



California Youth
Leadership Forum
for Students with
Disabilities (YLF)

Annual Report



Prepared by
CCEPD Staff



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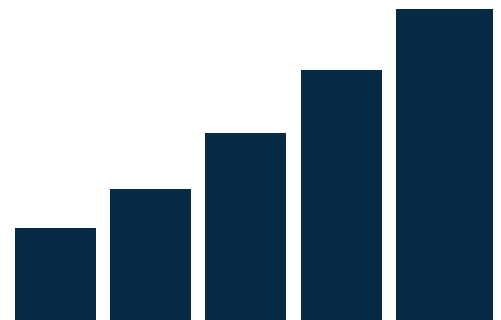
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Overview

The California Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities (YLF) is a week-long residential program for sophomores, juniors, and seniors in high school with disabilities. Concentrated on pre-employment transition services, delegates engage in leadership activities focused on post-secondary education, career readiness, independent living, financial literacy, and self-advocacy.

During the program, eight to ten delegates work in small groups, supported by two peer counselors, one or two peer mentor(s) and two group assistants. Delegates work on activities that reinforce the key leadership goals and objectives of the program. Goals and objectives are to learn disability history and culture, resources available for career development and independence, and leadership skills. Each day has a theme, and scheduled activities reinforce that theme.

In addition to small group sessions, delegates participate in large group sessions which feature presentations and discussions from young adults with disabilities who have successfully transitioned out of high school and explored post-secondary education, work and career life, living independently, and self-advocacy. Delegates also have fun activities such as: a talent show, a college campus tour, a visit to the California state capitol, and a dance, which offer delegates the opportunity to socialize with fellow delegates and learn public speaking skills and interact in a fun atmosphere.

The YLF began in California in 1992 and has grown to a national program in over 30 states.



2024 Highlights and Outcomes

For the first time since the COVID pandemic, YLF was held fully in person in 2024! From July 15 through July 20, delegates from all over California participated in the residential program at California State University, Sacramento.

Highlights of the 2024 program included the addition of new panels for delegates to hear shared experiences from young emerging leaders in addition to established leaders with disabilities. Additional activities surrounding Capitol Day included a robust panel on systems change hosted at the California Secretary of State Auditorium. Other highlights of the week included a mentoring luncheon hosted on campus, the return of an in-person resource fair, a new peer mentor role giving recent YLF Alumni the opportunity to continue to develop their leadership skills, new partnerships and supporters, and a film crew documenting the moments and memories of YLF 2024

This year we saw an increase in the number of youth interested in attending YLF with 150 students applying to the leadership program with 60 delegates selected and 50 attending.

Delegates participated in surveys to measure outcomes and growth in key concepts of self-advocacy and understanding of supports needed to live independently. Youth completed a before and after survey measuring their growth in areas such as disability history, self-advocacy, resources, career goals and supports needed, and independent living skills.

The top areas for new learning and growth for 2024 YLF delegates included having a better understanding about:

- The disability rights movement and its leaders.
- Feeling comfortable communicating with new people.
- Being proud to have a disability.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Knowing other young people with disabilities.
- Resources to reach educational goals.
- Having a strong connection to the Disability Community.

Additionally, delegates were asked open-ended questions to find what they learned most from the YLF program. Response themes related to gaining confidence with independence, and acceptance with being a member of the disability community, including growing friendships, were very high. Growth in knowledge on resources and advocacy abilities were also overwhelming.

2024 Demographics



In 2024, the majority of delegates identified as cisgender with a few identifying as non-binary/gender variant. Many delegates shared multiple identities within demographic categories like disability, race, and ethnicity. YLF achieved both disability, race and ethnicity diversity for 2024 with highest groups identifying as having developmental disabilities and being Hispanic/Latino, respectively. Most Delegates were seniors and juniors, with few who were sophomores. Delegates resided as south as San Diego County and as north as Tehama County.

In recent years, an effort has been made to recruit YLF alumni and staff closer to the age of delegates for more effective peer mentorship. Of 66 staff members, about 65% were either high-school age or in their 20s and 35% were in their 30s and 40s. 27 of the 66 staff members were alumni of the YLF program.

2024 Delegate Testimonials

“My biggest takeaway from YLF was developing new and healthy friendships, and most importantly coming out of my shell. I will go about my life differently since attending.”

