



LA YOUTH: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!



YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
STARTS WITH BEING INFORMED



YOUTH TOOLKIT

A Guide to Understanding
Civic Engagement Rights for Young People

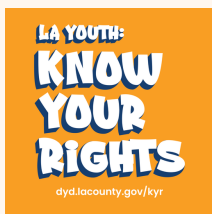
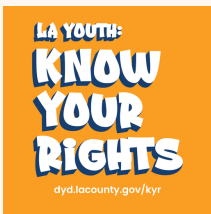


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INTRODUCTION

The “LA Youth: Know Your Rights” campaign is a partnership between the Los Angeles County Department of Youth Development, the Los Angeles County Public Defender’s Office, and the Los Angeles County Alternate Public Defender’s Office.

This campaign was created at the request of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to address the rise in youth-led civic action in response to increased immigration enforcement. While youth civic engagement is critical for social advancements, it is equally as important that youth remain safe and informed of their rights to prevent unnecessary harm or legal consequences.

This toolkit is tailored for youth and allies interested in learning how to safely exercise civic rights, such as with protests, walkouts, demonstrations, and other forms of civic engagement.

We hope to empower and educate youth and allies to safely stand up for themselves and be protected from unnecessary harm or legal consequences.

WANT TO READ THE BOARD MOTION?
SCAN HERE!



A partnership between:



Disclaimer: The resources and links provided are for general informational purposes only. The County makes no guarantees, expressed or implied, about the information included here. This information is not guaranteed to prevent the risk of detention, arrest, and possible prosecution. Please be cautious and make sure you are informed about the risks involved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit was created with and for young people. Through youth listening sessions, we learned directly from youth about the information, questions, and concerns that matter most when participating in their communities and civic life. Their feedback helped shape this resource and reflects our commitment to centering youth voices, experiences, and leadership.

We are grateful to the youth leaders, community partners, advocates, and organizations whose insights, expertise, and support made this toolkit possible.

- **Youth Leaders from Heart of Youth Justice Reimagined**
- **Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission**
- **Los Angeles County Youth Commission**
- **Los Angeles County Office of Education**
- **Los Angeles County Office of Immigrant Affairs**
- **Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health**
- **The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)**
- **The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)**

ABOUT THE ARTIST

A local youth artist was hired to co-develop the thematic design and branding of public-facing materials for this campaign.

Rudy Almazan

Rudy is a Chicano graffiti artist from Long Beach, CA who uses art to educate and bring community members together. He has a passion for empowering others through the intersection of art and fashion. To bring this vision to life, he created his own streetwear clothing brand, C.A.P.S. Streetwear (IG: capsstreetwear).

You can view Rudy's work on the cover page and pages 5, 9, 10, & 24.



LA YOUTH: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT 101

Did You Know?

Civic engagement is about using your voice and your ideas to shape the world around you. There are many ways to engage in civic participation and make a difference in your community!

Learn more about
your rights &
access resources at
dyd.lacounty.gov/kyr

SCAN BELOW



Ways to Participate in Civic Engagement:

- Engaging in lawful public demonstrations or protests
- Volunteering, fundraising, or donating
- Joining or starting a club
- Using social media & digital tools
- Meeting with local leaders or school officials
- Running for youth leadership roles
- Organizing community forums or events



Investing to support informed and empowered youth in LA County!

HISTORY OF YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Young people have always been at the heart of social and political change. From classrooms to city streets, youth have led movements that have reshaped their communities and the nation. Below are just a few examples of this powerful legacy.



1990 LGBTQ+ YOUTH ACTIVISM

Young people organized for visibility, equality, and safety in schools, forming groups like Gay-Straight Alliances and pushing for inclusive education.

1968 EAST LA WALKOUTS

Thousands of Mexican-American students walked out of East LA schools to demand equal education and cultural representation.



2020 LA COUNTY YOUTH COMMISSION

As the official youth advisory body to LA County, this youth-led body amplifies young voices in County policy and decision-making.



2019 DACA WALKOUTS

Thousands of young people coordinated walkouts across the country in support of the DACA program.



2020 HEART OF YOUTH JUSTICE REIMAGINED

HYJR is a youth-focused initiative in LA County that empowers youth to engage directly with DYD & creates opportunities for them to build leadership and share their voice.

2020 BLACK LIVES MATTER

Young organizers played a central role in nationwide demonstrations against racial injustice and police brutality, using social media to amplify their voices.



DID YOU KNOW?

Almost every major movement for justice has been powered by young voices. When you organize, speak out, vote, or educate others, you are continuing a long tradition of youth leadership and civic engagement.

