



## **Interim Progress Report**

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 Through February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### **Prepared By**

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### **Prepared For**

Iowa Department of Human Services

## INTRODUCTION

Achieving Maximum Potential (AMP) 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 between YSS (AMP’s lead agency) and the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS). The primary purpose of AMP is to empower young people to become advocates, for themselves and for system-level improvements to child welfare policies and practices in Iowa. When supported through productive partnerships with adults, youth can play a pivotal role in making the child welfare system more responsive and effective.

AMP offers leadership opportunities, service-learning projects, speaking opportunities, and educational or vocational assistance to youth ages 13-20 who have experienced foster care, adoption, or other out-of-home placements. AMP also offers opportunities to learn life skills and access a variety of resources as young people transition from foster care to adulthood.

Eight private, non-profit youth-serving agencies comprise The Partnership of Iowa Foster Care Youth Councils (hereafter referred to as AMP). During the interim reporting period of July 1, 2019 through February 29, 2020, AMP supported fourteen Youth Councils, twelve of which operated throughout the eight-month period:

- YSS (Ames, Carroll/Denison, Clinton/Davenport<sup>1</sup>, Des Moines, Eldora [State Training School], and Marshalltown/Newton)
- American Home Finding Association (Ottumwa)
- Children’s Square USA (Council Bluffs and Sioux City)
- Foundation 2 (Cedar Rapids)
- Four Oaks (Waterloo)
- Hillcrest Family Services (Dubuque)
- Youth Shelter Care of North Central Iowa (Fort Dodge)
- Young House Family Services (Burlington/Mt. Pleasant)

The Partnership works with three consulting agencies:

- Child and Family Policy Center (CFPC): Legislative advocacy
- Iowa State University Research Institute for Studies in Education (ISU-RISE): Annual program evaluation using the Program and Activity Assessment Tool (PAAT)
- Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII): Program evaluation and data collection, analysis, and reporting

AMP also works with a variety of other stakeholders including group homes, shelters, the Iowa Aftercare Services Network, Variety (the Children’s Charity), community colleges, and other state and local entities throughout Iowa.

State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2020 (July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020) represents the third year of a six-year contract between YSS and DHS. As required by the contract, this Interim Progress Report outlines AMP membership and activities during the eight-month period of July 1, 2019 through February 29, 2020 (hereafter referred to as “the reporting period”).

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<sup>1</sup> Carroll/Denison and Clinton/Davenport Councils are inactive as of 10/2019

## DATA COLLECTION

Beginning July 1, 2016, YSS entered into an agreement with the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII) in which YPII performs data collection, analysis, and reporting related to AMP programs and members. In order to gather consistent information from local Councils, YPII developed two online data collection instruments: Meeting Summaries and Member Information Forms<sup>2</sup>. These online forms are to be completed by Council Facilitators after each Council meeting and are monitored by YPII throughout the program year. Facilitators are instructed to complete a Meeting Summary as soon as possible after every Council meeting, and to encourage members to complete a Member Information Form as early as possible within each State Fiscal Year (*i.e.* once per member per year).

AMP solicits member feedback by administering an annual Member Survey<sup>3</sup> which is developed by YPII in consultation with YSS and DHS. In order to reach a representative sample, Facilitators administer the survey during their Council meetings within a specific, month-long period. Facilitators are encouraged to ensure respondents that their feedback is valued and their responses are anonymous.

The SFY 2020 survey will be available in electronic and paper versions, both of which will be submitted to YPII for data entry and analysis. The survey will take place between the submission of this report and the full-year Annual Report. For reference regarding the scale of the effort, 123 responses were collected in SFY 2019.

YPII also distributes attendance spreadsheets and collects updated data from each Council on a quarterly basis. Council Facilitators are instructed to use the spreadsheet to track the attendance of individual members throughout the year. Compared to Member Information Forms and Member Surveys, which rely on self-reported attendance and are not completed by all members, these master sheets provide a means to measure individual member and Council attendance over time.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

Of the fourteen AMP Councils that were active at the beginning of the reporting period, thirteen reported Council meetings attended by young people<sup>4</sup>. This report details those thirteen Councils, and the hundreds of individuals who attend them, and is organized as follows:

- Member Characteristics
- Council Attendance
- Council Meeting Content
- Summary of Major Projects
- Communication Efforts
- Quality Assurance Efforts
- Barriers & Opportunities

Although each AMP Council operates somewhat differently, the State Training School (STS) Council stands apart. STS is an all-male juvenile facility that has housed roughly 80 residents at any given time during the reporting period. The STS AMP Council differs in terms of frequency of meetings, total points of contact, restrictions around leaving campus for special events, and more. It is the sole Council to have a full-time Facilitator, which is staffed by YSS and allows for meetings with each of the eligible “cottages” (residential buildings) on a weekly

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<sup>2</sup> See the Appendix for these instruments

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix for the Annual Member Survey instrument

<sup>4</sup> The Clinton/Davenport Council failed to report any youth-attended meetings between 07/2019-12/2019 and was deactivated as of 01/2020

basis. With these unique characteristics in mind, STS Council data is reported separately from that of the other thirteen Councils (hereafter referred to as “Community Councils”) throughout this report.

Data for the current reporting period are compared to prior AMP program years when doing so illuminates significant changes over time. When prior years appear, data are specific to the same Interim Report reporting period of July through February (eight of twelve program months).

