

FLY Message Guide

FY17-18

The Message Guide is a foundation for our staff, Board of Directors, and consultants to use when communicating about FLY to our supporters, funders, and the general public. If you have any questions about this document or any aspect of FLY's communications, please contact Claire Wagner, Director of Communications, at claire@flyprogram.org or 669-238-1078.

The Message Guide is Confidential

Even though messages contained here eventually make their way into public documents, this Message Guide is only for internal use. Feel free to use what's written here when you communicate about FLY, but don't share this entire document with anyone other than our staff, Board of Directors, and consultants. If you have any questions about this, contact Claire Wagner. Thank you!



Secret Board Page – <https://flyprogram.org/board-materials/>

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Introduction

It's considered a best practice for every for-profit or nonprofit organization to have a formal message set as a basis for communicating about itself. This is a key way to protect and promote a brand. The purpose of this new Message Guide is to organize and streamline the way we talk about FLY. It doesn't represent a rebrand. In fact, many of the messages borrow from literature, speeches, and grant proposals FLY has produced over the past few years. And the FLY Belief Statement remains central to our message set.

Benefits of a Message Guide

When we share one general, approved set of FLY messages, this is how we all benefit:

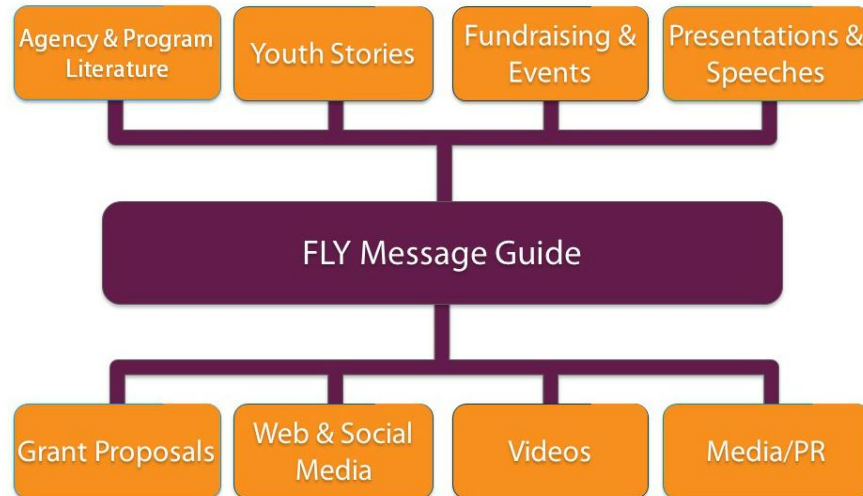
- **Clarity**—Knowing the most important points to communicate about FLY and how to say them
- **Consistency**—Supporting the FLY brand by communicating key messages in the same way and by setting an example of FLY's preferred voice (tone and style)
- **Credibility**—Building credibility with our audiences because all of us repeat one set of messages
- **Connection**—Building a powerful emotional connection to our audiences to make them more likely to take action in support of our youth
- **Correctness**—Making sure that important facts and data about FLY, our youth, our supporters, and the juvenile justice sector are communicated correctly
- **Convenience**—Giving everyone a central place to find approved content they can use as they promote FLY and our work

The FLY Message Guide will be updated at least annually by the Director of Communications. If you have suggestions or updates, please contact Claire Wagner but don't alter this document in any way.

Where and How Messages Are Used

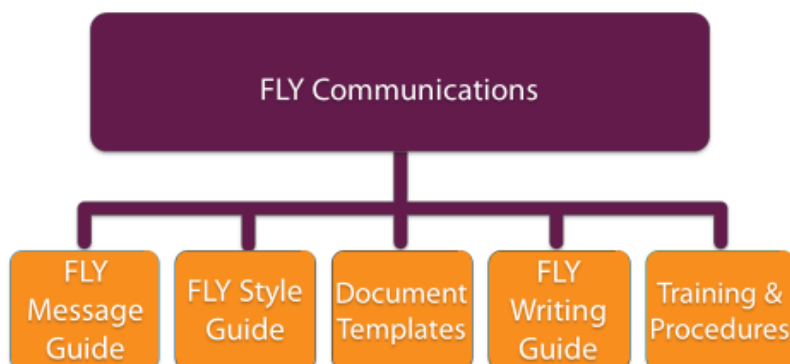
This Guide has a number of different categories, some of which have overlapping content because these messages are relevant to more than one topic. Please keep in mind that **the Guide will never be reproduced from start to finish – we will each pick and choose just what we need to communicate to specific people for specific purposes.** Each section has an explanation of why or how those messages might be used.

The Message Guide obviously isn't everything we could or should say about FLY or our programs. It's the starting point for conversations and the many types of communications we will create such as those shown in this diagram. Although you'll have the benefit of these messages and other tools discussed in the next section, **any time you need a new or revised communication, first contact Claire Wagner about whether we can collaborate on it.**



Other Tools for FLY Communication

The Message Guide is just one of the tools we will use to create or update FLY communications. Items with an asterisk in the list below the diagram should be created in FY17-18.



