



AMP Interim Progress Report Covering July 1, 2016 – February 28, 2017

COURTNEY CLEMENT & CAROL BEHRER, YOUTH POLICY INSTITUTE OF IOWA
WITH RUTH BUCKELS, YSS

INTRODUCTION

AMP (Achieving Maximum Potential) is a youth engagement program for current and former foster and adoptive youth summarized by the motto “Nothing about us, without us.” AMP serves as Iowa’s Foster Care Youth Council through a contract from the Iowa Department of Human Services to YSS. The primary purpose of AMP is to empower young people to become advocates for themselves and give them a voice in system-level improvements in child welfare policies and practices. When supported through productive partnerships with adults, youth can be authoritative advocates for making the foster care system more responsive and effective.

AMP offers leadership opportunities, service learning projects, speaking opportunities, and educational/vocational assistance to youth ages 13 and older who have been involved in foster care, adoption, or other out-of-home placements. AMP also offers participating youth opportunities to learn various life skills and shares information with youth on resources that are available to them as they transition from foster care to adulthood.

Eight private, non-profit youth-serving agencies, led by YSS, comprise a statewide collaboration known as the Partnership of Iowa Foster Care Youth Councils. Through the contract with DHS, these eight agencies supported sixteen AMP Youth Councils (including a Mobile Council and a Council at the State Training School) during the report period of July 1, 2016 through February 28, 2017. The eight partner agencies and the locations of the Councils they support are:

- YSS (Ames, Davenport, Des Moines, Eldora/State Training School, Marshalltown, Mason City and Mobile)
- American Home Finding Association (Ottumwa)
- Children’s Square USA (Council Bluffs and Sioux City)
- Foundation 2 (Cedar Rapids)
- Four Oaks (Waterloo Council and Iowa City)
- Hillcrest Family Services (Dubuque)
- Youth Shelter Care of North Central Iowa (Fort Dodge)
- Young House (Burlington/Mt. Pleasant)

In addition to the partner agencies, the Partnership has links to three consulting agencies, ISU – RISE (Research Institute for Studies in Education) to conduct program assessments; the Child and Family Policy Center (CFPC) for legislative advocacy; and the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII) for data collection and reporting assistance. In addition, AMP networks with a variety of other stakeholders including, but not limited to, the Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, Iowa KidsNet, the Iowa Aftercare Services Network, and group homes/PMICS and shelters.

The DHS Foster Care Youth Council contract with YSS is in the final year of a multi-year contract. As required by the contract, this report provides information on membership and activities of AMP during the period of July 1, 2016 through February 28, 2017. Quantitative information on member characteristics and council meetings is following by a narrative summary of the status of major AMP projects and other important contract deliverables.

DATA COLLECTION

Beginning July 1, 2016, YSS entered into an agreement with the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII) to collect, analyze, and report information related to AMP membership, participation, local activities, and the annual member satisfaction survey. To gather consistent information from local Councils, YPII developed two online data collection instruments – a meeting summary form and a member information form (see Appendix for hard copies of these instruments). All Councils, including Mobile and Eldora-STS, complete the meeting summary form online using a web-based survey platform, for each regular meeting they hold. Council facilitators completed a total of 277 meeting summaries during the report period; 188 summaries reported on the regular monthly meetings of the community-based Councils, 69 reported on the meetings held at the STS or Mobile locations, and the remaining 20 reported on additional meetings or special events (summaries for special events and additional meetings was optional).

Council facilitators were also instructed to ask each participating youth to complete a member information form. YPII developed a slightly modified version of this form for the Mobile and Eldora-STS Councils to reflect the unique characteristics of those councils. Facilitators enter information from the completed forms online.

Council facilitators collected and entered information from 378 individual AMP members during the report period; 341 of the entries are from the local, community councils and 37 of these are members of the Eldora-STS council. Youth were encouraged to skip over questions they were not comfortable with or ready to answer.

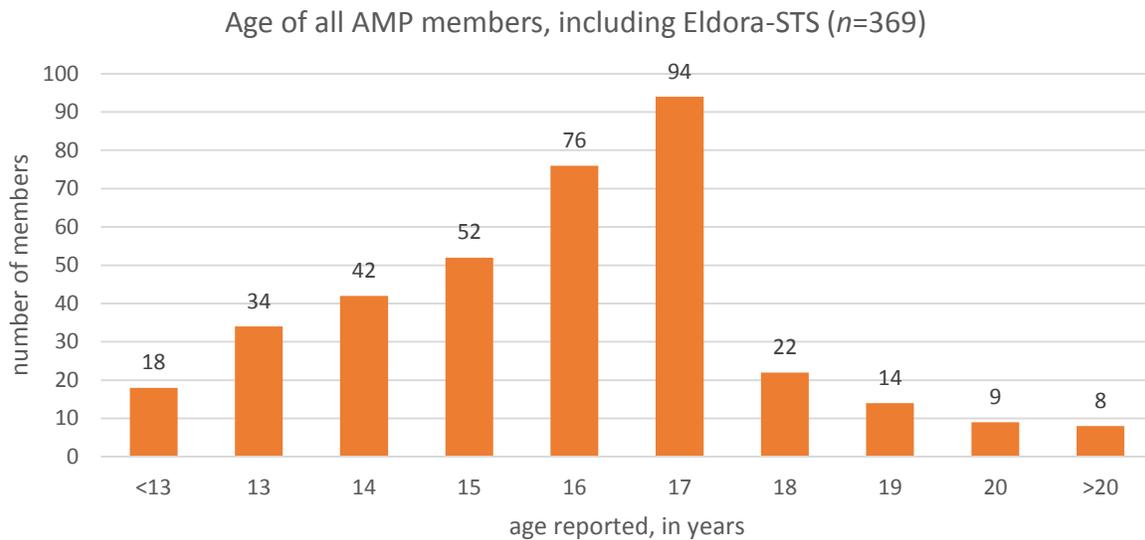
The following councils are represented in the succeeding charts and tables: Ames, Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Eldora-STS, Fort Dodge, Iowa City, Marshalltown, Mason City, Mobile (meetings and participation only), Ottumwa, Sioux City, and Waterloo. We have reported some member data collected from the Eldora-STS council separately because of the specific population served and the unique format of meetings at the STS relative to the 14 community councils. No member information was entered from the Mobile council.

MEMBER CHARACTERISTICS

Facilitators were asked to collect member information from as many participating youth as possible, beginning in July 2016. Based on facilitators' attendance logs, approximately 870 young people attended one or more AMP meetings during the report period. Of those, 372 (45%) completed a member information form on which the following information is derived.

AGE

AMP is intended for young people ages 13 and older who have been involved in foster care, adoption, or other out-of-home placements. Ages reported by members range from 9 to 28 years old, though less than 10% fall outside the intended range of 13 to 20 years old. The average age of community Council members is 15.8 years old, which is slightly younger than the average Eldora-STS member (16.5 years old). Sixty percent of members are between the ages of 15 and 17, while less than 15 percent are age 18 or older.