## MEMBER CHARACTERISTICS

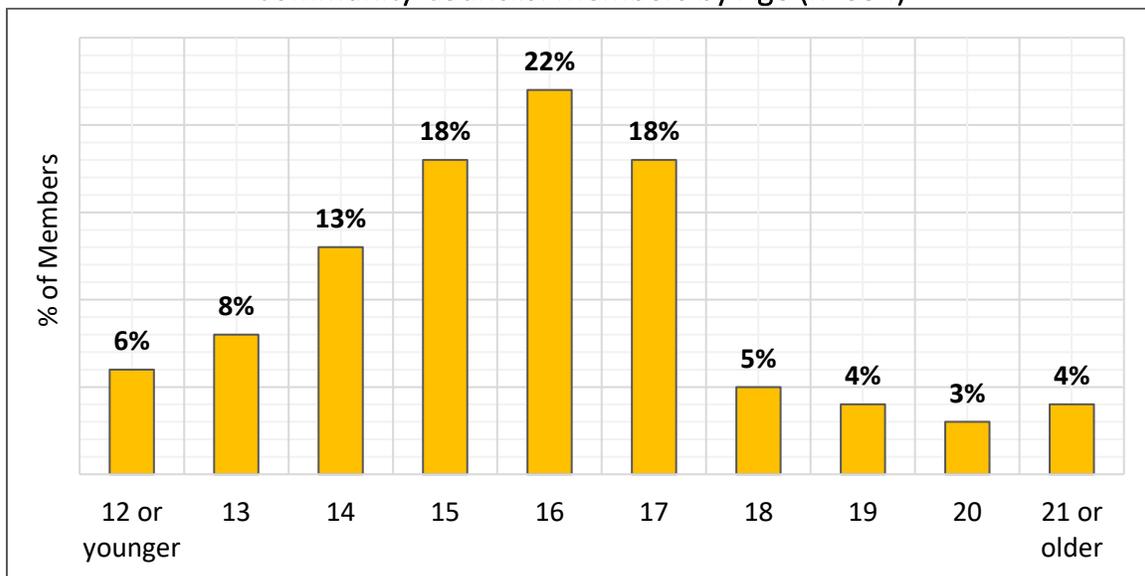
Community Council Facilitators submitted a total of 143 Meeting Summaries and 354 Member Information Forms during the reporting period. AMP’s STS Facilitator completed 30 Meeting Summaries and reported 117 total members<sup>5</sup>. Community Council Facilitators have been encouraged to make some of their meetings mobile, meaning in their community but away from their normal location (largely congregate care facilities). For a third straight year, Facilitators reported an increase in the proportion of mobile Council meetings: 26% of all Meeting Summaries were listed as mobile (up from 19% in SFY 2019 and 6% in SFY 2018).

Community Councils members are generally representative of the broader population of youth in out-of-home placement in Iowa (DHS or JCS). STS members tend to be demographically distinct from Community Councils and, by extension, from those in Iowa’s child welfare system overall.

### Member Demographics

Among Community Council members, 90% fall within the intended range of 13-20 years old and 71% fall within the range of 14-17 years. In terms of race/ethnicity, AMP Community Council members are representative of older foster youth statewide: 62% of these members identified as White, mirroring the 64% of older Iowa youth in foster care as of 2018<sup>6</sup>. Meanwhile, State Training School Council members are all males, all between ages 12-18<sup>7</sup>, and disproportionately African American.

Community Councils: Members by Age (n=354)



<sup>5</sup> In lieu of Member Information Forms, AMP’s State Training School Facilitator reports basic information about members from the facility’s database

<sup>6</sup> Source: Iowa Department of Human Services (featured in YPII Data Brief, “[Older Iowa Youth Experiencing Foster Care](#)”)

<sup>7</sup> The precise age distribution of STS Council members was not provided for the reporting period

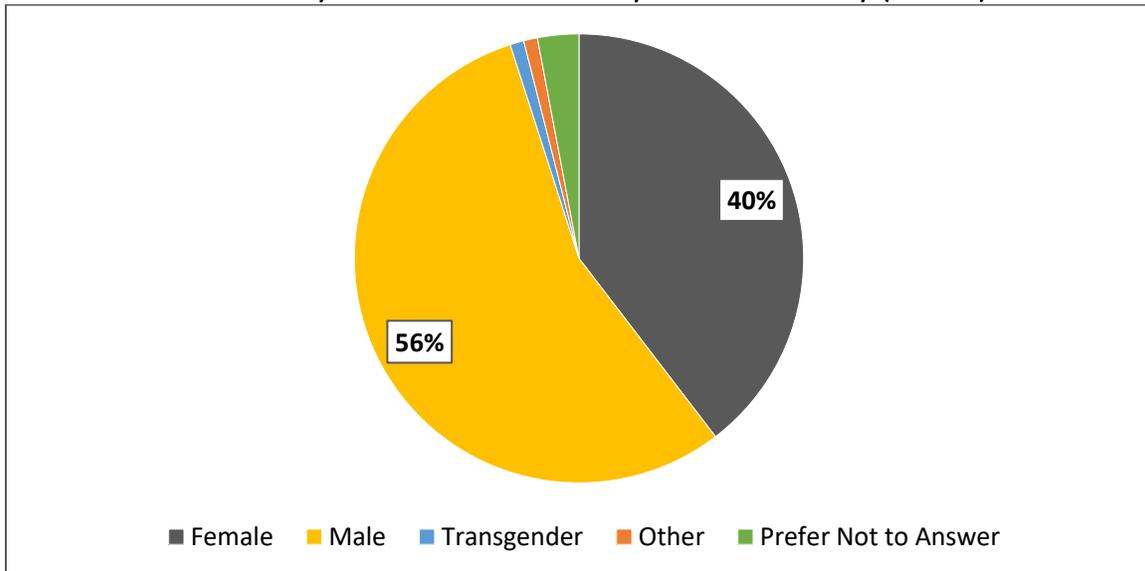
### All Members: Racial/Ethnic Identity by Council Type

	Community Councils (n=338)	State Training School (n=117)
<b>African American or Black</b>	22%	51%
<b>American Indian or Alaskan Native</b>	3%	0%
<b>Asian</b>	1%	0%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	14%	9%
<b>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</b>	1%	0%
<b>White</b>	62%	40%
<b>Multiracial</b>	7%	0%
<b>Other</b>	1%	0%

Note: Because members are asked to select all the races/ethnicities they identify with, percentages exceed 100% in total.

All youth placed at STS, and therefore all STS AMP members, are males. Over half (56%) of Community Council members identified as male, 40% identified as female, 1% identified as Transgender, 1% selected “Other”. The remaining 3% expressed that they preferred not to answer.

