



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

YMCA OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY

YMCA YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT 2020 - 2021



DEAR READERS,

In reflecting on 2020, it's abundantly clear that we have made it through one of the most challenging chapters of our lives. It's also clear that our Y showed up in extremely meaningful ways for all of San Diego County. Our Y staff were tested personally and professionally. For some of us, COVID-19 has taken family and friends, so I want to acknowledge their spirits first and foremost.

Youth & Family Services (YFS) plays a major role in how our Y impacts the community. YFS serves our most resilient and under-resourced community members and does it with grace, dignity, and evidence-backed approaches. We walk alongside our participants and clients, providing a steady shoulder to lean on, a listening ear, and warm responsiveness to support folks in a compassionate and dignified way.

Clearly, this past year has been one filled with rapid changes, stress, opportunity, grief, exhaustion, and uncertainty. Because of our shared purpose, our team at YFS navigated it all with poise, authenticity, and compassion. I couldn't be more proud of what we accomplished together while taking care of one another and our clients and participants. Within a few short days, we showed our ability to navigate change by successfully switching our services to remote and virtual options. This pivot allowed us to engage our clients and participants in new ways. We were serving our most vulnerable and resilient community members better than we had before. We saw increased engagement in therapeutic services, especially among young people. We were shocked and grateful. We also saw some clients become more isolated with limited access to technology, making it difficult to connect with them. We had teams that never stayed at home; they continued to serve our unsheltered youth on the streets, bring our older adult clients food and essential items, stay present for our clients in housing programs, and mobilize to support the shelter for unaccompanied migrant children, in-spite of the risks posed to themselves and their loved ones. Our teams courageously rose to the occasion; they were essential workers. Because of their unshakable commitment to this work, we were able to serve our community during a most unprecedented time. Because of the creativity and innovation of our team, we served our clients more deeply. We tried new things, pushed beyond our comfort zones, and our community is all the better for it.

As we look ahead, the big question is: what's next for us? Though there is clearly uncertainty, we know that we will evolve with our community. We will continue to listen and show up for our community in the ways they need us to. We will offer services and supports that are culturally relevant and informed by the best evidence available. We will continue to support our teams with an environment that values their authentic selves, and we'll keep charging ahead to make change in our systems. To do this, we must maintain our focus on our internal culture and elevate the work of our justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion team to ensure we make progress as an anti-racist organization.

Our teams are still processing all that has occurred personally and professionally. We're finding new ways to interact with the "next normal," and we're designing new, more effective ways to work and serve. These past 18 months demanded that we adapt and evolve and also showed us how resilient and resourceful our clients and our teams really are. No matter what lies ahead, we'll move forward, and we'll keep with us the confidence in ourselves and our clients that we can meet any challenge, any barrier, any uncertainty. I am beyond grateful for our team at YFS. They are radical, creative, compassionate, and above all, dedicated and resilient.



Warmly,

KRYSTA ESQUIVEL, MSW (she, her, hers)
Vice President of Social Services
YMCA of San Diego County, Youth & Family Services

