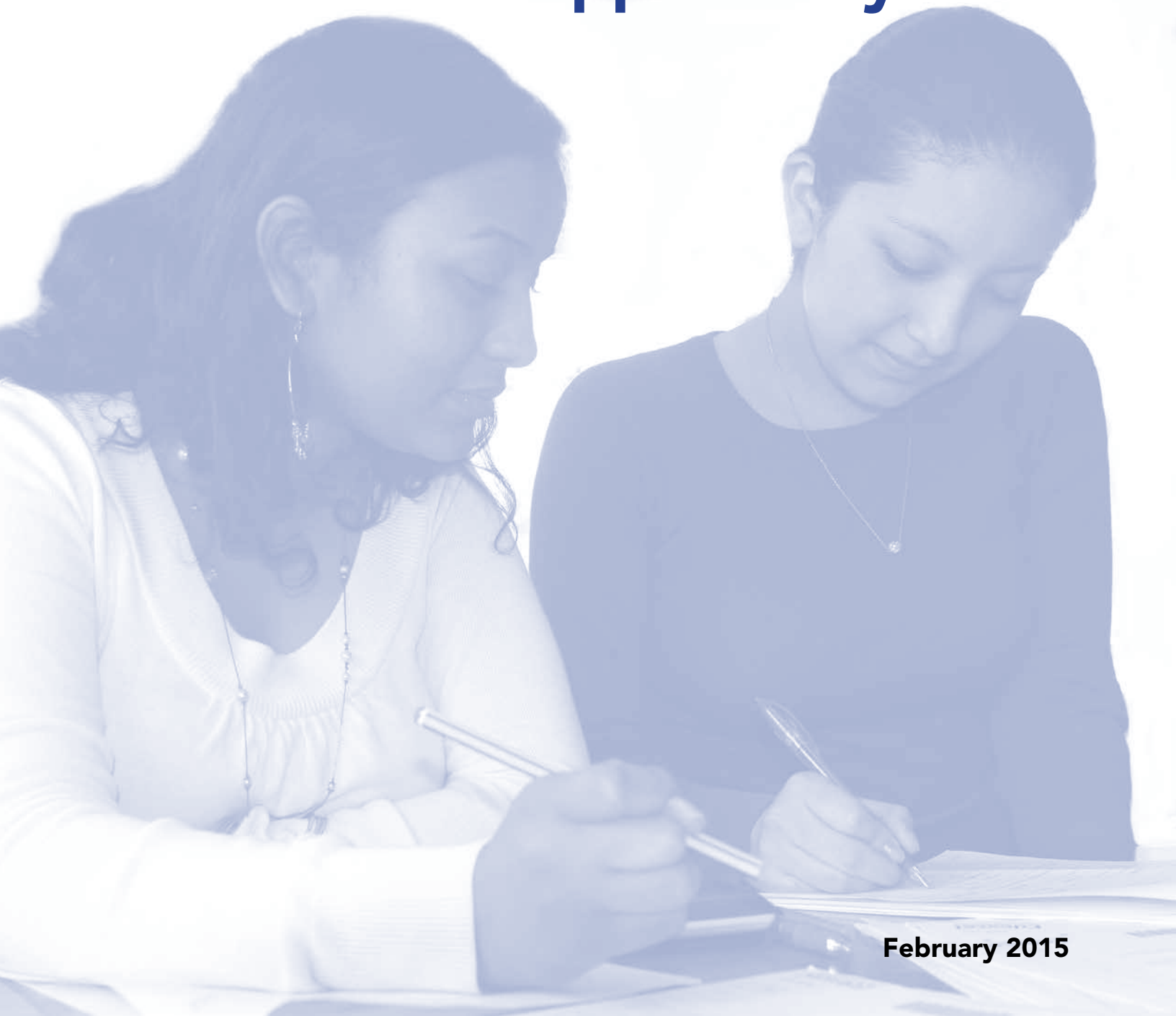


Advancing a Policy Agenda for California's Opportunity Youth



PURPOSE

PolicyLink and the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL)¹ developed this memo for California opportunity youth collaboratives as part of a larger initial effort to define a statewide policy agenda and action plan. The authors intend to work with the collaboratives to refine the policy agenda and ultimately build their capacity to advance it.

INTRODUCTION

Opportunity youth (OY), also commonly referred to as disconnected youth, are young men and women between the ages of 14 and 26 that come from low-income, underserved, and disadvantaged communities. They disproportionately include youth that are homeless, not in school or employed, or involved with the child welfare or justice systems. There are currently more than 6 million OY in the United States.²

Building on the White House Council for Community Solutions' recommendations to the President for fostering cross-sector collaboratives that put OY on the path to prosperity, the Aspen Institute's Forum for Community Solutions has established the

1 PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works® (www.policylink.org). The National Center for Youth Law is a nonprofit organization that uses the law to ensure that low-income children have the resources, support, and opportunities they need for a fair start in life (www.youthlaw.org).

2 Statistics from Measure of America.

Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund (OYIF). OYIF provides support to 21 communities to demonstrate how this collective impact, place- and policy-based approach can lead to improved outcomes for OY.

In California alone, five communities – more than in any other state – have taken up the charge to improve educational and career outcomes for disconnected youth. Leaders of the five California collaboratives and their supporters have agreed that a high degree of collaboration among these communities can lead to improved outcomes for all youth in California. The five sites that constitute the California Opportunity Youth Network (COYN) are:

- **Del Norte County:** Wild Rivers Community Foundation, Del Norte County and the Adjacent Tribal Lands Opportunity Youth Initiative
- **Los Angeles:** Alliance for Children's Rights, Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative
- **Oakland:** Urban Strategies Council, Oakland-Alameda County Opportunity Youth Initiative
- **San Diego:** San Diego Youth Development Office, San Diego Youth Opportunity Pathways Initiative (PATHWAYS)
- **San Jose:** Kids in Common & Planned Parenthood Mar Monte, Santa Clara County Opportunity Youth Partnership

The opportunity for collaboration is hastened by the need to take advantage of timely policy and systems change opportunities at the federal, state, and local levels such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and California's AB 86 (Adult Education Reform) in order to ensure the collaboratives reach the scale necessary to improve outcomes for their target populations.