RACE AND ETHNICITY

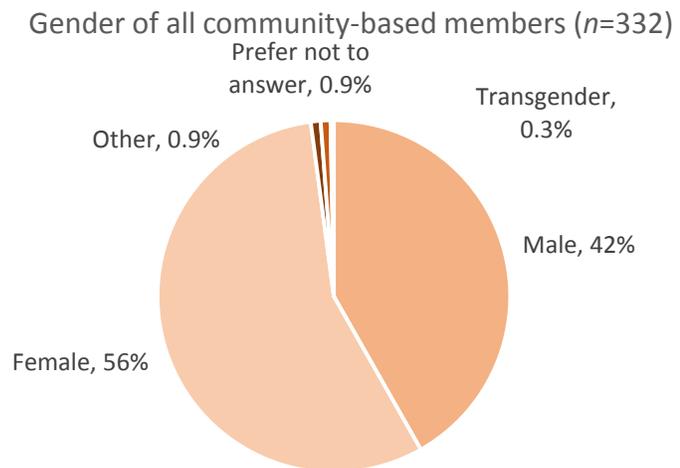
AMP members are generally representative of the foster care population in Iowa. The majority of AMP members identified as White (69% of community-based councils and 57% of Eldora), and a greater proportion of Eldora-STS members identified themselves as Black or African American compared to the rest of the statewide councils. Because race and ethnicity categories are not mutually exclusive, AMP youth could choose as many as they liked. Therefore, some participants are represented in more than one category and percentages do not add up to 100%.

	Community Councils $n=339$	Eldora-STS $n=37$
White	68.7%	56.8%
African American or Black	17.1%	35.1%
Hispanic or Latino	11.8%	13.5%
Multiracial	7.4%	2.7%
American Indian or Alaska Native	4.1%	0.0%
Other	2.1%	0.0%
Asian	0.9%	0.0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.6%	0.0%

GENDER

More females (56.1%) than males (41.8%) participated in the community councils. Less than 1% of members identified as either transgender (0.3%) or something else (0.9%). All of the Eldora-STC members identified as male; including these 37 members, the overall makeup of AMP members is closer to equal between genders, but the majority still leans female.

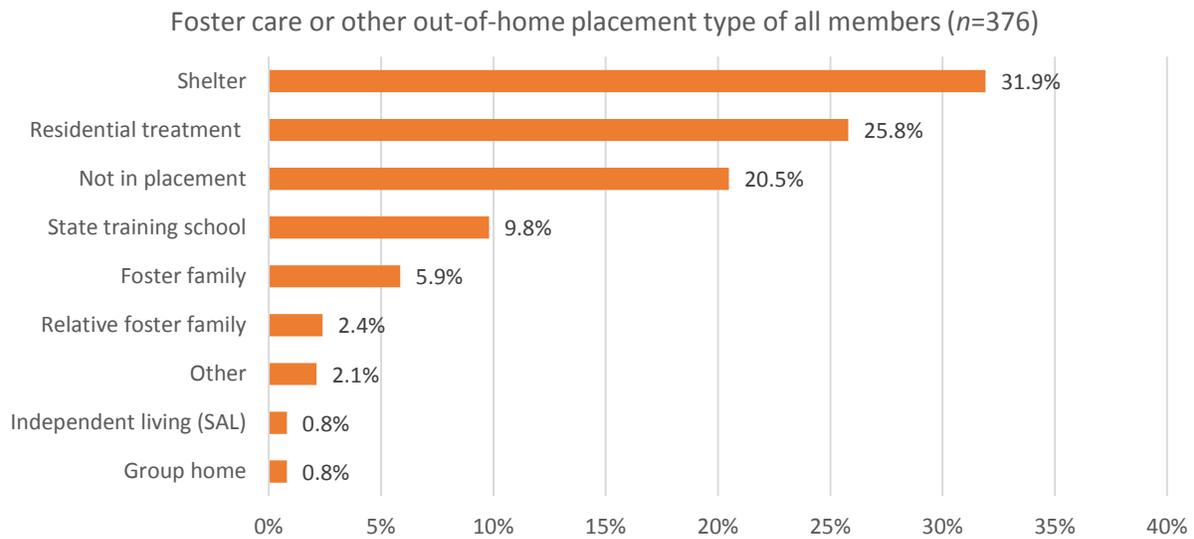
The makeup of councils by gender varies. Due to the location where some groups meet, such as the state training school or gender-specific group home facilities, individual councils may naturally lack gender diversity.



PLACEMENT TYPE

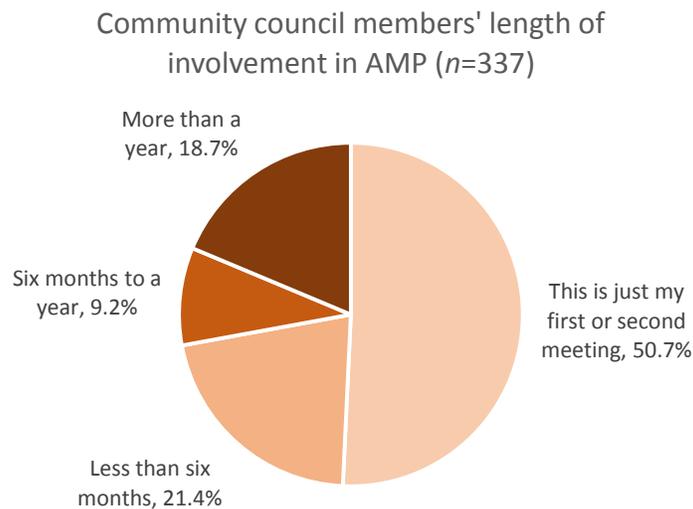
About 21% of AMP members reported that they are not currently in an out-of-home placement (includes those who reported they are living on their own or were adopted). Nearly 60% of all AMP members are living in a congregate care setting – a shelter, residential treatment facility, or group home. Meanwhile, just over 8% are living in a family-like setting. Some AMP councils hold one or both of their monthly meetings on-site at a residential or shelter facility, which partially explains the high frequency of youth in these placement types.¹

¹ The majority of the “Other” placement answers written in by youth have been categorized into one of the predetermined categories. For example, youth who indicated they were residing in a PMIC were added to “Residential Treatment”. Youth who were adopted, living with their biological families, or on their own were included in “Not in Placement”. Remaining entries in the “Other” category include Juvenile Court Services, LSI, and those who did not provide an answer.



