



ILP Newsletter

SPRINGING INTO ACTION

ILP is springing into action with different workshops, engaging events, and an array of resources! What is your action for spring? Spring cleaning? Applying for school or a new job? Taking on more responsibilities? Whatever you are acting on this season, it is important to maintain balance and focus. Everyone has their own way of staying organized and focused on their life goals. Keep reading to see how fellow foster and probation youth are staying focused and organized to achieve a balanced life.

LEEOSHA'S STORY

I'm 24 years young and a mother of a beautiful 6-year-old athlete, a full-time worker, and a student. While in the system, I've had my mother and siblings separated, forcing me to be resilient on my own. While looking for a way out of my trauma and reality, I found myself going in circles. Determined to give my daughter a great childhood, I began healing, forgiving, and loving myself in a way that no one taught me.



I have been a Youth Advocate for over two years and I've been impressed with the advocacy and improvements that I've made while being in the Youth Advocate Program (YAP). I've traveled around the states to advocate on policy, made connections with youth in care, and pushed myself beyond the barriers in my own mind. I traveled to Washington D.C. in October 2018 to speak with legislators on ways the foster care system can improve sibling connections, transitional housing, and resources for families. Through this experience, I've gained friendships and awareness of how youth are the new leaders of system change.

I take pride in my resiliency and my ability to create plans with action steps to achieve a better outcome. In 2017, I was struggling to complete my general education courses at Laney College and meet the requirements to transfer to a university. This year, I'll be graduating in the summer with my AA in Psychology. In Fall 2019, I will be attending classes at California State University, East Bay.

My daughter Aniyah is on a gymnastics team and trains three days a week. I'm proud of her and happy I'm able to support her hobbies and athletic abilities each and every day. For the past two months, Aniyah has been taking private swim lessons in preparation for summer and vacation. Aniyah teaches me American Sign Language and different Spanish words she learned from school—even though I often forget them. I'm proud to see my daughter happy, smiling, and open to the amazing possibilities of life.

Each day I'm striving for healthy self-care and maintaining positivity throughout my life. I'm only stronger because of my past, and my dreams are currently my reality.

- Leeosha N., Youth Advocate/Student at Cal State East Bay for Psychology



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Check out what's new with CYC on page 2.
- Learn what educational support is offered at ILP on page 3.
- Check out the upcoming ILP events on page 4.
- See page 5 for ILP's address, phone number, and general information.
- Discover what YAP does for foster youth on page 6.

DAY AT THE CAPITOL WITH CYC

Participants of California Youth Connection's (CYC) Alameda Chapter attended the Day at the Capitol Conference in Sacramento. This event provides the space for foster youth to discuss concerns about the foster care system, to state goals for system change, and present new laws and policies that aim to improve the lives of young people with experience in the foster care system.

The Alameda chapter stated their concerns and proposed plans to California representatives. Their proposals can potentially influence change in the foster care system statewide.

Come join the growing group of young individuals that are making their voices heard and creating change in their communities!

For more information, contact the ILP office:

info@alamedacountyilp.org
(510) 667-7696



CYC participants created signs promoting the expansion of services available to foster youth.



WHAT ILP OFFERS

Alameda County ILP supports youth in Education, Employment, Health and Wellness, Permanent Connections, Housing, and Money Management. ILP workshops contain information regarding each of these topics. Youth who attend workshops earn \$25 per session. Youth can also receive one-on-one coaching with an ILP coach to assist them with creating and accomplishing individual goals!

The education team at ILP can assist with senior expenses, graduating plans, college applications, and assist with any educational needs that one may need to be successful. Young people can receive a \$600 stipend for graduating high school! We encourage every ILP participant to reach out to an education specialist for education support and questions. See page 5 for contact information.

Other possible incentives that may be available to an ILP participant include: a laptop, driver's training, reduced California ID fees, pregnant and parenting support, employment readiness services, work permits, college book money reimbursements, uniforms and supplies for vocational programs, college tours, senior photos, and more!



REGISTER FOR ILP SERVICES



Complete an intake with a Worker of the Day (WOD) at the ILP office or over the phone



WOD or an ILP coach will call/email you regarding your eligibility

(1-2 weeks to process intake)



Meet with an ILP Coach to discuss your needs, interests, and goals



Register for workshops, outings, and any services that appeal to you



DISTANCE LEARNING

Check out ILP's Distance Learning! ILP staff can assist you with using the Distance Learning website or with mailing paper packets to you. Some reasons for participating in Distance Learning are as follows:

- ⇒ Extra-curricular activities that overlap with ILP workshops
- ⇒ Living too far away to attend/not having a ride to attend
- ⇒ Missing a workshop series and would like to make up the curriculum

We look forward to having you participate in our program!

