



ONE VOICE IMPACT

Powered by Selfless Love Foundation

YOUTH COUNCIL MANUAL

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ABOUT ONE VOICE IMPACT



OVERVIEW:

One Voice Impact (OVI), powered by Selfless Love Foundation, provides support for local youth advisory councils, current and former youth in foster care opportunities to develop important leadership and life skills; to advocate for policy and practice changes, and to be a part of a community of youth leaders who are making a difference in child welfare today and for generations to come.

PURPOSE:

OVI seeks to harness authentic youth voice, create space for youth and young adults with lived experience to work alongside system leaders to find solutions to local issues, and provide a platform for statewide collaboration.

MISSION:

Selfless Love Foundation leverages resources, expertise, and proven solutions to improve the child welfare system, creating opportunities for more youth in foster care to find their forever families and thrive in adulthood.

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS



One Voice Impact (OVI) is built on research-based youth engagement principles modeled after Wong's Pyramid that peaks at a pluralistic relationship between youth and adults. This is a model of shared control in planning and decision-making.

OVI Principles:

- Young people involved in the foster care system should have a voice in decisions that impact their lives.
- Young people with lived experience have the expertise needed to transform the foster care system.
- Authentic youth engagement means preparing, equipping, and compensating youth who sit at the table with adults.
- When young people and child welfare staff work together in youth councils, local issues can be resolved.
- By creating a statewide network of youth councils to advocate for improvement, we can better prepare young people for lifelong success.

COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT STEPS

ENGAGE YOUTH LEADERS

**IDENTIFY
CORE YOUNG ADULTS**

**TRAIN & EDUCATE
COUNCIL MEMBERS**

ESTABLISH A COUNCIL

CREATE STRUCTURE

HOST FOCUS GROUPS

IDENTIFY STRATEGIC GOALS

CREATE CHANGE

MEET SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

TRACK PROGRESS

CELEBRATE WINS

ENGAGE YOUTH LEADERS

IDENTIFY CORE YOUNG ADULTS

Know What You Are Asking

When asking youth to be a part of a youth advisory council, it is important to know what you asking of them. Some examples of those questions are; what is the time commitment? Are they interested in the purpose? Will they be committed to the process if it is slow-moving from the start? Many youth may want to be involved, but due to work or school cannot commit to the requirements needed.

STAFF TIP!

Aim to have 10 to 12 youth committed prior to the training or retreat phase, so that if the commitment is too much, there are still enough youth

How to Identify Youth

- Ask youth you already know and have a relationship with.
- Ask coworkers or other child welfare professionals for recommendations.
- Consider partnering with community providers or other agencies that already have a board or a population of young people.

ENGAGE YOUTH LEADERS

TRAIN AND EDUCATE COUNCIL MEMBERS

To impact change within the child welfare system, youth must first be able to be educated on the current system and how it functions. Training and educating youth on how to safely and appropriately share their stories and understand the structure of the system of care will allow them to make changes and see themselves as **organizational assets**.

Use interviewing for a position as an example. Before an interview, applicants research the organization and talk to others with more experience to prepare to answer possible questions. This is how we should prepare the young adults on a youth advisory council. If we as staff do not provide youth with ongoing training, we are not fulfilling the duties and requirements of a youth/adult partnership.

NOTE!

Youth on councils are representatives of not only other youth in foster care but also of the organization supporting them. Training them is just as important as training staff to do their jobs.

Training Resources and Tips:

- Host a leadership retreat where youth can bond and talk about the system of care and begin to develop a council structure.
- Be patient with youth who are learning to reframe their lived experience from a client to subject matter experts.
- Reach out to OVI staff to assist in training or utilize other community resources.

