

# Partnering with Youth



Involving Youth in Child Welfare  
Training and Curriculum Development



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# Partnering with Youth

## Involving Youth in Child Welfare Training and Curriculum Development

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- the following twelve Independent Living Training Grantees throughout the country who included youth in their projects and then responded to a questionnaire concerning how youth participated:
  - Fordham University – Children First
  - Eastern Michigan University – Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Communities
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  - San Diego State University Foundation
  - San Francisco State University
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  - University of Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Services
  - University of South Carolina – Center for Child and Family Studies
  - University of Southern Maine – Muskie School of Public Service
- the willing and able youth-in-care throughout the country who were involved in all aspects of the projects including facilitation, training, curriculum writing, video and digital story production—taking an overall leadership role in this work.



# Introduction

## Engaging Youth in Training and Curriculum Development

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, commonly known as the Chafee Act, mandates states to involve youth in the design of state independent living programs and give youth voice in developing their individual case plans. Over the last ten years we have seen innovative programs that have involved youth in the improvement of the foster care system.

Recent research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison provides evidence that engaging youth in decision-making has positive effects on both adults and organizations. The Wisconsin researchers found that youth involvement enhances adults perception of youth's competence, heightens their commitment and energy, makes them feel more effective and confident, and makes them more aware of the needs and concerns of youth. The benefits to organizations include helping them to clarify their mission and make their programming more responsive to youth in the community. (Zeldin, Shepherd et. Al. (2000) *Youth in Decision Making: A Study of the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Madison Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development.)

Karen Pittman in her article "The Power of Engagement in Youth Today" states that "problem-free isn't fully prepared, and fully prepared isn't fully engaged." She goes on to say that "supporting youth development is not just about building the competencies, confidence, character and connections of our future leaders. It is about actively engaging youth in their own development and that of their peers, families, schools, communities, cultures and country. There is something developmental about engagement.

Youth (like adults) often must address their own issues in order to be contributors or change agents in other arenas. But the engagement is not linear. Just as “fixing” often happens best through development of other strengths; development often happens best through participation in causes bigger than oneself. Skills, attitudes, values and insights grow more quickly when there is purpose, especially when that purpose is immediate, relevant and external.”

Many youth in foster care have been actively engaged in foster care system reform. They have also had the opportunity for positive development through participation in causes directly related to foster care issues. For example, in Maine and other states, youth have provided legislative testimony leading to the passage of tuition waiver laws and the development of a sibling rights policy.

causes **bigger** than oneself

In 2000, the Children’s Bureau of the US Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) funded twelve three-year projects to train child welfare practitioners on how to work effectively with youth transitioning out of foster care. One unique aspect of these projects was the inclusion of these youth in the development and design of the curriculums and trainings. Youth involvement was the driving force for how each of twelve projects unfolded.

Prior to this funding, youth involvement was primarily limited to having youth as guest speakers and panel presenters at pre-service worker trainings, foster parent trainings and independent living conferences. In these settings, youth would share their foster care experience with participants and react to questions posed by adults about foster care system issues. These twelve projects have broadened the role of youth far beyond what they

had done previously as guest presenters or by telling their stories to curriculum advisors, trainers and developers.

***Being a youth in care I feel I have experiences in my life that would help caseworkers better understand what changes youth have gone through.***

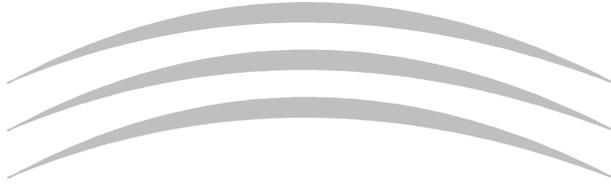
Some may ask, why it is important to involve youth in child welfare curriculum and staff development projects? Based on a survey of the twelve projects the following responses resonate the loudest:

- Youth voice has improved the quality of independent living training curriculum. Youth infuse a new energy into the curriculum development process; they raise *what if* questions and challenge the traditional types of training presentations.
- Youth offer new training strategies and creative perspectives using their own “real life” experiences. Youth can identify what works for them when they engage in adult relationships and life skill building activities.
- With youth involvement, curriculum developers understand the foster care experience through the eyes of youth and develop more responsive and effective training programs.
- Youth input helps strengthen independent living programs.
- Increasing the ability for youth to interact with adults in a decision-making capacity can lead to new independent living policy developments and greater collaboration among workers.

