


# Youth In Action

## Capitol Day

# 04.05.13



Like Us On  
**facebook**   
TNOYS Youth In Action

**TNOYS**  
TEXAS NETWORK OF YOUTH SERVICES  
Their Future Is Our Business

# The Youth In Action Program



Youth In Action is a TNOYS program that offers young people opportunities to learn about the policy making process and discover how they can influence decision-makers. The program provides planning tools for community youth groups to discuss and prioritize issues, develop recommendations, and plan how they can advocate for changes that will benefit young people in their community.

Every two years, youth groups come together in Austin for Capitol Day to participate in the legislative process. The upcoming Capitol Day is scheduled for April 5, 2013. The event will be hosted by Texas Network of Youth Services. More than 300 youth and adults, representing communities and programs from across the state, participate in this collaborative event each legislative session.

Youth participating as part of Youth in Action will share their policy concerns and recommendations with other youth and learn more about advocacy at the state level. They will hear from a youth speaker and a legislator and talk directly with legislative staff. This year's legislative speaker will be Representative Eddie Rodriguez from Austin, who will discuss the power and importance of youth advocates using their voices in the legislative process.

**Youth CAN make a difference in how legislators vote on issues that affect their lives! By participating in Youth In Action, you and your group will become equipped to make an impact on issues important to YOU!**

Simple

## 9 Steps to Get Ready For and Participate In Youth In Action-Capitol Day



- 1.) Review this entire packet and determine whether the activities are appropriate for your group: call TNOYS if you have questions.
- 2.) Pre-register by **February 1, 2013** to let TNOYS know that you plan to participate and give us your expected group size. This greatly assists us in planning accordingly. The pre-registration form was sent with the “Save the Date” announcement on January 10, 2013.
- 3.) Schedule appointments with your legislators and/or their staff well in advance. Schedule them for the afternoon on April 5th, 2013. (See page 5 for instructions/tips.)
- 4.) Have each youth participant’s parent or guardian sign the enclosed school permission slip (page 6) and submit it to the youth’s school to excuse his/her absence on April 5th. Also get signatures on the photo/video release form (page 7).
- 5.) If your program is on a tight budget, consider trying to raise money to cover the cost of your group’s travel to Austin for the event.
- 6.) Complete the three activities in this packet with young people from your community and develop a proposal statement with recommendations for change. (See pages 10-12 for details.)
- 7.) Develop a creative way to express your proposal and recommendations—such as a skit, a video, artwork, a song, or any other expression of your ideas. (See “guidelines” on page 12.)
- 8.) Finalize and complete the Youth in Action registration form (page 4) and provide to TNOYS no later than: March 19, 2013. Remember to include a signed photo/video release form for any youth under the age of 18.
- 9.) Make sure your group, your ideas, and your voices are at the Capitol by 9:00 a.m. on Friday April 5th, 2013! Please be prepared to stay until around 3:00 p.m.



## Youth In Action - Capitol Day - April 5, 2013

# Registration Form

**Register By March 19th, 2013**

We are thrilled that you and your youth group have decided to participate in Youth In Action—There is no charge for youth participants, but we request that adult sponsors pay a \$10 registration fee to help with the costs of the event.

Please plan to bring **atleast one adult sponsor for every ten young people who attend the event.**

We look forward to hearing about the concerns of the young people you're working with!



**2525 Wallingwood Drive  
Suite 1503  
Austin, Texas 78746  
Phone: 512.328.6860  
Fax: 512.328.6863**

Participants:  
Use additional Sheets If needed

Youth or Adult?

