

YOUTH AGING OUT SURVEY
ISSUE: YOUTH LEADERSHIP/ADVISORY BOARDS

What youth leadership/advisory board structure currently exists in your state?

Alaska

Alaska's youth leadership group is "Facing Foster Care in Alaska".

Arizona

The state supports both a statewide and local Youth Advisory Board(s). In Arizona, DCYF services are delivered through six regional areas called "districts". Each district has a staff person assigned who assists in facilitation of the state Chafee Independent Living Program including a local youth advisory board. The state Independent Living Coordinator assists alumni in facilitation of the statewide board that meets with the Governor twice each year to provide information on the needs of older youth in care.

Colorado

As a State-supervised/County Administered System, counties often have youth advisory boards that advise counties and since many services are contracted through providers there are also provider youth advisory boards

The new and history-making state-regional youth leadership/advisory board is in its infancy with the creation of six regional teams with each providing two representatives to the state-level team...each youth member is called a "Consultant".

Without minimizing the fine work of others, a particularly noteworthy team is the dynamic El Paso County Youth Advisory Board who provide state-wide leadership on youth permanency issues as co-train-the-trainers with adult staff...conducting two youth permanency summits this year past and presenting at the child welfare conference

The YES! Academy that serves homeless youth has provided a panel at the National Independent Living Association Conference this past year

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative-Bridging the Gap-has an active leadership team based at the non-profit Mile High United Way.

Connecticut

The DCF currently has 10 area office or regional boards that meet on at least a monthly basis. These boards also send two representatives to meeting on a statewide level on a bi-monthly basis.

Delaware

The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) consists of foster youth and former foster youth, age 14 and older. The YAC has elected officers who serve two-year terms. The ILP Manager oversees the Council and adult volunteers serve as advisors/mentors.

Indiana

Indiana currently has a youth advisory board that can house up to 18 members. These members are current and former foster youth ranging from 16-21 years of age. Ideally they are representatives from the 18 regions in Indiana.

Iowa

Iowa SALYD, (Self-Advocacy and Leadership for Youth with Disabilities) a membership organization of youth with disabilities that provides peer support, information, and advocacy to youth with disabilities. Grant manager Becky Flores, when developing the program, gathered support from important partners in Iowa's Disability Community. These partners include:

- The Iowa Governor's Developmental Disabilities Council
- Iowa Protection and Advocacy Services, Inc.
- Ask Resource Center
- Iowa Division of Persons with Disabilities
- Iowa Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development

Iowa DHS contracted a private agency to administer the Iowa Aftercare Services Network. IASN is a network of private agencies across the state to assist youth as they leave foster care and enter adulthood. Aftercare is a voluntary support system, which offers case management, guidance, and when certain criteria are met such as working full time or going to school, a monthly stipend. This stipend is referred to as PAL. Those in Aftercare and PAL work with a "self sufficiency advocate"(SSA) to develop a "self sufficiency plan". This plan addressed the young person's needs in areas of housing, health, relationships, education, and employment. Mental health is frequently addressed in the Self Sufficiency Plan and in bi-weekly, one-on-one sessions with the youth and the SSA. The youth remains eligible for Aftercare only if they are meeting with the SSA and working on their goals.

The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development is a state-led interagency initiative designed to better align policies and programs and to encourage collaboration among multiple state and community agencies on youth-related issues. The goals of the initiative are to promote the use of positive youth development principles in state policies and programs and to facilitate the use of effective youth development practices in communities throughout Iowa.

With the support and encouragement of families, schools and communities, Iowa youth can help create a better Iowa. The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development is working to make certain that youth have opportunities to be involved, practice healthy behaviors and are socially competent, achieve success in school, and are prepared for a career and a productive adulthood.

Iowa DHS has recently joined with a fantastic youth group, Elevate, who has gained nationwide attention for their efforts toward improving Iowa's foster care system. Elevate is opening chapters across the state to allow all foster care youth in and who have aged out of foster care. Elevate uses voice, poetry and other talents to educate, inform and energize. Elevate has spoken at court engagements, new worker training, foster parent meetings. Elevate youth freely discuss how mental health, typically depression, has impacted their ability to function and also how the "system" has been able to support them in getting the help they need.

Maine

The Youth Leadership Advisory Team (YLAT) has been Maine's youth leadership organization for youth in foster care since 1998.

The Maine State Legislature established the Legislative Youth Advisory Council to advise them with respect to issues that impact the lives of children and young adults in Maine. This is the first board of its kind in the country. One of our YLAT youth leaders is a member of this board. This had led to the enactment of two pieces of legislation that improved the lives of children and young adults in care.

