



**CALIFORNIA** COMMISSION  
**WOMEN & GIRLS** ON THE STATUS OF

# **YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL 2025 HANDBOOK**

# CALIFORNIA COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN & GIRLS

Dear Youth Advisory Council member,

Congratulations on being selected as a member of the 2025-2026 California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls' Youth Advisory Council. You have been selected for this council because of your passion and commitment to advance gender equality and equity in California. Serving as a Youth Advisory Council member provides a distinct opportunity to be a visible change agent in California

As a Youth Advisory Council member, you are one of many youth leaders who will help to direct our efforts to achieve equity, access, and justice for all girls in California. We hope you find your time with the Youth Advisory Council productive and rewarding. We are grateful for your dedication, time, and insight into key issues affecting girls today.

Thank you for your commitment to service. I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Darcy Totten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Darcy" and last name "Totten" clearly distinguishable.

Darcy Totten

Executive Director

California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

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## About the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

For nearly 60 years, the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls has identified and worked to eliminate inequities in state laws, practices, and conditions that affect California’s women and girls. Established as a state agency with 17 appointed commissioners in 1965, the Commission regularly assesses gender equity in health, safety, employment, education, and equal representation in the military, and the media. The Commission provides leadership through research, policy and program development, education, outreach and collaboration, advocacy, and strategic partnerships.

All references to “women and girls” include gender-expansive individuals, cis women and girls, trans women and girls, nonbinary individuals, gender-nonconforming individuals, genderqueer individuals, and any women or girl identified individuals.

## **About the Youth Advisory Council**

The Commission on the Status of Women and Girls created the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to ensure the Commission's work maintains a youth-centered approach when developing policy solutions to address critical issues that youth are directly impacted by. The Council is a group of young residents (ages 14-20) of California brought together to increase youth involvement in California's public policy efforts. Through this Council, the Commission shall keep youth engaged through mentorship, leadership and advocacy opportunities, and supporting the development of a Girls Agenda for the Commission.

\*All references to "women and girls" include gender-expansive individuals, cis women and girls, trans women and girls, nonbinary individuals, gender-nonconforming individuals, genderqueer individuals, and any women or girl identified individuals.

## **Vision**

To educate the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls about the experiences, needs, and views of California youth and girls.

## **Mission**

The Youth Advisory Council will provide insight into policies, procedures, and legislation affecting girls throughout California to Commissioners, Commission staff, and become advocates for the Commission's efforts to support girls and opportunities for girls and youth from all of California's diverse communities to thrive.



## **Youth Advisory Member Roles**

YAC members represent a diverse cross section of the California population. Membership is comprised of 17 youth, ages 14-20, from various locations across California. The role of the YAC is to operate in an advisory capacity to the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls by providing current knowledge, critical thinking, and analysis to increase the confidence of the Commission's decision-makers that they have a reliable connection with the young women of our state when advancing policy proposals that impact youth.

As an official Advisory Committee created by the Commission, the YAC is subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act, which means that all meetings of the YAC must be publicly noticed and open to the public (Please see the section on the Bagley Keene Open Meetings Act for more information).

## **Youth Advisory Member Responsibilities**

YAC members are expected to:

- Attend scheduled Youth Advisory Council meetings (5x/year).
- Engage with Commission staff to identify opportunities to support the Commission's work and events based on your expertise and work directly with Commission staff, as requested.
- Attend opportunities to develop leadership and advocacy skills.
- Comply with the requirements of the Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act.
- Serve as a local Commission youth ambassador and act as a liaison within your local community.
- Advise and proactively make recommendations to the Commission regarding issues that affect young women within your geographical area.
- Serve a one-year term and communicate with Commission staff if you are no longer able to full your responsibilities and must step down from the YAC.

## **Youth Advisory Member Best Practices**

As a YAC member, your participation, input, and insight are valued. To effectively participate, YAC members should:

- Share expertise and knowledge to further the vision, mission, and values of the Commission at meetings.
- Share information peer-to-peer with fellow YAC members at meetings.
- Continually familiarize themselves with issues of importance to the girls of their region.
- Regularly share information in their communities about the Council's work and bring issues of concern to the YAC and Commission.
- Positively portray the Commission, the work of the YAC, and promote the efforts of the YAC when acting as an ambassador.

## **Time Commitment**

We are asking for a one-year commitment to the Youth Advisory Council. If at any time a YAC member is no longer able to fulfill their responsibilities and must step down, they must submit a letter, dated with the resignation date, to Commission staff and the Commission Chair.