- **FLY Message Guide** – This document, the actual written messages that form the basis of our agency communications. Dropbox folder link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wedcsmotxbqbg2u/AAAvvOiOHBwDurNX7DBIwEFqa?dl=0> (shared/FLY Communications FY2017-2018)

- **FLY Style Guide** – Written in 2010 and still used today, it explains the FLY design system and visual brand guidelines (how to use the logo, fonts, colors, etc.). Dropbox folder link:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wedcsmotxbqbg2u/AAAvvOiOHBwDurNX7DBIwEFqa?dl=0> (shared/FLY Communications FY2017-2018)
- **Document Templates*** – We'll create templates in Word and PowerPoint for the most common types of documents.
- **FLY Writing Guide*** – This document will explain how we want to communicate about FLY, to whom, and why, in order to create a compelling voice for FLY, maintain our professionalism, and follow the best communication principles.
- **Communications Training and Procedures*** – These will explain the what/why/how of FLY communications. The materials will eventually be incorporated into the FLY launch modules but could also be used in separate trainings and workshops.

About Our Language

Accessibility

Avoiding jargon and making our language accessible is a challenge for us because of the complexities of our work in the juvenile justice sector, and also because it can sometimes feel out of integrity with our mission. Society and its systems tend to strip our youth of their individuality and add labels that limit them. We must balance our need to be supportive and strengths-based with our need to be more simple and direct in our communications. Most of our supporters don't have close proximity to the youth we serve or to the juvenile justice system. Our job is to bring them closer. We have to do this in terms they can readily understand in order to persuade them to act on behalf of our youth.

Preferred Gender Pronouns (PGP)

FLY's LGBTQ Work Group will likely make a formal recommendation in the future. For now, this document uses the gender-neutral pronouns they/them/their rather than she/he/her/him/his.

Youth – Kids – Young People

Although "youth" will be the term most often used to describe our clients or young people in the juvenile justice system, we strategically use "children" in the belief



statement and “kids” in other places to reinforce how young our clients are, and to avoid redundancy.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The DEI Committee will initiate the development of messaging FLY’s commitment to, and work in, the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This document contains early attempts to articulate our commitment and will be revised or supplemented when that messaging is approved.

About Our Data

Our statements about FLY’s cumulative impact over the years reflect a cautious approach and what leadership feels is sustainable. We’ve also included select current year data and will update this as new data becomes available from our Evaluation and Learning department. As for juvenile justice sector data, we’ve done our best to reflect current statistics, though not much is available on a local level. Sources for the data are listed in the footnotes at the end. If you know of better or more up-to-date sources for any of the data used here, please contact Claire Wagner.

**Thank You for Your Support
as FLY Ambassadors!**

FLY's Core Messages

The Belief Statement, Positioning Statement, Elevator Pitch, and Key Talking Points form the cornerstone of FLY's approved messages. Each builds upon the other by adding more detail.



Official Belief Statement

*FLY's belief statement takes the place of a traditional tagline ("one-liner") as the single most used message about the organization. When you use this and identify it as our belief statement, use the exact wording and **bold all**.*

At FLY, we believe **all** our children deserve a chance to become more than their past mistakes.

Positioning Statement

A positioning statement expresses the value of a brand (organization) – in other words, how it fulfills a need in a way that its peers or competitors don't. Any time you need one paragraph about FLY, this is your go-to.

Founded in 2000, Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY) is an award-winning nonprofit working to break the cycle of juvenile violence, crime, and incarceration. FLY believes that **all** our children deserve a chance to become more than their past mistakes. FLY's legal education, leadership training, and mentoring programs motivate and equip youth to change the course of their lives. We are also committed to helping our juvenile justice systems become more just, humane, and equitable. As a result, FLY increases safety in our communities and decreases the costs and consequences of crime.

Elevator Speeches

An Elevator Speech is a short verbal pitch that tells people what we do and gets them interested in learning more. We've provided two options. The second draws more on FLY's origins and there's a break in the middle where you can ask the person you're talking to if they want you to continue with a short youth story.



Elevator Speech Version 1

Hi, I'm [YOU] from Fresh Lifelines for Youth or "FLY," where we believe that **all** our children deserve a chance to become more than their past mistakes.

We've all been teenagers and know those years aren't easy. But just imagine you're like most of our FLY kids:

- You're growing up in poverty
- You've experienced significant trauma like physical or sexual abuse or witnessed first-hand the abuse or even the killing of another person
- You don't know how to solve problems without violence or crime because that's how you learned to survive

On top of it all our kids face systemic injustices because America incarcerates more kids than any other country in the world. And a hugely disproportionate number of them – 80% – are kids of color.

When kids in trouble come to FLY, many believe that by age 21, they'll be in prison or dead. We cannot stand by and let them continue on this path. They're just kids!

At FLY, we give young people a chance to take their lives in a whole new direction. After being in FLY, they find the desire to change and have the support and skills to make change possible.

And we do this in a way that makes economic sense. As taxpayers we spend nearly \$600 a night on incarceration – more than \$200,000 per kid per year. And more than half the kids just cycle right back behind bars.

Instead, for less than one-tenth the cost of locking kids up, FLY gets them out of the pipeline to prison and onto a brand new path.

As our kids change, they begin to mentor family members. They continue their education. They help support their families financially and contribute to our local economy. They come back to volunteer at FLY and other nonprofits.

They also help the criminal justice system that many were a part of, working with probation departments and the juvenile courts to make improvements.

Over and over again, we see how our youth make things better not just for themselves, but for their communities, too.

Elevator Speech Version 2

Hi, I'm [YOU] from Fresh Lifelines for Youth or "FLY," where we believe that **all** our children deserve a chance to become more than their past mistakes.

The U.S. locks up more kids than any other country in the world. We also know that a hugely disproportionate number of these kids are youth of color and youth living in



high-poverty areas. Incarceration is expensive: juvenile hall costs more than \$200,000 per youth per year in California. And most kids who are incarcerated come out and just get locked up again.