The Maine Youth Action Network (MYAN) is a statewide Network of support for youth and adults who are striving to effect positive change. We strongly believe in the power of youth and adult partnerships, and the capacity we all have to change the world we live in. MYAN trains, supports, connects and advocates for youth organized to effect positive change through school and community-based peer programs. We are a partnership of youth and adult staff working to help youth and their advisors in peer groups to fulfill their own mission. Youth groups of all types can be part of MYAN, including social action, prevention, education, peer listening, mediation, mentoring, health promotion, civil rights and others.

Minnesota

We do not have a formal youth advisory board. We are interested in creating a structure for this and in May 2007 we met with the executive director of Foster Club Inc., several youth and a private foundation to examine our options and recommend a structure to Department administration.

Mississippi

The DFCS IL program continues to make efforts to increase youth involvement through the youth advisory board named Helping Ourselves Prosper Equally (HOPE) Forum.

HOPE Forum is a youth advisory group, which consists of members who are participating in the Independent Living Program. Meetings are held at least once a quarter for the youth to discuss improvements or challenges with the Independent Living Program. Though this area has been challenging to capitalize on, efforts continue to review the best way to structure this board. Plans are in place to seek further information to better this process. However, efforts include allowing youth to express ideas and concerns through different lines of communication, like HOPE forum.

Missouri

The Missouri State Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) was established December 1992. The SYAB meets on a quarterly basis. Each member of the board is an outstanding youth in foster care that represents other youth in his/her area of the state. Each of the seven administrative areas is represented with up to four (4) youth to serve on the SYAB to assure that SYAB members are equally representing their specific area as related to geographical size. The board also may consist of three non voting, ex-officio members. Ex-officio members must be a current or former foster care youth who has served at least a one-year term as a board member or alternate, within the last three years.

Nebraska

In Nebraska we have two advisory board structures that work with foster youth:

Governors Youth Advisory Council (GYAC). The Council strives to:

- Give youth from diverse populations and geographic locations in the State a united voice;
- Provide opportunities for youth involvement on state and local boards and committees which develop programs to serve youth;
- Keep abreast of the bills, laws, policies, and decisions that might have an impact on youth in their communities;
- Increase the level of communication between youth, community, and government;
- Assure that youth are represented in State initiatives; to collaborate with other state and local youth organizations;
- Increase youth and adult partnerships in order to build better communities;

Foster Youth Councils (FYC):

- Advise the Health and Human Services Director regarding issues, policies and practices that affect foster youth;

- Publishes and distributes a quarterly newsletter “Nebraska Connected” for youth in foster care, with articles related to transitional and independent living.

New York

Youth in Progress (YIP) is the NYS OCFS Foster Care Youth Leadership Team. The team is comprised of youth leaders, each with an adult mentor from each of the six regional foster care youth leadership groups, OCFS partners, and the Adolescent Services Resource Network (four regionally based centers under contract with OCFS to provide training and technical assistance to local district and voluntary agency staff on adolescent issues).

The structure has three different teams:

- The Support Team is responsible for managing the overall initiative and keeping it on track. The Support Team includes representatives from the following offices within OCFS: Policy; Training; Program Support and Regional Office. Also part of the team is the ASRN located in Albany.
- The AD HOC Members – who are kept informed of activities but “called to action” when issues need to be addressed. This team includes representatives from OCFS Legal, Public Information, Youth Development, Division of Rehabilitative Services and Bureau of Program Monitoring and Performance Improvement.
- Regional Partners which includes representatives from each of the OCFS regional offices and each of the ASRNs.

North Carolina

SaySo, Inc. (Strong Able Youth Speaking Out) has been in existence since 1998. The SaySo Board of Directors (BOD) is comprised of 20 youths statewide as voted by their peers at the annual statewide meeting. The organization has ten local chapters, and approximately 400 general members.

North Dakota

Our Youth Leadership Group is NDYouth. It is a formal board, complete with bylaws, elected offices, etc... We have a State Board, as well as 8 smaller Regional Boards. The regional boards have adopted the state bylaws, and also elect their Regional Board members.

Ohio

Overcoming Hurdles In Ohio (O.H.I.O) Youth Advisory Board. This advocacy group is supported by PCSAO and PCSA’s and foster parents.

- Since 2006 they have held more than 20 regional meetings around Ohio and conducted four statewide meetings.
- They have spoken to over 500 child welfare professionals since the beginning of 2007.
- O.H.I.O has participated in discussion with Ohio State legislator’s regarding foster care reform legislation.
- O.H.I.O has recently given testimony in support of the current budget.

