



HOMELESS YOUTH OUTREACH PROJECT

2009–10 Progress Report

HYOP Goals

- Provide legal advocacy and representation to homeless youth to help bridge the gap between existing services.
- Partner with social service agencies serving homeless youth to create a “one stop shop” environment for homeless youth.
- Educate our courts, schools, service providers and the public about the growing number of homeless youth, their needs, and their many talents.
- Create community awareness of issues commonly faced by homeless youth.
- Stimulate grass-roots efforts to change the way society looks at and addresses youth homelessness.

About HYOP

The Homeless Youth Outreach Project (HYOP) was founded in 2006 as a special project of the Children's Advocacy Institute (CAI) at the University of San Diego (USD) School of Law. HYOP is the first and only program in San Diego County dedicated to providing legal and advocacy services to the County's homeless youth, helping to bridge the gap of access to available resources, government agencies, courts, schools and other vital resources and services.

HYOP's mission is to provide the advocacy and legal representation that San Diego's homeless youth need in order to transition off the streets and realize their dreams in an environment where they are safe and secure.

HYOP has experienced great success over its first four years and is now a vital part of San Diego's homeless youth provider network. Since its inception, HYOP has engaged in the following activities:

- HYOP has worked with over 800 homeless youth, helping them secure housing, health insurance, access to health care providers, government benefits, mental health care, school enrollment, and financial aid.

- HYOP has been instrumental in working with Homeless Court, the probation department, and the criminal court to achieve outcomes that will help homeless youth transition off the streets.
- Recognizing that better trained advocates will ensure further success for our home-



less youth, HYOP has trained over 80 homeless youth service providers, court staff and attorneys on how to advocate for homeless youth in the court system, identifying for them issues to look for and be sensitive to when working with homeless youth.

- HYOP helped expand San Diego's Homeless Court Program to include homeless youth and their service providers in its proceedings.

- For the last three years HYOP has helped Sony Electronics, Inc. host a holiday party for 100 of San Diego's homeless youth, providing them with a holiday meal, new sleeping bags, and backpacks full of wrapped presents—all aimed at providing the youth with hope for a better future.



Case Study: La Quita

On her 18th birthday, La Quita aged out of the foster care system and found herself homeless, without a job, and without a high school diploma. Determined to finish high school, La Quita slept behind a Home Depot and went to school every day — not eating until dinner time when she could receive a meal from a nearby outreach center.

When Homeless Youth Outreach Project (HYOP) staff first met La Quita in October 2006, she was anything but cooperative; she did not believe that anybody was willing to help her. But HYOP staff persisted, going so far as obtaining a cap and gown for La Quita so that she could march with her high school graduating class, and proudly taking pictures as she received her high school diploma.

La Quita then relented and began working with HYOP. HYOP represented La Quita in Homeless Court, clearing her record of old trolley ticket fines and illegal lodging tickets for sleeping outside. Inspired by the support and kindness of the Homeless Court

Judge, La Quita applied to City College and started her first semester of college. Unable to afford rent for an apartment with her student loans, La Quita continued to live on the streets while she attended school. HYOP stuck with her, purchasing a bus pass for her and helping her get Food Stamps and school supplies, so that she could get to school each day energized and ready to learn. When La Quita began applying to transitional living programs, HYOP provided references and letters of recommendation on her behalf. Once she was in a transitional living program, HYOP referred La Quita to Just In Time For Foster Youth, a program that provides furnishings for former foster youth when they get their first apartment. HYOP also wrote a letter of recommendation for a scholarship that awarded La Quita a new laptop.

La Quita is now a self-sufficient young woman well on her way toward earning an Associate's Degree. HYOP continues to support La Quita, acting as a reference, assisting with credit issues and health insurance matters, and anything that comes up in her life.

