

## PROPOSITION 64 ADVISORY GROUP

**Date:** July 24, 2025

**Time:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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### Members Present

- » Denise Galvez
- » Jessica Guerra
- » Stephanie List
- » Adrienne Shilton
- » Vince Leus
- » Pete Nielsen

### Opening Remarks and Introductions

*Denise Galvez, Prevention and Youth Branch Chief, Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)*

Galvez welcomed attendees and provided an overview of the meeting agenda. Virtual attendees introduced themselves.

Galvez turned the meeting over to Jessica Guerra for contract updates.

### Contract Updates – Round 7

*Jessica Guerra, Section Chief, Prevention and Youth Branch, DHCS*

Guerra shared about the Youth Education Prevention, Early Intervention and Treatment Account (YEPEITA) contract funding for fiscal year 2025-26.

Guerra reported that the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) contract was executed for \$12 million for prevention education campaigns and drug data surveillance; the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) contract is in the process of execution for approximately \$195.42 million for childcare and child development programs; the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) contract will be executed for approximately \$13 million for youth access to natural and cultural



resources; and the Center at Sierra Health Foundation (The Center) contract will be executed for approximately \$51 million for the Elevate Youth California (EYC) program.

## **Elevate Youth California Cohort Updates**

*Matt Cervantes, Associate Vice President of Programs, The Center at Sierra Health Foundation (The Center)*

*Shyra Murrey, Program Officer, The Center*

Cervantes opened the presentation and welcomed attendees.

Murrey shared that the [EYC 2024 Annual Report](#) is available on the EYC website and includes funded partner accomplishments and data from EYC Rounds 3-5 (November 2023 through December 2024). Murrey reported that 31,174 youth were engaged in core programming, 75,554 participants attended 47,983 prevention program events, and funded partners engaged 13,350 youth through 927 youth listening sessions that ensure youth voices inform the direction and implementation of EYC and create space to explore youth interests and community concerns.

Murrey provided funded partner highlights from Connected to Lead, Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants, Brotherhood of Elders Network, and the California Youth Empowerment Network. Connected to Lead, serving Los Angeles and Orange counties, aims to develop leadership and resilience of foster, at risk, and justice-involved youth through healing circles and a SUD prevention campaign. The Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants, located in Alameda County, worked to develop leadership of Southeast Asian youth by having them lead a community-based participatory research project exploring the link between generational trauma and substance use. The Brotherhood of Elders Network seeks to strengthen leadership skills of system-impacted Black youth through cohort-based mentorship programs. The California Youth Empowerment Network empowered young people by providing opportunities for leadership that centered on social change campaigns and multimedia advocacy art to support healthier communities.

Murrey discussed upcoming milestones, including the Round 3 Evaluation Report; Round 7 Standard Track Request for Applications; Round 4 Evaluation; and continuation of partner support through office hours, networking sessions, coaching, training, and technical assistance opportunities.

Vince Leus shared that he is consistently impressed by the graphics used in EYC presentations. Leus praised the program's reach across diverse communities in California and its ability to provide leadership opportunities for young people—some of whom

may eventually serve on the Prop 64 AG. Leus asked whether the report is being shared with leaders and decision-makers as an awareness and education tool, to highlight how the program is benefiting youth statewide.

Galvez responded by explaining that the rationale behind using visually engaging, infographic-style formats is to ensure the information captures attention and is actively utilized, rather than being overlooked or forgotten. Galvez informed that DHCS will raise awareness about EYC's impact through the YEPEITA Legislative Report, which is anticipated to be released later this year. Additionally, DHCS previously increased awareness about the EYC program by presenting to the California Senate Business, Professions, and Economic Development Committee. Galvez noted that some Advisory Group members also serve on legislative committees and expressed appreciation for Leus's recognition of the program's branding and communication approach.

Adrienne Shilton expressed concern that legislators may not read the YEPEITA report in its entirety due to its length. She asked whether there are plans to develop shorter fact sheets or briefings, possibly including stories from youth who have been directly impacted by the program.

