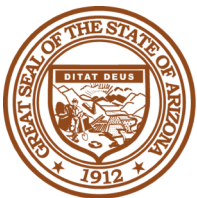


Governor's Youth Commission

Final Report

2023-2024



Governor's Office
of Youth, Faith
and Family



gyc.AZ.gov

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE	1
MEMBERSHIP	2
COMMISSIONERS SERVING COMMUNITIES	4
WORKGROUP REPORTS	5

PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

Established in 1989, the Governor’s Youth Commission (GYC) aims to promote healthier Arizona communities through youth volunteerism and service learning. The GYC increases awareness of the most significant issues affecting members’ communities and encourages civic participation to address them. By empowering civically engaged and service-oriented youth leaders, the commission is working to build a brighter future for Arizona. The GYC achieves its mission through five workgroups:

Distracted Driving Workgroup

The Distracted Driving Workgroup aims to combat distracted driving by raising awareness about its impact and educating peers on safe driving practices.

Domestic Violence Workgroup

The Domestic Violence Workgroup aims to raise awareness of the warning signs and red flags of an unhealthy relationship and connect Arizona teens with resources and support.

Education Workgroup

The Education Workgroup collaborates with community partners and youth statewide to identify gaps and barriers within the education system and better inform Arizona high school students, teachers, and government officials about pathways to success.

Mental Health Workgroup

The Mental Health Workgroup aims to gather resources on suicide prevention and mental health services to support Arizona high school students and their families.

Substance Abuse Workgroup

The Substance Abuse Workgroup aims to spread awareness of available resources for preventing teen substance use and abuse.

MEMBERSHIP

Arizona high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors can serve as Commissioners for at least one academic year, with the option to serve up to three years. Commissioners are chosen based on their demonstrated dedication to their school and community and their oral and written communication skills showcased throughout the application process.