### Community Councils: Members by Gender Identity (n=354)



### Placement Type

STS Council members (n=117) represent 25% of all AMP members in the reporting period. Additionally, three-in-four Community Council members (74%) reported a congregate foster care placement. This includes, residential treatment facilities, youth shelters, and Psychiatric Medical Institutions for Children (PMICs). Just 6% of members reported “Family-Like” placements. This includes adoptive families, foster families, and kinship care placements. The remaining 20% reported either “Other” placements or that they were not in an out-of-home placement; the latter group is likely comprised primarily of the 16% of members who reported being 18 or older and having “aged out” of the system.

Most AMP Councils hold monthly meetings on-site at a residential or shelter facility. This largely explains the high frequency of Members from these placement types. However, this proportion has grown rapidly in recent years (from 56% in SFY 2018 up to 74% in SFY 2020) and has seen its gains come primarily from a decrease in members who are no longer in placement (25% down to 9%).

### Community Councils: Members by Placement Type & State Fiscal Year

		SFY 2020 (n=350)	SFY 2019 (n=372)	SFY 2018 (n=339)
Family-Like	Adopted (or with adoptive family)	2%	5%	4%
	Foster family	3%	4%	6%
	Relative foster family (kinship care)	1%	0%	1%
Congregate	PMIC	6%	3%	6%
	Residential treatment	36%	36%	24%
	Shelter	32%	29%	26%
	Not in foster care or placement	9%	13%	25%
	Other	11%	9%	6%

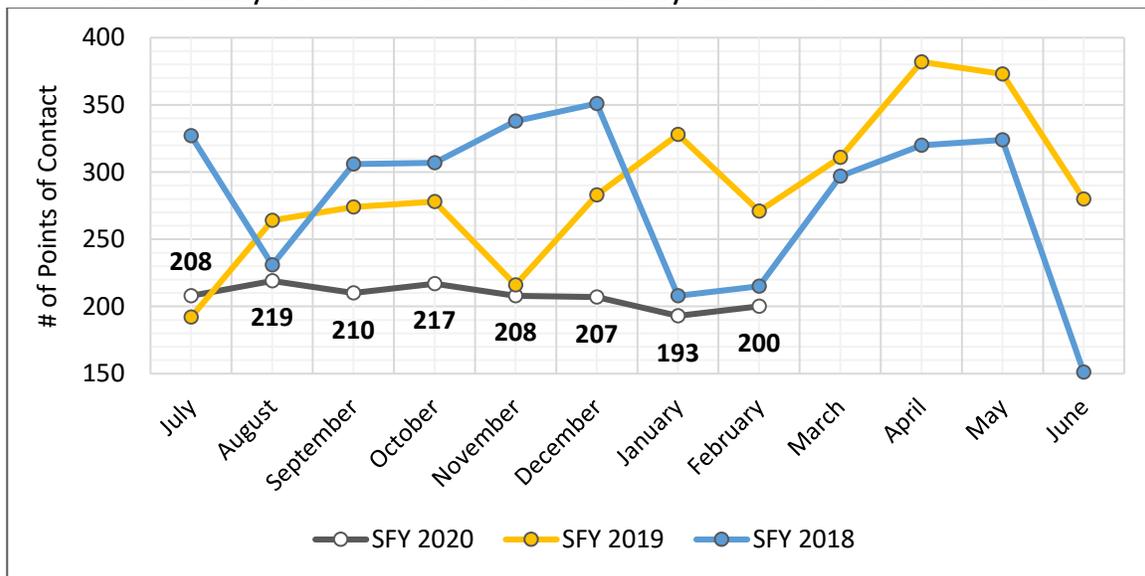
### COUNCIL ATTENDANCE

AMP Meeting Summaries were used to capture 143 Community Council meetings and 30 STS Council meetings during the reporting period. Facilitators also track Council meeting attendance at the individual member level. According to attendance sheets submitted for the reporting period, 782 young people attended AMP meetings for 2,742 points of contact. The STS Council accounts for 15% of these young people (177) and 39% of all points of contact (1,074). These totals do not include special event attendance (e.g. AMP Day on the Hill) which are included in the Summary of Major Projects section below.

When analyzed by month, points of contact are very consistent at roughly 200 per month within the reporting period. This is generally significantly lower than the reporting period in prior years, which included peaks as high as 351 (December 2018). In the prior two years points of contact rose significantly in the spring. This could occur again in the final months of SFY 2020, but the lack of significant peaks and valleys in the current reporting period increases uncertainty.

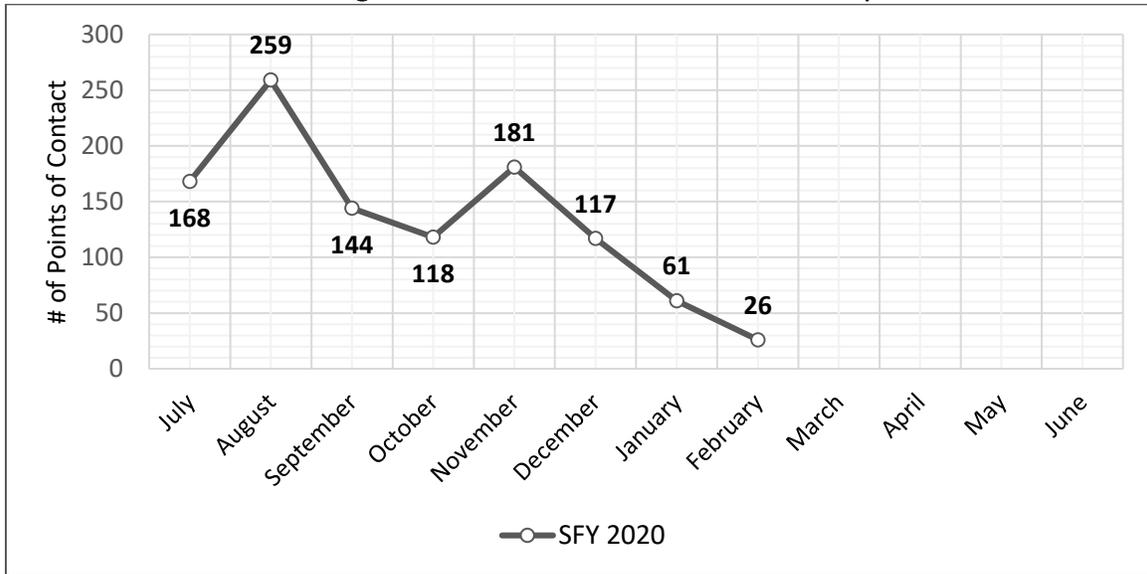
Overall average attendance for AMP is elusive. Despite the general expectation for each Community Council to hold two meetings per month, holidays, weather-related cancellations, and other factors affect each Council differently. During the reporting period, which spans eight months and therefore offers the possibility of sixteen Community Council meetings, most Councils reported 12-16 meetings.

