CYC Legislative Accomplishments

- **Reforming Non-Public Schools** - Thousands of foster youth attending non-public schools will finally have the opportunity to receive a quality education due to the passage of AB 1858 (Steinberg, Chapter 914, Statutes of 2004). AB 1858 seeks to improve the quality of education provided at non-public schools by requiring them to meet the same standards for appropriate curricula, qualified teachers and adequate materials and supplies that public schools must meet. Additionally, AB 1858 calls for non-public schools to be monitored similarly to public schools to ensure they are offering appropriate educational services. CYC members felt strongly that given the high cost of non-public schools and the great needs of the students they serve, standards for and oversight of non-public schools should at least equal, if not exceed, those of the state’s public schools.

- **Improving Foster Youth Education** - California affirmed its commitment to foster youth’s education with the passage of AB 490 (Steinberg, Chapter 862, Statutes of 2003). The goal of AB 490 is to ensure that every youth in foster care has the same opportunity to succeed academically as other students and receives the educational services they need. This new law improves public school procedures so that foster youth have a better chance to succeed in school by requiring that youth are not forced to change schools unnecessarily, won’t lose credits and can immediately enroll and quickly receive records at a new school. The bill also requires designation of a foster youth education liaison in each district.

- **Permanency for Group Home Youth** - Due to the efforts of CYC and other child advocates, foster youth in group homes will now have greater chance of establishing a permanent life-long connection with a caring adult. AB 408 (Steinberg, Chapter 813, Statutes of 2003) requires social workers to ask youth over the age of 10 who live in group homes who is important to them and to take actions to support those relationships. AB 408 also strengthens a youth’s right to attend their court hearings, and the right of youth to participate in social and extracurricular activities. The new law also allows funds to be used to convene a team of individuals important to the youth to develop a transition plan.

- **Improving the Independent Living Program** - CYC members all over the state celebrated the passage of AB 1979 (Steinberg, Chapter 271, Statutes of 2002) on August 26, 2002. This new law creates statewide regulations for the Independent Living Program. With state regulations, we hope that every youth in California will have equal access to this important program and that the regulations will be enforced to ensure that counties are spending their ILP money for services that help youth make the transition to independence. Regulations for the Independent Living Program are scheduled to go into effect in February 2003.

- **Support for Emancipated Youth** – In a groundbreaking moment for the state of California, Governor Davis signed AB 427 (Hertzberg, Chapter 125, Statutes of 2001) on July 30, 2001. This new law creates the Supportive Transitional Emancipation Program (STEP), which allows counties to provide monthly financial support to emancipated foster youth as long as they are attending school or working towards the goals outlined in their Transitional Independent Living Plans. AB 427 also makes changes to the state’s Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) that encourage providers to create or expand housing programs for current and former foster youth. The passage of AB 427 significantly increases state resources and support for youth who have emancipated from the foster care system.

- **Foster Youth Rights** – After several attempts to put the rights of foster youth into California law, CYC realized success in 2001 as the foster youth bill of rights became law. AB 899 (Liu, Chapter 683, Statutes of 2001) consolidates all of the rights of foster children into a common location in California law. It also requires social workers to inform youth of their rights at least once every six months. Finally, AB 899 requires the list of rights to be posted in facilities that care for six or more foster children.

- **Extended Medi-Cal for Former Foster Youth** – Thanks to CYC and other child advocates, California was one of the first states in the country to take advantage of a new federal program that allows states to extend Medi-Cal for former foster youth until the age of 21. This law eliminates the re-application process that emancipated youth previously had to go through in order to get health care. Youth now experience a seamless transition of their Medi-Cal services, after emancipation, until they reach 21 years of age. This law change was enacted through the state budget and AB 2877 (Thompson, Chapter 93, Statutes of 2000).
• Maintaining Sibling Togetherness – On September 29, 2000 Governor Davis signed AB 1987 (Steinberg, Chapter 909, Statutes of 2000). This law requires social workers to include in court reports a section on the child’s sibling relationships and the plans for visitation of siblings. It also requires social workers to notify children on their caseload of significant events in the lives of siblings. While this bill does not require that siblings be placed together, it takes us one step closer towards that ultimate goal. CYC members were involved in AB 1987 from start to finish.

• State Foster Care Ombudsman – California has its first foster care ombudsman because of the efforts of CYC youth. The ombudsman’s office has a statewide toll free number where youth can register complaints or concerns regarding the foster care system. The ombudsman has offices in Sacramento and Los Angeles and the phone number is: 877-846-1602. The program was enacted through SB 933 (Thompson, Chapter 311, Statutes of 1998).

• Post-adoption contact with siblings - AB 2196 (Washington, Chapter 1072, Statutes of 1997) was a CYC sponsored bill to increase contact and visitation when siblings are adopted separately. When a child is going to be adopted, the bill requires the social worker to include a discussion of sibling visitation and contact in the child’s case plan. The bill also authorizes the court to include in an adoption order provisions that will facilitate sibling contact as long as the adoptive parents do not object.

• Driver’s Licenses – AB 2691 (Areias, Chapter 865, Statutes of 1992) This bill allows someone other than a child’s parents or guardians to sign the child’s application for a driver’s license. Probation officers and social workers can sign a driver’s license application without liability for any accidents or tickets the child may incur. Any other person who signs the application will be jointly liable with the child for any damages resulting from the negligent or wrongful act of the child in driving a motor vehicle.

• Transitional Housing Program – AB 1198 (Bates, Chapter 799, Statutes of 1993) This bill created the “in-care” transitional housing option for foster youth 17 years of age or older and in their last year of high school. The program is called the Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) and further modifications were made to THPP in 2001. Counties can offer THPP as a type of placement for certain youth who meet eligibility requirements. Youth live in apartments or houses with close monitoring and supervision from the county or from a private agency. This affords youth the opportunity to practice living on their own while social worker services are still available to them.

• Foster Care Independence Act – HR 3443 (Chaffee). Federal legislation passed in November, 1999 which doubles the amount of money the federal government allocates to states for independent living programs; gives states the option of extending Medi-Cal to age 21; requires states to use a portion of these funds for older youth who have left foster care but are under age 21; allows states to use up to 30% of the federal money for housing for emancipating foster youth.