Name

Agency

Address

City, State, Zip

Work Phone

Cell Phone

Email

Signator

Fee  
Adults: \$10.00  
Youth: Free

\$

\$

\$

\$

\$

\$

☐ I am the adult who will preview my group's presentation prior to the event

Please make checks payable to TNOYS

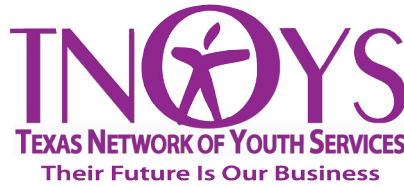
Total

Will you be joining us for lunch? YES ☐ NO ☐

# HOW TO MEET WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR



- A) **Make your appointments** with the legislative offices you wish to visit well in advance of the event, recommended by mid February. Schedule them for some time in the afternoon of Friday, April 5th, 2013. To identify your legislators, go to <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/> or call TNOYS for further assistance. Be aware that you may meet with legislative staff, rather than your actual legislators, because of their very busy schedules.
- B) **Consider selecting a spokesperson.** This is someone who will lead the discussion and answer questions during the meeting with your legislators or legislative staff.
- C) **Plan to present the results of the attached activities.** This includes your proposal statement along with your recommendations (in writing, if possible).
- D) **Keep your presentations brief!**
- E) **Demonstrate how your issue has affected you.** Use facts and a human story.
- F) **Encourage questions.** It is important to answer with facts and not arguments.
- G) **Always be polite and respectful,** even if you don't agree with the person you are talking to.
- H) Leave time to **write a thank you note** to the legislators and staff in each of the offices you visit at the end of the day. TNOYS will make materials for thank you notes available to you during Capitol Day.



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To Whom It May Concern:

Please permit \_\_\_\_\_ to be excused from school or other usual responsibilities on April 5, 2013 to participate in Youth In Action – Capitol Day activities. Youth In Action is a program of the Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) that provides young Texans an opportunity to learn about the advocacy process and to discover, first hand, how they can influence decision-makers.

The Youth In Action program provides planning tools for community youth groups to discuss and prioritize issues, develop recommendations, and develop a plan of action for their community. The Capitol Day event is scheduled for April 5, 2013. Youth groups will assemble with other youth at the State Capitol, hear about other communities' issues of concern, share ideas and solutions, learn to use advocacy skills and visit with legislators and their staff.

TNOYS is very pleased to offer young leaders in Texas this opportunity to participate in citizenship democracy and to provide them with training, tools and experiences that emphasize the tremendous value of participation in the legislative process.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Elizabeth Flint at 512.328.6860 or [eflint@tnoys.org](mailto:eflint@tnoys.org).

Thank you,

Christine Gendron  
Executive Director  
Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent, Legal Guardian or Adult Sponsor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

TNOYS needs a completed and signed copy of this form **for every child or young adult under age 18** who will be attending Capitol Day, as part of the Youth In Action program. If a youth group creates a video for their presentation that will include youth who will not be attending Capitol Day, TNOYS will need a completed and signed consent form for each of those youth as well.

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Youth In Action is a program of the Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) that provides young people from all over Texas a chance to learn about the advocacy process and to discover, first hand, how they can influence decision-makers. Each youth group participating in Youth In Action is urged to attend Capitol Day, scheduled to take place on April 5, 2013. Youth groups will assemble at the State Capitol to hear concerns of other youths, share ideas and solutions, learn to use advocacy skills and visit with legislators and their staff. TNOYS is very pleased to offer young leaders in Texas this opportunity. To help promote the program to more young people in the future, we plan to take photographs and video footage of this event. While it is a public event, we want to make responsible parties aware of our plans, and ask that you please sign the statement below, acknowledging the possibility that your child might appear in a photo on the TNOYS website or other materials.

Thank you,

Christine Gendron, Executive Director  
Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS)  
512.328.6860



As a participating youth (name: \_\_\_\_\_), and as a parent/guardian of that youth, we acknowledge and give consent that photos or video footage containing his/her image, may be used by the Texas Network of Youth Services in materials designed to promote the Youth In Action program and Texas Network of Youth Services. We understand that any photo or video footage taken or used as part of this program/event belong to the Texas Network of Youth Services.

