



CAYEN's Recommendations in Response to COVID-19

The California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN) is a statewide board made of transitional age youth (TAY). CAYEN's personal experience, education and employment give voice to the challenges and successes of TAY. CAYEN advocates for systemic change to create equity and access to supports and services through behavioral health public policy.

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) is drastically changing the lives and negatively impacting the mental well-being of TAY. As we adapt to the current situation it is crucial to incorporate CAYEN's recommendations.

1. Include TAY in your discussions, decisions and responses to COVID-19.
2. Provide TAY with electronic devices, internet access and data plans to virtually engage in supports and services.
3. Connect TAY to free telehealth and virtual behavioral health supports and services that are ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse. Incorporate safe ways to access and use these resources that allow for nonverbal communication like texting. Vulnerable populations such as undocumented, homeless, LGBTQ+, foster youth and youth facing domestic violence are not always in safe environments where they can talk freely.
4. Outreach to TAY to ensure they are aware of available resources. TAY are being displaced, grieving and experiencing higher rates of anxiety and depression. TAY are taking their lives at increased rates.
5. Increase resources and shelter for TAY experiencing domestic violence and other abusive relationships. Abuse is rising.
6. Continue providing temporary housing and the services tied to homeless programs for TAY who are already a part of these programs. TAY are experiencing a pause on those services resulting in no access to healthcare.
7. Create programs to help cover rent. Vulnerable youth who have lost their jobs and live paycheck-to-paycheck cannot pay past unpaid rent. This will create more homelessness.
8. Provide financial resources and webinars on how to access those resources, many TAY are estranged from their parent/guardian and will not receive stimulus checks/benefits because they are claimed as dependents by their parent/guardian.
9. Create online educational supports and services in place of the traditional after school programs and tutoring. Home support and availability of parent/guardian is often limited and sometimes nonexistent. Lack of educational resources is exacerbating anxiety, stress and depression.
10. Release youth in detention with nonviolent offenses or soon to end-sentences into group homes/house arrest. TAY in detention are further endangered due to the withholding of cleaning/hygiene supplies.