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## **SNIPPET**

### **Forming a Network for Youth Services Providers**

**Youth Council:** Ventura County Youth Council

**Element:** Comprehensive Approach

**Function:** Coordinating Youth Services

**Subject:** Coordinating Youth Services, Staff Development

**The Challenge:** The mission of the Ventura County Youth Council is “To form collaborative alliances with other dedicated youth-service agencies and youth advocates to more effectively disseminate and share information, as well as provide for and assist with opportunities that benefit our youth – our future.” The Youth Council wanted to find ways to form alliances effectively.

**The Practice and Evidence:** In October 2000, the Ventura County Youth Council initiated an effort to build a comprehensive youth development system by creating the Workforce Investment Network for Youth (WINetwork for Youth). WINetwork for Youth is a collaborative effort of the WIB and the Youth Council, a unified effort to form an alliance of youth advocates. The Network was designed so that everyone working with youth would equally recognize its work and identify with it. All youth-serving organizations that completed a mapping survey were automatically included as members; therefore, the Network has developed into a system capable of serving all youth. The success of the Network has been strengthened by providing the following member benefits:

- an opportunity for youth service providers to network with fellow youth advocates regarding youth development efforts across the county;
- a structured forum to communicate and disseminate information;
- An opportunity to discuss community events and include them on a monthly calendar posted on the WIB website, ([www.wib.ventura.org](http://www.wib.ventura.org));
- workshops and technical assistance for staff development and capacity-building, especially important to non-profit organizations with limited funds;
- youth services marketed as a comprehensive system, rather than as specific programs. (See the YCidea “Mapping and Marketing Resources for the Entire Community” beginning on page 41.)

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**The Details:** Several strategies have helped make the Network a success:

- Although WINetwork is a project of the Youth Council, it was intentionally created as a separate identity. Network members feel ownership through regular opportunities to discuss and determine what is important to all youth.
- The Network holds monthly meetings to keep everyone connected, engaged, and informed, and creates incentives so that champions, individuals, and organizations will want to be involved.
- In designing the Network, the Council involved all key stakeholders in the community, giving them the opportunity to build a comprehensive system to leverage collaborations.

## **Where to Go for More information**

Ventura County Youth Council

Amy Fonzo  
Deputy Workforce Area Director  
(805) 648-9542  
[amy.fonzo@mail.co.ventura.ca.us](mailto:amy.fonzo@mail.co.ventura.ca.us)

## **Tools**

The following tools are available through the Ventura County Youth Council:

Youth Services Resource Directory I  
Youth Services Resource Directory II  
Youth Services Directory Survey  
Creating Choices Marketing Piece