September 2021

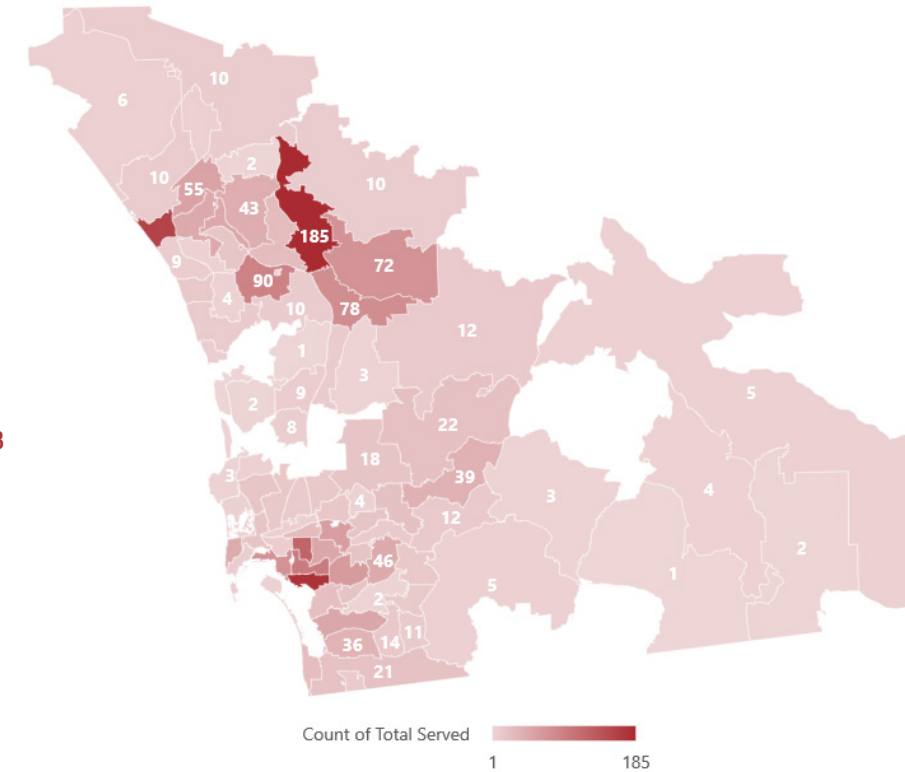
OUR REACH

In our commitment to advance equity, YFS walks alongside the most resilient members of our community, ensuring they have access to the services and supports that meet their individual needs. Those we serve include youth with experience in the foster care system, young people between the ages of 16 and 24 in the transition to adulthood, young people experiencing homelessness, youth and families in crisis, kinship caregivers, and many others.

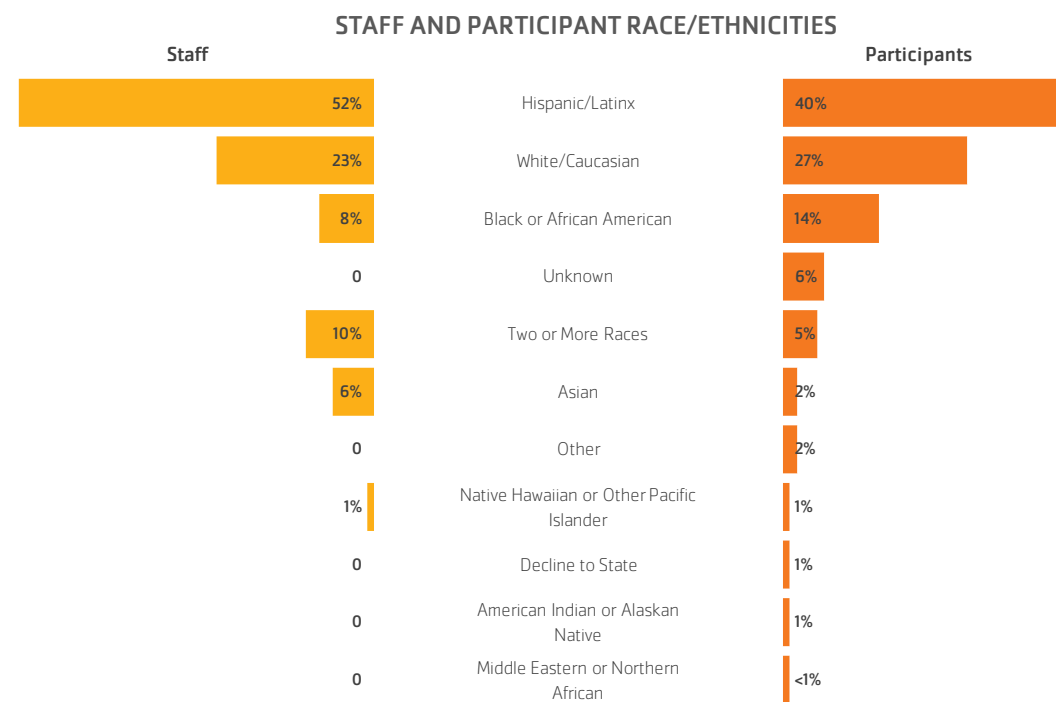
YFS directly served **2,406** individuals and impacted an additional **1,469** family members during the 2020-2021 fiscal year. YFS connected participants with **1,629** referrals to programs and resources, and engaged **4,649** collaborators, community members, and organizational leaders for a total of **10,153** served, connected, impacted, or engaged.

