



Education Coordinating Council

February 26, 2025, 9:00 a.m. | Hybrid Meeting

In-Person: 510 South Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90020 | Room VCHQ TK02

Remote: via Microsoft Teams

Member Tanya Ortiz Franklin, ECC Chair, Los Angeles Unified School District
Representatives Fabricio Segovia, ECC Vice Chair, former foster youth
Present: Judge Akemi Arakaki, ECC Vice Chair, Los Angeles Superior Court

Ashley Benjamin, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District
Tristan Bulatao, Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Los Angeles
David Carroll, Los Angeles County Department of Youth Development
Michelle Castillo, West Covina Unified School District
Jessica Chandler, former foster/probation youth
Jesus Corral, Los Angeles County Probation Department
Yasmin Dorado, Antelope Valley High School District
Joshua Elizondo, Los Angeles County Youth Commission
Jennifer Higuchi, Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services
Dora Jacildo, Commission for Children and Families
Jodi Kurata, Association of Community Human Service Agencies (ACHSA)
Ofelia Medina, First 5 LA
Denise Miranda, Los Angeles Unified School District
Elisabeth Nails, Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture
Judge Michael Nash, Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection
Jennifer Rodarte, Long Beach Unified School District
Luciana Svidler, Children's Law Center of California
Brian Stanley, Pasadena Unified School District
Kanchana Tate, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
Rachelle Touzard, Los Angeles County Office of Education
Trish Wilson, Lancaster School District

Additional Presenters: Sherrie Bradford, Alliance for Children's Rights Education Advocates
Cristopher Espino, Alliance for Children's Rights Education Advocates
Alexandria Maldonado, Alliance for Children's Rights Education Advocates
Alaina Moonves-Leb, Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection
Jessica Petrass, John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)
Ann Quirk, Children's Law Center
Myriah Smiley, Alliance for Children's Rights Education Advocates
Danielle Wondra, Children Now

Staff: Barbara Lundqvist, Director, Education Coordinating Council
Elizabeth Koenig, Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection
Rachael Parker-Chavez, Luskin Fellow, Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection

Agenda Item 1: Call to Order, Introductions, AB 2449 Notifications/Motions, Land Acknowledgement

Vice Chair Fabricio Segovia brought the meeting to order, welcoming everyone and acknowledging youth-serving and school-district partners “who have worked tirelessly to support the communities that have been and continue to be impacted by the effects of the January wildfires.” Following member self-introductions, Segovia called attendees’ attention to **Attachment 1** to these meeting minutes, an end-of-year update covering ECC activities in 2023 and 2024. “We’ve done a lot,” he said, “and we’re looking forward to another productive year.” He further thanked the Department of Children and Family Services for helping the ECC secure and cover costs for today’s meeting room.

Vice Chair Segovia reported that Chair Ortiz Franklin from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and Commissioner Joshua Elizondo from the Los Angeles County Youth Commission requested remote attendance under AB 2449 due to just cause, and no persons over the age of 18 were present at either Chair Ortiz Franklin’s or Commissioner Elizondo’s locations.

- **Judge Michael Nash moved that Ortiz Franklin be permitted to represent LAUSD from her remote location and Judge Akemi Arakaki seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
- **Judge Michael Nash moved that Elizondo be permitted to represent the Youth Commission from his remote location and Judge Akemi Arakaki seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Elizabeth Koenig reviewed in-person, online, and telephonic housekeeping issues and reminded attendees that the meeting was being recorded for note-taking purposes. She concluded Agenda Item 1 with the County of Los Angeles [land acknowledgement](#).

Agenda Item 2. Presentation and Discussion: Education Rights for Young People and by Young People

“During last year’s ECC strategic planning process,” Vice Chair Segovia began, “several youth who participated in listening sessions—including the Alliance’s Education Rights Advocates here at today’s meeting—told us that not knowing their education rights as foster youth affected their ability to academically achieve and engage in school. Caregivers and systems partners also raised the need for more information on child-welfare education rights to best support youth. This feedback was embedded in the new ECC Strategic Plan, which calls for us to establish/increase training for biological parents, caregivers, school district staff, County staff who work with youth (including social workers), bench officers, staff in Short-Term Residential Treatment Programs, or STRTPs, formal Educational Rights Holders [ERHs], and youth themselves on education rights. The Strategic Plan also points out that these resources should be youth-friendly, developed with feedback from people with lived expertise, and disseminated in a way that is intentional and layered so this information consistently reaches all youth in foster care and the adults who support them. Education rights are embedded in our Strategic Plan, in fact, in two priority areas—chronic absenteeism and youth engagement and supports.”