## **Communication Processes and Protocols**

When a YAC member has something to discuss with the council in between meetings, they should follow the below steps:

1. Email Commission Staff
2. The YAC Chair and Commission Staff will work together to fulfill any requests or items needing action

## **Reporting Expectations**

A comprehensive update on progress toward YAC objectives and deliverables shall be discussed at all quarterly meetings. Barriers to progress and possible solutions shall also be discussed and documented in meeting minutes. Action items, and those responsible for said items, will be included in all meeting minutes.

A quarterly deliverable report including Girls Agenda updates, shall be written by the YAC Chair and Vice Chair and sent to designated Commission staff prior to the YAC meeting. A representative of the YAC will be required to attend each Full Commission Business Meeting. The Commission's Annual Report will include YAC goals, accomplishments, and a look ahead into the next year.

## **Mutual Agreements**

Mutual agreements shall be discussed and recorded at the initial meeting of all members. These can include but are not limited to:

- Preferred method of communication
- Frequency of communication between meetings
- Reasonable response times when communicating with Commission staff

## **Working Agreements**

As part of the Youth Advisory Council, members agree to:

- Respect others' opinions
- Contribute to conversations and provide constructive feedback
- Take initiative and speak up
- Maintain confidentiality when appropriate
- Foster a safe environment, show support, and hold each other accountable
- Keep an open mind and ask questions

## **Onboarding Requirements and Process**

YAC members are required to provide the following information to Commission staff once accepted as a YAC member:

- Headshot and Brief Biography (250 words max)
- Media Release form (signed by parent/guardian if minor)
- Emergency Contact and Release form
- Any other forms requested by Commission staff

All members will receive the following information within the first weeks of their term:

- Acceptance and welcome letter
- Youth Advisory Council member handbook
- Youth Advisory Council Roster
- Calendar of Meetings
- Orientation Session
- Meet and Greet with Commissioners and Commission Staff
- Pairing of YAC members with Commissioners for mentoring upon availability

## **Election of Youth Advisory Council Roles**

Elections shall be held for Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary at the second YAC meeting.

### **Chair:**

- Leads by example and is the primary liaison between Commissioners, Commission staff, and YAC members.
- Ensures procedures are in place for effective meetings and works with the necessary persons to develop and disseminate meeting agendas and minutes on time.
- Possesses effective communication and time-management skills needed to lead meetings and follow up on action items.

## **Vice Chair:**

- Assists the Chair in carrying out important tasks such as Girls Agenda projects and meeting agenda development and dissemination of pertinent information.
- Works closely with the Chair and stands in place of the Chair if the Chair is absent.

## **Secretary:**

- Takes meeting minutes.
- Sends minutes to Commission staff, the Chair, and the Vice Chair for review, prior to dissemination to YAC members and Commissioners.



## **Commission Staff Responsibilities**

- Upon onboarding, Commission staff will ensure YAC members receive training and resources related to the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, along with an overview of the California Legislature and policymaking process.
- Commission staff will coordinate membership outreach, inform members of the Commission meeting schedule, and schedule quarterly YAC meetings.
- Commission staff shall assist with meeting minutes and dissemination of information between meetings, provide information on opportunities to participate in advocacy, and request support on bills as needed.
- Commission staff will assist with the annual update of the Girls Agenda and prepare youth for regular presentations to the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.

## **Commissioner Responsibilities**

- The Policy Committee will work closely with the YAC (facilitated by Commission staff) and will occasionally attend meetings.
- YAC members shall convey YAC information at regular Commission meetings and upon request to help inform decision making and policy development.
- Commissioners shall offer mentoring opportunities to YAC members as available. Commissioners will be paired with YAC members based on backgrounds and interests to ensure a well-rounded experience. Commission staff will provide additional information on this process during onboarding.

## Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act

As an official Advisory Committee created by the Commission, the YAC is subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act, which means that all meetings of the YAC must be publicly noticed at least 10 business days in advance of the meeting date and open to the public. The California Legislature adopted the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act with the intent of ensuring a seat at the table for members of the public when making decisions.

Bagley-Keene requires meetings of three or more Youth Advisory Council members to be open to the public.

## Key Elements of Bagley-Keene

Bagley-Keene rules apply to all meetings, including in-person gatherings, phone calls, video conferences, and email chains.

**Public Notice Requirements:** State bodies must provide public notice of a meeting at least 10 days in advance, specifying the date, time, and location, along with an agenda of the topics to be discussed.