This monograph can serve as a starting point for agencies interested in involving youth in the development of child welfare curriculum and staff development projects.

starting  
point

# Definitions



The language of independent living and youth development is often interpreted differently. These are some working definitions to help guide project work.

## **What are independent living services?**

Independent living services, or transition services, are designed to provide youth in foster care with the skills, knowledge and supports they need to become self-supporting. Through relationships with family, friends, and community, they need the resources to succeed in all the important areas—or “domains”—of their lives: identity formation, community connections, supportive relationships, physical and mental health, life skills, education, employment, and housing. (*It's My Life – A Framework for Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Successful Adulthood*. Casey Family Programs, 2001)

## **What is youth development?**

Youth Development is the natural process of growing up and developing one's capabilities, which is too important to be left to chance. Positive youth development occurs from an intentional process that promotes positive outcomes for youth by providing support, relationships, and opportunities. Youth development takes place in families, peer groups, schools, in neighborhoods and communities, and prepares youth to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through coordinated, progressive research-based experiences that help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and intellectually competent. (*The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century*: Final Report)

## What is meaningful youth engagement?

According to the Center of Excellence for Youth Engagement, meaningful youth engagement produces benefits to youth and the communities in which they live. Through engagement, youth gain a sense of empowerment as individuals and make healthy connections to others; resulting in the reduction of risk behaviours and increases in positive activities. In addition to the social benefits of these behavioral changes, the community gains through the energy and ideas that youth bring to organizations, activities, and their relationships with adults.

the  
community  
gains

## What is Youth Voice?

Youth Voice is the vital contributions youth can and do make to independent living and staff development programs. It's about adults giving youth the opportunity to make these contributions. Youth Voice doesn't mean talking or shouting to be heard. It's not about drowning others out. Youth Voice is about considering the perspectives and ideas of youth, respecting what everyone has to say, taking risks, listening, sharing and working together. (Source: *Creating Youth/Adult Partnerships Curriculum*). As youth are involved in training and curriculum development they grow more capable, effective and powerful.

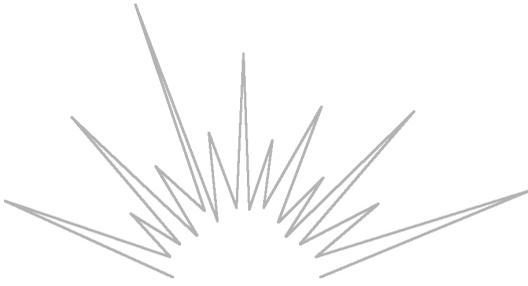
***"The only way you can learn is to listen."***



## What are Youth/Adult Partnerships?

These partnerships involve youth and adults working together sharing power and learning from each other to build stronger communities. (*Youth Voice: A Guide for Engaging Youth in Leadership and Decision-Making in Service-Learning Programs*). According to Jim Kielsmeier and Carole Klopp, adult leaders are the “guides on the side,” instead of the “sages on the stage.”





# Taking the First Steps

## **Organizational Needs**

Before embarking on youth involvement in curriculum and training for staff and care providers (adoptive and foster parents) it is important to assess the readiness of an organization to handle the responsibilities and demands of this new way of doing business. It is important to educate the adults involved in how to work with, listen to, include and respect youth.

Involving youth in staff development initiatives takes time—and more time. It requires dedicated staff to work with both youth and adults in the preparation and delivery of project activities. Staff who work on these projects need to constantly balance the achievement of the training project and the development of effective youth/adult partnerships. Success with the partnership helps build youth confidence and this confidence in turn engages youth as effective system change agents. The results and rewards of youth involvement in training surpass the amount of staff time; however, the organization has to know and be ready to take on this commitment or it can be a negative experience for everyone.

***“Don’t tell us what to do show us.”***

To sustain youth involvement in curriculum and staff development projects, adults need to respect the youth’s work and point of view. Youth in foster care can provide curriculum developers a unique view on the qualities of youth workers and the competencies necessary for them to succeed at their work. They are in a unique position, as service consumers, to identify the types of services and resources needed for successful transition. By working with youth on curriculum development, the end product is more effective because it reflects “real life” stories and intervention strategies that work.

## Youth and Adult Needs

It is important to provide the right type of training and support to both youth and adults. Each needs different types of skills to work together on projects. They need training that will support and enhance their respective roles in the curriculum and staff development project.