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A Note of Thanks to Our Supporters

The Homeless Youth Outreach Project would like to acknowledge all of the individuals, foundations, and other entities that have supported HYOP since its inception. Thanks to the generous support of local and nationwide funders, HYOP's doors remain open as we look toward a promising future in our community. HYOP extends a special thanks to the following organizations for their generous support:

- Sony Electronics, Inc.
- San Diego County Bar Foundation
- Children's Advocacy Institute
- BNSF Foundation
- Simon Strauss Foundation
- McCarthy Family Foundation



2009-10 Accomplishments

During 2008, the Homeless Youth Outreach Project provided services to over 240 homeless youth and represented over 30 individual homeless youth in ongoing legal and advocacy matters involving access to education, health insurance, access to health care, mental health treatment, access to benefits, Supplemental Security Income, and Homeless Court matters. As part of its core program, HYOP held weekly legal clinics at the Stand Up For Kids Outreach Center in downtown San Diego, and partnered with over 15 different agencies in San Diego, including new partnerships with Hillcrest Youth Center and Legal Aid Society of San Diego. Some of HYOP's 2009-10 highlights include the following:

- ◆ HYOP successfully facilitated the inclusion of Toussiant Academy of the Arts and Sciences, The Center Sunburst Youth Housing Project, and Catalyst as providers to San Diego's Homeless Court Program. The Homeless Court Program plays a vital role in helping homeless individuals get and stay on the road towards self sufficiency. Homeless Court is held in a local shelter, away from the criminal courthouse, and addresses only misdemeanor and infraction tickets. This court recognizes and credits homeless individuals for their participation in the program and all of the steps they take toward addressing the underlying reasons behind their homelessness. When appropriate, the court will dismiss cases and fines acquired while an individual was living on the streets. Gaining access to Homeless Court for San Diego's homeless youth was invaluable in helping clean up a youth's record so that he/she can get a driver's license, rent an apartment, or get a student loan. Participating in the Homeless Court process also removes the constant fear that a youth will be arrested for an outstanding warrant, thus enabling that youth to focus on getting a job, going to school, taking care of family, and/or finding a place to live.

In 2009-10, HYOP provided homeless youth with advocacy in matters such as:

- * Denial of housing
- * Denial of health insurance
- * Identity theft
- * Outstanding bills with collections
- * Social Security fraud
- * Obtaining immigration status
- * Probation violations
- * Homeless Court matters
- * Access to mental health care
- * Denial of Chaffee grant
- * Denial of residency status
- * Name changes
- * Supplemental Security Income denial appeal
- * Stay away orders
- * Sealing juvenile record
- * Probation modification
- * Access to government benefits
- * Access to Independent Living Services for former foster youth

- ◆ In an ongoing effort to educate homeless youth on their rights and responsibilities under the law, HYOP staff partnered with law students from the University of San Diego School of Law and Cal Western School of Law to provide training the homeless youth at the Hillcrest Youth Center. In a Q & A format, homeless youth learned about their rights, such as the 4th Amendment protection against illegal search and seizure, what police officers are and are not allowed to do when they stop a youth, and more. HYOP also offered information on the rights of transgender youth in the school system, at home and in the work place. The training was so successful that HYOP is now working on other "know your rights" and plans to provide similar training sessions to the homeless youth at Stand Up For Kids and other homeless youth provider agencies in the upcoming year.
- ◆ In partnership with Sony Electronics, Inc. HYOP staff helped coordinate and hold the 3rd annual holiday party for 100 homeless youth, providing them with a holiday meal and gifts such as sleeping bags, backpacks, clothes, first aid kits, raincoats and flashlights.
- ◆ In an expansion of its existing partnerships, HYOP staff provided legal assistance and advocacy services to homeless youth receiving services from Sunburst Youth Housing Project and Hillcrest Youth Center. HYOP also served as a resource to Sunburst and Counseling Cove staff, answering questions they may have about the legal system as it affects homeless youth.

Case Study: Angel



Turning 18 marked the beginning of Angel's life as an adult, but also the start of a battle with seizures, mental illness, homelessness and the criminal justice system. Unable to get the medical treatment he needed for what everyone believed were epileptic seizures in Puerto Rico, Angel's grandma put him on a plane headed for San Diego, hoping he would get treatment for his debilitating seizures. However, without family or friends who could help him navigate the system, Angel quickly found himself without health insurance or medical treatment — and without a home. Kicked out of nearly every shelter in town for his behavior, Angel found himself living on the streets with nowhere to go.

HYOP staff met Angel in June 2007 at a free medical clinic for homeless youth in Ocean Beach. Angel explained that he had a brain tumor and he needed help. He had no place to live, he was in

Misunderstood as an angry, defiant and uncooperative teenager, Angel was locked up in jail instead of being sent to treatment. HYOP worked closely with the Public Defender's Office, the Probation Department and San Diego Superior Court to have Angel released so that he could receive the medical treatment he needed to get healthy.

trouble with the law and was clearly a very sick young man. Misunderstood as an angry, defiant and uncooperative teenager, Angel was locked up in jail instead of being sent to treatment.