Alexandria Maldonado began the presentation of *Education Rights for Young People and by Young People (Attachment 2)* by briefly describing the Alliance for Children’s Rights, a legal nonprofit organization that provides services for families and youth who are directly involved in the child-welfare system. “The Alliance’s Education Advocates group has existed for three years, and every

one of us has had our own ups and downs with knowing or not knowing our educational rights,” Maldonado said. “We’re working toward making sure that doesn’t happen to anyone else.”

Cris Espino continued, citing slide 4 of Attachment 2:

- *It is essential for youth to be able to advocate for themselves. By providing them with the knowledge and tools to take control of their futures, we help empower them to make informed decisions.*
- *Youth need resources that are accessible, easy to understand, and ones they can refer back to as they move forward. To ensure that these resources are effective, we collaborated with lived experts from Education Rights Advocates and Castillo Consulting Partners.*

“In our process, youth are the decision-makers,” Espino went on. “About how long the videos are, what topics they address, how we can engage youth with them, and the scripts. Who is interested in telling their story? We had meetings in the evenings, online, and in person. We tried to do whatever worked for young people around their schedules of school, job, and other responsibilities.” He expressed particular gratitude to Kids in the Spotlight, the nonprofit that donated the in-kind use of its audio-video recording studio.

Best practices for this kind of endeavor include:

- Compensate youth for their lived expertise.
- Create opportunities for youth to work together.
- Leverage electronic tools for asynchronous work.
- Continually follow up, but still let youth lead.
- Allow youth to be creative in how they participate.
- If possible, utilize a professional videographer/editor.

Lessons learned during this process included:

- Allow for multiple work sessions with youth.
- Start with educating the youth themselves about rights; give them time to understand how rights apply to their own lived experiences.
- Support youth in making impactful testimonial statements, not objectifying themselves.
- What do they want to share? How do they want to share?
- Make sure their stories serve their goals.
- Build a collaborative approach, respecting different perspectives and experiences.

Sherrie Bradford, part of the Alliance’s Education Advocates group, is also the Prevention and Early Intervention Training Coordinator at CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocates) of Los Angeles. Her background as an advocate, trainer, and educator has built her skills to advocate for youth through this project, introducing the unique element of a creative lens designed to engage young people more effectively with the content.

The presentation included videos of two skits, one introducing the concept of Educational Rights Holders (slide 6 of Attachment 2) and the other discussing school stability for foster youth and the mandate that, when a youth’s placement location changes, they be immediately enrolled in a ‘school of origin’ (slide 7 of Attachment 2), once their Educational Rights Holder decides if it is

in the youth's best interest to stay in their current school or to return to a previous school, for example, to which they had strong connections.

"That's the one we all wish we had known about," said Myriah Smiley. "I moved placements a *lot*, and therefore moved schools a lot. If I'd known about this, I could have advocated for myself much more effectively."

All the videos created through this effort are available on a [YouTube playlist](#); in addition, a separate [Youth Engagement Resources](#) webpage on the Office of Child Protection site has also gone live, from which the videos (in both landscape and portrait formats, for computers and hand-held devices) may be downloaded and shared.

ECC members were asked to consider and discuss these questions:

1. How can ECC members and constituents help share these videos directly with youth? How can these videos be embedded into existing processes to help youth understand their rights?
2. How can the ECC, as discussed in previous meetings, do something more than 'trainings' (since everyone has a lot of trainings) to help systems partners and youth know about education rights? How can we best leverage these videos for these efforts?

- **Action Item** David Carroll volunteered to post the videos on the **Department of Youth Development's** website, and also to facilitate ECC contact with youth-serving partner organizations.
- **Action Item** Elisabeth Nails from the **Department of Arts and Culture** suggested that the videos be presented at Creative Wellbeing gatherings and at a March 17 training, and also be integrated into artist residencies.
- **Action Item** The **Foster Youth Services (FYS) division of the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE)** hosts quarterly and regional meetings of school districts and County partners, La Shona Jenkins said, and the videos could be disseminated among those attendees, posted on the LACOE-FYS website, and shared in its newsletters.
- **Action Item** Jessica Petrass suggested that both the **Department of Children and Family Services** and the **Education Coordinating Council** become active on social media, as that is a surer path to communicating with young people than e-mail has become.
- **Action Item** Michelle Lucarelli-Beltran from the **Auditor-Controller's Office of the STRTP Ombudsman** said that all videos currently available from this project were already on her unit's website; staff will post them on its new social media channels as well.
- **Action Item** Brian Stanley from **Pasadena Unified** wants to include this presentation in the school-policies packets his district prepares for new students. "Plus we have educators who themselves still don't understand many of these rights," he added. "As you know, these conversations are very real."
- **Action Item** Lundqvist and Moonves-Leb will publicize and share these videos at the **California Foster Youth Education Task Force's Education Summit** in April.
- **Action Item** LACOE's Rachelle Touzard would like to **add non-foster students and other young people to the target audience for these videos**, given the likelihood of circumstances

similar to those shown in today's second skit, during which an acquaintance of a foster youth helps her research her school options in anticipation of an upcoming placement change.