Tennessee

Tennessee DCS has a limited system of Regional Youth leadership Boards (Y4Y) across the state. However, we are currently working with Clay Finck and Dorothy Ansell of the National Resource Center to build a statewide Y4Y and infrastructure to support a board in each of our 12 regions.

Virginia

The Virginia Youth Advisory Council (V-YAC) is an advocacy group for youth in and aging out of foster care. V-YAC is comprised of youth age 15 and over statewide.

Washington

➤ In April 2005, Children’s Administration in partnership with Casey Family Programs and College Success Foundation established a Statewide Youth Advisory Board named “Passion to Action” to serve in an advisory function, providing CA with input and recommendations regarding our policy and practices. Feedback from this Board aids CA in improving our ability to effectively meet the needs of the children and adolescents we serve.

➤ The Board consists of up to 20 current and former foster youth from around the state who have been recipients of CA services. The members actively participate in various committees within CA and other governmental agencies, as well as community agencies to provide input on new practices and policies (as they are the experts).

➤ The Board presents at various functions within CA and in the community to share their story, offer their expertise, and provide feedback on current issues.

➤ In October 2006 the Children’s Administration along with several other community partners co-sponsored the first Washington State Foster Youth and Alumni leadership summit. This summit brought foster youth and alumni (who have demonstrated leadership abilities) from around the state together to have them develop local action groups. Washington State has 6 regions and there is at least one action group in each region. The regional groups are still in different developmental stages. Some have been running for a year while others are just getting started.

- Region 1 - U.N.I.T.E – Understanding needs and Implementing Them Everyday
- Region 2 – R2FYAC- Region 2 Foster Youth Action Council
- Region 3 – HEY-MAC – Hearing Every Youth-Making A Change
- Region 4 - GSAN (Greater Seattle Alumni Network) – first chapter of FCAA (national alumni movement)
- Region 5 – Connected – The Connected Youth and Alumni Leaders of Tacoma
- Region 6- Raise Your Voice
- Region 6- Y.E.L.L. – Youth and Excellence leadership Link

➤ Passion to Action members sit on local action/support groups for foster youth and alumni in their regions.

What activities and initiatives is your youth leadership/advisory board currently involved in?

Alaska

FFCA has quarterly statewide meetings and has more frequent local meetings in the four state regions. FFCA members have participated in community meetings concerning foster care, they have participated in the training of new foster parents, and they have participated in radio programs dealing with issues faced by youth in foster care. FFCA members have also participated in national conferences regarding youth leadership.

Arizona

The Youth Advisory Board is involved in a number of activities and initiatives including:

- Caregiver (foster parent) training
- New Case Manager training
- Juvenile Court Judges training
- Monitoring of group care facilities

- Development of informational brochures, booklets, etc., to educate peers on youth rights, services, community support, etc.
- Place, Vision and Voice project with ASU is a media campaign to dispel myths about youth in care.
- Planning and facilitation of annual youth and staff development conferences.
- State Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) including participation in the statewide assessment, on-site review and Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).

Colorado

The state-regional teams are forming and assisting Colorado implement the Child and Family Services Review by participating in a state-wide logo contest with the Top 5 winning cash prizes and awards.

This team will provide a coordinated voice in informing best practices for youth services in Colorado.

The El Paso County Youth Advisory Team is conducting a presentation on youth permanency at the Colorado Child Welfare Conference this week and they are preparing for summit on the Western Slope in the fall of 2007.

Connecticut

The YAB's are involved with a number of initiatives including a Speakers Bureau, Peer Mentoring, Leadership Teams, Policy Team Members, Grant Reviewers, presenters at local, state and national conferences, Foster Parent Recruitment, etc.

Our boards are also designing a power point presentation for youth coming into care.

Delaware

YAC meets on a monthly basis. YAC has applied for and received small grants to fund activities, such as Leadership Seminars, field trips, and career day. YAC members volunteer for community projects, i.e. community health fairs, Mental Health Day Awareness and Habitat for Humanity. Members are currently developing an IL Resource Book. YAC members participate on panels during statewide summits relative to older youth and youth aging out of foster care.

Indiana

Currently our Board is able to speak at numerous trainings and conferences. Their input is requested for a variety of issues. They are also able to decide amongst themselves as to their goals and participate in events.

Iowa

Elevate uses their voice, poetry and other talents to educate, inform and energize. Elevate has spoken at court engagements, new worker training, foster parent meetings. Elevate youth freely discuss how mental health, typically depression, has impacted their ability to function and also how the "system" has been able to support them in getting the help they need.

