



# AMP Interim Progress Report Covering July 1, 2018 – February 28, 2019

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

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

Eight private, non-profit youth-serving agencies, led by YSS, comprise a statewide collaboration known as the Partnership of Iowa Foster Care Youth Councils. Through the contract with DHS, these eight agencies supported fifteen AMP Youth Councils during the report period of July 1, 2018 through February 28, 2019. The eight partner agencies and the locations of the councils they support are:

- YSS (Ames, Davenport<sup>1</sup>, Des Moines, Eldora-STS (State Training School), Marshalltown, Mason City<sup>2</sup>, and Mobile)
- 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 (Burlington/Mt. Pleasant)

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

The DHS Foster Care Youth Council contract with YSS is in the second year of a five-year contract. As required by the contract, this report provides information on membership and activities of AMP during the period of July 1, 2018 through February 28, 2019.

## DATA COLLECTION

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<sup>1</sup> YSS has been actively working to hire a facilitator for the Davenport council throughout the report period; however, there has not been a meeting held since March 2018. No council data has been collected during the grant period.

<sup>2</sup> Mason City council closed in December 2018. Council data has been collected via the online meeting summary form and the online member information form, but not the satisfaction survey or the attendance logs.

Beginning July 1, 2016, YSS entered into an agreement with the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII) to collect, analyze, and report information related to AMP membership, participation, local activities, and the annual member satisfaction survey.

To gather consistent information from local councils, YPII developed two online data collection instruments: [meeting summary form](#) and [member information form](#)<sup>3</sup>. Council facilitators completed a total of 154 meeting summaries during the report period, including 48 meetings at Eldora-STS<sup>4</sup>. Facilitators collected information and completed member information forms from 376 individual AMP members during the report period.

Additionally, YPII collects [attendance records](#) from each council. Council facilitators track the attendance of individual youth from meeting to meeting during the year. This provides a more reliable method to gauge involvement over time, as opposed to the self-report, static question on satisfaction surveys or member information. It also may indicate if members are reengaging after missing a few meetings, although the current report covers a relatively brief timeframe.

Finally, YPII develops an annual youth [satisfaction survey](#)<sup>5</sup>. The purpose of the survey is to solicit feedback from a representative sample of AMP members; therefore, facilitators administer the survey at just one of their regular meetings with the youth present at that time. Eleven councils AMP participated in the annual satisfaction survey during February and March 2019, and 123 youth completed the survey.

## 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. Member demographic information was completed for 499 youth (376 from community-based councils; 123 from Eldora-STS).

### **Age**

Ages reported by members range from less than 12 years old, to 22 or older, though just 5% fall outside of the intended range of 13-21 years old. Most AMP members are under 18, with 57% between the ages of 15 and 17.

Because of the age restrictions at the state training school, 90% of the youth at the Eldora-STS council are between the ages of 16-18. A much wider range of ages exists within the community-based councils, where only 51% of the youth are between the ages of 16-18.

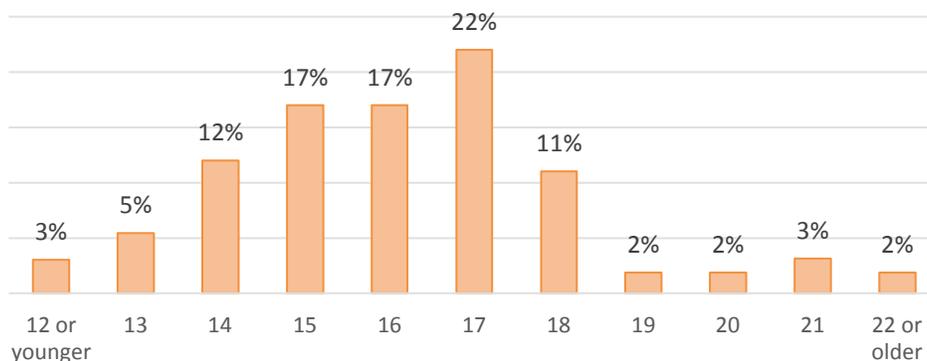
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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix for hard copies of these instruments.

