

2019

Report to the Colorado General Assembly



Colorado Youth Advisory Council Review Committee



Prepared by Legislative Council Staff
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December 2019

Colorado Youth Advisory Council Review Committee

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December 2019

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December 2019

To Members of the Seventy-second General Assembly:

Submitted herewith is the final report of the Colorado Youth Advisory Council Review Committee. This committee was created pursuant to Section 2-2-1305.5, C.R.S. The purpose of this committee is to review the work of the Colorado Youth Advisory Council and to recommend legislation regarding issues affecting Colorado youth.

This committee did not approve any bills for consideration in the 2020 session and was therefore not subject to review from the Legislative Council.

Sincerely,

/s/ Senator Leroy Garcia
Chair

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The text of the committee's letter to the Governor in support of positive youth development is included as Attachment A after the resource materials page.

This report is also available online at:

<https://leg.colorado.gov/committees/colorado-youth-advisory-council-review-committee/2019-regular-session>

Committee Charge

The Colorado Youth Advisory Council (COYAC) Review Committee was created in House Bill 19-1024 to review COYAC's work and to recommend legislation regarding issues affecting Colorado youth.

Pursuant to Section 2-2-1302, C.R.S., COYAC is charged with examining, evaluating, and discussing the issues, interests, and needs affecting Colorado youth. The issues may include, but need not be limited to:

- education and skill development;
- employment and economic opportunities and educational opportunities, including increased accessibility to opportunities for youth in rural communities;
- access to state and local government services;
- the environment;
- behavioral and physical health, including suicide prevention;
- safe environments for youth, including preventing bullying;
- substance abuse;
- poverty; and
- increased youth participation in state and local government.

COYAC consists of 35 members representing each state senate district and 5 at-large members. Members must be between 14 and 19 years old and be enrolled in and attending school in Colorado. They serve two-year terms. COYAC meets three to four times per year and receives organizational support from a vendor, Engaged Public, under contract with the General Assembly. Four legislative members of COYAC are appointed by House and Senate leadership to two-year terms.

Each school year, COYAC makes policy recommendations to the General Assembly. The recommendations for the current and prior years are available online at: <http://engagedpublic.com/coyac-policy-recommendations.php>.

Committee Activities

The committee held three meetings during the 2019 interim. The committee discussed COYAC's work and legislator engagement with COYAC, and the legislative members reviewed vendor proposals and interviewed applicants for facilitating COYAC for 2019-2020. The committee also heard presentations from COYAC youth on their legislative recommendations from the 2018-2019 school year:

- youth budget;
- youth impact statement; and
- youth advisory review / youth voice in state agencies.

The following sections discuss the committee's activities during the 2019 interim.

Youth Budget

The first policy recommendation from the COYAC students proposed the creation of a youth budget that would provide information about how much money is spent on children's programs in Colorado and what programs serving children receive state funding. The students cited a lack of transparency within the state budget in identifying where and how much money is directed each year to programs that impact children. This lack of transparency, students noted, makes it difficult to make connections between how money is spent and any resulting impact on the lives of young people.

Originally proposed to be a biennial document prepared by the General Assembly outlining those expenditures, the committee expressed concerns about the broadness of the proposal. Following committee discussion and further analysis from the students, the committee considered, but ultimately did not propose, legislation that would establish an age range for what constitutes children or youth in the state budget. The age range would then be applied to any children's budget documents. The students proposed an age range of 0 to 18 years to define youth. The committee also considered but did not propose legislation that would require reporting on specific topics of concern to youth such as behavioral health. In addition, the committee discussed potential legislation that would add a requirement that certain committees obtain reports that would discuss state spending on youth but did not recommend a bill.

Youth Impact Statement

COYAC's second policy recommendation concerned youth impact statements. COYAC students recommended allowing legislators to request youth impact statements, similar to fiscal notes, on their bills. COYAC would then analyze the bill and provide information on its impact on youth in the state. As the committee discussed this proposal, concerns were raised about the timing of preparing the statements, recognizing that bill drafts are confidential and there would be limited time to prepare a statement. Legislative members also noted that COYAC could take on this project without legislation, which was ultimately their recommendation.

Youth Voice in State Agencies

For their third policy proposal, COYAC students discussed ways to promote youth voices in state government. Students expressed concern that agency decisions that affect youth do not take the views of youth into account. In order to amplify youth voices in state government, COYAC students proposed mandating positive youth development (PYD) training for state agency employees working in programs that impact youth. Students explained that PYD is an evidence-based approach to engage youth in decision making, build sustainable programs, and reduce risky behavior among youth across the state. Students also noted that increasing the use of PYD is among the recommendations in Colorado's Statewide Youth Development Plan. Committee members expressed concern over the cost of mandated training, and ultimately, the committee agreed to draft and send a letter to the Governor to encourage the use of PYD in state agencies.

