

Alameda County Youth Advisory Council (YAC)

Facilitated by Fresh Lifelines for Youth

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AGENDA

- YAC Overview
- YAC Development Process
- YAC: Where We Are Today
- YAC Key Focus Group Learnings
- YAC Next Steps: Working Groups & YAC Launch
- Q&A

"I didn't know that you can change stuff that goes on in Juvenile Hall and on Probation"

- Youth Focus group participant

Overview

The **Youth Advisory Council (YAC)** serves to increase the involvement of youth voice in the Alameda County juvenile justice system through an organized infrastructure that aids youth in developing their leadership and advocacy skills. The YAC is centering youths' lived experiences and needs in order to inform and serve in an advisory capacity to the JJDPC and in partnership with probation and collaborative community partners to improve and shape the overall juvenile justice system.

Purpose & Background

- The Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Commission (JJDPC), in collaboration with Probation and system and community partners, want to ensure youth voice is integral in efforts to create a more effective Alameda County Juvenile Justice System
- To inform the plans for the YAC, in 2018, 50 Alameda County juvenile justice system-involved youth provided valuable input through surveys and focus groups.
- In 2019, 40 youth from the community probation Summer Enrichment Academy also participated in weekly focus groups, providing ideas for the YAC.

The input obtained solidified the importance of the YAC being a platform to help young people share their ideas in a constructive manner that leads to positive systems change.

The Vision

The vision of the YAC is to promote long-term, sustainable change in two key ways:

1

The YAC will help support the JJDCPC as well as work directly with Probation to target system challenges and the underlying factors that are at the root of community needs – with a focus on the juvenile justice system. This holistic approach – which seeks to alter social, economic, political, and educational conditions for youth – has the potential to create more sustainable change than do more traditional, “individual-level” strategies.

2

By involving young people as agents of positive change in their communities, the YAC will cultivate the next generation of leaders across the juvenile justice systemic change. Through their experience as youth leaders in this advisory capacity, young people can develop an ethic of service and community engagement and build the skills and relationships they need to be community leaders in the future.

The Council Participants

Facilitators & Adult Allies

- Fresh Lifelines for Youth holds the contract to pilot and facilitate the YAC
- The Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Commission will serve as a key partner to the YAC
- Probation Staff will support the YAC and work as a partner with the YAC to co create systems change solutions
- Community Partners will work in collaboration with FLY in support of the YAC's work to improve the juvenile justice system

The Youth Advisory Council

- 10-12 Alameda County Youth
- 17-25 years old
- Currently and formerly system involved
- Council Members will be paid

FLY's YAC Development Process

1

Pre-Planning Phase:

- Design Pilot Launch Work Plan
- Establish point of contacts w/Probation
- Hire for YAC Staff

2

Planning Phase:

- Focus groups w/youth in the facilities, community & w/CBOs
- Gather input from Probation
- Convene youth working groups
- Identify system change opportunities for the Council

3

Implementation:

- Recruit the YAC Members
- Launch the YAC
- The YAC begins meeting & working on key juvenile justice issues
- Support Council Members w/ leadership coaching & professional development

4

Sustainability:

- Reflection and Presentation of Learnings and Impact
- Evaluation of the Council work and Recommendations to continue to move the work forward post May 2023

Recap: The Goal

Engage youth ages 17-25 who have had some level of system involvement and create opportunities for them to be involved in system change efforts led by various stakeholders in the juvenile justice system. The youth will be supported through coaching and professional development. The intent is to accomplish ACPD's vision of inclusion of the youth voice in system decisions during and **beyond** this YAC grant period.

Where We Are Now

PLANNING PHASE:

- Focus groups w/youth in the facilities, community & w/CBOs
- Gather input from Probation
- Identify system change opportunities for the Council
- Convene youth working groups

YAC Launch Date May 2022!

FOCUS GROUP SNAPSHOT

Focus Group Goals:

1. Receive feedback from youth who are currently or formerly system involved
2. Begin developing relationships with possible YAC council members
3. To use this data as a jumping off point for working groups and future YAC work

Note: Youth not formerly or currently system involved had family member who were system impacted

