

**California Youth Connection's
Los Angeles Chapter
Community Dinner**

"Celebrating 20 years of Advocacy"



**Thursday, November 13, 2008
Los Angeles, CA**

Agenda

5:30-6:15pm: *Registration*

6:15-7:30pm: *Buffet-Style Dinner*

6:15-6:23pm: *Welcome*

6:23-6:31pm: *CYC Overview*

6:30-7:05pm: *Study Introduction/Finding and Results*

7:05-7:20pm: *Recommendations*

7:20-7:30pm: *Guest Speaker*
Trish Ploehn, Director of DCFS

7:30-7:50pm: *Celebrating 20 years of Advocacy*

7:50-8:00pm: *Closing Remarks*

California Youth Connection

“Working to Improve the Lives of Children and Youth in Foster Care”

California Youth Connection (CYC) is a non-profit youth advocacy and leadership organization for current and former foster youth. We are young people ages 14-24 who, because of our experience with the child welfare system, are committed to educating policy makers and the public about the unique needs of foster youth. CYC was founded on the principle that policy makers and administrators can benefit from the input of youth who have experienced first-hand the impact of foster care policies and social work practices. We believe that no one can better articulate the strengths and weaknesses of the foster care system than those who have participated in it.

California Youth Connection was founded in 1988 by a group of foster youth and supportive adults to provide a vehicle for California foster youth to learn leadership and advocacy skills and to engage directly with policy-makers to improve the foster care system. Founded on the model of youth empowerment, almost twenty years later CYC maintains a dual focus on policy and youth development.

CYC is an organization comprised of 28 chapters throughout California with 500 total members. Adult Supporters assist the youth of each chapter in running meetings, targeting local issues, and fund raising. CYC chapters host and organize two statewide conferences per year, the summer policy conference and “Day at the Capitol”. Day at the Capital provides members with an opportunity to educate legislators on foster care issues.

Information of Study/Local Issue

The California Youth Connection promotes grass root and statewide community organizing, legislative change and policy development through the empowerment of current and former foster youth. Part of grass root initiatives includes advocating on a local level. For this, each county's CYC chapter take son a local issue to improve the foster care system within their community. The Los Angeles Chapter chose to survey the youth in their county and find out if youth are aware of the resources available to them.

Methods:

The Los Angeles Chapter members began to notice a trend among their peers; many youth were not aware of the services available while in care or services after transition. In order to address this the youth decided to not only survey Los Angeles County foster youth, but to follow these surveys with a presentation to educate the youth on services, programs and their rights. The youth created the survey, the presentation and administered the survey and presentations themselves, practicing true youth involvement.

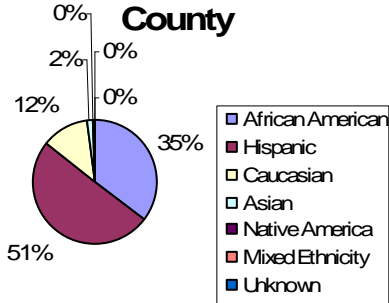
The foster youth surveyed are all Los Angeles youth with various placement settings, including group homes and probation homes. The survey was distributed on two separate occasions over the last year, once in May/June 2007 and again in September 2008. The survey was created by the members of the Los Angeles CYC chapter using youth friendly language. The intent was to collect demographic data and more importantly, gather data regarding youth's knowledge on basic resources such as ILP services, transitional housing, and employment.

Findings

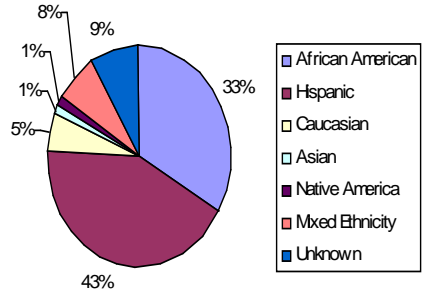
- 75 % of youth have not heard of CYC
AB 408 (2003) strengthens a youth's right to attend their court hearings, and the right of youth to participate in social and extracurricular activities, such as California Youth Connection
- 28% of youth know of job opportunities with Employment Services Specialists
The Foster Care Bill of Rights (2001) gives youth the right to work and develop job skills
- 48% of youth were not given a chance to speak in court
AB 3051 (2007) provides youth the right to attend and participate in their court hearings.
- 70% of youth do not know how to obtain a credit report
AB 2985 (2006) requires county welfare departments to request credit checks for foster youth who are 16 or older and provide referrals to credit counseling organizations if the credit check discloses any negative information.
- 62% of youth are not aware of Transitional Housing Placement Programs
AB 427 (2001) encourages providers to extend the states THPP programs for current and former foster youth, while HR 3443 has allowed states up to 30% of the federal money to be allocated to housing for emancipating foster youth.
- 50% of youth are aware of high school incentives
AB 427 allows counties to provide monthly financial support to emancipated foster youth as long as they are attending school or working towards the goals outlined in their Transitional Independent Living Plans.
- 57% of youth are not aware of the Chafee grant
In the Foster Care Independence Act (1999) federal monies were allocated to states to assist youth in their transition out of care. In California, youth are eligible for up to \$5,000 a year for career and technical training or college. Monies may also be used to help pay for child care, transportation and rent while in school.