Committee recommendations. As a result of its discussions, the committee prepared a letter to the Governor in support of positive youth development.

Summary of Recommendations

As a result of the committee's activities, the committee recommended a letter to the Governor in support of positive youth development. The committee did not recommend any legislation.

Letter to the Governor in Support of Positive Youth Development

In this letter, the committee describes positive youth development (PYD) and discusses the benefits of PYD in engaging youth as partners in state government. It notes that the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) offers training in PYD and has created a youth advisor model to provide a youth perspective in programmatic decision making. It encourages the Governor and executive agency directors to emphasize the importance of PYD in their programs that interact with youth, and it asks that they train their staff in PYD and implement CDPHE's youth advisor model.

Resource Materials

Meeting summaries are prepared for each meeting of the committee and contain all handouts provided to the committee. The summaries of meetings and attachments are available at the Division of Archives, 1313 Sherman Street, Denver (303-866-2055). The listing below contains the dates of committee meetings and the topics discussed at those meetings. Meeting summaries are also available on our website at:

<https://leg.colorado.gov/content/committees>

Meeting Date and Topics Discussed

July 26, 2019

- ◆ Committee Administration and Introductions
- ◆ Policy Recommendation 1: Youth Budget
- ◆ Policy Recommendation 2: Youth Impact Statement
- ◆ Policy Recommendation 3: Youth Advisory Review

September 4, 2019

- ◆ Policy Recommendation 1: Children's Budget
- ◆ Policy Recommendation 2: Youth Impact Statement
- ◆ Policy Recommendation 3: Youth Voice in State Agencies
- ◆ COYAC Staff Support Request for Proposals

October 18, 2019

- ◆ Letter to the Governor in Support of Positive Youth Development
- ◆ COYAC Activities and Future Planning
- ◆ Legislator Engagement

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October 18, 2019

Jared Polis, Governor
200 E. Colfax, Rm. 136
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Governor Polis,

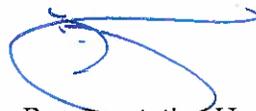
During the 2019 legislative session, the General Assembly created the Colorado Youth Advisory Council Review Committee (committee) to meet every legislative interim to review the work of the Colorado Youth Advisory Council (COYAC). Created under section 2-2-1302, C.R.S., the COYAC examines and evaluates the issues most relevant to Colorado youth and provides formal recommendations to elected officials regarding those issues. During the 2019 interim, the committee met three times to hear recommendations from COYAC. Based on these discussions, the Colorado Youth Advisory Council Review Committee asks that the use of positive youth development (PYD) programs be expanded in the executive branch and recommends that PYD techniques be promoted in agencies with programs that impact young people. More specifically, the committee encourages departments to participate in training, developed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), and to incorporate the PYD approach of hiring youth advisors as part-time agency staff.

According to the statewide Youth Development Plan, required under section 26-1-111.3, C.R.S., PYD is considered a best practice for "youth service professionals, organizations, and youth-focused state agency programs." PYD is an evidence-based approach to help make programs that impact and involve young people more successful by engaging young people in developing the programs' strategies and practices. A PYD approach allows young people to be resources in decision making and aligns with the following principles: strength-based, inclusive, engage youth as partners, collaborative, and sustainable. More information about PYD can be found here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/11-LJZzvpWVdS1gWMycBP_yWid5NIp2DM/view.

To promote the use of PYD, the CDPHE offers training in PYD and has created a youth advisor model. The model encourages agencies to hire youth part-time to provide a youth perspective in programmatic decision making. The youth advisor model has been utilized as a pilot program by the CDPHE. According to a survey of participants in the pilot program, the model brought diverse perspectives and made youth-focused programming more relevant and responsive to program participants. Since that pilot program, the Colorado Departments of Education, Labor and Employment, and Human Services have all incorporated youth advisors into certain programs.

Based on the findings by CDPHE and at the recommendation of the Youth Development Plan and the COYAC, the Colorado Youth Advisory Council Review Committee strongly encourages the Governor and all executive directors to emphasize the importance of PYD to their agencies and programs that interact with youth. In addition, the committee encourages state agencies that interact with youth to train their staff in PYD and implement the youth advisor model developed by the CDPHE.

Sincerely,



Representative Hugh McKean
Chair, Colorado Youth Advisory Council Review Committee

- c: Dir. Joe Barela
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- Dir. Lu Cordova
- Dir. Rick Garcia
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- Dir. Kara Veitch
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