

AMP YOUTH SURVEY RESULTS

April-May 2013

The AMP semi-annual satisfaction survey provides young people an opportunity to provide feedback on their experience as AMP members and is one indicator of the quality and effectiveness of local Council operations. Conducting such a survey at least annually is a requirement of the Department of Human Services' Foster Care Youth Council contract with Youth and Shelter Services. Moreover, results of the survey are available for use by AMP leadership and facilitators to improve the quality of the AMP experience for young people. This report is based on the youth surveys completed during local AMP Council meetings in April and May 2013.

METHODOLOGY

As in past survey administrations, AMP members are invited to complete a short, written survey during the course of a regular Council meeting. The surveys are collected and sent by Council facilitators to the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa for data entry and analysis. A total of 209 surveys were returned in April - May 2013, the same number of surveys completed during the previous administration in November-December 2012.

Local council facilitators may have given youth the opportunity to complete a survey at more than one meeting. Facilitators are asked to have each young person complete the survey only once, but there is no assurance that the surveys are from completely unduplicated youth. However, there is no reason to believe that substantial numbers of youth complete the survey multiple times or that the overall results would be significantly different even if there is some duplication. Further, surveys are intended to be anonymous and sent to YPII without review by the local Council facilitator, but young people occasionally write their name on their survey and facilitators have access to the surveys in the normal course of administering it. Not being able to guarantee confidentiality may affect how some young people respond to the survey.

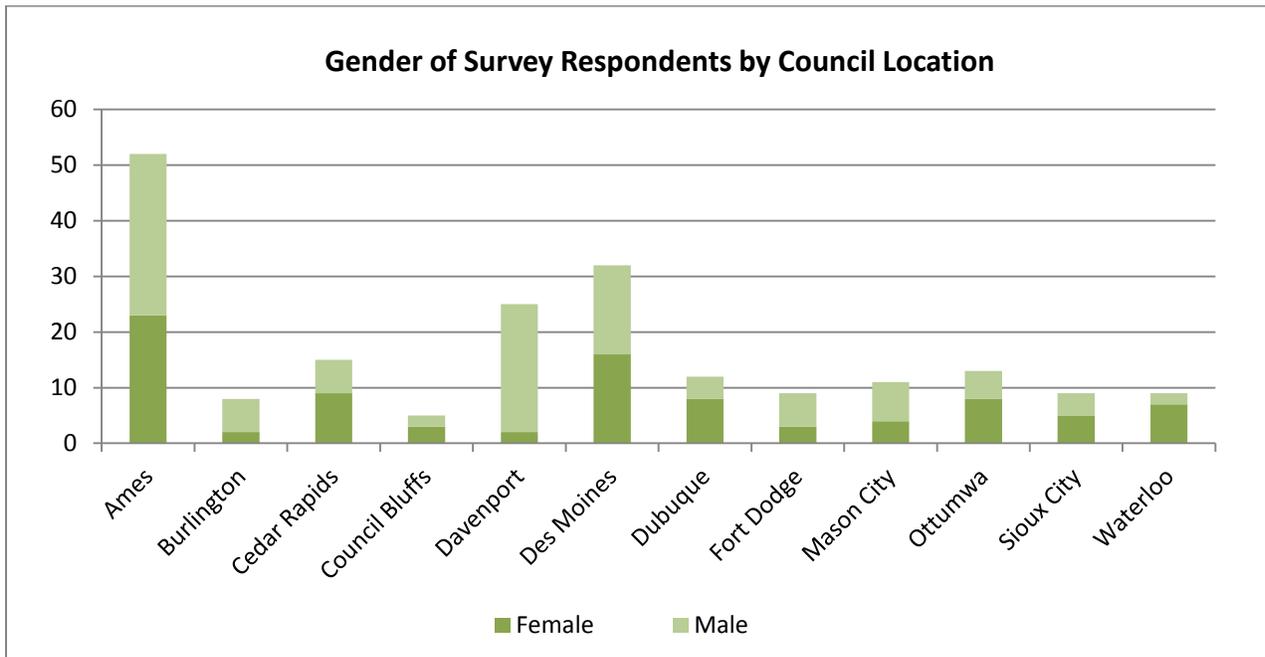
Completing the survey is voluntary and not all youth completed all survey questions. Because young people may join AMP at any time during the year, there are frequently youth attending meetings who are brand new to AMP or who have attended only a few AMP meetings or events when the survey is administered. These youth are given the opportunity to complete the survey, but their feedback is based on limited participation. The most recent survey asks how long youth have been involved in AMP and includes an option of "this is only my first meeting." This allows us to analyze survey results by length of young people's involvement.