In the 2006-2007 year, SIYAC had three initiatives: mandate guidance counselor presence in each school district across Iowa (passed – schools must have 1 guidance counselor for every 350 students), stabilize the college tuition rate, and ensure all students have access to advanced placement courses through their high schools. Two of SIYAC's previous initiatives pass this year as well. Anti-bullying legislation mandating schools to have a school policy protecting gays, lesbians, and bi-sexual students and a poll-worker bill allowing youth 16-18 to work at polling stations in exchange for school credit. Previously, one had to be 18 to work in a polling station.

Maine

Youth leaders are involved in leadership development activities through a two day leadership retreat, attendance at state and national conferences as well as skill building in local leadership meetings.

As YLAT matures there are increased calls for youth leaders to be prepared for a variety of leadership roles. Youth leadership activities include training & public speaking, serving on advisory committees, developing resources in the community for youth in care, working on policy & legislative initiatives and meeting with DHHS staff and administrators.

Youth continued to be called upon to provide perspective and testimony to legislative hearings and initiatives, to work with OCFS staff on policy initiatives, and to meet with or serve on advisory committees and workgroups (e.g. Maine Justice for Children Task Force, Evidenced Based Practice Workgroup, Group Care Standards Workgroup, Program Improvement Committee, District Future Search Workgroups, the National Scholarship Fund and the Governors Task Force). There is greater opportunity to increase the capacity of additional professionals to act as adult partner with youth leaders in these types of activities. Staff from the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service will provide youth and adult partnership training to accomplish this goal. Participants will include OCFS staff, community agencies, and providers of Children's Behavioral Health services.

The demand for youth engagement activities has grown, fueled by successes in youth training, youth engagement in policy and youth roles on advisory committees. The broader community has been inspired and engaged by the compelling and competent voices of youth leaders. YLAT youth leaders have provided keynote presentations with the assistance of AddVerb Productions in Washington DC and soon in Tulsa, OK and Minneapolis, MN. They will also present these at the Maine Child Abuse Action Network Conference and the Maine annual conference for youth in foster care in 2007. They have been requested to present at the 2008 conference being planned by the Maine Justice for Children Task Force. Youth leaders have also made important presentations at national conferences such as It's My Life Conference, the NAPCWA Annual Conference, the Destination Future Youth Leadership Conference and more.

Minnesota

Youth participate in the planning of the annual youth conference and the state Chafee advisory board. Youth also recently participated in a statewide Children's Justice Advisory Committee meeting to examine systemic improvements to the foster care system.

Mississippi

The youth advisory group has completed criteria guidelines for the HOPE Forum youth advisory group. They are participants with youth weekend activities, summer youth conferences, and various other agency meeting held through the year, statewide. Youth leaders have been identified per the seven (7) regions of Mississippi.

Missouri

Student Youth Advisory Board and Area Youth Advisory Board members have been involved in panel presentations and various state/area conferences regarding what the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program has meant to them and how it can make a difference. Other involvement includes:

- Meeting with legislators during the Annual Child Advocacy Day to provide information and advocate for foster care and independent living services.
- Speaking at community meetings to provide information about foster care and adoption issues.
- Participating in agency meetings and committees, such as the PIP Advisory Committee and CQI state level meeting, Federal Regional meetings.

- Participating in other community youth boards or councils, such as FosterClub All-Stars and Department of Mental Health Advisory Council.
- Providing Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and Education Training Voucher Program information to foster parents, youth and community members.

In FY 2007 youth will also help train staff on the new Adolescent FST Guide and Individualized Action Plan, sharing their perspective on why this tool will help youth transition successfully from foster care. When possible, youth are asked to assist in foster parent STARS pre-service and in-service trainings. Other trainings include Transitional Living Advocate and Court Appointed Special Advocates. Youth on the State Youth Advisory Board host and design the entire annual state youth conference. Workshops and conference activities are generally led by the youth.

Nebraska

GYAC is currently planning for their second meeting with the Governor in 2007. This meeting will take place at the Governor's residence and will be centered on looking forward to the next legislative year.

FYC most recently planned and offered "Camp Catch Up", a weekend camp that reunites children in foster care and their siblings. FYC members serve as camp leaders and take a strong lead in the planning of the camp. In addition to Camp Catch Up, members of the Council are also involved in the planning of the Independent Living Conference. One of the sessions at the conference will include members of the Council on a panel to talk about transition and independent living.

Youth involved in the Circle of Nations continue to plan the upcoming Native American Youth Conference. The youth planning committee has established a theme, identified speakers, planned culture night activities and several other details of the conference.