STAY CONNECTED

Do you want to make sure that you don't miss any ILP workshops, outings, and activities? Want to keep up with the latest services, resources, and news for transition aged youth? Follow ILP on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter! See page 1 for ILP's social media links.

Are you not on social media? Visit the ILP website for the latest updates on workshops, events, and other important information regarding the program.

www.alamedacountyilp.org/



EDUCATION INSIGHT

By Corinna G., Youth Advocate

When I first entered college, I had just graduated from San Lorenzo High School. I was 19-years-old and was participating in AB12. I received a lot of information about education in a Transitional Living Conference (TLC) meeting before I signed up for college. I was excited about the financial support from financial aid and other grants like the Chafee grant. The meeting facilitators did a great job explaining all the benefits that I could receive as a foster youth. However, I wish the information from that meeting would have been more realistic. If only someone would have said “...here are all of the great benefits, but this is what you have to do to keep it.” Once I started receiving financial aid and other grants, I wasn’t completely aware of the work that was required to continue those benefits. My third semester of college was a rough time for me. I failed a few classes because I was dealing with life issues that affected my productivity in school. I didn’t know how to get back on my feet after feeling like a failure and I continued to fail the next semester. I withdrew from multiple classes and didn’t realize how much I was losing as my GPA lowered.



As my grades lowered, so did my self-confidence and motivation. Along with the struggle of balancing life and school, I received mail saying I had to pay back financial aid for the semester I failed. Additionally, I was almost kicked out of school for failing my classes. I felt as if I didn’t know how to dig myself out of a hole that kept getting bigger.

“My advice to anyone entering college is to ask questions and to know your limits. There is no rush when it comes to your education goal.”

Even though a lot of signs were telling me to give up on school—I kept going. I decided it was time to ask for help from multiple people. I went to all the programs that I was a part of and sat down with one person from each program asking for any type of words of encouragement to help me dig myself out of this hole I put myself in. After reaching out for support and following up with tasks that I needed to do to pass my classes, I started to feel less stressed and more confident about the things I was doing in life. I enrolled into tutoring and met with a counselor weekly just to hold myself accountable. I’m still in college digging myself out of a hole, but now I know what not to do.

What I would have done differently is ask more questions about what the expectations are for a college student to be successful. Instead of verbally doubting myself and lowering my self-confidence, I would have been more understanding of myself and what I was going through. I also would have enrolled in therapy because I was balancing what was on my mind and school. Those two subjects alone take a lot of support and it would have been nice to have someone to help guide me through it. Another aspect of my experience I would change is the number of classes I took that first year. I would have taken one class that semester, instead of enrolling in the four that I ended up failing. I never wanted to stop my education goal, which is why I kept going. I see education as my only way up and for that alone, I know now that I would rather take one class while managing a full-time job and two kids rather than failing multiple classes due to my capacity. My advice to anyone entering college is to ask questions and to know your limits. There is no rush when it comes to your education goal. It will be there when you are ready to take it on. Start off with one class and see how it goes.



Several youths took the opportunity to talk to many college representatives during College Night. Representatives for local colleges included Los Medanos College, Laney College, Stanford. CYC and other youth advocacy programs were in attendance to support ILP youth in their higher education goals.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION

Contact the ILP office to learn more about what education resources we offer. If you already have an ILP coach, ask them how they can support you with your educational goals. See page 5 for the ILP office number and information.



The education team facilitates the Student Success and College Prep workshops at the ILP office! Come by to get assistance with applying for colleges, navigating the FASFA process, and to ask any educational questions that comes up in your higher education journey.



PREVIOUS EVENTS

ILP partners with The Princess Project to provide young people with dresses and accessories to make their prom night memorable.



Young people had professional photos taken for their senior portraits at the ILP office! Youth got made up by Janea who is a local makeup artist that runs her own business, Faced By Janea.



The Foster Care Youth Conference provided youth with information and workshops on housing, employment, health and wellness, education, and social justice to empower young people with a roadmap for success. Healthy smoothies and shirt making were offered throughout the event.



During Career Night, young people were introduced to various careers and the process to become a professional in a field of their interest. Veterinarians, law enforcement, BART technicians, and barbers were in attendance to talk to our youth about career options and the possibilities that are available in their community.