### Community Councils: Points of Contact by Month & State Fiscal Year



STS Council meetings are organized by the facility’s cottages and take place much more frequently than Community Councils. This is reflected in the 1,074 total points of contact among 117 members (mean = 9.2, median = 7.0 per member). The reporting period shows a large degree of volatility, including a precipitous decline since 11/2019. This is explained in part by changes to the structure of the STS Council Facilitator position which went into effect during this period.

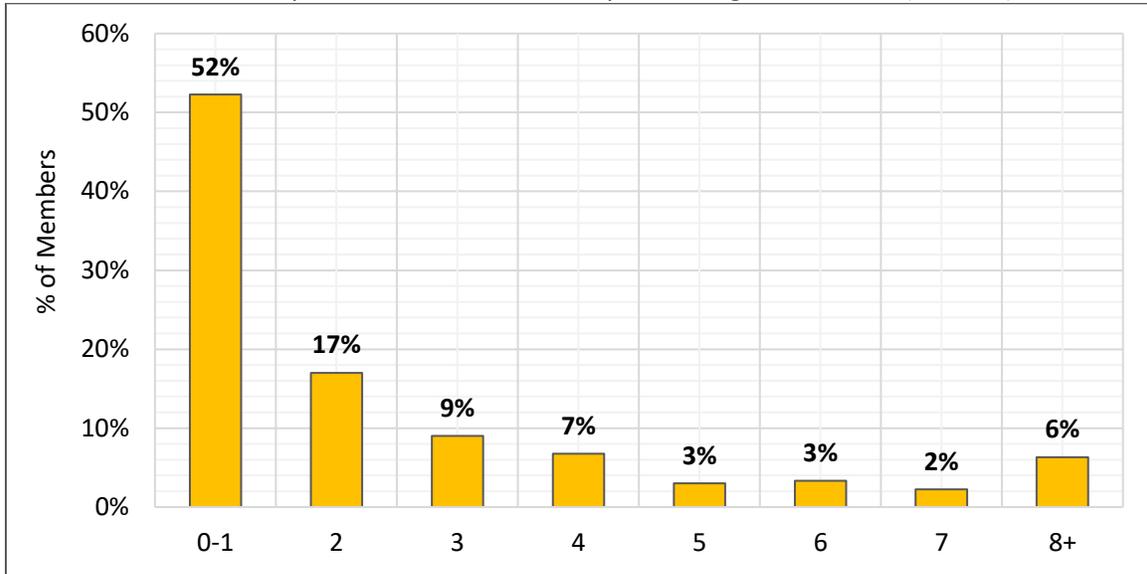
State Training School Council: Points of Contact by Month



Just over half (52%) of Community Council members have attended zero or one meetings during the report period<sup>8</sup>. Another 33% have attended between two and four meetings, 8% have attended five to seven, and the remaining 6% have attended six or more meetings. Among Community Councils throughout Iowa, the number of meetings per member had a mean of 2.5 and a median of 1.0. It is reasonable to infer that the increasingly high proportion of members in congregate care settings, where many placements are relatively short in duration, may account for the lack of retention.

<sup>8</sup> 20 youth were listed as having attended zero Council meetings but one or more special events (e.g. service activity)

Community Councils: Members by Meetings Attended (N=664)

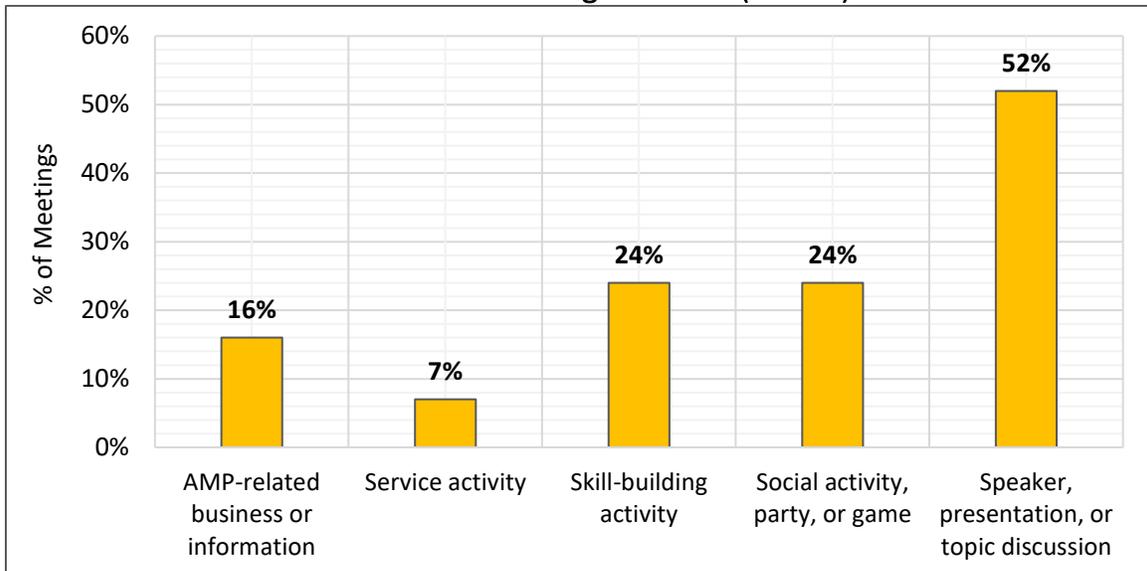


AMP attendance is tracked at the Council level rather than with a statewide master list. Therefore, members that attend multiple Councils, within a given reporting period, would not be easily cross-referenced and accounted for by AMP or YPII staff. Additionally, members are listed in multiple ways on attendance sheets (first and last name, first name and last initial, etc.). Although this helps protect confidentiality, there is potential for errors based on duplicated or otherwise incorrect identification.