At FLY, we know what *does* work for kids who've been in trouble with the law or whose risky behavior could get them in trouble. Years ago, youth who were locked up in a maximum security facility told our founder what might have prevented them from ending up there:

- “If only I had known how much trouble I could get into”
- “If only I had been given a chance to change”
- “If only someone had really cared about me”

These ideas eventually became FLY's legal education, leadership training, and mentoring programs. This is how we help young people get out of the pipeline to prison and onto a new path toward healthy, productive lives. And we do it for less than one-tenth the cost of incarceration.

(This section is optional if you have time.) Do you have time for a quick story? I'll share a little about Nick. When he was referred to FLY, his father was in prison and his mother was an addict. He was angry, lost, and didn't believe he would live past the age of 18. After landing in juvenile hall, he came into our law class. He said it was the very first thing that made him think he could do something right and that he should keep going.

After his release, Nick joined FLY's Leadership Training Program. He completed probation, graduated from high school, spent a year volunteering for AmeriCorps, and now he's in college, where he even had the opportunity to study abroad in Italy. And he keeps coming back to FLY to volunteer with other youth.

Kids like Nick are all over the Bay Area and need our help. When they get a chance with FLY, we find over and over again that not only do they change, but they immediately reach back and help other youth like them change, too. They are helping to create a safer, healthier, and happier community for all of us.

Key Talking Points

These points expand on FLY's positioning statement and answer the most common questions asked. Incorporate them into documents or give them as a list to people who just want facts about FLY.

- Founded in 2000, Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY) is an award-winning nonprofit dedicated to breaking the cycle of juvenile violence, crime, and incarceration. At FLY, we believe that **all** our children deserve a chance to become more than their past mistakes.
- Locally, 10,000 kids are arrested each year and 6,000 are on probation.ⁱ The majority of kids just go back in again, and juvenile hall costs more than \$200,000 per year per youth in California.ⁱⁱ In addition, incarcerated kids are much more likely to end up in jail as adults.ⁱⁱⁱ
- FLY is one of the very few Bay Area agencies that specialize in working with kids who are incarcerated or on probation, or whose risky behavior could land them in juvenile hall.
- FLY has played an important role in community-wide efforts to reduce the number of youth incarcerated. Since FLY was founded in 2000, Santa Clara County has experienced a 77% reduction in juvenile incarceration. Since 2012 when FLY began in San Mateo County, that community has seen a 65% reduction.^{iv}
- FLY serves approximately 2,500 youth ages 12-18 annually in 25 cities across Santa Clara, San Mateo, and Alameda counties.
- Most FLY youth live in areas with high rates of crime and poverty. Many have experienced significant trauma such as physical or sexual abuse. They also have other key risk factors such as involvement with child welfare services (including foster care), living in a single-parent home, and having a parent in prison.
- Youth of color represent 86% of FLY's clients. Nationwide, youth of color are far more likely to be arrested and incarcerated than white youth, and this trend has actually been growing in recent decades.^v
- FLY's core programs – legal education, leadership training, and mentoring – are based on ideas from youth who were facing years or life in prison:
 - Teach kids about the law and consequences of crime so they can learn to make better choices
 - Give them a chance to do something good for their communities so they aren't seen as just "juvenile delinquents"

- Give them positive adult role models who will be there for them and can help them change their lives

These ideas remain the foundation of FLY and have been strengthened with best practices in youth development and crime prevention. And our services are less than one-tenth the cost of incarceration.

- FLY supports youth of all backgrounds, abilities, and identities as they become educated and contributing members of our society. Our racial justice and systems change work promotes their just and equitable treatment in our communities.
- FLY is committed to incorporating the voice of youth in all aspects of our work, including systems change efforts.
- FLY builds a network of support for our youth through our volunteers and through partnerships with local colleges and other nonprofits who can provide resources for them.
- FLY is highly respected by members of our local juvenile justice systems including judges, probation chiefs, district attorneys, and public defenders, as well as local school officials. We are frequently invited to discuss challenges and to help design and implement new ideas.
- FLY has 60 staff and 200 volunteers, and a budget of nearly \$6 million. Approximately 30% of our revenue comes from government, 45% from foundations, and 25% from individuals and corporations.
- FLY has an exceptionally dedicated and talented staff who have both the head and the heart for this work. We love our clients fiercely and we love them in a way that is smart and helps them take accountability for their actions.
- FLY has received numerous local human rights awards and the James Irvine Leadership Award for effectively addressing a problem of statewide importance. FLY's founder and CEO, Christa Gannon, was inducted into the Ashoka Fellowship as one of its first fellows in the country involved in juvenile justice work.
- Charity Navigator, the largest charity evaluator in America, ranks FLY among the top nonprofits in the nation based on financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency.

Additional Content

Mission, Vision, and Values statements are primarily intended to guide internal stakeholders like staff and our Board of Directors. Some organizations like to present them graphically, so we created a diagram that shows them alongside our core belief and values.

IMPORTANT: *These statements can't be altered except through a formal review and revision process with our Board, so if you use them, don't edit them.*

Official FLY Mission Statement

FLY's mission is to prevent juvenile crime and incarceration through legal education, leadership training, and one-on-one mentoring.

Official FLY Vision Statement

FLY's vision is that our most at-risk and disadvantaged youth will transform from juvenile delinquents into positive community leaders, a community of people will support them in that process, and our local juvenile justice systems will provide more effective and humane services.



A Short History of FLY – Version 1

The first version is more of a story of Christa's experience and the second version is general and not centered on our founder.

