



# Goals of Today's Presentation

- **Introducing CYC** by showing the membership current structure of the organization
- **Highlight previous campaigns and legislative efforts** that enabled the youth voice to transform the foster care system
- **Discuss statewide policy efforts and how counties can get involved!**

# Mission & Vision



The **mission** of California Youth Connection (CYC), a youth-led organization, is to develop leaders who empower each other and their communities to transform the foster care system through legislative, policy, and practice change.

Our **vision** is that all foster youth will be equal partners in contributing to all policies and decisions made in their lives. All youth in foster care will have their needs met and the support to grow into healthy and vibrant adults.



# STATEWIDE COUNTY CHAPTERS



# Youth Voice at California's Capitol





**What youth-led efforts  
have you seen in your  
county/community?**



# #FosterStability

a youth-led effort to create a  
youth-centered process for stability  
in all aspects of our lives:



STABILITY IN  
EDUCATION AND  
EXTRACURRICULAR  
ACTIVITIES

STABILITY IN  
RELATIONSHIPS  
AND LIFELONG  
CONNECTIONS

Every kid is  
one caring adult  
away from being a  
Success Story

#IBDnc #CJC  
#IBDnc #CJC-SanDiego



STABILITY IN  
PLACEMENT

STABILITY IN  
HEALTH AND  
WELLNESS



We will create a system that honors and nourishes  
the mind, body, and soul  
of every child and youth  
impacted by California's foster care system.

# #FosterStability 2 H.E.A.L





# CALIFORNIA YOUTH CONNECTION'S 10 POINT MENTAL HEALTH VISION



1. WE WANT A PROCESS TO CONNECT WITH MENTAL HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AUTHENTICALLY.
2. WE WANT EDUCATION AND ACCESS TO AVAILABLE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES WITHIN OUR COMMUNITIES.



3. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END OF OVERMEDICATION TO YOUTH WITHIN THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM.
4. WE WANT ACCESS TO HOLISTIC AND ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT FROM MEDICATION AND TALK THERAPY.



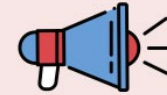
5. WE WANT THE IMMEDIATE STOP OF CASE-OVERLOAD OF PROVIDERS SERVING FOSTER YOUTH.



6. WE WANT ACCESS TO SPECIALIZED TREATMENT THAT MAY NOT BE BILLABLE TO MEDICAID.

7. WE WANT THE RIGHT TO VOICE WHAT SERVICES AND TREATMENTS WE WANT TO RECEIVE FOR OUR MENTAL HEALTH. WE DON'T WANT TO BE FORCED TO RECEIVE A TREATMENT WE DON'T WANT.

8. WE WANT HOTLINES FOR YOUTH TO REACH A PROFESSIONAL TO TALK THROUGH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES WHEN NEEDED INSTEAD OF CALLING 911.

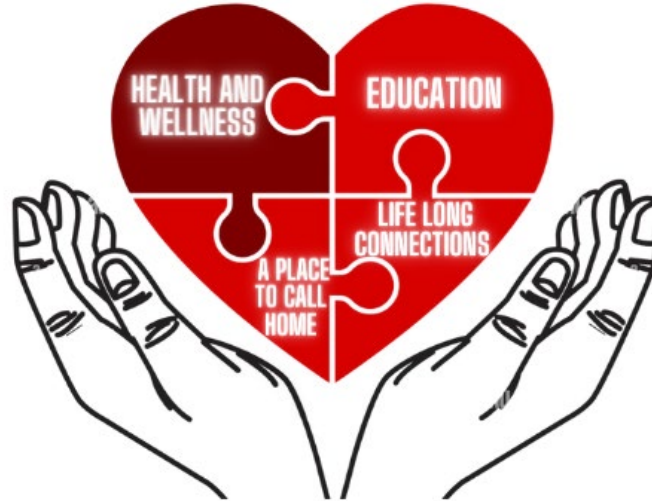


9. WE WANT THE IMMEDIATE STOP OF MISDIAGNOSIS OF YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE IN ORDER TO RECEIVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

10. WE WANT TO REMOVE THE POLICIES THAT LABEL OUR SELF CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AS A LIABILITY.

# CYC's Feel the Heal Campaign

FEEL THE HEAL



## Youth Voices

“I had the opportunity to play basketball while I was in foster care. Basketball gave me the *building blocks and the essential life skills that I needed in order to be successful in life* and these were things I didn’t learn while in foster care. Basketball was the only thing that provided me *stability no matter where I went or how many times I moved*. My coaches and the *lifelong connections* I made throughout these activities helped me learn what healthy relationships were. Without these activities I would not have been able to *work through my trauma* and I wouldn’t have the skills I need to have a successful future.”