## COUNCIL MEETING CONTENT

AMP Facilitators often lead multiple activities during each Council meeting. “Speakers, presentations, or topic discussion” occur the most often (52%), followed by “Social activities, parties, or games” (24%), “Skill-building activities” (24%), “AMP-related business or information” (16%), and finally “Service activities” (7%).

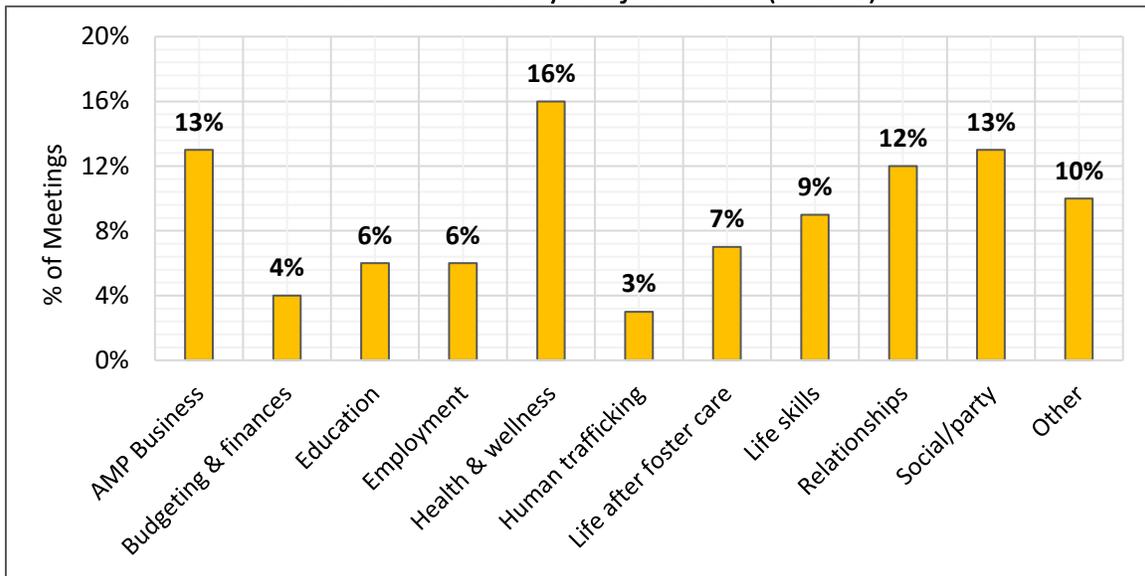
All Councils: Meeting Activities (N=173)



Note: Because Facilitators are asked to report all the activities they led, percentages exceed 100% in total

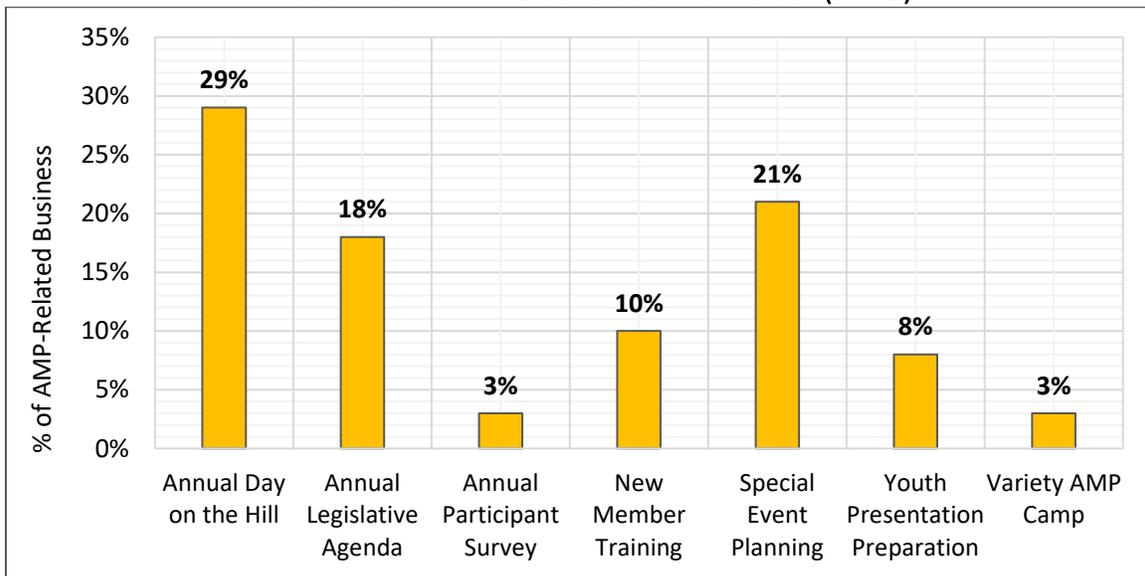
In addition to activity types, Facilitators report the primary topic they address at each Council meeting. Primary topics are well-distributed, ranging from 16% of meetings (Health and Wellness) to 3% (Human Trafficking).