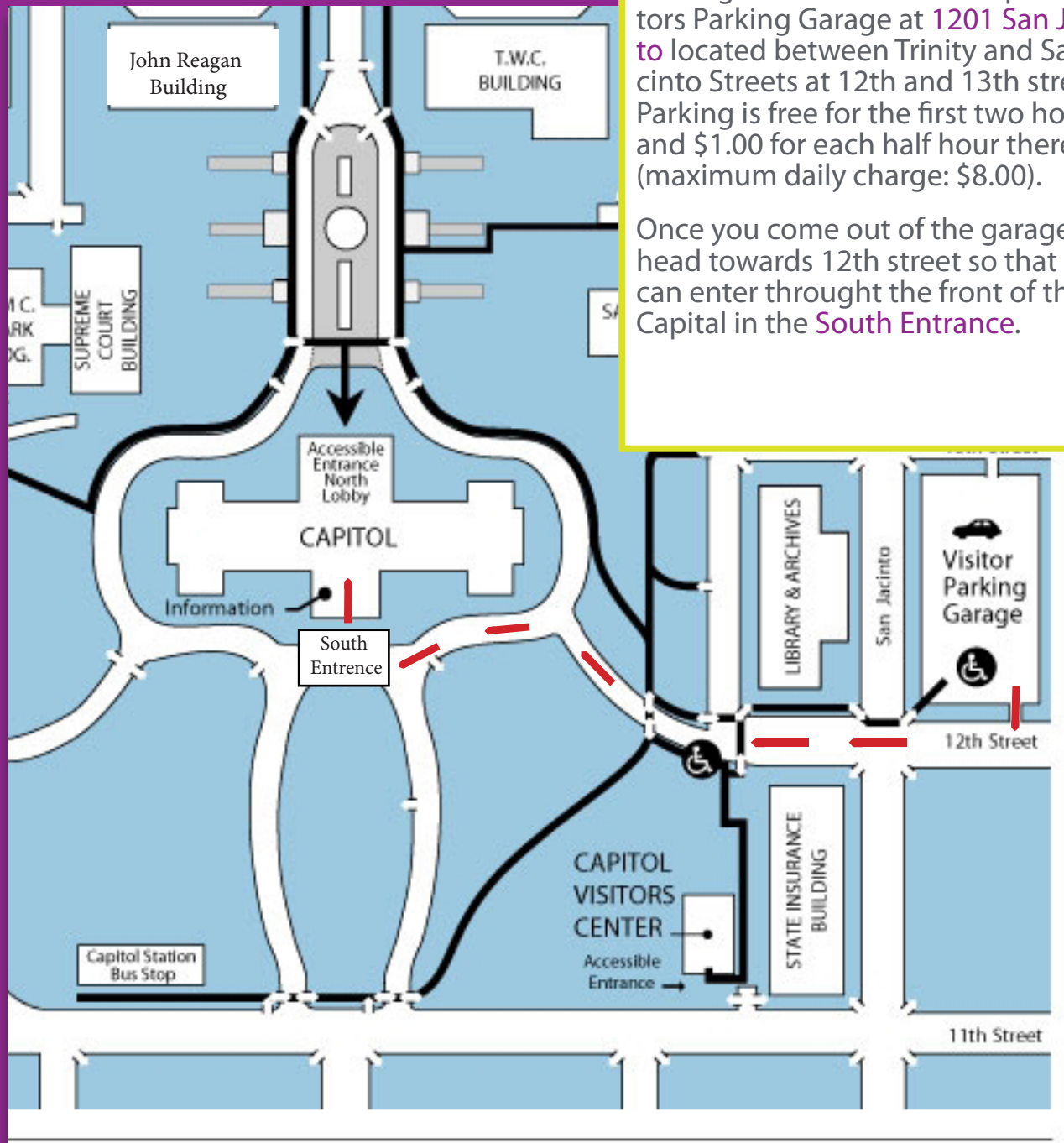
\_\_\_\_\_  
Youth's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# WHERE TO PARK



Parking is available in the Capitol Visitors Parking Garage at 1201 San Jacinto located between Trinity and San Jacinto Streets at 12th and 13th streets. Parking is free for the first two hours and \$1.00 for each half hour thereafter (maximum daily charge: \$8.00).

