

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE ARTS



Energy, 2016 Mural with student artists; Joseph Montalvo, Lead Artist

GOAL

Over the next four years, strengthen and expand collaboration with other LA County departments, as well as community-based organizations, to embed the arts into services and systems of care that help to support, heal and develop youth and families impacted or at risk of becoming impacted by the criminal justice system.

The LA County Department of Arts and Culture (formerly the Arts Commission) is committed to systems-reform efforts that emphasize a coordinated approach for positive youth development. Our aim is to embed the arts within multiple systems of care to promote healing, personal growth and overall well-being among young people (and their families) involved in – or at risk of becoming involved in – LA County systems. Over the next four years, five goals will define the way we sustain and deepen current efforts, in partnership with other LA County agencies and community partners:

- 1) Establish a LA County Youth Arts Task Force to embed arts instruction across multiple County systems, with a focus on fostering healing and positive self-expression among youth from historically marginalized communities, steering them away from involvement with the juvenile justice system;
- 2) Provide in-depth arts instruction to incarcerated youth as a strategy for sparking and supporting personal transformation during residential care; expand opportunities for youth to engage in individual or group arts practices in their own communities as part of re-entry and aftercare support systems;
- 3) Develop and test strategies for using trauma-informed arts instruction as a component of diversion services offered to youth in lieu of arrest or citation;
- 4) Expand opportunities for foster youth and others from historically marginalized communities to engage in trauma-informed arts practices within their own neighborhoods, thereby helping them to develop positive self-identity, personal voice and agency; and
- 5) Create pathways for youth from historically marginalized communities, foster youth and those involved in the juvenile justice system to access jobs in LA County's creative economy, providing them with stable income and viable career options.

BACKGROUND

In 2014, demolition and reconstruction of the old Camp Kilpatrick youth detention facility activated the County's Civic Arts policy, which allocates 1% of capital project expenses for works of art. At that time, former Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky's office elected to direct funds generated by the Civic Art policy toward systems-change strategies that would embed the arts into all aspects of the County's juvenile justice reform efforts. First steps included consultation on the design of creative learning spaces in the new Camp Kilpatrick facility, and field testing of trauma-informed arts instruction in other youth facilities. Today, in partnership with the Probation Department, the LA County Department of Arts and Culture (Arts and Culture) contracts with community-based arts organizations to provide year-round trauma-informed arts instruction for youth in all 11 juvenile detention facilities, all 5 juvenile day reporting centers, 3 public housing sites, 2 community parks, and 3 continuation high schools located across the County.

With four years of contribution to LA County juvenile justice reform efforts, 15 years of experience in arts education policy and planning, arts administration acumen, and close relationships with community arts partners across the region, Arts and Culture is well-positioned to lead systems-change work, grounded in arts practices, with County colleagues over the next four years.

Key strategies for affecting systems change across LA County include:

Coordination of a LA County Inter-Agency Youth Arts Task Force

Several County agencies currently provide opportunities for youth to engage in the arts as a strategy for supporting growth and development. However, these programs are not generally connected nor coordinated with other County efforts. Aligning arts-based strategies across County departments would leverage existing resources for greater impact, build efficiencies, and improve outcomes for youth. Therefore, Arts and Culture proposes to establish and lead an Inter-Agency Youth Arts Task Force, comprised of more than a dozen County agencies, which would meet quarterly to address opportunities for using arts practices to support high risk youth and their families.

County agencies initially targeted for participation in the Task Force include:

1. Department of Arts and Culture
2. Commission on Human Relations
3. Community Development Commission/
Housing Authority
4. Department of Children and Family Services
5. Department of Health Services,
Office of Diversion & Reentry,
Youth Diversion & Development Unit
6. Workforce Development, Aging & Community Services
7. Department of Mental Health
8. Department of Parks and Recreation
9. Department of Public Health
10. Office of Child Protection
11. Office of Education
12. Probation Department
13. Public Libraries
14. Sherriff's Department

The Task Force will launch in 2019 and develop a collaborative action plan for embedding arts-based practices within all programs and services that support youth. A field scan to identify and map current government and community-based programs that use the arts to support, heal and develop youth in neighborhoods across LA County will also be completed to surface strengths and areas for growth. Finally, training in Arts-Based Trauma-Informed Care will be developed, field tested, and refined in collaboration with the Department of Mental Health and the Commission on Human Relations for implementation across multiple LA County agencies.

