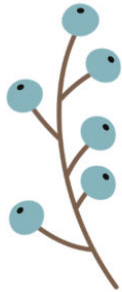




YOR CALIFORNIA
California Youth Opioid Response

YOR NEWS

December 2025



Hello, and warm holiday wishes from YOR California!

In this last issue of 2025, we highlight another one of our grantees, share a ride-along with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department from a behavioral health lens, and offer up more valuable resources. We are glad you are part of our community, and if you know anyone who might be interested in reading, please share!

Wishing you a happy and healthy new year.

The YOR California Team



SPOTLIGHT

YOR California Grantees Making a Difference

San Benito County Public Health
& Central Coast Overdose Prevention

This YOR 4 project is a youth-driven initiative focused on empowering young leaders in substance use prevention and community education across San Benito and Monterey counties. San Benito County Public Health (SBCPH) and Central Coast Overdose Prevention (CCODP) joined forces to create Bi-County Youth Opioid Response and Prevention Program (BCYORPP). This Fall, they launched a youth advisory board (YAB).

Neither organization had experience with a YAB, so they turned to another YOR 4 grantee, Children's Hospital Los Angeles, for mentoring. Mary White leads SBCPH's Opioid Overdose Prevention Program and says, "Their team had a lot of great experience, so we literally took tips from them and incorporated them into our plans." Tips included ideal group size, format, meeting design, how to incentivize and partner with young people, leadership training, and youth recognition.

With the intent of creating a YAB comprised of young people from both counties they reached out through social media and partner high schools, community college, and CCODP's street medicine program. Mary says their messaging centered around youth voice. "We can't speak for them. We need them to speak to their peers and teach us how to do that. We want to use their words, their styles, and their platforms."

The YAB launched in September with a virtual onboarding meeting. Mary says each meeting will include leadership training because "we want them to walk away with something that is sustainable and will help them for the future."

The YAB members come from a variety of towns, counties, schools, and socio-economic situations which CCODP Regional Director Rita Hewitt



describes as both a success and a challenge giving an example of a youth with lived experience who was super engaged and then disappeared for three weeks. Mary says that despite the bumps, the YAB members are working well together.



In October, the YAB held their first quarterly meeting and role-played facilitation techniques to prepare for their first project; a youth-led peer listening session coming up in February. Mary says the YAB activities are designed to build on each other. The peer listening session comes first and then “they’ll use that to do a parent listening session, take what they learn from their peers, and share it with the parents. Then they’ll build a social media campaign.” The culminating activity in the last year will be a podcast series.

We asked if they have any advice for their own peers on building a YAB. Mary says, “Lean on your partners and really leverage that — the people you work with, the organizations you interface with —when you do that, it increases your reach.” Rita adds, “Be open to all; make it a welcoming environment. In life there’s already so many criteria, for example, finding a job when you have no experience, you think,

‘someone’s got to give me a chance to have my first experience.’ So, it’s like that. Something brought them here and we want to tap into that—whatever sparks their fire or passion about substance treatment or just addiction in general.” Both say they are open to answering questions from anyone else interested in starting a YAB.

Top image: SPCPH Opioid Prevention Program Coordinator Adriana Garcia and Opioid Prevention Program Director Mary White, CCODP System Administrator Khanh Nguyen Whited, and YOR CA Grantee Liaison Christian Citlali.

Bottom image: BCYORPP YAB Recruitment Flyer

We also had an opportunity to visit several other YOR 4 grantees recently!



Clockwise from left: Children First Foster Family Program Manager Travis Withrow, Director of Community-Based MHS Janice Saelee, and Transitional Housing Program/SUD Director Karen Kemp. Toiyabe Indian Health Project Primary Care Clinic, Bishop, Inyo County. Drop-in Room in the Imperial County Children’s Outpatient Building, Calexico.

The YOR California Team is looking forward to meeting our 2025-2026 Youth Services Leadership (YSLI) Cohort in January!

YSLI is a workforce development leadership initiative uniquely designed to develop leaders of youth, transition-age youth, and young adult substance use services. This year we have doubled our last year's inaugural cohort number with 21 new Associates selected in a competitive application process. Thank you to all who applied, and to all who supported applicants!



The program utilizes the latest and best fast-track leadership theory and design. This approach offers a promising model focused on knowledge building, relationships (coaches, trainers, and peers), and experiential learning. The overarching goal is to help strengthen the capacity of youth services agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs) to meet the unique behavioral health needs of youth/young adults misusing opioids and/or stimulants throughout the state of California.

YSLI Associates are emerging professionals and leaders of youth-specific and responsive services who are committed to a career that addresses, directly or indirectly, the needs of youth misusing opioids and/or stimulants.

YSLI is a SOR IV program within YOR California—a component that increases both grantee and non-grantee behavioral health workforce capacity.



Centering Behavioral Health in Public Safety Response

YOR California Subject Matter Expert and Grantee Liaison Luis Garcia had the privilege of participating in a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Ride-along with a Century Station deputy. The patrol took them through the City of Lynwood and the surrounding unincorporated South Los Angeles area. He shares his experience with us here. As you read, please consider ways that interactions with law enforcement might be improved.