New York

Priorities include:

- Dispelling the negative stereotypes of youth in foster care; to "normalize" the experiences of youth in foster care;
- Improving policies and practices regarding family and sibling contacts;
- Increasing youth involvement in selecting, assessing, and retaining service providers;
- Improving available services for youth while in foster care and when leaving foster care, including trial discharge; and
- Improving practices to meet the clothing needs of youth in foster care, and increase youth opportunities to make decisions about clothing.

North Carolina

- SaySo is currently creating a website community with safe forums to connect youths – currently in the NC foster care system and alumni. Forums will be used to provide information and support but also solicit feedback from youths beyond the ideas/suggestions of the BOD.
- SaySo also has created a "For You" video to be viewed by youths offering advice and suggestions while in care but it also can be used for training adults (primary caregivers and professional social workers).
- SaySo is publishing a pdf "For You" guidebook for youths in care available as a download from their website.

- SaySo is creating a “Come Home to SaySo” campaign as a 10-year anniversary activity to re-engage alumni and aged out youths.
- SaySo conducts a statewide annual meeting of youth members and a leadership retreat weekend.
- SaySo assists with facilitating two statewide life skill youth conferences for younger teens.
- Some SaySo members participate on smaller local committees to promote the needs of transitioning youths and larger regional initiatives via Casey, child welfare groups, or educational research programs.

North Dakota

Our current Youth Leadership Board was recently formed through the assistance of the University of Oklahoma National Resource Center. They offered technical assistance on two occasions, the latest being in April of this year. To date, state members have been involved in CFSR trainings/site reviews and legislative testimony. Regional Boards meet monthly and have their own agendas specific to the Region. We will be having a State Board IVN in July. We have applied for a grant for the members to develop and implement a foster care website. This will be our focus, upon receipt of the grant.

Ohio

O.H.I.O has met with ODJFS to discuss partnering on task forces and initiatives. They have provided testimony for Ohio’s current FY budget. They have met with the Governor to discuss recommendations for the foster care system. They are meeting with leadership at ODJFS to discuss partnering on task forces and initiatives. O.H.I.O would like to continue to meet with Federal Legislators to discuss their concerns about foster care. They continue to participate in National Conferences. Two areas that O.H.I.O is strongly advocating for is Medicaid & Financial support for youth who age out of care until age 23 and for specialized services for Teen moms in foster care.

Tennessee

All internal workgroups are required to have youth representation. Additionally, the state has embarked on a plan to hold “Youth Permanency Convenings” in each of our 3 Grand Regions promoting the youth voice and the need for permanency options for older adolescents.

Virginia

V-YAC has quarterly conferences across the state for advisory council officers, members and visiting youth. V-YAC was instrumental in the passing of legislation in the 2005 session of the General Assembly and is currently involved in the development and review of independent living policy and the development of regional youth councils.

Washington

- Passion to Action is very involved in shaping the foster care system. They participate in many committees and advisory boards around the state including:
 - Educational Oversight Committee
 - Children, Youth and Family Services Advisory Board
 - Foster Parent Recruitment Oversight Committee
 - Region 1 Real World Independent Living Planning Committee
 - Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit Planning Committee
 - National Foster Club All-Stars
 - Casey Family Programs Mental Health Study Committee
 - Casey Research Advisory Committee
 - Foster Care To College Advisory Board
 - Mental Health initiative

- Governor's Scholarship Advisory Board
 - Camp Victory Advisory Board
 - Youth In Transition Advisory Board
 - Make it Happen Advisory Board
- Passion to Action presents at various functions within CA, as well as, in the community to share their story, offer their expertise, provider feedback on current issues, etc. Some of the functions they have presented at are:
- CA Academy training for new social workers
 - Management Team Meeting for Children's Administration
 - BRAAM panel
 - Education Summits around the State
 - House of Representatives Workgroup for Early Learning
 - Legislative testimony
 - Social Worker training - Academy
 - Region 1 Real World Independent Living Conference
 - It's My Life Conference
 - Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit
 - Make It Happen Convening
 - Foster Youth Graduations in Regions
 - Local Independent Living/Transitional Living groups
 - Foster Parent Conferences (Statewide and Regional)
 - University of Washington School of Law students
 - High School Counselors Conference
- The Advisory Board also participates in a wide array of additional activities to impact the foster care system.
- Review documents for Children's Administration (ETV, FCTC, Foster Care to 21, etc)
 - Provide feedback on FCTC/IL website
 - Assist BRAAM Panel with creating foster parent survey
 - Attend and present at Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit
 - Mentoring of Foster Youth
 - Present to KIRO Public Radio
 - Help in creation of Youth Driven Survey
 - RSW leadership Summit
 - Peer mentoring for Make It Happen
 - Volunteer at Governor's Cup
 - CASA volunteer
 - Met with National Foster Care of Alumni of America
 - Attended focus group on Mental Health Initiatives
 - Attend Youth Advisory Day in Olympia
 - Attend and present at It's My Life Conference
 - Attend National Permanency Convening in DC
 - Attend National Pathways to Adulthood Conference
 - Participate in Y- Foster program
 - Volunteer at local IL/TL groups
- Over the past year, Children's Administration has also involved foster youth and their voice in the creation of several DVDs regarding issues around foster care. Two such projects were:

- “Success Stories of Youth in Care” which highlighted the lives of 4 youth who have been in foster care
- “Back on track” which provides information to youth about the process of coming into foster care and the services available

How does your youth leadership/advisory board inform policy and practice in your state?

Alaska

At present there is no formal process to allow the advisory board to provide input regarding state policy and practice. This is in the process of being developed as the CFSR process starts.

Arizona

The Youth Advisory Board meets at least quarterly with representatives from the Governor’s Office, state Agency and Division offices. Local boards meet with local decision makers. Youth Board members have assisted in the drafting, review and revision of program policies, formal rules and service contracts. The annual youth conference provides a forum for youth to gather and brainstorm issues of concern and develop recommendations which are presented to a panel of decision makers for response and ultimately to effect positive systems change.

Colorado

As mentioned above, the state-regional teams will provide information via Survey Monkey (On-Line Surveys) and the Annual Chafee Teen Conference. In addition, youth voice is provided in panel presentations to inform best practice at various trainings and conferences throughout the year and gathered at foster care reviews and other venues. Noteworthy this year has been the very successful passage of the Youth Medicaid Bill that provides emancipating from care youth medical services from ages 18-21 years. This has been a direct result of consistent youth voice on these issues to include testimony at state legislative hearings

Connecticut

The YAB’s not only recommend new policies but review current policy. They also sit with the policy team, on many occasions, to help write the policy.

Delaware

YAC informs the Division’s Advisory/Advocate Board of their concerns. Members serve on panels during statewide conferences; policy makers, community leaders and professionals from the medical, education and social services field attend these conferences. Youth are also invited to testify during Joint Finance Committee sessions.

Indiana

Often employees of the state will attend a meeting to obtain the opinion of the Board.

Iowa

Sibling Legislation: Through collaboration with DHS, United Way, Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association, Educators, Private Provides, & Middleton Center for Children’s Rights, the Elevate youth council designed the details of a bill to change current practice in regards to family connections/ sibling visitation for youth. The bill passed unanimously in legislative subcommittees, full committees, and both houses. The bill expects that siblings in foster care be placed together whenever possible, but if not possible, they should be told why not.

Elevate youth typically attend meetings and participate in Elevate activities with a foster parent, DHS worker, bio-parent or mentor. Elevate youth work with adults to improve Iowa's foster care system and end up developing life long supports and connections.

Elevate shares their stories and answers questions in numerous training venues including new DHS worker training, Foster and Adoptive Parents Training, support groups for parents involved in the child welfare system, Court Improvement Project, and an annual conference for youth in care and who have aged out of foster care.

SIYAC youth are expected to meet and speak with their legislators throughout their term. Three hours of the monthly SIYAC meeting is dedicated to meeting with their legislators and other legislators. In addition, SIYAC invites various legislators and policy-makers to their meetings on a regular basis. SIYAC typically comprises issue briefs on 2-3 issues they would like to impact each year. These are shared with legislators through personal conversation and posting on their website.

Maine

YLAT members have been instrumental in developing specific Office of Child and Family Services policies. The policies that they helped to draft or revise include the OCFS policies regarding Extended Care, Sibling Placement and Visitation, and Driver's Education, Permit, and License.

Further, youth leaders have had significant impact on informing legislative processes and issues. Testimony from foster care youth leaders was credited with the passage of a tuition waiver for youth in foster care.

While the policy is an important component to protect the rights of separated siblings, the Maine court seemingly had no authority in enforcing this policy. Because policies aren't always followed, more work was needed in Maine. A few years after the YLAT driven sibling policy went into effect, work began on a youth driven law about the rights of siblings in foster care that also started to address the plight of separated siblings. Through the advocacy of youth leaders on behalf of siblings separated by the foster care system, a bill was passed by the Maine State Legislature in March of 2006 and signed into law by the governor.

Now in affect this law grants judges the authority to court order sibling visitation whether the entire sibling group is in state custody or split between care and a; pre-adoptive home, birth home, or home of extended family members. Maine's sibling rights law also allows children 12 or older to petition the judge for visitation with their sibling. All of this is dependent upon the court determining that it is in the best interest of each of the siblings in the group to be placed together or have visitation.

