



## CYC Launches Youth Mental Health Collaborative

“Regardless of identity or specific system involvement, mental health connects all youth populations because we’re all humans who have faced this adversity. And something we all share is an independent spirit, a strong will, and a tendency to not rely on anyone else or ask for help...It’s that common ground that makes peer engagement such an effective way to get through to people.” —*J. CORTEZ III, CYC ADVISORY BOARD CO-CHAIR*

**C**alifornia Youth Connection and its partners Youth In Mind, Young Minds Advocacy, and VOICES have launched a joint effort to facilitate the direct engagement of transition aged youth (TAY) ages 16–25 with California’s state and local mental health systems. Funded by a three-year contract with the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC), this youth-led collaborative will conduct Outreach, Training, and Advocacy activities at the state and local levels to improve outcomes among TAY.

Over the three-year project, youth will lead efforts focused on improving the effectiveness of services and supports, reducing stigma, and increasing equity through:

- Community engagement and education campaigns
- Training for TAY and other community stakeholders
- Local and statewide advocacy

California’s Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), approved by voters in 2004, plays a major role in funding innovative mental health services, mental health treatment, prevention and early intervention, education and training to people of all ages affected by mental illness throughout the state. MHSOAC oversees the investment of MHSA dollars, and provides vision and leadership to California’s public mental health systems, in collaboration with clients, their families, and underserved communities. The act requires that MHSOAC utilize transparent and collaborative processes to determine the mental health needs, priorities, and services for California mental health consumers—contracting with CYC and its partners ensures that these values are upheld for TAY.

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**California Youth Connection (CYC)** is a statewide nonprofit organization comprised entirely of youth ages 14–24 with direct experience of our state’s foster care, mental health, and juvenile justice systems. CYC facilitates youth-led organizing, education, and advocacy, providing a transformational experience of community and individual empowerment.

[www.calyouthconn.org](http://www.calyouthconn.org)

**Youth In Mind (YIM)** is a peer-run, California-based nonprofit changing the lives of young people, 12–28, impacted by mental health through education, advocacy and collaboration. Youth In Mind members participate in multiple levels of leadership and advocacy, including member leadership summits, mental health conferences, and local advocacy activities with the purpose of promoting positive change through authentic youth engagement.

[www.yimcal.org](http://www.yimcal.org)

**Young Minds Advocacy (YMA)** is a nonprofit organization founded to address the number one health issue facing young people and their families—unmet mental health needs. Using a blend of policy research and advocacy, impact litigation, and strategic communications, YMA works to change attitudes towards mental illness and break down barriers to quality mental healthcare for young people and their families.

[www.ymadvocacy.org](http://www.ymadvocacy.org)

**VOICES** brings together more than 40 partnering agencies to provide housing, education, employment and wellness services to transitioning youth, ages 16–24. Created and run by youth, each year VOICES serves more than 1,500 youth transitioning to adulthood from foster care, mental health, and juvenile justice settings.

[www.voicesyouthcenter.org](http://www.voicesyouthcenter.org)