Stephanie List shared that The Center plans to develop an infographic for each round of EYC.

Cervantes expressed appreciation for the feedback from Prop 64 AG members and shared that he will coordinate with DHCS to ensure the suggestions are incorporated moving forward. Cervantes also referenced recent news articles discussing potential cuts to cannabis tax revenue, noting that EYC partners were featured, highlighting their active role in advocacy efforts.

Galvez then introduced Education Northwest to present an update on the formal evaluation of EYC Round 3, emphasizing the program's effectiveness and its capacity to drive meaningful change.

### **External Evaluation – Round 3**

*Marbella Uriostegui, Ph.D. Senior Researcher, Education Northwest*

*Anna Marie Ramos, Ph.D. Senior Associate, Business Development Manager, Social Policy Research Associates*

Uriostegui introduced the evaluation team and provided an overview of the agenda, including discussion on evaluation focus and methods, EYC Round 3 funded partner findings, and time for questions.



The EYC Round 3 evaluation focused on implementation and outcomes at the youth participant, funded partner, and community levels, anchored in the EYC logic model. The presentation focused on outcomes findings. Uriostegui mentioned the diverse data sources, including a review of reports, focus groups and listening sessions with funded partner staff members, youth surveys with a 91% response rate, and Photovoice focus groups.

Uriostegui provided a snapshot of youth survey participant demographics.

Uriostegui presented data showing that almost all youth reported gains in knowledge and confidence around substance use prevention. Youth created educational materials and facilitated community events to raise awareness. Youth connected substance use to broader community challenges, including poverty, housing issues, and mental health. Youth expressed a deep desire for meaningful change on these issues for their community.

Almost all youth participants reported having a trusted adult in their EYC program. Mentors offered valuable resources, such as homework help, guidance in understanding complex processes like grants, and emotional support. Youth described feeling comfortable turning to their mentors, noting that these relationships helped boost their confidence and sense of belonging.

Youth had many opportunities to lead activities and develop key skills within their EYC program, including strengthening communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Youth were involved in civic engagement and policy, systems, and environmental change. Over three-quarters of youth reported they discussed social issues within their program or researched and learned more about community issues. In Photovoice focus groups, youth identified community issues and how they participated in canvassing, community advocacy events, and policy discussions. Youth shared personal stories and advocated for change at city council and school board meetings on topics such as substance use prevention, environmental justice, immigrant support, and behavioral health.

Funded partners reported enhancing their organizational capacity in three main areas, including staff hiring, training, and development; organizational strategy and data capacity; and partnerships.

The Center shared that 66 Round 3 funded partners were awarded the Round 6 grant.

Youth engagement translated into community and policy outcomes. Youth are raising awareness of community challenges, advocating for systemic solutions, mobilizing their

community members through events and rallies, and speaking directly to decision makers at local and state levels.

Denise noted that while efforts are underway to build skills and raise awareness around youth civic engagement, there is still much work to be done. The focus now is on guiding youth toward a deeper understanding of what it truly means to engage in social justice.

Uriostegui provided key evaluation milestones and a timeline, including finalizing the evaluation report and an infographic executive summary in Summer 2025, collecting data from Round 4 funded partners and reconvening the Think Tank members to support co-interpretation of findings between Fall 2025 and Spring 2026, publishing the Round 4 report, and hosting a public webinar to share findings with the network in Summer 2026.

During discussion, Leus highlighted that the EYC program helps sustain organizations. Evaluation findings demonstrate that EYC supports a broader statewide ecosystem of organizations dedicated to serving and empowering youth. The program functions as a safety net, not only protecting youth from harmful activities but also guiding them into leadership roles. This investment in protective factors contributes to stronger, more resilient communities.

Galvez thanked Leus for his reflection and noted the frequent references to the EYC logic model. Galvez suggested revisiting the logic model in future rounds to assess how well it supports and reflects the goal of sustaining a statewide ecosystem.