Youth need to understand the project and the skills necessary to participate effectively. It is essential to explain the process of curriculum development and training and the skill sets needed. Sometimes adults can play the role of mentor, coach or guide.

Youth need to be given project roles that are appropriate to their development and expertise. Additionally, they need to be given the support and opportunities to “stretch their skills” on projects. Adults can act as guides for youth and help to translate their strengths into future career pathways.

# attitude **shift**

At times, adults working on these types of projects need to examine their own attitudes toward working with youth and in some cases make an attitude shift in their work. This new attitude involves having youth play new and different roles, giving them opportunities to have or share decision making capacity and working with them as partners. Adults need to validate youth for their work on curriculum and staff development projects. This can take the form of monetary compensation, having youth make formal and informal presentations about the project, as well as written recognition on final project products. Scheduling meetings and trainings in accordance with youth’s schedules is also an ongoing validation of their importance to the project. Intrinsic compensation comes in the ability of youth to establish new relationships and roles with adults and other youth and to learn new skills.

Phillip Haid, Elder C. Marques & Jon Brown state in their report, *Re-focusing the Lens: Assessing the Challenge of Youth Involvement in Public Policy*, “It is important for youth to remember when collaborating or partnering with adults, to establish a clear set of objectives, expectations and parameters to the working relationship. A failure to do so can lead to ‘experience taking over,’ pushing youth to the side and forcing them to play a much smaller role in the decision-making process.” This is especially critical in cases where adults have decided to create opportunities for youth involvement. A lack of clarity about roles and expectations can lead to some unfulfilled expectations and disillusionment with the process.

new and different  
**roles**



# Creating Youth /Adult Partnerships

Traditionally, youth in foster care have been viewed by adults as the recipient of independent living services. Over the last decade with attention paid to a positive youth development approach, youth in foster care have been more involved in issues affecting their lives. This movement has required adults to examine their relationships with youth in foster care. The most powerful youth development approach is to create youth/adult partnerships. The publication *Youth Voice – A Guide for Engaging Youth in Leadership and Decision-Making in Service Learning Programs* mentions the following things to think about when creating youth/adult partnerships:

really  
hear

**Looking Inward.** Adults need to assess their own attitudes and behaviors when working with youth. A helpful tool for this is William A. Lofquist's *Inventory of Adult Attitudes and Behavior – An Instrument for Examining the Nature of Adult/ Youth Relationships*. Lofquist's inventory identifies three styles or approaches to working with youth:

- youth viewed as objects with adults in control and no intention of youth involvement;
- youth viewed as recipients with the adult in control allowing youth involvement; and
- youth viewed as resources with shared control—a youth/adult partnership.

(William Lofquist, *The Technology of Prevention Workbook – A Leadership Development Program*. AYD Publications, 1992).

**Opening the Door to Communication.** Communication is the key to any successful youth/adult partnership. It requires adults to sharpen their listening skills to “really hear” and respect the concerns and ideas of youth in care. Youth must also step back and hear the concerns and ideas of adults. It is important to create shared activities for both youth and adults that allow them to practice these new ways of communication. They need to discuss how they are going to work together, including pre-planning sessions as well as ongoing meetings to reflect on project outcomes and their relationship. All youth/adult partnerships need intentional time to reflect on the relationship to create safety and openness for each person to honestly discuss their strengths and challenges. They need to pay attention to any changes in their relationship as the project changes.

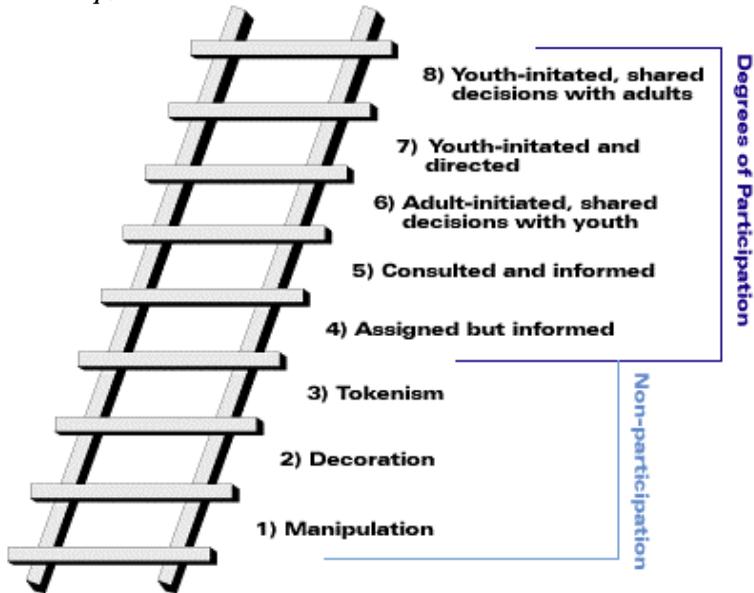
***“Respect us, encourage us, guide us –  
have a sense of humor.”***