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CREATE STRUCTURE

- Work with youth to identify the council's mission, vision, and purpose statements in the early stages to help inspire and focus youth.
- Youth should decide amongst themselves if having roles, like President and Vice President, will hurt or help the function of the councils. Roles can help delegate tasks to certain individuals and create accountability but may also cause unnecessary competition. This all depends on the group you have.
- All youth should be made aware of the importance of their involvement. No youth leader is more valuable than another. Each one has had a unique experience and perspective of the system of care.
- As the news of the council spreads through the community and system of care, youth interest will grow. It is important for the longevity of the council that members create an interview process for accepting new members.
- Youth should decide how selective to create their interview process depending on the amount of interest in their areas.



ESTABLISH A COUNCIL

HOST FOCUS GROUPS

Youth council members are representing all youth in foster care in their circuit. It is important to gain an understanding of current and former youth in foster care to identify system-wide issues.



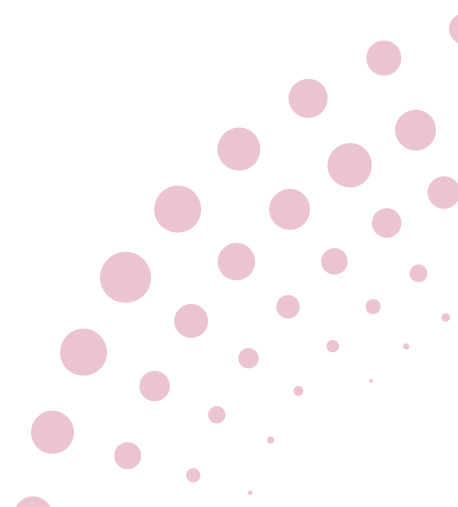
Steps to Hosting a Focus Group

- Identify agencies that provide services and/or housing to youth in or formerly in foster care (foster homes, group homes, transitional housing).
- Coordinate a time to facilitate an in-person or virtual focus group.
- Focus groups should include no more than 10 youth and last 60 to 90 minutes.
- If the group consents, record the focus group and take notes as a backup.
- Develop open-ended questions to gather information about issues facing youth in foster care.

ESTABLISH A COUNCIL

IDENTIFY STRATEGIC GOALS

- Transcribe the focus group recording - word for word - to make sure the context of the statement is preserved.
- Review the notes as a council and identify the most common issues.
- Pull out youth quotes that provide context to the issues.
- Learn more about the issues - policies, procedures, and practices.
- Identify 3 to 5 issues that the youth council wants to establish as goals.
- Make sure there is a consensus within the group on the 3 to 5 areas and that the goals are attainable.
- Each issue may have a youth lead and several youths co-lead to alleviate some of the burdens on child welfare professionals and provide accountability to the youth.
- Remind youth of goals at every meeting to maintain focus and follow progress.



CREATE CHANGE

INVOLVE SENIOR MANAGEMENT



- Before finalizing the goals and creating strategies, it is important to get the perspective of child welfare decision-makers in the community (CEOs with the Lead Agency, Case Management Provider, Group, and Foster Homes).
- Prepare an issues presentation to review with the leaders and questions to ask.
- Record meetings and review notes to determine if the established goals are attainable.
- Goals set by the youth council should be addressed or completed within the span of 6 to 12 months.
- For much longer or higher scale goals, developing approaches can be used to address the goals.
- It is important that the agencies can see a noticeable impact from the youth council, however small.
- Create partnerships with local universities, nonprofits, and neighboring child welfare agencies. The localized approach allows youth councils to be flexible in their involvement in the community.

CREATE CHANGE

TRACK PROGRESS

- Youth councils should create an action plan for each goal.
- The action plan should include objectives, strategies, the person responsible, success measures, and target dates.
- The action plan should be reviewed monthly to assess progress.
- If progress is stalled, consider new strategies (bringing new partners to the table, meeting with agency leadership, or coordinating with the OVI network for discussion).



CREATE CHANGE

RECOGNIZE WINS

Completion of goals and other important milestones should be celebrated by the Community Based Care organization and supporting agencies. By keeping track of the council's wins and accomplishments, you are able to continue efforts and motivate young adults that are a part of the council.



