



# AMP Year-End Report Covering July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018

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## 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 strong advocates for making the foster care system more responsive and effective.

AMP offers leadership opportunities, service learning, 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. Moreover, AMP provides a safe and supportive environment for young people in foster care to socialize with their peers and participate in normal adolescent activities.

Eight non-profit youth-serving agencies, led by YSS, comprise a statewide collaboration referred to as the Partnership of Iowa Foster Care Youth Councils. Through the contract with DHS, these eight agencies supported AMP Youth Councils in fifteen locations during the report period of July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018. Due to facilitator turnover, some of the Councils did not meet the entire year. The eight partner agencies and the locations of the Councils they support are:

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

In addition to these agencies, the Partnership has links to three consulting organizations, ISU – RISE (Research Institute for Studies in Education) to conduct program assessments; the Child and Family Policy Center (CFPC) for help with 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, Four Oaks and LSI Fostering Connections, the Iowa Aftercare Services Network, and group homes/PMICS and shelters.

SFY 2018 marked the first year of a potential five-year contract between DHS and YSS. As required by the contract, this report provides information on membership and activities of AMP during the period of July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018, updating the interim report that was submitted in April. The report includes quantitative information on member characteristics and council meetings, followed by a narrative summary of major AMP projects and certain other 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, state and 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 paper versions of these instruments). These forms were updated for SFY 2018 based on results and feedback from the facilitators and AMP statewide coordinator.

All Council facilitators are instructed to complete the meeting summary form online using a web-based survey platform, for each regular meeting they hold. Rather than separate versions for Eldora-STS and mobile councils, all facilitators began using the same form in July 2017. Council facilitators completed a total of 271 meeting summaries during the year, including 79 on meetings at Eldora-STS.

Last year, Eldora-STS and mobile members completed slightly modified versions of the member information form. This form collects basic demographic information and the foster care experience of youth who attend one or more AMP meetings or events. Beginning July 1, 2017, all AMP members, including at Eldora-STS and mobile locations, used the same member information form for consistency across councils. Facilitators enter information from the completed forms online. Council facilitators collected and entered information from 543 individual AMP members during the report period. Youth were allowed to skip questions they were not comfortable with or ready to answer.

## **MEMBER CHARACTERISTICS**

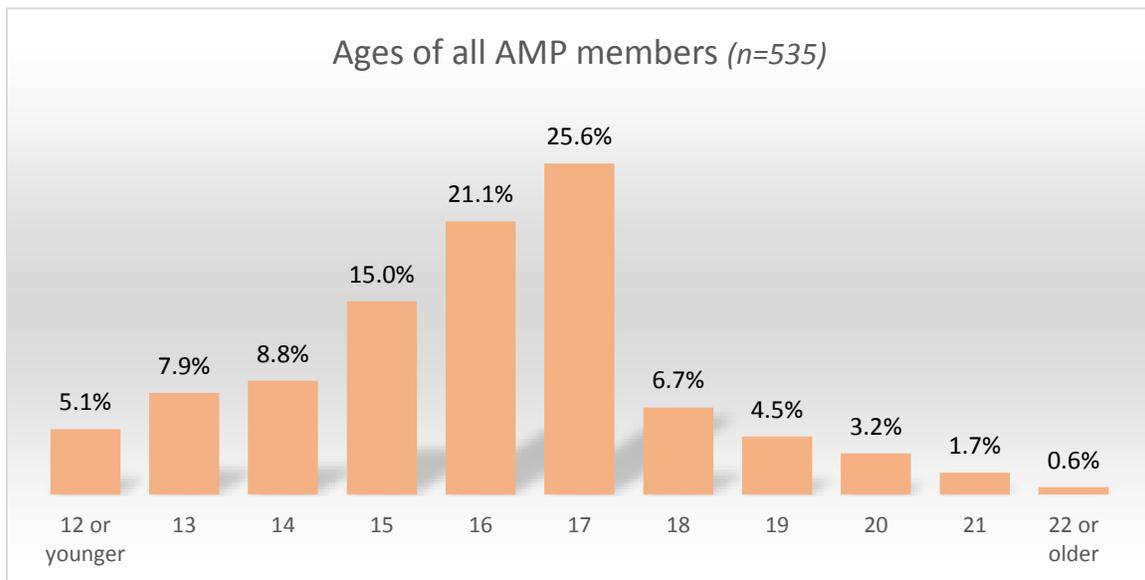
Facilitators collect member information from as many participating youth as possible on an annual basis, starting in July for the current fiscal year. Based on facilitators' attendance logs, approximately 1,300 young people attended one or more AMP meetings from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018. Of those, 543 (42%) completed the member information form.

The Des Moines and Davenport Councils did not submit any member information forms and are not represented in the following charts and tables on Member Characteristics.

### **AGE**

Ages reported by members range from less than 12 years old, to 22 or older, though less than 6% fall outside of the intended range of 13-21 years old. The majority of AMP members are under 18, with 62% between the ages of 15 and 17.

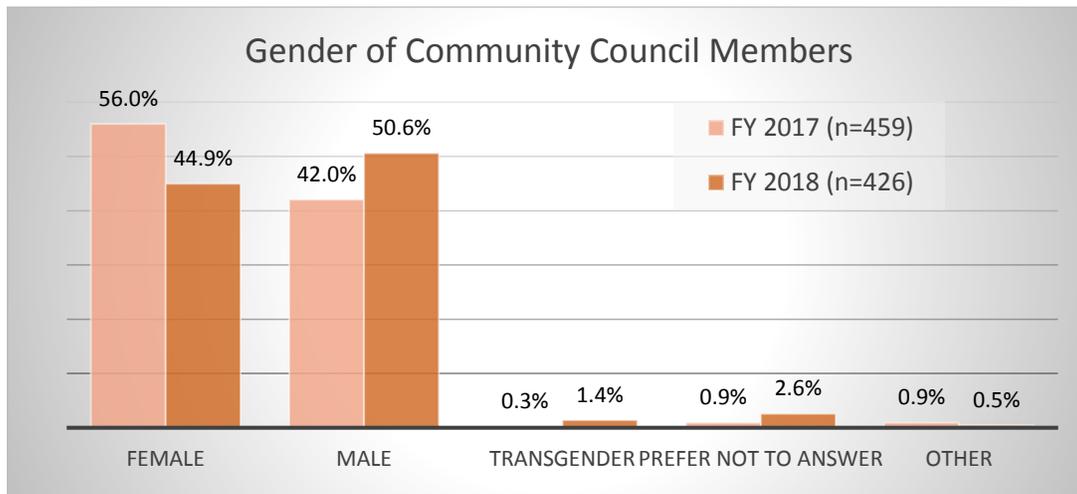
Youth attending AMP at the Eldora-STS are predominantly 16 or 17 – nearly three-quarters of members are this age, consistent with the overall population of boys at the training school. Youth attending community-based councils tend to be somewhat younger, and a much wider range of ages exists within these councils. About a quarter (25.7%) of community council members are 14 or younger, and 18.6% are 18 or older.