This law was developed as a result of a young woman's frustration with her own experience with sibling separation. This youth leader's analysis of the Department of Health and Human Services Policy regarding Sibling Visitation and Maine's Child Protective Statute highlighted inconsistencies between the agencies' policies and the state law. At the age of 15, she took the initiative to find or create a legal solution to enable sibling visitation. The sibling law was drafted and passed to put the force of Maine law behind the state agencies' guideline. It was meant to specifically support the youth driven sibling policy of the OCFS, to protect sibling relationships in foster care.

Even though Maine has an agency policy and a state law, the outcome for siblings will really come down to OCFS leadership actively protecting sibling relationships in foster care. There needs to be widespread understanding and commitment that it is in the best interest of siblings and sibling groups for brothers and sisters to all live in the same home. Furthermore, in the event that placement together is not possible there needs to be steadfast movement on the part of the adults towards the next natural steps – efforts to

reunify, as well as frequent and meaningful visitations and contact between brothers and sisters that encourage rather than disrupt the sibling relationship.

In March 2006, our YLAT coordinator, Chafee Program Manager, and a former youth in care went to New Hampshire to meet with 30 of their youth leaders, their DHHS Commissioner, and a representative from the Governor's Board of Directors to help them strategize and plan for introducing a foster care tuition waiver bill to the New Hampshire legislature.

Minnesota

We do not have a formal process for this but to the extent we involve youth it is at the advisory level.

Mississippi

Youth are represented at the Strategies for Achieving Independent Living Services (SAILS) Advisory Board. This board is embodied by the State Independent Living Coordinator, two MDHS Staff members from each of the seven Regions in the State, the PREPARE Program Director, Mississippi Band of Choctaw representatives, and Youth in care leaders. Efforts continue to ensure youth are represented at the SAILS meetings. Adolescents participating in the program under this section will participate directly in providing recommendations and designing their own program activities that prepare them for independent living. In addition, the adolescents will be required to accept personal responsibility for living up to their part of the program. Once any recommendations have been submitted, they are forwarded to the Policy and Practice workgroup who finalize recommendations to the Division Director.

Missouri

Recognizing that each SYAB member represents all children and youth who have/are in Out-of-Home placements, each SYAB member is responsible for providing Children's Services policy and procedural input to CD administrative staff. The SYAB decides what goals and activities they want to pursue for upcoming meetings and carry those out accordingly. The SYAB also works as a network by bringing back important information to the Area Youth Advisory Board (AYAB), who in turn, take information back to Older Youth workers and youth in their communities.

Nebraska

Youth leaders inform policy and practice in the State of Nebraska through both the Governor's Youth Advisory Council and the Foster Youth Council. In January 2007 GYAC met with the Governor to discuss pieces of legislation that had been introduced in the unicameral. A second meeting with the Governor is being planned. GYAC also sponsored a luncheon for State Senators which was attended by 23 State Senators. This luncheon provided the youth an opportunity to discuss introduced legislation as well as youth involvement in the law making process.

The Foster Youth Council has provided a voice for youth in care to state lawmakers through newspaper articles, speaking at legislative hearings, presenting to all Senators on their experiences in care as well as numerous presentations to the Commission on the Protection of Children, the NE Foster Care Review Board, Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, Health and Human Services, Court Appointed Special Advocates and communities at large. Most recently Foster Youth Council representatives presented the opening session for the "Partnerships for the Education of Students in Out of Home Care" conference.

New York

Representatives of YIP are members of the OCFS Commissioner's Advisory Group. They were introduced to the legislature by OCFS Commissioner and since then YIP has had the opportunity to meet

with staff from both the assembly and the senate. The youth have identified legislative issues of concern. At the last YIP meeting in the winter, youth received training from legislative staff on the legislative process. Two youth have an opportunity to be represented on the Adolescent Services and Outcomes Strategy Workgroup, the OCFS workgroup that was formed in June, 2002 to strengthen services to foster care youth and former foster care youth. Each year, regional speak-outs are held where youth have the opportunity to voice their concerns to a panel of individuals who can influence policy and practice (e.g. OCFS Commissioner and local social services district commissioners, local educators, local judges, etc.)

North Carolina

SaySo members participate in:

- State child welfare federal reviews;
- State and national conferences as panel members and presenters;
- Offering suggestions and providing feedback to policy makers and advocates for children in NC;
- Serving state government via the page programs (House, Senate, and Governor pages);
- Assisting to train social workers and foster parents serving older teens in care;
- Providing information to assist GAL and others advocates who serve older teens in care.