-Yasmeen, Senior, Sacramento County

“Now that I have attended YLF, I will challenge myself to find my limits. I will work hard to do things more independently and/or to get accommodations instead of just asking somebody to do something for me.”

-Rachel, Junior, Los Angeles County

“I will be a lot more open and thoughtful about myself. Now that I have been around people like me and my own unique community, it really has opened a lot of personal doors for me that I am proud of.”

-Zanottisky, Senior, Sacramento County





Year-Round Activities

In addition to the six-day summer program, additional year-round activities have been developed for YLF alumni in recent years. Virtual alumni workshops are held following YLF covering topics such as transition after high school, money management, apprenticeships/internships, career planning and work-based learning. Social activities and peer mentoring opportunities have also been offered including participating in regional events where YLF Alumni can serve as leaders and mentors to other participants. Additionally, all alumni are given the chance to participate in the national Association of Youth Leadership Forums events.



Regional Events

In collaboration with local regional partners, YLF has begun the implementation of regional YLF events. These weekend programs include many of the same curriculum topics covered in the longstanding summer program, but in a condensed manner. While not a prerequisite or feeder into the statewide summer program, regional YLF delegates will have the opportunity to apply to the summer program.

After holding the initial pilot program last year, Sacramento YLF regional partners held their second regional YLF event October 18-19. The event was held at Sacramento City College and targeted students, between the ages of 16 and 21. Nine students participated in the weekend event and learned about disability identity, goal setting strategies, and community engagement. A resource fair was also created where students could learn about services and resources in the community to help them reach their employment, education, and independent living goals.

Los Angeles partners hosted a regional YLF event in Los Angeles on Saturday, October 26. The event was held at Los Angeles Trade Technical College and targeted students between the ages of 16 and 21. Ten students participated in the event and learned about disability pride and goal setting strategies. Students heard from peers who have successfully graduated from high school and attended college, gained employment, and who are living independently in their communities.

There are plans to add a San Diego program in 2025 and talks will begin for another region.



**LOS ANGELES REGIONAL
YOUTH LEADERSHIP
FORUM (YLF)
FOR STUDENTS AGES 16-21**

FREE ENTRY

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2024

PRIDE. ADVOCACY. EMPOWERMENT.
LOS ANGELES TRADE-TECHNICAL COLLEGE

QUESTIONS? YLF@DOR.CA.GOV

<https://forms.office.com/g/q5qV44Ah6s>

The poster features a yellow and orange color scheme with a blue hand icon at the top left. It includes the YLF logo at the top center, which says 'CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF YLF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT'. The text is bold and clear, with a QR code at the bottom right.



**INVEST IN
Your Future**

**SACRAMENTO REGIONAL
YOUTH LEADERSHIP
FORUM (YLF)
FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

October 18-19, 2024
Sacramento City College

Join us for a weekend of interactive workshops, powerful speeches uplifting disabled voices and youth empowerment.

**YLF
SACRAMENTO**

APPLY NOW

<https://forms.office.com/g/cT8nAfrtSZ>

The poster has a green and white color scheme. It features a collage of photos on the right side showing students at a table and in a classroom setting. The text is arranged in a clean, modern layout with a QR code at the bottom.

2024 Partners & Sponsors

Thank you to our 2024 Partners and Sponsors



California Department of
EDUCATION



Thanks to our 2024 YLF partners and sponsors. Without their commitment and support, YLF planning staff could not do the amazing work with supporting transition age youth. Thanks to the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), the California Department of Education (CDE), the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), CalABLE, Anthem Blue Cross, the Association of California State Employees with Disabilities (ACSED), Health Net, Sutter Health, Molina Healthcare, Disability Rights California (DRC), the State Independent Living Council (SILC), and Friends of Californians with Disabilities, Inc.



2025 Planning

Planning for the 2025 YLF is underway. The 2025 YLF will be held in-person from July 14 through July 19, 2025, at California State University, Sacramento.

California residents with any disability who are high school sophomores, juniors, or seniors during the 2024-2025 school year are eligible to apply. Students who demonstrate leadership potential in school and in the community are best suited for this program.

The 2025 delegate application will be available January 2025!





Contact Us



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www.dor.ca.gov/Home/YLF

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