## RACE AND ETHNICITY

AMP membership is generally representative of the foster care population in Iowa. The majority of AMP members identified as White (71% of community-based councils and 42% of Eldora-STS), and a greater proportion of Eldora-STS members identified themselves as Black or African American compared to the rest of the statewide councils. Youth were instructed to select the one race or ethnicity they *most closely* identify with. Some selected more than one race or ethnicity, thus some totals do not add to 100%.

	All Members n=538	Community Councils n=421	Eldora-STS n=113
White	65%	71%	42%
African American or Black	20%	14%	42%
Hispanic or Latino	11%	12%	9%
Multiracial	7%	7%	4%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%	4%	1%
Other	1%	1%	1%
Asian	1%	2%	0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1%	<1%	3%

**GENDER**

Compared to SFY 2017, there has been an increase in the percentage community-based Council members who are male, and a decrease in female members. In SFY 2018, just over half (51%) of the community council members who completed member information forms are male, and under half are female (45%). All of the Eldora-STS members identified as male; *including the STS Council, the total AMP membership is 61% male and 36% female.*

**PLACEMENT TYPE**

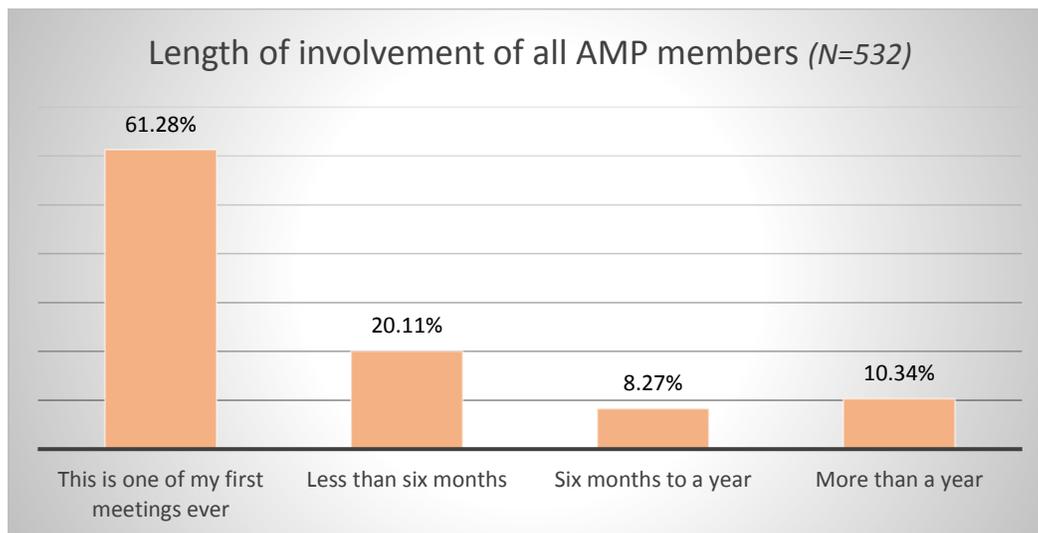
About 69% of AMP members are living in a congregate care setting – state training school, shelter, residential treatment, or PMIC. The Eldora-STS Council accounts for more than a fifth (21%) of all AMP members on whom data was collected; 16.5% are not in foster care or another out-of-home placement. Only 9% are living in a family-like setting (adoptive family, relative foster home, or foster family). Some AMP councils hold meetings on-site at a residential or shelter facility, which partially explains the high frequency of youth in these placement types. Compared to the data that was submitted in SFY 2017, more AMP members are at the STS or no longer in placement and fewer are in residential treatment. Some of this difference may be the result of more consistent reporting by the STS.

	SFY 2018 (n=539)	SFY 2017 (n=514)
State training school	21%	11%
Shelter	23%	34%
Not in foster care or placement	27%	16%
Residential treatment	21%	22%
Other <sup>1</sup>	6%	5%
PMIC	4%	2%
Foster family	5%	7%
Adopted (or with adoptive family)	3%	2%
Relative foster family (kinship care)	1%	2%

<sup>1</sup> Entries in the “Other” category include Juvenile Court Services, court-ordered day program, Job Corps, 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 are encouraged to have youth complete the information form during one of the first meetings of the fiscal year (beginning July 1, 2017), or as new members start attending meetings during the year. As a result, over half (61%) of members said they were brand new to AMP meetings, reporting it was their first or second time attending. One-fifth (20%) report having been involved with AMP for less than six months; and about one-fifth (19%) have been involved for six months or longer. In comparison, 40% of youth who completed the annual satisfaction survey reported they had been involved for 6 months or longer.



All but six Eldora-STS AMP members report being involved in meetings for less than six months. The average length of stay before discharge at Eldora-STS is just over 10 months (from Iowa Department of Human Services). However, 19% of STS members reported on the satisfaction survey that they have been involved for more than one year.

## COUNCIL MEETINGS AND PARTICIPATION

During SFY 2018, 271 meetings held across the state were documented using the online meeting summary form, about the same number of meetings documented last year (272). The most meeting summaries were submitted from Eldora-STS (N=79), which held bi-weekly meetings with several different subgroups on campus. The Davenport Council did not enter any meeting summary data. Compared to billing information, meeting summaries were submitted for 88% of meetings held by community based councils.

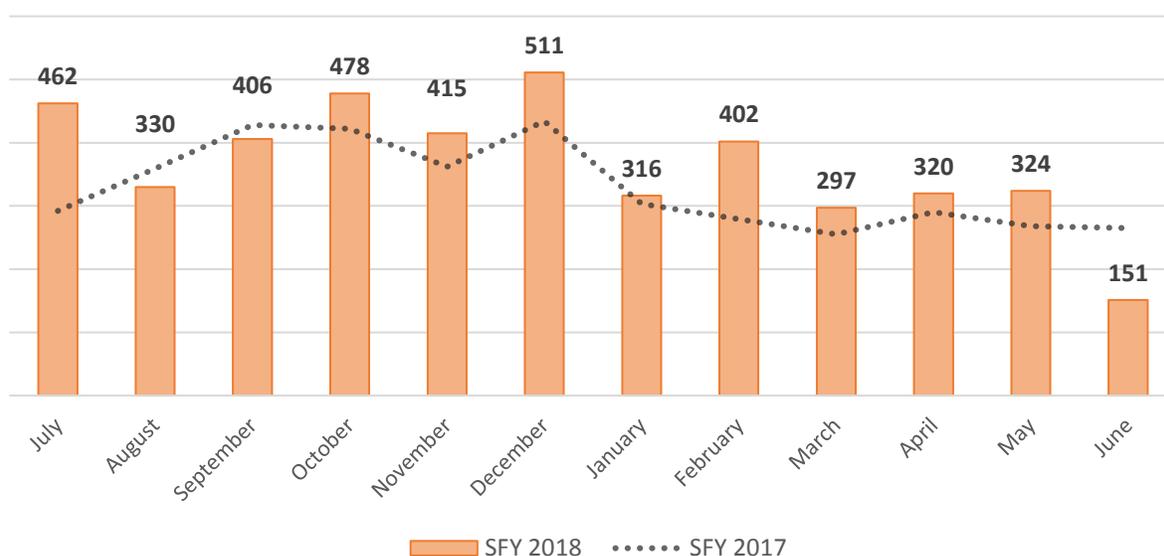
Across all councils, an estimated 1,300 unique young people attended AMP meetings for 4,412 points of contact through regular Council meetings held during the year based on attendance logs maintained by

facilitators. Of these youth, 849 were noted as “new” members in their local Council this year (based on information submitted to YSS for billing purposes).

