

CALIFORNIA CENTER

OUR SUPPORT FOR YOUTH ENGAGED IN POLICY-MAKING AND PLANNING

Youth In A District-Wide High School Reform Process – In 1999, the California Center recruited and trained forty youth from ten high schools who (over the course of several months) led the youth engagement component of the “E21” high school reform process for the Sacramento Unified School District. After conducting a survey of their peers, studying “expert” recommendations, and convening 500 of their peers, the youth developed and presented youth priorities before audiences of teachers, administrators, parents and other members of the community. The youth also served on topic specific committees alongside adults as part of the district's commitment to “youth governance” (2000-2001). The project was supported by funds from the School District and a Carnegie Foundation grant.

Youth On Boards and Commissions: The California Center's Youth-Full Government training academy supports the establishment, expansion and improved functioning of youth boards and commissions for cities, counties, tribal governments and regional coalitions. Youth-Adult teams who have participated in the conference over the past two years have created brand new youth councils, expanded youth participation opportunities through subcommittees and advisory boards, advocated for voting youth positions alongside adults on a variety of councils and commissions. Youth participants also formed the first-ever statewide Youth Advisory Board to the California State Legislature's Wellness Task Force.

Youth In Land Use Planning Processes: Through its Youth VOICE in Community Design project (2001-2004), the California Center has trained and supported youth participating in neighborhood, city, county and regional planning processes in California and throughout the nation. Supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, recent partners have included the San Diego Regional Planning Authority, Valley Vision in Sacramento, and the North Dakota Geographical Alliance.

Youth Developing Strategic Health Policy Plans: 1. Youth supported by the California Center (1999-2000) participated alongside adults in a year-long process to develop the California Adolescent Health Collaborative's Strategic Plan for Adolescent Health. The highly praised plan has been distributed to state and local legislators, government agencies, academic institutions, educators and non-profit organizations. With support from the National Center for Adolescent Health, the document has served as a model for several other States. 2. Youth who attended the California Center Youth-Full Government Program (2004) developed and presented local strategic plans to combat childhood obesity to school boards, city councils and county supervisors in ten California communities.

Youth in Health-Related Advocacy Campaigns: 1. The California Center trained and supported youth who participated in an “educational” campaign (1999-2003) to inform state and local policy-makers about teen pregnancy prevention strategies. Participants attended a training conference on public policy basics and adolescent health; conducted a survey and focus groups with their peers; and they developed several key recommendations on teen pregnancy prevention including comprehensive, age appropriate sex education; culturally sensitive programs; and more male involvement in prevention efforts. Youth in this project conducted over 100 face-to-face meetings with adult policy-makers at the State Capitol, and they presented to over 1000 citizens and elected officials at several local school boards. Print articles generated from their work reached over 500,000, and a televised hearing had an audience of over 300,000. 2. Other youth trained by the California Center have participated in local advocacy campaigns, including a successful youth-led effort in Pasadena, California to pass a smoke free parks ordinance.

Youth Delegates At High Level Policy Conferences (1998-2003)- With contractual support from the prestigious Foundation Consortium “think tank”, the California Center recruited and trained groups of ten to forty youth who participated in several recent high level policy conferences with CEO's, academics and elected officials on topics including access to health care, local government reform, and improving services for youth and their families (1999-2003). Participating youth participated in and sometimes facilitated sessions with adults. At the conclusion of each conference, youth delegates presented a Youth Platform with specific policy recommendations.

Youth in Policy-making and Planning

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Youth In A City Charter Revision Process – In 1998, thirty-five high school youth from several high schools presented youth policy priorities to the Los Angeles City Charter Revision Commissions during a televised press conference (1998). Participating youth developed those recommendations after conducted and analyzing a survey of 2000 of their peers and after hosting a youth conference. This California Center project was a partnership with the City of Los Angeles Commission for Children Youth and their Families and their Youth Council. It received financial support from Verizon (GTE).

Youth Conducting “Official” Surveys And Focus Groups: 1. Upon contractual arrangement with the University of California at San Francisco’s National Adolescent Health Center, youth trained by the California Center distributed surveys to members of the California State Legislature (on Sexual Reproductive Health Issues). Adult researchers turned to the youth after they (the adults) had been unable to get the surveys returned. The youth had over fifty returned! 2. The California Research Bureau, a division of the California State Library that advises the State Legislature, provided a contract to the California Center to have youth conduct several Focus groups of their peers on health-related issues.

Youth Evaluating Proposals Grants and Making Budgets: Youth recruited and trained by the California Center paired with adults in 2001 to read and evaluate proposals to the 21st Century After School program at the Department of Education. Their input helped shape how 4.5 million dollars were distributed to high school after-school programs. 2. Youth participants in the California Center CATAPULT Policy and Community Leadership program developed a budget and time-line to expend funds allocated for their community service projects.

Youth Presenting Water Policy Recommendations - With support from the Environment Now Foundation, ChevronTexaco, and the Metropolitan Water District, the California Center recruited a statewide group of forty youth who, after taking an overnight white water rafting trip, studied water issues during sessions with stakeholders and decision-makers involved in the CALFED process. The youth presented their policy priorities to a panel of decision-makers including Senator Debra Bowen (1998)

Youth Summit On Healthy Communities: With support from the Packard, California Endowment and the California Wellness Foundations, the California Center recruited a statewide group of fifty youth nominated by local elected officials, teachers and community organizations. Participants conducted a survey of 500 of their peers, met with experts, then formed and presented recommendations to statewide policy-makers during a televised hearing. Youth health-related recommendations focused on the school-based clinics; health benefits for new immigrants; and eligibility for the healthy families program.

Youth Video Teleconference On Education Issues: In 1996, twenty youth, split between studios in San Diego and Sacramento, participated in a live digital video teleconference with Senator Dede Alpert, chair of the California Senate Education Committee. Organized by the California Center, the teleconference provided youth with the opportunity to make education policy recommendations directly to the Senator.