College Night gave youth an opportunity to discuss education options with college representatives, go over the college application process, and learn about the expectations and benefits of higher education.

UPCOMING EVENTS

ILP Graduation— Youth graduating from high school and college are eligible to participate in the ILP graduation. Graduating youth will be honored for their educational accomplishments and for participating in ILP. Come celebrate the accomplishments of the young people that participate in ILP.

Back to School Bash— This event highlights the beginning of a new school year. There will be providers present to talk about their services, games for every age, raffles, food and music. Youth, caregivers, social workers, and other providers are welcome to join the festivities!

Call the ILP office for more information regarding any of the events listed above.
See page 5 for ILP's office phone number.





PREVIOUS WORKSHOPS

ILP started the new year with workshops that focused on personal development and healthy practices. Cooking For Health, Making Proud Choices, Healthy Relationships, and Living Your Best Life were among the workshops that centered around a young person's mental, physical, and emotional health. In the Healthy Relationship workshop series, youth learned: how to communicate effectively, the various types of abuse, the building blocks of healthy relationships, and understanding dating in a technological world. Once spring had sprung, ILP coaches shifted to education, sports mentoring, and permanency workshops. This included workshops like Living On Your Own, College Prep and Scholarship Support, and Basketball. The education team helps young people with their ILP scholarship applications and offered higher education support. Check our website or social media pages for updates on what workshops are coming up!



WORKSHOPS AVAILABLE THIS YEAR

This year, ILP is offering workshops for youth to build their life skills and expand on their interests in various topics:

Computer Workshop—Learn about a variety of computer skills that can help you with higher education and career development. You can potentially earn a laptop by attending every session!

LGBTQ+ Mentoring—If you identify as LGBTQ+ or are interested in learning more about LGBTQ-related topics, this series is for you. Receive support around various life challenges such as body image, healthy relationships, sexual health, and more!

Health and Wellness—You will learn strategies to stay well physically, mentally, and emotionally; make healthy choices; and access services designed to support you in maintaining good mental and physical health.

Leadership Development—This series was created to empower high school and college students to enhance their communication skills, interpersonal skills, and relationships to achieve goals in all areas of one's life.

Permanency—Learn the art of reciprocity in relationships and ways to build your support network while exploring the various options available including adoption, reunification, adult adoptions, and living on your own.

Making Proud Choices—MPC promotes sexual health and healthy relationships and teaches you how to prevent unplanned pregnancies and how to reduce the risk of HIV and STIs.

Creative Expression—This workshop series allows space to express yourself freely and creatively through painting, drawing, spoken word, poetry, sewing, woodwork, tie-dye, ceramics, and many more.

WANT TO JOIN THE FUN?

Contact the ILP office to learn more about what services we offer and to sign up for workshops and outings!



GENERAL INFORMATION

675 Hegenberger Road
Suite 100
Oakland, CA 94621

Phone: 510-667-7694
Fax: 510-667-7629

Regular Hours:
M-F 8:30am-5pm
Workshop Hours:
M-F 8:30-7pm



WHAT IS THE YOUTH ADVOCATE PROGRAM?

The Youth Advocate Program (YAP) is a three-year training and employment program through Westcoast Children's Clinic for young people ages 18-24 and have been in foster care in Alameda County. The program is for foster and probation youth who would like to learn and develop their leadership and youth advocacy skills. Advocates have on-the-job support and training and learn to thrive in a workplace environment. Specialized internships with WestCoast teams help Youth Advocates to further their education while gaining valuable work experience.

Youth Advocates also mentor and provide emotional support to current foster youth, both in person and through the creation of outreach materials designed to help them navigate life in this complex system. Advocates are responsible for informing youth on policy updates and how those changes will impact those youth personally as they navigate the foster care system.

In addition to building advocacy skills, YAP helps program participants identify their educational and career goals and provide those youth with resources to thrive. Becoming a youth advocate is a life-changing experience that allows you to spark change in the foster care system.

For more information and to apply, contact Diane Ramirez at: dramirez@westcoastcc.org.



CREATIVE EXPRESSION CORNER



Mollina (Molly) is an ILP youth who attends the workshops, events, outings, and takes advantage of the many services offered at ILP. She attends the CYC meetings and works together with the other CYC participants to plan for advocacy opportunities and legislative changes. Molly has taken charge of her life and her life goals to becoming the most authentic version of herself. She has been working towards goals such as publishing her poetry work. This past year, Molly published her work online. Her collection of poetry is called Day by Day and can be found on Lulu.com.

