2016 Legislative Agenda

Collected from all 16 AMP Foster Care Youth Councils:
Ames, Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Des Moines Mobile Facilitator,
Dubuque, Eldora State Training School, Ft. Dodge, Iowa City, Marshalltown, Mason City,
Ottumwa, Sioux City & Waterloo

2015 Carryovers

1. AMP youth request that Iowa ban conversion/aversion/reparative counseling/therapy for LGBTQ youth. The potential risks of conversion/aversion/reparative counseling/therapy are great, including depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior, since therapist alignment with societal prejudices against homosexuality may reinforce self-hatred already experienced by the youth.

2. To increase permanency for foster care youth, AMP youth request that the state of Iowa:
   • Access federal funding to implement the Guardianship Assistance Program to provide legal guardians financial assistance for the care of their relative children/youth. Currently 32 states offer the federal Guardianship Assistance Program, but Iowa does not.
     OR
   • Allocate state funding to provide financial assistance to relatives who have assumed legal guardianship of their relative children/youth.
     A subsidized guardianship program provides relative caregivers the opportunity to become the legal guardians of their children/youth, thereby replacing the state in that role, and offers children/youth permanency when parental rights are not or will not be terminated.

3. AMP youth request Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter Training/Trainer Updates:
   • Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter Training include information on Human Trafficking so mandatory reporters know what it is and recognize it
   • Reporting by mandatory reporters of possible cases of sexual abuse or child prostitution for children 12 years and older be “required”, when the abuse was perpetrated by a person who was not a caretaker/person responsible for the care of the child. Current law states that mandatory reporters “may” call this possible abuse in to DHS.
New in 2016

Increased Permanency for Foster Care Youth:

1. AMP youth request that open or cooperative adoptions be allowed in Iowa for children/youth age 10 and older. Some youth may resist adoption because they believe it requires severing relationships with their birth families, but exploring the possibility of open adoption may alleviate these concerns. Open adoption allows for both a permanent legal family for the youth and continued connections with birth parents, siblings, or other relatives.

Improved Outcomes for Foster Care Youth:

1. AMP youth request that Iowa fully implement the 2014 federal law, “Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families”, which includes promoting foster child “normalcy”. The new law ensures youth placed in the foster care system (foster family care, CWES shelter placement, group care, and supervised apartment living (SAL) participate in age or developmentally-appropriate events, promoting their engagement in “social, extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities”. We understand that additional state funding may be required to implement this new law. Situations that need to be addressed in Iowa include:
   • Making it possible for a youth in out-of-home care to secure a driver's permit/license
   • Allowing foster parents to sign permission slips and requiring foster parents to provide transportation to activities
   • Liability protections be provided for those carrying out the law's normalcy practices
   • During case reviews, lawyers and judges should examine what “normalcy” steps have been taken and encourage the agency and care provider to help the child participate in these activities

2. AMP youth request that more specialized care options be available for youth with high mental health needs and those youth aging out of foster care. This would include:
   • Despite where a youth lives, he/she should receive appropriate mental health and behavioral services to meet their needs
   • Special living situations for youth 18-21 who would benefit from structure and supervision to prepare them successfully for adulthood