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Challenges Transition-Aged Youth Face in Los Angeles

Education

Workforce Development

Income Inequality

Upwardly Mobile Mafia

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Content

Issue Day - UMM



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Civic Challenge

How does Los Angeles support transition-aged youth (TAY) as they exit the foster system to ensure long-term stability that includes long-term education, economic mobility, and self-sufficiency?



Historical Background

TAY Definition

Just as it sounds, and for the purpose of our Issue Day Topic, Transition-Aged Youth (TAY), are those youth who are in the Los Angeles County Foster Care System and are transitioning from being a minor under the care of a Foster Family, to being an independent adult. This group is defined as the age range of 16-25 years old. The TAY age range spans both the child and adult service systems available.

The Problem

There are currently more than 50,000 youth in foster care in California, and a majority of them (between 38% and 50% by various estimates) live in Los Angeles County, the largest child county welfare system in the country. This means LA is also the epicenter of youth aging out of the system. Due to Assembly Bill 12, the state's Extended Foster Care (EFC) law, TAY may continue to receive benefits until age 21. However to qualify they must be successfully pursuing education or career opportunities (or have a medical exemption). More than half of foster care youth struggle with a learning disability or delay and TAY experience societal setbacks like homelessness,

incarceration and teenage pregnancy at disproportionately high rates when compared to peers in the general population. So where is Los Angeles missing opportunities to better serve TAY who are striving towards independence?

Current stakeholders and policies involved in the solution

While there are yet strides to be made to ensure positive outcomes for TAY, there are a number of organizations operating and policies developed to address needs and serve as resources. The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services recently established a new division in 2022 with a specific focus on streamlining access to services for transition-aged youth from foster care. This new Youth Development Services Division operates a variety of programs such as life skills development, graduation expense assistance and offers independent living aid. Additionally, a variety of non-governmental organizations also exist to assist on national, state and regional levels with missions focused on youth exiting foster care systems, including the Children's Law Center of California, Journey House, Sanctuary of Hope, and Family Urgent Response System (FURS).

The California Youth Connection and other agencies also serve to progress legislative action specifically for current and former foster youth. In the last year alone, notable policy accomplishments were the CA Youth Empowerment Act (AB 46 - 10/2021) which enabled the creation of the California Youth Empowerment Commission and legislation supporting TAY in public post-secondary education (SB 512 - 10/2021). Locally, non-profit organizations like the LA LGBT Center play a large role in offering and disseminating services, as well as creating programs focussed on issues such as workforce development and education attainment. Additionally, housing - specifically affordable housing - is paramount to helping transition age youth. Low-income housing providers, like West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation (WHCHC) amongst many others, build and manage housing specifically for TAY residents with on-site services and service coordinators available to help residents connect with local services. As we explore policies and programs that are being established and being developed, we want to better understand what gaps remain to ensure positive outcomes and how TAY voices are being heard to lead in those efforts.

Focusing & Guiding Questions



Guiding Question

What additional resources does the County of LA need to provide to ensure long-term stability?



Focusing Questions

What are the social and economic consequences for failing to adequately support transition-aged youth as they exit the foster system?

How have other major challenges facing Los Angeles, such as the housing shortage, economic environment, access to education etc., impacted transition-aged youth?

What do TAY want and what resources do they need to get there?

Purpose, Outcome, & Process



Process

10:00 - 10:10 AM

Opening remarks

Welcome & group intro - Nicholas Efron

Hear from our host Danny Pepper, Director of Resident Services at WHCHC

10:10 - 10:25 AM

Lived experience video of Adelene Bertha - produced/directed by Tim Sarell

10:25 - 10:45 AM

Break out into groups to read page 4 and discuss

10:45 - 11:15 AM

Lived experience fireside chat moderated by Desa Philadelphia

Guests:

- Lucero Noyola - Program Officer, Carrie Estelle Doheny Foundation
- Kia Dupclay - Free 2 Dream Big

11:15 - 11:20 AM

Break

11:20 - 12:05 PM

Provider Panel moderated by Steph Silver

Guests:

- Liz Lee - Safe Place for Youth
- Elizabeth Droz - East LA Occupational Center
- Lisa Pinto - Department of Child and Family Services

12:05 - 1:00 PM

Lunch

1:00-1:10 PM

Lived experience video of Travion Jackson - produced/directed by Tim Sarell

1:10 - 1:30 PM

Presentation from Arthur Romeo

1:30 - 2:30 PM

Mindfulness exercise, debrief activity, announcements

2:30 - 2:40 PM

Migrate to LA LGBT Center

2:40 - 3:00 PM

Coffee/Snack

3:00 - 4:00 PM

Tour LA LGBT Center

6725 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90038

4:00 PM

Walk/Drive to Happy Hour!

