

YOUTH SERVICE CALIFORNIA 1995-96 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Founded in 1990 Youth Service California (YSCal) is a state-wide collaboration of public and private organizations that promotes youth service on the state and national levels and provides assistance to local programs. YSCal is a non-profit organization governed by a state-wide Board of Directors. The collaboration is made possible through grants from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, contracts, and affiliate contributions.

YSCal's mission is to make service part of every young person's experience in California. Across our state, local youth service programs include K-12 school and community-based initiatives, conservation and service corps, higher education efforts, and collaborations that include these organizations and more. YSCal staff and affiliating leaders assist the State of California with youth service planning through their work with the California Department of Education-CalServe office and the California Commission on Improving Life Through Service in Governor Pete Wilson's Office. YSCal support to local programs includes: an affiliates program and information clearinghouse; a state conference; a state-wide newsletter; information and technical assistance services; and sponsorship of Youth CAN (California Action Network), a state-wide council of diverse young people involved in service.

YSCal believes that service is an integral part of citizenship in a democratic society; thus the California youth service movement will succeed if:

Service is integrated into the mission of all programs and institutions;

State efforts reflect and build upon the diversity of California's true population and existing service efforts. All individuals regardless of economics, race, age, and ethnicity are encouraged to serve; and

Service is not viewed as a partisan issue. A non-partisan effort is needed to institutionalize service.

The following policy recommendations are opportunities to use youth service as a strategy for improving California. They are a useful tool both for elected officials wishing to develop related policy and state agencies hoping to further our state movement. Youth service is a general term used to describe myriad programs that involve young people in community service. Service-learning programs are school and community-based efforts that actively connect community service with academic and personal skill development through structured reflection. High quality youth service programs include service-learning to build the skills, knowledge, and awareness of young people in becoming active citizens.

Service-Learning As a Strategy for Education Reform and Community Development

- Promote service-learning as a rigorous teaching and learning strategy that helps K-12 schools and Institutions of Higher Education achieve academic goals with the following:

Support for diverse, high quality collaborations that incorporate service-learning into school-based and national service efforts;

Expansion of staff development for teachers/faculty and technical assistance to schools and community agencies to implement thoughtful service-learning projects that include preparation, action and reflection;

Provide guidance and incentives for service-learning as a strategy for teaching the academic curricula as guided by the state curriculum frameworks. Identify age-appropriate service-learning activities and infusion points across subject areas; and

Expand Service-Learning Institutes to enable teachers and school-community partnerships to learn pedagogy, share successful efforts, and inform state planning.

- Promote state and national programs that already have service in their legislative intent.
- Add service-learning language to legislation and appropriate policy and program guidelines to promote service as a strategy and implementation method for:

School Reform/Restructuring;

Welfare Reform;

Mentoring programs;

Job Training Partnership Act and other vocational education efforts;

Employment programs;

Teen Pregnancy Prevention;

Crime Prevention programs;

Alcohol and Drug Prevention;

Dropout Prevention;

Literacy programs;

Youth development programs;

Conservation corps programs;

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities programs;

School-to-Work-Opportunities programs;

Goals 2000;

Improving America's Schools Act and other categorical programs including Compensatory Bilingual Education; Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities; Gifted and Talented Education; and Healthy Start.

- Promote youth service and service-learning as strategies across state and federal programs that relate to poverty, housing, public safety, environmental protection and restoration, and historical preservation, among others.

- Support local conservation and national service corps and the California Conservation Corps to engage diverse young people in full-time service. Corps can be viewed and developed as education reform models that involve young people from all backgrounds to provide needed services. These models can represent the combination of technical training and service learning which reach high-risk youth as well as provide an option for youth approaching or attending college who wish to earn financial aid or repay college loans.

Infrastructure Development

- Promote an inclusive state policy and state agency collaboration regarding youth development that defines what we expect to have happen with young people that includes youth service as a critical component.
- Fund high quality youth service programs that reflect the true ethnic and cultural diversity of California.
- Promote collaboration between K-12 schools, conservation corps, colleges/universities, private business, and community-based organizations to build strong regional programming and a state movement that gives every young person an opportunity to serve.
- Require and promote active participation by youth in the design, development, and implementation of all state funded service programs.
- Ensure that representation to the youth service field actively includes civic organizations and youth development groups. Urge for their inclusion in state planning.
- Continue to develop regional networks throughout the state that meet regularly and serve as conduits of information and advice to local programs and state agencies. These networks can be a place for connecting state agencies and state-wide organizations to local programs, for public and private collaboration, and for training and technical assistance.
- Create information systems that use technology to link programs across the state.
- Involve the business community by connecting the corporate community with youth service efforts.
- Work with the National Park Service and the Corporation for National Service in the development of the Presidio Leadership Center in San Francisco.
- Encourage the State Commission to develop youth service awards to recognize and promote high quality, creative local collaborations.
- Clarify and secure liability protection for schools and community programs involved in youth service activities.
- Document and advertise the benefits to service providers and service recipients of model service programs.

State Level

- Encourage the integration of the work of the CA Commission on Improving Life Through Service, the CA Department of Education CalServe Program, the California Conservation Corps, and other state agencies to build a comprehensive plan and institutional commitment for service in California.

- Encourage state offices to coordinate policy and program development and facilitate distribution of comprehensive information and technical assistance in order to build service opportunities for every youth in California; coordinate media efforts and collect and disseminate information on programs both in and outside the state; disseminate information to local programs on state and federal resources that support service. This effort should continue to build on existing service programs and utilize the experience of Youth Service California and its affiliate organizations, related state-wide organizations, local partnerships, and diverse service groups to provide appropriate technical assistance to local programs.

- Promote and support collaboration between the Governor's Office and the Legislature to insure a lasting youth service movement that is non-partisan.

- Develop incentives and rewards for private sector involvement in national and community service.

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