Trauma-Informed Arts Instruction for Incarcerated Youth

Arts and Culture currently contracts with teaching artists to provide year-round arts instruction to youth in the County's 11 juvenile detention facilities and in high schools associated with the Probation Department's juvenile day reporting centers.

Through inter-agency coordination, Arts and Culture will support re-entry plans for youth that provide a continuum of care by aligning arts instruction provided in detention facilities with in-school, after-school and community-based programs; initiating arts-based parent and family services; and coordinating access to jobs in the creative economy. In 2019, Arts Facilitators who work with youth inside detention facilities and closely collaborate with external partners will be hired to guide youth toward arts learning opportunities in their own neighborhoods upon release. As well, strategies for providing trauma-informed arts instruction that promotes parent/ family healing and supports family reunification will be field tested.

Arts-Based Youth Diversion

LA County recently set a goal to divert 80% of alleged youth offenses over four years to dramatically reduce the number of young people touched by the criminal justice system. As part of early research, the County's Chief Executive Office/Service Integration Branch conducted interviews with youth to hear their thoughts about what might have deterred them from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. In 2017, the Office of Youth Diversion & Development (YDD) reached out to Arts and Culture because many young people responded that they wanted opportunities to positively express themselves through the arts. This feedback, taken alongside the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network's growing success with youth inside juvenile detention centers, sparked initial collaboration between Arts and Culture and the YDD.

As a first step in expanding the role of the arts in youth diversion practices, YDD identified Integrated Arts Education as one of ten holistic, evidence-informed services that is now included in the [Work Order Solicitation for Youth Intensive Case Management Services](#). (item 7.1.22, page 7). In 2019, Arts and Culture will work alongside social service providers contracted for case management to provide staff training in Arts-Based Trauma-Informed Care and to field test strategies for including arts instruction in youth diversion plans.

Prevention

With funding from the Probation Department, Arts and Culture contracts with community-based organizations providing arts instruction for youth in struggling communities to deter their involvement in the juvenile justice system. This work currently takes place at three public housing sites, two community parks, and three continuation high schools located across the County. In spring 2018, Arts and Culture also partnered with the Department of Public Health to support the Trauma Prevention Initiative by providing arts-based community building activities in the Willowbrook and Westmont-West Athens neighborhoods.

In 2019, Arts and Culture looks to expand arts instruction offered in County parks, followed by expansion into County libraries during subsequent years. With funding from the Department of Mental Health (DMH), Arts and Culture will deepen its partnership with the Office of Child Protection in 2019 to field test Communities of Wellness, where trauma-informed arts learning and care will be offered in selected high schools for youth, as well as for educators, parents, families, community-based artists, DMH clinicians and Probation Officers supporting youth in those schools. Funding from DMH is also enabling Arts and Culture's continued partnership with the Office of Education, which will add socio-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching strategies in online arts integration training modules for K-6 educators. Long-term, we aim to partner with the Department of Children and Family Services to include trauma-informed arts instruction within all aspects of the County's foster care system, targeting services for youth who are most at-risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system.

Job Readiness and Youth Employment

In April 2017, the LA County Board of Supervisors adopted the [Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative](#) (CEII) to address inequities in the arts and culture sector. Earlier this year, the CEII Report recommendation *Teen Arts Pathways: Employment and Learning Opportunities in the Arts and Culture for High School Students* was launched to develop pathways to work-based learning opportunities for youth aged 14 to 24—particularly those of color, low-income, LGBTQ, disabled, foster youth, or those in the probation system—to prepare them for careers in the arts and creative industries. A literature review and field scan of organizations, agencies and programs that prepare youth for careers in the arts and the creative economy is currently underway, and a final report was released in March 2019. This report will inform online and in-person strategies for helping historically underserved youth gain access to careers in LA County’s vibrant creative economy, which comprises one in seven jobs in LA County.