North Dakota

At this point, several youth testified on two occasions for legislation regarding Youth Aging out of Care. We have involved youth in our State's Regional Child and Family Service Reviews. These youth have also received training to be a part of the Regional CFSSR's. Children and Family Services make a conscious effort to include youth in policy review/revisions. Two youth accompanied our team to the Permanency Convening in Washington, D.C. We will be sending a team of 6 youth to the Youth/Adult Partnership Convening in North Carolina this summer.

Ohio

Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio (OHIO) has met with the policy makers (legislators, senators, Governor and ODJFS) to voice knowledge and personal experiences that might influence current and future policies so they may be more effective for the youth in care.

Tennessee

Again, each workgroup dealing with policy or program formation/implementation is required to include representatives of the youth voice as active participants in the process.

Virginia

The Council is actively involved with the Independent Living (IL) Program Supervisor/ Coordinator and the Foster Care Policy Specialist through policy discussions held during the V-YAC quarterly meetings.

Washington

- Passion to Action is very active in helping Children's Administration with its development of policy and practice. The Board participates in many of the workgroups that have been developed to create or revise policy and practices. The Board's input is most valuable. (Please refer to question 2 for more details).
- This summer members of the board will be invited to participate in workgroups that focus on implementing new legislation.

Name and contact information of state individual regarding leadership/advisory board issues

Alaska

Amanda Metevier, President
Facing Foster Care in Alaska
311 N. Franklin
Juneau, AK 99801
facing_fostercare@yahoo.com

Arizona

DES/DCYF Independent Living Coordinator
Beverlee Kroll
bkroll@azdes.gov
(480) 545-1901 ext. 15886

Colorado

Bob Coulson
Adolescent Services Administrator
(303) 866-4706

Shirley Dodd
Chafee Coordinator
(303) 866-4539

Ricardo Matthias
YES! Academy
(303) 866-3151

Connecticut

Frank Martin
(860) 550-6592

Delaware

Truman Bolden
Independent Living Program Manager
Phone: 302 633-2638
truman.bolden@state.de.us

Indiana

Cassandra Porter
(317) 234-4211

Iowa

Amy Croll
Department of Human Rights
Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning
Lucas State Office Building, 2nd Floor
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Amy.croll@iowa.gov
(515) 281-5999

Maine

Virginia Marriner
Acting Director of Policy & Practice
Office of Child & Family Services
Department of Health & Human Services
221 State Street
Augusta, ME 04333
(207) 287-5060

Minnesota

Claire Hill
(651) 431-4686
claire.d.hill@state.mn.us

Mississippi

For the Department of Human Services/ Division of Family and Children's Services, Independent Living Program please contact:
Sergio A. Trejo, Program Administrator, Sr.
Mississippi DHS-Division of Family & Children's Services
State Independent Living Coordinator
750 North State Street
Jackson, MS 39202
(601) 359-4983
strejo@mdhs.state.ms.us

Missouri

Tricia L. Phillips or Sally A. Gaines
Missouri Children's Division
PO Box 88
Jefferson City, MO 65103-0088
(573) 526-5408 or (573)522-6279

Nebraska

Mark Mitchell
Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 95044
Lincoln Nebraska 68509
(401) 471-9211
mark.mitchell@hhss.ne.gov

New York

Nancy Martinez
Diana Fenton

North Carolina

Nancy Carter, Executive Director, SAYSO
411 Andrews Road, Suite 230
Durham, N.C. 27705
(919) 384-1457
Nancy.Carter@ilrinc.com
www.saysoinc.org

North Dakota

Dawn Pearson, State IL Coordinator
ND Department of Human Services
600 E. Boulevard, Department, #325
Judicial Wing/State Capitol
Bismarck, ND 58505-0250
(701) 328-1018
sopead@nd.gov

Ohio

Jessica Schneider Chance
Public Children Services Association of Ohio
510 East Mound Street, Suite 200
Columbus, Ohio 43215
(614) 224-5802
Jessica@pcsao.org

Tennessee

Lane Simpson, JD
Director of InTERdependent Living
1280 Foster Avenue
Menzler 1
Nashville, TN 37243
(615) 253-0024
Lane.Simpson@state.tn.us

Virginia

Letha Moore-Jones
Independent Living Program Supervisor & Coordinator
VA Dept. of Social Services
7 N. Eighth St.
Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 726-7576
letha.moore-jones@dss.virginia.gov

Washington

For information regarding Washington State's Statewide Youth Advisory Board: Rick Butt
Independent Living Program Manager
(206) 923-4891
rlbu300@dshs.wa.gov