This does not include the youth who attended various events (e.g., Day on the Hill, Plugged in & Charging Conference) or who were assisted through Fo\$ter Fund\$ scholarships, also administered by YSS through AMP.

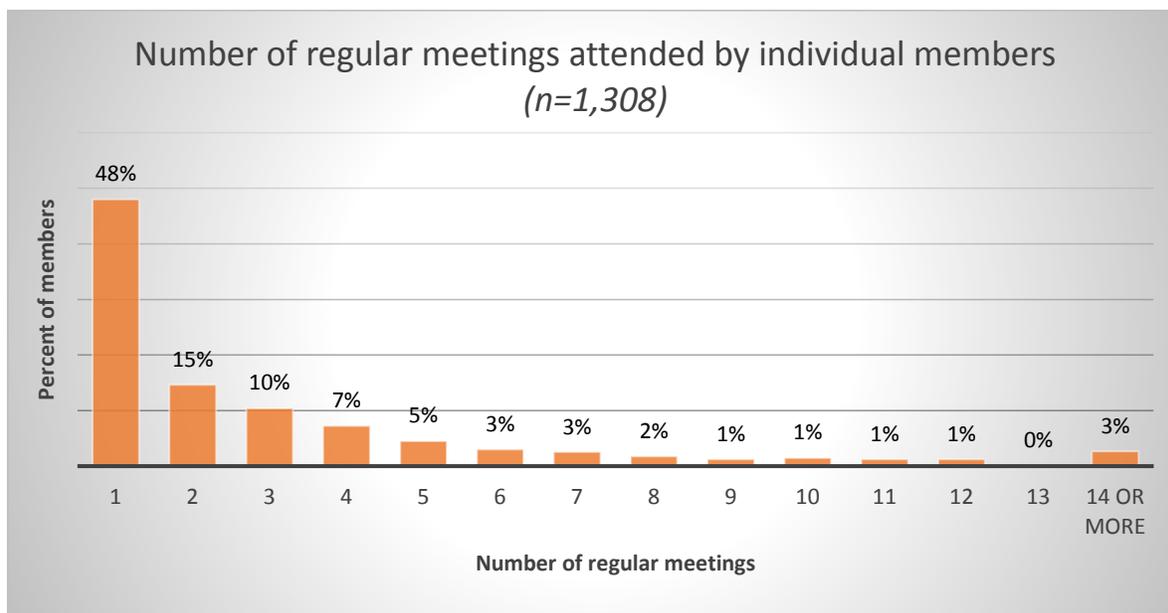
The chart below shows updated monthly attendance of all councils during SFY 2018 compared to SFY 2017. On average, monthly attendance is about 13% higher compared to last year, not including June 2018, when several Councils only met once because of AMP Camp or other scheduling conflicts.

AMP Monthly Attendance, SFY 2018 vs. SFY 2017



Average attendance at 252 meetings for which attendance was logged and submitted was 17.5 youth, compared to 11.3 average attendance last year. Across Councils, average attendance ranged from 5 youth per meeting in Marshalltown to 56 youth per bi-weekly period at the State Training School, which holds multiple meetings with smaller groups. Among community-based Councils, average meeting attendance was 14.3 youth.

Council facilitators make an effort to track the attendance of individual youth from meeting to meeting during the year, recording names from their sign-in sheets on a spreadsheet. This provides an estimate of individual youth involvement over time, as opposed to the self-report, static question on satisfaction surveys or member information.



Based on the attendance logs submitted by Council facilitators, just under half (48%) of all members attended just one meeting during the year, more than a third (37%) attended between 2 and 5 meetings, and the remaining 15% of members (nearly 200 individual youth) attended 6 or more meetings during FY 2018, indicating a positive attachment to AMP. Overall, individual young people attended an average of 3.34 AMP meetings during the year.

It is reasonable to assume that the higher proportion of youth in congregate care settings like shelter and residential treatment may account for many of the youth attending only briefly as their participation is likely tied to their placement.

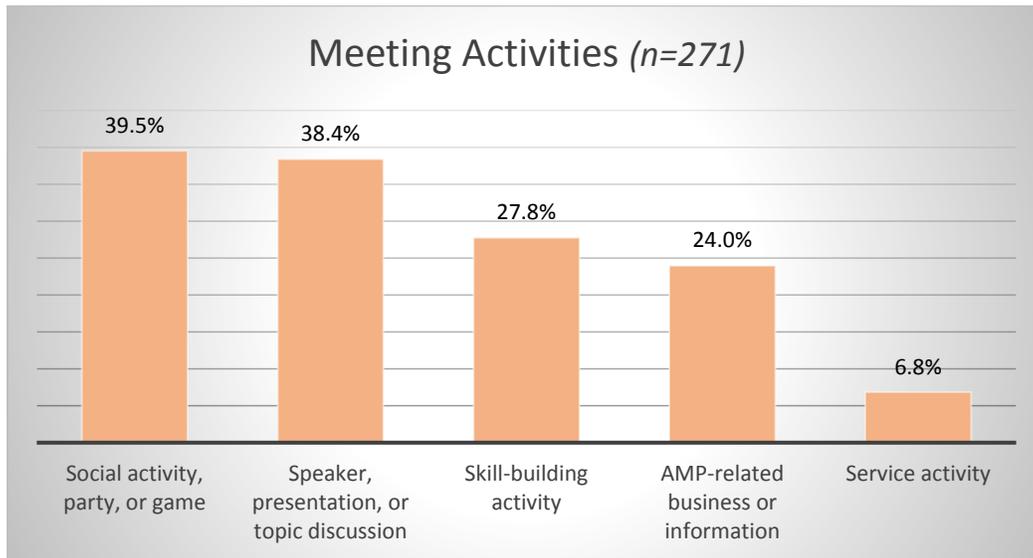
Individuals are tracked by council, and are not added to a master list; thus, youth who have attended or are attending meetings and events at another council are not easily cross-referenced between councils. In addition, facilitators use a variety of ways to identify youth (*e.g.*, first and last name, first name and last initial) 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.