**Create Meaningful Opportunities.** Adults need to create a variety of opportunities for youth to contribute. These opportunities must be viewed as meaningful types of involvement by youth in care. The process for creating these opportunities must take into account safety, scheduling, reimbursement, and commitment. Youth should be able to take risks with the support of adults and learn from their experiences, for example when receiving presentation feedback, or when facilitating discussions. These opportunities for involvement should always be more than “tokenism.” Roger Hart, *Children’s Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*, UNICEF, describes the various levels of youth participation with a steady progression to meaningful shared decision-making between youth and adults.

safe  
opportunities

## Ladder of Participation

From: Roger Hart, *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*, UNICEF.



**Clear Expectations and Commitments.** Both youth and adults should be honest and clear about their expectations of each other and their level of commitment to the partnership. Over a period of time both youth and adults need to re-evaluate their continued interest in the project, role expectation and the partnership relationship. There need to be safe opportunities for them to express their feelings about the need for new challenges and/or responsibilities.

At some point, youth in care will transition into the community and may choose to discontinue participation in the project. Adults need to help youth consider the different types and levels of involvement they may play in ongoing staff development projects and help them end their involvement when appropriate.

# New and Different Roles: Youth as Advisors

In the role of advisor, youth provide input into the development of independent living curriculum and staff development projects. They review curriculum, develop and/or provide assistance with curriculum materials, such as videos, theater presentations, handouts, activities, and case studies. They serve as members of curriculum and staff development advisory committees, and in curriculum development through participating and/or convening focus groups.

## meaningful roles

### **Things to consider:**

- Initially, recruit youth from existing independent living projects such as youth advisory boards. Make sure to extend opportunities to a broad age range of youth so younger youth will be available when older youth move on.
- When recruiting youth for projects make sure to coordinate activities with legal guardian and care providers (caseworkers, foster parents, etc.) so youth are not simultaneously pulled in many directions or away from an important present focus.
- Clarify for youth the parameters of the work you are asking them to be part of.
- Clarify the nature of the group or committee they are joining and their specific role in it.
- Assign youth meaningful roles as advisors.
- Always involve more than one young person as an advisor.

- Schedule meetings at times and places where youth feel comfortable and are able to attend without missing other important priorities
- Provide or assure transportation to meetings is available for youth.
- Provide travel reimbursement.
- Avoid using jargon at committee meetings.
- Help youth understand the variety of ways child welfare systems respond to youth issues (e.g., policy and training issues).
- Provide meaningful ways for youth to stay involved through on-going committee projects, specific assignments and other opportunities to contribute.
- Validate youth for their committee work—over and over again.
- Encourage youth to document their work through the use of journaling, portfolios or resumes.





## New and Different Roles: Youth as Trainers

There is a range of youth involvement in training events from guest speakers, panel presenters to co-facilitators, There are also different venues for involvement—from informal roundtable discussions to formalized child welfare training programs.

Youth can develop the knowledge and skills to be effective trainers and can work with adults to deliver existing curriculum. They can develop their platform skills and learn to work as part of a child welfare training team. Many child welfare curricula incorporate youth as panel members to discuss the issues affecting youth in foster care. Through youth participation, theater, group presentations and other creative endeavors have been incorporated into curriculum projects.

## strengthen **engagement**

### **Things to consider:**

- Recruit youth and adults who have demonstrated training and leadership potential.
- Conduct informational sessions for both youth and adults that outline specific project roles, expectations, and responsibilities. Provide experiential meeting formats to promote youth/adult partnership building.
- Engage more than one team of youth and adults.
- Develop a time-limited contract with the teams for a specific number of training deliveries.

