

news galleryweek

August 19, 2026

CHOICES Program accepting applicants for new Tulare County Youth Council

The TCOE CHOICES Prevention Programs, in a strategic partnership with the California Friday Night Live Partnership and the City of Tulare, has launched a comprehensive youth cannabis prevention initiative funded by a \$4.5 million Prop 64 Public Health & Safety Grant. A primary focus of this project is the creation of the Tulare County Youth Council (TCYC), a youth-led, adult-supported program. TCYC is designed to reduce illicit and underage cannabis use and promote healthy decision-making across the county, with a highlighted focus on the city of Tulare. By utilizing research-based prevention programs and the proven Friday Night Live (FNL) model, the council will empower student leaders to lead advocacy initiatives, deliver peer-to-peer educational programs, and shift community attitudes regarding the risks and legal consequences of illicit and underage cannabis use.



CHOICES is now actively recruiting dedicated student leaders to represent the diverse voices of Tulare County. This unique opportunity is open to youth who are eager to implement the FNL Standards of Practice, which include building meaningful youth-

adult partnerships, engaging in community advocacy, and developing leadership skills in a safe, inclusive environment. Council members will gain hands-on experience by conducting community research, analyzing local data through a countywide survey, and planning a major countywide youth conference to showcase their prevention work. By joining this effort, students will serve as vital peer mentors and role models, working directly with local agencies and elected officials to create lasting positive change for their communities.

High school and college-age youth are encouraged to apply for the Tulare County Youth Council at <https://bit.ly/TCYC2026>.

Student Future Ready Events to hold information meetings for coaches



Schools that plan to participate in a number of the large annual student events coordinated by the Tulare County Office of Education are invited to send their coaches to informational meetings beginning next month.

At the coaches' meetings, event coordinators will cover the process for registering teams, any applicable state or national themes, and changes to rules and regulations.

This year, there is one new event for middle school students – Middle School Mock Trial.

To attend one or more of the following information meetings, please contact the event coordinator listed.

Sustainability Challenge Showcase Kick-off Meeting (grades 9-12)

September 8, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Zoom session

For information, contact College and Career Readiness at 559-739-0314

TCOE Esports League Community of Practice Meeting (grades 6-8)

September 8, 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Zoom session

For information, contact Doug Cairns at doug.cairns@tcoe.org

Step Up Youth Challenge Advisor Training (grades 5-12)

September 8, 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

TCOE Administration Building

For information, contact Zoty Briceño at miozoty.briceno@tcoe.org

Middle School Mock Trial (grades 6-8) New!

September 9, 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

TCOE Administration Building, Cedar Room

For information, contact Paula Terrill at paula.terrell@tcoe.org

Mock Trial Coaches' Meeting (grades 9-12)

September 15, 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

TCOE Administration Building, Redwood Center B

For information, contact Paula Terrill at paula.terrell@tcoe.org

Reading Revolution Coaches' Meeting (grades 4-8)

September 22, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

TCOE Administration Building, Redwood Center EF

For information, contact Paula Terrill at paula.terrell@tcoe.org

Poetry Live! Informational Meeting (grades 6-12)

September 24, 4:00-5:00 p.m.

TCOE Doe Avenue Complex, Willow Room

For information, contact Paula Terrill at paula.terrell@tcoe.org

Academic Decathlon Coaches' Meeting (grades 9-12)

October 1, 4:00-5:00 p.m.

TCOE Administration Building, Redwood Center D

For information, contact Paula Terrill at paula.terrill@tcoe.org

Academic Pentathlon Coaches' Meeting (grades 6-8)

October 6, 4:00-5:00 p.m.

TCOE Administration Building, Redwood Center D

For information, contact Paula Terrill at paula.terrill@tcoe.org

Science Olympiad B/C Coaches' Meeting (grades 6-12)

October 7, 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

TCOE Administration Building, Cedar Room

For information, contact Paula Terrill at paula.terrill@tcoe.org

Young People's Concerts Link Up Training (grades 3-5)

October 6, 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Register for the meeting at <https://tcoe.org/StudentEvents/YoungPeoplesConcerts>

For information, contact Kate Stover at kate.stover@tcoe.org

Science Olympiad A Coaches' Meeting (grades 4-6)

October 20, 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

TCOE Administration Building, Cedar Room

For information, contact Paula Terrill at paula.terrill@tcoe.org

History Day Coaches' Meeting (grades 4-12)

October 22, 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

TCOE Administration Building, Cedar Room

For information, contact Paula Terrill at paula.terrill@tcoe.org

Community Design Challenge Kick-off Meeting (grades 9-12)

January 28, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.

TCOE Administration Building

For information, contact College and Career Readiness at 559-739-0314

For the dates of these and other Student Future Ready Events,

visit tcoe.org/StudentEvents.

Step Up Youth Challenge kicks off September 8 with advisor training



The annual Step Up Youth Challenge is a long-running school/community service program for teams of middle school and high school students. The program kicks off with an advisor training on September 8, beginning at 4:30 p.m. at the TCOE Administration Building in Visalia. Advisors are encouraged to register for the mandatory training by visiting tcoe.org/StepUp/advisor's-corner.

Details on the student Youth Summit, community service project development and submission process, and the Red Carpet Awards ceremony will be shared at the advisor training.

Continuing on September 28, advisors and their student team members will come together for a full-day Youth Summit at TCOE's Administration Building. The summit is designed to motivate and inspire students on their journeys to create impactful community service projects.

Participating middle and high school teams will compete for grants totaling \$13,000. Now its 15th year, the Step Up Youth Challenge is coordinated on behalf of the County of Tulare and the Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency by TCOE's

CHARACTER COUNTS! program. For more information, contact Zoty Briceño at 559-737-6349 or miozoty.briceno@tcoe.org.

Editor: [Robert Herman](#), Communications Director

Contributors: Nayirah Dosu, Jennifer Fisher, Jaime Burnitzki, Brittaney Quinonez, Paula Terrill, Kathleen Green-Martins

To receive the News Gallery Week, sign up using the [form](#), or contact Jennifer Fisher at jenniferf@tcoe.org or 559-733-6172.