Two weeks ago, I took part in a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department LASD ride-along from the Century Station. This station patrols the City of Lynwood and the surrounding unincorporated South Los Angeles area. An LASD ride-along is an observational opportunity to accompany sworn deputies during a patrol shift to better understand day-to-day law enforcement operations, decision-making, and community interactions. As an appointed commissioner of the Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission, I participated in this ride-along to strengthen informed oversight, build transparency, and deepen understanding of the realities deputies and community members experience in the field.

Accompanying a deputy with more than 35 years of service offered important insight into the realities law enforcement faces when responding to community calls, many of which involve behavioral health needs, substance use, and young people in crisis. I was reminded how frequently law enforcement encounters high-risk youth and young adults facing behavioral health and substance use challenges. Deputies are often the first to respond in moments of crisis, long before behavioral health or school-based systems are activated. There are a lot of youth/young adult behavioral health challenges that intersect with various stakeholders—schools, law enforcement—and access to care. In Los Angeles County, the communities that are patrolled have long had these challenges. However, recent behavioral health investments are shifting access to care.

One story shared during the ride-along underscored what is possible when systems work together. The deputy described a recent encounter with an unhoused, system-involved, 16-year-old experiencing substance use who was initially contacted through a law enforcement response. Rather than remaining solely within the justice system, the situation shifted through collaboration with specialized LASD Co-Response team (deputy and clinician) and street outreach teams, allowing the youth to be safely housed and connected to behavioral health services. This outcome reflected coordinated care efforts across public safety, outreach, and care systems, prioritizing stabilization, recovery, and long-term support.

From a Youth Opioid Response (YOR 4) lens, this example highlights the importance of strong partnerships between law enforcement, behavioral health providers, outreach teams, and the

community. Early identification, rapid linkage to care, and housing stability are critical protective factors for youth ages 16–25, particularly those at risk of substance use disorders and system involvement. When public safety and behavioral health partners collaborate, youth outcomes improve, and communities become safer and more resilient.

Resources



[A Pathway Beyond the Crisis: What's Next in Opioid Use Policy](#)

Kaiser Permanente

This recorded webinar looks at what is driving declines in opioid overdose deaths and the policy strategies needed to sustain them.

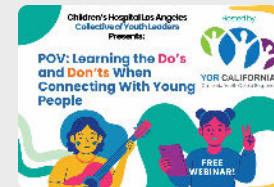
topics include:

- The recent decline in opioid overdose deaths
- Promising overdose prevention education and treatment strategies

[POV: Learning the Do's and Don'ts When Connecting with Young People](#) **YOR California**

In this recent YOR CA webinar, a panel of young advocates from Children's Hospital Los Angeles Collective of Youth Leaders share best practices for developing authentic youth-adult partnerships to support SUD/ODU prevention efforts. Take a look at the [Webinar Slides](#).

Check out this resource from the webinar: [Practical Tips for Connecting with Young People](#)



[The Impact of Substance Use on the Developing Adolescent Brain](#)

Overdose Response Network & Coalition on Physician Education in Substance Use Disorders

This webinar recording focuses on how substance use affects the developing adolescent brain.

[Funding Opportunity: Innovation in Behavioral Health \(IBH\)](#)

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Find it on [Grants.gov](#).

Closing June 3, 2026. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), through its Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation (Innovation Center), will select up to five state Medicaid agencies (SMAs) to participate in the voluntary service delivery and payment model promoting integrated care in behavioral health (BH) settings. The IBH Model will test the impact of a value-based payment (VBP) model aligned across Medicaid and Medicare that supports an integrated care delivery framework in specialty BH organizations and settings for adult Medicaid, Medicare, and dually eligible beneficiaries with moderate to severe mental health conditions and/or substance use disorders (SUDs).

[2025 State and Federal Policy Changes Impacting Immigrant Access to Behavioral Health Services](#)

California Pan-Ethnic Health Network

This publication presents the significant policy changes enacted this year by both the federal government and the California state government, and immigrant access to Medi-Cal services.

[Voices of Youth Justice: Listening and Centering Culture and Community for Tribal Youth](#)

Office of Youth and Community Restoration

This publication presents the significant policy changes enacted this year by both the federal government and the California state government, and immigrant access to Medi-Cal services.

[Medi-Cal Changes 2026-2028](#)

Department of Health Care Services

DHCS has provided information on the upcoming changes for individuals who are Medi-Cal members.

[2026 California School Health & Behavioral Health Conference](#)

The California School-Based Health Alliance

April 27-28, 2026 - Join fellow peers on this two-day conference in Los Angeles California. This conference will focus on how schools and community partners can influence California's historic investment in behavioral health systems reform.

The [YOR California website](#) has over 180 resources in several focus areas including SUD and positive youth development.

YOR 4 is a joint effort of the California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions (CIBHS) and Advocates for Human Potential, Inc. (AHP) and supported by funding from California's Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) State Opioid Response (SOR) 4 grant, provided by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Advocates for Human Potential | 490-B Boston Post Road | Sudbury, MA 01776 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!