Nearly two years ago, Arts and Culture and the Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) began exploring opportunities to expand access to arts-based job training, internships and apprenticeships through WDACS’ youth employment programs. This year, WDACS implemented protocols for paying incarcerated youth for their work in the arts while residing in detention facilities. Learnings from this early work will be incorporated into scalable strategies for providing paid job training to system-involved youth, and those at risk of becoming system involved, so that they can build readiness and capacity to successfully contribute to LA County’s creative workforce.

In 2019, Arts and Culture will explore the feasibility of training and hiring an Arts Navigator to connect foster youth, formerly incarcerated youth, and those at risk of becoming system involved, with opportunities to engage in the arts in their local communities, as well as to access paid job training and career development in the arts. Arts Navigators will also collaborate with Arts Facilitators working in juvenile detention centers to support youth re-entry following incarceration, but are expected to play an increasingly larger role in prevention (and a diminishing role in re-entry) as they engage more youth in communities.

Build Awareness and Share Practices

Over the next several years, artists in residence will be commissioned to teach and mentor youth, and will produce works of art that amplify and humanize the experiences of youth and families involved the juvenile justice system. To disseminate learning, emerging models, and promising practices with the field, annual formative evaluation reports will be produced and shared with colleagues both within and beyond LA County.

CURRENT PARTNERS

LA County Partners

- Department of Arts and Culture
- Department of Health Services, Office of Diversion and Reentry, Youth Diversion & Development Unit
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Parks & Recreation
- Department of Public Health
- Office of Child Protection
- Office of Education
- Probation Department
- Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services

Community Partners

- Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network (Members include The Actors’ Gang, Armory Center for the Arts, ArtworxLA, Write Girl, Gay Men’s Chorus of Los Angeles, Jail Guitar Doors, Rhythm Arts Alliance, Street Poets, The Unusual Suspects and The Dance for Healing Project)
- Carnegie Hall (New York)
- Drumming for Your Life Institute
- Spirit Awakening



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2019 OBJECTIVES

LA County Inter-Agency Youth Arts Task Force

- Conduct a field scan to map LA County programs that use the arts to support youth and families
- Develop a collaborative action plan for embedding arts-based practices in all LA County youth services
- Develop and field test training in Arts-Based Trauma-Informed Care for LA County staff

Trauma-Informed Arts Instruction for Incarcerated Youth

- Sustain current programming in all 11 detention facilities and 5 juvenile day reporting centers
- Initiate new arts-based strategies to support parent and family engagement and reunification
- Hire additional Arts Facilitators to coordinate arts instruction within juvenile detention facilities, mentor incarcerated youth, and guide young people toward arts learning opportunities upon release

Arts-Based Youth Diversion

- Provide training in Arts-Based Trauma-Informed Care to social service providers and arts organizations
- Develop and field test strategies for including arts instruction in youth diversion plans

Prevention

- Expand trauma-informed arts instruction in County parks
- Field test Communities of Wellness
- Provide training in Arts-Based Trauma-Informed Care to community artists
- Embed socio-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching strategies in online arts integration training modules for K-6 educators

Job Readiness and Youth Employment

- Release field scan of organizations, agencies and programs that prepare youth for careers in the arts to inform strategies for helping youth access employment in LA County's vibrant creative economy
- Expand opportunities for system-involved youth, and those at risk of becoming system involved, to access arts-based paid job training and internships through WDACS' youth employment programs
- Hire an Arts Navigator to connect system-involved youth, and those at risk of becoming system involved, with opportunities to engage in the arts in their local communities, as well as to access paid job training and career development in the arts
- Provide training in Arts-Based Trauma-Informed Care to non-profit/creative industry supervisors

Build Awareness and Share Practices

- Hire a research consultant to produce annual formative evaluation reports for program refinement