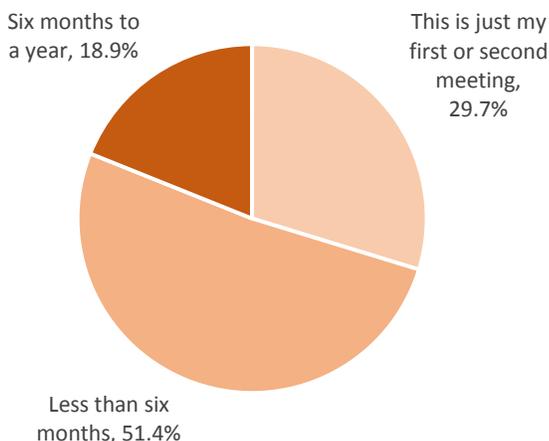
DURATION OF INVOLVEMENT

In an effort to collect information from both existing members as well as newly participating youth, facilitators were asked to have youth complete the information form during one of the first meetings of the fiscal year (beginning July 1, 2016) and as new members started attending meetings during the year. As a result, just over half (50.7%) of community council members said they were brand new to AMP meetings, reporting it was their first or second time attending. About 28% report having been involved with AMP for six months or longer. In comparison, more than half of youth who completed the annual satisfaction survey reported they had been involved for 6 months or longer.



All Eldora AMP members report being involved in meetings for less than a year, as the average length of stay before discharge at Eldora is just over 10 months (from Iowa Department of Human Services). Consequently, none of the STS members reported having participated in AMP for more than a year.

Eldora-STS members' length of involvement in AMP (n=37)



COUNCIL MEETINGS AND PARTICIPATION

From July 2016 – February 2017, **188 regular meetings** (scheduled twice monthly meetings) were held across the state at **14 different council locations**. Many councils frequently held a third meeting or a special event outside of their regularly scheduled meetings – the attendance for these additional points of contact are not included in the charts below, but are reported to YSS. Finally, due to meetings at the Davenport and Iowa City councils being temporarily and indefinitely on hold, respectively, some gaps in attendance are to be expected.

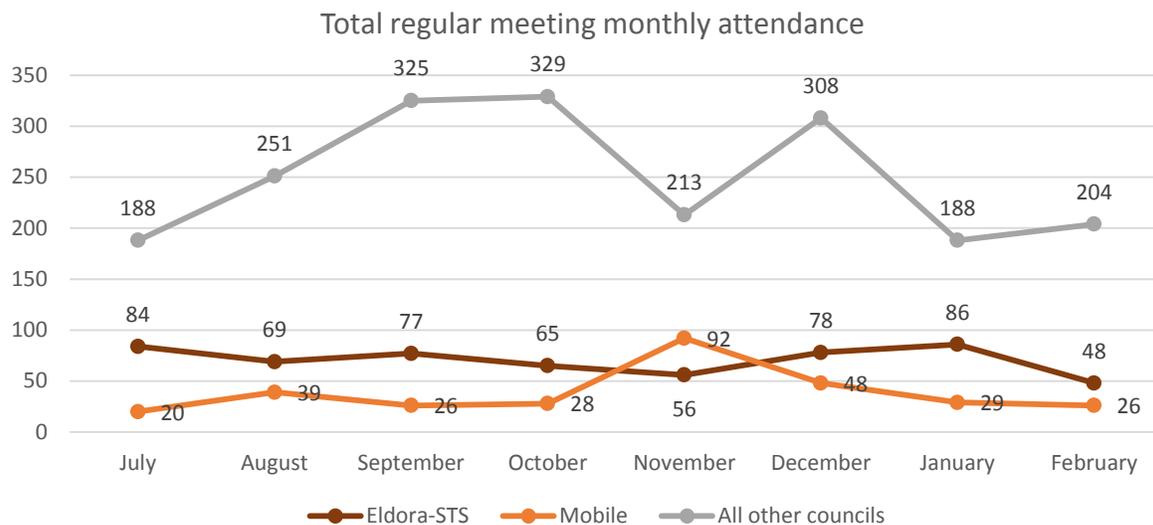
Including both Mobile and Eldora-STS, at least **870 unique young people** attended AMP meetings (Eldora-STS did not track individuals) for **2,809 points of contact at regular meetings** over the report period. Including the numerous special events, additional meetings, and AMP events that youth attended, **AMP has touched youth with experience in foster care 3,521 times²** since July 2016. Average attendance is 11.0 members per meeting for the fourteen community-based councils; locally, average attendance ranges from 4 to 21 youth per meeting.

Across all cottages at the Eldora-STS location, an average of 30.4 youth participated in meetings each month, 16.1 in individual meetings, and 21.5 youth in special events.

Mobile meetings occurred on a regular basis at Orchard Place, Polk County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC), and Woodward. Other meetings took place less frequently at Youth Homes of Mid America and locations throughout the community. On average, about 6 youth attend any given Mobile meeting.

The chart below shows the total monthly attendance at regular meetings for all councils; Eldora-STS and Mobile councils may include individual meetings that occurred in that month.

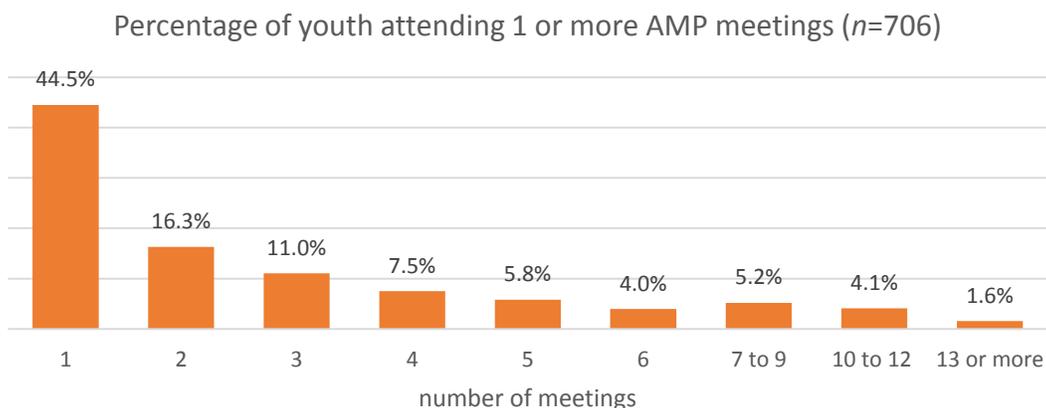
² Data source: YSS AMP Participant List 2017



A newly implemented form of attendance tracking allows Council facilitators (except at Eldora) to follow the attendance of individual youth from meeting to meeting during the year. This provides a more reliable method to gauge involvement over time, as opposed to the self-report, static question on satisfaction surveys or member information. It also may indicate if members are reengaging after missing a few meetings, although the current report covers a relatively brief timeframe.

As the table below shows, all but about 11% of members have attended between 1 and 6 meetings during the reporting period. With the relatively simple method of tracking individual youth based on names from sign-in sheets using an Excel spreadsheet, we are cautious to draw definitive conclusions from this data. Individuals are tracked by council, and are not added to a master list; thus youth who have attended or are attending meetings and events at another council are not easily cross referenced between councils. In addition, facilitators use a variety of ways to identify youth (e.g., first and last name, first name and last initial, first name only, or initials only) when submitting attendance sheets. While this helps protect confidentiality, there is potential for errors based on incomplete or incorrect identifying information and overlooking previous participation as facilitators track individual youth.

