Current Investments and Advocacy: Enrichment Activities for System Impacted Youth

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Framework Advocacy: 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, Former Statewide Policy Manager, California Youth Connection
The Need to Support Enrichment Activities Has Never Been Greater

- Enrichment and extracurricular activities are positive interventions that are critical to meeting the mental health and wellness needs of young people.

- As we struggle to provide adequate family-based care options, investments in enrichment and extracurricular activities are needed to complement existing investments in complex care cases, mental health system and Medi-Cal reform.

- Our laws are clear that participation is a right, but enforcement of the law and funding to support implementation is not adequate.
Benefits of Extracurricular Participation

- **Promotes Healthy Development**: Helps build resiliency and positive self-identity; counteracts the harmful effects of trauma; complements behavioral health interventions.

- **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 support for caregivers, improves placement stability and opportunities for permanency.
Recent Advocacy Efforts: Components of AB 1675 and the Complementary Budget Request

- The Department of Social Services, Department of Health Care Services, and Department of Education to develop a plan to maximize and leverage all available funds to support participation in enrichment activities;
- Require the Department of Health Care Services to include young people and families in implementation planning if its request to provide an activity stipend for youth in foster care is approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid through its 1115 Demonstration Waiver Request (BH-CONNECT); and
- Additional accountability mechanisms to ensure that existing laws are followed, such as including participation in enrichment activities in the case plan and as part of court review hearings.
- The budget request was for 9.2 million.
Status of Legislative and Budget Advocacy

- Efforts to advance AB 1675 and the budget request were not successful this year.
Continued Advocacy: Leveraging Family Flexible Funds

- AB 179 of 2022 included $50 million for funding to increase the use of family based care.
- Among the permissible uses of the funds are “costs to facilitate a foster caregiver’s and child’s participation in child and youth enrichment activities.”
- Funds are allocated to county child welfare agencies and probation departments.
Continued Advocacy: Leveraging Family Flexible Funds

- Guidance and a copy of the template letter of intent can be found here: **ACL 23-02**
- Applications can be submitted now (and no later than July 1, 2024).
- Funding expires on June 30, 2025.
- Encourage child welfare agencies and probation departments to submit a letter of intent and to seek feedback from youth and families about use of funds.
- Work with California Youth Connection (CYC) to develop a pilot program on enrichment activities using flexible funds.
  - Link to template proposal: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TLxftA7Zp1oFMGYw8d7v99XE1ECtUoWp/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TLxftA7Zp1oFMGYw8d7v99XE1ECtUoWp/edit)
  - CYC Contact, Kristina Tanner, kristinat@calyouthconn.org
Continued Advocacy: Impacting Implementation of the BH-CONNECT Waiver

- DHCS has included the development of an “activity stipend” for youth in foster care in its application for a Medicaid 1115 Waiver, BH-CONNECT Demonstration.
- This would allow the use of Medicaid funds for activities that promote social and emotional well-being and counteract the harmful effects of trauma.
- Advocates and stakeholders are asking to be included in implementation planning.
Continued Advocacy: Individual Advocacy Under Current Law and Funding Streams

- Include enrichment activities in the case plan.
- Include participation in enrichment activities in any Child-Specific Funding Requests for Exceptional Needs under [ACL 21-119](https://fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/file-a-complaint/).
- Ensure that the court make findings about youths’ participation in enrichment activities in accordance with the law and ask for any orders to make participation possible.
- File a motion to request the court to order the agency to provide necessary supports to ensure the youth can participate in entitled activities.
- File a complaint with the Ombud Office if participation in not allowed or supported. [https://fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/file-a-complaint/](https://fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/file-a-complaint/)
Continued Advocacy: Education and Training

- Training materials developed for the JCC: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1xrSPtdRq8o5AaAjrtwK5AOa_Pkpn0Ryd?usp=drive_link
Contact Information

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