YFS operates county-wide and served individuals from 92 San Diego County zip codes over the course of the year. The most represented zip codes were 92026 (n=185), 92113 (n=176), and 92054 (n=158).

A total of 42% of program participants were between the ages of 18-24. A total of 8% of participants identified as LGBTQ+ and 60 identified as Transgender. 66% of participants identify as a person of color. These statistics more than reflect the demographic makeup of our community and are reflected in our own Y staff.

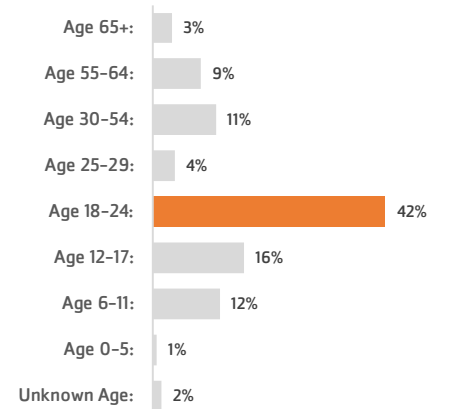


OUR STAFF ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF THOSE WE SERVE



53% of staff are age 20-29

AGE OF PARTICIPANTS



OUR APPROACH

Over fifty years of working with youth and families in San Diego County have taught us that no single path leads to a thriving, successful, and healthy existence. What is required is a continuum of interrelated supports that build on one another to meet the unique needs of each individual and family.

Access to basic needs removes barriers and relieves the exhaustion that comes from living in scarcity. Similarly, services to address mental health quiet an over-stressed brain that may keep us from achieving our goals and connecting with others. With these needs met, we can shift our focus from merely surviving to tackling more complex tasks, such as setting and meeting academic goals, building economic stability and mobility, and developing and maintaining the relationships that we can call on daily and in moments of crisis.

At YFS, we focus on increasing **resiliency and connection**. We emphasize warm, responsive interactions to reduce the stress brought on by under-resourced environments and provide safe spaces for developing new skills. With reduced stress, clients can increase trust in others, deepen engagement in services, and focus on setting and achieving long-term goals.

We are also deeply committed to advancing equity and creating environments where every person can show up as their true self and feel safe, valued, and respected. Our work combats systemic injustices found across many systems including child welfare and criminal justice. We actively engage in youth-led, systems change efforts to correct these injustices and improve outcomes for historically marginalized and oppressed individuals and families.

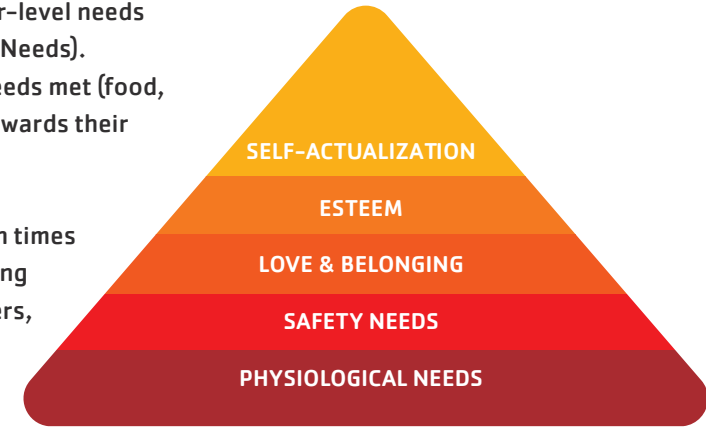


OUR AREAS OF FOCUS

MEETING BASIC NEEDS AND REMOVING BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

THE ISSUE: Individuals struggling to meet their basic needs are focused on survival, which makes it difficult to work towards meeting their higher-level needs for belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs). Individual and families must feel safe and have basic physiological needs met (food, water, shelter) before they can begin planning for and taking steps towards their future. Safe and stable housing is crucial to this process.