With a more sophisticated method, such as an online database of youth with identification numbers, tracking attendance over multiple months and years might better indicate the engagement and reengagement of members, as well as the frequency of long-time members from year to year.



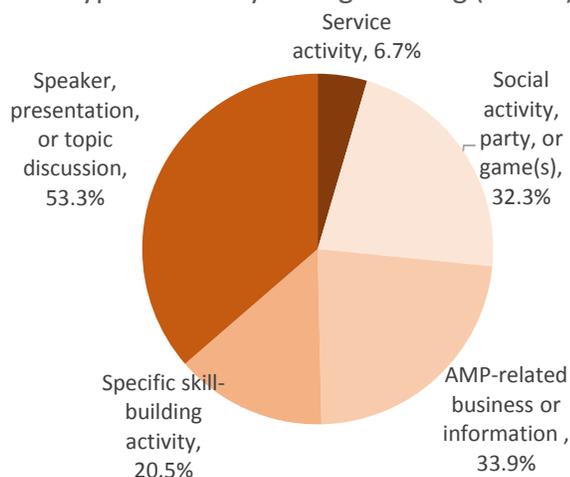
MEETING TYPE

Facilitators were asked to identify the main category of meeting when submitting a summary. Often multiple types of activities occur during one meeting and facilitators indicated such. The most frequently reported activity was a speaker, presentation, or topic discussion (53%) and least reported was a service activity (7%).

The majority of meetings at Eldora-STS (59%) had a skill-building activity. AMP-related business and social activities occurred equally, at 25% of meetings at

Eldora-STS, and almost 16% of meetings included a speaker or presentation. Mobile meetings only had a skill-building activity (84%) or a speaker (16%), because of the location and format of these gatherings.

Type of activity during meeting (n=195)

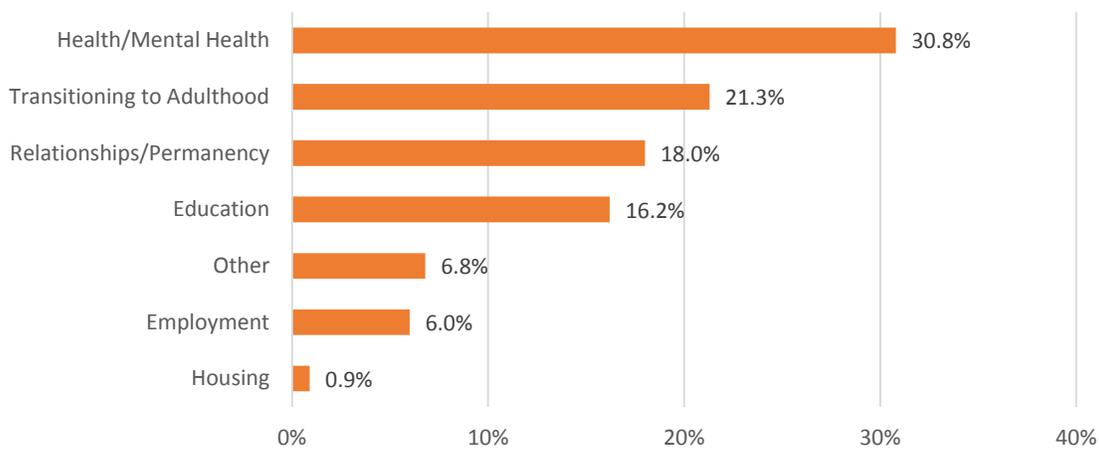


TOPICS ADDRESSED

The information-sharing and skill-building functions of AMP are partially met through presentations, activities and discussions on various topics during regular AMP meetings. When this was the case, facilitators categorized the primary topic or focus of the meeting. YPII sorted topics written-in by facilitators into the given categories to the extent possible, such as including nutrition within Health, money management within Transitioning to Adulthood, and communication within Relationships. Though not an exhaustive list, the following are examples of what remained in the "Other" category:

- Human trafficking
- Identifying triggers and helping avoid non-positive behavior
- Bullying
- Talking about character

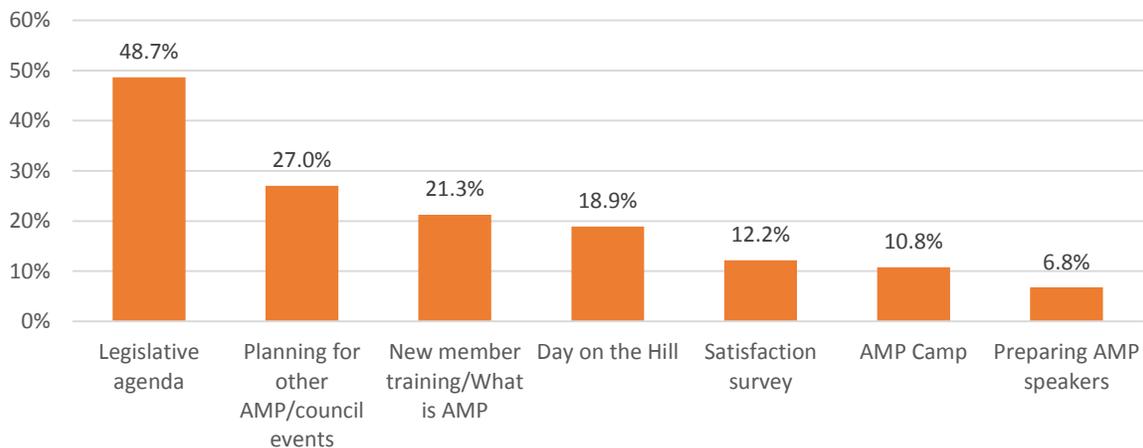
Primary meeting topic of discussion or speaker (n=117)



Conducting AMP-related business during Council meetings provides opportunities for youth to practice communication, decision-making and advocacy skills and reinforces AMP’s commitment to a youth-driven approach. When AMP-related business was included as part of the meeting, facilitators identified the primary AMP-related topic. Options included: AMP Camp, Day on the Hill, AMP legislative agenda, new member training/What is AMP, planning for other AMP/local council events, preparing AMP (youth) speakers, and satisfaction survey.

At the 74 Council meetings when AMP business was discussed, nearly half (48.7%) focused on AMP’s legislative agenda. Similarly, at Eldora-STS meetings, three-quarters of meetings with AMP business related to Day on the Hill, and about 38% regarding the legislative agenda. Mobile council meetings did not report discussing AMP-related topics.