Once you come out of the garage, head towards 12th street so that you can enter through the front of the Capital in the South Entrance.



# DIRECTIONS



We are planning to kick off the event in the Capitol Auditorium in the Capital Extension Underground (E1.004) at 9:30 a.m. The youth activities will be in the auditorium until noon. Individual legislative visits will take place during the afternoon. We will conclude the event in the Legislative Conference Room (E2.002) with food and fun.



## To the Auditorium:

Enter through the front of the Capital; the South Entrance.

Go through the Rotunda to the North wing Elevators

Press (E1) to The Capital Extension Underground.

Proceed through the long hallway and the auditorium will be on your right (E1.004).

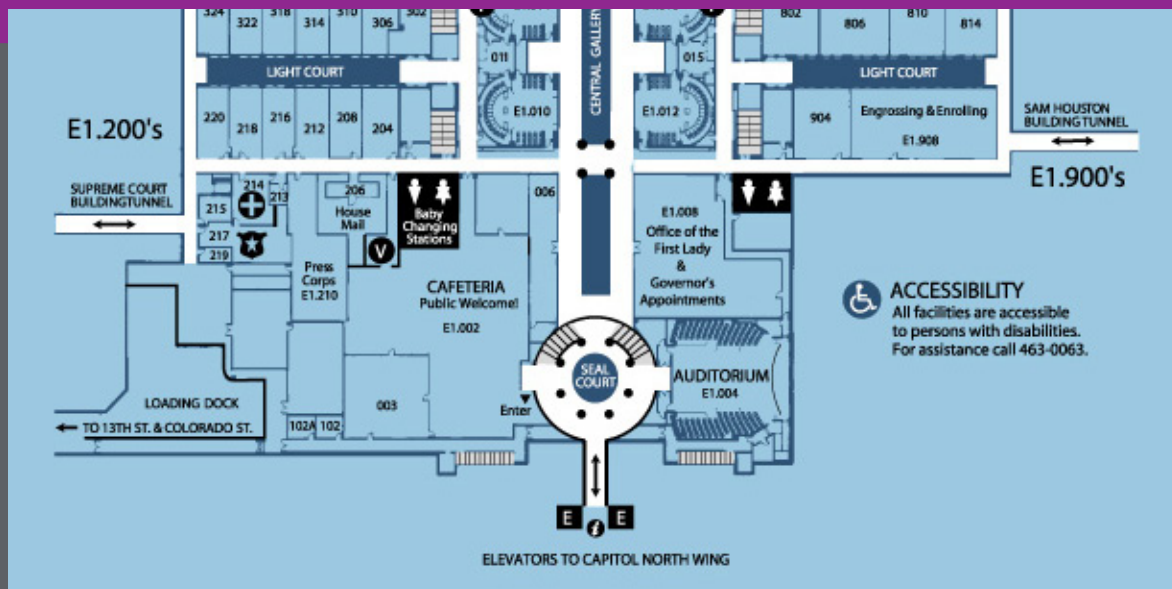
## To the Legislative Conference Room:

From the Auditorium head back to the elevators (on the left).

Press (E2) in The Capital Extension Underground.

Proceed through the long hallway and the Conference Room will be your first room on the right.

If you get lost, just look for the YIA signs! Or ask the Capitol Staff!



# PRESENTATIONS!



The goals of these activities are to: (1) identify & discuss issues or challenges that are of concern to youth in your group, (2) narrow and select 3 issues of concerns and develop recommendations for solutions, (3) come to consensus about which issues and recommendations your group will address during Youth in Action

## Activity 1!

Maybe you already know what problems you want to solve. Or you may be stuck on finding ways to make your community a safer place for young people. If you're stuck, try brainstorming!

