

2016 MICHIGAN YOUNG LEADER ADVOCACY SUMMIT

Friday, August 5th, 2016 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Lansing Community College Conference Center—West Campus

Policymaker Participation Overview

Thank you so much for joining us for the 2016 Michigan Young Leader Advocacy Summit! This event has been designed to engage young people with experience in foster care to build skills of self-advocacy and provide them an opportunity to share their perspective on how to improve the implementation of policies that directly affect them and other young people experiencing foster care. As a policymaker and influencer, you are in the unique position to hear the voices of the young people you serve and integrate their lived experience into the improved policies and practices you oversee. In an effort to maximize your time with the young people at this event, we have put together some tips on what you can expect and how you can make the most of your time. If you have any questions about this event, please do not hesitate to contact Maddy Day (contact information is below).

What you can expect:

- Energetic young leaders!
- Lots of ideas about improved policy implementation
- Young leaders who are still learning to connect their experience to policy
- Young leaders who want to learn from you about how policies get implemented
- Lots of questions about why some policies work and other policies do not

Making the most of your time with young leaders:

- Listen with an open mind. Not every idea will work in policy or practice, but each idea gives insight to the lived experience of foster care.
- Make it conversational. You will be sitting in small groups with young leaders, so feel free to engage them in an informal way.
- Ask questions or ask for clarification if you are not sure what a young leader means.
- Let the young leaders take the lead with sharing personal information. We will be working with the young leaders in the morning to help them understand the core elements of safe and appropriate self-disclosure. **You can help by asking present and future-focused questions.**

“The young, free to act on their initiative, can lead their elders in the direction of the unknown... The children, the young, must ask the questions that we would never think to ask, but enough trust must be re-established so that the elders will be permitted to work with them on the answers.”

— Margaret Mead

For questions, please contact Maddy Day, Director of Outreach and Training, Center for Fostering Success, Western Michigan University at (269) 538-9142 or Maddy.Day@wmich.edu

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Policy focus areas:

Extension of Foster Care to 21

- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (PL 110-351) allows an option for states to match Title IV-E funding to extend foster care maintenance payments to age 21. A youth must either be enrolled in school full-time, employed full-time, a combination of both, or unable to do either due to a documented medical condition. Youth who leave care after the 18th birthday are allowed the option of re-entering if they decide.
- State legislation, the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Act (MCL 400.641 – 400.671), passed in 2011. Allows for youth in Michigan foster care at the age of 18 to stay in an approved placement until the age of 21. Approved placements include foster homes, relatives, independent living host homes, college dormitories, or a youth's own apartment. Policy and procedure was developed for Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care (YAVFC) in 2012.

Transition planning

- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 requires all youth in care have a discharge meeting during the 90-day period prior to case closing. DHHS implemented this into Family Team Meeting policy and provides a document to be filled out by the facilitator at the meeting that addresses the following areas: housing, supportive relationships, independent living skills, education, employment, transportation, financial management skills, review of the youth's credit report, emotional/mental/physical health, and substance use/abuse.
- In 2011, DHHS updated policy to require an Annual Transition meeting starting at age 16. A form similar to the one used for the 90-Day Discharge meeting was developed, and is to be used as the youth's transition plan from age 16 to the time of case closure. DHHS policy was updated in 2013 to change this to a Semi-Annual meeting.

School Stability

- Michigan Revised School Code, 1976 PA 451 (MCL 380.1148): For any child/youth who is placed in Michigan foster care, a school district must allow him/her to enroll in and attend the appropriate grade in the school selected by the Department of Health and Human Services or a child placing agency, even if it is no longer the school of residence.
- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 included education provisions that include keeping a child/youth in the school of origin whenever possible. It requires child welfare staff to collaborate with education staff to ensure that best interest of school placement are considered, and if a school move is required, that the student is enrolled immediately. This has been in DHHS policy since 2009.
- MCL 380.1135(4). When a child/youth in foster care does move school placements, the receiving school must request in writing the school record from the previously attended school.