



California Youth Connection

About Us

California Youth Connection is a youth led organization of systems impacted youth 14-24 years old who work together to transform the foster care system and intersecting systems through legislative, policy and practice change. CYC Members have been at the forefront of policy change in California for the past 30 years, including the Foster Youth Bill of Rights, Transitional Housing and Extended Foster Care and many more. A statewide organization, CYC Members come together in county based chapters to develop their leadership skills, create policy recommendations, and implement campaigns for change. Our vision is that youth impacted by child welfare and intersecting systems are empowered to have their needs met and the support to grow into healthy and vibrant adults.



LOCAL ORGANIZERS

Our local organizers are the heartbeat of CYC, ensuring on-the-ground implementation.

Our work is powered by grassroots policy engagement and local advocacy efforts of youth across the state in county based chapters!



POLICY & LEG COMMITTEES

CYC members that serve as policy and legislative representatives ensure that the voices of local organizers are elevated for statewide change. Developing CYC's Statewide Priorities for legislative and policy change!



CONFERENCES & TRAINING

CYC members undergo comprehensive training to create and teach educational materials, ensuring a deep understanding of CYC's mission, vision, and the effective use of their voices for driving change.

2024 Statewide Priorities

System Accountability

“System accountability is about ensuring holistic transparency and responsibility in all aspects of a young person's life”

*System Accountability in the context of youth welfare and foster care involves ensuring transparency and responsibility in areas like Transition Planning, Effective Child and Family Teams, and reducing juvenile justice system involvement. This addresses concerns raised by youth who feel that social workers aren't present enough, leading to their issues being overlooked, while foster parents prioritize financial gain over proper care. **Social workers, probation officers, CDSS and county social service agencies involved in the young persons' lives need to be honest about their procedures, be better equipped to support the needs of youth, communicate, and be accessible to youth.** The goal is to create a system where the welfare of young individuals is prioritized, their voices are heard, and caregivers act in their best interests.*

Placement Safety and Culture

“Placement safety and culture ensures growing a youth's sense of belonging where they feel comfortable, have their needs met, and are able to ask for what they need.”

*Placement Safety and Culture focuses on establishing secure and inclusive environments in foster care, including STRTPs and foster homes. It seeks to address the challenges faced by foster youth due to cultural, religious, and personal differences with caregivers, ensuring they can fully engage in daily activities while receiving proper support. **Foster parents need to be equipped with conflict resolution skills to handle issues such as addiction and mental health and mitigate identity loss, social isolation, and language barriers, all while fostering a sense of belonging and maintaining connections with family members.** Youth should not have enrichment activities or allowances withheld as disciplinary measures. Support is needed so all youth have a feeling of safety in placements.*

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Foster Youth Rights

“The rights of foster youth are not being upheld by the youth's microsystem of support because the education and violation of a youth's rights have not been addressed.”

*Foster Youth Rights is dedicated to safeguarding the rights of foster youth by addressing critical challenges. These challenges include the lack of understanding among youth and caregivers regarding youth's rights, the dismissal of their reported issues by caregivers and social workers, and inadequate communication of their rights. Furthermore, there's a concern that social workers may prioritize foster parents' voices, potentially due to adoption incentives and social workers not understanding the legal obligation to inform youth of their rights. **It is important that foster youth be educated about their rights, rights violations within homes are addressed in a timely manner as well as immediately for serious complaints that regard the safety of youth, and to ensure individualized care and support while enforcing the legal posting of youth rights in group homes and other placements.***

Transitional Resources and Supports

“Ensure youth can access public benefits and vital resources to prevent homelessness and provide the necessary resources for foster youth to thrive and become self-sufficient.”

*Transitional Resources and Support addresses the pressing need for enhanced assistance to youth impacted by the foster care system as they transition to independence. This support encompasses crucial elements like housing, food access, education, and guaranteed income. **Comprehensive transition planning should occur at ages 16, 18, and 21, the aim is to ensure youth can access public benefits and vital resources to prevent homelessness and provide the necessary resources for foster youth to thrive and become self-sufficient. Additionally, efforts should be made to provide former and current foster youth with licenses as well as a centralized hub with foster youth specific educational resources; including info on scholarships, higher educational support programs, and finance management.** Being better supported through transition from the foster care system and connected to other supports in the community will allow youth to have the tools needed.*

Housing

“ Without having stable, safe and supportive housing, youth struggle to move forward in life. Having housing is key for youth to be able to work towards their goals.”

Housing encompasses two distinct housing-related challenges. The first revolves around housing for youth in a Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP) and housing for youth exiting the foster care system, highlighting the need for improved landlord recruitment to address issues such as a lack of credit or renting history, landlords' limited knowledge about SILP and some of the housing choice vouchers available to former foster youth, and concerns about rent payment

without a co-signer. **Consider various incentives to landlords renting to youth including tax credits and fund to address any property damages that may occur. Work with Independent Living Programs to establish guidelines and policies to allow them to act as co-signers for youth. And finally to ensure social workers know housing options and programs available to youth and can communicate the options to youth so they can make informed choices.** The second challenge pertains to housing within resource homes and emphasizes the importance of better support and communication between youth and their resource families. This includes addressing disparities in treatment, insufficient practical assistance, inadequate placements, overcrowding, and social isolation.

Christopher Hernandez, CYC Statewide Legislative Coordinator

Email: christopher@calyouthconn.org