Ways to Recognize Wins:

- Agency-unique awards
- Pictures and articles posted in the organization's newsletter
- Celebration dinners or outings with the council

STAFF INVOLVEMENT

Creating a council takes time and commitment from a dedicated staff member or community partner. Actual time per week for staff can vary based on how long your board has been running, events being planned, or the support your staff champion receives. Setting the expectation for your staff champion on how educated and active you'd like the Youth Advisory Council to be is important when assigning the task to a position.



Some Common Staff Champion Tasks:

- Planning and coordinating monthly meetings (this includes locating the space, finalizing the agenda, updating goals, and finalizing transportation)
- Coordinating ongoing training for the council - this can be planned for the entire council or include prep for special requests for youth input.
- Project planning with youth for special events
- Communication with administration, youth, staff, and other stakeholders

REMINDER!

Being a staff champion can be a lot of work - provide your team with support or adequate time within their position for planning.

FUNDING & COMPENSATION

Just like with staff involvement, budgets for the youth advisory council can vary by region and activities planned. It's important before starting a council to look at what involvement you're asking of it and allocate a budget for those items.

One Voice Impact encourages and advocates for youth compensation for their input. As in any job, you are paid for your time and expertise and that's just what youth with lived experience are, experts on what they are speaking about. We encourage incentives or other compensation for youth participating in council activities.

YEARLY BUDGET EXAMPLE

EXPENSE	COST
Stipends for Members	\$2,400.00
Board Meetings (food)	\$900.00
Leadership Retreat	\$1,500.00
4 Training Events	\$500.00
Swag	\$360.00
3 Special Events	\$750.00
Transportation	\$300.00
Total	\$6,710.00

MAINTAINING A COUNCIL



It's important to remember that councils will go through a "lull" after the initial launch. It is important to maintain constant communication and effort after the initial "sparkle" goes out and the slow-moving, hard work starts. The next few pages will provide some best practices for how to do that.

As youth join the developing council, it is important that youth provide opportunities to give input on forms, meetings, and overall council structure. This will model the youth-adult relationship.

TRAININGS

Training Offered by One Voice Impact Staff



Strategic Sharing: How to share your story in a healthy purposeful manner

Better Together: Understand the strengths that youth/adults bring to the partnership

Self-Advocacy: Understand where youth voice is required in the child welfare system and how to appropriately advocate for yourself in those situations

Local Advocacy: Youth organizing is the process of building power as a group and using this power to create positive change in their lives. Learn about youth organizing, develop a root cause tree, host focus groups, and move the needle on local issues.

Other OVI-Supported Leadership Training Opportunities

Dale Carnegie: Help youth develop leadership and communication skills to motivate and inspire others.

Dream Tank: Nine-month intensive leadership program that provides youth with training in public speaking, professional etiquette, and professional connections opportunities.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

When discussing how to maintain a council, you as staff must be consistent. Understanding that having a set monthly meeting will allow youth to plan and attend those meetings will provide the framework and consistency they need to become involved.

Changes in the meeting date and time can lead to confusion, inability to plan, or lack of interest from youth attending. A youth involved with One Voice Impact stated that even if you have one youth attend you as the staff should keep showing up. We must build a platform for the youth to allow for their consistent participation.



PROJECTS VS. STRATEGIC GOALS

Advocating for change can be a long, slow process. This is why it's important to provide youth on your council with opportunities for engagement and to be able to physically see changes or impacts they are making. Allow youth to identify projects they would like to be a part of while concurrently advocating for their strategic goals.