It should also be noted that no attempt is made to assess the internal consistency of individual surveys. For these reasons, caution should be used when drawing definitive conclusions from the survey and results should be considered in conjunction with other methods of assessing the quality and effectiveness of AMP.

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH

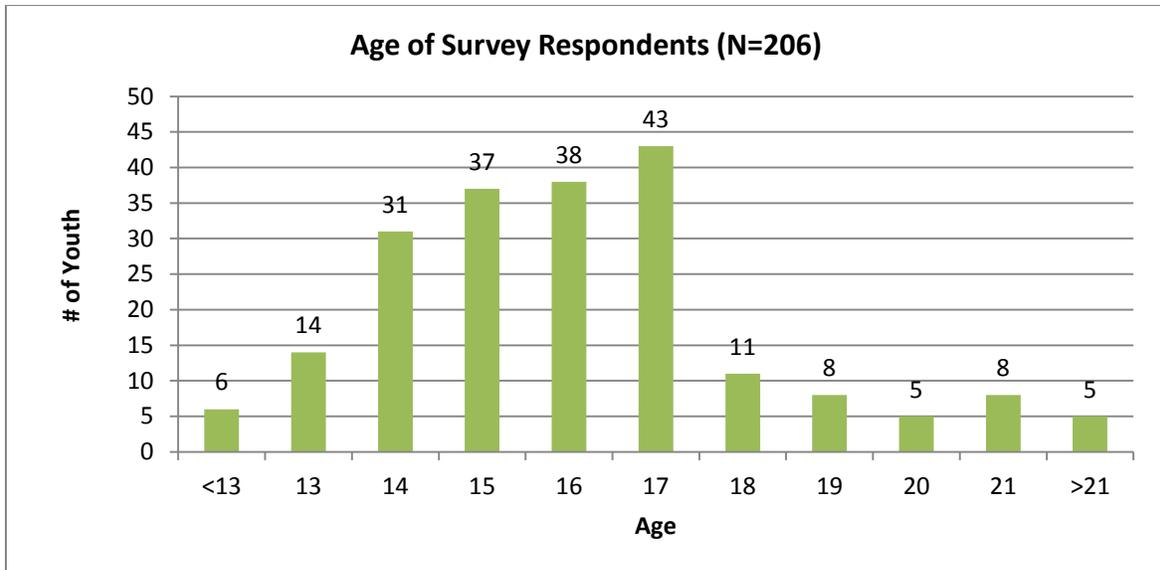
Youth from twelve local Councils were surveyed during April and May 2013 . The Ames Council accounted for 55 of the 209 surveys completed or 26.3% of the total; the Des Moines Council accounted for 34 surveys, 16.3% of the total. Youth in the Davenport Council completed 25 surveys (12.0% of the total). The remaining Councils each surveyed 15 or fewer young people, accounting for the remaining 45.4% of surveys. Limited demographic information is requested from respondents, including gender, age, and how long they had been involved in AMP.

GENDER: Both boys and girls participate in AMP. There were more males (110) than females (90) responding to the survey in this administration. The chart below shows the number of responses from each Council by gender. While some males and females completed the survey at each Council, the Davenport Council had a significantly greater proportion of males (23) than females (2) among survey respondents.