JUVENILE HALL
of Youth

50

CAMP SWEENEY
of Youth

8

YOUTH in COMMUNITY
of Youth

16

% of Probation Youth
50%

CBO'S
of CBOs

19

YOUTH SURVEYS
of Surveys

5

% of Youth on Probation
80%

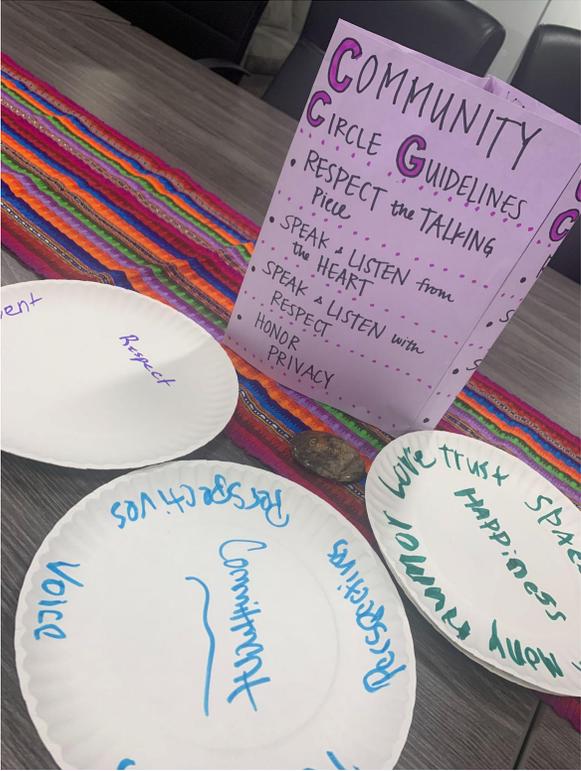
of Youth Engaged

79

Focus Groups Learnings



"[We need] a different disciplinary system; when you treat youth as criminals with the environment of jail, it is not helpful" - **Youth Focus Group Participant**



Focus Groups Approach & Methodology

Each Youth Focus Group was ran as a Restorative Justice Community Circle with an opening, centerpiece, icebreaker and a carousel activity with 5-6 questions.

Questions asked:

1. If you could redesign this facility, what would it look like? What would you include, change or take down?
2. What additional programs or resources could best support your needs and goals?
3. What are some challenges/barriers that prevent youth from successfully completing Probation?
4. What should a successful transition from probation look like? Feel like? Sound like?
5. What changes would you make to the Juvenile Justice system?
6. What are things we didn't ask that you would like to address?

Responses were captured under each question and were broken down into themes using an inductive and exploratory approach to analyze the qualitative data



Changes in the Facilities

Better Food

- “I’ve been starving myself- food here is bad for you”
- “Have youth cook in the kitchen and prepare their own meals”

Grievance Process

- “Grievance does not work”

Access to Technology

- “ TV, phone, internet access”

Better Hygiene Products & Clothing

- “More soap, more time in the shower”
- Need better soap, better lotions, face products, hair products
- “Would like to wear my own shoes”

Facility Design & Bedding

- “Age matters. You shouldn’t be putting 15 and 17 and 11 yr olds in the same unit.”
- “More colors on the walls”
- Bigger rooms and better beds

OC Spray

- No Pepper Spray, More Staff

Changes in the Facilities

Different Daily Schedules with more Programming

“There needs to be more attention to Girls, the boys get all of the good programs”
- **Youth Focus Group Participant**

Mental Health Programs
such as Counseling & Art Expression

Career exploration and post-secondary programs
i.e Resume workshops, trade school classes, and entrepreneurship

Financial Literacy Programs

Physical Health Programs
such as weight training & swimming - Overall more time out of rooms

Programs or Resources to Support Youth Needs & Goals

**Family Support/
Wrap Around
services**

**Financial Education
and Support
(stipends/incentives)**

“I think instead of being punished, the youth should be mentored and guided rather than being imprisoned” - **Youth Focus Group Participant**

**Post-Secondary
Programs**

**Housing and
Employment
Opportunities**

Another Participant - “Hire counselors that have experienced stuff situations like that before so the youth feel comfortable”

Challenges and Barriers Preventing Youth from Completing Probation

Lack of Positive Influences, Peer Pressure & Gangs

Old Habits & Drugs

Law Enforcement

Family Challenges

No Money/Lack of Employment

“Environment that you are in: they should be able to help move your family; put you somewhere or with a family member where you are able to achieve those goals. Not just put you in a group home”
- **Youth Focus Group Participant**

**When describing what a transition
from Probation should feel like:**

“You should feel free and be treated like a
normal person to where your pass isn’t
holding you back”

- Youth Focus Group Participant

Overall Changes in the Juvenile Justice System

- Restitution/Fine & Fees
- Court Process
- Addressing Racial Disparities
- Prioritize Decarceration
- More Restorative Practices, less punitive
- More Opportunities for Youth Leadership in Systems Change

“Black and Brown people are set up to fail..Kids who grown up impoverished are set up to fail.”

- Youth Focus Group Participant

“I have a family!”

- A young woman was recalling being taken away from her family into another home from Juvenile Hall

THESE ARE OUR YOUTH!

Let's Get to Work...

Next Steps: Working Group

The **goals** of the working group are to develop the council values, structure, mission, bylaws etc. alongside young people who have direct experience with the juvenile justice system. Youth will be using the data from the focus groups to inform the development of the YAC.

Who: Youth who are currently or previously system-involved, primarily those who have participated in the focus groups

When: February through April of 2022

Our **hope** is that youth who are part of the working groups will also be a part of the Youth Advisory Council. This is a **paid opportunity**.

YAC Launch Date May 2022!

**We want to invite you all to participate in
our continual efforts to support the
YAC!**



QUESTIONS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

Please do not hesitate to follow up with us.
You can reach us via the contact below;

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