



Youth Engagement Project



YEP

newsletter

Each quarter we bring you updates on YEP news and helpful tips for youth engagement. Email mia.stizzo@cfpic.org be added to our newsletter mailing list!

YEP Funding Available for Counties!

Does your county need funding to support youth engagement at the local level? The Youth Engagement Project (YEP) partners with California counties to support embedding foster youth voice in Child Welfare and Probation systems. Through this partnership,

local projects that are tailored to the specific needs of each county provide opportunities for counties and their foster youth to build capacity for intergenerational partnership. YEP is currently recruiting counties to be a part of our team! Please let us know if you would like further information by emailing Kelly Hood, Youth Engagement Project Director: Kelly.hood@cfpic.org.

YEP County Highlights

Tulare County has partnered with YEP for several years – and this partnership and is making a positive impact in their local Child Welfare system!

Madeline Cruz

My name is Madeleine Cruz and I am the YEP coordinator for Tulare County. I am a Child Welfare Services Supervisor for the Independent Living Program and Extended Foster Care Program, and as such greatly enjoy working with current and former foster youth between the ages of 15 1/2 to 21. I have been working with YEP for the last two years and strongly believe that we can make positive changes for children and youth in foster care by integrating the voice of youth into our daily work.



I am excited that we were recently able to welcome Kaitlin Garcia as our new YEP Ambassador. Together, in collaboration with the county’s Resource Family Approval team, we are focusing our project on the

targeted recruitment of resource families who take placement of teenagers, as well as increased placement stability for youth.

Whenever I am not working, I enjoy spending time outdoors with my husband, our three children, and two dogs; going for long walks; cooking, and painting.

Kaitlin Garcia

Hello, I am Kaitlin Garcia and I am from Tulare County! An accomplishment that I am proud of is getting my apartment at the age of 17. I am currently going onto my third semester at the College of the Sequoias. Fun fact about me, I taught myself how to play the piano!

The reason why I wanted to become a YEP Ambassador is that I know hands-on how it feels to be a foster child in the system. I have always been my own advocate. I want to advocate for the voices that are unheard of or those who do not know to speak up for themselves. I hope to achieve the goal of giving confidence to those who need it the most in the Foster System. I want the foster youth in my county to know they are not alone and they have me to look up to as a mentor and leader.



YEP's Participation in the Center for States Virtual Conversations with Jerry Milner

By: Arielle Rubio, CDSS YEP Ambassador

The Capacity Building Center for States, in collaboration with the Children's Bureau, recently held a series of roundtable conversations throughout United States to help gain a better understanding of current events that are impacting foster youth. Children's Bureau Associate Commissioner, Jerry Milner, asked foster youth Young Leaders to share their experience around current events.

Lauren Mendez, YEP Project Associate, and Arielle Rubio, YEP's California Department of Social Service Ambassador, represented California in the roundtable conversation. Additional Young Leaders from Hawaii, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and Michigan also participated in the discussion.

YEP provided information on current events and the impact they can have on foster youth. YEP also provided insight regarding how CDSS and Counties support youth voice in policy implementation and program development in California.

YEP shared the following information which was gather from Ambassadors:

Foster youth fight secret battles every day which impact their mental health and can create higher

rates of relapse. To help mitigate these challenges, social workers and support systems should promptly share resource and provide additional support to foster youth.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has taken a proactive approach to include youth voice in statewide Child Welfare policy and procedures. CDSS embeds youth voice in their practices by inviting youth to have a seat at the table to share their own personal experience and provide feedback around policy making and program development.

COVID-19: Highlighting Needs for Older Youth and Non-Minor Dependents

By: Lauren Mendez, YEP Project Associate

In June 2020, YEP partnered with CDSS's Transitional Age Youth Unit and California Youth Connection (CYC) to facilitate a workshop at the Virtual Partnership for Well-Being. This presentation: *COVID-19: Highlighting the Needs of Older Foster Youth and Non-Minor Dependents* focused on how to engage youth with their Transitional Age Living Plan during COVID-19.

YEP presented some viewpoints of foster youth regarding COVID-19 and provided many different recommendations on how to engage youth in completing their TILP. In addition, YEP touched on how to prepare youth who are turning 21 and exiting foster care.

YEP Project Associate Lauren Mendez presented the following suggestions that were gathered from YEP Ambassadors:

“Talking to the youth now about obtaining a part time job that may not be what they had in mind or wanted, but explaining that using the skills they obtain from a job now that they could use later after COVID-19.”

“Creating a savings plan may not be on everyone's mind during the disruption of the pandemic. However, it would benefit youth in the long haul it would a great advantage for the youth to be self-sufficient and stable. During this time social worker and support systems should use this time to create a plan regarding what saving could look like during this pandemic as well focus on future disruption that may impact their financial status.”

“When a youth is turning 18 or 21 years old social workers should increase the number of check-ins. The frequency should be based on the needs of the youth. If the social worker chooses not to meet the youth in person, alternative methods need to be explored. Some examples that would replace face to face visits are text, FaceTime, and Zoom.”

Which of These Public Figures are Former Foster Youth?

Submit your answers to YEP Director, Kelly Hood, Kelly.hood@cfpic.org, for a chance to win a gift card!



Miles Cooley



Coco Chanel



Eddie Murphy



Cardi B



Cher