➔ **Action Item** Ana Gutierrez from the **West Covina Unified School District** will share these resources with resource parents and relative caregivers during her district's trainings.

Judge Nash asked about orientation packets or other materials given to youngsters when they enter the child-welfare system, suggesting that a list of informational websites be developed and included. Requirements already exist, Luciana Svidler commented—integrated into Los Angeles County policy and in state guidance—for social workers to discuss the [Foster Youth Bill of Rights](#) with foster children and youth semi-annually and at every placement change. DCFS has an e-learning on the subject; a resource website guide and perhaps a social media guide could also be useful additions.

Agenda Item 3. Updates and Discussion on the Implementation of the ECC's Strategic Plan
Priority Areas

Stability/Chronic Absenteeism Co-leads Yasmin Dorado from the Antelope Valley Unified High School District and Jennifer Higuchi from the Department of Children and Family Services updated attendees on their workgroup's activities:

- Held three workgroup meetings; the time of everyone who joined is appreciated
- Established milestones around caregiver training on education rights/stability rights, data to support districts in making budget 'asks' for school-of-origin transportation; also hoping this data can support work to secure sustainable funding for school-of-origin transportation funding
- Began discussing chronic absenteeism and brainstorming how to support caregivers and others in getting youth to school
- Developed a work plan to accomplish these goals
- Holding caregiver-training discussions with:
 - ✓ The California Community Colleges' Foster and Kinship Care Education (FKCE) program, which provides applicant and approved resource-parent training as part of a child-centered Resource Family Approval process
 - ✓ Foster Parent College (caregiver and staff trainings)
- Making presentations to children's social workers (CSWs) to they may speak with caregivers around the concept of 'school of origin,' how transportation to those schools is handled, and making use of the expertise of education specialists

The co-leads called attention to a wording change the workgroup had discussed, on page 30 of the ECC's Strategic Plan for 2024–2029 (**Attachment 3**)—the third bullet under “Desired Outcome Within Five Years.”

*100% of youth involved with systems will stay in **their** school of origin until a best-interest determination has been completed.*

Because students may by definition have more than one 'school of origin' the workgroup recommended that the ECC change the language to “**a** school of origin.”

Agreeing that the term “school of origin” already includes multiple school-of-origin locations, Jessica Chandler expressed concerns that this suggested language, however, could lead to DCFS’s choosing the school that is most convenient (for its staff or others) rather than where the youth actually wants to attend. Chandler, David Carroll (Department of Youth Development), and Ann Quirk (Children’s Law Center) all emphasized the importance of ensuring that youth ‘voice and choice’ is reflected in school-of-origin decisions. The intention of the workgroup’s recommendation, Director Lundqvist confirmed, was to ensure that youth could attend any school of origin they wished to attend.

Given the discussion, members agreed to **consider tabling a vote on adopting adjusted language until the workgroup devises phrasing** that might address all possibilities. **Fabricio Segovia so moved, David Carroll seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.**

ECC members and constituents were encouraged to let Lundqvist or Koenig know if they are interested in joining this workgroup; current members would greatly appreciate more school districts participating, for example, to support data-collection efforts.

Youth Engagement and Supports Workgroup co-lead Josh Elizondo (Los Angeles County Youth Commission) summarized the listening session held with youth in October, at which the group discussed ways of creating a collaborative space where youth feel authentically engaged and through which their voices can be heard.

- Engage youth monthly at least, with a mix of in-person and virtual meetings
- Think about logistics needed (compensation, transportation, etc.)
- Provide resources for youth (food, mental health services, etc.)
- Provide internship and employment opportunities and/or other incentives for youth to engage

In addition, youth should have a say in the workgroup’s decision-making, information should be shared out in various forms, and ways to make the larger ECC meetings more youth-friendly should be considered.

Young people attending the listening session agreed that a formal workgroup should not be launched until a structure for including and compensating youth is established, but felt that, in the meantime, they could engage with existing youth organizations like the [California Youth Connection](#) (CYC) and the [Opportunity Youth Collaborative](#), where some supports are already in place.