Los Angeles County has the largest transitioned-aged youth population in the country; TAY do not have the resources they need to become independent adults.

Bring attention to an issue that is underrepresented in mainstream talk and thought leadership.

Purpose

Develop a better understanding of the challenges faced by transitioned-aged youth once they exit the foster care system in Los Angeles County.

Outcome

Locations



West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation

West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation builds new high-quality apartment buildings and has renovated older ones that provide housing and services to lower and fixed-income people using environmentally sustainable materials and other components that protect the environment. WHCHC has apartment communities in the cities of West Hollywood, Los Angeles and Glendale. We maintain a development pipeline of three to four projects in development.

Courtyard at La Brea

1145 N La Brea Ave, West Hollywood, CA 90038

Developed primarily with funding from the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program and opened in 2013, Courtyard at La Brea is home to 32 one- and two-bedroom affordable units available for low- and very-low income residents, people with disabilities, and transition-aged youth. The building was designed by Patrick Tighe and John Mutlow and has won numerous awards from the American Planning Association Los Angeles Chapter, American Planning Association California Chapter, National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, and the County of Los Angeles.

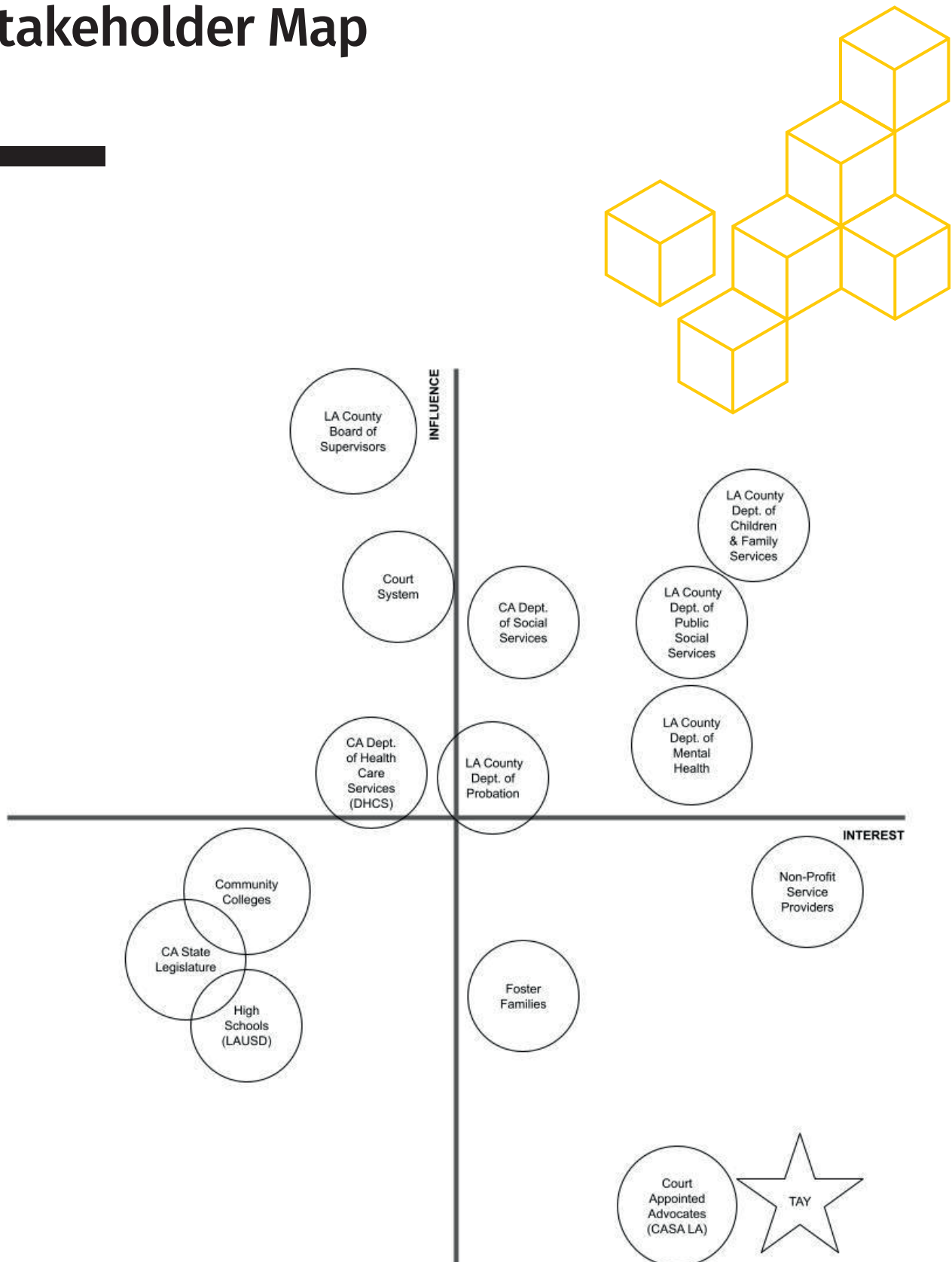


LA LGBT Youth Services Center

6725 Santa Monica Bl, Los Angeles, CA, 90038