In response to this need, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation requested that PolicyLink and NCYL draft a policy agenda and action plan based on two issues of interest: jobs and education. These recommendations are intended for COYN sites to reach scale and broaden impact, as well as to expand the quantity and quality of services available to OY through policy advocacy and increased local and statewide collaboration.

Produced by PolicyLink and NCYL, this memo incorporates early research and policy analysis on WIOA, AB 86, and other legislative opportunities related to educational and career success, as well as key stakeholder interviews, in order to understand the opportunities and challenges that the five sites anticipate facing regarding these imminent policy changes. Feedback was requested from all site leads, as well as Workforce Investment Board (WIB) staff, other workforce experts, and staff from offices of elected officials (see Appendix A for a complete list of respondents). Conversations with stakeholders occurred in November and December 2014. Findings from these conversations were then analyzed for common themes, key concerns, and perceived challenges in the field, and recommendations were created to address them.

Across interviewees, a common goal emerged: ***The sites must support a system in which publicly funded initiatives can create seamless, holistic services for eligible populations.*** Those services must be delivered through a client-centered system that allows for multidimensional intervention, including but not limited to: job training, core competency development, education, mental and physical health care, child care, substance abuse treatment, trauma-informed care, and flexibility in how individuals navigate the pathway from disconnection to career. The sites must pay particular attention to, and provide specific support for, those OY subpopulations who are involved with the foster care and justice systems. In order to succeed, the sites must establish a network and position that network as a mechanism to influence policy, share expertise across the state, and disseminate best practices not only among members, but to all systems and initiatives that aim to support OY.

While not comprehensive, this document describes a set of key challenges and opportunities in employment and education for California's OY. The goal of this memo is to share findings that generate conversation, begin to surface and advance shared priorities across sites, and identify policies and practices that can be leveraged to achieve better outcomes for OY.

ACTION AREAS

The recommendations are grouped into broad thematic areas of policy and practice. In the policy portion of the paper, our recommendations explicitly focus on WIOA and education-related reforms at the federal, state, and local levels. In the practice portion of the paper, our recommendations emphasize improving coordination across the network, building data collection and data sharing capacity, and ensuring results-oriented work via performance benchmarks and outcomes.

These recommendations represent the needs, concerns, and capacities that site leads articulated as the highest-priority in their work, and integrate recommendations made by workforce and education experts regarding the most fruitful points of intervention in policy conversations and funding opportunities on the horizon.

PROMISING POLICIES FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

EMPLOYMENT

Goal #1: Monitor and comment on federal WIOA regulations and other related opportunities.

- ⇒ Recommendation: Engage members of Congress and leadership in US Department of Labor (USDOL) to shape WIOA policy that is responsive to OY issues.

Engaging federal congressional representatives is a key strategy for influencing the national conversation on how WIOA as well as other federal policies and actions are affecting OY. The Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative has already begun working with elected officials on some discrete aspects of statewide WIOA implementation. With their support, Representative Karen Bass of California's 37th District (Los Angeles) has agreed to support conversations about provisions of WIOA at the federal level. With support from COYN and others, the LA collaborative made the following recommendations to Representative Bass:

- Enact WIOA regulations in such a way that states have flexibility to define the timeline and criteria for re-engagement of OY. Such regulations would allow more state autonomy over how multiple systems and sectors (employment, education, mental health, criminal justice, foster care, etc.) are implicated.
- Institute federal incentives that would reward states for leading implementation. Incentives might include waivers, flexibility, or additional points for states that are pursuing combined plans and exploring broad collaboration across agencies and programs at multiple levels – all of which might serve as a catalyst for strong implementation in California and nationwide.

- Refine WIOA policy such that states can provide exceptions to system-involved youth for the in-school versus out-of-school designations. This would mitigate challenges COYN members articulated regarding seamless access to services and client-centered eligibility requirements. Removing the requirements that WIOA supports be withdrawn upon return to school, for example, would ensure more seamless intervention and better outcomes, particularly for systems-involved youth.
- Prioritize systems-involved youth who still maintain some connection to school. This will allow COYN to serve the most vulnerable OY without penalizing young people “on the bubble” regarding their in-school versus out-of-school designation. This in turn will improve policy and practice for all OY in California (and, by extension, the US).

The development of a shared coordinated response will be critical to COYN's success with federal advocacy.

Engaging California congressional representatives in each district should be done with an eye towards understanding member priorities and their connection to COYN issues in WIOA. Not all will need to champion the same set of provisions, and with a coordinated approach, COYN can ensure members are engaging the provisions which align with their expertise and the network's priorities.

At the same time, influencing the federal agency will require a variety of advocacy strategies, such as hosting briefings, writing letters, meeting with stakeholders, and facilitating inter-agency dialogue.

Additionally, numerous other federal legislative items, administrative policies, and public-private initiatives will take center stage in the final years of the current administration and with the installation of the 114th Congress. Presidential initiatives such as My Brother's Keeper (MBK) and the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention; the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and attendant waiver conversations; and pilot projects such as the Workforce Innovation (USDOL), Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth (P3), and Investing in Innovation (US Department of Education) funds, all represent points of entry for COYN into a national conversation regarding more sensible and streamlined funding and implementation of OY-supportive initiatives.

