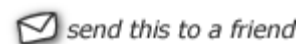


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Every Youth has a Right to
Dignity, Humanity & Justice

Youth Justice Institute Newsletter

Spring 2009

Please Note: YJI email is down this week due to maintenance so if you need to get in touch with someone please find each staff's contact information at www.yjinstitute.org. If you have a general email to the agency you can send it to [yjinstitute\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:yjinstitute(at)gmail.com).

Dear :

Welcome to our Spring 2009 issue! We are excited to share some new and exciting things happening at the Youth Justice Institute.

- Check out the new [YJI website](#)- we are proud to present our long awaited brand new website which features program information, Bay Area resources, and our new logo at. In addition to information about the programs, staff and work of YJI, you can find publications, partners and links to resources for juvenile justice involved youth. Please fill out the form to link your organization to our site if you would like to be included.
- Download the new report "[Strength, Empowerment and Collaboration: A Call to Action to for Young Men](#)". This report is a follow up to the community convening held at the San Francisco Main Library last January, in which more than 140 community members came together to discuss issues related young men involved in the juvenile justice system.

We have also been very busy in our mentoring program, working with young men at Log Cabin Ranch, working with young people in the schools and in detention in Oakland and much more which you can learn about in this edition of the newsletter. Please contact us at our website www.yjinstitute.org if you would like to support YJI by donating items, money, or volunteering.

Finally, YJI has been affected by these tough economic times, as we know many others have, and we want to offer all of our partners in the community our support as we all work to continue to assist young people in making positive changes in their lives. There are many people, agencies, organizations and policy makers who have and continue to believe in future of the amazing youth we serve and we are hopeful that as they endure and survive many challenges, so will all those who support them.

In Community,

Gena Castro Rodriguez
Executive Director

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"Boys Report" highlights local and national findings about boys in the system

In January 2008 the Youth Justice Institute in partnership with the Department of Children, Youth, and their Families coordinated a community convening to discuss the emerging and pressing issues facing young men who are involved in the juvenile justice system. The intention was to help highlight the unique needs that system involved young men face and brainstorm strategies to positively effect their outcomes. There was an informative panel of people, some of whom talked about the current trends in statistics that relate to young men in delinquency and others shared their observations and experience with the young men. After the panel, everyone participated in breakout groups to discuss different topics that affect young men. The convening was a success and this report is designed to augment the knowledge gained that day with research regarding young men. Please take the time to download the report at: <http://yj institute.org/policy/publications.php>

YJI at the McCullum Youth Court's Summit

YJI presented at the [McCullum Youth Court's](#) 2nd Annual Youth law and Justice Summit "Overcoming Legal Obstacles- What Gets in the Way?" which was held on Friday March 27th at Mills College. At this daylong event, YJI facilitated two workshops specifically aimed at educating the young people about the legalities of statutory rape laws in California, with an emphasis on why this law is in place, who it is meant to protect and who is affected by this issue. This event was attended by over 300 enthusiastic and curious Oakland youth from the public school system. We're excited and honored to have been asked to present at this event and to be part of such a great community effort!

In-custody groups at the Alameda County

YJI is currently facilitating bi-monthly groups for the girls in custody at Alameda County Juvenile Hall. We are in the second year of working with gender responsive curriculum developed by YJI to address the needs and concerns specific to the in-risk young women we serve. Topics of these groups work through themes on self, relationships and communication. Through these themes we address difficult subjects such as trauma, grief and loss and exploitation while also encouraging the young women to explore topics regarding family, body image and setting personal goals. We are continually inspired and encouraged by the insightful and resilient young voices we have the pleasure of interacting with in these groups.

Upcoming Mentoring Opportunities

In March of 2009 we were pleased to accept 41 mentors to work in all of our mentoring programs. We have a very excited and excellent group of mentors & we're off to a good start! Our summer session will start in June 2009 so if you're interested, the application process will begin in May. We are looking for responsible, stable, caring people (men & women) with the time and patience to commit to working with a young person inside juvenile hall for the Summer of 2009 semester. We are currently accepting applications. You can fill out the application, [click here](#). Volunteering consists of committing to at least one semester to help establish healthy, caring relationships with adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system. These youth often lack the support they need to successfully exit the system and need your guidance, experience and wisdom to help them make changes in their lives. For more information, please contact Kaina Walker, Mentoring Program Manager at [mentoring\(at\)yj institute.org](mailto:mentoring(at)yj institute.org) or 415-753-7625.

Policy

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Here are a few important pieces of legislation that affect the lives of juvenile justice system involved youth. Please follow the links below to learn more, contact your representatives and help improve the system for the young people we support.