**All Councils: Primary Subject Areas (N=173)**



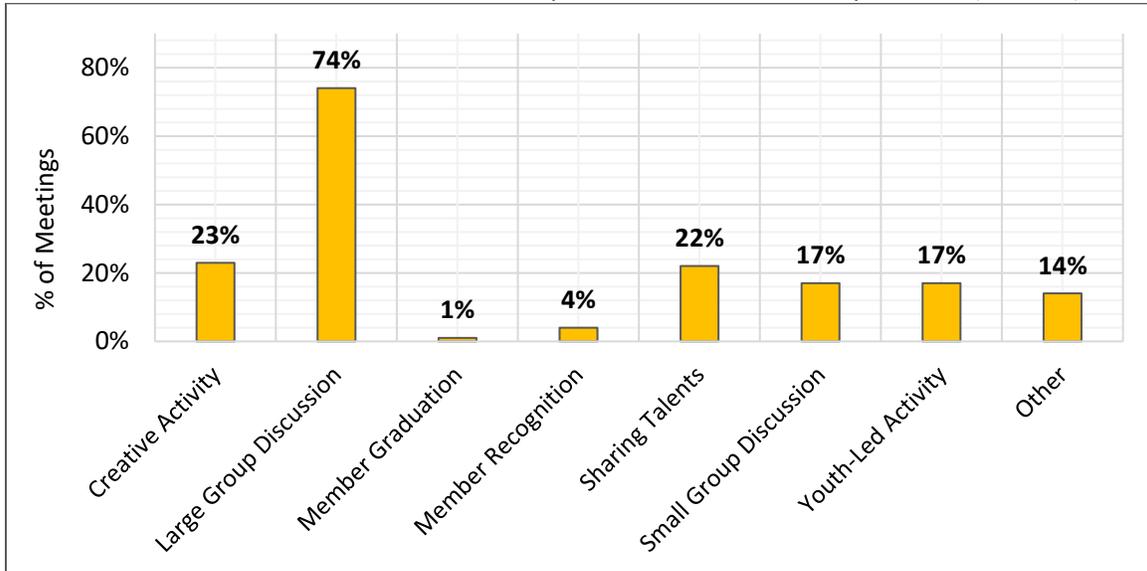
Conducting “AMP-related business” during Council meetings provides opportunities for youth to practice communication, decision-making, and advocacy skills. This work reinforces AMP’s commitment to a youth-driven approach. When AMP-related business was included as part of the meeting (16% of all meetings), Facilitators identified the primary AMP-related topic. Planning for AMP’s annual Day on the Hill advocacy program (29%) and other special events (21%) combine for half of the reported AMP business discussions.

**All Councils: AMP-Related Business Areas (n=72)**



AMP Facilitators understand the importance of engaging youth in multiple ways and building relationships through positive youth development. Nearly three-in-four meetings (74%) included a large group discussion, 23% included creative activities (music, visual art, etc.), and 22% included members sharing talents with their Facilitators and peers.

All Councils: Positive Youth Development Practices Incorporated (N=170)



Note: Because Facilitators are asked to report all the positive youth development practices they incorporated, percentages exceed 100% in total

## SUMMARY OF MAJOR PROJECTS

AMP’s stated purpose is 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 other 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, and build supportive relationships with adults in the community. This section of the report summarizes major activities conducted by AMP during the reporting period.

### AMP Day on the Hill

On January 27, 2020 a group of 85 AMP members, representing twelve councils throughout Iowa, convened at the State Capital in Des Moines for AMP Day on the Hill. Each year AMP members, guided by AMP staff and community partners, develop a legislative agenda through an iterative process of brainstorming, reflecting on, and prioritizing issues of importance to current and former foster youth. This process culminates in an AMP Legislative Agenda<sup>9</sup> that members present to Iowa legislators throughout their Day on the Hill.

In addition to a tour of the Capital, AMP members are introduced and recognized on the floors of the House and Senate for their efforts to improve Iowa’s child welfare system. Members then share their stories and convictions with legislators in multiple settings throughout the building, including a culminating press conference in the central rotunda. For the current reporting period, Day on the Hill included speeches from five members and the presentation of awards for an impactful former State Training School youth (Ka’Mario Hill), a DHS Transition Planning Specialist (Jan Huff), and a JCS Juvenile Court Officer (Troy Seeley).

### Mini-Camps & Mini-Conferences

Since SFY 2018 AMP has implemented “Mini-Camps” and Mini-Conferences” to convene members and connect them with opportunities in higher education. These single-day events are a relatively small commitment for

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix for Legislative Agenda.

foster families. This allows youth, many of whom cannot attend AMP's annual statewide camp or conference, to participate in day-long social events or visit community colleges and interact with representatives from programs for transition-aged youth (e.g. Aftercare Advocates).

#### *Cedar Rapids Service Area*

From October 12-13, 2019, seventeen AMP members attended a Mini-Camp at Forest Lake Camp in Bloomfield, Iowa. Seven staff members and volunteers facilitated the camp.

Attendees arrived early Saturday afternoon. After a discussion of camp policies and a tour of the grounds, both of which were led by camp hosts, members participated in "get to know you" games, arts and crafts, a hayride, and campfire songs. Sunday commenced with Des Moines Art Center staff leading a canvas painting activity. Members later painted bricks which were used as an outline for a flower bed at the camp. The weekend concluded with the camp's director leading a nature hike.

#### *Des Moines Service Area*

On October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, thirty-five AMP youth attended a Mini-Camp at the Buckel's farm near Story City. Attendees participated in "minute to win it" games, beanbag toss, carpet ball, gaga ball, a hayride, and a campfire. They were also able to meet and play with husky puppies. In addition to AMP staff members and individuals who served as mentors at Variety AMP Camp in previous years, students from Iowa State University volunteered to set up games and monitor activities.

#### *Eastern Service Area*

On February 29, 2020, twenty-five young people attended a Mini-Conference at Southeastern Community College (SCC) in Burlington. The conference, "Leap into the Future: Explore your Potential", began with a keynote by Shawn Johnson, Learning Resources Coordinator at SCC.