Projects

- Community service
- Awareness event for teens in foster care
- Luggage drive
- Working a booth at an organizational event
- Recruitment event for the council

Strategic Goals

- Implement a life skills curriculum locally
- Create a peer mentoring program for transition planning
- Educate foster parents on teen specific needs
- Change cell phone policies in group homes

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



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MOCK APPLICATION

1. What are your personal and educational goals for the next year?
2. What strengths would you bring as a board member?
3. What is one thing you would like to change about the foster care system?
4. What are your hobbies and interests?
5. What motivates you to join the Youth Empowerment Board?
6. What past experience do you have that would help while you serve on the board? What other opportunities have you participated in?
7. What qualities and characteristics do you have that would make you a good board member? What are some of your strengths as a leader?
8. How much time do you have each month to participate as a board member? What is your schedule? What is your work/school situation?
9. How are you with time management? How do you handle deadlines?
10. How do you handle conflict? How do you plan to handle conflict if your fellow board members have a different opinion?
11. How do you plan to build relationships and earn the respect of fellow board members and officers throughout the foster care system?
12. What benefits would you expect to receive from participating in the Youth Empowerment Board?

BOARD POSITIONS

Each council is comprised of youth and young adults between the ages of 16 and 23, with at least one year of experience in the child welfare system. All members will be placed in licensed or relative/non-relative care or participating in EFC/PESS at the time of application for the council.

The council is managed by up to six (6) leadership positions

Chair – Tasks

- Manages meetings – welcome, summary, upcoming dates
- Sets agenda for monthly meeting along with FSS supervisory staff
- Coordinates with other board leaders to address any relevant updates from each area

Co-chair – Tasks

- Assist Chair in meeting management
- Prepare agenda and send it to board leaders and FSS supervisory staff prior to meetings
- Coordinate leadership training for each meeting with FSS supervisory staff
- Introduce leadership training at monthly council meetings
- Communicate additional leadership opportunities to the group (i.e. OVI training opportunities)
- Coordinate additional leadership training opportunities where needed, work with FSS supervisory staff

Secretary/Treasurer – Tasks

- Maintain official records of the council
- Take detailed notes at all meetings
- Compile notes and share them with council leadership and FSS supervisory staff after each meeting
- Maintain budget spreadsheet along with FSS supervisory staff
- Maintain files or all relevant council photos, documents, and information
- Work with the Membership Liason to maintain council member contact information

BOARD POSITIONS

Communications – Tasks

- Manages all communications efforts for the council
- Creation of flyers, social media shares, and other advertising for council-sponsored events (meetings, special events, projects/outreach)
- Send communications to council members regarding upcoming meetings and events
- Work with FSS supervisory staff to coordinate efforts

Project Liaison – Tasks

- Track all current projects of the council
- Monitor and update all tracking
- Work with assigned project leads to update FSS supervisory staff on project progress, barriers, and successes
- Work with assigned project leads to complete a project wrap report detailing successes, struggles, and things to keep in mind
- Present updates on all projects at monthly council meetings – calling on project leads when necessary for full update information
- Can be combined with chair, co-chair, or communications position

Membership Liaison – Tasks

- Recruit and maintain membership for the council
- Work with FSS supervisory staff and community partners to recruit new participants for the advisory council
- Encourage new attendees at monthly council meetings to apply after the required attendance
- Work with communications seat to prepare flyers, social media, and other advertising to encourage new member interest
- Maintain database for all council members (contact information, member approval date, case manager contact, etc.) with the help of the secretary and FSS supervisory staff
- May be combined with Secretary/Treasurer position

SAMPLE AGENDA



Citrus FCN Youth Advisory Council ("YAC")

June 2022 Meeting

Saturday June 25th, 2022, 11:00 am to 12:30 pm

Citrus FCN Offices or Zoom Meeting Option

Agenda Items

Why do we have a YAC: Youth offer important perspectives for understanding the context of data, uncovering barriers to progress, and identifying strategies for improvements. Primary Stakeholders, like former and current youth, may also have additional data that may promote further understanding.