STUDENTS' RIGHTS

In 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that students don't lose their constitutional rights to free speech or expression when they enter school.

This means students, K-12 and college level, have to the right to express themselves on school campuses and participate in a protest or walkouts.

However, there are certain limitations and policies to your rights at school. Below are your general rights as a student on school campus:

FREE SPEECH

You can speak out, distribute flyers, wear expressive clothing, and participate in protests, as long as it doesn't disrupt school operations or violate non-message-related policies.

PROTESTING

You can organize and/or participate in protests at school, but it must be peaceful, orderly, and not disrupt school operations. Schools can regulate the time, place, and manner of protests.

WALKOUTS

Schools can discipline you for missing school, even if you miss class to participate in a protest, but they can't punish you more harshly for the political nature of the protest.

SUSPENSION

Missing class alone is not grounds for suspension. However, schools may suspend you if you damage property or are disruptive during the protest.

TRUANCY

You are truant if you miss 3+ days without a valid excuse or are late/absent for over 30 minutes on 3+ occasions in a year.



STUDENT RESOURCES



STUDENTS' RIGHTS

LEARN ABOUT STUDENTS' RIGHTS ON CAMPUS AND WHAT TO DO IF SCHOOL RULES VIOLATE THOSE RIGHTS.

SOURCE: ACLU

aclu.org/know-your-rights/students-rights



NAVIGATING STUDENT PROTESTS TOOLKIT

USE THIS INTERACTIVE MAP OR THE LINKS PROVIDED TO ACCESS RELEVANT EDUCATIONAL LAWS AND FRAMEWORKS IN YOUR STATE.

SOURCE: NATIONAL CENTER FOR YOUTH LAW

stateofstudentrights.com



WE ARE ONE

ACCESS QUICK LINKS AND INFORMATION REGARDING STUDENT AND FAMILY RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN LAUSD.

SOURCE: LAUSD

weareone.lausd.org



MY SCHOOL, MY RIGHTS

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS' AND FAMILIES' AT CALIFORNIA'S TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

SOURCE: ACLU OF SOCAL

myschoolmyrights.com

LA YOUTH: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

Parent & Caregivers Conversation Guide: Youth Civic Engagement

Inform your parents & caregivers before participating in any form of civic engagement. This guide can help you start a supportive, honest conversation.

1. Start with Shared Values: Begin by connecting your interest in civic participation to something your family already cares about.

"I want to get involved because I care about our community and want to help make things better by _____."

2. Acknowledge Their Concerns: Let your caregiver know you understand their worries, especially around safety and potential risks.

"I know you're concerned about safety, and I really want us to make decisions together that feel safe for our family."

3. Explain What You Want to Do: Be clear about the activity you're interested in and why it matters to you.

4. Offer Alternatives: If your caregiver is nervous about demonstrations or public actions, suggest other ways to participate. (ex: organizing phone banks, signing petitions, etc.)

5. Share Your Safety Plan: Include steps you're taking like:

- a. Knowing your rights
- b. Going with trusted adults or in a group
- c. Sharing the event location, start/end times, who you'll be with, and their phone numbers
- d. Checking in before and after activities

6. Invite Them In: Let your caregiver know they are welcome to be part of the process.

"Would you look at this information with me?"

"Do you want to meet the group I'm planning to volunteer with?"

SCAN BELOW



Learn more about your rights & access resources at dyd.lacounty.gov/kyr



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LA YOUTH: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

PROTESTING



Before You Go: Stay Ready, Stay Safe

- ☐ Bring water, medications, and cash
- ☐ Dress for the weather
- ☐ Carry your phone + portable charger
- ☐ Write down emergency contacts (don't rely only on your phone)
- ☐ Share your location only with trusted people
- ☐ Avoid sharing personal details publicly and using privacy settings on social media

During a Protest

You CAN:

- Protest on public sidewalks, parks, and plazas
- Hand out flyers or information in public spaces
- Chant, sing, and express your message

You CANNOT:

- Block entrances, sidewalks, or buildings
- Disrupt other protests or tag/vandalize property
- Use speech that is obscene or incites immediate harm

Your Voice Matters:

Civic engagement starts with you. The First Amendment protects your right to speak up, gather, & peacefully protest.

Learn more about your rights & access resources at dyd.lacounty.gov/kyr

SCAN BELOW



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PROTESTING RIGHTS: IF DETAINED

Even though the **First Amendment** protects your right to peacefully protest and express your views, encounters with law enforcement during protests can still occur, which can be stressful or unpredictable.