“...a collection of poetry that talks about the people in my life that I love the most. It's like a personal sneak-peek into my innermost thoughts and feelings.”

Additionally, Molly enjoys singing and creating songs. Occasionally, you can hear her singing softly around the ILP reception area and before ILP workshops. Channeling this creative side helps her to express herself and stay centered throughout the day. Everyone has their own way of keeping oneself balanced. Molly's way to staying balanced is through writing and song.

WHAT DOES ART MEAN TO YOU?

By Laura R., Youth Advocate

Art to me means freedom for self-expression. It's a way to visualize an emotion that I might be feeling or confused about. It can also be a way to send a message. I feel that art has always been a way for me to be creative since I was a child. I started off with coloring and drawing on the sidewalks with chalk and ever since it has evolved into arts like painting, drawing, spray painting, and creating clay sculptures. I started to love art at a very young age. I felt that I could lose myself in a piece for hours just to find a different part of myself that I didn't know existed.



Do you want to include your art piece, a poem, spoken word piece, or personal story to the newsletter? Call or email our communications representative Kelsey Sanchez at (510)877-0503 or ksanchez@alamedacountyilp.org.

If you want a space to be creative, come to ILP's Creative Expression workshop series! Call the ILP office to check when the next series begins! See page 5 for ILP's contact information.



HOW TO MAINTAIN A BALANCED LIFE

WestCoast Children's Clinic's Youth Advocates



Maintaining a life balance can be a great challenge to anyone. There is not an easy or straightforward way to balance work, school, family, personal goals, and other aspects of one's life. The youth advocates from WestCoast Children's Clinic each breakdown the ways they handle the balancing act of their many responsibilities and the struggles that those responsibilities represent as they go through life with a post-foster or probation background.

LEONARD—My biggest personal challenge is transportation. I commute from Antioch to Oakland using public transportation. How everything runs smoothly on BART can be a deciding factor on if I'm late or not. I'm balancing community college, work, and my personal life. Also, trying to apply the things I'm learning in school to work and towards my career in the music industry can be stressful to say the least. It was tough figuring out how to manage my time correctly and to be honest I still haven't figured it all the way out.

There is an upcoming challenge that is coming soon that goes along with my first challenge. I will be turning 21 and aging out of foster care soon. I will no longer be able to get subsidized BART tickets. Paying for BART tickets will be another chunk of money coming out of my budget. I'm still in the process of working out a budget that I can stick to without going over the limit I set for myself. The way I handle things when life starts to get overwhelming is through music. I listen to a lot of music to just zone out and enjoy it. When I need someone to talk to about anything I'm stressed over or just want to forget what's going on, I go to my girlfriend, older sister, or my older brother. I have a very close-knit support circle to help me balance what can sometimes be a very hectic work life.



“I have a very close-knit support circle to help me balance what can sometimes be a very hectic work life.”

SAVANNA—I'm 20-years-old and I'm a Youth Advocate at WestCoast Children's Clinic. I'm Black/African American and I'm currently 30 weeks pregnant. I have always had a passion for helping others. The way I deal with my work life is that I think positive thoughts, never bring my personal emotions to work and if I have to do with work I talk to someone about it. I'm a go-with-the-flow type of person, so this job is perfect for me because our schedule changes all the time. I often have a hard time in the morning because I find myself tapping my snooze button repeatedly, but always find the courage to get up. I commute from Hayward to Oakland every day. For the most part, I love the drive if I can get up on time. I haven't been working as a Youth Advocate for very long, but it has already taught me patience, responsibility, and maturity.

TYRAY—I'm a former foster youth and a former probation youth. I currently work at WestCoast Children's Clinic as a Youth Advocate as well as taking a few college classes. I don't really have a work life balance; I just have priorities. I like to prioritize my schedule based on the day and what's going on that day. I tend to put my business and priorities first then leisure. Growing up involved with the system, I really had to teach myself a lot and mature faster than others. Currently, this reflects a lot in my work life and career path because I view things differently. I feel as if I really do not have any time to waste, especially with knowing that I'm a former foster youth/probation youth, on top of being a young black man. My work life is based on my dreams and goals in life and that's another way to break down my work life balance. It's tricky because I hold myself accountable no matter what the situation is. I'm a role model for family and friends. Being that role model and working can be a task to juggle. I believe it's based on you and what your goals in life are. You don't want to get stuck and unhappy with a job you don't like. There is a stereotype on young folks that overwhelm and trick us into thinking we are supposed to have a job or be a full-time student while finding a balance between both. I'm all the way against that belief because I don't balance, I prioritize.