“We’ve come up with three possible models of how the workgroup could function,” Elizondo said, “and after we do some more research, we’re planning another listening session to go over those structures and get feedback on them. We know, too,” he went on, “that implementing any of this will take time and resources. We will likely be asking ECC members to pitch in with helping us implement and fund the chosen model.”

Lundqvist thanked Elizondo and co-lead Taylor Schooley (Department of Youth Development) for their efforts with this workgroup.

Post-Secondary Educational Achievement and Workforce Readiness Jessica Petrass from John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) updated ECC members on various topics related to this strategic-plan priority area.

- As a result of January’s wildfires in the Los Angeles area, the priority deadline for all students in California to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid® (FAFSA) has been extended to April 2. (Last year’s FAFSA underwent an electronic overhaul that caused

glitches and delays in students' ability to file on a timely basis—another reason for this year's shifted deadline.)

Nationwide, FAFSA applications have decreased sharply, with California falling to 50th place. California Dream Act applications are similarly down by 38 percent. "Now more than ever," Petrass urged, "we need to double down on our efforts to talk to our high school seniors and engage them—see what kind of concerns are coming up as they complete these forms and if the students are linked to support for that process. Los Angeles County's goal is to have 70 percent of high school seniors complete the FAFSA," she added, "and as of a couple of weeks ago, we were only at around 31 percent. I hope we can partner on this effort."

- The California Kids Investment and Development Savings program ([CalKIDS](#)) was created by the State of California to help more children have an opportunity to save for higher education. CalKIDS, a 529 children's savings account program administered by the ScholarShare Investment Board (a California agency chaired by the State Treasurer), provides eligible low-income public-school students in California with up to \$1,500 in a CalKIDS account to help jumpstart their savings for higher education and career training.

In addition, all babies born in California on or after July 1, 2022, regardless of family income, get money in a CalKIDS college savings account at birth.

- \$25 for babies born from July 2022 through June 2023
- \$100 for babies born on or after July 1, 2023
- \$25 bonus when you claim your CalKIDS account
- \$50 bonus when you link your CalKIDS account with another ScholarShare 529 account

"At the time CalKIDS was established," Petrass stated, "one-time allocations for low-income, foster, and homeless students were also issued, so our students might have five hundred or a thousand bucks sitting in their accounts. However, as of last June, only about 7 percent of our foster youth had claimed their accounts, which is the first step toward being able to use that money for post-secondary expenses. As of December, we were up to only 8.8 percent. That's an improvement, but we'd like to get to 10 percent or more. JBAY just got a CalKIDS flyer approved that targets youth in foster care plus homeless youth, which we'll send over to ECC staff, along with some financial-aid materials.

"Please continue to tell your students about this," Petrass asked attendees. "It takes about ten minutes for them to log on, and whatever funds are sitting there can be used for college."¹

- The Post-Secondary Workgroup is also partnering with DCFS and LACOE on connecting high school seniors to campus-based foster-youth support programs. A finalized [Release of Information](#) form has been approved to facilitate a 'warm hand-off' for these students, and the workgroup is close to finalizing the process and launching these efforts for seniors in March or April.
- "Some final good news," Petrass concluded. "California State University Sacramento just changed its policies to offer guaranteed admission to any foster youth in California who meets

¹Money in CalKIDS accounts can be used to pay for qualifying* higher-education expenses such as tuition and related fees, books and required supplies, and computer equipment.

*Funds used to pay for non-qualifying expenses may be subject to penalties and/or taxes.

the basic A–G requirements. This can apply to any of your current seniors who may already have applied to the CSU system and would want to attend Cal State Sacramento this coming fall.”

Agenda Item 3d. Strategic Plan Design Finalization

As previously mentioned, the designed version of the Education Coordinating Council 2024–2029 Strategic Plan appears as **Attachment 3** to these meeting minutes. Finalizing its design was tabled until the May meeting, to follow a vote on revised language to be developed by the Stability/Chronic Absenteeism Workgroup (third bullet, page 30).

Agenda Item 4. Updates and Discussion on Child-Welfare Education Legislation

“Just a quick reminder,” Lundqvist said prior to introducing the speakers for this item, “that the ECC is a Brown Act body created by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. As such, we can’t take a public position on any legislation without going through the County’s Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations process. Today’s presentation and discussion, therefore, is for informational purposes only, so partners can be aware of key issues that may affect our work. Some of you here today are part of organizations or districts that *can* take positions on legislation on your own, and if you’re interested in following up on any bills or issues you hear about today, please get in touch with the presenting organizations directly.”