As a law student in 1996, FLY's founder and CEO, Christa Gannon, volunteered to teach the law to youth spending most of their teenage years, or their entire lives, behind bars. As she got to know the youth, they opened up to her about their experiences. Their statements often began with "If only..." and ended with "I wouldn't be here."

- "If only I had known how much trouble I could get into"
- "If only I had been given a chance to change"
- "If only someone had really cared about me"

The youth were adamant that it didn't have to be this way for other kids. They told Christa what she could do to make a difference:

- Teach kids about the law and consequences of crime so they can learn to make better choices
- Give them a chance to do something good for their communities so they aren't seen as just "juvenile delinquents"
- Give them positive adult role models who will be there for them and can help them change their lives

In 1998, Christa received the prestigious George Soros Foundation award, a two-year fellowship, to take the kids' ideas, bolster them with best practices in youth development and crime prevention, and start a pilot program. The pilot was so successful that when the fellowship ended in 2000, Christa incorporated the project into a nonprofit. The suggestions of the youth Christa originally worked with remain the foundation of FLY to this day—legal education, leadership training, and one-on-one mentoring.

FLY began with one staff member and a handful of volunteers serving youth in a few neighborhoods in San Jose. Today, with 60 staff and 200 volunteers, FLY serves approximately 2,500 youth annually in 25 cities throughout the Bay Area. Christa Gannon serves as Chief Executive Officer. The agency and Christa have received numerous local, state, and national awards.

A Short History of FLY – Version 2

FLY's core programs were originally envisioned by youth who were going to spend most of their teenage years, or their entire lives, behind bars. When they opened up about



their experiences to our founder, Christa Gannon, their statements often began with “If only...” and ended with “I wouldn’t be here.”

- “If only I had known how much trouble I could get into”
- “If only I had been given a chance to change”
- “If only someone had really cared about me”

The youth suggested ways to prevent other kids from ending up with the same fate as them:

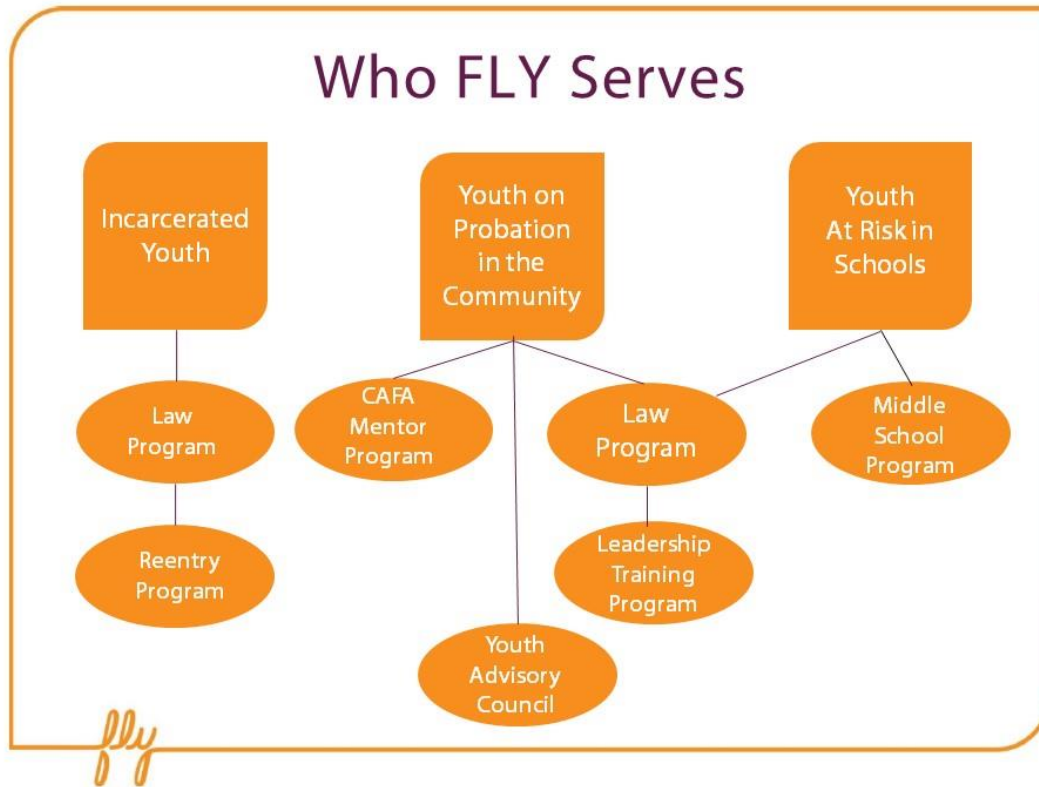
- Teach kids about the law and consequences of crime so they can learn to make better choices
- Give them a chance to do something good for their communities so they aren’t seen as just “juvenile delinquents”
- Give them positive adult role models who will be there for them and can help them change their lives

Christa took those ideas, bolstered them with research on best practices in youth development and crime prevention, and started a two-year pilot program. The pilot was so successful that when it ended in 2000, she incorporated the project into a nonprofit. The original ideas of those incarcerated youth remain the foundation of FLY to this day—legal education, leadership training, and one-on-one mentoring.

FLY began with one staff member and a handful of volunteers serving youth in a few neighborhoods in San Jose. Today, with 60 staff and 200 volunteers, FLY serves approximately 2,500 youth annually in 25 cities throughout the Bay Area. The agency and Christa have received numerous local, state, and national awards.

Who FLY Serves

The following is a diagram that Christa likes to use when explaining our programs and which youth populations they serve.