**Public Access and Participation:** Meetings must be open to the public, and members of the public must be allowed to comment on agenda items before or during the meeting.

**The Act forbids “Serial Meetings”:** A serial meeting occurs when there is a chain of communications from one member to another or when one person acts as a hub of a wheel and communicates individually with the various spokes. A serial meeting can involve face-to-face communications, telephone calls, emails, texting, and instant messaging, etc.

**Emergency Meetings:** In urgent situations (e.g., natural disasters), the Commission can hold emergency meetings without the 10-day notice but must still meet certain public disclosure requirements.

# Meeting Management Basics

All YAC meetings will follow parliamentary procedure, a set of rules for meeting conduct that allows everyone to be heard and participate in decision-making in a respectful manner.

## Basic Principles

- No member may speak until recognized by the Chair
- One person may have the floor at any one time and all sides are heard
- The majority of members rule

## Meeting Structure

All YAC meetings follow the same basic order of business or structure. This includes the following:

- Call to Order
  - The meeting begins when the Chair states “I call this meeting to order.”
- Roll Call
  - Roll Call is conducted to record all members present at the meeting and establish a quorum. A quorum is the minimum number of members needed to be present to conduct business, which consists of a majority of YAC members or 9 members. No votes may be taken until a quorum of members are present.
- Business
  - Business includes all items that are to be discussed and/or voted on. To ask the council to take a vote on an item, a member should state “I move to...” followed by the action they are requesting that the council take. Another member must second the motion by saying “I second.” The Chair announces the outcome of the vote.
- Public Comment
  - This is a time for the public to comment on any agenda items.
- Adjournment
  - The meeting has concluded once the Chair adjourns the meeting.

## Development of a Girls Agenda

The Youth Advisory Council has the opportunity to help shape the Commission's priorities through developing and proposing a Girls Agenda to the full Commission.

- YAC members shall onboard in coordination with the Legislative Calendar and in order to meet key deadlines, including, but not limited to, bill introduction, policy and budget committee hearings, house of origin and end of session.
- YAC members will identify key issues for youth in their region and research policy solutions to address these issues locally, statewide, and federally when applicable.
- YAC members shall identify short-term, immediate solutions and long-term solutions in order to address the various needs for girls throughout our state and achieve gender equity.
- YAC members will recommend to the Policy Committee and Full Commission a list of policy proposals to address priority issues annually. YAC members will use the legislative calendar as a guide to ensure all deadlines are met.
- YAC members will work with Commission staff, including, but not limited to the Policy Director and Legislative Analyst, to help guide approved policy proposals through the legislative process, including, but not limited to, submitting letters of support to policy committees, testifying in committee hearings, advocating in support of policy proposals, and elevating issues on social media platforms.
- YAC members will update the Girls Agenda annually and conduct ongoing research in order to solve for our priority issues and represent our state's girls.

The next few pages include a cheat sheet to understanding California's legislative process and how bills become law as well as key legislative deadlines for this year.



## **How Bills Become Law and the Legislative Process Explained**

### **Step 1: Ideas are turned into Legislation and Bills are Introduced**

All legislation starts off as an idea. These ideas can come from anyone, and the process begins when either an individual or group persuades a member of the Legislature to author a bill. The Commission on the Status of Women and Girls has the unique opportunity and power to sponsor, co-sponsor, and support legislation. Through the development of the Girls Agenda, the YAC will advise and recommend to the Commission policy solutions to address issues faced by California's girls. Bills that are being scheduled for committee.

The legislator then sends the idea and the language for the bill to the Legislative Counsel's Office, where it is drafted into the actual bill.

The drafted bill is returned to the legislator for his or her review. Persons or groups that originated the idea for the bill may also review it to ensure that the provisions they desire are in the bill in the correct form. If the author is a Senator, the bill is introduced at the Senate Desk. If the author is an Assemblymember, the bill is introduced at the Assembly Desk, where it is assigned a number and read for the first time. Senate bills are designated as SBs and Assembly bills are ABs.

## **Step 2: Bills go through the Committee Process in the House of Origin**

The bill then goes to the Senate or Assembly Rules Committee, where it is assigned to a policy committee. Bills are assigned to committees depending on what issue areas they fall under. Some examples include education, housing, transportation, and health to name a few.

Bills cannot be heard and/or amended in policy committee until 30 days after they have been introduced and printed in order to give the public ample notice to review new legislation introduced. This also provides ample time for groups and offices to communicate positions on bills and work on amendments if necessary.