HOW WE'RE MAKING AN IMPACT: YFS provides critical supports in times of housing crises to prevent and divert young people from experiencing housing instability and homelessness. Supports such as hotel vouchers, access to emergency housing, rental and deposit assistance, and transitional housing services provide a diverse array of options to meet our participant's individual needs. The immediate needs of the most vulnerable are met through street outreach services, transition age youth (TAY) drop-in centers; emergency funds, access to physical, mental and dental health care, and supplies needed to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.



MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was informed by the Blackfoot Nation's way of life: <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2021-06-18/the-blackfoot-wisdom-that-inspired-maslows-hierarchy/>

“Our Safe Place has helped me with school and also mentally. They have great supports and the best program. They helped me through my hard times either financially or just to be there when you need a shoulder to lean on. I'm really glad they are there when you need them.”

Our approach includes applying the **CAAVE Model**, which offers **Compassion, Awareness, Acceptance, Validation, and Empowerment** as a means for staff to connect with clients and one another. These qualities allow our staff to become part of a client's process in developing self-regulation skills by offering a level of safety and trust. This co-regulatory approach helps clients to feel a sense of calm when interacting with our teams and in our spaces allowing them to fully experience our service and intervention, and making room for them to explore their options within the scope of our programs. This approach also allows our staff to conserve their energy, become more mindful of their interactions and interdependence, and better serve others while taking care of themselves, protecting them from stress and exhaustion.



HIGHLIGHTED OUTCOMES:

100% of youth engaged in the Turning Point Transitional Living Program for at least 12 months exited the program to safe and stable housing.

Provided groceries, meals, and snacks to **1,315** youth and young adults at the TAY drop-in centers.

Provided hotel vouchers for **853** bed nights to youth experiencing homelessness and **62%** of those served transitioned into permanent housing.

Provided **54** youth with deposit or rental assistance.

Provided **316** gateway supports such as hygiene kits, blankets, clothing, bus passes, and backpacks to youth experiencing homelessness and living on the streets.

TEACHING NEW SKILLS TO INCREASE PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND POSITIVE COPING SKILLS

THE ISSUE: Mental and behavioral health care are equally important as physical health care, particularly for those who have had Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and other traumas. ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood that can impact mental and physical health, increase stress, and complicate development trajectories and outcomes in adulthood. According to ACEs Aware, ACEs are strongly linked to 9 of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States and the life expectancy of individuals with six or more ACEs is 19 years shorter than that of individuals with none.

<https://www.acesaware.org/ace-fundamentals/>

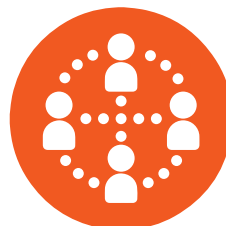
HOW WE'RE MAKING AN IMPACT: YFS supports the healthy development and well-being of those we serve by providing case management and coaching, support groups, psycho-education, and therapeutic support. We work to increase protective factors to combat the consequences of ACEs in adulthood and prevent ACEs from occurring in the next generation.

"I've been able to make friends who I know are safe and respectful. I also have been able to finally access therapy after being without for so long."

PROTECTIVE FACTORS



CAREGIVER RESILIENCE



SOCIAL CONNECTIONS



KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE



CONCRETE SUPPORT IN TIMES OF NEED

HIGHLIGHTED OUTCOMES:

Provided mental and behavioral health care to **836** community members.

Provided **842** sessions at the Well-Being Annex.

64% of youth served at the Youth Resiliency Center increased their resilience.

96% of youth served at the Turning Point Transitional Living Program improved their emotion regulation, emotional self-awareness, and situational responsiveness.