Shawn challenged AMP members to maximize their potential by valuing the wisdom shared by mentors and embracing the big decisions they will have to make as they transition to adulthood. He challenged the youth to recall one thing he told them and to concentrate on it for the following month. Additionally, Shawn shared his personal experience being placed at State Training School as a youth and how he overcame his past to achieve the success he has today.

Following his speech, Shawn coordinated a vision board activity, a canvas painting project, and dodgeball. Finally, he led a campus tour and handed out door prizes and SCC souvenirs. Throughout the Mini-Conference, AMP members seemed to connect with Shawn and listen intently to everything he shared.

#### *Postponed Events*

The following events were scheduled for April 2020 and are postponed in accordance with state and national emergency declarations made in response to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic:

- Mini-Conferences
  - Cedar Rapids Service Area (Waterloo, 4/3/2020)
  - Northern Service Area (State Training School [Eldora], 4/4/2020)
- Annual Statewide Conference ("Plugged In & Charging", Ames, 4/25/2020)

## COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

AMP maintains a website, [www.ampiowa.org](http://www.ampiowa.org), which includes information about local Councils, statewide activities, and selected original works of current and former AMP members. This includes a series of videos, created in collaboration with Iowa Department of Public Health and juvenile justice professionals, which feature AMP youth sharing their experiences transitioning to adulthood. The website also includes poems and personal journeys written by AMP members over the years.

Facebook is an additional tool AMP uses to connect with young people; at last count there were 324 members of the AMP Facebook page. Facilitators use Facebook to recap council meetings, advertise events, share resources with members, and similar posts.

On March 1, 2020, AMP hired an Electronic Communication Specialist. This position is tasked with building and maintaining an electronic Council in order to connect eligible youth throughout Iowa who may not be able to access in-person Council meetings. This individual will manage the AMP website and expand the organization's social media presence. They will also participate in researching website improvements, including online registration systems that could be used for special events.

Across the state, AMP councils regularly seek out and maintain partnerships with local or regional partners in various capacities. For instance, in February 2020, AMP initiated a partnership with 4-H which provides quarterly meetings at which foster youth from throughout Iowa can participate in 4-H activities together. AMP is currently partnering with Southeastern Community College (Burlington), Hawkeye Community College (Waterloo), and Drake University (Des Moines) to provide Mini-Conferences. In SFY 2021 AMP will seek to partner with five more community colleges on Mini-Conferences.

### Recruitment

AMP strives to be accessible and inviting to all eligible youth. AMP leadership and Council Facilitators 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 members initially attend AMP after working with one of its partner agencies in another capacity. Other strategies include hosting mobile meetings, outreach to DHS Transition Planning Specialists and Aftercare Self-Sufficiency Advocates, and the use of radio, television, and print media.

In 2020 AMP finalized six new videos in a series titled "AMP Promise." These videos will be released in the spring of 2020 to TV and radio stations statewide in hopes of recruiting AMP members, as well as to increase available foster homes for teens. Each video focuses on a different youth's journey, someone who believed in them, and how that support helped them be the successful person they are today. Subjects include:

- A former drug abuser who is now in nursing school
- A former "troublemaker" who is pursuing a career in law enforcement
- A youth with a behavior problem who aspires to be a robotic engineer
- A first-generation college graduate who earned a bachelor's degree in social work
- An at-risk teen who works with at-risk youth in her community

## QUALITY ASSURANCE EFFORTS

AMP has multiple levels of quality assurance checkpoints. The annual member survey (forthcoming) will provide a snapshot of members' perspectives. The PAAT study, an online youth program rating tool administered by ISU-RISE, a third-party evaluator, garners feedback from youth, staff, and community members. Regular meetings and trainings for Facilitators also provide opportunities for feedback and identifying concerns.

In March 2018, AMP received a three-year certification from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitative Facilities (CARF). YSS has Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement teams, which include AMP staff, to ensure AMP policies and programs continue to meet CARF certification.

### Program & Activity Assessment Tool (PAAT)

The Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE) at Iowa State University completes an annual assessment of AMP Councils using the Program and Activity Assessment Tool (PAAT). This tool assesses whether a program provides its members a learning experience which promotes positive youth development. The PAAT tool, as modified for AMP, consists of 43 items that measure critical aspects of youth development programming. The process involves surveying a small number of members, staff, and volunteers at each site. Each AMP Facilitator is asked to recruit six respondents from their Council: two AMP youth, two Facilitators or support persons, and two volunteers or community members.

## BARRIERS & OPPORTUNITIES

A persistent barrier AMP Facilitators face throughout the state is the transportation of youth to Council meetings. Most members do not have their own vehicles and many foster parents are unable or unwilling to transport them. As a result, Facilitators and support staff take up to an hour before and after Council meetings for pick-up and drop-off.

Another barrier is that many young people living in family foster homes are reluctant to attend meetings at congregate care facilities. In order to mitigate this barrier, Facilitators are been asked to maintain two regular meeting locations, one of which is in a community in their service area rather than on the grounds of a facility. Assuming Facilitators alternate between these two locations, they would have one community meeting location approximately once per month.

Finally, as a program for youth with experience in the child welfare system, AMP will be affected by changes resulting from implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act. This federal legislation promotes the use of "evidence-based family preservation services" to decrease the number of youth who are removed from their homes. When removal is imperative, Family First will seek to emphasize placements with "relative or fictive kin" and Licensed Foster Families rather than congregate care<sup>10</sup>. This change in the number and distribution of foster youth (*i.e.* prospective AMP members) will likely have a significant impact on the program in the months and years ahead.