Aanya Venkat

Arizona College Prep High School
Maricopa

Aarna Tanna

Desert Mountain High School
Maricopa

Abby Goble

Gilbert Christian High School
Maricopa

Adellae Umphress

Williamsburg Academy
Yuma

Alejandro Tavera-Reyess

Catalina Foothills High School
Pima

Alyssa Hild

Telesis Preparatory Academy
Mohave

Andres Villaseñor

Nogales High School
Santa Cruz

Anmol (Molly) Budhiraja

Basis Peoria
Maricopa

Angelo Villa

Cibola High School
Yuma

Anthony Akator

BASIS Tucson North
Pima

April Twitchell

Lee Williams High School
Mohave

Aubrey Klain

Veritas Preparatory Academy
Maricopa

Brenda Rodriguez

Parker High School
La Paz

Brooke Horne

Blue Ridge High School
Navajo

Daniel Jung

Pusch Ridge Christian Academy
Pima

Danny Williams

Dishchii'bikoh High School
Navajo

Dylan Staples

Casa Grande Union High School
Pinal

Emilia Kim

BASIS Oro Valley
Pima

Emily Deiss

Red Mountain High School
Pinal

Emily Lewis

Morenci High School
Greenlee

Frank Kaplan

Phoenix Country Day School
Maricopa

Genesis Sanchez Hernandez

Independence High School
Maricopa

Georgia Bukata

BASIS Scottsdale
Maricopa

Hailey Jantz

Bradshaw Mountain High School
Yavapai

Hailey Manani

Desert Vista High School
Maricopa

India Davis Wiley

North High School
Maricopa

Isabelle Holder

Coconino High School
Coconino

Isha Karthik

Desert Mountain High School
Maricopa

Jaisveen Kaur

Parker High School
La Paz

Joshua Jaeger

Pueblo High School
Pima

Kevin Chen

Hamilton High School
Maricopa

Mason Takeuchi

BASIS Flagstaff
Coconino

Mikayla Williams

ASU Preparatory Academy
Pinal

Miranda Gu
Arizona College Prep High School
Maricopa

Mizuki Yashiro
Scottsdale Preparatory Academy
Maricopa

Nathan Cai
Brophy College Preparatory
Maricopa

Nathaniel George
Brophy College Preparatory
Maricopa

Nicholas Cartagena
Queen Creek High School
Maricopa

Omar Abdul-Gawad
Estrella Foothills High School
Maricopa

Pallak Gupta
Rio Rico High School
Santa Cruz

Priti Kari
BASIS Tucson North
Pima

Rance Wartz
Navajo Preparatory Academy
Apache

Ricardo Rodriguez
AAEC - Estrella Mountain
Maricopa

Saige Douglass
Arizona School for the Arts
Maricopa

Saturnino Felix Pajkos
Tanque Verde High School
Pima

Shreyash Prakash
BASIS Phoenix
Maricopa

Skyla Bird
Sedona Red Rock High School
Yavapai

Sofia Crisantes
Nogales High School
Santa Cruz

Sonya Colattur
Xavier College Preparatory
Maricopa

Sophia Lin
BASIS Scottsdale
Maricopa

Sophia Rosa
Buena High School
Cochise

Starr Joe
Window Rock High School
Apache

Tanish Doshi
BASIS Oro Valley
Pima

Tawnya Guerro/Mitchell
Pima High School
Graham

Toby Chang
BASIS Prescott
Yavapai

Tony Stewart
Bioscience High School
Maricopa

Trinson Cameron
Canyon View High School
Maricopa

Varsheni Muthu
Mountain Ridge High School
Maricopa

Yusuf Rakhimi
Brophy College Preparatory
Maricopa



2023-2024 Governor's Youth Commission Orientation/Quarter 1 Meeting

COMMISSIONERS SERVING COMMUNITIES

To empower generations of civically engaged and service-oriented leaders in Arizona, GYC members served their local communities through various initiatives such as meal prep services, food drives, and community clean-ups, inviting their classmates, friends, and family members to join them.

During the 2023-2024 year, members of GYC completed **4,743** hours of service across Arizona and leveraged an additional **15,683** hours from fellow students, friends, and family members.



Sophia Lin & peers participating in iReach's annual Adopt-a-Park Clean-Up Event
Maricopa County



Skyla Bird educating Sedona Food Truck Festival attendees on proper waste disposal methods
Yavapai County



Mikayla Williams & peers serving dinner to lower socio-economic and unhoused Arizonans served by Catalysts Helping Increase Potential
Pinal County



Omar Agawad & peers raising awareness for children with disabilities at HopeKids annual Hope Walk
Maricopa County



Anthony Akator Jr. & peers engage in a community clean-up with Serve Tucson
Pima County



Molly Budhiraja & family dropping off 35 boxes of clothing, shoes, & canned food to Andre House of Hospitality through her organization My Wish For My Community
Maricopa County



Mason Takeuchi & peer prep meals for individuals and families served by the Flagstaff Family Food Center
Coconino County

WORKGROUP REPORTS

Distracted Driving Workgroup

The 2023-2024 Distracted Driving Workgroup focused on improving the user experience on DriveSafeAZ.org, initially established by the previous year's cohort, and amplifying awareness of its state and national resources by engaging in community events. Workgroup members created digital and print educational flyers with a QR code linking to DriveSafeAZ.org, an Arizona-specific site designed to expand awareness of safe driving practices to high school students, guardians/caregivers, and new drivers in communities statewide. Educational flyers housed on DriveSafeAZ.org are available to the public for download and local distribution.

To expand awareness of DriveSafeAZ.org, workgroup members conducted targeted outreach in local communities. Outreach strategies included email campaigns to local Motor Vehicle Divisions (MVDs), schools, and libraries in seven counties: Coconino, Graham, La Paz, Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, and Yavapai. Additionally, the workgroup collaborated with the Substance Abuse Workgroup to distribute educational materials to approximately 100 students on preventing distracted driving and substance abuse at the [5th Grade Drug Awareness Day](#) in Oro Valley.

