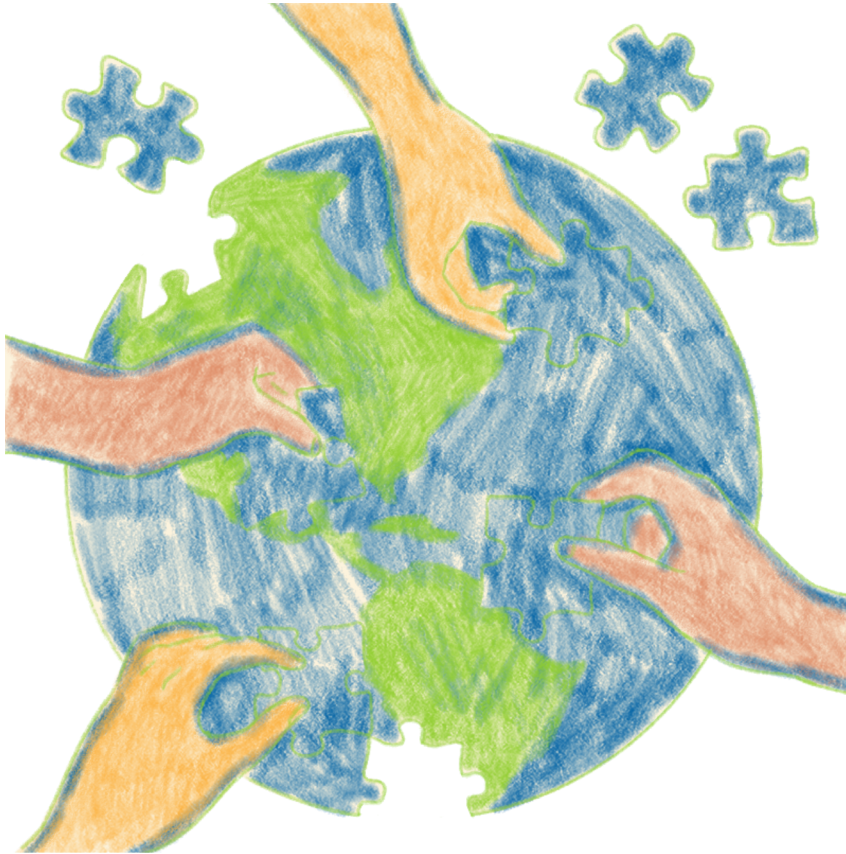




# *Youth Engagement Project Newsletter: Moving Forward with Purpose*



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## INTRODUCTION

The Youth Engagement Project (YEP) is pleased to share the latest 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.

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 this latest quarter of the 25-26 fiscal year, the YEP continues to increase involvement at both the local and state level with numerous requests for youth voice and participation. Numerous counties and ambassadors have been added to the program over this past quarter as well. We would like to welcome: Isaiah (TBD), Vee (Butte), Amara (Nevada), Jordan (Tulare) to the team! Additionally, two new counties were onboarded, including El Dorado and Orange, which brings total participation to 25. We are thrilled to have them join YEP and look forward to working closely with them.

# Youth Ambassador Updates



This quarter has been extremely busy for the youth ambassadors who are off and running with their respective projects. Below is a sample of all the places you can find YEP:

In partnership with the **Los Angeles County Office of Education, Technical Assistance Program**, ten Youth Ambassadors partnered with eight lived experts from across the state to plan and deliver the student program at the annual California Foster Youth Education Summit to over 180 youth. The Youth Ambassadors, Mia, Lauren, Aliyana, Angel, Skyy, Maritza, Tiffany, Selena, Sophia, and Mike worked diligently to deliver the Student Training Academy, two general sessions and a workshop at the conference, which was held April 19-22 in Sacramento.

Also in April, five Youth Ambassadors shared their personal experiences regarding their careers and tips/tricks for other youth who might be ready to pursue employment opportunities. The session was recorded and available to view here: **[YEP Career Fair: Lived Experts of Foster Care Share Their Journey Into the World of Work](#)**

In May, four counties (Sacramento, Butte, Los Angeles, and Marin) spoke about their job openings, hiring practices and interviewing techniques to better prepare current and former foster youth navigate the world of work. We appreciate them sharing their wisdom and insight with our lived experts: **[YEP Career Fair Part II](#)**

Several youth ambassadors participated in listening sessions with the California Department of Social Services regarding the new **Tiered Rate Structure** and the impact to TAY populations.

In June, two Ambassadors, Lauren and Mike, participated in a lived expert panel focused on wraparound services as part of the **Partnerships for Well-Being Institute**.

Jason did a great job sharing his expertise with a national audience as part of the Youth Law Center's **Quality Parenting Initiative National Symposium**.

# County Partner Updates

Each YEP county has been matched with 2-3 Youth Ambassadors who are able to support county-level projects for approximately 8-10 hours per month, as counties look at various ways to infuse youth voice and lived experience into their practices and policies. This portion of the newsletter highlights the innovative work done by several counties.