Howard Padwa asked, “What’s the secret sauce?”—encouraging the EYC evaluation team to explore whether there are specific programs or practice components within EYC that are particularly effective in driving impact and moving the needle on outcomes.

Cervantes acknowledged The Center’s evaluation team, which supported the evaluation team at Education Northwest.

Galvez introduced Pueblo y Salud.

## **Youth Listening Session Report**

### *Pueblo y Salud*

Rose Perez, a youth lead organizer with Pueblo y Salud (PyS) for the past year and a half, expressed appreciation to EYC, DHCS, and The Center for their continued support and commitment to empowering young people statewide. Perez then introduced her



colleagues, Enrique Carmona and Jason Strickler, the PyS Prevention Program Coordinator.

Strickler shared that PyS's roots go back to the Chicano Latin movement in Los Angeles County and highlighted the contributions of Executive Director, Ruben Rodriguez, who was involved with the Latino Coalition on Alcohol Issues in San Fernando Valley. PyS was founded in 1986 as the Latino Coalition on Alcohol Issues in the San Fernando Valley and became an institutionalized agency in 1991. That same year, it introduced the environmental prevention concept to Los Angeles County through a conference with its original authors. PyS received several commendations for its efforts, leading to funding for environmental prevention by the Alcohol and Drug Program Administration of the Los Angeles County Public Health Department in 1992.

Strickler mentioned that the PyS mission is centered around community empowerment. Strickler listed the different ways PyS empowers the community to advocate for things, including EYC, Youth 4 Hoods Coalition, COVID-19 mitigation, its radio station, Cesar Chavez Commemorative Committee of the San Fernando Valley, and March for Justice in the city of Los Angeles.

Carmona introduced the Youth Lead Antelope Valley coalition (YLAV), the youngest member being 12 and the oldest member being 21. The coalition is led by youth and decisions are made according to youth votes. Carmona emphasized the strong trust between the youth participants and PyS staff members, as youth participants share freely about their opinions and struggles. YLAV's membership grew from eight to 27, and that number is expected to grow to 40 this year.

Perez mentioned that during the first cohort of YLAV, members conducted the Together Over Fentanyl, which was finished by the third cohort, to strengthen community efforts to fight against fentanyl and raise awareness. As part of the initiative, youth created a public service announcement, published on YouTube, that warns the community about the dangers of fentanyl.

Perez mentioned YLAV's social justice and civic engagement activities, including a three-day Fight Fentanyl Spring Camp, in partnership with Southern California Edison, the primary electric utility company for much of Southern California. Perez also highlighted the annual Cesar Chavez March for Justice and the Cesar Chavez Youth Leadership Conference.

Carmona proudly mentioned that five coalition members are going to college, and sophomores and juniors are considering what they can do to attend college. PyS has

supported youth coalition members through college visits, financial aid applications, and job applications.

Strickler showed a [digital story](#) about PyS, presented at the DHCS Advance Behavioral Health Prevention California conference.

Strickler explained that each PyS program has developed a sustainability plan. Strickler highlighted YLAV's partnership with Southern California Edison, working with representatives from the Palmdale City Council to make the coalition a line item in the budget, securing sponsorships from businesses for the radio station, and the March for Justice which raises \$20,000-\$30,000 annually.

Galvez thanked PyS for their work, emphasizing how PyS engages with youth internally and then elevates them as young professionals externally.

Carmona responded to Lincoln Bohn's question about community buy-in when the messaging is about anti-fentanyl versus anti-smoking by explaining that the fight against fentanyl campaign is large and the message is well-received. PyS presents on both topics, and some parents might not show interest in the fentanyl presentations, but when discussing anti-smoking and anti-vaping, PyS explains how smoking and vaping can serve as a "gateway" to fentanyl use.

## **Substance Use Prevention Evidence-Based Resource Website**

*Howard Padwa, PhD, Research Scientist, UCLA Integrated Substance Use and Addiction Programs (UCLA-ISAP)*

*Sherry Larkins, PhD, Research Sociologist, UCLA-ISAP*

Guerra introduced Howard Padwa and Sherry Larkins.

