



Statewide Youth Advisory Board

Monthly Meeting

August 26th, 2026

5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

[Zoom Meeting](#)

Minutes Details:

I. Welcome | Kyle Johnson – Youth Advisor, OCFW – DCF

- a. Attendance – Youth/Young Adults: 9
 - i. *J. Amerson, M. Funicello, K. Grant, J. Guzman, R. Hurley, L. Mwangi, Q. Peeples, S. Ramos, D. Smith, S. Young*
- b. Attendance – Support Staff: 6
 - i. *Kyle Johnson, Calvin Martin, John Watson, Brad Hill, Janessa Collins, Maria Batista, Venus Motley*
- c. Introductions & Icebreaker
 - i. *No icebreaker for this meeting.*

II. Icebreaker Ideas

- a. Virtual Ice Breakers
 - i. Name a movie, food, city, and animal with a random letter (*i.e., Someone chooses a letter. Participants must come up with those four things in under 60 seconds*).
 - ii. Custom CrowdParty/Kahoot.
- b. In-Person Ice Breakers
 - i. A spin-off of “This or That.” Participants must convince/persuade individuals on the other team to come over to their side (*i.e., Hot Dog or Cheeseburger: Team Hot Dog must convince individuals on Team Cheeseburger that hot dogs are better and to come over to Team Hot Dog*).
- c. Other Ideas
 - i. Allowing Advisory Board members to develop and facilitate the ice breaker, similar to how the Youth Subcommittee did previously.

III. Bylaws Development Discussion

- a. What, if any, changes would you make to the Application?
 - i. Utilize a digital, fillable format (*i.e., DocuSign, Google Forms, Microsoft Forms, Survey Monkey, etc.*) to improve accessibility and data collection.
 - ii. Indicate that the phone number is optional to provide clarity to young people without a phone number.
 - iii. Implement a 1-on-1 follow-up meeting with applicants to review background knowledge and gauge genuine interest to help avoid “voluntold” appointed young people.
 - iv. Develop a follow-up survey to gauge members’ lived experience.

2415 North Monroe Street, Suite 400, Tallahassee, Florida 32303-4190

- b. What should the application review process look like?
 - i. It should be facilitated by an “application board” with a mixture of voting and non-voting membership
 - ii. Ensure that applicants are genuinely interested in the Advisory Board and were not voluntold to apply by their Lead Agency staff.
 - iii. Applications should go live sooner than last year to allow more time for communication and action
 - iv. Develop a “scoring rubric” to assist in gauging the young person’s interest in participating based on their responses on their application. This should not be an intense rubric and should be designed to help with application review and follow-up.
- c. Revisiting Eligibility: What changes, if any, would you make to the voting member eligibility requirements? Why?
 - i. Expand to 28 or 29 to gather a better understanding of post-Independent Living outcomes (*i.e., housing, education, medical, etc.*). Allows their experiences to shape supports for transitioning out of IL.
 - ii. Expand voting members to age 26 and non-voting to age 29. It is important to get information and perspective from former foster youth who are outside of age range so we can get some insight on those post-IL outcomes.
 - iii. Expand to include post-IL ages to better shape current policy and practice.
 - iv. Let everyone have a vote but only have certain age ranges for paid roles.
 - v. Members should represent the county where they currently reside and receive services rather than their county of origin. If you no longer live in the area you represent, then you do not know what the current barriers may be.
 - vi. Voting members should have active engagement in their local Advisory Board to be able to effectively communicate the needs of their area.
 - vii. Open applications beyond Lead Agency approval to allow more young people to learn about and join the Advisory Board. This can also help avoid Lead Agencies appointing uninvolved young people to represent their area.
 - viii. Expand eligibility to include unaccompanied homeless youth to allow them an opportunity to speak up on their experiences.
- d. What are your expectations for meeting attendance?
 - i. Members should have attendance at both the Statewide Youth Advisory Board meetings and their local Advisory Board meetings.
 - ii. Meetings should continue to be held at a consistent time and date to allow a better opportunity for people to plan to attend.
 - iii. After a member misses several meetings, a check-in should be completed to ensure that the young person is okay and see if taking a step back, or “hiatus”, would be best for them.
- e. What elected Officer Roles would you like to see in the Advisory Board? What would their responsibilities look like?
 - i. Recommendation made to proceed with standard roles (*i.e., Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, etc.*) until we can understand the specific operational needs

of this Advisory Board. Amendments can be made at a later date to create specific positions, as needed.

IV. DCF Summit

- a. The 2026 Florida Children and Families Summit is from September 9th – 11th, 2026 at the JW Marriot Grande Lakes, Orlando, FL.
- b. The Statewide YAB will have a hybrid in-person/virtual meeting on Wednesday, September 9th, 2026 (10 AM – 12 PM)

V. Closing | Kyle Johnson – Youth Advisor, OCFW – DCF

- a. Our next meeting will be on **Wednesday, September 9th, 2026, from 10 AM – 12 PM** at the 2026 Florida Children and Families Summit with virtual attendance available via Zoom.
 - i. This meeting's primary objective will be to review a first draft of the Statewide Youth Advisory Board Bylaws and provide further feedback.