- Compensate youth for their time.
- Help youth understand how to use power and authority in their role as trainer.
- Help youth identify and deal with emotional issues that may be triggered during the training experience.
- Provide youth with emotional support and strategies to handle self-disclosure issues.
- Provide additional helping resources when needed.
- Provide ongoing support and technical assistance to the training teams such as weekend retreats, group meetings, ongoing listserv, and conference calls.
- Provide regular reflection time for youth and adults. According to Donald Schon, reflective practice is the cultivation of the capacity **in** action (while doing something) and **on** action (after you have done it);
- Encourage and provide opportunities for youth to disseminate their experiences with the project through newsletters, child welfare publications, etc. to enhance their skills and strengthen the climate for youth engagement in the child welfare system.
- Develop a strong training program for both youth and adults. Effective training programs incorporate multi-modal approaches such as art projects, drama, music, and kinetic activities. The following topics should be part of any training program:
  - Teamwork
  - Developing a positive training climate
  - Individual assessment of training competence
  - Discussion of learning styles
  - Techniques for promoting group discussion
  - Understanding group dynamics
  - Handling difficult group members
  - How to give and receive constructive feedback



# New and Different Roles: Youth as Curriculum Developers

Working in partnership with adults, youth in foster care are in the unique position to know what types of independent living interventions work.

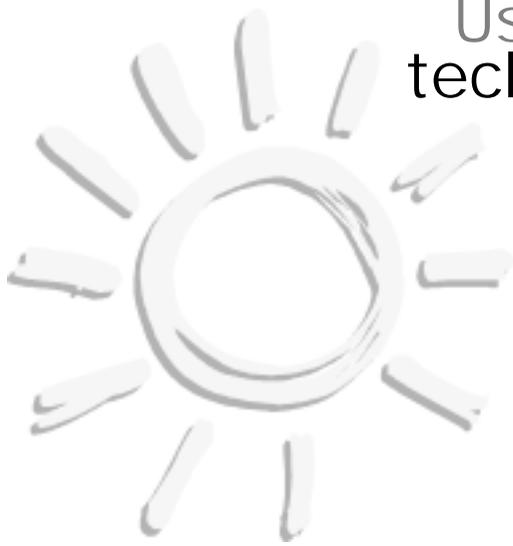
Youth can design training programs and develop curriculum materials for both youth and adults. Youth have contributed their own stories, poetry, letters to new workers, made videos, and digital stories. Youth have an exceptional knowledge of technology and have created comprehensive PowerPoint presentations, participant training manuals, web sites and training announcements. Using the Internet as a curriculum research tool, youth have contributed state of the art child welfare information. This has resulted in enriched curriculum design and presentation of child welfare material.

Both youth and adult curriculum developers need to continue incorporating youth stories and voice in a way that has emotional impact and at the same time intentionally links to worker's competency development.

***"It's important for people to hear real life stories from the young people who have experienced them. I think people will learn and remember the most from young speakers, rather than books or second hand stories. Hearing young speakers touches and inspires others."***

## Things to consider:

- Identify the motivation for engaging youth as curriculum developers.
- Recruit a team of youth interested in curriculum development.
- Recruit adults interested in working with youth and responsive to their ideas on curriculum development.
- Clearly explain expectations and roles for both youth and adults.
- Develop a flexible meeting schedule to accommodate youth.
- Recognize and utilize the skills youth bring to the project—technology, Internet research, and different presentation modalities including drama and/or video.
- Provide ongoing opportunities and resources for youth to develop their curriculum and professional development skills.
- Provide ongoing emotional support.



## Using the Internet technology

# Challenges and Recommendations

## Youth Recruitment and Retention

**Challenge:** Youth in foster care have many responsibilities. Initially, projects recruit youth with demonstrated leadership and presentation skills. As youth move on in their development, the training program can easily revert back to an adult driven project.

**Recommendation:** Work with existing youth groups to develop an ongoing recruitment and retention program. Think about a broader age range of youth and extend opportunities to younger youth. Create a partnership with the independent living program in your state and provide meaningful and varied opportunities for youth participation.

## ongoing recruitment

### Stereotypes

**Challenge:** Both adults and youth have stereotypes of each other. There are also many stereotypes associated with youth in foster care. Based on assumptions, some youth may be excluded from project participation while others may not participate to their potential leading to frustration and further mistrust of adults.

**Recommendation:** Don't make assumptions about the abilities of youth or adults. Instead, build on the strengths of each individual and provide ongoing opportunities for personal growth.