The support systems in place in my life are First Place for Youth (Transitional Housing Program), Next Step Collaborative (EOPS Program at my college), and WestCoast Children's Clinic. My network has been expanding since I was recently hired at WestCoast. At times I get frustrated with my situation, but I keep in mind that all hardships sink at some point. Thanks for taking the time out to do a little bit of reading about me. Remember to set your mind free.



HOW TO MAINTAIN A BALANCED LIFE CONTINUED

WestCoast Children Clinic's Youth Advocates



MIKNESHA—I handle my work life with great time management skills. I commute to work from Stockton, so I make sure to use alarm clocks to make it to work on time. I plan everything so that I am early to work and meetings, rather than late. I use my organizational skills to ensure that all of my tasks and assignments are in order and completed on time. I make sure to look at my calendar every night and morning; I create to-do lists on my phone; and I write on my calendar at home. I hold myself accountable for all of my actions. If I am late, it doesn't feel good because I have high standards for myself. Similarly, if I am doing a good job, I feel good about myself. I practice self-care for my own wellness and to treat myself.

"I don't know what works for me [for staying balanced], but I'm open to trying to see what works best for me."

JAZMINE—How I handle work life? I don't know how to handle my work life because this is my first time having a full-time job. I don't know what works for me, but I'm open to trying to see what works best for me. The one thing I'm trying to do is hand write a to-do list and even keep one on my phone. I also even try to have a planner and write down everything that is due, but I will always forget to check my planner. So, I'm hoping that the to-do list will help me. I also take things day by day because things might change and being a Youth Advocate, our schedules change and not everything on the schedule is always accurate. I will say I have a good memory especially when it's important. Also, doing self-care because sometimes we forget to take care of ourselves. The one thing that helps me every night is meditating for 30 minutes. Meditating helps me think about my day and what made me mad. Taking some deep breaths throughout the day can be beneficial because it helps your body relax. You also want to make sure to take breaks especially if you have been sitting down and looking at a computer all day or working on projects. For me, I can't look at a computer for 5 hours and be able to finish my work. I get distracted easily so I must take breaks in between.



CIARA—I am 21-years-old and born and raised in the Bay Area. Throughout most of my life I have been a part of the foster care system. In experiencing that, I have faced a lot of challenges. I had to learn on my own how to adapt and figure out who I was, not only as a dependent of the foster care system, but also as an individual. Trying to grow as a young adult is already a challenge, but with foster care being attached to that, it can feel overwhelming. Nevertheless, I persisted. I kept pushing with an optimistic mindset. Even though I went through tough situations throughout foster care, it taught me how to be resilient and independent all while showing me how strong I was.

Recently I heard about the Youth Advocate Program and that they were hiring. Once I discovered how this was a job to support foster youth, I knew that I had to apply for this job. Having the passion of being a voice for youth that I can relate to in the foster care system and being able to support them sparked an ambition in me. In short, I received the job and I am so proud to be a part of the WestCoast Children's Clinic Youth Advocate Program! I have only been a part of this fellowship for a couple of months, but within these couple of months I have learned so much. I have been learning how to properly advocate for the youth by supporting them with their wants and needs and providing them with helpful resources. I get to do this while learning how to develop professional skills in the workplace as well as my personal life. With the help of God, my friends, and family as my support systems, I continue to grow and persevere. The circumstances of my past have molded me into the person I am, but it doesn't define me. My circumstances were just battle scars to show how far I have come. I overcame and so can you!



MARIE—As a 23-year-old, handling work life is not just about work life for me, it is also about the relationship work life has to everything else I do. I am a parent, a graduate student, and a partner. A big part of work life is leaving work at work and leaving my other responsibilities at home or in the classroom while I am at work. However, right now work and school are intertwined a lot more than usual because part of my job is to take care of my professional development and school is a huge part of that.

A huge support for me is my son and partner. I can always count on them to take care of our home when I have to prioritize school and work. I try to give myself an hour a day to just be with them and not worry about everything else I need to do. I am still practicing this. I consider my home to be my sanctuary. I try to remind myself that school is only temporary; that work is a journey of learning, development, and of my own personal fulfillment to make a difference in the world. Since work is going to be a major part of my life until I retire, if at any point I don't enjoy what I do, then it is time to move on.