



American Youth
Policy Forum

**Improving Education and Workforce Outcomes of Systems-Involved Youth:
Building Consensus around Key Areas of Influence for Policy**

An AYPF Discussion Group
1200 18th St. NW
Washington, DC 20036
July 26, 2018
8:30am-3:00pm

There are nearly 425,000 youth in foster care and 50,000 youth in the juvenile justice system. Due to many precipitating factors, such as housing instability and the lack of social supports, a vast majority of these youth struggle with education and workforce barriers that hinder their path to successfully transitioning into adulthood. What if we could change this trajectory, so that youth involved in the foster care and the juvenile justice system are able to transition out of care with the tools and confidence needed to excel in their next steps?

This discussion group will highlight two organizations that are working to do just that for the youth in Philadelphia and Rhode Island. Each program uses best-practices to successfully connect youth transitioning out of foster care and youth involved in the juvenile justice system with opportunities to gain job training, placement, and educational assistance. Participants will also discuss the link between programs and policies, relevant state and federal legislation, framing, and areas of alignment.

Specifically, the goals of the discussion group include:

- Identifying opportunities within policy to better support the education and workforce success of youth involved in foster care and the juvenile justice system;
- Highlighting successful programs and their connection to current and future policies;
- Exploring effective means for framing this topic for policymakers; and
- Building a consensus around key areas of influence for federal and state policymakers.

Agenda

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| 8:30-9:00am | Continental Breakfast Available |
| 9:00-9:10am | Welcome and Opening Remarks Betsy Brand, Executive Director, AYPF |
| 9:10-9:40am | Introductions: What Brings You to This Work? |
| 9:40-9:50am | Setting the Context: AYPF's Work and Impact to Date Samaura Stone, Senior Policy Associate, AYPF |

9:50-10:05am **Spark Presentation #1: Graduation Instead of Incarceration**
Nigel Bowe, Program Director, The Choice Is Yours, JEVS Human Services,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Founded by the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office, the Choice Is Yours (TCY), is a diversion program for young offenders aged 18-29 who have been arrested for the first time for a nonviolent drug offense. Participants of TCY are able to wipe their criminal slate clean after completing an arduous year-long program run by JEVS Human Services. Through a partnership with Penn Foster, participants are able to earn their high school diploma and are connected to career and postsecondary education opportunities.

10:05-10:35 am **Program Discussion**
Respondent: Isaac Hammond-Paul, Deputy Director, DC ReEngagement Center,
Office of the State Superintendent of Education

Following the spark presentation, the identified respondent will offer brief reflections, make connections to their work and open up the conversation for others to share.

10:35-11:00 am **Aligning Juvenile Justice Programs with State and Federal Policies**
Simon Gonsoulin, Director, National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center
for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-
Risk

Building off of the program discussion, participants will have the opportunity to discuss state and federal policies that are directly related to supporting and establishing programs for youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

11:00-11:10am **Break**

11:10am-11:25am **Spark Presentation #2: Employment and Empowerment (E2) Peer Support Training**
Kat Keenan, Deputy Director, Foster Forward, Works Wonder Program, East
Providence, Rhode Island

Works Wonder was originally started as a research initiative funded through a Children’s Bureau grant to research ways to help Rhode Island’s foster youth who have aged out of or are about to age out of state care succeed in the workplace. Works Wonders has grown into an evidence-supported career development and employment engagement program that provides 8-10 hours of skills based training, 12 weeks of one-on-one career coaching, and paid work-based learning opportunities. An Employment Specialist works with youth to explore their career interests, build a CareerEd Plan and foundational skills.

11:25am-12:00pm Program Discussion

Respondent: Susan Punnett, Executive Director, DC Family and Youth Initiative

Following the spark presentation, the identified respondent will offer brief reflections, make connections to their work and open up the conversation for others to share.

12:00-12:30pm Aligning Foster Care Programs with State and Federal Policies

John Sciamanna, Vice President of Policy, Child Welfare League of America

Building off of the program discussion, participants will have the opportunity to discuss state and federal policies that are directly related to supporting and establishing programs for youth involved in the foster care system.

12:30-1:00pm Lunch and Networking Break

1:00-1:10pm Recapping the Morning and Transitioning to Group Discussions

Jesse Kannam, Policy Associate, AYPF

1:10-2:10pm Building Consensus around Key Areas of Influence and Effective Messaging

Juvenile Justice Group Leader: Kisha Bird, Director of Youth Policy, Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Foster Care Group Leader: Thomas Showalter, Executive Director, National Youth Employment Coalition

Participants will divide into two groups based on their expertise in Juvenile Justice or Foster Care to respond to discussion questions about each youth population, identify the areas for policy and program changes, and contemplate the best use of messaging and framing to communicate with policymakers.

2:10-2:30pm Key Takeaways and Alignment

Each group will have the opportunity to report and summarize their main takeaways from the small group discussion. A focus will be placed on areas of alignment between youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system, as well as identifying employment and education challenges that are similar and unique to each group.

2:30-3:00pm Closing and Next Steps

Jenna Tomasello, Policy Associate, AYPF

After a full day of thought provoking content, networking and identifying opportunities and barriers for youth, participants will use interactive polling to share their thoughts about various topics raised throughout the day as a way to identify group consensus and strengthen programs and policies for youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system. There will also be time for individual reflections and commitments.

3:00pm Adjourn