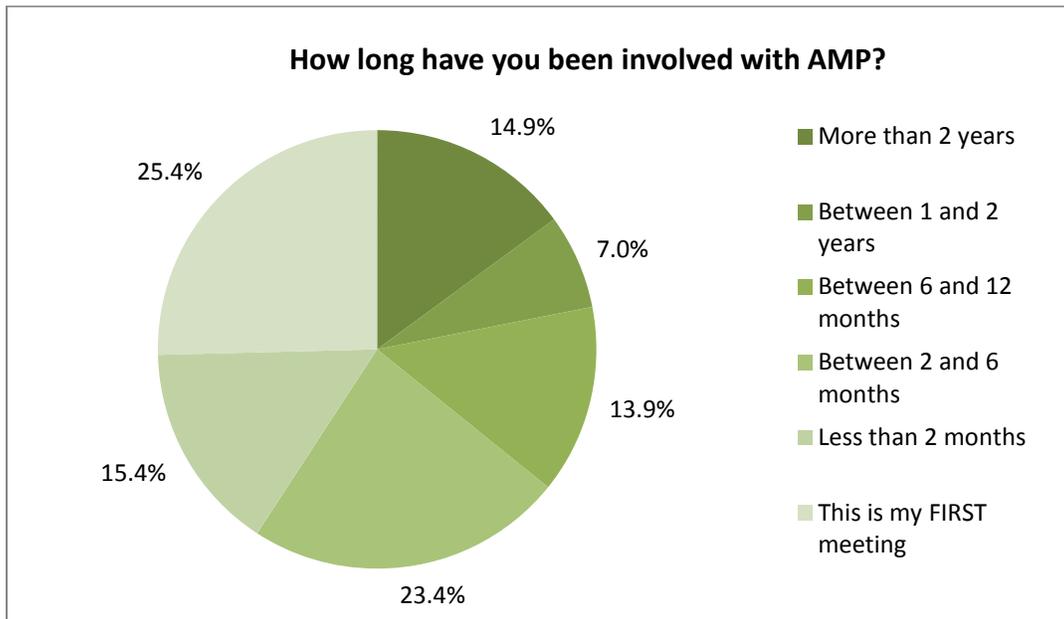


AGE: AMP is intended for youth ages 13 and up who have been involved in foster care, adoption or other out-of-home placements. Similar to previous administrations, the ages reported by survey respondents ranged from **age 11 to 24**. Most youth (72.3%) surveyed are ages 14 to 17; the median age of respondents is 16.

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DURATION OF INVOLVEMENT: Among 201 April-May survey respondents who reported their length of involvement in AMP (or its predecessor elevate), 15% indicated that they had been involved for more than two years, and another 7% reported involvement of one to two years. A quarter of the youth responding (25.4%) were attending their first AMP meeting, and another 38.8% had been involved for less than 6 months. Survey results should be interpreted with the short duration of involvement of many of the respondents in mind.



POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

As in previous administrations, the survey included a series of statements that reflect a positive youth development approach to youth programming or that refer to skills and abilities of the AMP facilitators. As shown in the table below, the vast majority of youth (85% or more) responded that they “strongly agree” or “agree” to these statements, indicating that AMP is a positive experience. Statements that may be impacted more significantly by length of involvement (e.g., positive relationship with an adult through AMP and leadership experience) received somewhat lower ratings than statements that are not as contingent on a member’s length of involvement.

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel welcome at AMP meetings and events	157	50	1	0
I have a chance to express myself at AMP meetings	127	75	7	0
My AMP facilitator treats me with respect	164	42	1	0
AMP youth members treat each other with respect	118	84	5	0
AMP informs me of supports and services available to me*	148	56	4	0
My local AMP facilitator understands the foster care system*	142	60	3	0
I have at least one significant, positive relationship with an adult through AMP*	119	58	21	8
My local AMP facilitator lets youth make decisions	133	68	3	0
AMP has given me at least one leadership experience this past year.*	115	62	3	5