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<sup>10</sup> [Family First Overview](#), Iowa Department of Human Services

## **APPENDIX**

AMP Meeting Summary Form  
AMP Member Information Form  
AMP 2020 Legislative Agenda



# MEETING SUMMARY

Date of meeting:

- 
- Stationary meeting (regular location)     Mobile meeting (facilitator went to youth)
- 

**Select any of the following that occurred during the meeting and comment with more details if you wish.**

- Speaker, presentation, or topic discussion     Service activity    Comment:
- AMP-related business or information     Social activity, party, or game
- Advocacy activity
- 

**What was the PRIMARY subject area or activity for the meeting? Select the CLOSEST subject area and comment with more details if you wish.**

- Education     Relationships     Other (only if nothing else is checked)
- Employment     Budgeting/Finances    Comment:
- Health or mental health     Life After Foster Care
- Human trafficking     AMP Business
- Life skills     Social, art project, party
- 

**Name and organization of presenter or guest speaker, if applicable:**

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**If you selected AMP-related business, select any of the following that occurred or were discussed and comment with more details if you wish.**

- AMP Camp     Satisfaction survey    Comment:
- Day on the Hill     Preparing or supporting AMP youth speaking at an event (foster parent class, community meeting, etc.)
- Legislative agenda
- New member training/What is AMP
- Planning for other AMP/Council events     Other
- 

**How many youth attended?**

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**How many community members or volunteers attended?**

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**Select any positive youth development practices incorporated during the meeting or write in another answer.**

- Break into small groups for discussion     Creative activity (art, music, etc.)
- Large group discussion     Recognizing/awarding youth
- Youth led a discussion or activity     AMP member graduation
- Sharing individual talents     Other (please specify)
- 

**Any additional details about the meeting?**

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# MEMBER INFORMATION

Date of meeting:

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**How old are you? Select one:** 12 or younger 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 or older

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**What is your gender?**  Female  Male  Transgender  Prefer not to answer  Other

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**How do you describe your race? Select all that apply.**

- African American or Black  Hispanic or Latino  White  
 American Indian or Alaska Native  Multiracial  Other  
 Asian  Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- 

**How did you learn about AMP? Check all that apply.**

- Aftercare worker  DHS worker  Friend  
 AMP facilitator or volunteer  Family member  JCO  
 AMP website  Facility staff  Judge  
 Brochure or flyer  Foster family  Other:
- 

**About how long have you been involved with AMP, at this Council or another?**

- This is one of my first meetings ever  About six months to a year  
 Less than six months  More than a year
- 

**Have you attended any of the following in the past year? Select all that apply.**

- Meeting at a different council location  Plugged In and Charging Conference  
 Another AMP event (conference, service project, etc.)  I spoke or presented somewhere (community meeting, foster parent class, etc.)  
 Day on the Hill  None of the above  
 AMP Camp
- 

**What is your current placement type? Select one.**

- Adopted or with adoptive family  Relative foster family (kinship)  STS  
 Foster family  Residential treatment  Not currently in foster care (on your own, living with family, etc.)  
 PMIC  Shelter  Other:
- 

**Have any of the following ever applied to you? Select all that apply.**

- Adopted  Not sure  
 Aged out of foster care  None of the above  
 Returned to biological family (reunified)



YSS  
 125 South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
 Ames, Iowa 50010  
 O: 515.233.2250, ext. 4575

Statewide Coordinator  
 Ruth Buckels  
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**Achieving Maximum Potential (AMP)** is a youth-driven, statewide group that seeks to unleash the full potential for personal growth among foster and adoptive children in Iowa. AMP works to help youth become independent adults who can successfully educate others about the child welfare system and take an active role in making life better for themselves and others in state care.

### AMP 2020 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Collected from all 13 AMP Foster Care Youth Councils: Ames, Carroll/Denison, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Des Moines/Des Moines Mobile, Dubuque, Eldora State Training School, Fort Dodge, Marshalltown, Mt. Pleasant, Ottumwa, Sioux City and Waterloo

### STATE OF IOWA LEGISLATION

#### 1. AMP youth request more housing options for teens.

- + Youth deserve to grow up in a family. We need adults (foster/adoptive parents, relatives & guardians) to step up and care for teens!
- + When youth are placed away from home, they want to be placed closer to their families for the purpose of visits and family interaction.

#### 2. AMP youth request an increase in foster care clothing allowance stipend.

- + The amount allowed per youth is unrealistic to the cost of clothing (\$250 maximum per year).

#### 3. AMP youth request additional training specific to teenagers for foster, adoptive, kinship and guardian parents.

- + Teenagers can be difficult to parent; especially those who suffer trauma.
- + Teens want parents who have the skills so they can be successful in a family setting.

#### 4. AMP youth request transition training for all system involved youth.

- + Offer specific curriculum that addresses the areas of: Housing, Money Management, Health Benefits, Employment, Secondary Education and Life Skills training.
- + Provide options other than college such as: trade jobs, apprenticeships and other hands on – work based learning programs.

## YOUTH REQUESTS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS...Legislative Action Still Needed!

1. AMP youth request that all youth in the state of Iowa, who are educated in their homes, be dual- enrolled in a local community school for at least physical education or extra-curricular activities. This is for safety.
  - ✦ Education Oversight / Regulation for all educational settings.
  
2. AMP youth request safe and affordable housing for young adults aging out of the foster care system.
  - ✦ Tax incentives /tax breaks for landlords who rent to transitioning youth (use New Mexico law as a model)
  - ✦ Tax incentives / tax breaks for employers that hire foster youth. (New Mexico Employers Tax Credit For Hiring Foster Youth May 8, 2018 – SB231)
  
3. AMP youth request that each judge ask a youth age 12 and older if they want to have their own legal representation (in addition to their Guardian ad Litem - GAL).
  - ✦ Working on a one pager with Drake law students for GAL's to notify system youth on when it's in their best interest to bifurcate the GAL role.
  
4. AMP youth request to get their driver's license before they age out of care.
  - ✦ Work with insurance companies to decrease liability for the person signing for the license
  - ✦ Underwrite state liability insurance for these situations (Florida Keys To Independence SB744 & Transportation Really Is Possible (TRIP) North Carolina Driver's License Project)
  
5. AMP youth request when a young adult turns 18, they need contact information for their adopted siblings.
  - ✦ Educate adoptive parents on the value of sibling contacts
  - ✦ Consider cooperative adoption for youth adopted out of Iowa's child welfare system