## MEETINGS

Because facilitators were encouraged to make their councils “mobile”, we updated the summary sheet to ask whether the meeting was stationary or mobile; about 8% of summaries entered were for a mobile meeting (the facilitator went to the youth) during the year.

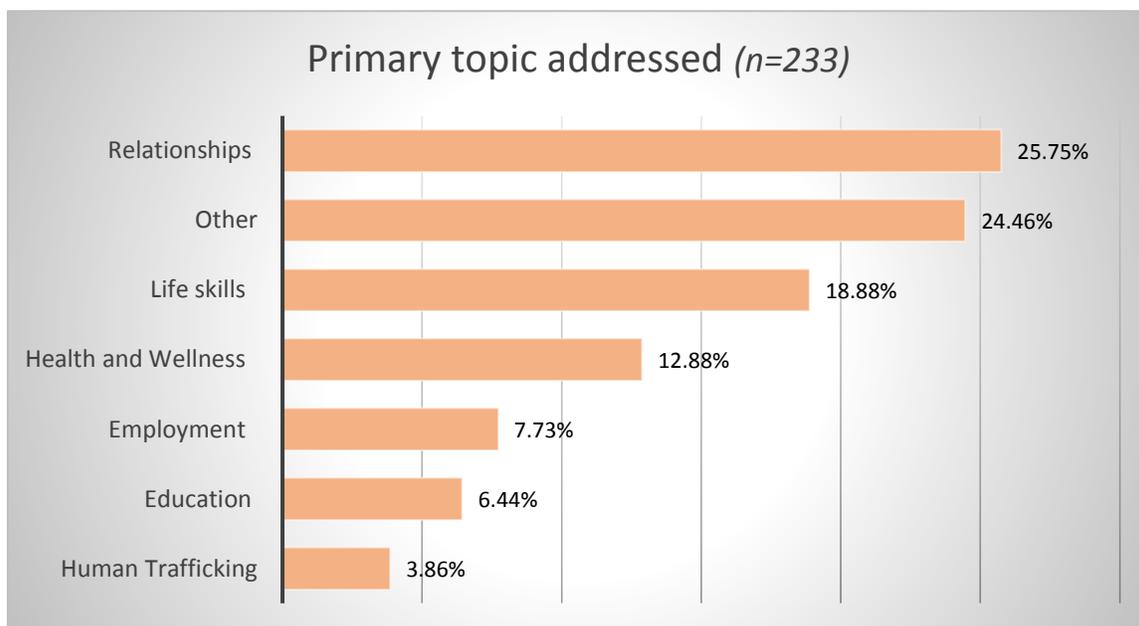
The following charts and tables provide information on the types of activities, topics, and partners involved in the numerous meetings across the state. All councils, except Davenport, are represented in the following charts. An average of 19.3 meeting summaries were entered per Council (ranging from two summaries entered by Des Moines to seventy-nine entered by the Eldora-STS).

**ACTIVITIES**



Many AMP facilitators combine more than one activity during a meeting, as indicated by the chart above. Social activities and hosting a speaker or discussing a specific topic are the most frequent activities reported by facilitators. Skill-building activities and AMP-related business or information are included in about a quarter of all meetings. Service activities occurred the least often at 7% of meetings. Facilitators also have the option to include additional information on the activity type or briefly describe what kind of social or speaker activity it was (e.g., holiday party, CrossFit, goal-setting, working on AMP legislative agenda).

**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. A wide range of presenters and speakers were enlisted by facilitators throughout the year. Facilitators selected a primary topic(s) as part of the meeting summary data collection instrument, and had the option to comment on additional topics addressed or indicate something other than a category given. Within the “Other” category, the majority of the topics written in were related to AMP projects and activities (*e.g.*, new member training, yearly planning, survey, and legislative agenda). Modifications to this question on data collection instrument have been made for FY 2019 in an effort to more fully and accurately capture the topics being addressed by the Council.

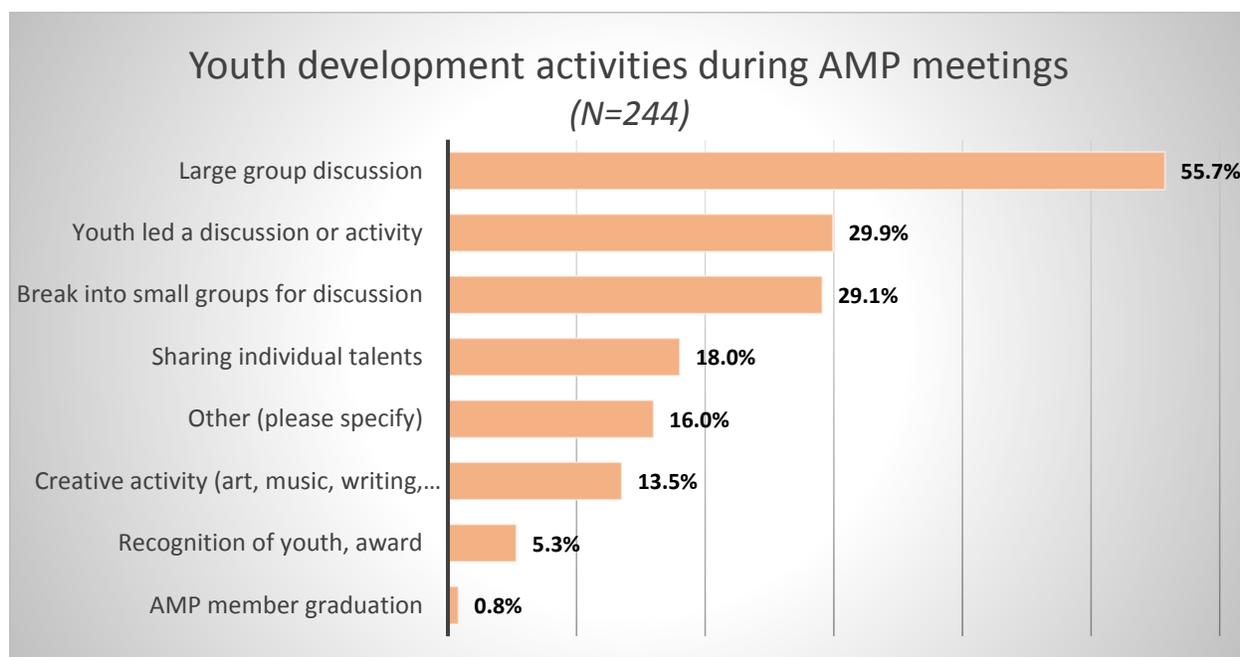
Conducting AMP-related business during Council meetings provides opportunities for youth to practice communication, decision-making and advocacy skills and reinforces AMP’s commitment to a youth-driven approach. When AMP-related business was included as part of the meeting, facilitators identified the primary AMP-related topic, as shown in the table below.