Goal #2: Streamline program eligibility so clients are funded across multiple programs and interventions without disruptions in service due to changes in eligibility.

Nearly all interviewees expressed frustration about how to meet clients' holistic needs across multiple domains. Case management providers work to coordinate care across multiple, uncoordinated systems with varying eligibility requirements, inadequate (or sometimes redundant) ancillary supports, and myriad outcome indicators that programs may or may not have the capacity to track. COYN stakeholders seek ways to mitigate the negative impact of the inevitable interruption

in services to clients. With greater administrative and financial capacity, providers could transfer the burden of gaps in eligibility and funding from clients to providers.

⇒ Recommendation: Transfer the burden of gaps in eligibility and funding from clients to providers, by allowing flexibility in funding and programming with targeted outcomes that ensure positive results for OY.

It is important to give states flexibility to define the timeline and criteria for re-engagement. Due to lack of collaboration, young people move in and out of the educational, probation, and child welfare systems regularly and WIOA should support and enhance collaborative models, rather than disincentivizing collaboration between systems.

Collaboration and coordination across sectors and funding streams are required to truly meet the needs of clients. Policy and regulatory change will be necessary for such coordination, but so too will capacity-building within organizations that provide direct services, administer funds, work as intermediaries, or otherwise occupy a place in the universe of organizations that serve OY.

WIOA requires 75 percent of state and local youth funding be used for out-of-school youth.³ At least 20 percent of local youth formula funds must be used for work activities such as summer jobs, pre-apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and internships.

Policy strategies that ensure eligibility and continuous support throughout the duration of a client's needs are important elements to reconnecting OY. To do this successfully, service providers will need flexibility tied to defined outcomes, as well as capacity-building to understand how to mitigate funding challenges and leverage other employment opportunities across sectors such as in infrastructure (CA water bond, transportation funding for high speed rail, etc.) and the environment (cap and trade investments, parks and natural resources).

Additionally, mapping existing policies in the short-term will help determine funding sources, coordination mechanisms, and blending and braiding schemes, such as: Washington State's Open Door, Louisiana's JumpStart, NYC's secondary education competency based learning, and federal changes to HiSET (high school equivalency testing).

This level of coordination and sophistication between policy and practice will require COYN members to increase their in-house capacities for policy-aligned practice. This long-term objective will require leadership from sites to think beyond staffing the programmatic and service elements of their collaborative and hire staff with policy expertise. Building in-house policy expertise will allow each collaborative

3 U.S. Department of Labor "Engaging Employers for Opportunity Youth" webinar (January 14, 2015).

to have real time focus and attention on the local policy environment. This type of local policy capacity is an important complement to the work of the statewide policy organization. Creating a dynamic wherein local expertise is working in close partnership with a state policy entity can drive synergy that yields lasting results and ensures policy driven by practice and constituents in communities.

Goal #3: Build upon local administrative advocacy and political action.

The COYN, along with advocacy partners PolicyLink and NCYL, occupies a unique position. The five California sites, when united under the COYN umbrella, give voice to issues faced by nearly every subpopulation of OY; work on issues related to urban, suburban, and rural systems; and represent a constituency larger in number than perhaps any other state network. To date, there is a lack of representation on WIBs that understands and advocates for OY needs.

⇒ Recommendation: Engage new local WIB membership.

WIOA reconfigures WIBs at both the local and state levels to streamline membership and re-balance representation between business and workforce development stakeholders. Advocacy and action at both the local and state levels can influence WIB appointments to ensure inclusion of members who understand, support, and will represent the interests of OY.

In addition to local/regional advocacy around WIB configuration, statewide advocacy in the short- to medium-term may also provide long-term benefit to COYN members. The state WIB reconfiguration authorized by WIOA increases the proportion of members from the business sector relative to employment advocates. As such, strategic engagement in the makeup of the California state WIB will be necessary to ensure that the composition is reflective of members who understand issues specific to OY.

Since WIOA eliminates the requirement for youth councils, but encourages youth committees, COYN sites should seize the opportunity to create and enact mechanisms to institutionalize youth committees for local/regional WIBs.

Few COYN members report experience with direct advocacy or political action. Those that have had advocacy experience have worked primarily through local and state (rather than federal) channels. Some have ongoing relationships with key elected or appointed actors. In addition to capacity-building to help COYN stakeholders better navigate policy opportunities, another key priority will be to build advocacy capacity to address the aforementioned issues. Developing relationships with decision makers, connecting with local organizing and advocacy groups working with similar populations, raising the visibility of key workforce issues facing OY, and making recommendations for membership criteria are examples of some of the broad tasks necessary to influence WIB membership.

Additionally, opportunities should be explored to leverage the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color policy action team, including drafting a policy paper to better align MBK and OY efforts and requesting that the California Executive Alliance sponsor, adopt, or create a California MBK Initiative.

EDUCATION

Goal #1: Expand educational opportunities for OY through ESEA.

⇒ Recommendation: Influence federal ESEA proposal to ensure a focus on OY by engaging members of Congress and US Department of Education leadership.

COYN is positioned to inform statewide conversations, develop and implement more rigorous interventions, and streamline administration of pathways for foster care, homeless, and justice system-involved youth.

With the support of PolicyLink and NCYL, COYN has an opportunity to leverage local, regional, and state-level expertise and amplify the perspectives of key stakeholders to influence national legislative and administrative actions on behalf of OY. COYN members are, in many cases, early adopters of cutting-edge policies and practices, which can in turn inform national policies and large-scale private philanthropy.