AB12 - *California Fostering Connections to Success Act* is California's promising response to the most comprehensive foster care federal legislation signed in over a decade. HR6307 was signed into law last year, but requires that each state opt in through their own legislative process to the various opportunities provided by the bill. This will be a long process, but California's AB12 is just such a bill that based on the federal opportunity will significantly reform California's foster care system in two ways:

- Assist youth aging out of foster care by expanding support for youth to age 21 by leveraging federal dollars (currently if youth stay in care longer than 18, counties receive no federal assistance and so consequently many counties find it hard to keep youth in care past 18)
- Support relative caregivers by again drawing down federal dollars to pay for services that are currently entirely state-funded

For more information go to:

www.cafosteringconnections.org

SB 134-- Senator Carol Lui--This bill improves the ability of youth incarcerated in state facilities to parent their children by allowing them to communicate over the phone and in writing with their child and with their child's caregiver, other parent, social worker, teacher, physician or any other person involved in the child's upbringing. The bill will be amended to provide youth who are incarcerated in local facilities with similar opportunities for communication with their children. In addition, the bill will require local detention facilities to provide opportunities for "meaningful contact," including in person visits, between incarcerated youth and their children. SB 134 is co-sponsored by one of YJI's partner agencies, the Center for Young Women's Development, and it expands the scope of the current law which does not specify that parenting incarcerated youth may communicate with individuals who care for their children. This amendment will allow incarcerated youth to use approved phone access to communicate with their children and to remain involved in the lives of their children through continued communication with their children's caregivers. For more information go to:

www.womensfoundca.org

AB 999 has been introduced by Assemblymember Nancy Skinner. California's Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) spends \$234,000 a year to lock up each young person in the youth prison system. One third of the time spent in DJJ is based on "time adds" -- a disciplinary measure that extends a youth's time in prison for a wide variety of infractions. Books Not Bars, a wonderful system reform partner, is co-sponsoring a bill to change this. AB 999 proposes to eliminate time adds and reduce the amount of time youth spend in the DJJ. It will implement an incentive program that would allow youth to go before the parole board earlier, based on good behavior and positive program participation. The bill has just been introduced and needs all the support it can get. If other Assemblymembers co-sponsor the legislation, it has a much better chance of passing. For more info go to:

http://www.ellabakercenter.org/?p=bnb_cosponsor_ab999

A Young Man's Success

When Carlos first came into juvenile hall on violent gang related charges, he had a very defeated attitude and he felt that it didn't matter if he tried because that would never change the outcome of his circumstances. He received a mentor through YJI a few months after being detained and although he spoke English, he was much more comfortable having someone fluent in Spanish, so we provided him with a mentor that could meet his needs. Carlos was facing going into the adult system, and his mind set was ready for prison which was getting him into trouble in the units. In his eyes, there were no other options but prison. After being mentored for a while, his mentor would encourage him to see that his life was not over regardless of whether he was sent to the adult system and that his behavior does matter and does count. The mentor would try to change his defeated way of thinking by helping him explore his artistic strengths and encouraging him to believe that he can make a change in his life. Although Carlos was still skeptical that he could affect the outcome of his case, he did start making certain personal changes and trying to better himself and his attitude. One way was by accepting therapy through YJI also from a bilingual and experienced therapist, a service that he continues to access six months later. As

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Carlos became more involved in these two programs, his behavior and attitude also began improving and by the time he had his hearing to determine if he would remain in the juvenile system he had solicited support from others and written a letter to the judge. His hard work in over a year in detention paid off in a victory which gave him a large boost in his self confidence. This helped him to continue to advocate for himself in court through demonstrating his strengths and he was able to help the courts see that going to the juvenile state prison would not benefit him with his history. Carlos is now looking at services that will be truly rehabilitative and a future in which he is self sufficient, healthy and not involved in the criminal justice system.

YJI's work at Log Cabin Ranch

YJI has been working at Log Cabin Ranch since September providing College and Rehabilitation counseling to the young men there. At the "Ranch" we are currently working with a group of three young men, all of whom have high school diplomas which means that they do not have a program to do during the day while the other youth are in school. C. Jason Bell, a counseling intern from SFSU, has designed a program for these young men where they are enrolled in college courses and receive counseling around for future educational goals. He reserves time for each young man to spend about forty five minutes speaking about anything they choose. After the individual session they all go to the computer lab to work on college assignments that are to be completed over the internet or through the mail. Doing college work while still in custody has given the boys a new wind; they are able to use their time to realize their future goals. They are proud to let the other boys on the Ranch know that they are in college and they seem to be enjoying their classes.

Thank you to our funders

- Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act
- Crime and Delinquency Reduction Initiative
- Measure Y
- Van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock
- Tipping Point Community
- The Women's Foundation of California

To provide financial support for YJI, please [click here](#).



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