AMP-related business/activity	<i>n</i> =110
AMP Camp	15.5%
Day on the Hill	19.1%
Legislative agenda	26.4%
New member training/What is AMP	30.0%
Planning for other AMP or council events	29.1%
Satisfaction survey	15.5%
Preparing or supporting AMP youth speaking at event	17.3%

AMP is well-supported by community organizations, businesses and individual volunteers. When volunteers or community members were present at meetings, an average of 3.5 people were in attendance, in addition to staff.

### YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

AMP facilitators understand the importance of engaging youth in multiple ways for positive youth development and relationship-building. Over half (53%) of meetings included a large group discussion, 30% involved a youth leading a discussion or activity, and just under 30% included breaking into small groups for discussion. Other opportunities for youth to engage with adults and their peers in meaningful ways included sharing individual talents, a creative activity (like art, music or writing) and recognizing youth for individual accomplishments.



### 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. AMP staff, primarily Terri Bailey, prepared the majority of this section of the report, which summarizes major activities conducted by AMP during SFY 2018

#### Providing Normalcy -- Variety AMP Camp

AMP Camp took place June 20-26, 2018. This was the seventh year of sponsoring Variety AMP camp, and the second year held at Forest Lake Camp in Bloomfield, Iowa. Camp offered campers a variety of normal activities, such as swimming, fishing, paddle boats and canoes. YSS hired the staff to work with AMP youth; Ruth Buckels, the AMP Program Manager, two adult staff plus facilitators from Ames, Ottumwa and the AMP intern filled the positions. The Ottumwa facilitator, Holly Dommer, used her local connections to bring activities and guest speakers to AMP campers.

On June 19, ten mentors reported for training. This was the first year we were able to involve five additional mentors-in-training. A mentor-in-training is an experienced camper who expressed interest in someday becoming a mentor. Cassandra Hall spent the day with mentors designing a contract filled with characteristics needed from a mentor. Mentors and mentors in

training went to “The Beach” which is an indoor pool in the city of Ottumwa. The mentors then practiced teamwork games, brushed up on communication skills, and discussed the week and what they hoped to achieve with campers. After swimming, the new contracts were signed by the mentors. We returned to camp and toured the Forest Lake campgrounds; practiced emergency procedure training and “get to know you” games. The next day, mentors reviewed campfire songs and learned some new songs that would be debuted this year. A volunteer singer from the community, Dave, was able to help the mentors choose a few uplifting songs to help the youth feel comfortable and safe.

Additionally we were able to bring in a professional youth photographer this year. Abby Wolfe is an AMP youth who is fulfilling her dream of being a photographer; hundreds of photos were taken to remember the week at camp and use in future banners and brochures.

Campers arrived at 4:00 pm on June 20<sup>th</sup>. The highlights of camp included volunteers from Job Corps teaching cooking and problem solving skills, a professional panel of DHS, JCS, TPS and a judge to answer youth questions about the child welfare system, Wisdom Beyond Words to teach five amazing concepts from the movie Black Panther, archery, nature hikes, building healthy relationships, tie dyed shirts and a tour of the Ottumwa Job Corps facility.

The best part of Variety AMP Camp is the friendships made during the week. Campers become close to their mentors and close to each other. Many share similar life experiences and have met before in placements around the state. Youth refer to each other as “family” and the camp T-shirt slogan this year was, “Moving forward while reaching back”. This saying was created by an AMP mentor who’s in Job Corp and moving forward with his future. He stated that this year at camp, he will reach back to bring others forward toward their future.

Our final night at camp, we gathered around the campfire and did a closing ceremony which consists of camp staff holding four candles. These candles represent peace, faith and love and the narrator spoke about people in conflict, losing faith and forgetting to love others that are close to them. Staff blew out the candles one by one to represent the loss of these elements in the world today. The remaining candle is hope...hope relights the other candles bringing peace, faith and love back into the world today. “Never let the flame of hope go out of your life; with hope, no matter how bad things look and are....Peace, Faith and Love can shine brightly in your lives!” The AMP statewide program manager Ruth Buckels was the candle of hope that re-lit the three candles held by AMP staff & facilitators, staff lit the mentor’s candles and mentors lit the youth candles. “We see the light, we are the light,” everyone sang; we are an AMP family. Everyone began to hug and cry; youth took turns giving “shout outs” of what camp meant to them and thanking people for being an instrument for change in their lives! Suddenly, fireworks began to shoot up in the night sky and their reflection on the lake was spectacular!

Variety AMP Camp is a key tool is helping foster/adoptive youth be successful. The bonds made at camp each year strengthen with each youth that attends and the mentors get a chance to give back to peers who are struggling. Iowa’s youth are resilient and headed for a bright future!

**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. This year it was held on January 22, 2018 with more than 80 youth attending. 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.

The focus of the 2018 AMP legislative agenda was safety; safe housing options for youth ages 18-24 years old, safe age appropriate techniques to educate students in Iowa schools to recognize childhood sexual abuse, and education oversight to insure safety for youth who are educated in their homes. While legislators heard from AMP youth at Day on the Hill, and through email and phone calls, no action was taken on the issues from AMP's legislative agenda.

Iowa Department of Human Services listened and approved subsidized guardianship from the 2017 AMP legislative agenda. It took some time to figure out how to implement the funding; they plan to use funds from the Family First Prevention Services Act which is due to roll out in October 2019. AMP will continue to work with DHS as the role of services change because of the Family First Act and pursue housing goals for older youth. Changing the rules for education oversight will be challenging since oversight was removed four years ago by the legislators but due to two teen deaths in Iowa the AMP youth are concerned for the safety of any youth educated in their home. On a federal level, AMP will continue to be a member of Foster Youth in Action (FYA), a national grassroots network of foster youth-led groups from 23 states. Five AMP youth will participate in the annual FYA conference held in Berkeley California in November 2018. AMP youth will receive training, leadership opportunities, shared learning, and become empowered advocates on a federal as well as state level.

**Annual Foster Care Youth Conference – Plugged In and Charging**

The 3rd Annual AMP “Plugged In and Charging” Conference took place on February 16 and 17, 2018 at Indian Hills Community College (IHCC) in Ottumwa, Iowa. AMP facilitators collaborated with the college to provide a venue for youth to learn about the college experience. Eighty-one youth, facilitators and support staff were part of this year's event, including youth from eleven AMP Councils.

Through the generosity of IHCC, youth experienced dorm life Friday evening before the conference, and enjoyed time with other AMP youth from around the state. The morning of the conference on Saturday, February 17<sup>th</sup> included a college tour and breakout sessions for exploring different degree/diploma programs. Youth had hands-on learning opportunities in the laser department, mechanics, criminal justice, and health science field.