### Tips:

**Don't do it alone! Do it in a group or class!**

**Write it down! You could use a flipchart!**

**All Ideas are Welcome!**

Rank your Issues. Pick 10 issues/ areas of concern. List them like the example below. Then rank each of the issues on a scale of 1 to 5, based on the level of concern you have about these issues within your community. Make your choices based on your own and your friends' personal experiences.

## Activity 2!

	Highly Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Minor Concern	Not A Concern	Not Sure
1. _____	1	2	3	4	5
2. _____	1	2	3	4	5
3. _____	1	2	3	4	5
4. _____	1	2	3	4	5
5. _____	1	2	3	4	5

**Now pick your top 3 choices from above!**

# PRESENTATIONS!



## Activity 3!

**Proposal Statements!** Now is time to further examine the 3 selected issues of concern and identify at least 3 recommendations for addressing them. It's one thing to identify the problem; but your voice carries much more weight if you have identified a way to solve it.

**A.** Break into small groups and appoint a youth leader. Discuss the 3 issues that your group prioritized as most important. Instruct the groups to answer this question: "What could be done to meet each of these challenges?" They might think of actions that could be taken by young people, agencies, schools, families, neighborhoods, or even changes to laws.

**B.** In your small groups carefully reexamine each of the priority issues and all of the potential solutions that were brainstormed.

**C.** Now for each of the issues, select 3 recommendations to be addressed during Youth in Action. Think about the clearest, most realistic or practical recommendations to actually solve the problems.

**D.** The group should develop their recommendations into proposal statements using the format below.

**Proposal Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**In order to: (intent of proposal)** \_\_\_\_\_

**we propose that: (practical activity)** \_\_\_\_\_

**through:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. What youth can do:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. What communities can do:** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What government can do:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E.** Each group then presents their 3 proposal statements and 3 recommendations to the larger group. If someone doesn't agree with one of the statements, they may suggest changes to the proposal statement for the whole group to discuss. Discussion is good, but keep in mind that each group has to present their ideas. Keep things moving.

**F.** Small groups can practice "role-playing" the scenarios. For instance one person can be the group's spokesperson while another will play the part of a legislator. Other group members can provide supportive feedback about the presentation and identify areas to further hone in on.

**...Now come up with a way to present the proposal and recommendation(s) that your group decided to address during Youth In Action—Capitol Day.**



### **Examples of ways to present your proposal include:**

- > Perform a skit**
- > Create a piece of artwork**
- > Give a speech**
- > Write a poem or song**
- > Make a YouTube style video**

### **Guidelines:**

- 1.) Your presentation must be 3 minutes or less.**
- 2.) YOUR presentation should be about the issues YOU care about.**
- 3.) Use your creativity and have fun!**

### **Hints/Resources:**

**Think about the types of presentations you find interesting. What makes you want to listen to someone else explain their ideas? The same types of presentations might be a good way for you to communicate your message.**

**You may want to combine several communication methods into your presentation. For example, you could perform a skit that includes a short song or use some of your artwork as props.**

# **BE CREATIVE.**



**The following summaries reveal that young people can be very influential with their peers, parents, the press, the private sector, and policy-makers.**

### **ALCOHOL & DRUGS**

Seventh graders in Dallas, Texas documented the number of liquor stores in their neighborhood, especially near schools. They traveled to the state legislature to present their findings. Senator West, a strong supporter, declared "The children motivated me. I'm going to do all I can to help get the bill passed." The state law was changed to allow the local zoning board to reduce the number of liquor stores.

Students in Omaha, Nebraska conducted a student survey at their school and the results led them to set up a before-school and after-school substance abuse help group. This group networks with agencies throughout the city and refers students in need to the proper professionals and community agencies.