Primary topic of AMP-related business at community council meetings (n=74)



SUMMARY of MAJOR PROJECTS

The statewide Partnership seeks to unleash the full potential for personal growth among foster and adoptive youth in Iowa. AMP pursues this goal through regular meetings, special events and major projects. Youth train to become advocates for themselves and others, and participate in valuable leadership opportunities. Among the most important benefits of participation in AMP is the chance for youth to build social capital. Youth share their stories with each other, provide understanding and support for one another, gain life skills necessary to become healthy, independent adults, and build partnerships with adults in the community. This section of the report summarizes major activities conducted by AMP during the report period.

Providing Normalcy – Variety AMP Camp

Originally funded by Variety – the Children’s Charity of Iowa, AMP has given youth in foster care an opportunity to experience a weeklong summer camp with their peers each of the past four years. Last summer, thirty-one campers and ten young adult mentors attended Variety AMP Camp July 17-23, 2016, at the 4-H Camp near Madrid, Iowa. The mentors are AMP members who have previously attended AMP Camp as campers and act as role models and helpers for campers during the week.

In addition to typical camp activities organized by the 4-H Camp staff, several invited guests came to AMP Camp to speak with campers or provide an activity. State Senator Herman Quirmbach spoke to AMP youth about using their voice to improve the child welfare system. Campers practiced writing letters, sending emails and calling their local legislators to express their opinion on AMP legislative priorities. Robert “Words” Taylor guided campers through poetry activities with the theme “getting in touch with your inner self.” Reverend Deb Hill-Davis, a motivational speaker, spoke about each youth being a light in the world, and the Des Moines Art Center provided a crafting time activity for campers.

AMP Camp is also an opportunity to inform youth about AMP initiatives and solicit their ideas for the following year’s activities. This past summer, campers also voted on a new AMP logo.

Preparations for the 2017 AMP Camp are underway. AMP Camp will take place June 20-27, 2017 at a new venue – Forrest Lake Camp, which is located south of Ottumwa in northern Davis County. This camp has a lake, canoes, paddleboats, fishing, hiking trails, a multipurpose building with a full size gymnasium, industrial kitchen and dining room. There are multiple cabins, a chapel, and arts and crafts room. Along with a large outside space for sports and fire rings for evening campfires. Sports activities, crafts, speakers and life skills lessons are being planned for the week of camp.

The plan is to remain with the same number of campers, mentors and adult staff and volunteers as in previous years. Mentors will arrive a day early to develop leadership skills and learn their responsibilities as mentors. Local Councils have received the paperwork to invite youth to create an AMP Camp logo for the Camp shirt. As in past years, AMP youth will be guided to learn how to tell their individual stories, which will be documented by the videographer who attends camp.

Informing Public Policy – AMP Day on the Hill and Foster Youth in Action

An important opportunity for AMP members to share their views and discuss issues with elected officials is the annual AMP Day on the Hill. Each year AMP members, with support and guidance from AMP staff and partners, develop a legislative agenda through an iterative process of brainstorming, reviewing, and prioritizing issues of importance to youth in foster care. The process culminates in a legislative agenda (see Appendix) that AMP members share with Legislators during the Day on the Hill event.

In preparation for the 2017 Day on the Hill, seven AMP members attended a daylong training offered in partnership with the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa. The leadership workshop gave the participating youth a chance to research an issue from the legislative agenda, refine their thoughts and ideas, and weave their personal experience with relevant data in a succinct, impactful presentation.

Approximately fifty AMP members representing ten councils attended the Day on the Hill on January 23, 2017. Five AMP members spoke at the press conference, advocating for the following changes in law or policy that are included on AMP's 2017 Legislative Agenda:

- Abby W., funding for anti-bullying law
- Hayley C., subsidized guardianship program
- Christian B., federal legislation (counseling for minors without parental consent; employment of transition age youth)
- Corey A., permanency option for older youth
- Dalani P., Erin's Law

AMP was joined by numerous members of Teens Against Human Trafficking, staff, and volunteers. Based on a short survey of participating AMP members, about 58% of youth attending the event have been involved in AMP for more than 6 months. For half of these AMP members, Erin's Law (child sexual abuse prevention in schools) was the state legislative issue they cared the most about.

Any time we can support youth advocacy on a state or national level we do. Several AMP members are actively working on national projects with Foster Youth in Action, a network of 16 foster youth-driven groups spanning 17 states. FYIA often surveys foster youth for their perspectives, to which AMP member regularly respond.

In addition, two AMP members participated in the 2016 Leaders for Change conference in Washington, D.C. in October 2016. AMP's youth delegates had the opportunity to share the work happening in Iowa with the rest of the group and other guests, present and learn from others regarding legislative priorities, and visit in groups the offices of more than 20 legislators to advocate for policy change.

Annual Foster Care Youth Conference – Plugged In and Charging

The 2nd Annual AMP "Plugged In and Charging" Conference took place February 24-25, 2017 at Indian Hills Community College (IHCC) in Ottumwa, Iowa. AMP facilitators partnered with the college to provide an opportunity for youth to explore a variety of career and diploma programs, participate in

workshops, and immerse themselves in a college environment. Ninety-seven, youth, facilitators and support staff were part of this event.

Through the generosity of IHCC, several youth were able to arrive on Friday evening and spend the night in the dorms at the college. Saturday morning, youth participated in a college tour as well as breakout sessions to explore different degree and diploma programs. Workshops included hands-on opportunities in the laser department, culinary arts, criminal justice, and health science field, among others. The youth learned to maneuver the college cafeteria for lunch. Luncheon speaker Andrew Allen, CEO of YSS, shared his personal journey with the youth and inspired them to “reach for the stars.”

Afternoon breakout sessions included learning about personality types, how to interact with law enforcement, how to have a better attitude and art making. Programs including Job Corp, Iowa Financial Aid, and Iowa Aftercare Services had informational tables that youth visited between sessions. Youth spent the remaining part of the day in the College Net Center playing sports and laser tag. This was followed by pizza and a chance to attend the IHCC basketball game that evening before returning home.

Youth were invited to complete evaluation forms and share their thoughts on the conference and what they enjoyed and learned from as well as what they would change. Of the youth who completed an evaluation form, more than half (63%) were female and 37% were male. The average age of this group was 17 years. The large majority of youth (90%) had attended an AMP meeting or event prior to the conference. A little over half (52%) were not currently in a foster care or other out-of-home placement; 43% said they were in a foster care placement, and 5% were either not sure or said they had been adopted³.

WEBSITE and COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

AMP maintains a website, www.ampiowa.org, which serves to share both information about AMP and creative, original work of members. On the main website, there is an “Amplified Poets” poetry book, which includes written works submitted by youth. Thanks to the web design, the book has unlimited pages so youth will be able to submit poetry content for years to come. Youth in each council are able to update their local council page, learning and teaching this skill to the council.

Facebook and Twitter are additional means AMP uses to connect with young people. At last count, there were 270 friends of the “Achieving Maximum Potential – AMP” Facebook page. One of the highly anticipated features of the Facebook page is the instant communication and feedback loop AMP has needed for some time. It is now possible for us to ask “friends” to answer questions on our blog, as well as post comments and answers on our wall.