Krista Tedrow, the keynote speaker, was in the foster care system and has a passion for helping young adults achieve their maximum potential. From the good, the bad, even the ugly, Krista shared her

journey of how she overcame the odds to prove them wrong. Krista created a great interactive activity for all the youth to take part in.

Following lunch, the participants attended afternoon breakout sessions. At the conclusion of the afternoon sessions, youth went to Job Corps for a campus tour and to hear about the Job Corps Program. Following dinner back at IHCC, many of the youth and facilitators enjoyed the college basketball game that evening before their return home.

Youth completed surveys sharing their thoughts on the conference and what they enjoyed and learned, as well as what they would change. Positive feedback was again received from youth on how to improve the event, but overall youth reported enjoying and learning from their participation in the conference.

### **Mini-Camps & Mini-Conferences**

In the new contract, AMP proposed both mini-camps and mini-conferences as a means to draw youth into AMP and link them with opportunities in higher education. This has proven successful and it is growing in popularity. The pared down version is a smaller commitment for foster families, and assists community colleges, Aftercare Advocates and programs for transition aged youth to have face-to-face interactions. The mini-camps help youth meet and greet each other as well as learn a leadership skill.

**Three mini-camps** were held in 2018. The first was a camp reunion at Forest Lake Camp near Ottumwa, the second was held at a church campground in Newton and the third at the Buckels farm near Story City. AMP Campers spend a Saturday getting a taste of what Variety AMP camp offers all week during the full summer camp session.

#### Forrest Lake Ottumwa Mini-Camp:

The first mini-camp was held at the Forest Lake Camp south of Ottumwa in rural Wapello County on October 15, 2017. Over 45 youth attend this event from around the state. After sharing highs and lows, AMP Camp attendees from 2017 shared with the youth their camp experiences, then showed the AMP Camp video and led the group in camp songs. The mini-camp participants went back to the main building where they took part in large group team building games. Following dinner and conversation, Ruth Buckels, State AMP Coordinator, led a discussion on the AMP Legislative Agenda and talked about the future of AMP Camp. Youth split into small groups and spent time brainstorming what they would like to see at future AMP Camps.

#### Newton Mini-Camp

The second mini-camp was on February 3, 2018, at the Christian Camp and Conference Center in Newton. Twenty-five youth from four different AMP councils took part in this fun day. An artist was present to engage youth in creating their own mini-masterpiece to bring home with them. Other activities included large and small group games and team building experiences. The attendees viewed the 2017 AMP Camp video and got to ask questions about 2018 AMP Camp.

#### Ames Mini-Camp

The Ames Mini-Camp was held at the farm of Ruth Buckels near Story City on May 5, 2018. Fifty one youth from multiple councils across Iowa and YSS shelter/treatment facilities gathered at the farm on a

sunny Saturday morning and began with team building games. Teams practiced passing a water balloon over a volleyball net trying to keep it from breaking. Others tried to make a square, while blindfolded, using their communication skills to guide each other on the shape of the rope. Teams cut a banana and then tried to put it back together, symbolizing a broken relationship; will the banana/relationship ever look the same? After lunch, youth learned about service dogs and how animals help survivors of trauma. Ruth Buckels breeds and trains service dogs; she spoke with the teens about positive relationships with animals and people, including the power of healing from trauma. Teens created two art projects for the juvenile justice building in Polk County; one shaped after last year's camp motto: adding leaves to our family tree and the second, powerful feeling words for AMP teens. The day ended with learning silly camp songs and encouraging the teens in attendance to register for Variety AMP Camp this summer!

**Mini conferences** are designed to be held on a Saturday and follow the successful footprint of the annual AMP statewide "Plugged In & Charging" conference. Collaborating with community colleges in all five DHS service areas, youth experience what it is like to stay in a dorm room, eat at food service, attend college classes and benefit from college resources. Offering a shorter activity closer to home allows teens to experience an AMP event in hopes they will see its value and get involved.

#### State Training School Mini-Conference

The first of the five mini-conferences was held on January 20, 2018, at the State Training School. The State Training School AMP facilitator and several other partners were involved in the planning. Twenty-six current residents of the facility attended this event. The keynote speaker was Andrew Allen, CEO of YSS. He connected well with the youth and kept their attention – they asked lots of thoughtful questions. Breakout sessions included Transition 101, led by Transition Planning Specialist (TPS) Teresa Jacobs, and Immersion: a Point of Re-Entry by Randi Radosevich, who works with the prison re-entry population through St. Vincent DePaul. Other organizations that were available for youth to connect with included DMACC, Iowa Medicaid and Aftercare. State Training School students received lots of good information that they will be able to use upon re-entry into their communities.

#### Southeastern Community College (SCC) Mini-Conference

The SCC mini-conference kicked off with Dr. Michael Ash addressing the 53 youth in attendance, followed by the keynote speaker, Dr. Kris Meyers. After the lunch provided by SCC, the young people attended three different breakout sessions and group building challenges in groups of 2-4. The day ended with a campus tour, presentation by the West Burlington Fire Department/Paramedics, and lots of door prizes and freebies. Numerous SCC, Young House Family Services (YHFS) and community volunteers "worked" the mini conference. SCC and YHFS hope to offer this mini conference again next year, with some small tweaks to make it even better!

### **WEBSITE and COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES**

AMP maintains a website, [www.ampiowa.org](http://www.ampiowa.org), which serves as a vehicle to share information about AMP councils, statewide activities, and creative, original work of its members. On the main website, there are stories of personal journeys written by AMP teens and close to 100 poems submitted by youth. New stories and poetry are added throughout the year. Youth in each council are able to update their local council page with the assistance of their local facilitator.

Many of the new photos are by an AMP youth who started her own photography business this year. This youth has offered to take senior pictures for foster teens, as a means to “give back” to a program that helped promote her talent.

AMP has a new resource section that contains three new videos from Wells Fargo Bank on financial advice about opening a checking or savings account, using a debit card, building your credit and the importance of your credit report. Iowa Legal Aid has three new presentations that teach youth about the law when it comes to bullying, renting an apartment/dealing with landlords, and domestic violence situations. This section is a great way to share information that youth learn at AMP meetings with teens who live in a rural setting and who cannot attend an AMP council meeting. Given the susceptibility of youth in care to human trafficking, two additional videos are stories from human trafficking victims. These videos are designed to help youth look for the warning signs from traffickers and understand how traffickers can use the feelings of being a teen in foster care as a recruitment tool.

Facebook is an additional communication channel AMP uses to connect with young people. At year-end, there were 306 friends of the “Achieving Maximum Potential – Group” Facebook page. Facilitators and youth use Facebook to show other teens what happened at their AMP council meeting or advertise an event. One of the highly anticipated features of the Facebook page is the instant communication and feedback loop AMP uses to get answers/opinions on topics from youth statewide. Resources, contests, scholarships and information are posted to the Facebook page. We continue to have a group that is closed to the public so AMP members can share personal information in a safe way.