Bylaws Discussion
Statewide Youth Advisory Board
July 29th, 2026

Discussion Topics Reviewed:

I. What should the name of the Advisory Board be?

- a. Florida's Youth Advisory Board
- b. Florida's Foster Youth Committee
- c. Florida Youth Committee
- d. Florida's Youth Advisory Council
- e. Youth Voices for Change
- f. Elevate Youth Advisory Board
- g. Voice and Vision Youth Board

II. What is the mission of the Advisory Board?

- a. Empowers young people with lived experience to shape policies, programs, and systems that impact their lives.
- b. To ensure foster youth voices are heard, valued, and transformed into action that creates better opportunities and outcomes for every young person in care.
- c. To create the foundation of knowledge of the system of care as well as identify what policy works and how it got there historically.
- d. To take youth with lived experience voices and amplify them in the community.
- e. Building youth leaders who use their lived experience to advocate, inspire change, and improve outcomes for children and families across Florida.
- f. Youth-empowered committee fighting to influence legislation for the betterment of child welfare.
- g. To improve the child welfare system through youth voices.
- h. Empowering youth with lived experience to lead, advocate, and drive positive change in Florida's child welfare system while ensuring every voice is heard and valued.
- i. To give youth the tools to maneuver spaces with system professionals.
- j. Young people coming together to create statewide change to improve experiences
- k. To empower youth in foster care by encouraging creativity, leadership, and teamwork. We provide a space where every voice matters, every idea is...
- l. To give youth a space to speak freely

III. What is the purpose of the Advisory Board?

- a. To create meaningful opportunities for youth leadership, advocacy, and partnership that improve outcomes for Florida's children and families.
- b. To ensure youth voices are represented in policies, programs, and decisions that impact children and families across Florida.
- c. To empower youth in foster care by providing a safe space to share ideas, develop leadership skills, build meaningful connections, and help shape programs and opportunity positively impact the youth

- d. To promote youth leadership, advocacy, and civic engagement while improving outcomes for children and families
- e. To unite youth leaders across Florida to advocate for equity, opportunity, and positive change in child welfare
- f. To ensure current and former foster youth help shape decisions, policies and services that strengthen Florida's child welfare system.
- g. To foster collaboration between youth and stakeholders to create policies and practices that better support children and families
- h. To make sure youth voices are heard in decisions, policy, changes, etc...
- i. To have young people come together to create everlasting change, leadership, civic engagement, opportunities, while building community.
- j. To provide youth led guidance that strengthens policies, programs and opportunities for current and former foster youth.
- k. To connect youth leaders across Florida and promote advocacy, leadership, and positive system change.
- l. To keep child welfare the priority of foster care in a system that businesses driven by profit often forget or abandon for business gains.
- m. To build a network of youth advocates committed to improving the lives of children and families through leadership and service.
- n. To inspire youth to lead with purpose, advocate with confidence, and create lasting change in their communities.
- o. To give youth with lived experience an opportunity to have an impact by developing their voice through obtaining knowledge of the system + speaking directly to system professionals statewide.
- p. how? by getting youth with lived experiences/ homelessness voices to help with policies, bills, and programs.
- q. To develop leadership qualities that allow youth with lived experience to maneuver professional settings as well as lead in their community.
- r. To create opportunities for youth to lead, collaborate, and advocate for a stronger, more responsive child welfare system
- s. To build youth to be knowledgeable enough of the system to identify what exactly they want to see change.

IV. How does the Advisory Board determine goals / priorities?

- a. Majority vote based off all youth representatives from each advisory board.
- b. By reviewing youth-identified needs, current child welfare trends, and recommendations from council members and stakeholders.
- c. Council members submit ideas, discuss them, and vote on the top 3–5 priorities each year.
- d. Create a strategic plan
- e. Recognizing the corruption in the system truthfully and building a plan to tackle it head-on
- f. Maybe we can follow up with the priority by doing a survey