Each bill must appear in the Daily File for four days prior to being heard in a committee (there are separate daily files for the Senate and Assembly). The Daily File is the agenda of the day's business, together with public notice of bills set for committee hearings. By checking the File, you can keep track of bills that are being scheduled for committee. If you live out of town and plan to testify at the hearing, it is a good idea to call the author or your legislator to make sure the bill is going to be heard on that date. Sometimes bills are taken off the agenda at the last moment and/or moved to other hearing dates.

## **Policy Committees**

Leading up to the committee hearing, groups may schedule meetings with legislators who sit on the committee as they will be the members voting on the measure.

These meetings may be used to discuss support on a measure, opposition, concerns, other feedback, and/or to provide research to members prior to them taking votes on bills.

Groups can also participate in the committee process by submitting position letters to the committee prior to the hearing, meet with committee staff to communicate positions and feedback, provide main testimony during the hearing, and provide a “me too” during the hearing.

The position letter deadline varies for each committee, but deadlines and instructions can be found on the committee’s website page.

Committee analyses will also be released for each bill prior to a committee hearing. These reflect summaries of a bill’s intent, groups in support and opposition, arguments in support and opposition, and the bill’s estimated fiscal impact.

Committee hearings begin when the Chair calls them to order. The author of each bill is then given an opportunity to present their bill, followed by main testimony in support. Main testimony in support is usually limited to two people with a time limit of two minutes each. This is followed by testimony given by the opposition if opposition is present, and other groups are then given the opportunity to briefly state “me too”s in support or opposition.

“Me too”s are statements of testimony made by additional groups and individuals in support or opposition to a measure and are limited to stating your name, organization, and position.

Once all testimony has concluded, committee members will then engage in discussion, deliberation, and take a vote on whether to approve the measure.

## **Fiscal Committees**

Once bills have cleared the policy committee process, they may be sent directly to the floor or may be assigned to a fiscal committee before going to the floor. For bills assigned to a fiscal committee, this is typically the Appropriations committee, where bills are considered for their fiscal impact.

It is at this point that bills tagged with higher dollar amounts are usually placed on suspense. When a bill is placed on suspense, it is grouped with other bills to all be heard and voted on at a later date, called the Suspense hearing. All bills approved by the Appropriations committee are then sent to the floor in each house to be voted on by the entire house.

### **Step 3: Bills go through the Committee Process in the Second House**

Once bills are approved by the floor in their house of origin, they are sent to the second house. This means that all Senate bills approved will then go to the Assembly and all Assembly bills will then go to the Senate. The committee process in Step 2 then repeats itself.

### **The Amendments Process**

Amendments are changes to the current language of a bill. They can occur at any point in the legislative process before they are approved by both houses and are sent to the Governor's desk - including during the policy committee process, fiscal committee process, or when they are still being considered on the floor. Amendments can come from a group, author, other members, Chair of a committee, administration, or other stakeholders.

### **Step 4: Bills go to the Governor's Desk**

Once a bill has passed both houses, it is sent to the Governor's Desk for signature consideration. The Governor has 12 days to either sign the bill, approve the bill without signing, or veto the bill. If a bill is signed or approved without a signature, it is now considered a law that has been passed. This is a vital time for members, individuals, and various stakeholder groups to participate in the process by sending in support letters on measures to the Governor's office.

# 2025 LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

## January

- Jan. 1 Statutes take effect.
- Jan. 6 Legislature reconvenes.
- Jan. 10 Budget bill must be submitted by Governor.
- Jan. 24 Last day to submit bill requests to the Office of Legislative Counsel.

## February

- Feb. 21 Last day for bills to be introduced.

## April

- Apr. 10 Spring Recess begins upon adjournment.
- Apr. 21 Legislature reconvenes from Spring Recess.

## May

- May 2 Last day for policy committees to hear and report to fiscal committees fiscal bills introduced in their house.
- May 9 Last day for policy committees to hear and report to the Floor nonfiscal bills introduced in their house.
- May 16 Last day for policy committees to meet prior to June 9.
- May 23 Last day for fiscal committees to hear and report to the Floor bills introduced in their house.  
Last day for fiscal committees to meet prior to June 9.

## June

- June 2-6 Floor Session only. No committees may meet.
- June 6 Last day for each house to pass bills introduced in that house.
- June 9 Committee meetings may resume.
- June 15 Budget bill must be passed by midnight.

## **July**

July 18      Last day for policy committees to hear and report bills.  
Summer Recess begins upon adjournment, provided Budget Bill has been passed.