## Sharing Power

**Challenge:** People are not always conscious of their power and/or how they use it. During trainings the trainers have (or lose) control. They are in charge of everything that takes place in the room. The expression “never give up the power of the marker” speaks to this power in the training room.

In general, youth in the foster care system feel that they have lost power and control of their own lives and may be uncomfortable with taking on the authority of the training role. On the other hand, many adults have difficulty relinquishing power to youth during the planning and decision-making process as well as during the training event.

**Recommendation:** Create an open climate for discussion on issues of power and control. Work with the intention of sharing power by distributing responsibility and decision-making at a comfortable level for the adults and youths involved. Provide ongoing opportunities for youth and adults to reflect on the power dynamics in their relationship.

start small  
and  
build

## Constructive Feedback

**Challenge:** Adults may be critical or apprehensive of training ideas presented by youth. Youth may be reluctant to share ideas for fear of adult reaction or may be judgmental of any ideas adults suggest.

**Recommendation:** Create a safe environment for honest communication. Design a process for self-evaluation tied to professional development. Provide guidance and support in giving and receiving constructive feedback.

## Sustainability and Integration

**Challenge:** Youth involvement in curriculum and staff development provides both youth and adults a unique opportunity to improve training programs. However, these types of projects are characteristically funded through demonstration grants and the ability to sustain the project after the funding ends is often questionable.

**Recommendation:** Identify the local child welfare training provider and discuss ways to integrate youth involvement into ongoing training projects and curriculum delivery. Convene a group of stakeholders to discuss strategies to leverage multiple funding streams to ensure project sustainability. Make sure to include youth in these discussions. Remember to start small and build on your success!



# On Line Resources

## **Connect for Kids**

<http://www.connectforkids.org>

Connect for Kids, an award-winning multimedia project, helps adults make their communities better places for families and children. The Web site offers a place on the Internet for adults—parents, grandparents, educators, policymakers and others—who want to become more active citizens, from volunteering to voting with kids in mind.

## **National Network for Youth**

<http://www.nn4youth.org>

The National Network informs public policy, educates the public and strengthens the field of youth work. Young people are championed, especially those who because of life circumstances, disadvantage, past abuse or community prejudice have less opportunity to become contributing members of their communities.

## **Adolescence Directory On Line**

<http://education.indiana.edu/cas/adol/adol.html>

Adolescence Directory On-Line (ADOL) is an electronic guide to information on adolescent issues. It is a service of the Center for Adolescent Studies at Indiana University.

## **Center for Youth As Resources**

<http://www.yar.org>

Connecting youth positively to their communities and improving community life nationally and internationally through the spread of youth-led service initiatives.

## **Community Youth Development**

<http://www.cydjournal.org>

CYD Journal promotes youth and adults working together in partnership to create just, safe, and healthy communities by building leadership and influencing public policy.

## **Teen Voices On Line**

<http://www.teenvoices.com/tvhome.html>

The original magazine written by, for and about teenage and young adult women.

## **Youth in Action**

<http://www.youthlink.org/us/>

Youth In Action provides support and recognition for the voices, ideas and positive solutions of youth. As partners in the Global Youth Action Network, a growing collaboration among organizations worldwide, the youthlink.org web site is being expanded as an international clearinghouse for youth voices, resources and action.

## **Youth Leadership Advisory Team**

[www.ylat.org](http://www.ylat.org)

The Youth Leadership Advisory Team is a team of Maine youth in care (in state custody), ages 14-21, engaged in education and advocacy for positive changes in the child welfare system.

[www.fyj3.com](http://www.fyj3.com)

A partnership web project between FosterClub.com and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiatives.

# Publications

*Creating Youth/ Adult Partnerships Curriculum.* CY/APTC, National 4-H Council supply Service, 7100 Connecticut Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD 20815 (301) 961-2984

*Powerful Pathways: Framing Options and Opportunities for Vulnerable Youth.* Karen Pittman and Nicole Youhalem, The Forum for Youth Investment, October 2001.

*Technology of Prevention Workbook.* William Lofquist. Associates for Youth Development publications, 1989.

*Youth as Trustees.* Community Partnerships for Youth, Inc. Fort Wayne, IN (219) 436-4402

*Youth Development: Issues, Challengers and Directions.* Public/Private Ventures. 1999. Philadelphia, PA Youth Development Direction Project.

