

# 2025 Youth Advisory Council



In 2025, the Youth Advisory Council (YAC), housed within the University of Oregon’s Center for Childhood Safety and Wellbeing (CSAW), experienced a year of significant growth, focus, and impact. With YAC member’s help the center hired a dedicated Youth Engagement Coordinator (YEC) in March 2025. The YAC was able to expand its capacity for relationship-building, community engagement, and intentional recruitment—marking a turning point in the Council’s development as a youth-led driver of violence prevention and systems change.

Throughout the year, the YAC engaged 10 active youth members, including the onboarding of 5 new members from rural Lane County, strengthening geographic equity and access to leadership opportunities. Youth met consistently and participated in more than 8 formal feedback opportunities with community and systems partners, including the Lane County Violence Prevention Coalition (LCVPC), CSAW’s Training Academy, Voices of Change for Child Safety (VOICES), Parent Community Cafe (PCC), and the Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study (OCAPS). These feedback loops ensured that youth perspectives informed program design, training

approaches, and prevention strategies across sectors.

Guided by the Prevention Education and Advocacy for Childhood Empowerment (PEACE) Report, the YAC honed its work around a focused initiative exploring the intersection of mental health, substance use disorder, and child maltreatment prevention. Youth engaged with more than 8 community organizations and experts, deepening their understanding of trauma-informed care, harm reduction, survivor mental health, and available behavioral health resources. This learning translated into youth-led conversations, community education, and creative advocacy, including a youth-produced [video](#) featured at the Prevent Child Abuse America (PCAA) national conference, amplifying Lane County youth voices on a national stage.

The YAC also maintained a strong commitment to belonging, joy, and care. Members participated in multiple in-person gatherings and community events including Take Back the Night, 4J Pride, Radical Alternative Development’s (RAD) Annual Mental Health Benefit Concert, the Oregon School-Based Health Alliance JOY conference, and two in-person celebrations centered on

relationship-building and reflection. As the year concluded, the YAC launched planning for a new initiative focused on housing security as violence prevention, while setting tangible goals for 2026 that include expanded feedback roles, continued recruitment, social media launch, and deeper coalition engagement with other community youth councils.

In 2025, the Youth Advisory Council demonstrated that when youth are trusted, resourced, and supported, they move beyond advisory roles to become collaborators, educators, and leaders shaping prevention systems. This year represents both a culmination of learning and a foundation for future impact.

## Overview

The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) exists to center youth voices in violence prevention efforts, with a particular emphasis on primary prevention and the prevention of child maltreatment and abuse. In 2025, the YAC entered a new phase of growth—marked by increased staffing capacity, clearer focus, expanded rural representation, and strengthened partnerships across Lane County.

### *January - March*

- Created interview questions for the new Youth Engagement Coordinator
- Discussed Engaging in Legislative Endorsements- Our Children Oregon's Children's Agenda
- Identified strategies for alignment with UO student-led VOICES
- Directed the search process for a YEC, including developing interview questions and conducting interviews
- Collaborated with VOICES on a social media campaign for Child Abuse Prevention Month

### *Building Capacity & Leadership (March - April)*

In March 2025, the YAC presented at the JOY Conference for the Oregon School-Based Health Alliance where members lent their expertise on primary prevention efforts taken by CSAW. The hire for a YEC—a position dedicated to leading the YAC—was completed. This role significantly expanded the Council's capacity to:

- Engage youth consistently
- Build relationships with community partners
- Recruit and onboard new members
- Support youth leadership development

In April, during Child Abuse Prevention Month, YAC members partnered with VOICES formerly Students Against Child Abuse (SACA), a University of Oregon-based child abuse prevention organization. Youth:

- Tabled at Take Back the Night
- Participated in a creative writing workshop centered on healing and expression

These activities emphasized the YAC's commitment to survivor-centered prevention and creative approaches to healing.

### *Honing Focus: Mental Health & Substance Use Disorder Initiative (May - October)*

In May, the YAC intentionally narrowed its scope to focus on one protective factor identified in the PEACE Report. Youth selected mental health and substance use disorder as their initiative, recognizing its deep intersection with violence prevention and child maltreatment.

From June through October, youth engaged in structured learning, dialogue, and community

engagement with more than 8 organizations, including:

- Lane County Public Health
- The Trauma Healing Project
- Sexual Assault Support Services
- Charlie Behavioral Health
- The Behavioral Health Pathway Program
- Oregon Justice Network
- Looking Glass Community Services

Youth learned about:

- Trauma-informed care
- Harm reduction
- Survivor mental health
- Community behavioral health resources
- Coping mechanisms

In June, the YAC hosted an in-person convening with the Trauma Healing Project that centered embodied and holistic approaches to healing. During this event, youth filmed interviews that later became part of a video showcased at the Prevent Child Abuse America (PCAA) Conference. The video was directed, produced, and edited by a YAC member and was featured nationally in July 2025, elevating youth voice beyond Lane County.

### ***Youth-Led Feedback & Systems Engagement (July – November)***

Throughout 2025, the YAC participated in at least 8 formal feedback opportunities, including:

- LCVPC Asset Mapping
- LCVPC Think Sessions (focused on Third Spaces and Educational Opportunities)
- CSAW Training Academy, informing how social workers engage youth involved in the child welfare system
- OCAPS
- The rebranding of the UO student-led advocacy group, now Voices of Change for

Child Safety's (formerly Students Against Child Abuse)

In November, YAC members joined multiple youth-serving organizations in a summit-style convening to reflect on LCVPC Think Sessions. Youth engaged in collective feedback focused on promotive and preventive factors related to childhood sexual abuse, reinforcing the YAC's role as a thought partner in regional prevention strategy.

### ***Expanding Access & Rural Recruitment (August – September)***

A major hallmark of 2025 was the YAC's intentional focus on rural outreach. During August, the YEC:

- Attended school registration events in rural Lane County
- Engaged native youth at the Native Americans Towards Improved Values in Education and Society (NATIVES) summer camp program

As a result, the YAC onboarded 5 new rural youth members, bringing the total to 10 active members and significantly expanding rural representation.

### ***Community, Joy, and Visibility***

Alongside heavy topics, the YAC prioritized joy, connection, and visibility. Youth:

- Attended RAD's Annual Mental Health Benefit Concert
- Participated in 4J Pride Fest
- Held an in-person celebration in October to reflect, bond, and recenter joy
- Began developing content for a YAC Instagram account designed to share resources, elevate youth voice, and increase public visibility

### ***Reflection & Looking Ahead (December)***

In December, the YAC was invited to join a countywide youth network, expanding access to shared resources, social connection, and educational opportunities. The month was also dedicated to:

- Reflecting on the mental health and substance use initiative
- Planning the Instagram launch
- Selecting a new initiative for 2026

Youth chose to focus next on housing security as violence prevention, recognizing housing stability as a critical protective factor for youth wellbeing.

### ***Looking Toward 2026***

As the YAC moves into 2026, tangible goals include:

- Expanding feedback roles, particularly within CSAW programming
- Launching and sustaining the YAC Instagram
- Recruiting additional members, with continued emphasis on rural youth
- Active participation in the Youth/YAC network where youth serving organizations can pull resources, educate youth on timely topics, and celebrate our youth's accomplishments
- Deepening learning and advocacy around housing security as violence prevention