Efforts to create greater awareness through downloadable educational materials and community outreach yielded promising results, as seen through website analytics, in the 24% increase in visitors to DriveSafeAZ.org from the previous year. Despite the success, the Distracted Driving Workgroup struggled to build partnerships with trusted community-based organizations (CBOs) sufficient to fuel further community engagement and growth.

Sunsetting of Distracted Driving Workgroup

In response to the challenges faced by the Distracted Driving Workgroup and its overlap with the Substance Abuse Workgroup, the GYC sunsetted the Distracted Driving Workgroup name and reallocated the work, roles, and responsibilities to the Substance Abuse Workgroup. Merging the two workgroups prompted the GYC to launch a Conservation and Sustainability Workgroup for the 2024-2025 term, aligning with a top priority for Governor Hobbs: *Resilience, Water, and the Environment*.

Recommendations from the 2023-2024 Distracted Driving Workgroup are available below in the Substance Abuse Workgroup.

Domestic Violence Workgroup

The 2023-2024 Domestic Violence Workgroup made a measurable impact on Arizonans. For instance, the workgroup organized a Hygiene Product Drive to assist Arizona domestic violence shelters in their efforts to support and advocate for domestic violence victims *and* their families. The initiative raised awareness of the local community's needs and gathered approximately \$40,000 of resources from 50 donation sites, benefitting nine domestic violence shelters and positively impacting individuals affected by domestic violence in five counties: Maricopa, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yavapai, and Yuma. Additionally, the workgroup partnered with [BLOOM365](#) to host a

free community event where 45 individuals received education on recognizing the warning signs of dating violence and prevention strategies. Attendees also learned various ways to support and advocate for those affected by teen dating and domestic violence. Through ongoing efforts to help victims *and* their families, the Domestic Violence Workgroup continues strengthening Arizona communities with the mission to #EndDVinAZ.

Recommendations

2024-2025 Domestic Violence Workgroup

- Rebrand the *Hygiene Product Drive* as a *Product Drive* to increase donations of essential items for local organizations, ultimately increasing the drive's impact.
- Share flyers throughout the drive on personal social media platforms rather than one pinned post on the GYC Instagram page.
- Stream events in a hybrid format with live captioning to increase accessibility and reach a wider audience.

Education Workgroup

To better prepare Arizona high schoolers for a career they are passionate about, the 2023-2024 Education Workgroup emphasized the importance of completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and awareness of non-traditional postsecondary options. The workgroup collaborated with ten academic institutions, including Arizona State University (ASU), the University of Arizona (UA), Northern Arizona University (NAU), Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR), AskBenji, Arizona Department of Education (ADE), Diné College, and Stanford University to organize free virtual events as part of the [Postsecondary Education Readiness Webinar Series](#). Across three events, 169 participants identifying as Arizona students, guardians/caregivers, and educators from 12 counties received information about local resources to support postsecondary education and other opportunities for students pursuing alternative paths. The workgroup also made visual and informational improvements to the existing regional financial aid resource flyers created and distributed by the previous workgroup cohort. The updated flyers incorporated year-round resources, whereas the former only posted one-time events and webinars. The workgroup partnered with local CBOs such as libraries, schools, and cafes to help distribute flyers to their established and trusted networks across Arizona communities to expand their reach.

Recommendations

2023-2024 Education Workgroup

- Utilize the established Speaker Directory to strengthen partnerships and expand building new ones, focusing on engaging rural stakeholders.
- Collaborate with ABOR to host a 2025 College Decision Day event on May 1 in Northern and Southern Arizona.
- Create short clips from the three webinars suitable for Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts to expand awareness of the resource and increase the number of Arizona students submitting a FAFSA or enrolling in a postsecondary education program.

- Implement resources that support postsecondary services in Santa Cruz, Greenlee, and Graham County. Collaborating with state agencies and CBOs providing services can maximize local communities' distribution.