Padwa acknowledged partnership with Azuza Pacific University and the Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS) on developing two resources, the Substance Use Prevention Evidence-based Resource (SUPER) and the California Service to Science Academy (CSSA).

Padwa defined evidence-based practice (EBP) as a practice with documented, empirical evidence (e.g., randomized controlled trials, peer-reviewed studies) of effectiveness in improving outcomes. These are clinically reviewed and codified, manualized to ensure implementation fidelity. Padwa illustrated the difficulty of a practice becoming an EBP. For instance, a practice from rural California may not have a local university to test it.



Padwa defined community-defined evidence practice (CDEP) as a community-based behavioral health practice that has strong support within a specific community and may resonate with historically marginalized populations.

EBPs and CDEPs include six common strategies: 1) information dissemination, 2) education, 3) alternatives, 4) problem identification and referral, 5) community-based processes, and 6) environmental strategies.

Padwa explained how substance use prevention repositories like Blueprints have historically provided information on practices that have strong evidence. Due to the length of time for a practice to reach strong evidence, practices may be outdated. The SUPER serves as a centralized resource to assist California providers serving youth in identifying EBPs and CDEPs that are culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate and demonstrate effective prevention strategies and outcomes. The SUPER website launched in June 2025.

Padwa provided a tour of the [SUPER website](#), demonstrating how to filter through the 34 practices currently available based on prevention category, prevention strategies, practice components, population age, and populations of focus. Padwa expects this number to increase to over 100 practices over the next few years.

Shilton asked if there was the potential for collaboration with DHCS staff working on Behavioral Health Transformation (BHT), Proposition 1, and the SUPER EBP and CDEPs.

Guerra shared that CDPH will oversee BHT prevention services, and DHCS will oversee BHT early intervention services. DHCS is required to develop a list of early intervention EBPs and CDEPs in consultation with the Behavioral Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission, counties, and stakeholders. DHCS is currently hosting listening sessions and developing a list that will be published biennially. Guerra shared that the SUPER website has been shared with the DHCS BHT team members.

Larkins mentioned that the CSSA, inspired by an initiative by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, provides the capacity for practices to start building evidence to be featured on the SUPER. DHCS contracted with UCLA-ISAP to conduct an eight-month pilot CSSA to generate promising evidence on ten potential CDEPs and strengthen participants' evaluation capacity to document the effectiveness of their work. The nine organizations that participated are California Health Collaborative, Cambodian Family Community Center, Continuity Consulting, Friday Night Live, LA County Substance Abuse Prevention & Control, Pueblo y Salud, Sacramento Youth Center, San Fernando Valley Partnership, and Two Feathers Native American Services.





CSSA activities included: evaluation training and technical assistance, individualized coaching, learning collaboratives with expert guest presenters, and the development of resources to support program evaluation.

Larkins provided highlights from Two Feathers Native American Family Services' Youth Leadership Development Program, Sacramento Youth Center's Peer Mentoring Program, Continuity Consulting's Mindfulness-Based Substance Abuse Treatment programming, and California Health Collaborative's Healing, Equity, Advocacy, and Leadership Project.

UCLA-ISAP is analyzing final CSSA site reports and preparing summaries. Along with CARS, they are conducting exit interviews to identify improvements for the CSSA model. Based on the lessons learned, they are also standardizing procedures and data collection for future CSSAs. Additionally, UCLA-ISAP is preparing for two new CSSA cohorts: one focused on Elevate Youth California and the other on SUD prevention. They will also enhance the SUPER website to include more SUD prevention EBPs, CDEPs, and promising practices.

Uriostegui complimented the website.

### **Public Comment**

*All participants*

No public comments were made.

### **Closing and Next Steps**

*Jessica Guerra, Section Chief, Prevention and Youth Branch, DHCS*

Guerra concluded by thanking all attendees for their participation and ended the meeting, noting there were no additional comments.