Changes to the ESEA are needed to ensure school stability and success for OY. Proposed recommendations for the ESEA reauthorization bill include:⁴

Children and youth experiencing homelessness

- Ensure that school district homeless liaisons and state coordinators have time and training to carry out their responsibilities.
- Ensure that homeless liaisons participate in professional development offered by the state.
- Enhance the school stability provisions of the law to ensure that students can stay in their same school when it is in their best interest.
- Improve access to, and retention in, pre-school for young homeless children.
- Require that the amount of funding reserved for homeless students under Title I, Part A be based on needs assessments, and clarify that

4 From the Child Welfare and Mental Health, National Foster Care and National Child Abuse Coalitions sign-on letters for ESEA reauthorization.

funds can be used in all schools in a school district, as well as for transportation and liaisons.

- Provide additional assistance to unaccompanied youth by ensuring that liaisons assist them with the FAFSA, and that such youth are able to receive credit for work done satisfactorily in another district.
- Allow homeless children and youth transitioning from feeder schools to remain in their school district of origin, if it is in their best interest.
- Require school districts to adopt policies and practices to promote school success, including access to full participation in the academic and extra-curricular activities that are made available to non-homeless students.
- Require that states conduct monitoring of, and provide technical assistance to, all local education agencies (LEAs).

Children and youth in foster care

- Ensure that children may remain in their same school when they enter foster care and change foster care placements, provided it is in their best interest.
- Ensure that children in foster care can enroll immediately when a school change is necessary, even without the records normally required for enrollment.
- Ensure that school records are maintained and immediately transferred if a child in foster care enters a new school.
- Require school districts and child welfare agencies both to have points of contact designated to assist children in foster care to get the educational services they need.
- Promote the collection, evaluation, and sharing of information on the education of children in foster care to help improve educational outcomes.
- Require that foster children's school credits travel with them and are recognized when school moves are necessary.
- Require child welfare and education agencies to collaborate to develop and implement a plan on how transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded to keep students in foster care in their school of origin when it is in the child's best interest.

Children and youth in the juvenile justice system

- Require states and LEAs to establish a procedure for assessment and identification of the learning needs of youth upon entry into the juvenile justice system.

- Require states to monitor and report specifically on LEAs' compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for students with disabilities in correctional facilities.
- Require states and LEAs to establish procedures for the prompt reenrollment of youth in appropriate schools upon return from juvenile justice placement.
- Prohibit LEAs from automatically placing children returning from juvenile justice placements into alternative education programs.
- Require states and LEAs to establish procedures for the prompt transfer of educational records.
- Require LEAs to honor academic credits earned during placement in the juvenile justice system.
- Authorize federal funding for innovative practices aimed at ensuring the educational success of students reentering school from the juvenile justice system.
- Require LEAs to allocate a portion of Title I, Part D funding for youth reentry.
- Authorize alternatives to the Title I, Part D "seat time" requirement.
- Implement sanctions or loss of preferential status for funding or other benefits for states and/or LEAs that do not provide the required or appropriate educational services upon reentry or remove barriers to school reentry.
- Hold LEAs more accountable for graduation rates and including juvenile justice-involved youth in state accountability systems.

Currently, ESEA does not provide the level of accountability or guidance to ensure poor children and OY are well-supported. Given the breadth and impact that this legislation will have on schools, children, and youth throughout the country, advocacy is an imperative.

One way for COYN to advocate for these amendments is through telephone and letter-writing campaigns. For example, letters have been sent to Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pension (HELP), and Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Scott on the House Committee on Education and Workforce, all of whom are taking the lead on the ESEA reauthorization.

Chairman Alexander is requesting public comments on the discussion draft of the ESEA reauthorization bill, and movement on the ESEA bill is expected to happen very quickly, with many discussions pointing to a vote in both the House and Senate by the end of February.

Goal #2: Collect and operationalize labor market information in order to understand training needs and act on opportunities.

- ⇒ Recommendation: Create and consistently update a statewide landscape of growth industries, stable industries, and employer needs, to identify where jobs are, and where jobs will be, to create alignment between employers and the employment needs of OY.

The state's WIOA implementation work group should incorporate provisions in the proposed plan that ensures this function is performed by the appropriate state agencies and made publicly available. Moreover, this information should drive state-sponsored training programs, the development of curricula at relevant public institutions, and strategies to connect employers with skilled job seekers.

Many COYN members have already conducted landscape analyses via their OYIF planning funds and/or other regional efforts to better connect their labor force supply efforts with true labor force demands. However, the economic development landscape is constantly shifting, requiring updates to even the most comprehensive labor force projections. Additionally, WIOA's reconfiguration of state WIBs to increase business sector representation will require commitment by COYN stakeholders to an authentic, responsive working relationship with business partners.

Toward this end, COYN sites need to comprehensively understand not only where jobs are, but also where they will be in the coming years. Employers' ability to anticipate and communicate workforce needs one to three years in advance will allow COYN members to best prepare clients for future work on a timeline that both aligns with employers' job creation strategies and allows for the comprehensive clinical interventions many OY require to become work-ready. OY are at a disservice if they are trained for jobs that are available today, knowing that multiple years of interventions and supports may be needed to become job-ready.

WIOA's flexibility regarding regional approaches can support analysis of larger regions and potentially more sectors than WIA allowed. Regional barriers to accessing employment—especially transportation-related barriers—must be mapped against unfilled jobs. Better information will improve the equilibrium between labor supply and demand.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) is one source of information for landscape mapping, although its data is limited to the private sector. As the state develops its comprehensive plan for WIOA implementation, this should be a core component. Once the COYN backbone organization (see section on "Practice" below) is developed, this entity will be tasked with gathering and analyzing this information and identifying how best to use it to develop workforce training programs.

Goal #3: Coordination between WIOA and adult education funding.

⇒ Recommendation: Leverage existing sites' networks to connect adult education providers and funds to WIOA providers and funds.