Knowing your rights helps you stand up for what you believe in while protecting yourself and your community.

① Try your best to stay calm, keep your hands visible, and do not resist or obstruct, even if you believe your rights are being violated.

② If stopped by the police, ask if you are free to leave. If the officer says “yes,” calmly walk away. If the answer is “no” and you’re being detained, ask why.

Remember. Do not resist or obstruct, even if your questions are not answered.

③ If you're under 18, ask for a lawyer and parent or guardian. Don't sign anything or agree to questioning without a lawyer. You have the right to contact them.

④ Do not consent to a search of yourself or your belongings (bag, pockets, phone, etc.). If law enforcement does not ask for your permission before conducting a search, clearly state “I'm not consenting to a search of my person, vehicle, or belongings”

Remember. If you do explicitly consent, it can affect you later in court.

⑤ You have the right to film and record police and their actions in public, as long as it doesn't interfere with them. Police officers may not confiscate or view your photographs or video without a warrant, nor may they delete anything under any circumstances.

PROTESTING RIGHTS: IF ARRESTED

1

You have the right to ask why you are being arrested. Otherwise, say you wish to remain silent and ask for a lawyer immediately.



Remember: You do not have to answer questions without a lawyer. Invoking your right to remain silent can never be used against you in court and you should always consult with a lawyer before speaking to law enforcement. Remaining silent is not grounds for arrest.



If police attempt to question you further, you have the right to a lawyer. If you can't afford a lawyer, you have the right to free legal counsel.

Remember: The right to a lawyer is guaranteed by the 6th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

You can call **Jail Support LA** for support at **(424) 610-3020**

3

If you're under 18, the police are required to contact an attorney who specializes in representing youth and allow you to talk to that attorney by phone or video conference before they ask you any questions.



**LA COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDERS OFFICE
JUVENILE ADVOCACY**

pubdef.lacounty.gov/juvenile-advocacy



LEGAL RESOURCES



LA COUNTY'S PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE RAPID RESPONSE TEAM

TO ACCESS GENERAL CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM
GUIDANCE, CONTACT:

 **213-719-2801**

 **PDRRT@pubdef.lacounty.gov**



NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES OF LA COUNTY

NLSLA PROVIDES FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND
RESOURCES TO THOSE THROUGHOUT LA COUNTY.

 **nlsla.org**



CALIFORNIA'S OFFICIAL LEGAL RESOURCE: LAW HELP CA

LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS, THE LAW, AND
WHERE TO FIND LEGAL SERVICES NEAR YOU.

 **www.lawhelpca.org**



ACLU PROTESTERS' RIGHTS

LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS DURING A
PROTEST AND WHAT TO DO DURING A POLICE
INTERACTION OR ARREST.

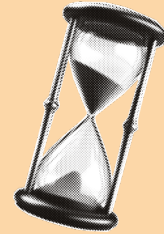
 **aclu.org/know-your-rights/protesters-rights**

CURFEWS, DISPERSAL ORDERS, AND UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLIES

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

CURFEW ORDER

A curfew order is a legal restriction that limits people from being in certain public areas during specific hours.



Curfews can include:

- **Youth Curfews:** Apply specifically to youth under 18 years old → in LA County, youth curfew is 10pm to sunrise.
- **Emergency or Civil Curfews:** Temporarily apply to everyone during protests, unrest, or natural disasters. Violating an emergency curfew can lead to warnings or citations, temporary detention or being taken home, fines or, in rare cases, arrest.

DISPERSAL ORDER



A dispersal order is a command from law enforcement to leave a specific area. It's usually issued when police believe a gathering is becoming unsafe or unlawful. Once given, anyone who remains in the area after being ordered to disperse may face arrest or citation.

UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY

An unlawful assembly is whenever two or more persons assemble together to do an unlawful act, or do a lawful act in a violent, boisterous, or tumultuous manner.

CURFEWS, DISPERSAL ORDERS, AND UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLIES

Being informed, planning ahead, and staying calm can help keep you safe during community events and demonstrations.



BEFORE ATTENDING AN EVENT

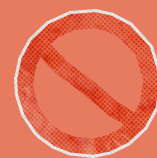
- ☐ Know local curfew rules and any emergency orders in effect.
- ☐ Plan your ride home and share your plans with a trusted person.
- ☐ Carry ID and emergency contact information.
- ☐ Stay with trusted friends, organizers, or adults whenever possible.

IF AN ORDER IS GIVEN

- Stay calm and listen for instructions.
- Leave the area promptly using the safest available route.
- Stay with your group and avoid confrontation with law enforcement.
- Go directly home or to another safe location.