### **DISCRIMINATION & RACISM**

Compelling testimony by young people based on their personal experiences of discrimination convinced wary Massachusetts legislators to pass a landmark Gay and Lesbian Student Rights Law. Students, with the support of the Lieutenant Governor, spoke at hearings, met with individual lawmakers, organized a massive letter-writing campaign, and held rallies and candlelight vigils that raised public support for a law aimed to "provide all students with a safe and supportive public education."

More than 10,000 students in Los Angeles walked out of classes in 1994 to demonstrate against a California referendum barring undocumented immigrants from attending schools and receiving other public services. Leonardo Hernandez, 16, who was among the Montabello High School demonstrators said, "Maybe if they see us, people will realize that this is what will happen if the proposition passes because we will all be in the streets instead of school."

### **EDUCATION & SCHOOLS**

Art classes were disappearing in Portland, Oregon. One student was so upset that she wrote to rock star Jackson Browne and asked him to hold a benefit concert. To her surprise, she got a call at home from Browne himself who agreed. The concert raised \$100,000 for arts education and the students, in cooperation with the school board, decided how the money would be spent.

To combat anti-gay prejudice, several students succeeded at creating a Gay-Straight Alliance Club at their high school in North Carolina. Persistence and networking made the difference. Despite their fear of violence and the principal's resistance, the students let it be known that they might file a grievance against the school for violating the Equal Access Act. The group received support from the local Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network chapter.

## EMOTIONAL HEALTH & STRESS

Allie Young of Pinellas County in Florida recognized the need for more education and visibility about eating disorders because of her own battle with the disease. She formed Helping Hands, a support group at her school for teenagers coping with anorexia nervosa. Her advocacy efforts included a campaign to raise awareness of the need for every county in the state to provide comprehensive services and treatment geared for those suffering from this life-threatening disease, especially those unable to pay for expensive hospitalization.

Seventeen-year-old runaway Janna Koschene of Colorado, presented a vivid account of sleeping in cars and overnight shelters at hearings conducted by a congressional committee. She gave detailed recommendations based on her own positive experiences at a daytime drop-in center in Denver. At a time when budgets were being cut, Congress voted a modest increase for federal funds earmarked for crisis shelters and other community-based youth centers.

## RECREATION & YOUTH SERVICES

In Hopkins, Missouri (population 600), a high school sophomore wanted to turn an abandoned theater into a teen center. After recruiting some friends, they made a presentation to Community 2000 and wrote a short article in their weekly newspaper. Bingo! As a result of this publicity, the students received an anonymous donation of \$40,000 to fulfill their need.

## TEEN SEXUALITY

A high school class in Ohio took on the problem of teen pregnancy and interviewed dozens of people in the community from doctors and correctional officers to a teen mother. They approached their school board for funds and published a booklet, to educate others which was done so well that the local medical center and area schools distributed it.

Two hundred students traveled to the state legislature in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to protest a welfare reform proposal requiring parental consent for abortions for minors. At the rally, the Teen Health and Welfare Coalition presented a petition with more than 1,000 signatures saying that "teenagers should be consulted before legislation is passed that affects our lives."

## VOTING

The Cambridge City Council in Massachusetts passed legislation lowering the voting age to 17 by a vote of 8-1 in March 2002. The year before, a proposal by the student-led Campaign for a Democratic Future that would have given 16-year-olds the right to vote in municipal elections was defeated. One opponent on the City Council was persuaded because "This group stayed with it" and another councilor changed her mind: "Your energy, persistence, and commitment are truly inspiring." This suffrage battle continues now at the state legislature because Massachusetts, like many other states, must approve a home rule petition.

**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."**

**- Margaret Mead**



Like Us on Facebook at **TNOYS Youth In Action** for exclusive YIA videos, pictures, information and updates on YIA-Capitol Day and other upcoming events for YOUTH!

**TNOYS**  
TEXAS NETWORK OF YOUTH SERVICES  
Their Future Is Our Business