Referrals to FLY come from different sources:

- **Incarcerated youth** are referred by local probation departments.
- Referrals to the **CAFA Mentor Program** come from the probation department and the courts.
- Referrals to the **Law Program** frequently come from school teachers, counselors, and administrators but also come from probation departments, family, and community members.
- Referrals to the **Leadership Training Program** result from evaluations and assessments by FLY staff of youth who have completed the Law Program.
- For the **Middle School Program**, referrals generally come from school teachers, counselors, and administrators.

FLY Programs

FLY Law Program

In the **FLY Law Program**, our staff and highly trained volunteers teach a fun, interactive 12-week course using our nationally recognized legal education curriculum, which covers relevant topics such as police encounters, accomplice liability, three strikes, theft, vandalism, drugs, gangs, and police arrests. The law curriculum is interesting and engaging to the youth, and is an excellent vehicle for us to teach critical life skills like anger management, problem solving, conflict resolution, and resisting negative peer pressure. Everything is taught in a non-judgmental manner with no stigma is attached, which makes the youth more willing to learn. Mid-way through the semester, youth take a field trip to a local university law school where they tour the campus and act out a mock trial in the moot courtroom. The Law Program classes are taught in schools, community centers, juvenile halls, and juvenile camps and ranches.

FLY Leadership Training Program

When the Law Program ends, youth who are assessed as being at the highest risk and having the least support are recruited to join the **FLY Leadership Training Program**. Each youth completes a comprehensive assessment to identify their greatest barriers to living a healthy, productive life. Together with a FLY case manager, who supports them during the entire program year, the youth each create a plan to address these barriers. The program kicks off with a wilderness retreat where the youth begin building trust, learning the value of teamwork, and developing the confidence to change. Then the youth, now identified as Peer Leaders, meet bi-monthly for social activities and to plan service learning projects in the community where they learn how to identify, build on, and redirect their strengths.

CAFA (Court Appointed Friend and Advocate) Mentor Program

For more than 15 years in Santa Clara County, FLY has trained and matched adult volunteer mentors with youth on probation. The mentors meet weekly with the youth to support them in developing new attitudes, behaviors, and ambitions. Each mentor/mentee match has a FLY case manager for support and also attends monthly group activities organized by FLY. Recently, in partnership with the Probation department, FLY added a court advocacy component to address the fact that youth of color were failing a specific type of probation at significantly higher rates than white youth. FLY's **CAFA (Court Appointed Friend and Advocate) Mentor Program** helped achieve a dramatic turnaround in the failure rates. Because of this success, all mentors are now granted legal standing to act as advocates for their mentees in the courtroom and at schools.



FLY Middle School Program

The **FLY Middle School Program** helps interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline in which kids with issues at school are disciplined and pushed into the juvenile justice system instead of being offered the services they need. Our program helps seventh and eighth graders in high-crime, high-poverty areas of Santa Clara County stay engaged in school and out of the system. The program offers an age-appropriate version of FLY's Law Program along with one-on-one support from a FLY case manager for youth referred by school officials.

FLY Reentry Program

The **FLY Reentry Program** serves youth in longer term incarceration at camps in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. In both counties, the program provides 12 weeks of law classes taught by FLY staff while the youth are in custody. In San Mateo County, after youth are released, they also receive intensive one-on-one support from a FLY case manager to help with their transition back into the community.

Youth Advisory Council

In partnership with the Probation Department, FLY launched the first-ever Youth Advisory Council in Santa Clara County in 2017. The founding group of 10 were sworn in as Youth Justice Consultants by our presiding Juvenile Court Judge. The YAC is comprised of former probation youth, ages 17-24, who participate in decision-making processes and influence policies and practices throughout the county. They work closely with the Probation Department to analyze current policy and practices and give their input on future initiatives. YAC members also meet with youth currently incarcerated to hear their feedback and report to the Probation Department so that the youth voice is fully captured. The group has also created a youth-led orientation program for youth new to probation and their families. As we build out this program we believe this council could become a model for incorporating the youth voice in government policy and procedures in other communities.

The Need for FLY

This is the broader context for FLY and why our work is important. It can be combined with a youth story to provide a personal perspective. Also, our system partner video, "Why FLY Works – Our Partner's Perspective," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWNwbRCZy14>, has very powerful endorsements from leaders in juvenile justice and education.

The U.S. locks up more youth than any other country in the world. In Santa Clara, San Mateo, and Alameda counties alone, 10,000 kids are arrested each year and 6,000 are on probation.^{vi} On average in California, incarcerating a youth costs taxpayers nearly \$600



per day per youth and \$200,000 per year,^{vii} but the majority just cycle right back in again.

Being locked up as a kid can have life-long consequences and is a major determinant of incarceration as an adult.^{viii} Studies estimate that the average cost to society of each high-risk 14-year-old entering into a life of crime to be between \$1.7 million and \$3.3 million, which takes a significant toll on communities.^{ix}

How do so many children end up in the juvenile justice system? Research shows that 90% of incarcerated youth do not have meaningful access to positive adult role models, while 80% do not have the skills to make healthy life choices, and 80% have experienced significant trauma.^x Without guidance and a solid foundation of personal assets, life skills, and access to positive role models, youth are more likely to resort to unhealthy coping behaviors such as involvement in drugs, alcohol, and crime. When beginning at FLY, many youth answer the questions of where they see themselves by age 21 by saying, "I will be in prison or dead."

Many youth first begin acting out at school. Instead of receiving the additional services they urgently need, they are frequently punished and pushed out of school and into the juvenile justice system.^{xi} This widespread phenomenon has become known as the "school-to-prison pipeline."