Luciana Svidler and Ann Quirk from the Children’s Law Center, along with Danielle Wondra from Children Now, reviewed foster-youth education legislation, including several bills that were introduced this year and a few that went into effect at the beginning of 2025. “Danielle and I are the co-chairs of Legislative Subcommittee for the California Foster Youth Education Task Force,” Quirk began. “As such, our job is to analyze legislation for ways in which it could affect systems-involved youth, and then make sure that Task Force members know about it.”

Bills Introduced This Year

- [AB 772](#) (Lowenthal) focuses on suspensions and expulsions, specifically regarding off-campus acts such as bullying and cyberbullying, and would require the California Department of Education to develop a model policy for schools to address such incidents.
- [AB 1230](#) (Bonta) [Expulsion Rehabilitation Plan Reform \(2025\)](#) (sponsors: National Center for Youth Law and Alameda County Office of Education) ensures that students facing expulsion receive the support they need to return to their home schools.
- [AB 243](#) (Ahrens) aims to reduce barriers to higher education for youth involved in the juvenile-justice or child-welfare systems, including by allowing public institutions of higher education to review juvenile case files for financial-aid purposes and other accommodations. Language is likely to change to address privacy concerns.
- [AB 601](#) (Jackson) directs the California Department of Social Services to develop a mandated-reporter training—based on recommendations from the Mandated Reporter to Community Supporting Taskforce—to be required for all mandated reporters in the state. The bill also adjusts the definition of ‘general neglect’ and adds language requiring the referral of some general-neglect cases to community support.
- [AB 970](#) (McKinnor) authorizes Los Angeles County to establish a pilot program (January 1, 2026, through October 31, 2028) to test a new model for the mandatory reporting of child abuse or neglect, including a comprehensive training for all mandated reporters and a ‘decision support’ tool that would recommend whether or not to report the particular incident.

During the span of the pilot, a mandated reporter would be deemed to have satisfied their reporting duties if the reporter completed the training, used the decision support tool, and complied with the recommended action—thus shielding the mandated reporter (as well as the reporter’s supervisor, employer, superior, or principal, as specified) from civil liability or criminal penalty and from penalties impacting their professional licenses, credentials, and certifications, for failing to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect.

- [AB 791](#) (Berman) would require California colleges and universities to: (1) have more transparency around their cost of attendance (COA) budgets, which are a determination of what a student must pay to attend an institution each year, including tuition and non-tuition expenses; (2) use housing costs in the COA budget that are reflective of local county costs; (3) be more transparent about their COA adjustment policies; and (4) allow students to request COA adjustments without unrealistic deadlines or limitations.

Legislation That Went Into Effect in 2025 (except where noted below)

- [AB 2137](#) (Quirk-Silva) improves outcomes for California’s foster youth by allowing Foster Youth Services Coordinating Programs to provide direct services to youth in foster care (such as tutoring, mentoring, and counseling) without requiring a waiver from a school district.
- [AB 3223](#) (Wilson) For the Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program, this bill adds to the definition of ‘pupil in foster care’ a child who is the subject of a juvenile-court petition and has been identified by a county child-welfare agency, a probation department, or an Indian tribe, and meeting specified criteria as being at imminent risk of removal and placement into foster care, as provided.
- [AB 2711](#) (Ramos) would prohibit the suspension of a student who voluntarily discloses their substance use to a school or district, in order to seek help through services or supports, solely for that disclosure.
- [SB 291](#) (Newman) requires, beginning with the 2024–2025 school year, school recess to be at least 30 minutes on regular instructional days and at least 15 minutes on early release days. It also prohibits school staff from restricting a student’s recess for disciplinary reasons unless there is an immediate threat to the safety of the student or other students.
- [SB 483](#) (Cortese) prohibits the use of prone restraint in schools, including nonpublic schools.

Public Comment

Jill Rowland, director of the education program at the Alliance for Children’s Rights, announced that the updated-for-2025 [Comprehensive Education Toolkit for Youth Who Are Systems Involved | Alliance for Children's Rights](#) will be released within the next week or so. “This is a tool designed specifically for both school personnel and court personnel,” Rowland said, “in which, among other things, we highlight and connect to all the videos that we saw samples of earlier in this meeting. We are scheduled to come out to the LACOE regional gatherings in March to train on the Toolkit, and I think it would be great if we could also have the youth who presented here today come and talk about their videos.”

Next Meeting

The Education Coordinating Council's next hybrid meeting is scheduled for:

Wednesday, May 21, 2025 | 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

In-person location to be announced.

Remote connection via Microsoft Teams to be announced.

Adjournment

There being no further public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.