AMP is producing six new videos to post on the website. These videos are short trainings for youth on lease agreements, sexting, cyber bullying, domestic violence, rights when searched or approached by the police (with Iowa Legal Aid), and financial advice about opening a checking or savings account, using a credit card to build credit and the importance of your credit report. Given the susceptibility of youth in care to human trafficking, two additional videos are stories from human trafficking victims. These

³ Data source: Completed AMP Conference evaluation forms

videos will be designed to help youth look for the warning signs from traffickers and understand how the feelings of being a teen in foster care can be used as a recruitment tool by traffickers.

This spring AMP is collaborating with IFAPA (Iowa Foster Adoptive Parents Association) to offer training to foster/adoptive parents and teens together. These trainings are being offered on five Saturdays during March, April and June in all five DHS service areas in Iowa. Foster parents will receive six hours of training credit towards their licenses. In the morning session, Ruth Buckels will educate on what human trafficking looks like in Iowa and how to protect youth in care from being recruited by traffickers. The afternoon session is Terri Bailey sharing information about transition services available to youth who age out of foster care. To encourage attendance, lunch is being provided and participants are able to attend a community college tour. For attending the tour, adults are eligible for prizes and youth receive a suitcase filled with items to aid their transition to adulthood.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Across the state, AMP councils regularly seek out and maintain partnerships with local or regional partners in various capacities. Below are examples, although not the entirety, of community connections throughout the state (submitted by council facilitators or pulled from Meeting Summary Forms).

Ames	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Iowa State Student Club, Emerging Leaders in Engineering ○ Learning Supports Advisory Team ○ Wells Fargo Bank ○ Planned Parenthood of the Heartland
Burlington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ US Bank ○ Iowa Wesleyan University (IWU) students ○ IWU Nursing Department
Cedar Rapids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Job Corps ○ Kirkwood Community College ○ Planned Parenthood <p>Cedar Rapids biggest community connection is Junior League of Cedar Rapids. They have continued to provide dinners at each of our meetings. Junior League of Cedar Rapids has also continued to provide youth moving into their own apartments the “Apartment in a Suitcase” which helps youth with the supplies that they need to live independently. The Cedar Rapids council has also been working with Four Oaks/Iowa KidsNet a lot lately when they hold their PS-MAPP classes for prospective foster families. This is a great opportunity for AMP youth to be able to use their stories to educate prospective foster families on the struggles of the system as well as to inform them about what a great and beneficial program AMP is.</p>
Council Bluffs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Iowa Legal Aid ○ Foundation 2 ○ Local professionals

Davenport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scott County Health Department ○ Hand & Heart Drumming ○ Teens Against Human Trafficking
Des Moines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Des Moines Art Center ○ Science Center of Iowa ○ Wells Fargo Bank
Des Moines Mobile	<p>The Mobile Facilitator Position is a flexible facilitator to bring AMP to places where youth would otherwise not be able to attend such as Orchard Place, Woodward, Youth Homes of Mid-America and Polk county Detention Center. Some of these programs have a range of activities and skill building with in the program. This facilitator’s job is to understand what the staff and youth would like to have discussed/trained/shared and design sessions based on their needs and requests. Several activities presented surround the youth with learning about their issues, relationships and feelings towards others, building skills to deal with these issues and how to improve relationships during placement and when they return to their community after treatment.</p>
Dubuque	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Capri College ○ Iowa Advocate for Mental Health Recovery ○ ISTEP Teen Club (Iowa Students for Tobacco Education and Prevention)
Eldora-STS	<p>Although the students at Eldora-STS are limited in the inclusion of community youth in meetings, they are able to bring in various adult individuals to contribute to AMP meetings on the campus, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ruth Buckels, YSS ○ Iowa State University students ○ Holly Dommer, American Home Finding Association ○ John Derryberry
Fort Dodge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cana Café ○ Webster County Aftercare ○ YSS Human Trafficking Community Educator
Iowa City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Iowa Legal Aid ○ Iowa Aftercare Service Network ○ Johnson County Junior League ○ Iowa City Junior Service League

Marshalltown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Marshalltown Community College ○ Wolfe Ranch ○ Iowa Aftercare Services Network <p>We volunteer for PM Kiwanis for their twice annual rummage sale (October and May), and have presented to their group twice in the past year. We have had holiday meals with YSS of Marshall County staff and board members and they have been guest speakers at AMP council meetings 4 times in the past year.</p>
<hr/>	
Mason City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prairie Ridge Integrated Behavioral Healthcare ○ AmeriCorps ○ Local US Marine Corps
<hr/>	
Ottumwa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DHS Transition Planning Specialist ○ Ruth Buckels, YSS <p>The Ottumwa AMP Council hosted the Plugged in and Charging Youth Conference at Indian Hills Community College (IHCC) in Ottumwa. Among the many connections coming out of the conference is planning for a pilot program between Job Corp, IHCC and AMP for this Summer & Fall for ten youth. The Job Corp program will host introductory classes and certificates that meets pre-requisites for IHCC programs. The plan is to also provide added room/board, education and supervision/supports for youth who need it.</p>
<hr/>	
Sioux City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Goodwill Industries ○ Jackson Recovery ○ Lutheran Services of Iowa <p>We work with Siouxland Human Investment Partnership. We get together every two months to discuss what each group is doing in the community and how we can help one another. The Sioux City AMP council receives an extra \$2,000 each year in grant money from SHIP. This year, our council was awarded a grant of \$1,000 to directly help kids who are transitioning from foster care.</p>
<hr/>	
Waterloo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ University of Northern Iowa professors and students ○ Iowa KidsNet ○ Allen Women’s Health ○ Community Partnership for Protecting Children ○ House of Hope ○ Waterloo Transition Advisory Board <p>We have had presentations from a Sheriff’s Deputy, Armani Community Services domestic and dating violence advocate, Child Protective Services, Hawkeye Community College, and others. In the near future, we will have speakers join us from Iowa Legal Aid, Job Corp, and Consumer Credit Counseling. In addition to Legal Aid, local restaurants, YMCA and bowling alleys, we have also had connections with Iowa Western Community College, which made a room available to hold meetings. We also had a connection with the Micah House homeless shelter where we volunteered by helping serve Thanksgiving weekend meal.</p>

RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

AMP continually works to be accessible and inviting to all eligible youth. Local Councils and state leadership are involved in ongoing recruitment efforts to ensure that young people are aware of AMP opportunities. Each partner agency promotes AMP within their organization and in their respective communities. Many youth attend AMP because of their placement or involvement with one of the partner agencies.

To reach youth in foster homes, AMP and Iowa KidsNet have worked together each month to put a list together and reach out specifically to foster family homes that take in teenagers. Bambi Schrader, the Iowa KidsNet Statewide Recruiter has attended the AMP Quarterly meetings and occasionally participates on monthly calls to keep up updated on progress and to provide connections and information to Facilitators. This has been more successful in some areas than in others in Iowa.