**San Diego County** held a panel session with their Ambassadors for newly hired staff and interns to hear directly from lived experts regarding the impacts that they have on youth in foster care. In addition, one Youth Ambassador, Mya, creates a monthly ILP newsletter where she shares resources, tips and upcoming events, evening authoring “Mya’s Corner”.

**Los Angeles County** has worked with their Ambassadors to create a mentoring program which will go live in the next few weeks. Current foster youth will be able to apply to the program and be mentored by a youth ambassador during their senior year of high school, as well as their freshman year of college. This additional support will assist in getting additional foster youth across the finish line to high school graduation and ensuring they have the support to navigate college.

**Riverside County** Youth Ambassador Rocco had an opportunity to be part of a panel regarding transitions at the QPI Care Provider meeting and his story was so impactful that it has started to make meaningful contributions to how leaders interact with their staff and the questions that they ask.

**JUNE NEWSLETTER**  
*Mya's Resource Spotlight*

**Food Support & Resources**  
Need help accessing food this summer? There are free and low-cost resources available throughout San Diego County for current and former foster youth, students, and young adults!

**FOOD PANTRIES & FREE MEALS**  
Find free groceries, meal programs, and local pantries near you through the jitConnect Foster Youth Resource Directory.  
Visit: [jitConnect.org](http://jitConnect.org)  
Click on "Food"

**CAL FRESH/EBT SUPPORT**  
CalFresh can help pay for food at grocery stores, markets, and some fast food chains. You may still qualify even if you are working or attending school.  
To apply or learn more, visit:  
• [GetCalFresh.org](http://GetCalFresh.org)  
• [BenefitsCal.com](http://BenefitsCal.com)  
Questions? Call 2-1-1

**COLLEGE FOOD RESOURCES**  
Many colleges offer campus food pantries, free groceries, and emergency meal assistance for students.  
Check with your school's:  
• Basic Needs Center  
• EOPS  
• Food Pantry  
• Student Support Services

**HELPFUL LINKS**  
• [San Diego County News Center](#)  
• [Just in Time For Foster Youth - Youth Services](#)  
• [211 San Diego](#)  
• [Feeding San Diego](#)  
• [CalFresh](#)

**REMEMBER**  
Beginning June 1, some CalFresh recipients may need to meet new work or volunteer requirements to continue receiving benefits.  
Questions or unsure if this applies to you?  
Call: 1-866-262-9881

**Food support is available to you. Don't be afraid to use the resources around you! You can also ask your social worker or ILS worker to go with you to check it out.**

Questions or need accommodations?  
We're here for you: [ILSHSA@sdcountry.ca.gov](mailto:ILSHSA@sdcountry.ca.gov)  
(866) ILS-INFO / (866) 457-4636

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

# ***Kudos Corner***

We are so extremely proud of all the Youth Ambassadors who have accomplished some major milestones during this quarter. This is our largest group of graduates to date!



*Michael graduated from Cerritos College and will be transferring to Cal State University Dominguez Hills.*



*Rocco graduated from high school and will be attending Sacramento State in the fall.*



*Angelica graduated from Pepperdine with her Master's in Psychology and has been accepted to a Ph.D. program for clinical psychology at Palo Alto University.*



*Mia graduated from Chico State and also enrolled to start to MSW program.*

Angel graduated from UCLA with a double major in Political Science and Public Affairs and will be moving to Sacramento for an internship with a state assembly person.

Emily traveled to Korea and enjoyed immersing herself in the culture.

Tiffany graduated from the Elevate Academy.

Aliyana has started her Master's program at Cal State East Bay and received numerous scholarships to assist her financially.

Jason graduated from Bakersfield College and will be enrolling at Cal State Dominguez Hills.

Isaiah graduated from Cal State-East Bay with a degree in Sociology.

Martiza graduated from University of California Santa Barbara!



**Maritza brought her personal story to life by filming the impact of sibling separation, which can be viewed here: [Maritza's story](#). We are extremely proud of her for embarking on this journey and being so courageous.**

## UPCOMING NEWS

The Youth Engagement Project will be developing various curriculum for counties to use regarding various Independent Living Skills topics such as Financial Literacy, Navigating College, and Housing Options. The classes will be developed, created and narrated by youth, including their own personal experiences. We hope to launch the library of curriculum in the fall of 2026.

Our annual YEP convenings will be held across the state in June and July with a focus on the new Tiered Rate Structure, Quality Parenting Initiative and Strategic Planning. We look forward to seeing each other in person.

At our next all county/all youth meeting on July 28th, the CFPIC Prevention team will join us to discuss the importance of prevention and begin to develop ways that youth can lend their voice to this important work. Counties should consider including their prevention leads in this discussion.

For more information or questions about the Youth Engagement Project, click [here](#) or send us an [email](#).