<sup>4</sup> Meetings at Eldora-STS are offered twice a month at each cottages. In some months during the report period, data was entered for each cottage's meeting, while some data was aggregated for the month before entering. Going forward, data will be aggregated each month.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix for hard copy of this instrument.

Ages of all AMP members (n=499)



### Race and Ethnicity

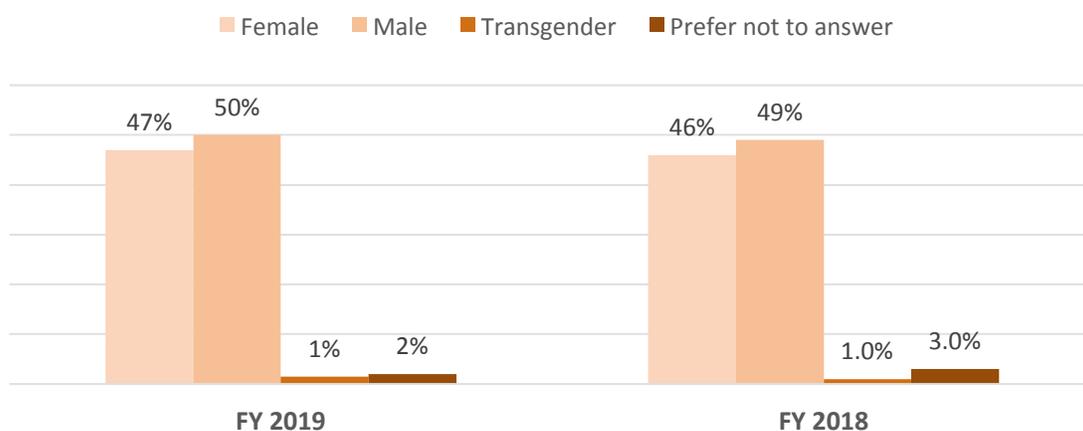
All AMP members are generally representative of the foster care population in Iowa, although the Eldora-STS council has a greater proportion of youth of color compared to community councils. While the majority of AMP members identified as White the proportion is much higher in community-based councils (72%, versus 41% of Eldora-STS). A greater proportion of Eldora-STS members identified themselves as African American or Black compared to the rest of the statewide councils.

	All Members n=499	Community Councils n=376	Eldora-STS n=123
White	64%	72%	41%
African American or Black	23%	15%	50%
Hispanic or Latino	9%	9%	10%
Multiracial	5%	7%	0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	3%	1%
Asian	1%	1%	0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1%	1%	0%

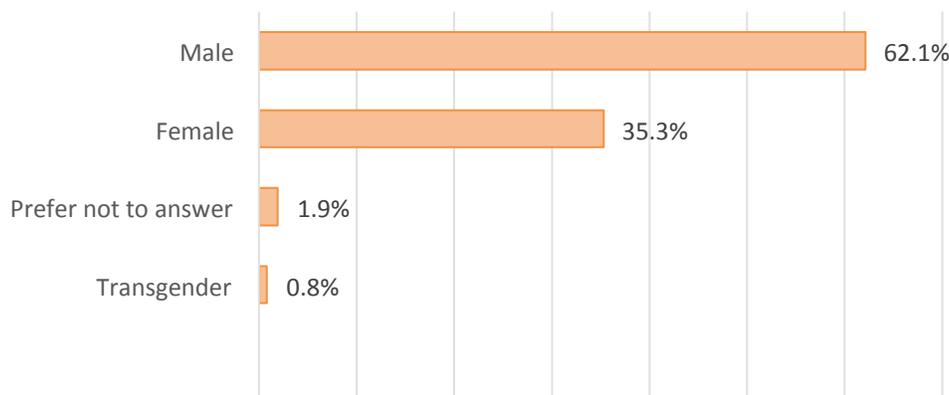
Note: Youth were instructed to select the one race or ethnicity they *most closely* identify with. Some selected more than one race or ethnicity, thus some totals do not add to 100%.