AMP also continues to attend as many PS-MAPP sessions 9 or 10 in an effort to encourage families to take in teenagers as foster placements. It is reported on the evaluation sheets to PS-MAPP trainers that this exposure to AMP youth does positively impact people's perception on fostering teens.

AMP continues to utilize print-media, radio and television opportunities to promote AMP, as they are available to us. AMP Day on the Hill received significant exposure, for example. As discussed above, AMP has a Facebook page and website and we educate by word of mouth about AMP, youth voice, youth issues and youth successes.

AMP has reached out to DHS Transition Planning Specialists and Aftercare Self-Sufficiency Advocates and their participants. AMP has shared educational materials with the IASN providers and asked them to share it with participants.

To reach adopted, guardianship, and kinship youth who are no longer connected to the system, AMP provides advertisements and articles in IFAPA's Weekly Word and in their News and Views Quarterly Newsletter. Since the location of these youth falls under confidential information, this is the best way to reach out to their families. AMP also has staff that train for IFAPA and can share about AMP when they meet face-to-face with families in training.

QUALITY ASSURANCE EFFORTS

AMP has multiple levels of quality assurance (QA) checkpoints. These include: the Youth Satisfaction Surveys giving us a snapshot of a youth's perceptions; feedback forms we can use randomly after a guest speaker to give the facilitator instant feedback; the PAAT study, an online, youth program rating tool administered by ISU-RISE, a third party evaluator that was just completed in January/February; and regular meetings and trainings for facilitators. YSS also has both a QI and QA teams that AMP staff are on to make sure AMP policies and programs meet CARF certification. AMP strives to continuously update and adjust according to youth feedback.

Youth Satisfaction Survey

Eleven councils and Eldora-STS participated in the annual satisfaction survey during February and early March 2017. The purpose of the survey is to solicit feedback from a representative sample of AMP

members; therefore, facilitators were encouraged to conduct the survey at just one of their regular meetings with the youth present at that time. In total, **130 youth completed the survey**, providing feedback on their experiences in AMP.

By age, gender, and race/ethnicity, the youth who completed the satisfaction survey are mostly representative of AMP's total membership. Only 10% of the respondents were answering these questions at their first AMP experience, which means that the large majority of youth responding are at least somewhat familiar with AMP and its services.

Length of involvement	
First meeting	9.5%
Less than 2 months	11.9%
Between 2 and 6 months	25.4%
Between 6 and 12 months	11.9%
Between 1 and 2 years	17.5%
More than 2 years	23.8%

Overall, youth responded with high satisfaction for AMP services. Highlights of the results include:

- 86.6% of youth rated the overall experience as an AMP member as Excellent or Very Good
- 85.9% of youth rated their leader's understanding of the foster care or juvenile justice system as Excellent or Good
- 82.8% of youth rated the opportunity to learn about supports and services AMP as Excellent or Very Good

Areas in which AMP as a whole may look to improve in the future include:

- Frequency and length of meetings, which 22.5% of youth rated as Average or lower
- Youth involvement in making AMP decisions, rated Average or lower by 21.1% of youth
- And offering leadership opportunities for youth in AMP, which 19.7% of youth thought was Average or lower

In addition, 70.3% of youth said they have at least one significant, positive relationship with an adult through AMP, and 57.0% said AMP has given them at least one experience to practice leadership in the last year. Revised in the satisfaction survey this year were two open-ended questions, which asked AMP members to respond in one word or short phrase. Below is a selection of the answers to each prompt:

How does being part of AMP make you feel?

- Accepted; comfortable; confident; empowered; gifted and lucky; happy, relief; important; it makes me feel good about myself; like I belong; like I'm capable; needed; protected; safe; welcomed; worthy

How would you describe AMP?

- A refuge; awesome; beneficial but underappreciated; cool; endless possibility; family; fun; helpful; inviting; is a really good program; it's like a family; like being at home; motivating; people care about you; something to look forward to; unified; voice of foster youth

More detailed results of the satisfaction survey can be found in tables in the Appendix.

Program and Activity Assessment Tool (PAAT)

The Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE) at Iowa State University completed a quality assessment of the AMP Councils using the Program and Activity Assessment Tool (PAAT) again this year. This tool measures how much and how well a program provides its members a learning experience that promotes positive youth development.

The PAAT tool, as modified for AMP, consists of 43 items that measure critical aspects of youth development programming. Each item on the assessment uses a six-point agree-disagree Likert-type scale. The process involves surveying a small number of participants, staff, and volunteers at each site. The PAAT assessment was most recently completed by AMP Councils in February 2017. Each AMP facilitator recruits six respondents from their council: two AMP youth, two facilitator or support persons, and two volunteers or community members to complete the on-line survey.

Overall, results were very positive. A total of 123 people responded in the most recent assessment – 43 youth; 34 facilitators/support person; and 46 volunteers/community members. Staff will be discussing the results of the PAAT assessments during face-to-face meetings, as we use the results to improve the quality of programming. The full PAAT report has previously been shared with DHS.

Facilitator Meetings and Training

DHS provided Foster Care 101 and 201 to the AMP Facilitators in July 2016. We did this at the request of the AMP Facilitators who have noticed that DHS in different parts of Iowa responds differently to youth. In April, AMP Facilitators will be invited to attend a daylong training hosted by Teens Against Human Trafficking (THAT). Facilitators also attend quarterly in-person meetings and participate on monthly conference calls that are used, in part, to address quality assurance issues.

STAFF AND COUNCIL CHANGES

AMP had limited turnover in lead Council Facilitators during the report period. Council Facilitators may be alumni of the system, supportive community members, or local foster parents, and are responsible for guiding/mentoring the local AMP council meetings. In addition, each Council has a Local Support Position, who is a community person able to transport youth to and from speaking engagements, as well as assist with council meeting set-up. Safety checks are completed on each person considered for this role. Once these safety checks are clear, this person is allowed to volunteer with AMP.

In December 2016, Megan Heffernan resigned from her position as the Davenport Council facilitator. She has been with us 4 years and will be missed. Hannah May, as assistant to Megan, has been hired for Davenport. This transition has been smooth for the youth and Hannah.

In February 2017, we chose to close the AMP council in Iowa City when the Facilitator, Jo Myers-Walker, was unable to continue in that role and participation at regular meetings was averaging only 2-4 youth. DHS was involved in this decision and agreed that the cost of maintaining the Council in Iowa City was not an effective use of funding; however, youth in that area will continue to be invited to other AMP events.

In March 2017, Jessica Day will leave her position at the State Trainings School as she moves to Omaha and begins a position as a House Parent with Boys Town. She has been with YSS – STS AMP Facilitator since its beginning 3 years ago. YSS has posted that position for hire, but there may be an interruption in AMP's presence at the STS as the clearance process for new hires at STS can be lengthy.