COYN sites reported a lack of coordination or engagement with education (K-12, community college, and university) partners. To address this, ongoing partnership-building by COYN members in their local regions is vital.

As discussed above, opportunity exists at the intersection of WIOA and AB 86 implementation, with much room for stronger coordination between WIOA and adult education funding. The changes in WIOA that incentivize collaboration and coordination toward the end of pathway creation also create new possibilities for blending and braiding funds. This meets the need articulated by COYN members for more seamless service provision for clients. COYN members expressed deep concern about the ways in which services are interrupted for clients when they age out of some services or complete training modules (see below). Eligibility requirements for currently uncoordinated funding streams disrupt the delivery of services in ways that coordinated funding could mitigate.

COYN members identify a number of partnership opportunities that may lead to more streamlined and coordinated funding schemes. Locally, COYN members have access to community college partners and, to a lesser extent, K-12 partners. A few also feel that true coordination will require changes to administrative and legislative regulations at the state and federal levels. Coordination among OY and adult education providers may also be supported via engagement of nontraditional partners. School-based alternative education providers, charter schools, out-of-school time networks, and others may have existing relationships with stakeholders such as K-12 and community colleges that COYN members seek to engage. Through the dedicated engagement of non-traditional stakeholders as well as "usual suspects," we can broaden the set of activities and partnerships COYN brings to bear in our efforts to create a truly multi-dimensional system of support for OY.

Statewide action will also be necessary to connect funding from WIOA to that of AB 86 in streamlined and strategic ways. The re-election of State Superintendent of Public Instruction Torlakson presents opportunities for better coordination among OY stakeholders, community colleges, and the K-12 system per AB 86's charge.

Finally, the Governor's budget will include an increased allotment for adult education and funding for the plans being developed by the regional consortia under AB 86.

The upcoming legislative session will feature bills from both the Education and Jobs/Economic Development/Economy committees, which require comment, refinement, and dedicated advocacy from COYN in an effort to develop a more integrated system of service delivery for California's OY.

This type of policy advocacy can be conducted as part of a COYN-led effort, or it can be combined with existing statewide initiatives led by well-established advocacy groups in the legislative and/or state policy sectors. Some of these groups may include the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, California Foster Youth Education Task Force, California EDGE Campaign, and the Linked Learning Alliance.

Regulatory mechanisms, including but not limited to the Local Control Funding Formula and child welfare Title IV-E Waiver, should be created and enacted to ensure coordination and streamlining across major OY funding streams.

Goal #4: Ensure that new funding priorities include a discussion of integrated programs that are client-centered and inclusive of the needs of OY.

⇒ Recommendation: Advocate for the inclusion of coordinated programs that support OY in local and state budgets.

The current policy environment presents new opportunities for COYN members. In early 2015, the imminent enactment of a newly reauthorized WIOA at the federal level, coupled with Adult Education Reform (AB 86) at the state level, make this a crucial moment to influence how funding and practice will evolve. The policy context, combined with the needs of California's OY, requires a multi-level, multi-disciplinary policy and advocacy strategy that spans the federal, state, and local levels and advances workforce and education priorities.

For the last several years, the state has enacted budget actions and policies that support local government as the subsidiary of the state with increased local control of expenditures. This includes the 2011 Health and Human Services Realignment, Probation Realignment (AB 109) (part of the 2011 Budget Act), Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) (revision of Proposition 98 education funding for schools), and increased participation of counties in the foster care Title IV-E Waiver. These landmark policies present a unique opportunity for COYN members to position themselves within local budget conversations.

Increased understanding of these major budget and policy actions will allow COYN members to work within local and state networks to remove barriers to education and employment and drive positive results by leveraging these unique and flexible funding streams. Programs do not have to be confined solely to WIOA funding obligations. Collaboratives can develop innovative projects to strengthen client-centered strategies.

Eliminating barriers to high school completion and GED attainment are paramount to the ultimate success of system-involved and out-of school-youth. It is the intent of the legislature to support and develop comprehensive education programs that will address the unique needs of system-involved and out-of school-youth including GED and adult education.

AB 86 priorities include:⁵

- *Provide an adequate, dedicated funding stream for adult education:* Prior to the recession and the Legislature's decision in 2009 to "flex" adult education monies, California spent roughly \$1.1 million on adult education between the K-12 and California Community College (CCC) systems. Since the enactment of flexibility, spending on adult education has declined by about half and will continue to decline in the future. It is essential that dedicated funding be restored at a level adequate to meet the growing need for adult education programs.
- *Ensure structures for regional integration of the adult education system:* For years, adult education was divided between K-12 and the CCCs, with very little collaboration between them. AB 86 initiated a process of joint planning for integrated service delivery. Program articulation, coordination, and/or integration of assessment instruments and outcome measures are necessary to eliminate the multiple barriers to student progress created by a fractured system. To ensure a reinvented and effective adult education system, California must fund and support the regional adult education consortia to effectively plan, coordinate, and distribute funding to meet identified needs and service gaps in their region. The state must also identify and remove policies that erect barriers to integration.
- *Maintain a high-quality, diverse delivery system:* A reinvented adult education delivery system must be integrated, but it also needs to build on the existing high-quality programs in each region to create a network of offerings that meets the diverse needs of the adult learner population. There must be a deep commitment in each region to maintaining a delivery system that includes adult schools, community colleges, and other providers such as community-based organizations.
- *Focus on the transition to college and career:* A high school diploma or GED can no longer be the primary objective of adult education. Adult education should link students to career technical and academic pathways that provide them the opportunity to attain credentials with currency in the labor market.
- *Implement policies and approaches that improve student success:* Currently, too few students achieve meaningful goals. Programs should be structured to accelerate students' attainment of skills and provide students the supports they need to complete courses and programs.