## **COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

Across the state, AMP councils regularly seek out and maintain partnerships with local or regional partners in various capacities. Following the 2017 Plugged-in and Charging conference, AMP worked with Job Corps in Ottumwa to have an AMP council on site to support AMP youth who are enrolling in Job Corps in groups of two or four. AMP reached out to Job Corps after hearing about their hands-on learning opportunities with which AMP youth thrive. Matching this learning style with a partnership with Indian Hills Community College for an associate’s degree is an outstanding opportunity.

AMP has reached out to Buena Vista University in Marshalltown, Southeastern Community College in Burlington, and DMACC in Ankeny. In the next fiscal year, AMP plans to reach out to five more community colleges for mini-conferences in hopes of encouraging youth to put college on their life-path. AMP is reaching out to multiple educational facilities to address challenges to post-secondary enrollment that young people identified – fear of college and not understanding resources.

AMP also has an on-going relationship with Variety, The Children’s Charity in Iowa. Each year they have funded Variety AMP Camp and 35 to 55 youth have attended and learned multiple skills during the week at camp. The goal for the 2018 camp is 80 youth to attend daily (some will be shelter youth so they will sleep at the shelter and attend daily activities) to learn leadership, healing, advocacy and community building skills.

In SFY 2018, AMP has connected with three mini-camp locations where we have rented a campground for a Saturday and brought in youth to learn and connect. The purpose of mini-camps is to reach youth who have not come to the annual camp and give them a glimpse of what camp is; it is also to teach a

skill. At each mini-camp location, AMP youth leave the camp “better than we found it” so there is a community service component built into the experience. The places AMP has used for camps have been very thankful for the service AMP youth have given back to them.

In a related effort, teens in foster care can now access funding from “Fo\$ter Fund\$”, a program administered through AMP to help pay for those extra expenses not covered by the foster care stipend.

## **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.

Beginning with this DHS Contract, each facilitator was encouraged to become more “mobile” by hosting a regular AMP meeting and one or more additional locations each month, in order to reach more youth. While “mobile” AMP Councils are just getting off the ground, there is some evidence that additional youth are able to be involved through this arrangement.

To reach youth in foster homes, AMP and Four Oaks have worked together each month to make a list to reach out specifically to foster family homes that take in teenagers. Bambi Schrader, the Regions 2 and 5 Recruiter for Fostering Families/Four Oaks, continues to invite AMP youth to staff recruitment tables and answer questions for potential families at recruitment events.

AMP also continues to attend as many PS-MAPP sessions 9 or 10 as possible 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 future foster parents’ perceptions on fostering teens.

AMP continues to utilize print-media, radio and television opportunities to promote AMP as they are available. AMP Day on the Hill received significant exposure, for example. As discussed above, AMP has a Facebook page and website and educates by word of mouth about AMP, youth voice, youth issues and youth successes. During SFY 2018, AMP has tested the exposure of an AMP newsletter, produced by the Davenport facilitator. All the facilitators are asked to report on their activities in the newsletter and share it with their community contacts. It is growing in popularity and many have said it is fun to read.

AMP has reached out to DHS Transition Planning Specialists and Aftercare Self-Sufficiency Advocates to promote AMP with their clients. AMP has shared educational materials with the Aftercare 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.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE EFFORTS

AMP has multiple levels of quality assurance (QA) checkpoints. The Youth Satisfaction Surveys provide a snapshot of a youth's perceptions. Feedback forms after a guest speaker are randomly given out to provide the facilitator instant feedback. 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. Conference calls, meetings and trainings for facilitators also provide opportunities for feedback and identifying concerns. YSS also has both 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. In March 2018, AMP was again reviewed and audited by CARF for certification. This review was highly praised by reviewers who described AMP as "an incredible program to gather and amplify youth voice."

### Youth Satisfaction Survey

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. Eleven AMP councils participated in the annual satisfaction survey during February and March 2018 and 157 youth completed the survey.

By age, gender, and race/ethnicity, the youth who completed the survey are mostly representative of AMP's total membership. Just over a third of youth reported they have been attending AMP meetings for less than 2 months, suggesting that the majority are familiar with AMP's activities and experiences. Compared to the previous year, more youth who took the survey were first-time attendees.

Length of involvement	SFY 2017	SYF 2018
First meeting	9.5%	20.3%
Less than 2 months	11.9%	16.3%
Between 2 and 6 months	25.4%	22.2%
Between 6 and 12 months	11.9%	14.4%
Between 1 and 2 years	17.5%	11.8%
More than 2 years	23.8%	15.0%

The 2018 survey featured questions patterned after a survey produced by Foster Youth in Action, a national network of foster youth councils, of which AMP is a partner. Each question begins with "Because of my participation in AMP..." to ask about AMP's influence on each opportunity.

Over 80% of youth agree or somewhat agree that because of AMP, they have positive relationships with peers (86%) and have developed skills for later in life (88%). Just slightly fewer youth agree or somewhat agree that because of their participation in AMP, they have been able to engage with their community (80%) and make positive change in foster care policy (72%).

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not sure	Somewhat disagree	Disagree
I have had a chance to develop skills that may be useful later in life.	66%	22%	8%	1%	2%
I have had new opportunities to engage with my community.	58%	22%	12%	0%	8%
I feel like I have built some positive relationships with my peers or made new friends.	68%	18%	8%	3%	3%
I feel like I can help make positive change in foster care policy.	50%	22%	21%	1%	6%

In addition, four contract-required question were asked of youth, who were given options to respond with “Yes”, “No”, “Too soon to tell”, or “Decline [to answer]”. Those who responded with “Too soon to tell” or declined to answer are excluded from the percentages.

- Do you feel like you have a meaningful relationship with at least one adult?
  - 97.8% Yes; 2.2% No
- Has AMP provided you information about supports and services available to you?
  - 90.9% Yes; 9.1% No
- Do you think AMP staff understand the foster care system (or juvenile justice system)?
  - 94.5% Yes; 5.5% No
- Have you had at least one experience in the past year where you practiced leadership in AMP?
  - 70.7% Yes; 29.3% No

As with the satisfaction survey last year, we also asked youth an open-ended question about how their participation in AMP makes them feel and the opportunity to express other thoughts about AMP.

*In one word or a short phrase, how does being part of AMP make you feel? [Selection of responses]:*

- A part of the world, accepted, amazing, cared for, confident, connected, family, good, grateful, happy, respected in the community, important, included, involved, like somebody worth of everything, powerful, supported, useful, wanted, welcomed

Additional results from the satisfaction survey can be found in tables in the Appendix and upon request.

### **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 thirteen AMP Councils in February 2018. 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 128 people responded in the most recent assessment – 73 youth; 27 facilitators/support person; and 28 volunteers/community members. Staff will be discussing the results of the PAAT assessments during face-to-face meetings, using the results to improve the quality of programming. The full PAAT report is shared separately with DHS.