GENERAL OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS EXPERIENCED

The number one barrier AMP faces in almost every council (except Mobile and Eldora-STS) is getting the youth transported to AMP meetings. Most AMP youth do not have their own vehicles so transportation has to come from someone else. Many foster parents will not transport. Currently, the council facilitators and their support staff take up to an hour before and after council meetings to pick up and return youth to their homes. In central Iowa, the AMP Mobile Facilitator is taking AMP to the youth in the facilities and this is working well.

Another barrier is that many youth in family foster homes do not want to meet on agency grounds with youth who are still in the system. AMP facilitators have been asked to secure two meeting locations so one is on-site and one is in the community so youth can get to one meeting location that is comfortable to them. In addition, foster parents seem to hold the same perceptions of not wanting to mix their youth with residential/treatment/PMIC youth.

APPENDIX

AMP Council Meeting Summary Form

AMP Member Information Form

Mobile AMP Member Information Form

Eldora-STS AMP Member Information Form

2017 Satisfaction Survey Results

AMP 2017 Legislative Agenda

AMP Council Meeting Summary

Council:

Date of meeting:

What occurred during the meeting? (Select all that apply)

- Speaker, presentation, or topic discussion
 - AMP-related business or information
 - Service activity
 - Social activity, party, or game(s)
 - Specific skill-building activity (e.g. budgeting, team-building, job-hunting, etc.)
-

If the meeting included a speaker, presentation, or issue discussion, what was the primary topic area? (Select one)

- Education
 - Relationships/Permanency
 - Employment
 - Transitioning to adulthood (e.g., resources)
 - Health/Mental Health
 - Other (please specify)
 - Housing
-

Who was the speaker or presenter? (Name and organization, if applicable)

If you selected AMP-related business, what was the general topic? (Select all that apply)

- AMP Camp
 - Planning for other AMP/council events
 - Day on the Hill
 - Preparing AMP speakers
 - Legislative agenda
 - Satisfaction survey
 - New member training/What is AMP
 - Other (please specify)
-

How many youth attended?

How many staff and adult volunteers were in attendance?

Type of youth engagement opportunities during the meeting: (Select all that apply)

- Small group discussion
 - Sharing individual talents
 - Large group discussion
 - Hands-on activity
 - Reflection time
 - Recognition of youth
 - Youth led a discussion or activity
 - Other (please specify)
-

Facilitator comment regarding the meeting (e.g., level of engagement of youth, behavior issues, would you recommend this topic or presenter to others, etc.)

Eldora AMP Member Information

What is your name? *(not collected online)*

How old are you?

What is your gender?

- Female Male Transgender Other (please specify) Prefer not to answer
-

What do you consider to be your race? Select all that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American or Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Multiracial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> White |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
-

What grade are you in school? *(if summer, grade you will start in the fall)*

- 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th
 High school graduate Not in school Other (please specify)
-

About how long have you been involved with AMP?

- This is just my first or second meeting About six months to a year
 Less than six months More than a year
-

Check any of the following that apply to you:

- Been in foster care at any point in time
 Reunited with biological family before age 18
 Adopted before age 18
 None of the above

2017 Satisfaction Survey Results

	Excellent	Very Good	Average	Below Average	Poor	Average rating	Total
Location and time of meetings	70	32	18	5	4	4.23	129
Frequency and length of meetings	61	39	24	3	2	4.19	129
Youth involvement in making AMP decisions	65	36	17	7	3	4.20	128
AMP leader's understanding of the foster care or juvenile system	78	32	11	7	0	4.41	128
Relationship between AMP members and adult leaders	68	36	15	7	2	4.26	128
Opportunities to learn about supports and services	73	33	17	4	1	4.35	128
Topics discussed at AMP meetings	68	39	14	6	1	4.30	128
Activities during AMP meetings	68	43	10	7	1	4.32	129
Leadership opportunities for youth in AMP	64	38	15	10	0	4.23	127
Your overall experience as a member of AMP	84	26	11	3	3	4.46	127

Do you have at least one significant, positive relationship with an adult through AMP?	Percent	Response Count
Yes	70.3%	90
No	12.5%	16
Not Sure	17.2%	22
<i>answered question</i>		128
<i>skipped question</i>		2

In the past year, has AMP give you at least one experience where you practiced leadership?	Percent	Response Count
Yes	57.0%	73
No	13.3%	17
Not Sure	29.7%	38
<i>answered question</i>		128
<i>skipped question</i>		2

AMP 2017 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, Fort Dodge, Iowa City, Marshalltown, Mason City, Ottumwa, Sioux City and Waterloo

STATE OF IOWA LEGISLATION

- 1. To increase permanency for foster care youth, AMP youth request 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.**

A subsidized guardianship program provides relative caregivers the opportunity to become the legal guardians of their children/youth, thereby replacing the role of foster care, and offers children/youth permanency when parental rights are not or will not be terminated. Foster youth achieve “normalcy,” maintain relationships with caring adults and under subsidized guardianship there are fewer administrative costs associated with state paid care such as home visits, court hearings and case management. Currently 32 states offer the federal Guardianship Assistance Program, but Iowa does not.

- 2. AMP youth request funding to implement the Anti-Bullying Bill, which has been assigned to the Domestic Violence Center in Cedar Falls, Iowa, per the governor’s proclamation.**
- 3. AMP youth request the State of Iowa adopt Erin’s Law, which requires all public schools implement a prevention-oriented child sexual abuse program.**

Twenty-two states have already adopted a version of Erin’s Law to educate and increase safety for all school-aged minors. Iowa needs to adopt Erin’s Law, so minors know the resources available to protect them.

- 4. AMP youth request additional specialized housing options be available for youth with high mental health needs and those youth transitioning out of foster care. This would include:**
 - + Despite where a youth lives, he/she will receive appropriate mental health and behavioral services to meet their needs.
 - + Emergency shelters are not staffed or trained as treatment centers, creating risky situations for youth with, and without, extreme mental health issues who reside in shelter care. AMP youth request safety, protection and continued family and community connections in our shelters while our peers who need mental health services get their services at treatment facilities with trained staff.
 - + Special living situations for youth, age 18-21, who would benefit from structure and supervision to prepare them successfully for adulthood.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

- 1. AMP youth request minor youth struggling with emotional and behavioral issues should be able to meet with a counselor without parental consent.**

Federal 42 U.F.C. and regulation 42 CFR Part 2 needs to be expanded to allow counselors to meet with minor youth struggling with substance abuse without parental consent. This law needs to be expanded in Iowa to include emotional and behavioral issues.

- 2. AMP youth request Iowa encourage the employment of transition age foster youth.**

Employer Tax Bill amends the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to include transition age foster care youth as categorically eligible for purposes of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). Employers may be eligible to receive a credit of up to \$2,400 annually for hiring foster youth.

2016 CARRYOVERS

- 1. AMP youth request 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. Six U.S states and the District of Columbia all have passed legislation banning conversion therapy for minors.