Additional recommendations:

- ⇒ Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding should follow the student. There should be a dollar amount that every school receives per student, so dollars

5 From California EDGE coalition AB 86 Principles and Recommendations.

should follow OY who drop out and attend a community program or county school. Texas provides an example. The age of eligibility was raised to 26 so that ADA can follow the young person and ensure a greater likelihood of reconnection and college completion in the event of high school dropout.

⇒ The state should pay for GED prep and tests. With the launch of the revised GED, geared to be more aligned with high school curriculum and to better prepare students for college, the exam has become much more difficult and expensive. Whether people who take the exam plan to go to college or not, a high school diploma or equivalent is a crucial prerequisite to working in a trade and for most businesses. Paying for the GED would benefit the state by removing barriers for disconnected youth to re-enter and contribute to society in a meaningful way.

California's Proposition 47 will also provide opportunities for funding educational opportunities for OY. Engaging legislators and the California Department of Education will help to ensure the interests of OY are met within implementation plans.

Furthermore, it is crucial to make meaningful post-secondary options available to all young people, including those who are not bound for a four-year bachelor's degree program. Career and technical paths that are linked to internships, job placement, life skills classes, and post-secondary certificate or degree programs can build bridges to a productive, rewarding adulthood for young people whose interests and aspirations are not best served by a traditional bachelor's degree program. In many European countries, the majority of students undertake a vocational track for secondary education. Already, many programs that link career and technical education in high school to post-secondary institutions and jobs have shown promise in the United States.

COYN should support policies that expand opportunities for OY to pursue education in a way that sets them up for better life outcomes. The following program proposals are worth noting:⁶

⇒ **Adult Education Block Grant** – The California Budget provides \$500 million of the Proposition 98 General Fund for a grant to support programs in elementary and secondary basic skills, classes and courses in citizenship and English as a second language for immigrants, education programs for adults

6 California Workforce Investment Board, "Investing in the California Workforce in New State Budget," <http://www.cwib.ca.gov>.

with disabilities, short-term career technical education programs linked to occupations with high employment potential, and programs for apprentices.

- ⇒ **Career Technical Education (CTE)** – The Budget provides \$250 million of the Proposition 98 General Fund for incentive grants to school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools.
- ⇒ **SlingShot Regional Grants** – These grants provide \$5.2 million in 2014-15 to address regional barriers to employment through innovative workforce development, training, employer engagement, and career education approaches.
- ⇒ **Regional Workforce Accelerator Grants** – These grants provide \$3.2 million in 2014-15 to partnerships for job training, support services, and job placement assistance for disconnected youth, formerly incarcerated individuals, and others with barriers to employment.
- ⇒ **Apprenticeship Program Funding** – The Budget includes an increase in \$14 million for existing apprenticeship programs to support both an increase in the number of hours allocated, and the rate at which schools and colleges are reimbursed.
- ⇒ **Enhanced Non-Credit Rate Change** – The Budget provides \$49 million to reflect an increase adopted with the 2014 Budget in the funding rate for career development and college prep non-credit courses to equal the rate provided for credit courses. Career development and college prep non-credit courses offer flexibility for community colleges to design and deliver courses better suited for students pursuing career technical education.

PRACTICES TO ENSURE NETWORK SUCCESS

The following are recommendations to amplify, coordinate, and scale the work of COYN sites.

Goal #1: Improve statewide coordination.

⇒ Recommendation: Identify or develop a COYN backbone organization that executes core network functions.

Interviewees reported a lack of statewide coordination, and hence reduced efficacy, among OY-serving sites. The processes whereby a locality identifies, implements, evaluates, scales, and disseminates good practice are resource-intensive, often geographically-bounded, and generally beyond the scope of any single organization. In order to scale such processes and influence policy statewide, a strong backbone organization must be in place with the capacity to facilitate and coordinate the work.

Research shows that strong networks are essential to streamlining collaborative efforts. To be effective and to reach scale, the COYN sites should form a statewide backbone organization that coordinates core areas of work such as policy, communications, a community of practice, and a focus on research and data.

Goal #2: Build data collection and data sharing capacity.

⇒ Recommendation: Improve data collection and sharing infrastructure.

Despite ongoing efforts among the California sites, very few COYN members report adequate progress in creating and using data systems that compile, warehouse, dashboard, or otherwise mobilize data in ways that help COYN sites develop actionable strategies. The challenges regarding data sharing are both mundane and complicated. COYN sites variously lack key requirements for robust cross-sector data sharing: data partnerships with other agencies (especially probation/parole, K-12, and mental health agencies), technology solutions for managing data, qualified data staff, and shared understanding of how "data" captures "success" (i.e. universal indicators and shared data dictionaries). Additionally, WIOA raises the possibility of increased data management burdens for providers, as local WIBs, states, and USDOL all aim to reboot their processes for tracking dollars and indicators in alignment with the new reauthorization.

While data sharing infrastructure is not "sexy," a few COYN sites have secured dedicated funding (often as match funds for their Aspen grant) to begin building this infrastructure. The front-end and maintenance costs of systematic, comprehensive, multi-level data sharing are far higher than most sites anticipate. The human and financial capital required to build relationships, negotiate agreements, identify sub-populations, create technology solutions, train partners, and coordinate indicators

across programs with diverse missions and clients, do not yet exist among COYN members. Dedicated efforts around data sharing are a crucial, and as yet unfulfilled, prerequisite for COYN's success. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that existing and upcoming data use restrictions do not disrupt the ability to track OY success.

Public systems are currently thinking through similar questions as the state's WIOA implementation work group develops a combined plan. There is the possibility that COYN sites can engage in these conversations in a way that allows their localities to inform and leverage the state data infrastructure.

Goal #3: Ensure work to improve outcomes for OY in employment and education is results-oriented.