Within the juvenile justice system, youth of color are overrepresented and this racial disparity has actually increased in the past two decades.^{xii} In Santa Clara County, youth of color represent 80% of the population of juvenile justice youth and experience significantly disproportionate rates of arrests, incarceration, and probation failure.^{xiii} LGBTQ youth^{xiv} and disabled youth also experience significantly higher rates of suspension and expulsion from school,^{xv} and are more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system.

FLY is dedicated to getting kids out of the pipeline to prison and giving them the support and skills to start on a new path. We also work to ensure that they receive just and equitable treatment if they do become involved in the system. Our core belief is that **all** our children deserve the chance to become more than their past mistakes. Extensive research supports this belief, proving that when kids know better, they do better.

FLY's programs are based on the ideas of youth facing years or life in prison, who told our founder what could prevent other kids from ending up like them. She took these ideas and bolstered them with research and best practices, and they remain the foundation of FLY to this day: legal education, leadership training, and one-on-one mentoring. This unique combination of programs motivates and equips youth to change their lives, mentor other youth like them, and give back to their communities through service. And FLY's services are less than one-tenth the cost of incarceration.

FLY has played an important role in community-wide efforts to reduce the number of youth incarcerated and its costly impact on taxpayers. Since FLY was founded in 2000,



Santa Clara County has experienced a 77% reduction in juvenile incarceration. Since 2012 when FLY began in San Mateo County, that community has seen a 65% reduction.^{xvi}

Youth Stories

These are just two examples of how our youth begin to fulfill their potential with support from FLY. Also, video stories can be found on FLY's YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/user/FLYprogram>. We especially recommend the FLY Youth Voices video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4p6EGHI1Ho>.

Christian

Christian was raised with a father who drank, used drugs, abused his mother, and was frequently in jail. By the time Christian was in middle school, he had already begun down a similar path, and was placed on probation after getting into fights, using drugs, and being involved with gangs. Looking back on those days, he thinks of his mother, who kept asking him what *she* had done to deserve this.

Christian was sent to FLY's Law Program, where he says, *"I learned a lot about the law, and my actions and consequences. I began to realize that I needed to make a change."* After completing the Law Program, he was invited to join FLY's year-long Leadership Training Program. *"Leadership was when everything came into perspective for me. My whole thinking changed."*

With the support of his FLY case manager and peer leaders, Christian completed probation. He worked hard in high school, earned extra credit, and even graduated one year early. Next, he earned his medical assistant's license with a 4.0 GPA. *"FLY had the open hands and the open hearts that I never had before. I never had anyone push me to strive for the best."*

Today Christian works full-time and gives back to his community as one of the youngest members of his local Lions Club. He also remains a dedicated FLY alumni volunteer, helping the next generation of youth learn to thrive. He once said that the best thing about his life is that, *"My mom trusts me now. She taught me to be a hard-working person, and now she is proud of me. I have forgiven my dad, too—I don't want to live with all the hatred inside me anymore. I'm my own man now."*

Sayra

As a child, Sayra's home life was full of struggle and instability. It was difficult for Sayra and her brother to be in the middle of her parents' conflict. When her mom and dad

weren't together, the kids moved back and forth between houses in different cities. In addition, her brother was very sick and the family was in and out of hospitals regularly.

Sayra also experienced different levels of abuse by people that she trusted. She didn't speak about it for years but even after speaking up, she didn't receive the support she needed. By the time she entered middle school, she was deeply depressed and sometimes suicidal. *"I would go to school and sit in the back. No teacher would come to me and say, 'What's wrong?' 'What's going on?' It's as if I didn't exist. I wanted help but just didn't know how to ask for it."*

Sayra started high school and continued to struggle. *"I made new friends, and we started selling and using. I was the one who got caught. I got kicked out of high school and sent to continuation school."* This is how she described the continuation school: *"There was more selling, there was more fighting, and there was tension everywhere. When you get put into an environment with sick people, you'll get sick with them."* Sayra was turning into an angry kid.

Sayra was introduced to FLY through our Law Program offered at the school. Kids learn about the law and the consequences of crime, but the classes are also designed to teach important life skills. The course only lasts twelve weeks but sometimes the sparks of change are lit very quickly in a young person's life. As Sayra described it, *"Little by little, I began to get hooked. I began to feel excited for every FLY session. FLY showed me that I was somebody and that I mattered."*

We take the kids in our law classes who have the least amount of support and the highest need and invite them to our Leadership Training Program. In Leadership, Sayra said, *"I realized that I could graduate if I worked hard. My FLY case manager helped me set goals and move out of the continuation school and into a military school to catch up on credits. I went from a 0.7 GPA to 4.0, and even graduated early. That was something I never thought I could achieve."*

Sayra learned that *"when you surround yourself with people who care about you, you start caring about yourself. I became more confident in who I am, what I believe in, and what I want to accomplish."* She plans to go to college and eventually work as a police officer in the community. And she still remains closely connected to FLY and our youth. She volunteers with FLY's Speech Committee, where she mentors other young people who are learning to heal, tell their stories, and inspire others. *"I get to give back as a role model and it gives me that opportunity to express myself. Sometimes as a youth that's all we want – we want to show that our voice matters."*

FLY's Impact

FLY has played an important role in community-wide efforts to reduce the number of youth incarcerated and its costly impact on taxpayers. Since FLY was founded in 2000, Santa Clara County has experienced a 77% reduction in juvenile incarceration. Since



2012 when FLY began in San Mateo County, that community has seen a 65% reduction.^{xvii}

Two of the most important measures of the success of youth intervention programs like FLY are rates of recidivism (reoffending) and rates of high school graduation. Over the past three years in FLY's Leadership Training Program:

- 86% of our youth are not convicted of a new crime during their program year
- 83% of eligible high school seniors earn their high school diplomas or GEDs

By comparison, national research data shows that without effective intervention, 50% - 80% of youth released from detention will reoffend. It has also been shown that juvenile incarceration can decrease the chances of high school graduation by up to 39%.^{xviii}

FLY utilizes research and evidence-based practices from both the social services sector and the National Institute of Corrections. We are committed to staying focused on the areas where we can have the greatest impact. Our robust Evaluation and Learning Department assesses and tracks the progress of FLY youth on an ongoing basis, which allows us to adjust programming accordingly.