- Welcome and Introductions
- YAC Revised Policy & Procedures
- 2022 CWLA Citrus YAC Presentation Workshop—Feedback from attendees
- Quarterly Report
- Members renomination
- OPPAGA Independent Living Services Project
- REI Updates
- Black Tie and Sneakers
- Stipend eligible activities:

2022 CARE Panel & Graduations (Virtual @ 06:00 pm)

> Monday June 27th Thursday June 30th

- Old Business /New Business
- Adjourn

Attachments:

Black Tie and Sneakers	2022 CWLA Citrus YAC Presentation Workshop
YAC Revised Policy & Procedures	OPPAGA Independent Living Services Project

Next meeting date and time:

Saturday July 16, 2022, at 11:00 am

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

Youth Advisory Council Member Participation Contract

As a Youth Advisory Council member I, _____, understand and agree to the following:

1. I will know and effectively articulate the mission, purpose, goals, and programs of the Youth Advisory Council and Family Support Services
2. I will attend monthly council meetings and actively participate in proceedings. I will inform the council in advance of any meetings that I cannot attend.
3. I will serve on at least one project committee annually and will, if asked, be willing to take a leadership role.
4. I will maintain the confidentiality of council deliberations and discussions. I will publicly support the decisions of the council, including those with which I might have been in disagreement.
5. I will encourage, enable, and respect the participation and contributions of fellow council members.
6. I will remain an active member of the Youth Advisory Council for a minimum of one year.

In turn, Family Support Services of North Florida agrees to provide each member of the council with the following:

1. Access to staff support from FSS, as needed for proper operation of the council
2. Ample notice of all meetings and events
3. Minutes of all council meetings
4. Relevant information to conduct my role as a council member
5. Respect for my time
6. The use of my talent effectively
7. Leadership opportunities for growth and development

If at any time I am no longer able to fulfill my duties and responsibilities as a Youth Advisory Council member, I will notify the staff support and change my membership status to inactive. In signing this document, I understand that I am making a statement of faith to every other council member. We trust each other to carry out the above agreement to the best of our ability.

Signed _____

Date _____

Accepted FSS Staff _____

Date _____

RESEARCH

Capacity Building for States "Youth Engagement Blueprint"

<https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/topics/youth-development/blueprint-series>

Wong's Pyramid <https://organizingengagement.org/models/typology-of-youth-participation-and-empowerment-pyramid>

Capacity Building for States "Embracing a Youth Welfare System"

<https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/topics/youth-development/youth-welfare-guide>

FCYO "Transforming Young People and Communities: New Findings on the Impacts of Youth Organizing"

https://fcyo.org/uploads/resources/transforming-young-people-and-communities-new-findings-on-the-impacts-of-youth-organizing_resource_5a4d1955857485674a21f4d2.pdf

Annie E. Casey "Framework for Effectively Partnering with Young People",

<https://www.aecf.org/resources/a-framework-for-effectively-partnering-with-young-people>

THEORY OF CHANGE

FOCUS: OVI is a statewide youth voice movement with a dual focus – transition age youth in foster care & child welfare system improvement.			
Transitioning Youth: Elevating youth voice in decisions that impact their lives and in policy and practice.		Child Welfare System: Driving improvement in policy and practices related to transition age youth.	
STRATEGIES			
Youth Councils: Supporting the development of councils to integrate youth voice at the local level.	Advocacy: Engaging youth in advocating for themselves and for changes to the child welfare system.	Partnerships: Collaborating with child welfare agencies to develop, implement, and evaluate the initiative.	Training: Youth leaders and youth councils are trained in life, leadership, and advocacy skills. Child welfare staff are trained in youth engagement, council development, and IL Service delivery.
OUTCOMES: Transitioning youth are viewed as organizational assets; youth voice is embedded in local and statewide policy and practice; and child welfare staff are better equipped to engage and support transitioning youth.			
IMPACT: Youth aging out of foster care are prepared for self-sufficiency.			

MANUAL CREATED IN COLLABORATION WITH



*Bringing Families
Together
For A
Bright Future.*

YOUTH VOICE MATTERS

FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES OR
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