⇒ Recommendation: Engage with state/regional/local WIBs around performance benchmarks and outcomes.

WIOA language is somewhat ambiguous regarding the operational definitions of performance outcomes, especially for employers. While certain outcomes are clearly defined, especially those that indicate ultimate long-term success (e.g. job placement and retention), other outcomes representing interim benchmarks lack operational definitions. As WIBs develop contractual language for the disbursement of WIOA funding, that language will need to include obligations regarding interim benchmarks as well as long-term outcomes.

This represents an opportunity to engage not only with policymakers but also with state and local WIB staff regarding the operational definitions and contractual obligations to which WIOA-funded initiatives will be held accountable. If indeed "what gets measured is what matters," this presents a huge opportunity to inform the selection of indicators of youth success in ways that support authentic intervention and align with best practice. Some interviewees note that one potential benefit to creating a statewide network is the dissemination of promising practices being implemented in different locations. By leveraging the expertise of COYN members in this way, COYN can support best practice implementation by backwards-mapping from the evaluation strategies to design performance indicators that will ultimately be included in both policy and contractual language.

Furthermore, incentives for progress should be instituted by offering additional funding as programs make incremental gains based on locally-determined benchmarks, as opposed to holding programs accountable to the state average.

Goal #4: Make more intentional and strategic connections between OY and boys and men of color through COYN and the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color.

Young men of color are disproportionately likely to be disconnected from school and work. They are a growing part of the American population, and face increased

risk of disconnection. Among 16-24 year-olds in 2013, 11.5 percent of white males were disconnected, compared with 14.9 percent of Latino males and 24.9 percent of African American males. There are not only significant negative implications of disconnection for the health and well-being of OY, but for society as well. It has been estimated that the true cost to society of such disconnection is upwards of \$51,340 per year and \$939,700 over the course of each youth's lifetime.⁷

Therefore, it will be important to explore ways in which the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color and the President's MBK initiative can be leveraged to support COYN work. Potential mechanisms include:

- ⇒ Incorporate OY policy priorities and recommendations into the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color's policy agenda.
- ⇒ Develop a shared frame and communications strategy that articulates the connections between OY and boys and men of color and their related networks and initiatives.
- ⇒ Approach the California Executives' Alliance to sponsor, adopt, or create a California-specific MBK initiative.
- ⇒ Offer an exclusive presentation of Arnold Chandler's presentation, "A Lifecourse Framework on Improving the Lives of Boys and Men of Color," to COYN sites.

CONCLUSION

Opportunity youth, their families, and their communities bear the burden of many of our state's failed policies, systems, and institutions. The work seeded by the Aspen Institute to remedy those gaps through local collaboratives that emphasize collective impact is a powerful model.

In California, that model has the potential to be scaled to a statewide network with real potential to set the course for statewide policy and systems change on behalf of California's most vulnerable youth.

This memo is an initial outline of recommended strategies and approaches to realize that vision. Through a nuanced focus on policy opportunities, as well as careful nurturing of partnerships within and across local collaboratives and other key stakeholders, COYN can prove to be a model for the nation.

7 Belfield, Clive R., and H. R. Levin. "The Economics of Investing in Opportunity Youth." (2012) <http://www.civicerprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/Belfield-Levin%20Economics%20Investment%20OppYouth%20Sept%202012.pdf>.

Appendix A: Interview Respondents

John Bailey

City of Oakland Workforce Investment Board
Oakland, CA

Jermaine Brubaker

Del Norte County and the Adjacent Tribal Lands Opportunity Youth Initiative
Del Norte County, CA

Dana Bunnett

Planned Parenthood Mar Monte
Santa Clara/San Jose County, CA

Carol Chodroff

Alliance for Children's Rights
Los Angeles, CA

Ian Gordon

San Diego Youth Development Organization
San Diego, CA

Joseph Herrity

Planned Parenthood Mar Monte
San Jose/Santa Clara County, CA

Robert Sainz

City of Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development
Los Angeles, CA

Robb Smith

Urban Strategies Council
Oakland, CA

Tamara Walker

City of Oakland Workforce Investment Board
Oakland, CA

Junious Williams

Urban Strategies Council
Oakland, CA

Barbara Baran

CA EDGE Campaign
Sacramento, CA

Rona Sherriff

CA EDGE Campaign
Sacramento, CA

Appendix B: COYN Policy and Practice Recommendation Overview

| Goal | Policy/Advocacy Recommendation | Time Frame | Leg / Regs Req | Fiscal |
|--|--|-------------|----------------|--------|
| EMPLOYMENT | | | | |
| 1. Monitor and comment on federal WIOA regulations and other related opportunities | Engage members of Congress and leadership in US Department of Labor (USDOL) to shape WIOA policy that is responsive to OY issues. | Short-term | N | \$ |
| | Enacting WIOA regulations so that states have flexibility to define timeline and criteria for reengagement of OY. | Medium-term | Y | \$ |
| | Federal incentives that reward states for leading implementation. | Medium-term | Y | \$\$\$ |
| | Refining WIOA policy so that states can provide exceptions to system-involved youth for the in- versus out-of-school designations. | Short-term | Y | \$ |
| | Prioritizing systems-involved youth who still maintain some connection to school. | Immediate | N | \$ |
| 2. Streamline program eligibility so clients are funded across multiple programs and interventions without disruptions in service due to changes in eligibility. | Transfer the burden of gaps in eligibility and funding from clients to providers, by allowing flexibility in funding and programming with targeted outcomes that ensure positive results for opportunity youth. | Short-term | Y | \$\$ |
| | Increase in-house capacities for policy-aligned practice change among COYN members to improve client services. | Long-term | N | \$\$\$ |
| | Map existing policies to determine funding sources, coordination mechanisms, and blending/braiding schemes (including CA AB86, Washington State's Open Door, Louisiana's JumpStart, NYC's secondary education competency based learning, federal changes to HiSET) | Short-term | N | \$ |
| | Create/enact funding regulatory mechanisms to ensure coordination and streamlining across major OY funding streams. | Medium-term | Y | \$\$ |
| | Create/enact regulatory mechanisms to ensure key subpopulations receive uninterrupted services across multiple domains of intervention via eligibility waivers and/or changes to eligibility criteria, funding and service coordination, coordination with Prop 47, and other necessary means. | Short-term | Y | \$\$\$ |
| | Increase in-house and partnership capacities for advocacy and policy among COYN members. | Long-term | N | \$\$\$ |
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Appendix B