The LA LGBT's "Recognize, Intervene, Support, Empower" (RISE) program continues to provide direct services, and organizational level training and coaching while evolving into a more robust program that works in broader systems of care at local, state, and federal levels. RISE is recognized as one of the leading LGBTQ+ programs addressing the disproportionate outcomes for youth in systems of care with a consistent connection between direct services, training and coaching, and advocacy to achieve systems-level change.

Stakeholder Map



Speaker and Stakeholder Bios

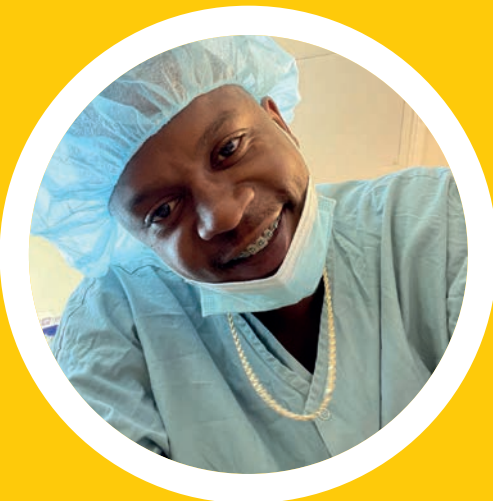
Background



Lucero Noyola

Program Officer, Carrie Estelle Doheny Foundation

Lucero Noyola spent time in California's foster care and juvenile justice system. She earned her MSW from the USC School of Social Work in 2020 and now works as a Program Officer for the Carrie Estelle Doheny Foundation. As a Program Officer she oversees funds that are focused on improving the social welfare of various vulnerable communities in Los Angeles, many of which she personally identifies with. Lucero served as a Fellow for the Youth Transition Funders Group between 2019 – 2022. In her role as a Fellow, she consulted with foundations across the nation on a range of issues affecting today's youth and philanthropy's role in leveraging their investments to create better outcomes. Prior to her role at the Doheny foundation, she served as a Grants Specialist with the California Community Foundation and as a Staff Assistant managing LA County Supervisor Hilda Solis's Community Grants Program. Lucero also has research, policy advocacy, and direct service experience with children, youth, and families. Lucero is a single mom, she loves cats, crafting, and anime.



Travion Jackson

UCLA Medical

Travion was born in Watts, CA at MLK Medical Center. He considers himself from LA and West Covina because those are the two places he grew up and built a friend base. He works as a GI Tech at UCLA Hospital in Santa Monica and has been there for five years. He also has a 3 year old daughter named Jaliah Noel who is wise beyond her years!