Advocacy and Systems Change

As the agency's policy agenda is fleshed out, we may add more to this section. Also, when communicating about our work in the educational and juvenile justice systems, consider sharing our video featuring system partners, "Why FLY Works – Our Partner's Perspective," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWNwbRCZy14>.

Early in FLY's history, we realized that in addition to working with individual youth, we needed to advocate for all youth involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in, the juvenile justice system. We needed to focus some of our efforts on helping to make that system more just, humane, and equitable.

As an example of our recent efforts, in 2016, FLY took on the issue of administrative fines and fees charged by the juvenile justice system. California has the second highest juvenile administrative fees in the nation. FLY produced a white paper on the issue identifying the burdens this places on families and proposed eliminating fees at the local level. We then worked with Dave Cortese, President of the Board of Supervisors, to take this issue on, and published an Op-Ed in the *San Jose Mercury News* discussing why the fees should be eliminated. With our help, Santa Clara County passed a moratorium on these fees. In October 2017, Governor Jerry Brown signed SB 190, which ended the billing of families for time youth are in juvenile halls and camps, as well as mandatory court fees.

FLY is also committed to increasing our justice policy reform efforts by doing what we do best: creating opportunities for youth to be part of the conversation in policy and



systems change efforts. For example, due to our strong reputation for working with system-involved youth and elevating the youth voice, FLY was chosen to facilitate the Santa Clara County Youth Advisory Council (YAC) in partnership with the Probation Department.

The YAC is comprised of former probation youth, ages 17-24, who participate in decision-making processes and influence policies and practices throughout the county. In the spring of 2017, the founding group of 10 were sworn in as Youth Justice Consultants by our presiding Juvenile Court Judge. This is the vision that they created:

“We envision the inclusion of youth voice will promote a local Juvenile Justice System that fosters the success and personal growth of our youth. As a result, we will see an increase in the number of youth who successfully complete Probation, as well as a decrease in youth incarceration rates.”

As YAC members, they will work closely with the Probation Department to analyze current policy and practices and give their input on future initiatives. YAC members also meet with youth currently incarcerated to hear their feedback and ideas report them to the Probation Department. One initial project that has come from this process is a youth-led orientation program for young people new to probation and their families.

We are documenting our efforts because this council has the potential to become a model for incorporating the youth voice in government policy and procedures in other communities across the nation.

There are many other examples of FLY youth leveraging their experiences to benefit other justice-involved youth and our system partners:

- FLY youth completed a training for Santa Clara County Public Defenders on how to engage most effectively with their teen clients.
- FLY youth did research and prepared both written and oral reports for executive leadership at the Santa Clara County Probation Department on how to redesign and improve their long-term locked facility; nearly all of their recommendations were adopted.
- FLY Leadership youth, as well as FLY volunteers, have sat on the San Mateo County Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC), which advises the Chief Probation Officer and other juvenile justice stakeholders on how to use funding for juvenile services and prevention and intervention efforts across the county.
- Several FLY youth have been given the Youth Voice position in the City of San Jose Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force over the years.

- FLY youth have traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in conferences held by the Department of Justice on youth and police relations, and youth, gangs, and violence.

Favorite Quotes

This section is a reference for some of our favorite quotes from system partners, youth, and others. We would appreciate more quotes from educators, nonprofit partners, volunteers, and community leaders. We need to get permission to use their words although they can remain anonymous if needed. If you're able to help with this, please partner with Claire Wagner.

Stakeholder Quotes

There is some kind of magic that happens at FLY. They can see these troubled and difficult kids as the jewels that they truly are, people who are so committed that their case management doesn't end at 5 p.m. Working with these amazing people, FLY kids ignite! Our kids come out of FLY programs with their souls and their beauty restored. Retired Santa Clara County Chief Probation Officer Sheila Mitchell

FLY has a unique ability to reach some of our toughest youth while there are a lot of other agencies that would probably just give up on them. Former San Jose Police Captain David Honda

I think youth really see the relationship with FLY as being accepted unconditionally for who they are, being loved and cared about for who they are...They just do it in a way that is so child-centered and trauma-informed and genuine that it works, and that's pretty magical. Santa Clara County Chief Probation Officer Laura Garnette

FLY builds trust and respect for others and it's a give-and-take between adults and students. It just goes a long way to building a good, positive school culture. Donald Scatena, Director of Student Services, San Mateo Union High School District

FLY helps kids not slip off the end of the page. You catch that gleam in a kid's eye, FLY gets a hold of that for the first time, you treat the youth as someone different, that they are special, and they run with it, they feel significant. Santa Clara County Probation Officer Sean Rooney

FLY is the best program I have ever seen—all students need to take FLY. This program is so important and these are our kids' lives we are talking about! Bridge Academy – Oakland Teacher

FLY does something that no one else does. They teach even the most troubled youth that they can be leaders. I think that's a paradigm shift for them that can have a real lifelong impact on even the most troubled youth. Former Secretary of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Matthew Cate



