



YOUTH VOICE AS A CATALYST FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

In 2019, FLY launched its **Youth Voice Initiatives (YVI)** - a portfolio of strategic initiatives designed to leverage young people's stories, perspectives, and expertise from their lived experience—to accomplish three things

- Position young people as key catalysts for systems change—particularly those systems that impact justice-involved youth (justice and education systems).
- Improve the organizational effectiveness of FLY;
- Offer leadership and professional development opportunities for program alumni to further their growth; and

Building off a theory of change that FLY's programs create opportunities for young people

- to find their voice
- to narrate their own stories and
- to change the public narrative of young people in the justice system

YVI supports FLY's fundraising efforts, organizational learning efforts and strategic directives, and most recently serves as a key vehicle for change in FLY's systems change efforts. YVI supports systems change efforts through the following initiatives.

THE YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

A FLY initiative in partnership with the Santa Clara County Probation Department that convenes a group of justice consultants who are young adults (ages 18-24) who were formerly involved in the justice system. These justice consultants work in teams and independently to analyze, design, recommend, and implement solutions to create a more just, equitable, and humane juvenile justice system. Examples of their projects include:

- Training in-coming deputy probation officers on youth-centered best practices for community supervision of youth on juvenile probation
- Hosting youth and family orientations and sharing tips to successfully navigate and complete probation for youth remanded to probation custody.
- Participatory action research projects to support the County's redesign of the long-term detention facility.
- Active participation on the County's Juvenile Justice Systems Collaborative, including voting membership in the collaborative's two work groups.

CALIFORNIA JUSTICE LEADERS

A partnership between FLY and Impact Justice, the CJL initiative is an AmeriCorps service opportunity for young adults formerly involved in the juvenile justice system to support other young adults transitioning out of state juvenile detention facilities. The goal is to assist the young adults to reintegrate back into their communities successfully, and build awareness and increase the utilization of California's Honorable Discharge petition (Senate Bill 625), which helps to remove barriers related to their juvenile records. FLY is a host site for California Justice Leaders in the Bay Area and is exploring opportunities to serve as a primary training partner for CJL statewide.

YOUTH VOICE POLICY FELLOWSHIP

The fellowship is a practice-based professional development program for FLY alumni. It allows one former FLY participant currently enrolled in post-secondary education to work with FLY staff to develop and implement youth-focused opportunities to advance FLY's policy agenda or promote the civic engagement of youth.

- Organizing FLY Youth and Staff townhalls to get feedback on FLY's policy agenda
- Collaborating with partner nonprofit organizations to host voter education workshops for FLY youth

LOCALIZED YOUTH VOICE POLICY ACTIVATION

When opportunities arise, FLY supports alumni and current program participants to engage in civic activities in their communities in response to issues that matter to them.

- In June 2020, current FLY participants and alumni participated in local efforts to eliminate police presence on high school campuses and reduce spending on law enforcement in Oakland and San Jose. Through emails, letters, calls, and testimonies to local school boards, FLY's youth were a significant part of the success of these efforts in the Oakland Unified School District and San Jose's East Side Union High School District.
- In 2018, FLY served as the host organization for the Oakland Police and Community Youth Leadership Council, supporting two FLY participants to incorporate youth voice in local law enforcement practices and efforts to improve public safety. With FLY's support, the youth leaders testified before the City Council offering recommendations for how police can improve community relations.

These represent some examples of how FLY incorporates youth voice in systems change efforts. As FLY's systems change efforts mature over time, so will YVI's role in these efforts. For more information, contact Susie Rivera, Vice President of Youth Voice Initiatives at FLY, at susie@flyprogram.org.