## **August**

Aug. 18      Legislature reconvenes from Summer Recess.  
Aug. 29      Last day for fiscal committees to hear and report bills to the Floor.

## **September**

Sept. 2-12    Floor session only. No committees may meet.  
Sept. 5      Last day to amend on the Floor.  
Sept. 12      Last day for each house to pass bills.  
Interim Recess begins upon adjournment.

## **IMPORTANT DATES OCCURRING DURING FINAL RECESS**

Oct. 12      Last day for Governor to sign or veto bills passed by the Legislature before Sept. 12 and in the Governor's possession on or after Sept. 12.

## **2026**

Jan. 1      Statutes take effect.  
Jan. 5      Legislature reconvenes.



## For Media Inquiries

The Commission's work can, at times, be very public-facing and result in inquiries from reporters and the media. All media inquiries received by YAC members should be referred to the Commission's Social Media Specialist, Cherilyn Otubuah at [Cherilyn.Otubuah@women.ca.gov](mailto:Cherilyn.Otubuah@women.ca.gov)

## Social Media Guidelines

The California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls believes in supporting open communication and encourages all YAC members, to share their passions with the world online while following these guidelines:

### Social Media DOs

**DO** follow and engage on social. As a representative of the Commission, you are our best avenue for public outreach. Please like and follow @CCSWG on Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook and help us to promote the great work the Commission is doing.



**DO** share the Commission's social media posts to your own platforms from all channels!

**DO** tell us what you're up to! Connect with the Social Media Specialist about opportunities to recognize and engage on social media where appropriate.

**DO** tag the Commission and help increase our presence online when participating as a representative of the Commission or in other appropriate situations.

**DO** utilize and promote social toolkits provided by the Commission.

## **Social Media Don'ts**

**DON'T** establish any Commission branded account on your own, including anything with California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls in the title, handle, URL, or logo.

**DON'T** use Commission branding (including but not limited to the Commission's name, logo, color scheme, screenshots of our website or fonts) on your private account to promote any project that is not affiliated with the Commission.

**DON'T** represent your personal opinions as the Commission's. When discussing the Commission online, identify yourself and your role as a member of the Commission's Youth Advisory Council. You must make clear that your opinions do not reflect an official statement of the agency in every post that may overlap with the Commission's work. You can use a disclaimer like, "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the position, strategy or opinions of the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls."

**DON'T** forget that as a member of the YAC you are a representative of the full Commission, even when you are posting from your private accounts.



## Offboarding Process

As a YAC member, your year of service is incredibly important to the Commission, and we want to provide all members with full support to be successful in their future endeavors.

Once a YAC member's term is complete, each member will be mailed the following materials:

- Thank You Letter
- Certificate of Appreciation

Members may also request letters of recommendation and reference requests by emailing Commission staff. Lastly, members will be given the opportunity to complete an exit survey to provide feedback to the Commission on their experience and recommended improvements for future YACs.

## Youth Advisory Council 2025–2026 Meeting Dates

The agenda and meeting link will be sent to council members via email prior to each meeting. Meeting information will also be posted on the Commission’s website 10 days prior to the meeting.

### 1st meeting, May 14, 2025

- YAC member Introductions and Meet and Greet with Commissions
- Overview of the Commission, role of the YAC, Bagley Keene, and mentorship with Commissioners
- Overview of the Girls Agenda and formation of working groups

### 2nd meeting, August 20, 2025

- Election of YAC officers: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary
- Presentation and Discussion of Initial Girls Agenda and Recommendations

### 3rd meeting, November 20, 2025

- Approval of the Girls Agenda to recommend to the full Commission

### 4th meeting, February 2026 TBD

- Approval of any revisions to the Girls Agenda to recommend to the full Commission
- Overview of the Committee Process and Advocacy opportunities

### Final meeting, April 15, 2026

## Full Commission 2025 Meeting Dates

The agenda and meeting link will be sent to council members via email prior to each meeting. Meeting information will also be posted on the Commission's website 10 days prior to the meeting.

1st meeting, January 15, 2025

2nd meeting, March 5, 2025

3rd meeting, May 21, 2025

- Bi-annual election of executive officers
- Policy Agenda
- May budget revision information session

4th meeting, July 15, 2025

- Start of fiscal year 25-26
- 2025-2026 Budget Discussion

5th meeting, September 17, 2025

- Policy Update (FY 25 bills)
- Spending Plan - Action Item

Final 2025 meeting, November 19, 2025

- Budget Advocacy Plan and End of Year Updates