IF YOU ARE STOPPED

- Ask, "Am I free to leave?"
- If you are not free to leave, remember that you have the right to remain silent.
- Stay calm and avoid escalating the situation.



AFTER THE EVENT

Write down important details about what happened, including the time, location, and any officer information if available.

This information may be useful if you later seek legal or advocacy support.



Remember: Not complying with a lawful curfew or dispersal order may result in a warning, citation, detention, fine, court appearance, or arrest.

CITATION & ARREST: WHAT YOUTH SHOULD KNOW

Getting a citation does not automatically mean you are guilty. Pay attention to deadlines, ask questions, and seek support if you are unsure what to do next.

CITATION



A citation (ticket) is a written notice for a minor offense, such as violating a curfew or failing to leave an area after a dispersal order.

A citation usually means:

- You are **not** taken to jail.
- You may have to appear in court later.
- Ignoring the citation can lead to additional consequences.



ARREST



An arrest means you're taken into custody, possibly to a local police station, juvenile hall, or processing center.

GUIDE TO JUVENILE JUSTICE COURT:

selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/juvenile-justice



CITATIONS

IF YOU RECEIVE A CITATION:



1

Tell a parent or guardian immediately.



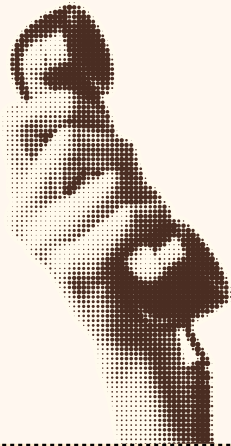
Review the citation and write down the court date, time, and location & do not ignore it.

2



3

Do not ignore a citation. Missing a court date can lead to more serious consequences.



Contact a legal aid or youth justice group for help understanding your options.

4



LEGAL AID FOUNDATION OF LOS ANGELES



lafla.org

LA COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE



pubdef.lacounty.gov/kyr

LA COUNTY ALTERNATE PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE



apd.lacounty.gov/juvenile-court

FOR SYSTEM-IMPACTED YOUTH

WHAT DOES “SYSTEM-IMPACTED” MEAN?

You may be considered system-impacted if you:

- Have been arrested, incarcerated, or involved in the justice system.
- Have a family member or loved one who has been incarcerated.
- Have been involved in the foster care system.



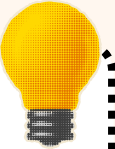
BEFORE PARTICIPATING IN CIVIC ACTION

Your experiences matter, but system involvement can sometimes create additional legal considerations.

To help protect your safety and wellbeing, consider speaking with a:

- Lawyer or public defender
- Trusted advocate or support person
- Probation officer (if applicable)
- Social worker or case worker (if applicable)

DID YOU KNOW?



Public defenders are court-appointed lawyers who represent individuals who can't afford private legal counsel.

NEED SUPPORT?

Local legal, youth justice, and community organizations may be able to provide guidance, resources, and support for system-impacted youth who want to participate in civic engagement.

LA COUNTY FOSTER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS



[LAYouthRights.com](https://www.layouthrights.com)

OFFICE OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY RESTORATION



oycr.ca.gov/ombudsperson

FOR IMMIGRANT YOUTH

Participating in protests or demonstrations may carry additional risks for immigrant youth and noncitizens. Your safety and wellbeing come first!

BEFORE PARTICIPATING IN CIVIC ACTION

Consider speaking with an immigration attorney, legal service provider, or trusted advocate if you have questions about how participation could affect your individual situation.



IF ARRESTED DURING CIVIC ACTION

If you are a noncitizen, do **not** provide your country of birth, citizenship, or immigration status to police officers or jail staff.

You can call **LA Rapid Response Network** at **(888) 624-4752**

Remember: Civic engagement is not limited to attending protests. There are many ways to make your voice heard and support your community such as mutual aid fundraisers, digital advocacy, or organizing townhalls!

NEED SUPPORT?



NATIONAL IMMIGRATION LAW CENTER IMMIGRANTS PARTICIPATION IN PROTESTS

THIS RESOURCE PROVIDES IMMIGRANTS AND ALLIES WITH INFORMATION ON IMMIGRANT RIGHTS & RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN PROTESTS.

 nilc.org/resources/immigrant-participation-in-protests-rights

FOR IMMIGRANT YOUTH: LEGAL RESOURCES



LA COUNTY OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS NOW YOUR RIGHTS RESOURCE HUB

ACCESS LOCAL RESOURCES AND RIGHTS
INFORMATION FOR IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES.

