

2024 - 2025

Annual Update

The Youth Engagement Project (YEP), is a partnership between the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to improve child welfare policies, programs and practices by building capacity for youth engagement at the state and local level. YEP provides support to counties to engage current or former foster youth on local projects designed to strengthen child welfare systems. These youth, called YEP Ambassadors, can engage with county coordinators in a variety of ways.

During this last fiscal year, the YEP continued to experience growth and improvements to the overall program design and scope, which are outlined below.

OVERVIEW

The YEP model continues to conduct recruitment, hiring, onboarding and training of Youth Ambassadors, as well as providing direct compensation to each youth. Counties may opt in to participate in the program at any time, without the need for a contract as funding is no longer provided directly to the county.

Ambassadors are matched with counties based on geographic location and shared interest in topic areas and are able to participate in statewide requests that align with their areas of advocacy.

Monthly support is provided to the counties and Ambassadors around project development and implementation, as well professional development for each youth.

County level projects from this year include: Youth participation in county Interagency

Team meetings, independent living program feedback and improvements, educational presentations, CFT/CANS discussions, creation of videos for social workers and caregivers, kin first support, and prevention discussions.

At the state level, Youth Ambassadors have utilized their voice regarding several important topics and provided feedback regarding rate structure, health equity, all county letters, and rate structure. They have been part of workgroups and planning committees for peer partner hubs, foster youth education summit, and complex care.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS @ A GLANCE

STAFFING

Onboarded additional Youth Ambassadors	Added an additional 21 Youth Ambassadors for a total of 40 young adults ranging in ages from 16-28
Hired Youth Ambassador Leaders	Added 7 positions in July 2024 to provide lived expertise and support to Youth Ambassador team

RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Recruited 4 new counties	Total of 20 counties participating in the program with 1 more to be added in August 2025
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COUNTY & YOUTH SUPPORT

Conducted 15 County/Youth Ambassador meetings	Provided support and professional development via monthly meetings
Provided 80 trainings/coaching for professional development to Ambassadors	Included trainings around conducting focus groups, self-love, mental health awareness

FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

Fiscal year 2025-2026:

- A robust evaluation regarding the program was conducted in June/July 2025 and feedback will be used to inform the strategic plan for FY 25-26.
- Prioritize recruitment efforts with a goal to reach 25 counties by 2026.
- Create structural enhancements to create collaborative learning across geographic regions with oversight from teams of Ambassadors around shared topics.
- Expand the coaching program to include additional coaches
- Increase diversity of youth to include Tribal representation.

CONTACT US!



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