– Kristina T., California Youth Connection Member

“Extracurricular activities are important for foster youth because it *promotes normalcy* within their time in care and helps as a *therapeutic tool for youth with trauma*.”

– Katrina Q., California Youth Connection Member

# Closing the Extracurricular Gap

The publication explores the critical role of extracurricular activities for children and youth in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, examines the benefits of extracurricular participation, the barriers young people face, and details steps that should be taken to ensure our young people have access to this crucial intervention, which has been shown to improve a broad array of childhood and adult outcomes.

## CLOSING THE EXTRACURRICULARS GAP:

Prioritizing Extracurricular Activities as a Key Intervention for Children and Youth in Foster Care and Juvenile Justice

April 2022 (2nd Edition)



# Youth Have Been Pushing for Legislative Changes

- CYC identified meaningful access to extracurriculars as a priority prior to 2016, but legislation was first attempted that year.
- Introduced bills:
  - AB 1984 (2016)
  - AB 754 (2017)
  - SB 219 (2019)
  - AB 2945 (2022)
    - CYC and Youth Law Center (YLC) amendments proposed an “enrichment activities allowance” for all youth in foster care and processes for documenting and reviewing funding and supports for the youth’s participation in the case plan and court findings

# Changing Perspectives in Policy and Practice

“Systems must think in an entirely new way about extracurriculars: as a *key intervention* for children and youth -- not just an extra.”

– Jennifer Rodriguez, Executive Director, Youth Law Center

“What we see in practice is that extracurriculars are being viewed as ‘extra’ or optional. The shift that needs to be made is to view these activities as essential *building blocks to healthy youth development.*”

– Makayla James, Statewide Policy Manager, California Youth Connection

# The Need to Support Extracurriculars Has Never Been Greater

- The pandemic exacerbated an existing mental health crisis.
- Extracurricular activities are positive interventions that are critical to meeting the mental health and wellness needs of young people.
- As CA implements FFPSA and aims to expand/support family-based care, investments in extracurricular activities must be made to complement existing investments in complex care cases.

# Persistent Barriers to Participation

- Lack of consistent prioritization of enrichment and extracurricular activities.
- Lack of accountability for legal requirements.
- Lack of funding for activities.
- Shortage of information on existing opportunities and resources.



# Supporting Research

# Benefits of Extracurricular Participation

Promotes Healthy  
Development

Helps young people build resiliency and positive self-identity, and counteracts the harmful effects of trauma

Supports Positive  
Behaviors

Improves academic performance, builds leadership and self-discipline skills, and reduces risky behaviors

Builds Positive  
Relationships

Builds healthy relationships with peers who share common interests and connections with supportive adults

