it is determined that additional resources are needed beyond what is included in the current budget. The action today requests the Board receive the final Workload Study Report.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

The proposed action supports the Empower, Equity, and Justice Strategic Initiatives of the County of San Diego's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan by enhancing departmental operations through the implementation of data-driven, evidence-based workload management strategies. Receiving the workload study will enable the Probation Department to strengthen organizational alignment, promote staff wellness, and ensure more equitable and effective service delivery to justice-involved youth and adults.

Respectfully submitted,



*Andrew Strong for*

EBONY N. SHELTON  
Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

Attachment A: Workload Study Consultation Services Final Report