

## JCOD & West Coast Customs Launch Automotive Training Academy for System-Impacted Individuals



The LA County Justice, Care and Opportunities Department (JCOD) has officially partnered with legendary automobile customization and repair shop, West Coast Customs (WCC), to provide hands-on training and certification for system-impacted individuals.

This 12-week program offers 16 participants immersive training in metal fabrication, wrap and tint, upholstery, electronics, and other key automotive disciplines. Graduates will receive a Certification of Completion in Automotive Customization and Restoration, with all training conducted at West Coast Customs in Burbank, California.

The partnership originated at the 2024 LA Auto Show, where JCOD and WCC hosted a 9-day automotive restoration workshop for justice-impacted individuals. Participants successfully restored a donated pickup truck, which was then sold to fund future training programs. The overwhelming success of this initiative led both organizations to expand their collaboration into a long-term training program.

To be eligible, participants must:

- ✓ Be justice-system or foster-system impacted
- ✓ Be 18 years or older
- ✓ Be enrolled in a JCOD program
- ✓ Have a government-issued ID and Social Security card

The first cohort launched on February 10, 2025, with the second cohort set to begin in June 2025.

For more information, click [here](#). To apply, click [here](#).

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## JCOD Launches First All-Female Firefighter Training Cohort at LA County Training Center



The highly anticipated all-female cohort of the JCOD Firefighter Training Program at the Los Angeles County Training Center (LACTC) is set to launch this month. Participants will move onto campus the week of March 10, with training officially beginning the following week. Up to 25 women are expected to take part in this groundbreaking program.

In addition to earning certifications in wildland and structural firefighting, participants will receive essential life skills training, a stipend, and free housing and meals. To support the growing demand, LACTC is also expanding its capacity by renovating the dormitory. Construction will be complete in the coming weeks.

The program has already demonstrated success—Cohort 1 graduated last fall, and more than half of the graduates have secured job offers from Cal Fire.

While the program is open to anyone pursuing a career in fire service, it prioritizes justice-involved individuals, system-impacted individuals, and veterans.

For more information, click [here](#).

## JCOD Led Discussion on Social Justice at SXSW 2025



JCOD led a discussion at the [2025 South by Southwest \(SXSW\) Conference](#), highlighting Los Angeles County's efforts to support justice-impacted individuals. JCOD Director, Judge Songhai Armstead (Ret.), moderated the panel [Community Champions: Driving Social Justice Forward](#), featuring Prophet Walker, CEO of Treehouse, and Doug Bond, President and CEO of Amity Foundation.

"JCOD's work is about creating real opportunities for individuals to heal and thrive with supportive services," said Judge Armstead. "SXSW gave us a platform to elevate these efforts and drive broader change."

SXSW, founded in 1987, remains a global platform celebrating the intersection of film, music, technology, education, and culture.

Listen to the session [here](#).



## Staff Spotlight

### Erica Webster – Justice Program Director



Erica Webster is a vital piece of the JCOD staff puzzle. As a Justice Program Director, she works with her team to manage and oversee JCOD's Rapid Diversion Program (RDP), Pre-Filing Diversion Program (PFDP), Specialized Treatment Optimization Program (STOP), and Pretrial Release Evaluation Program (PREP). Those programs offer critical opportunities for justice-involved individuals who've been charged with certain non-violent crimes to be supported out of the criminal legal system with holistic services.

"At JCOD, we get to translate macro policy and funding decisions into immediate benefits directly to justice-involved folks who often experience the most barriers to service," said Erica.

Erica is excited about working to advocate for funding and support to expand the Rapid Diversion Program county-wide so that more people can gain access to mental health diversion, and working with JCOD's partners to identify more opportunities through JCOD's STOP, Pre-Filing Diversion, PREP, and other programs to support individuals as they transition out of custody and into the community.

What fulfills Erica most about working with JCOD is seeing participants graduate from JCOD programs. “Completing a program like RDP, STOP or PFD means that an individual chose a difficult path, perhaps taking the first steps down the road to recovery or holding themselves accountable to important personal goals like going back to school. I'm so appreciative of our clients for trusting us to help them navigate that journey and graduations are our opportunity to express that gratitude and celebrate our client's accomplishments,” Erica added.

Erica earned her BA in International Studies – Chinese from Seattle University, and her Masters in Public Policy (MPP) from UCLA. When she's not working, she enjoys painting, doodling and acquiring as many house plants as possible.



## A Helping Hand in Recovery, Inc.



A Helping Hand in Recovery was officially founded on December 19, 2017, to assist those in need of recovery from addiction to drugs and alcohol. In 2023, Jacob McKeithan, who had worked as an accountant for the organization, felt a spiritual connection to the organization's name and purpose, so he agreed to take on the monumental task of Executive Director.

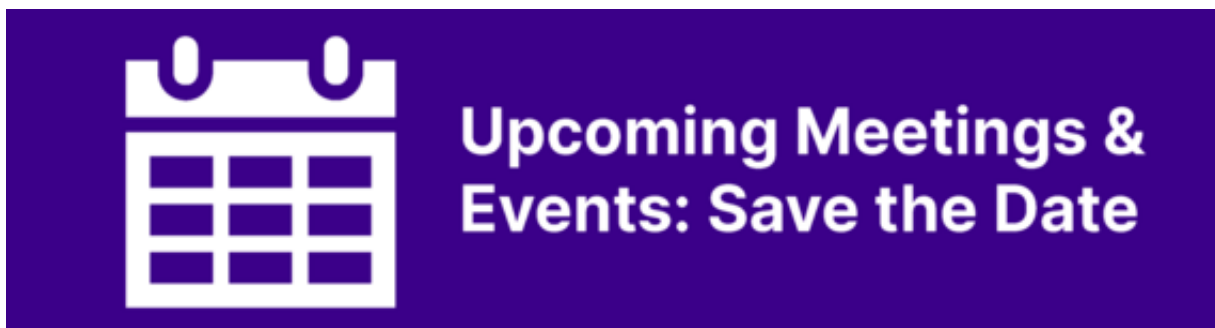
Since taking over A Helping Hand in Recovery, Jacob has relished the work. “We get to interact with individuals and families of all genres and backgrounds. The smile of hope on just one person's face a day makes our hard work to focus on our mission much more worth it,” he added. One of Jacob's fondest moments was when they matched a family with permanent housing, which gave Jacob's staff and that family hope that homelessness was finally in their rear view.



Despite the bright moments, it's been an uphill climb for A Helping Hand in Recovery. But with the organization's graduation from Cohort 6 of JCOD's Incubation Academy, Jacob says he gained insight on how much more he can do to help the community, and he's hopeful that help is on the way.

"The JCOD Incubation Academy was a great experience and enlightenment for me as an Executive Director. It felt good to know that I am not the only organization that struggles with getting assistance while trying to assist the community. Our determination to make our missions are carried out was a great aspiration to have in common," Jacob shared.

For more on A Helping Hand in Recovery, visit [www.hhir.org](http://www.hhir.org).



**Care First Community Investment (CFCI) Advisory Committee -  
Thursday, Mar. 20, 2025, 4:00 PM-6:00 PM**

**Meeting Location:**

Earvin Magic Johnson Park – John Hall Room  
12645 Wadsworth Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90059

View the agenda [here](#).

**To participate via computer or smart phone:**

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Dial-In: **+1 669 900 9128**

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