

# CELEBRATE WITH CYC IN 2018!



“For 30 years, CYC has allowed young people to be part of a story of hope. Our participation in CYC gives us the hope we didn’t have growing up. It’s hope for yourself and hope for the next generation. CYC allows young people to be immortal. We get to see that immortal stamp: I did that. We always know we’ve made that change in the world.”

—PATTERSON EMESIBE  
VOLUNTEER SUPPORTER, PEER  
MENTOR, & FORMER MEMBER

Founded in 1988 by a group of foster youth and volunteer supporters from around the state, California Youth Connection (CYC) is a youth-led organization guided by current and former foster youth at all levels, including our board of directors and staff. Our mission is to develop leaders who empower each other and their communities to transform the foster care system through legislative, policy, and practice change.

## CYC invests in youth leadership to transform foster care to a structure built on love, compassion, and practical support for young people.

To accomplish this, CYC engages in:

- Peer-to-peer community building
- State and local policy and legislative advocacy
- Training in best practices for child welfare and other professionals working with foster youth
- Local community outreach and education on topics identified by young people



## GET INVOLVED!

- **Join a chapter as a Member:** Current and former foster youth ages 14–24 run our chapters throughout California with the support of volunteers. Chapters focus on leadership development and local community education and policy work. Members also participate in statewide activities, including conferences, legislative work, and CYC governance.
- **Become a Supporter for a local chapter:** Dedicated people who believe in the power of youth leadership to effect change, our supporters uphold the mission of CYC through practical support for chapters at the local level and in statewide activities.

## SUPPORT OUR WORK

- Donations of any amount help us provide transformative experiences for current and former foster youth.
- Letters to legislators in support of our advocacy campaigns help us succeed in creating lasting change.

Visit our website and Facebook page to support CYC and hear more about our 2018 anniversary events! Join us!

[www.calyouthconn.org](http://www.calyouthconn.org)

## OUR HISTORY

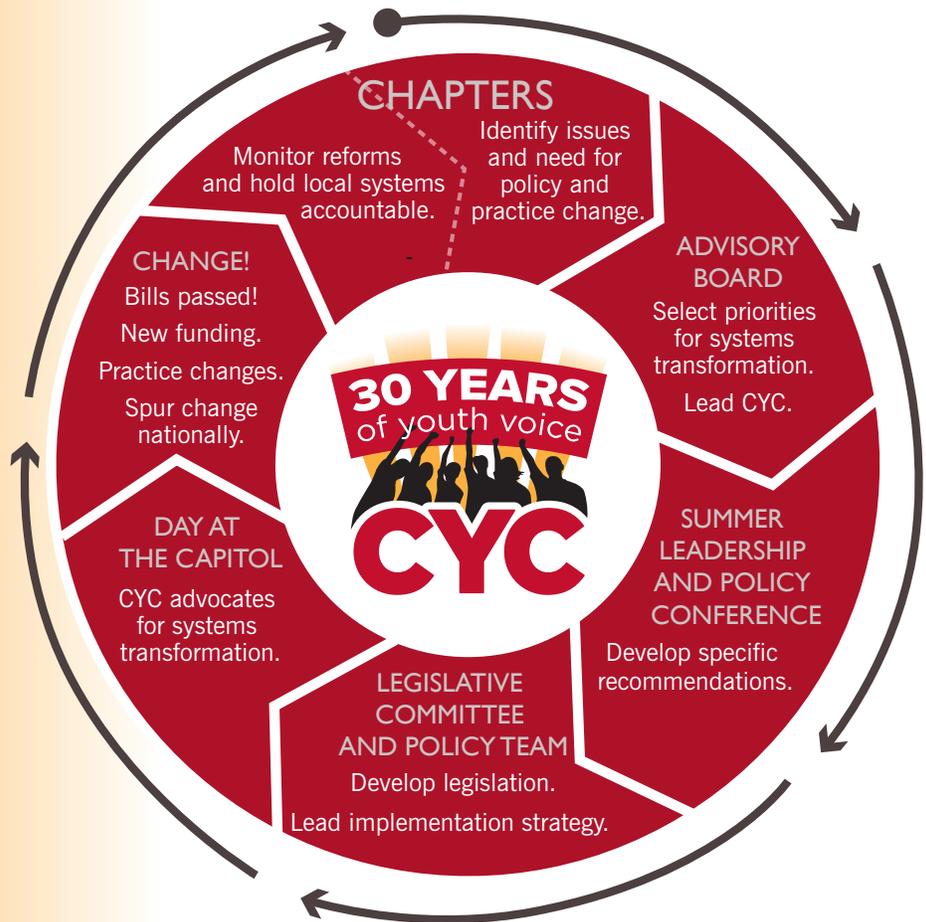
In 1988, when the child welfare policies that defined their lives had long been developed without them, a small group of foster youth decided to speak up. These 17 youth, with the support of volunteers and Independent Living Program staff, organized their peers from across California to improve the foster care system as only they could.

The youth who founded California Youth Connection (CYC) knew firsthand that far too many young people were exiting foster care at 18 with no safe place to go and little if any chance of going to college or maintaining employment. Within the first year, they developed five local chapters and launched what would become a tight-knit yet vast statewide community of peers engaging in strategic, profoundly effective advocacy.

By investing in the leadership of thousands of young people who have experienced California's foster care system, CYC has led a fundamental paradigm shift in child welfare policy in California and beyond, placing foster youth voice at the center of policymaking for the first time in history.

CYC's work has resulted in the passage of dozens of new laws that have profoundly improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of California foster youth throughout the years. CYC's model and the legislation that has passed have also created a template for other youth organizations nationally.

Meanwhile, the thousands of foster youth who have directly participated in CYC have gained confidence, job skills, education and career connections, and most importantly, have found in their peers a strong, supportive community.



## CYC'S LEGISLATIVE & POLICY ADVOCACY IN CALIFORNIA HAS LED TO:

- ✓ The Foster Youth Bill of Rights, developed by CYC, is written into law.
- ✓ Foster youth have the option to remain in care up to age 21.
- ✓ Siblings can maintain their relationships.
- ✓ Foster youth gained greater access to healthcare.
- ✓ Foster youth ages 16–24 have access to transitional housing.
- ✓ Resource parents' training is improved and more relevant, taking into consideration the individual youth in their home.
- ✓ Foster youth have priority in securing student housing on college campuses.
- ✓ The process of applying for a driver's license is more equitable for foster youth.
- ✓ Judges ensure that foster youth aging out of care have all of their documents in their possession, including birth certificates and social security cards, by utilizing a checklist.