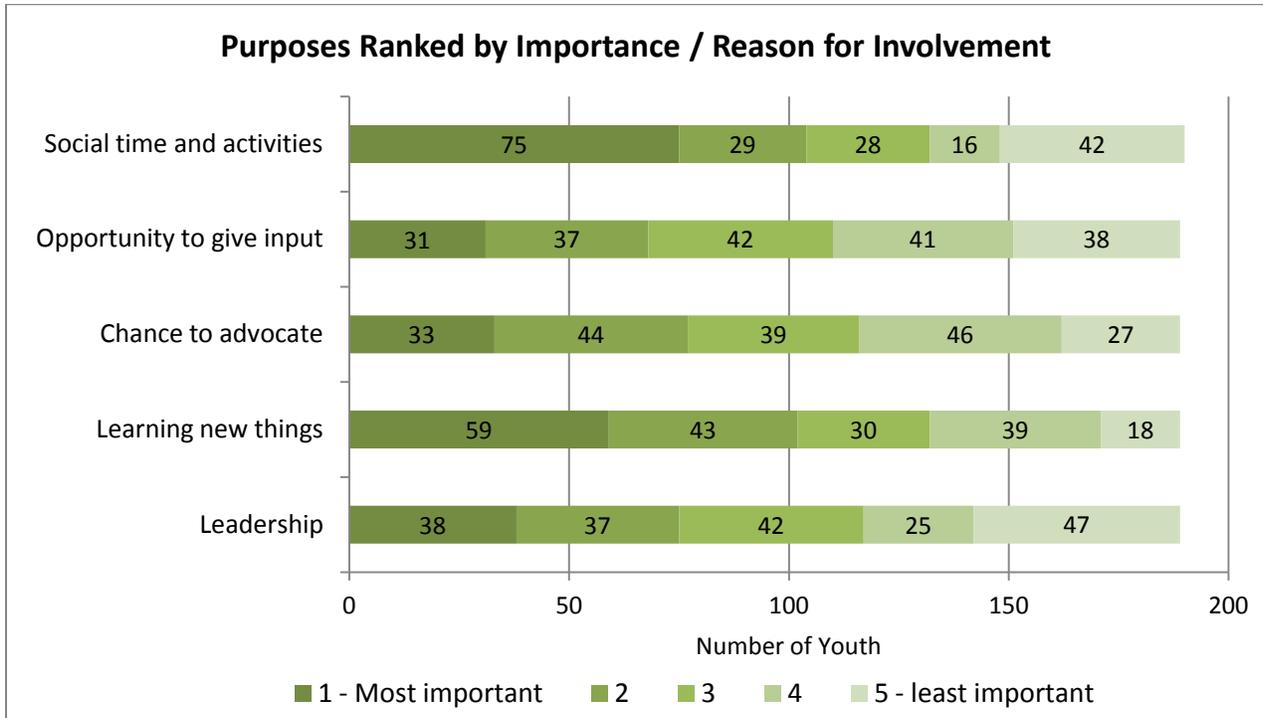
*DHS contract performance measure

REASONS FOR INVOLVEMENT

Youth attend AMP for a variety of reasons and have different priorities for being involved. In an attempt to assess what features or purposes of AMP are most important to members, a new question was added in the April-May 2013 survey that asked youth to “rank” five purposes that AMP fulfills, with “1” being the “most important” aspect of AMP to “5” being the least important to the respondent. While not all youth ranked the options from “1” to “5”, but rather “rated” each option as to its level of importance to them, the results do provide some insights into what attracts youth to AMP and why they stay involved.

While each aspect or purpose of AMP received rankings by youth anywhere from one to five in importance to them, “Social time and activities” was ranked first or second in importance by 54.7% of the youth and “Learning new things that I can apply in my life now or in the future” was ranked first or second in importance by 54% of the youth. Among those aspects of AMP that were ranked as somewhat less important were: “Opportunity to give my input on foster care and adoption related

issues,” which was ranked “4” or “5” by 41.8% of the youth; the “Chance to advocate for other youth in foster care” ranked “4” or “5” by 38.6%; and “Being given leadership opportunities” which was ranked “4” or “5” in importance by 38.1% of the respondents. The distribution of rankings is displayed in the following chart:



OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

Finally, the survey gave youth the opportunity to respond to one open-ended question: “What is the most important or valuable thing you’ve learned about in AMP?” Only about half of the youth responded to the question. Their answers ranged from specific issues (e.g., bullying), to comments about learning life skills, leadership and advocacy. The number of responses by category is as follows (a complete list of verbatim comments is attached):

- *Specific Issue or Activity (e.g., bullying, yoga) (15)*
- *Life skills (e.g., how to find a job) (10)*
- *Social aspects of AMP (10)*
- *Advocacy related (9)*
- *Rights (8)*
- *Support (e.g., others out there like me) (7)*
- *Don’t Know (7)*
- *Relationships/Social Skills (6)*
- *Importance of helping / listening to others (5)*
- *Leadership (4)*
- *Respect (4)*
- *Everything / General positive (4)*

CONCLUSION

Overall, youth provide very positive feedback about their experience in AMP and participate for a variety of reasons. The peer support and socialization opportunities that youth receive as a member of AMP continues to be a major factor in young people's involvement. Turnover in participants, however, remains high and maintaining long-term involvement of individual youth in AMP continues to be a challenge for all of the local Councils. In the previous survey administration, 34% youth reported being involved in AMP/elevate for a year or more; in this administration, only 22% of youth reported being involved for at least a year. Alternatively, nearly two-thirds of responding youth reported being involved in AMP for less than six months in the April-May 2013 survey (compared to 57% in the November-December 2012 administration). The short-term nature of participation may reflect the temporary nature of foster care placements, but it also suggests that additional strategies may be needed to retain the target population in a longer-term and meaningful way.



The Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII) is a non-profit organization that promotes policies and practices that make a difference in the lives of youth. YPII partners with a wide variety of youth-serving organizations and public agencies to develop, evaluate, and expand services and opportunities for youth in Iowa. Positive youth development and authentic youth engagement

are hallmarks of our approach to creating positive change. YPII has consulted with Youth and Shelter Services, Inc., to provide assistance to AMP (Achieving Maximum Potential), Iowa's Foster Care Youth Council, since 2011.

ATTACHMENT: Responses to Open-Ended Question:

What is the most important or valuable thing you've learned about in AMP?

- advocating
- How to advocate
- How to talk to a legislator
- i learned about foster care and the bills that have been put into foster care over the years. That was something I really needed to learn more about. [1st mtg respondent]
- laws and help make new ones
- More services that can help others!
- Speaking for AMP. learning about transition mtgs and speaking up in court
- that you can speak your mind..!
- Youth can make a difference.
- All the good things they do!
- everything
- Everything
- Everything
- All about kids in the system
- how to help
- To help others.
- To help out kids that get bullied
- to listen to others
- To listen to others
- about sex
- About yoga
- about yoga; how its important
- Bullying
- Bullying
- Bullying
- Bullying is bad
- Bullying is worse than people think
- getting a better understanding of sex life
- I learned about sexual identity
- I like the art sessions -- love to draw
- not to bully other teens and how it affects everyone.
- Sex is so complicated
- The bully documentary has really struck with me and I shared it at ISU.
- yoga
- Being a leader
- helps me get involved in the community! I have opportunity to prove my leadership in my life daily at IHCC!
- leadership
- Balance checkbook / money
- How to fend for myself.
- how to fill out an application
- Jobs and support
- Met a man who is helping me find a job
- Practice for job interviews
- That there's a lot of life opportunities.
- Where and how to get my GED and helping my brother when he came to live with me.
- Where the homeless shelters are if I need help when I'm on my own.

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What is the most important or valuable thing you've learned about in AMP?

- work together
- 1st meeting
- Can't think of one.
- I don't know
- I don't know. :)
- I dunno
- Nothing yet.
- You have to wear a AMP t shirt
- How to make better positive relationships
- Let me get to know an adult
- meeting new people and leadership opportunities
- Relationships
- Elevate respect
- Respect
- respect
- Respect
- About youth and their rights and being able to express yourself and interact and tell people your story.
- Bill of Rights - Be a support for others
- I HAVE RIGHTS
- That being heard is important and its our right to be heard, and without us talking, etc. nothing can change.
- that its ok to say what you feel and to have a voice and know you're not alone!
- That you can go to school if even bad or ok grades
- We have a right to be treated with respect.
- Your rights
- Be yourself
- be yourself
- Being able to express myself and share my story and not feel judged because there are alot of people like me.
- everyone matters and your choice
- it's good to journal
- It's ok to go through bad things
- Knowing I wasn't the only one in foster care.
- Never give up even if you do feel alone cause there are others who understand.
- That no matter who you are, you're always welcome here.
- They help me express my feelings
- To share my emotions and talk to people about opportunities.
- A lot; it's fun
- Friendship
- Great food!
- I have made new friends.
- It's a great support system for youth.
- It's fun
- It's important to have people there for you that are in the same situation as you.
- Making friends
- Making friends. Good food
- Not much yet--it is my first meeting. I made 3 new friends!
- social skills
- social skills

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What is the most important or valuable thing you've learned about in AMP?

- that people are there for me and all the opportunities that are open for me in the near and far future.
- That we have people that want to help foster children.
- That you are not alone.
- There are other teens like me out there!
- They accept you for who you are
- To know you are not alone
- Well today is my first night, but it's definitely nice to know I'm not alone and it's ok.