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## **SNIPPET**

### **Mapping and Gap Analysis to Support Youth Services**

**Youth Council:** Merced County Youth Council

**Elements:** Comprehensive Approach, Youth Leadership

**Function:** Coordinating Youth Services

**Subject:** Resource Mapping, Youth Involvement

**The Challenge:** The mission of the Merced County Youth council is “To build a community-wide consensus that promotes and supports an integrated youth service delivery system that ensures any youth the support needed.” One of the first tasks of the Merced County Youth Council was to assess their community to determine what youth services were available to address their top five concerns.

**Practice and Evidence:** They conducted a mapping project before developing their strategic plan. Initially, they tried to contract with an organization skilled in this process, but were unable to locate any to hire. Ultimately, this proved to be a gift in disguise as the Youth Council itself mobilized to accomplish the task. An important piece of the process was surveying youth to gather their input. Youth Council members—rather than staff—surveyed over 300 students in area summer schools, working face-to-face with administrators and youth.

This process worked on many levels, some the Council did not expect. The Council members were more fully engaged and educated, and they understood their youths’ needs better as a result of participation in the project. The Council expanded its membership and identified areas of immediate need on which to focus. As a result of the mapping survey and the Gap Analysis created from the data, the Council produced its first Asset Map. An equally important tool developed from the analysis was the Youth Resource Directory, given to every youth (14 to 21) in Merced County.

#### **Where to Go for More Information**

Merced County Youth Council

Even though this project was conducted early in the Youth Council’s history, information is still available. Please contact

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