STRENGTHENING ECONOMIC STABILITY AND MOBILITY

THE ISSUE: Long-term stability depends on financial independence and the ability to obtain and maintain employment and earn a living wage. An individual must earn at least \$21.26 per hour in a full-time job to cover their basic expenses in San Diego County. This amount increases to \$42.97 per hour if the individual has one child. For a family of four with two working parents, each parent must earn \$28.30 per hour to cover living expenses. The current minimum wage in San Diego County is \$14.00.

<https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/06073>

HOW WE'RE MAKING AN IMPACT: YFS works with those we serve to increase workforce readiness, obtain and maintain employment, increase income, and pursue higher education. The goal is to connect participants, especially young people, to meaningful career pathways with opportunities for upward mobility.



HIGHLIGHTED OUTCOMES:

28 youth participated in subsidized employment through the Connections 2020 program.

100% of youth participating in work readiness training through the Urban Career Pathways program improved their employability.

90% of former foster youth served through the Independent Living Skills Program maintained stable income for at least 6 consecutive months and **86%** maintained stable income for at least 12 consecutive months.

BUILDING SOCIAL NETWORKS TO INCREASE SOCIAL CAPITAL, POSITIVE IDENTITY FORMATION, AND ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES

THE ISSUE: Youth who have experienced homelessness and involvement in the foster care system often lack a social safety net, connections to positive role models, and support in developing and maintaining healthy relationships. Without a support network and permanent connections to rely on in times of need, they are more likely to feel isolated, struggle with mental health and substance use issues, and engage in unhealthy and abusive relationships.

HOW WE'RE MAKING AN IMPACT: YFS helps families and youth improve the relationships they build by focusing on the value of connection and community. This is done through providing support groups, opportunities to connect with peers, and support in creating healthy, permanent relationships. We believe that increased access to quality relationships can replace expensive programs and services and benefit our participants long after our services end, as participants develop skills to increase their social networks and social capital.



“Having someone who is willing to act as a friend and a guide is really helpful when I’m looking for advice.”

“The staff helped me finally feel a sense of community.”

HIGHLIGHTED OUTCOMES:

100% of youth served through the Turning Point Transitional Living Program reported having at least one adult in their life, other than staff, to whom they can go to for advice and/or emotional support.

98% of youth served through YFS housing programs established a permanent relationship with caring adults and peers.

264 support groups provided for kinship caregivers countywide.

INCREASING RESOURCES AND SUPPORT TO KEEP FAMILIES TOGETHER

THE ISSUE: Child welfare departments are prioritizing placement with family wherever possible to keep children out of the child welfare system, however these family members are often in need of additional support to prepare their homes for these children and to meet their ongoing financial, social, emotional, and academic needs. Without a safe and stable placement, children are at risk of entry or re-entry into the child welfare system.

HOW WE'RE MAKING AN IMPACT: YFS works with kinship caregivers and youth in the foster care system to improve their legal and relational permanency, leading to enhanced stability and support. YFS also works with families to improve family relationships and functioning and to provide opportunities for caregiver respite.

“We would never be able to afford a visit with [our grandson] without your help! [He] and his brother... really enjoy being able to be together. I love seeing and watching the boys together. I only wish that you could see what you have been able to make happen. I hope you realize what you have done for us.”

IN LOOKING AHEAD, YFS IS DOUBLING-DOWN ON OUR COMMITMENT TO UTILIZE EVIDENCE TO INFORM AND INNOVATE OUR SERVICES, COMMUNICATE OUR LEARNING TO ALL INVESTED PARTIES, ADVOCATE FOR BETTER POLICY, AND FIGHT FOR A HEALTHIER AND MORE EQUITABLE SAN DIEGO.



HIGHLIGHTED OUTCOMES:

Provided case management and navigation assistance to **453** kinship caregivers.

80% of youth in the Permanent Connections program established a permanent relationship with at least 1 caring adult.

Provided **11,000** hours of respite to kinship caregivers countywide.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT:

 www.ymcasd.org/yfs

 [/YMCAYouthandFamilyServices](https://www.facebook.com/YMCAYouthandFamilyServices)

 [/ymcayfs](https://www.instagram.com/ymcayfs)