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| 3. Build upon local administrative advocacy and political action. | Engage new local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) membership. | Immediate | N | \$ |
| | Create/enact mechanisms to institutionalize youth committees for local/regional WIBs. | Medium-term | Y | \$ |
| | National advocacy and political action with public and private funders around WIOA, MBK, ESEA, P3, and other OY-supportive initiatives. | Short-term | Y | \$\$ |
| | Engage elected officials who appoint local and statewide WIB members. | Short-term | | |
| | Engage advocacy partners with established records in CA and DC around initiatives including but not limited to MBK, P3, NFYVP, ESEA reauthorization. | Medium-term | N | \$ |
| | Explore opportunities to leverage the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color policy action team to support OY. | Short-term | N | \$ |
| | Draft a policy paper to better align conversations regarding MBK and OY efforts. | Short-term | N | \$ |
| | Request that the CA Executive Alliance sponsor/adopt/create a CA MBK Initiative. | Short-term | N | \$ |
| | | | N | \$\$ |
| EDUCATION | | | | |
| 1. Expand education opportunities for OY through ESEA. | Influence federal ESEA proposal to ensure a focus on OY (specifically on homeless youth, youth in foster care, and youth in the juvenile justice system) by engaging members of Congress and leadership in US Department of Education; for example, through telephone and letter-writing campaigns. | Short to Medium-term | Y | \$ |
| 2. Collect and operationalize labor market information in order to understand training needs and act on opportunities. | Create and constantly update a landscape of growth industries, stable industries, and employer needs to identify where jobs are and where jobs will be. | Long-term | N | \$\$ |
| | Ongoing partnership building by COYN members in their local regions. | Long-term | N | \$ |
| 3. Coordination between WIOA and adult education funding. | Leverage existing sites' networks to connect adult education providers and funds to WIOA providers and funds. | Short to medium-term | N | \$ |
| | Ongoing partnership building by COYN members in their local regions. | Immediate | N | \$ |
| | Create/enact regulatory mechanisms (including but not limited to LCFF and Title IV-E Waiver) to ensure coordination across OY providers and education partners. | Long-term | N/Y | \$\$ |

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|--|--|-------------|---|--------|
| 4. Ensure that new funding priorities include a discussion of integrated programs that are client-centered and inclusive of the needs of OY. | Advocate for the inclusion of coordinated programs that support OY in local and state budgets. | Medium-term | Y | \$\$ |
| | Engage state and local actors to integrate OY needs into all K-12 education, adult education, social service, and criminal justice conversations. | Short-term | N | \$ |
| | Create/enact funding regulatory mechanisms to ensure OY remain present and prioritized. | Medium-term | Y | \$\$ |
| | Advocate for practical policy changes such as the following: 1) Allow for ADA to follow the student; 2) The State should pay for GED fees and GED prep courses for OY; 3) Ensure that there is dedicated funding for OY; and 4) Ensure that realigned programs and local controlled funding expenditures are transparent and that there is a public accountability mechanism 5) Ensure AB 86 Reauthorization priorities. | Medium-term | Y | \$\$ |
| | Engage the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color and MBK to identify and advocate for policies that prioritize funding for OY. | Short-term | N | \$ |
| PRACTICE | | | | |
| 1. Identify or develop a COYN backbone organization that executes core network functions. | Develop a statewide network backbone organization; charge with functions including landscape mapping, coordination across sites, policy analysis, advocacy, and strategy development. | Immediate | N | \$ |
| 2. Build data collection and sharing capacity. | Creating data sharing infrastructure and mechanisms for each COYN site and statewide. | Medium-term | N | \$\$ |
| | Ensuring existing and upcoming data use restrictions do not disrupt the ability to track OY success. | Short-term | N | \$ |
| 3. Ensure work to improve outcomes for OY in employment and education is results-oriented. | Engage with state/regional/local WIBs around performance benchmarks and outcomes. | Medium-term | Y | \$\$ |
| | Engage state and local WIB staff to draft operational definitions that authentically represent OY success and can be feasibly achieved and sustained. | Short-term | N | \$ |
| | Create incentives for progress by offering additional funding as programs make incremental gains based on locally determined benchmarks vs. holding programs accountable to the state average. | Long-term | Y | \$\$\$ |

Appendix B

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| <p>4. Make more intentional and strategic connections between OY and boys and men of color through COYN and the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color.</p> | <p>Incorporate OY policy priorities and recommendations into the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color’s policy agenda.</p> | Short-term | N | \$ |
| | <p>Develop a shared frame and communications strategy that articulates the connections between opportunity youth and boys and men of color and their related networks and initiatives.</p> | Medium-term | N | \$\$ |
| | <p>Approach the California Executives’ Alliance to sponsor, adopt, or create a California specific MBK initiative.</p> | Medium-term | N | \$\$\$ |
| | <p>Offer an exclusive presentation of Arnold Chandler’s presentation of “A Lifecourse Framework on Improving the Lives of Boys and Men of Color” to COYN sites.</p> | Short-term | N | \$ |



PolicyLink