Adelene Bertha

Downtown Women's Center

Adelene Bertha serves as a Sr. Peer Support Specialist at the Downtown Women's Center (DWC), using her own lived expertise to support other women on their pathways to stability. Her job duties include community organizing, coordinating events, assisting peers in setting their goals, learning and practicing new skills, helping them monitor their progress, supporting them in advocating for themselves to obtain effective services, and implementing the housing first model. In her words, "I love my job and the best part about what I do is being able to connect with people in the Skid Row community and aid in reaching their fullest potential. As someone who was a homeless youth for many years the importance of housing in communities and for people is critical to the success of a community. I was never without a house or roof over my head because a shelter became my residence and a tent became my four walls. The reason I joined [DWC] is because I knew that I was homeless. A house refers to a building in which someone lives. A home is the building or location that a person thinks of as a place where he/she/they live and belong."

In addition to her work at DWC, Adelene serves as a member of the Los Angeles City Park Advisory Board in Skid Row and is pursuing a bachelor's degree in psychology at UCLA.



Liz Lee

Safe Place For Youth

Liz Lee is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with 16 years of experience working in social services, including 11 years working with unhoused populations. She began her career working the Dallas area's only youth shelter and has since supported historically underserved populations as a psychotherapist, intensive case manager, supervisor, and administrator. Most recently Elizabeth served as Downtown Women's Center's Deputy Innovation Officer, where she led training, developed culturally responsive programming, and oversaw all housing programs. Elizabeth graduated with her Master of Social Welfare from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2012 and received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 2002 from the University of North Texas. Her expertise areas are in acute and chronic trauma, power-based harm, and housing services. She is also a recent graduate of Coro's Women in Leadership program.



Lisa Pinto

Department of Child and Family Services

Lisa Pinto recently joined the LA County Department of Children and Family Services as a Complex Litigation Manager. She began her legal career as an attorney working in the Los Angeles County Dependency Court system representing neglected and abused children.

Lisa previously served as the Child Welfare Deputy for LA County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. In her capacity as Child Welfare Deputy, she advised the Supervisor and aided in further examining ways to improve the foster care system.

Prior to joining Supervisor Kuehl, Lisa served as the District Director to two successive Members of Congress in West Los Angeles. From 1996 through 2014, Lisa acted as District Director to Congressman Henry Waxman, who retired in 2014. She then joined Congressman Ted Lieu during his Freshman term in Congress, from 2014 through 2016.

In her capacity as District Director, Lisa was solely responsible for developing and overseeing constituent outreach, field operations and community engagement programs. She acted as a senior advisor, contributing to the strategy and mission of both Members of Congress. Lisa was also the surrogate for Congressmen Waxman and Lieu, responding to and resolving regional issues and acting as the point of contact for elected officials, federal agencies and community leaders. Lisa was gratified to assist Congressman Waxman in concluding his significant work in Congress while assisting Congressman Lieu in developing his priorities as a Freshman Member of Congress.

During her tenure, Lisa became engaged in issues regarding the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center. She became an expert on creating and implementing a Master Plan for the property and addressing homelessness among Veterans. Lisa led the effort on the ground and was instrumental in the signing into law of H.R. 5936, the Los Angeles Homeless Veterans Leasing Act of 2016. The law grants permission to the US Department of Veterans Affairs to develop permanent supportive housing for Veterans on the West LA VA, which was previously prohibited on the property.

Lisa graduated from UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and a concentration in Business Administration. She earned her J.D. from the University of California, Davis.

Lisa lives in Los Angeles with her daughter, Stella.



Kia Dupclay

Free 2 Dream Big

Kia Dupclay (She/ Her/ Hers) is a human rights advocate with the passion to end homelessness and human trafficking. She was born in East Oakland. While in foster care moved down to Los Angeles. She has dedicated herself to make changes within the community and legislation. As an electrical engineering major, Kia focuses on integrating technology and nonprofit to dismantle broken systems and assist in creating unconventional solutions to the way services are provided. Kia has won the Los Angeles County Building Bridges Award, S.C.R.I.P.T Award, Real Unsung Hero Award and has spoken across the country. Kia sits on four boards and as a part of the NYCL's CSEC Advisory Board, she was recognized by the California State Senate. As a part of LAHSA's youth advisory board and adult advisory board, she's received awards from the Mayor of Los Angeles. As a part of Rise Above Defeat's Board she coordinates outreaches in areas known for human trafficking. She works as a trainer and research developer at the Coalition To Abolish Slavery and Trafficking and she is the executive director of Free 2 Dream Big, an organization that provides outreach, training and support for survivors of human trafficking. With love, compassion and integrity, Kia fights against injustice and strives to provide trauma informed care to every person she meets. Her favorite saying is "Be like Nike and Just Do It! She loves to read to her son and watch Hamilton on Disney Plus.