📞 **(800)-593-8222**

🔗 **oia.lacounty.gov/kyr**



LA COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE IMMIGRATION UNIT

GUIDANCE FOR REDUCING THE IMPACT OF
CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS.

📞 **(213) 974-0572**

🔗 **pubdef.lacounty.gov/immigration**



IMMIGRANT DEFENDERS LAW CENTER RAPID RESPONSE LEGAL RESOURCE HOTLINE

A RAPID RESPONSE LEGAL RESOURCE HOTLINE
FOR SOCAL MEMBERS DETAINED BY IMMIGRATION
ENFORCEMENT AGENTS.

📞 **(213) 974-0572 | M-F 9am-4pm**



NATIONAL IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES DIRECTORY

SEARCH FOR FREE OR LOW-COST IMMIGRATION
LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDERS BY STATE, COUNTY,
OR DETENTION FACILITY.

🔗 **immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory**

FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH

As an LGBTQ+ young person, you have the right to participate in civic life and express yourself safely.

BEFORE PARTICIPATING IN CIVIC ACTION

- Bring ID if available.
- Attend with trusted people.
- Plan transportation, meeting points, and any accessibility or safety needs.



LGBTQ+ YOUTH RIGHTS

- You generally have the right to use your chosen name and pronouns.
- You are protected from harassment and discrimination.
- You may request that officers use your chosen name and pronouns and request an officer of your gender during a search.

NEED SUPPORT?

LGBTQ+ organizations, legal aid providers, and community groups can help answer questions and connect you to resources.

ACLU LGBTQ RIGHTS



aclu.org/issues/lgbtq-rights

LOS ANGELES LGBTQ CENTER



lalgbtcenter.org

LAMBDA LEGAL



lambdalegal.org

FOR DISABLED YOUTH

Disabled youth have the right to participate in civic life safely and fully, but preparation is key to making engagement accessible and empowering.

BEFORE PARTICIPATING IN CIVIC ACTION

- Ask event organizers about accessibility and available accommodations.
- Plan for your access and health needs, including medications, mobility devices, water, snacks, or other essential supplies.
- Identify accessible restrooms, seating, rest areas, and transportation options before the event.
- If you wear a mask for health reasons or have other accommodation needs, review local policies and any available exceptions.
- Attend with trusted people when possible.



NEED SUPPORT?

Disability rights organizations, legal aid providers, and community groups can provide information, accommodations support, and resources.

ACLU DISABILITY RIGHTS



aclu.org/know-your-rights/disability-rights

DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGAL CENTER



thedrlc.org

REPORTING CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

We know that it can feel scary and stressful when police or officials don't follow the law or respect your rights. While discrimination and civil rights violations unfortunately still happen, often disproportionately affecting youth and communities of color, there are steps you can take to protect yourself and hold authorities accountable.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR RIGHTS ARE VIOLATED

1

If possible, record details like officers' badge numbers, patrol car numbers, and their agency.



2

Collect witness contact information and take photos of any injuries.



3

With this information, file a complaint with the agency's internal affairs or civilian complaint board.



WHERE TO FILE A COMPLAINT

LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT



lasd.org/file-a-complaint

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT



bit.ly/4uUI3Wb

ACLU SOCAL



socalintake.aclusocal.org

LA YOUTH: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Participating in civic action is important, but your health & wellbeing come first!

BEFORE CIVIC ACTION: Prepare your mind

1. Ground Yourself: Remind yourself why you're showing up and learn your rights about what's legal in your community to reduce fear and uncertainty.
2. Plan for Emotional Safety: Go with trusted friends or mentors and use a buddy system. Create self-soothing plan (breathing exercises, grounding music, affirmations, or prayer if that helps you).



DURING CIVIC ACTION: Stay grounded and connected



1. Check in with your body: Are you tense, hungry, or anxious? Take short breaks & use grounding techniques.
2. Stay Aware: If tensions rise or you feel unsafe, move toward calmer areas or leave and find a safe space.
3. Stay Connected: Talk with your friends during breaks, share how you're feeling. Encourage each other to leave if anyone feels overwhelmed.

AFTER CIVIC ACTION: Reflect, rest, and restore

1. Reflect: Journal about what you felt and talk with trusted peers, mentors, or family about your experience.
2. Rest: Do something you enjoy or that grounds you afterwards.
3. Restore: Recognize your impact because even small acts of civic engagement matter!



SCAN BELOW



Learn more about your rights & access resources at dtd.lacounty.gov/kyr

In Partnership With



Investing to support informed and empowered youth in LA County!