HYOP worked closely with the Public Defender's Office, the Probation Department and San Diego Superior Court to have Angel released so that he could receive the medical treatment he needed to get healthy. HYOP compiled a history of the medical tests Angel had received and learned that he had a lesion on his

front temporal lobe — but no one knew exactly what was causing his seizures. Recognizing that Angel was going to need long term assistance for his afflictions, HYOP assisted him with his Supplemental Security Income claim and — after waiting for over a year and a half — Angel's appeal for Supplemental Security Income was granted. HYOP's assistance enabled Angel to obtain his own apartment, a place he has called home for over a year. HYOP continues to monitor his physical and mental health treatment, and reports to the court twice a year on his health and progress. With the help of HYOP, Angel now has the medical and financial support he needs to stay off the street; as his health begins to improve, Angel is looking forward to a future where he can go back to school, get a job, and live a healthy life.

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Looking Toward the Future

During the next year, HYOP will continue to partner with SDYS Storefront, St. Vincent de Paul's Toussiant Academy, Stand Up For Kids (San Diego and Oceanside), Counseling Cove, The Center Sunburst Youth Housing Project, San Diego Public Defender's Office, Homeless Court Program, Legal Aid Society of San Diego, and countless other programs bringing legal and advocacy services to San Diego's homeless youth. This coordination of agencies providing social services, legal and advocacy services is the type of wraparound services necessary to address all of the issues underlying the homelessness and make real life lasting transformations.

HYOP will expand its "know your rights" training program for homeless youth and will create new partnerships with schools serving homeless youth.

HYOP will also collaborate with the California Research Bureau and the network of homeless youth providers around the state working to create a tool kit on how to conduct a homeless youth study in California communities, with the goal of partnering with local homeless youth providers and implementing the first ever homeless youth study. The goal will be to provide a real picture of San Diego's homeless youth numbers and needs so that we as a community can implement tools to end youth homelessness for San Diego's children. This study will serve as an invaluable tool in developing a countywide plan to end homelessness for our youth, and it will give San Diego the knowledge and data needed to influence systemic policy and legislation that impact funding and resources for our homeless youth.

HYOP will expand its "know your rights" training programs for homeless youth, and will create new partnerships with schools serving homeless youth.





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*The **Homeless Youth Outreach Project** is a special project of the Children's Advocacy Institute (CAI) of the University of San Diego, a 501(c)(3) organization, and specifically the USD School of Law. The mission of CAI, which was founded in 1989, is to improve the status and well-being of children and youth in our society by representing their interests and right to a safe, healthy childhood. In addition to its academic program, which trains law students to be effective child advocates, CAI represents the interests of children and youth in the state legislature, in the courts, before administrative agencies, and through public education programs.*

Donations to CAI or HYOP are tax-deductible to the extent the law allows.

HYOP Staff



Kriste Draper
HYOP Director and Attorney

HYOP staff has extensive experience working with homeless youth. HYOP was created and is directed by Kriste Draper, who has worked for several years with homeless and disadvantaged children. Kriste first began working with homeless youth at the age of 17 as an outreach counselor for Stand Up For Kids. She continued her work with homeless youth while obtaining an undergraduate degree in social work. Kriste then attended and graduated from the University of San Diego (USD) School of Law, where she participated in the Children's Advocacy Institute's academic program and was a co-recipient of the James A. D'Angelo Outstanding Child Advocate Award in 2006. Upon graduating from law school, Kriste created HYOP as part of a two-year Equal

Justice Works Fellowship originally funded by Sony Electronics, Inc., continuing her lifelong commitment to working on behalf of homeless youth.

Kriste supervises and is assisted by law students from the USD School of Law and Cal Western School of Law.

HYOP staff is supervised by CAI Executive Director Robert C. Fellmeth, Price Professor of Public Interest Law at the USD School of Law. In addition to overseeing CAI's academic and advocacy programs, Prof. Fellmeth currently serves as Chair of the National Association of Counsel for Children, and serves on the Board of Directors of First Star and as counsel to the Board of Voices for America's Children.