Ariel Bustamante

LA LGBT RISE Program

Ariel Bustamante (she/her/hers) is a former Liberty Hill Leader to Watch and American Bar Association Panelist with more than a decade of experience working with social justice non-profits including GSA Network, Liberty Hill Foundation, the ACLU of Southern California, and now the RISE Program/Children, Youth, & Family Services at the Los Angeles LGBT Center. She attended Green Mountain College, an environmental liberal arts college in the small, rural village of Poultney, Vermont and self-designed her area of study: inequality and oppression studies. As a certified HIV testing and prevention counselor, she worked to increase awareness and access to resources in the small town. For more than six years, using an intersectional model, she worked to support the leadership development of youth activists and community organizers. As an equity and compliance expert, she has trained thousands of adults in the education sector, service providers, and others across the country at conferences, on panels, and through on-site.



Elizabeth Droz

East LA Occupational Center

Elizabeth Droz is a Career Technical Education Pathways Advisor at the East Los Angeles Occupational Center (ELAOC), with three service centers around East LA. ELAOC provides short-term career and technical training. They also offer classes in English as a Second Language (ESL), and classes leading to a high school diploma and/or preparation for the HiSET, the High School Equivalency Diploma Test. As an advisor, Ms. Droz helps students create an educational plan to reach their personal, educational, and career goals. The Career Technical Education (CTE) department provides industry-linked programs and services in a wide variety of technical fields.



Arthur Romeo

Artist

Hello there! My name is Arthur Romeo, I come from Hollywood, California and I'm a multi-hyphenate artist. For the last 15 years I've worked in the industry as a graphic artist, illustrator, writer, director, animator, puppeteer, sculptor and voice over artist. I started making voices when I was twelve years old. I would memorize commercials and do voices for my comic books. I take all of my crafts seriously and am committed to excelling in every opportunity to learn, work, and create. Over the past five years I've been very happy to work with Rockstar Gaming, Netflix, Avalanche, and other awesome production houses!

Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

- “ARF” - Adult Residential Facility licensed by Community Care Licensing.
- “Supportive Services - Intensive Residential Facilities” - Essential services that may not be reimbursable under Medi-Cal or other benefits programs - e.g., augmented staffing ratios and housing expenses, personal/community integration expenses, housing services, employment services, transportation, food vouchers.
- “CGF” - County General Funds.
- “CSS” - Community Services and Supports Plan.
- “DMH” - Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health.
- “EPSDT” - Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program which provides medically necessary services to Medi-Cal eligible beneficiaries under 21 years of age. This program is a requirement of the Title XIX of the Social Security Act Medi-Cal program to provide comprehensive health care.
- “FFP” - Federal Financial Participation for Short-Doyle/Medi-Cal services including EPSDT services.
- “IMD” - A hospital, nursing facility, or institution of more than 16 beds that is primarily engaged in providing, diagnosis, treatment or care of persons with mental diseases, including medical attention, nursing care and related services.
- “MHSA” - Mental Health Services Act.
- “MOU” - Memorandum of Understanding.
- “OE” - Outreach and Engagement.
- “PMRT” - DMH Psychiatric Mobile Response Team, which conducts evaluations in the field in order to develop crisis intervention plans.
- “RFS” - Request for Services
- “SDMH” - California State Department of Mental Health.
- “SED” - Seriously Emotionally Disturbed.
- “Service Area Navigator Team” - A group of people working together at the Service Area level to outreach and engage local communities and link clients to services, with the purpose of creating enhanced and seamless networks of mental health care.
- “Supportive Housing” - Rental housing where disabled individuals hold a lease or rental agreement in their own name, subject to applicable landlord-tenant laws, and where they may voluntarily choose to have support services for independent living.
- “SGF” - California State General Funds used as FFP match.
- “SOW” - Statement of Work.
- “SPMI” - Severe and Persistently Mentally Ill.
- “TAY” - Transition-Aged Youth.



Calls to Action

The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.

Mahatma Gandhi



Advocate

Voice your support for new state legislation that will provide additional housing and educational resources to current and former foster youth, TAY, and youth experiencing homelessness.