- g. sets goals by listening to youth in foster care, gathering feedback, and working together to identify the biggest needs. Priorities are based on what will have the greatest positive impact
- h. Member brainstorming sessions followed by consensus-building or voting
- i. Survey Monkey*
- j. Using google form or similar. NOT mentee
- k. Brainstorm session in-person of many priorities, whittle down to smaller list of priorities (3-5)
- l. Using 3-4 max on topics yet be mindful with any federal practices to be on a state level like the FYI vouchers. Even try to better statewide practices by voting quarterly or 2x a year
- m. Collecting data on normalcy/life skills (jobs, school, removals, aging out, exit surveys, ombudsman reviews, OCC requests, maltreatments,)
- n. Accountability in services
- o. Evaluate the effectiveness of the system currently
- p. A poll can help determine. Maybe we can all come up with a list of things and then do a poll. We can follow up by doing a survey
- q. Through a feedback session that later breaks out into voting to work on what is prioritized first-last
- r. Prioritize issues based on urgency, the number of youth affected, and whether the council can realistically make an impact
- s. The council will determine priorities through member discussion and voting, youth feedback, data on emerging needs, and collaboration with stakeholders, ensuring youth voice remains the primary factor
- t. Through being aware of what other organizations are prioritizing and picking what is not as prevalent to focus on.
- u. Recommendations from council committees based on research and youth feedback.
- v. I was thinking of collecting research while we are working on priorities from youth
- w. Prioritize by sections such as stable housing, K-12 and/or higher education, placement living, etc. by voting members of ages 16 - 26. We can take some input from community members yet it's the board.
- x. Seeing the differences of a regular household upbringing vs the normalcy of a foster home in comparison
- y. Outline strategic plans with timeframes and designated points of contact
- z. Depending on the voting topic, include non-voting members who are within the age range
- aa. Identify goals/priorities to determine data requests

V. What changes, if any, would you make to the existing eligibility requirements?

- a. Non-voting until 28 which is when the tuition waiver ends
- b. Voting and non-voting members. If feels like the non-voting members voices are valued as much...
- c. Voting members should be until 25
- d. Add "in Florida" at the end...

- e. Add homeless youth with no child welfare experience. Maybe we can partner with the school district to receive support from McKinney Vento (federal act)
- f. If we are not able to pay members of 23+ then, pay officer roles only... everyone else is voting member just not paid.
- g. Pay officer roles yet have lessor pay for non-officer roles (maybe)
- h. Officer roles should be for anyone who is on the council/ what happens if the people who are within the current guidelines do not want to run/are not in the headspace for the responsibility.
- i. If not all homeless youth/young adults, then unaccompanied homeless youth
- j. Raise the age cap for voting members
- k. Voting roles until 25 or 26 because of the FYI vouchers
- l. Change Chafee to fit federal language
- m. 18-25 for voting members but having mentor roles be added for 25+.
- n. I would include adopted and homelessness youth because they are not connected to a CBC. I think the voting members should be 14-26, and non-voting members 14-28. We need especially younger voices.
- o. Adding adopted youth should be added on the side if they were placed back in foster care or became an unaccompanied homeless youth
- p. I say 14-26 because 18 and under are currently being affected by changes in the system. But if not at least 16-26. Of course, 18-26 are being affected by other things.
- q. Whole advisory board should be able to vote for who they want to best represent them
- r. Should we discuss the term of non-voting & voting?

VI. What changes would you make to the 2026 Training Plan, if any, for future years?

- a. Professional trainings
- b. Showing the gaps in system professional roles that are present and most prevalent / showing where the roles overlap.
- c. Meeting etiquette
- d. Public speaking
- e. Storytelling used to find experience
- f. Grant writing & funding basics
- g. Legislative process
- h. How to utilize your fyi voucher
- i. Ethics and confidentiality
- j. How to identify and use different utensils
- k. Working with CBCs on how to encourage more youth to use the DCF tuition and fee exemption waiver and knowing the law with the rules
- l. Self-care
- m. Financial literacy
- n. Training on finding your personality type and how you can shape yourself professionally
- o. Mental health awareness
- p. Conflict resolution

- q. Various ways of conflict resolution, especially being mindful of youth who have trauma with conflict
- r. How to use your voice for effective advocacy rather than ineffective communication that doesn't reach the target audience in an inviting way.
- s. Budgeting 101
- t. Formal Dining Skills & Social Etiquette.
- u. Navigating the advocacy space for increasing FYI vouchers.
- v. Learning about tokenism.

Discussion Topics Left to Review *(and relevant questions to think about):*

- I. What changes, if any, would you make to the Application?**
 - a. *Are there any questions you'd add/remove? Would you keep the format the same?*
 - b. *For reference, you can view the current application at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/statewide-youth-advisory-board/>*
- II. What should the Application Review process look like?**
 - a. *How do you determine if an applicant is accepted or denied? Applicant requirements? Interview? How do you determine in the event of more applicants than vacant seats? First come, first serve? Experience?*
- III. What are your expectations for meeting attendance?**
 - a. *Attendance policy? Absence limit? Notice of absence?*
- IV. What elected Officer Roles would you like to see in the Advisory Board? What would their responsibilities look like?**
 - a. *Examples include: Chair, Vice Chair, etc.*
- V. What would the election process look like for these Officer Roles?**
 - a. *Application? Vote? Campaign process/duration?*
- VI. What is the Advisory Board's Expectations / Code of Conduct?**
 - a. *What do you expect from each other? What do you expect from the Department? What do you expect from the public?*