Demographics

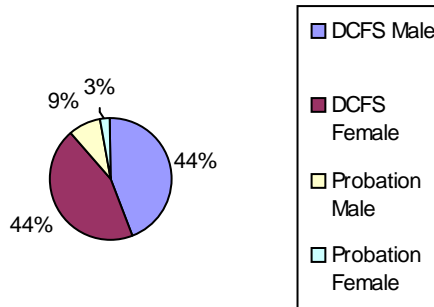
Race of Los Angeles County



Race of Surveyed

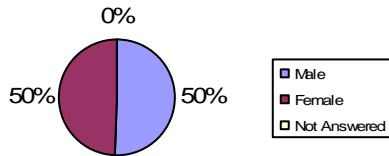


Dependency Status of Los Angeles County

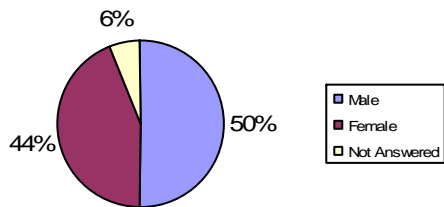


Demographics

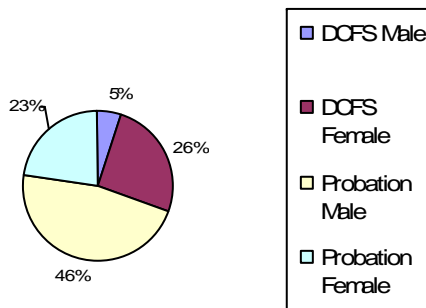
Gender of Los Angeles County



Gender Surveyed



Dependency Status of youth Surveyed



California Youth Connection's Recommendations

Group Homes

Group home staff should provide presentations and resource guides to youth, including the "foster youth bill of rights," services, and community resources upon entering or on a quarterly basis.

Creating partnerships with the group homes to employ more former foster youth, whose role would be to inform residents of their rights, services, and community resources.

Foster care agencies should employ California Youth Connection members to provide presentations in group homes and juvenile halls to educate foster youth on their rights, services, and community resources.

Enforce that the Foster Youth Bill of Rights is visible and in each room of group homes and foster homes.

Independent Living Program

Ensure that Youth Development Services (YDS) REACHES OUT to all youth and educates them on available services.

YDS will educate ILP coordinators on local resources and information for the youth within their communities.

Provide one to two computers in the regional offices that offer accessible, and updated online independent living program resources.

Recommendations Continued

Social Workers

Make sure that Team Decision Meetings (TDM) include at least three important people in the youths lives, including people such as counselors , educational liaisons, mentors, and foster parents.

Enforce ILP coordinator attendance at TDMs.

A year prior to transitioning, youth should be required to receive information on community resources, transitional housing, scholarships, college and/or trade schools along with the youth's important documents, such as a birth certificate or visas.

Current Foster Youth Recommendations

Foster youth should have access to peer mentoring programs, between current and former foster youth.

Foster youth who are at-risk or affiliated with gangs should be enrolled in gang prevention programs.

Unannounced and increased yearly visits from CCL in group homes, where youth are randomly selected to be in the evaluation process.

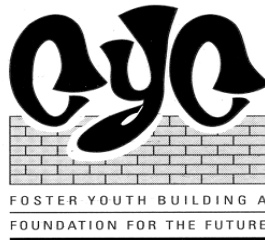
Foster youth in group homes should receive an increase in allowance and clothing money.

**California Youth Connection's
Los Angeles Chapter would like to
thank the following...**

Director Trish Ploehn

**Foster Youth Services, Los Angeles County
Office of Education**

Pasadena City Community College





**The Los Angeles Chapter
would like to thank its members and supporters
for their dedication in making this event possible.**

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