



# YOUTH TRUTH

## *Youth Engagement Project*

### *Newsletter- A New Year*



## *Youth Ambassadors Speak Out*

Each quarter, the Youth Truth newsletter will provide updates, advice or other facts about current Youth Ambassadors. This edition features Youth Ambassador Angelique Beccerra, supporting Riverside County.

On November 1st, Angelique had the opportunity to travel to Riverside County to attend their 2023 Community Partners Forum. Co-presented by Riverside County DPSS-Children's Services Division, Riverside County Probation, and the HOPE Collaborative, the event included updates on County improvement plans and projects, inspiring keynote presentation from a lived experience professional, dynamic provider panel discussion showcasing the power of prevention, dedicated time for networking, table discussion to promote prevention planning, and more!

The Youth Engagement Project (YEP) is pleased to share the second edition of our quarterly newsletter, highlighting the meaningful work being done by both YEP counties and Youth Ambassadors, as well as updates on the program as a whole.

## *Meet Angelique Becerra*

### *Youth Ambassador of Riverside County*



Per Angelique, "My experience at the Riverside Partnership meeting was an amazing opportunity to learn about all the different programs Riverside is establishing to support their foster youth, bio-parents, and caregivers. I'm excited to be a part of this change to bring back the voices of foster youth when it comes to meetings regarding impactful decisions on behalf of the child. It is important to me that the children who are most affected by these conversations are included, to give feedback, and help all those involved understand how to make this transition less stressful. Having the space for my voice to make a positive change means everything to my younger self, the foster child who's finally being heard".

## *Youth Ambassador Updates*



The new YEP model seeks to engage youth from across California to lend their voice and lived expertise to make change across the child welfare system. YEP currently has contracts in place with a total of 36 young adults, referred to as Youth Ambassadors who are involved in the program. The Youth Ambassadors have lived experience and come from diverse geographic locations and backgrounds. They represent 16 counties and are passionate about being change agents. Their advocacy efforts and focus areas are also diverse, ranging from educational and work readiness improvements, to sibling relationships, independent living enhancements and resources for youth in care.

## *Youth Engagement Project*

YEP, a flagship program for the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC), and with funding from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), encourages youth engagement by lifting up youth voices to improve child welfare systems in local jurisdictions and at the state level.

For the second quarter of the year, the YEP program focused on project development, data collection and evaluation. Each YEP county is responsible for completing a quarterly outcome form to identify goals and deliverables. In conjunction with this expectation, CFPIC recently hired a consultant to evaluate the program as a whole. Focus groups were held with the Youth Ambassadors on January 8, 2024 to solicit feedback on key domains such as support, value of the program as a whole, interactions with county leads and effectiveness of system change. Evaluation findings will be used to enhance the program for fiscal year 2024-2025 and will be shared with YEP counties in the coming months.

Another area of focus for the counties and Youth Ambassadors will be the Independent Living Program (ILP). YEP has created bi-monthly meetings for interested counties called Communities of Practice (CoP) where ILP efforts, barriers, potential solutions and projects will be addressed. The first meeting was held on November 8, 2023, with 8 counties in attendance and included best practices from Stanislaus, Glenn and Sacramento. The meeting was recorded and can be accessed [here](#):





## *County Partner Updates*

Each YEP county has been matched with 2-3 Youth Ambassadors. Counties have discussed various ways to infuse youth voice and lived experience into their practices and policy. This edition of the newsletter highlights the innovative work done by two counties Mendocino and Santa Clara, to create system change by lifting up youth voices.

### *Mendocino*

Utilizing supervisor Dani Shields as the lead for their YEP work, and supported by their Deputy Director Jena Conner, Mendocino invited their assigned Youth Ambassadors to attend their Interagency Leadership Team (ILT) meeting that will be held in the coming weeks. The ILT meets bi-monthly and having youth with lived experience attend will enhance and deepen their discussions about system issues.

### *Santa Clara*

Santa Clara welcomed a Youth Ambassador into their Request for Proposal (RFP) process as reader/reviewer. The RFP that is being reviewed is for Legal Guardianship, Identity Theft, and Credit Repair services and using youth voice to provide feedback on both the services/cost is a great way to use youth voice to effect system change. The Youth Ambassador, Emily Hampson, stated that the process was a good learning experience regarding her first opportunity to read high level legal/contract documents and while it was complicated to digest, it was an opportunity she had not ever experienced.

*To become a YEP County, please complete the brief application [here](#).*



## *Upcoming News*

We are working hard to upgrade our YEP website which will include a calendar, message board and shared repository for meeting agendas, minutes and project updates. We hope to have these changes made in the next few months. In the meantime, check out the [current site](#) that contains updates on projects, photos and biographies of each Youth Ambassador.

## *The Kudos Corner*

Sophia Jeffe is a Youth Ambassador supporting Stanislaus County. As part of her work as a Youth Ambassador, Sophia volunteered to participate in the statewide workgroup for Child and Family Teams/CANS. Recently, two committee members shared that “Sophia’s comments were not only insightful, but really constructive and impactful to the state’s thinking and planning”.

*Sophia’s work is an example of how important and powerful the work that Youth Ambassadors do to give voice to their experiences.*

## *Professional Development Opportunities*

In conjunction with sharing their voice for system change, Youth Ambassadors receive support and professional development to further their own career aspirations and growth. Each month, the team of Youth Ambassadors convene to share program updates. Bi-monthly, focused trainings are curated based on feedback from the Youth Ambassadors. In December, 2023, the first professional development training was held, which focused on honing public speaking skills. This training allowed for tips and tools, as well as real time practice and feedback. In addition to trainings, each Youth Ambassador develops goals during their onboarding to determine areas of strength and opportunities for growth. The template is revisited during their tenure as a Youth Ambassador and supported during meetings with the YEP Project Associate.

In addition to supporting the various counties, Youth Ambassadors are asked to provide their lived expertise to various statewide initiatives such as a workgroup regarding the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), CFT/CANS steering committee, or prevention convening. To request youth engagement/ lived expertise for a project or workgroup, email [ayaan.jones@cfpic.org](mailto:ayaan.jones@cfpic.org).

For more information or to apply to be a Youth Ambassador, [click here](#).