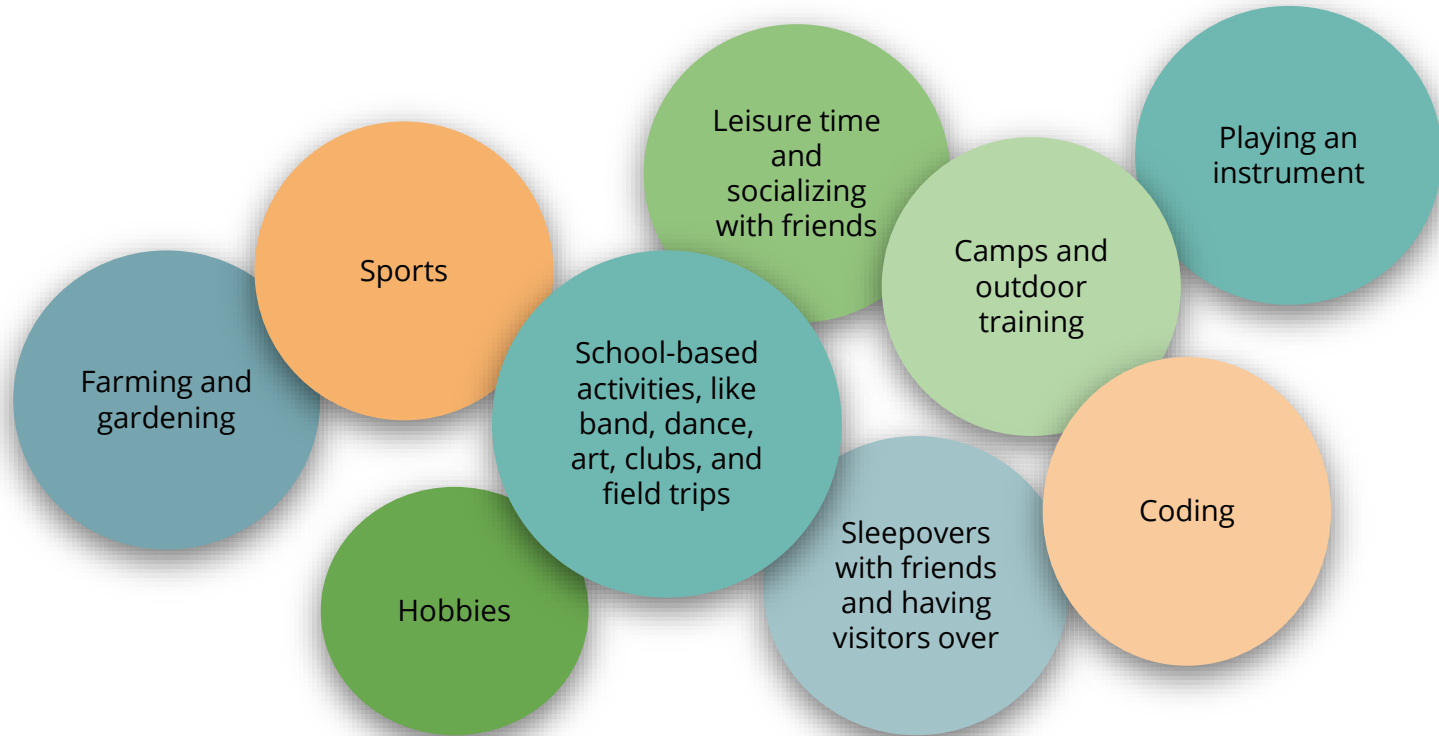
Benefits Caregivers  
and Systems

Provides “child care” and improves placement stability and opportunities for permanency

# Broader Benefits

- To youth:
  - Supports the experience of childhood for youth who often do not have their joy, leisure, and play time prioritized.
- To caregivers:
  - Provides child care during after school hours or holiday/summer breaks
  - Introduces additional adults who can provide support, advice, and care
  - Improves relationships with children when they are healthier, happier, and more connected
- To systems:
  - Stabilizes placements when relationships are stronger and youth are connected to people and their communities
  - Provides outlet for emotions as alternative and complement to traditional mental health interventions
  - Reduces involvement with juvenile justice system when youth are less likely to engage in risky behavior
  - Improves youth behavior while confined in the juvenile justice system

# What kinds of activities are included?



# Mitigating Trauma

- Trauma produces physiological changes to the body and brain
- Neuroplasticity = the brain's ability to adapt and change, which is higher during adolescence
  - Prolonged traumatic stress can lead to negative effects on children's emotional, behavioral, and social functioning
  - +
  - Developmentally healthy experiences, like extracurriculars, can "rewire" the brain to counteract damage caused by trauma and develop resilience
- Extracurriculars also provide young people with safe and stimulating environments to promote healthy brain development, such as the ability to think long-term

# Improving Outcomes for Youth with Complex Care Needs

- Academic performance
  - E.g., a meta-analysis of out-of-school-time programs showed improved reading and math skills for academically at-risk students involved in the programs (Lauer, et al., 2006)
- Reducing risky behaviors
  - E.g., a longitudinal study of youth from 5th to 10th grade showed positive youth development was associated with lower rates of sex initiation and tobacco, marijuana, and hard drug use (Schwartz, et al., 2010)
- Self-efficacy and soft skills, including leadership, grit, curiosity, and ability to work with others
- Likelihood to pursue post-secondary education
- Cultivating interests that can lead to a career

# Building Connections

- Youth in foster care or the juvenile justice system are often disconnected from their families, friends, and communities
- But extracurriculars can help foster healthy connections with:
  - ➡ Peers who share the same interests
  - ➡ Adults who can become mentors or role models, who can then provide support or resources through their networks
    - ➡ Especially important for transition age youth
    - ➡ Can lead to permanency and placement stability

# The Requirements of Law and Regulation



# CA Legal Support

- **Reasonable and prudent parent standard:**

- Every foster youth, including a foster youth supervised by probation, is entitled to participate in age-appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities. Caregivers shall use a “reasonable and prudent parent” standard in determining whether to give permission for a child to participate.
  - *Same definition as federal law. WIC § 362.05(c)(1); 22 CCR § 89377(a).*
  - WIC § 362.05(a)(1); WIC § 727(a)(4)(F).
  - 22 CCR §§ 84067(a)-(b), 84079(c)(1)-(2) [group homes]; 22 CCR § 89379 (a)-(b) [foster family homes].
  - RFA Written Directives, § 11-14(a)-(c).