- **Assembly Bill 963:** End the Foster Care-to-Homelessness Pipeline Act (Schiavo)
 - Establishes the End the Foster Care-to-Homelessness Pipeline Program within the California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (I-Bank) to guarantee qualified loans to qualified nonprofit and for-profit businesses for the construction, acquisition, and renovation of housing for current and former foster youth between 18 and 25 years of age.
 - I-Bank is required to give preference to municipalities with high housing inelasticity and high rates of foster youth (like Los Angeles!).
- **Assembly Bill 373:** Intersession Programs: foster children and homeless youth: priority access (Gipson)
 - Addresses disproportionately low graduation and attendance rates among students who are foster youth and students experiencing homelessness by requiring local education agencies, charter schools, and county offices of education to prioritize these groups for summer school sessions and winter sessions outside of the regular school year.
 - Offers a clear pathway for foster and homeless youth to enroll in classes, which may be challenging due to high mobility among these populations.

Letters of support may be submitted through this portal: [California Legislature Position Letter Portal](#)

OR

Call your local representative to voice your support: calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates

Volunteer

Get involved with organizations and individuals that are working to support TAY on their pathways to stability.



Los Angeles LGBT Center

- Become a LifeWorks Mentor to provide one-on-one mentoring to LGBTQ youth
- Provide ongoing support to one of the Center's programs
- Offer professional skills and expertise to the organization (e.g. photographers, lawyers, class facilitators)

Learn more at volunteer.lalgbtcenter.org



CASA of Los Angeles

Train to become a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). CASAs are appointed by a judge to an individual child's case to act and advocate for the child's best interests in court and in all aspects of their life, making a positive change and giving them an opportunity to thrive.



Learn more at casala.org/volunteer



Safe Place for Youth (S.P.Y.)

- **Employment & Education:** Opportunities include becoming a tutor, hosting resume workshops, conducting interview prep, and more depending on volunteer skills and expertise.
- **Host a SPY Youth Member:** SPY's Host Home program pairs unhoused young people with an open space in a Host's home. There is a careful matching process and Hosts receive a \$500 monthly stipend.
- **Sponsor Meals:** Sponsor and serve a meal at SPY's Access Center in Venice, or sign-up to deliver meals from local sponsors.
- **Manage the Clothing Closet:** Help set up SPY's clothing closet and engage with youth members while helping them style an outfit for the day.
- **Help Run Workshops with Healing Arts:** Volunteers with a passion for arts, yoga, graphic design, and other healing arts may find this volunteering opportunity especially rewarding.

Learn more at safeplaceforyouth.org/volunteer_opportunities



Guardian Scholars

Many institutions of higher education have established Guardian Scholar programs to support the holistic success of students who are current or former foster youth, youth experiencing or with histories of homelessness, or youth who were previously under legal guardianship or wards of the court. Ask your alma mater how you can get involved!

- **Cal State LA:** calstatela.edu/guardianscholars
- **USC:** dworakpeck.usc.edu/clinical-programs/trojan-guardian-scholars
- **UCLA:** guardianscholars.ucla.edu
- **LACC:** lacitycollege.edu/student-services/spr/guardian-scholars

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- Jesse Slansky, West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation (WHCHC)
- Joe Mills, Children's Institute
- Jose Rico, East LA Occupational Center
- Juan Hernandez, LA LGBT Center
- Kenneth Chancey, LAHSA
- Kia Dupclay, Free 2 Dream Big
- Lauren Costa, CASA and The Academy Project
- Lisa Pinto, DCFS
- Lisa Rogers, Carrie Estelle Doheny Foundation
- Liz Lee, Safe Place for Youth
- Lucero Noyola, Carrie Estelle Doheny Foundation
- Louis Tse, Student Movement of Justice and Opportunity
- Maddie Bello, CORO Southern California
- Marcel Sarmiento, United Nations World Food Program
- Maria Mofin, Partnership for Los Angeles Schools
- Maria Tello, Los Angeles County Office of Education
- Martin Diaz, West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation (WHCHC)
- Rachel Sherrell, Los Angeles Department of Public and Social Services
- Robert Gamboa, LGBTQ Center
- Samir Alvarez, Chrysalis
- Stephanie Hernandez, Aviva Family and Children's Services
- Tiffany Duvernay-Smith, LAHSA
- Travion Jackson, UCLA Medical
- Vicki Klopsch, CORO Southern California