FLY's benefit to the community is safer environment. The benefit to parents is having a resource to inform our children about being good citizens. The benefit to our youth is becoming a better judge of their own behavior choices and making better life decisions.
Parent of a FLY youth

The program has and continues to have a tremendous impact on my life. It has allowed me to get in touch with the views and feelings of youth in today's society. I have gained insight into what type of problems they have and the tremendous pressures they are confronted with in trying to survive and adapt to such an environment. This experience has not only made me a more complete person, it will also allow me to become a better and more understanding attorney. FLY volunteer

I have been in education for more than thirty years and it is rare to witness a program that is so successful as FLY...the law program facilitators have the ability and talent to work and relate to our students that up until now few other professionals have been able to reach...my students are eager to attend each session. They have told me that they have learned more in their weeks in the FLY program than in an entire year of regular school. William M. Chapman, former principal of New Valley High School

FLY is an essential partner with Probation, helping us with the entire spectrum of juvenile offenders, from first time felony offenders, to those involved with drugs, or gangs, to those incarcerated in juvenile hall and in our ranch facilities. Any Probation Officer you talk with in Santa Clara County will say: 'Probation cannot be as successful without FLY.' Retired Santa Clara County Chief Probation Officer Sheila Mitchell

FLY is a program that everyone in the justice field, judges, lawyers, probation officers, and clients have confidence in, depend on, and trust. Former Santa Clara County Probation Department manager John Dahl

FLY staff are committed, smart, talented and respected individuals who are focused on making our community better for youth. You don't bring people down, you don't look at the negative but at how you are going to solve it in the positive. Patricia Gardner, Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits

What we know is that the success rate with FLY is remarkable. If we are able to continue with that success rate and expand into other counties, then we will start to change the path of what California looks like in the adult side of the house as well because it really is about breaking cycles. Retired Santa Clara County Probation Chief Sheila Mitchell

Youth Quotes

I don't know where I would be, either locked up or dead to be honest. FLY has changed me and bettered my life.

FLY helped me by first making me believe in myself.

I could either go hard or take FLY's hand. I decided to make that change and take FLY's hand because they were really reaching out for me.



I've been waiting so long for someone to come and help me, and finally FLY is here. Thank you. I am so glad you came.

They understood me, they nurtured me, they brought me back to life.

FLY helped me see how much impact I can have on someone. How to understand and care for people.

I learned that I was doing a lot of things wrong that could have landed me in jail. That was the first time I became aware that there are consequences for my actions.

When I mess up, I just reflect on what I did wrong. And when I reflect on it, I'm like, okay, then what can I do differently next time.

The very first thing that made me think that I could do stuff was when I passed the Law Program. It gave me the mentality that I could keep going. I did that once, I could do it again.

I help out now. I don't hurt people anymore. That's a good part of my life.

People deserve second chances. I want to help people deep into their core and say, 'You're more than your past mistakes.'

FLY has helped me learn how to communicate with others and deal with serious problems.

I liked the mind opening ideas of the world around us cause the real world is a ocean and we live in a kiddie pool.

FLY staff and volunteers were amazing, talented, and put effort. They were always there for us.

FLY helped me better understand the world and who I am as a person.

This is the best program I've ever been to because it helps us understand instead of putting us down. It's not punishment it's learning. You get a second chance to understand what you did was wrong.

At FLY I have learned that one person can make a difference in my life, so I can make a difference in someone's to help the chain continue.

Having a mentor changed my life, now I ditch my bad influencing friends to hang out with my mentor.

I thank the mentor program and FLY especially for showing me that there is hope and you can do what you put your mind to. Now, I am sober and have faith in myself that despite my past I can succeed too.

Before FLY I was a hopeless and lost child. And now with FLY's help I am on my way to becoming a successful adult.

Now instead of being another statistic in the juvenile justice system, I am living my own American dream.



FLY listened. They listened when 99.99999% of me wanted to just give up.

FLY gave me a case manager who was ON ME, 24-7. All the ideas I said out-loud that I wasn't sure were possible, she helped make them happen.

Before FLY I used to make bad decisions but now it's easy to do the right thing and make the right decision.

I've chosen against committing crimes since I've been in FLY not only because I learned the punishments, but because FLY taught me how to avoid sketchy situations.

Being a peer leader not only allows me to have an impact on others, but also allows me to make new friends who are strong minded, intelligent, and understanding of what I've gone through. This will help me remain the person I've worked so hard to become and then it will take me to a whole other level and become the kind of person I've dreamed of.

I liked the fact that there is enough people who actually care enough to teach us things to stay out of trouble.

I've started going to school and paying attention because I don't want to get locked up.

In FLY's mentor program I learned that I'm not the only person who has problems. It doesn't matter if you've been to jail or your age or your race—that made me feel a lot better. I don't really feel alone anymore.

FLY gave me the hope that I can be the person I want to be. And I'm taking steps to be that person every day.

The year in FLY has been the best in my life.

Because of FLY, my life is on track.

Sources

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^v Joshua Rovner, “Racial Disparities in Youth Commitments and Arrests,” (The Sentencing Project 2016), <http://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Racial-Disparities-in-Youth-Commitments-and-Arrests.pdf>.

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^{xiii} 2016 Annual Santa Clara County Juvenile Justice Report

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^{xviii} John Wihbey, “Juvenile incarceration and its impact on high school graduation rates and adult jail time,” (Journalist’s Resource 2015), <https://journalistsresource.org/studies/government/criminal-justice/juvenile-incarceration-long-term-consequences>.