# CA Legal Support

- **Foster Youth Bill of Rights:**

- Enumerates rights to promote “normalcy” for foster youth, including the right to participate in extracurricular, personal enrichment, or social activities. WIC § 16001.9(a)(16).
- The National Foster Care Youth & Alumni Policy Council has defined normalcy as:

*The opportunity for children and youth in [an] out-of-home placement to participate in and experience age and culturally appropriate activities, responsibilities, and life skills that promote normal growth and development.*

# Justice-Involved Youth Need Similar Interventions ...

- Share similar backgrounds and experiences as youth in foster care, including having involvement in both systems, and can benefit from many of the same interventions.
- Minimal CA requirements for youth in juvenile facilities:
  - Access to education, recreation and exercise, religious programs, work programs, and visitation. 15 CCR § 1370-1374.
    - Includes, daily, at least: one hour of trauma-focused, culturally relevant programming; one hour of unscheduled activities like leisure reading; and one hour of exercise of large muscle activity. 15 CCR § 1371.
  - Deprivation of exercise, religious services, education, and rehabilitative programming is prohibited. 15 CCR § 1390.

# Advocacy Strategies

# Advocating for Funding and Utilization

- **Legislative and budget advocacy** that guarantees funding for extracurriculars for all youth in foster care, without burdensome application or reimbursement processes
- **Continued outreach and training** to ensure stakeholders are aware of entitlements and counties are prioritizing and investing in extracurriculars
- **Local advocacy for existing funding** to be allocated in the prioritization of EC activities.

# Funding for Enrichment Activities

- **Flexible Family Support Funds**
- **Complex Care Funding**
  - Child Specific Requests for Exceptional Needs AB 153, ACL 21-119

## Child Specific Requests for Exceptional Needs

Annual funding to support child-specific assessments, evaluations, enhanced care planning, technical assistance or supports for children with exceptional service needs. Counties may use these funds flexibly to support children with high acuity needs, including intensive specialty mental health services that are not billable to Medi-Cal, and youth with co-occurring treatment needs.



Funding Amount	Who Can Access
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\*\$18.1 million

Counties

*\*Ongoing*

### How to Learn More

All County Letter 21-119:

[ACL 21-119](#)

County Fiscal Letter:

[CFL 21/22-35](#)

# Flexible Family Support Funds

- \$50,000,000 shall be available for the State Department of Social Services to provide funding to increase the use of home-based family care
- Enacted in this years budget, Deadline Jan 1st 2023
- Can be used for:
  - Respite care
  - **Extracurricular activities**
  - Continue family connections
  - Concrete costs around housing arrangement limitation
  - Other activities and services that strengthen the family



# Example: Child Specific Request for Exceptional Needs

- Enhanced Intensive Services Foster Care with trained kinship parent who has received the additional training, coaching, and supervision.
- Program staff available to support the youth and family in the home 24 hours per day/7 days per week.
- Intensive behavioral health services funded through EPSDT contracts.
- Funding for enhanced supervision for after school coding program.
- Funding for purchase of drums, enrollment for music classed, and transportation.

# Statewide Policy Efforts

- Re-issued EC memo with Youth Law Center
- Ongoing Quarterly Directors Meeting Topic
  - Ex of successes:
    - Highlighting EC as essential support for youth with complex care needs
    - Access to CDSS policy unit issuing guidance about possible EC funding allocations
- Statewide trainings to CDSS workgroups, attorneys, and other stakeholders
- Engaged in the development of local guidance (ACLs)

**How can local chapters play an important role?**



# Possible Local Chapter Efforts

- Select EC investments as a local issue/local priority
- Facilitate training to county staff to encourage them to priority EC in their Child Specific Requests and Flexible Family Support Funds
- Recruit new CYC members and educate them on the available funding and develop tips for how to bring them up during CFT
- Develop best practice handout for social workers on how to prioritize EC in your county
- Spreading awareness via social media outlets

# What's Next?

- Take this back to your next chapter/regional meeting
  - Show recording OR have a member facilitate this session
- No active chapter yet.... NO WORRIES
  - Use this topic as a recruitment method
    - Host a in person/zoom meeting and invite youth to attend to discuss what access to EC looks like in your county
- If your chapter does decide to pick up this issue, loop back with Policy Team for technical assistance!

# Meet the Community Advocacy Coordinator (CAC) Team!

**Northern Region  
Region**



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# Q&A Session

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