Mental Health Workgroup

The 2023-2024 Mental Health Workgroup used the [Yellow Ribbon Club Toolkit \(YRCT\)](#), developed by the 2022-2023 Mental Health Workgroup, to raise awareness about supporting Arizona youth mental health and improving access to mental health resources, with a focus on rural schools and counties. The workgroup successfully engaged with 45 schools to implement the YRCT and participated in three in-person events. At each event, commissioners emphasized the value of mental health awareness, the benefit of establishing a mental health club with the YRCT, and the toolkit's components. To engage a broader audience, commissioners distributed bookmarks, flyers, and GYC items and asked attendees to share them with their classmates. While the workgroup found in-person events more effective than virtual connections, especially with CBOs, they encountered challenges implementing the toolkit in rural counties due to structural barriers such as broadband connectivity, transportation, and lack of local service providers. Recognizing the importance of providing information to a younger audience, the rural commissioners prioritized the involvement of middle school administrators and counselors in discussions about the benefits of YRCT.

To address the lack of resources necessary to decrease the stigma of mental health struggles, the 2024-2025 Mental Health Workgroup will prioritize in-person events by setting up information tables, passing out flyers, and ultimately increasing awareness of the YRCT as a catalyst for change in rural communities. Overall, the 2024-2025 Mental Health Workgroup members aim to improve access to mental health resources, reduce mental health stigma, and empower Arizona youth to support themselves and their peers.

Recommendations

2024-2025 Mental Health Workgroup

- Utilize the created YRCT (and club constitution if necessary) to generate awareness materials promoting a school's understanding of the club's mission to expand implementation.
- Identify key stakeholders in rural counties to expand potential community engagement opportunities, aiding in decreasing the higher rates of stigma seen in rural counties regarding mental health.
- Strengthen partnerships with established stakeholders to support future GYC outreach.

Substance Abuse Workgroup

The 2023-2024 Substance Abuse Workgroup focused on expanding awareness, collaborating with community partners, and sharing digital resources around preventing substance misuse and abuse. Workgroup members concentrated on developing the use of the Prevention and Harm Mitigation [Linktrees](#), initially established by the previous year's cohort, by increasing awareness of

its state and national resources by participating in community events. Workgroup members increased the number of resources on the site and updated digital and print educational flyers for distribution through strategic marketing strategies. They also participated in two in-person events: the 5th Grade Drug Awareness Day and Building Prevention Practices: a Youth Perspective. In collaboration with the Distracted Driving Workgroup, the workgroup gave educational materials to approximately 100 students on preventing distracted driving and substance abuse at the 5th Grade Drug Awareness Day. They also hosted the “Building Prevention Practices: a Youth Perspective” event with the [Maricopa County Department of Public Health Youth Advisory Council \(YAC\)](#). The event featured a panel of subject matter experts who shared key strategies to prevent substance misuse and abuse. The event reached approximately 30 attendees, many of whom were student leaders willing to take action against substance misuse and abuse in their schools and communities.

Through partnerships with key community stakeholders, the workgroup laid the groundwork for the 2024-2025 Substance Abuse Workgroup to continue promoting peer-to-peer interactions, educating Arizona youth and their guardians/caregivers about the risks of substance misuse and abuse, enhancing community efforts, and incorporating youth perspectives to combat substance abuse among Arizona’s youth.

Recommendations

2024-2025 Substance Abuse Workgroup

- Analyze responses from the Oro Valley event to create more engaging activities for the 2024-2025 event.
- Collaborate with CBOs to identify current gaps in substance misuse and abuse prevention and partner with them to develop specific action plans.
- Continue expanding the reach of LinkTree resources by creating new, attention-grabbing flyers in addition to those approved for the 2023-2024 GYC year.
- Create and share short peer-to-peer videos informing Arizona youth of the dangers of substance abuse and strategies they can do to help prevent substance misuse and abuse in their communities.

Build upon existing partnerships with trusted CBOs already working on preventing distracted driving among teens.

Increase awareness of DriveSafeAZ.org by utilizing the established QR code on marketing materials.

Utilize website analytics from DriveSafeAZ.org and search engine optimization (SEO) to enhance targeted marketing strategies for reaching more Arizonans.