



YOUTH COMMISSION POLICY-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Peninsula Partnership Leadership Council (PPLC) is made up of leaders from multiple disciplines from throughout San Mateo County whose mission is to formulate policies that effectively address the needs and foster the healthy development of all children, youth, and families in the County. To this end, the PPLC drafted the Peninsula Partnership Leadership Council Bill of Rights for the Children and Youth of San Mateo County so that policymaking bodies across the county can use it as a tool for their decision making. Two youth commissioners, who are full and equal members of the PPLC, contributed to the development of the Bill of Rights. Moreover, they presented it to the Youth Commission for their comments and feedback, which were incorporated into the final product. The Youth Commission then developed these recommendations to support the articles detailed in the Bill of Rights.

Youth Commission Policy-Level Recommendations for Peninsula Partnership Leadership Council Bill of Rights for the Children and Youth of San Mateo County

The San Mateo County Youth Commission** is a group of young people ages 14 to 21 who reside or attend school in San Mateo County. They come together to exchange ideas, work on policy projects, research, advocate youth issues and advise County officials on issues impacting youth. The Youth Commission works to ensure that voices of all youth are represented in San Mateo County. Youth Commissioners attend monthly trainings, Youth Commission public meetings and their County board/commission meetings. The Youth Commissioners developed the following recommendations to support the articles detailed in the Bill of Rights:

Ensure all Children/Youth have a healthy mind, body and spirit that enable them to maximize their potential by:

- providing youth mental health education and intervention at school sites or adequate access to community resources*
- directing resources to increase artistic outlets in schools and the community*
- augmenting mental health services to youth dealing particularly with self harm, sexual abuse and suicidal ideation*
- providing comprehensive and easily accessible sex education services*
- instituting annual education on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, starting in 4th grade*
- increasing funding for youth who require residential and outpatient substance abuse treatment*

Focus on developing life skills training that will prepare Children/Youth to live independently, be self-sufficient and contribute to their community by:

- making literacy a community priority
- mandating participation in courses on financial management that include discussions on debt and credit cards
- providing opportunities for the development of leadership skills
- increasing opportunities for the development of youth-adult partnerships so youth can have positive role models and mentors
- making Independent Living Classes (ILP) classes available for all
- providing subsidized Drivers Education classes at all schools
- providing time management classes that discuss balancing school, social and extra curricular activities

Ensure all Children/Youth have access to a 21st century education that promotes success in life in future careers and a love of lifelong learning by:

- creating modern libraries in all communities/neighborhoods
- making vocational training accessible for youth not on a college track
- providing access to up-to-date computers that have necessary tools and software
- creating more after-school programs that expose children/youth to different career possibilities
- encouraging schools to create more elective options that focus on technology and career development
- making scholarships and funding opportunities available for schools to have funding to purchase up-to-date technology
- hiring and retaining qualified teachers

Develop employment opportunities for Children/Youth that include protections from unfair labor practices by:

- providing a consistent standard for youth treatment in the workforce that all companies employing youth must adopt
- retaining a County employee to conduct random inspections to ensure that companies are enforcing child labor laws
- ensuring jobs frequently held by young people pay a living wage, not just minimum wage
- developing and disseminating a best-practice vocational training model to support young people in their efforts to secure employment



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Ensure that Children/Youth have a voice in matters that affect them by:

- informing young people at schools about laws that impact them
- creating opportunities for youth to genuinely participate in community-based groups that focus on generating solutions to community issues
- holding frequent youth-lead conferences, fishbowls and discussion groups to solicit youth input
- making opportunities available for youth to interface with those who have decision-making power including elected officials and community leaders
- supporting youth in their efforts to express their political views, from petition writing to meeting with elected officials to political demonstrations

Ensure Children/Youth have freedom from mistreatment, abuse and neglect by:

- providing parents/guardians/caregivers adequate financial support so they can care for their children appropriately
- increasing awareness of child abuse, sexual assault and crisis hotlines
- providing competent and accessible school-based counseling and guidance staff that can act as resources and assist in providing appropriate interventions
- holding parents/guardians/caregivers accountable for their own actions in the criminal justice system

Guarantee that all Children/Youth's needs are met including access to nutritious foods, shelter, clothing, health care and accessible transportation by:

- encouraging schools to adopt healthy, affordable and enticing lunch menus that include nutritious food options and alternatives to sugary fruit juices
- making public transportation more accessible by providing more bus routes with less frequent stops, more transfers and expanded scheduling routes during the evenings and weekends
- subsidizing healthier foods so children/youth have an incentive to purchase them
- creating opportunities to increase physical activity should be available to school-age children to reduce the number of overweight and obese children*
- providing financial assistance to help families with healthcare costs

Provide a safe and healthy environment, including homes, schools, neighborhoods and communities by:

- offering after-school programs that are engaging and welcoming
- ensuring youth have supportive adults in their lives including parents, mentors, teachers and others in the community
- consistently enforcing school rules so all students feel safe
- developing and implementing youth-run student safety commissions that help school officials enforce rules at school functions such as dances and sporting events.
- providing clean school campuses, especially school bathrooms

Facilitate the ongoing relationships with caring, trusting and supportive adults by:

- encouraging agencies that work with volunteer mentors to adequately screen adults to ensure they are genuinely interested
- providing comprehensive training on how to work with young people
- creating opportunities and incentives for adults to mentor young people such as workplace internship programs and more flexible work schedules to allow for employees to mentor during school hours

*Denotes recommendations from the 2007 Adolescent Report created by the Youth Commission available at:
www.smhealth.org/smc/department/home/0,,1954_5352214_1250847180,00.html

****Sonia Chaudhry** and **Jose Ceja** are Youth Commission members of the Peninsula Partnership. They were assisted by their colleagues in the Youth Commission, especially **Kristin Erickson**, **James Pollack** and **John Ha** to provide these recommendations.

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