### **Facilitator Meetings and Training**

Each facilitator is required to attend facilitator training with Terri Bailey when they begin working with AMP. Much of the training is focused on the website, so each council can manage their own page on the AMP website. Terri is then available for follow up on any topic requested for extra training.

Facilitators have asked for a training on the drugs present in Iowa, the culture, and how to react. In June 2018, Mike McGuire will present on this topic. We all know we work with a high-risk population and we hear a lot of lingo but since we are not “in the culture” we miss opportunities to teach and intervene. The training will be for adults only.

Facilitators attended a training in February on Iowa’s Juvenile Justice Program and how to access Juvenile Court Officers (JCOs) in their area. Terms and routine information were shared as well as specific contact information. AMP Facilitators have also attended training hosted by Teens Against Human Trafficking (TAHT).

### **STAFF AND COUNCIL CHANGES**

AMP had limited turnover in 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 2017, Collette Whitney became the facilitator for the Mason City council. The previous facilitator transitioned to TAHT and the interim person accepted the job but was unable to begin the work in a timely manner.

In March 2018, Hannah May resigned from the Davenport council after she was unable to successfully complete the requirements of her job description. This council will close until leadership has an opportunity to re-evaluate needs in Davenport. Attendance and community support were lacking for Hannah and the previous facilitator; this hurdle impacts the success for the youth.

### **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. Unfortunately, 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.

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#### **APPENDIX**

AMP Council Meeting Summary Form

AMP Member Information Form

2018 Satisfaction Survey Results

AMP 2018 Legislative Agenda

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### AMP Council Meeting Summary Form

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

Check if any of the following occurred during the meeting, and comment more specific detail if you wish.

- |   |  |          |
|---|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speaker, presentation, or topic discussion | <input type="checkbox"/> Social activity, party, or game | Comment: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AMP-related business or information        | <input type="checkbox"/> Skill-building activity         |          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Service activity                           |  |          |
- 

What was the primary subject area for the meeting? Check the box of the closest subject area and comment more specific detail if you wish.

- |  |  |          |
|--|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education               | <input type="checkbox"/> Life skills   | Comment: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment              | <input type="checkbox"/> Relationships |          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health or mental health | <input type="checkbox"/> Other         |          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human trafficking       |  |          |
- 

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

---

If you selected AMP-related business, check any of the following that occurred or were discussed, or write in another answer.

- |  |   |          |
|--|---|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AMP Camp                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfaction survey  | Comment: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day on the Hill                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Preparing or supporting AMP youth speaking at event (foster parent class, community meeting, etc.) |          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative agenda                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other  |          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New member training/What is AMP       |   |          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planning for other AMP/council events |   |          |
- 

How many youth attended?

---

How many community members or volunteers attended?

---

Check any positive youth development practices incorporated during the meeting, or write in another answer.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Break into small groups for discussion | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative activity (art, music, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large group discussion                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Recognition of youth, award          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth led a discussion or activity     | <input type="checkbox"/> AMP member graduation                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing individual talents             | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)               |
- 

Additional information about the meeting, activities or occurred?

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---

## AMP Member Information Form

---

**How old are you? Circle one:**    ≤12    13    14    15    16    17    18    19    20    21    ≥22

---

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

---

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

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

**How have you heard or learned about AMP? Check any of the following that apply.**

- |   |   |                                 |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aftercare worker             | <input type="checkbox"/> DHS worker     | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AMP facilitator or volunteer | <input type="checkbox"/> Family member  | <input type="checkbox"/> JCO    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AMP website                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Facility staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Judge  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brochure or flyer            | <input type="checkbox"/> Foster family  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |
- 

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

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> This is one of my first meetings ever | <input type="checkbox"/> About six months to a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than six months                  | <input type="checkbox"/> More than a year           |
- 

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

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting at another council location                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Plugged In and Charging conference  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other AMP event (conference, service project, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> I spoke or presented somewhere (community meeting, foster parent class, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day on the Hill                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AMP Camp  |  |
- 

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

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adopted or with adoptive family | <input type="checkbox"/> Relative foster family (kinship) | <input type="checkbox"/> STS   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foster family                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Residential treatment            | <input type="checkbox"/> Not currently in foster care ( <i>on your own, living with family, etc.</i> ) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PMIC                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:  |
- 

**Check if any of the following have ever applied to you:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adopted                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aged out of foster care                   | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>None of the above</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Returned to biological family (reunified) |   |
-

## 2018 Satisfaction Survey Results

Average age of respondents: 16.4

Council	# of responses
Ames	20
Burlington	15
Cedar Rapids	13
Council Bluffs	9
Davenport	0
Des Moines	3
Des Moines Mobile	0
Dubuque	0
Eldora-STC	37
Fort Dodge	7
Marshalltown	6
Mason City	0
Ottumwa	28
Sioux City	8
Waterloo	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>

Gender	
Female	42.31%
Male	55.13%
Other	2.56%
	<b>156</b>

Race or ethnicity	
African American or Black	20.92%
American Indian	5.23%
Asian	0.65%
Hispanic or Latino	9.15%
Multiracial	4.58%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1.31%
White	67.97%
	<b>153</b>

Do you feel like you have a meaningful relationship with at least one adult?	
Yes	90.07%
No	1.99%
Decline	1.99%
Too soon to tell	5.96%
	<b>151</b>

Has AMP provided you information about supports and services available to you?	
Yes	71.90%
No	7.19%
Decline	3.27%
Too soon to tell	17.65%
	<b>153</b>

Do you think AMP staff understand the foster care system (or juvenile justice system)?	
Yes	77.42%
No	4.52%
Decline	1.94%
Too soon to tell	16.13%
	<b>155</b>

Have you had at least one experience in the past year where you practiced leadership in AMP?	
Yes	56.86%
No	23.53%
Decline	4.58%
Too soon to tell	15.03%
	<b>153</b>

## AMP 2018 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

**Collected from all 14 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, Marshalltown, Mason City, Ottumwa, Sioux City and Waterloo

### STATE OF IOWA LEGISLATION

- 1. AMP youth request additional specialized housing options be available for youth; for minors with mental health needs and for all youth transitioning out of foster care. This would include:**
  - + 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.
  - + Independent housing options for youth, age 18-24, who would benefit from structure and supervision to further prepare them for adulthood.
  - + Affordable housing options in safe neighborhoods for youth ages 18-24.
- 2. AMP youth request the State of Iowa requires all public schools implement a prevention-oriented child sexual abuse program.**
  - + Thirty one states have already adopted legislation to educate and increase safety for all school-aged minors. Iowa schools need to teach students age-appropriate techniques to recognize child sexual abuse and tell a trusted adult, train school personnel on child sexual abuse and provide parents & guardians the warning signs of child sexual abuse, plus needed assistance, referral or resource information to support sexually abused children and their families.
- 3. 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.

### 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.

**3. 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.