*Youth in Decision Making: A Study on the Impacts of Youth and Adults on Organizations.* Shepherd Zeldin, Annette Kusgen McDaniel, Dimitri Topitzes and Matt Calvert, 2000. University of Wisconsin-Madison, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, [www.atthetable.org/handout](http://www.atthetable.org/handout)

*Youth in Governance.* Community Partnerships for Youth, Inc. Fort Wayne, IN (219-436-4402.

*Youth in Philanthropy.* Community Partnerships for Youth, Inc. Fort Wayne, IN (219) 436-4402

## **Videos**

*At the Table: Youth Voice in Decision-Making.* National 4-H Council. 7100 Connecticut Ave., Chevy Chase, MD 20815, (301) 961- 2972

## **Organizations**

### **Center for Youth as Resources**

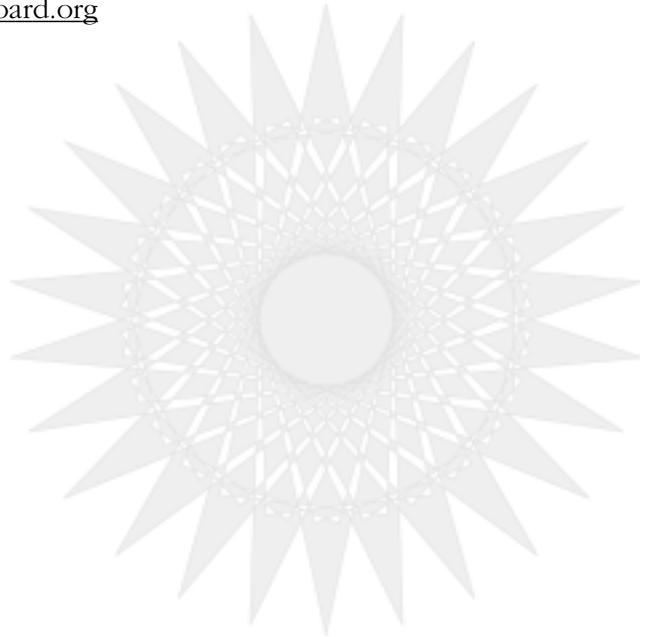
1700 K Street, NW, Suite 801 Washington, DC 20006, (202) 261-4185 [www.yar.org](http://www.yar.org)

### **Co/Motion**

11 Dupont Circle, NW, Washington, DC 20036 (202)822-6070  
[www.comotionmakers.org](http://www.comotionmakers.org)

### **Youth on Board**

PO Box 440322, Somerville, MA 02144, (617) 623-9900  
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# Notes

# Notes

# Institute for Public Sector Innovation

Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service  
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In January 1996, the University of Maine System approved the Institute for Public Sector Innovation (IPSI) as one of the three institutes that make up the Research Programs of the Muskie School. IPSI grew out of two major collaborations with the Maine Department of Human Services under the State/University Partnership agreement: the Child Welfare Training Institute (CWTI) (established in 1989) and the Department of Human Services Training Institute (DHSTI) (established in 1992). These projects continue to be major components of IPSI, along with expanded projects in collaboration with other State and Federal agencies such as the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services; Juvenile Justice and Corrections; Education; and Maine's Judiciary. IPSI activities now include areas such as strategic planning, organizational development, applied research, computer-based technology, information systems, cross-system collaboration, and performance management.

IPSI has a vision of competent and caring people in high performance organizations creatively working together to promote the public good. Recognizing the potential of people and organizations, IPSI serves the public good by promoting individual and organizational effectiveness and responsiveness in a climate of change. As a learning organization, IPSI functions within a set of core competencies that include flexibility, collaboration, independence, and commitment.

IPSI models and fosters a set of common values and action principles built on six unifying themes, including fostering self-responsibility, striving for excellence, valuing diverse perspectives, systems thinking, team learning, and modeling positive behavior.

# Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service

*“The School is engaged in essential work...to educate more people, young and old, in the art of democratic discourse and decision-making, strengthening the link between thoughtful scholarship and the society at large.”*

*Edmund S. Muskie, 1966*

The Muskie School combines significant research capabilities in child and family policy, disability policy, health policy, and public sector innovation with graduate offerings in public policy and management, health policy and management, and community planning and development.

The School’s teaching, research, and public service activities are successful because of a practical, innovative approach to issues; an interdisciplinary curriculum where theory is informed by hands-on experience; and cooperative partnerships with community, state, and federal agencies across the country.

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