### Gender

The gender breakdown of community council members in SFY 2019 is similar to that of SFY 2018. Half (50%) of the community council members are male, and just under half are female (47%).

Gender of community council members ( $n=376$ )

All the Eldora-STs members identified as male. With those members included in the analysis, the total AMP membership is 62.1% male and 35.3% female.

Gender of all AMP members including STS ( $n=499$ )**Placement Type**

Most AMP members (76%) live in a congregate foster care setting (e.g., state training school, shelter, residential treatment, or PMIC). Ten percent are not in foster care or another out-of-home placement. Another 7% are living in a family-like settings. Some AMP councils hold monthly meetings on-site at a residential or shelter facility, which partially explains the high frequency of youth in these placement types. Compared to SFY 2018, substantially more AMP members are currently in residential treatment and fewer are not in foster care.

	SFY 2019 (n=499)	SFY 2018 (n=442)
Residential treatment	27%	19%
State training school	25%	23%
Shelter	22%	20%
Not in foster care or placement	10%	19%
Other	7%	5%
Adopted (or with adoptive family)	4%	3%
Foster family	3%	5%
PMIC	2%	5%
Relative foster family (kinship care)	0%	1%

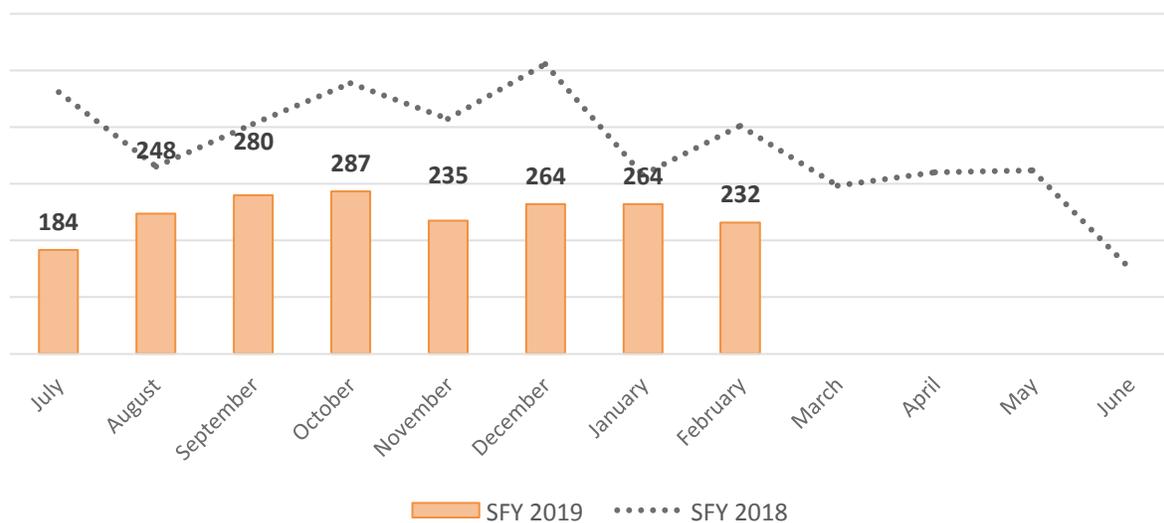
*Note: Remaining entries in the "Other" category include Juvenile Court Services, court-ordered day program, Job Corps, and those who did not provide an answer.*

### COUNCIL MEETINGS AND PARTICIPATION

From July 2018-February 2019, 154 meetings were held across the state and recorded using the meeting summary. According to council attendance logs, 572 young people attended AMP meetings for 2053 points of contact over the report period. Average attendance at meetings is 13 youth (compared to 18 youth per meeting in SFY 2018).

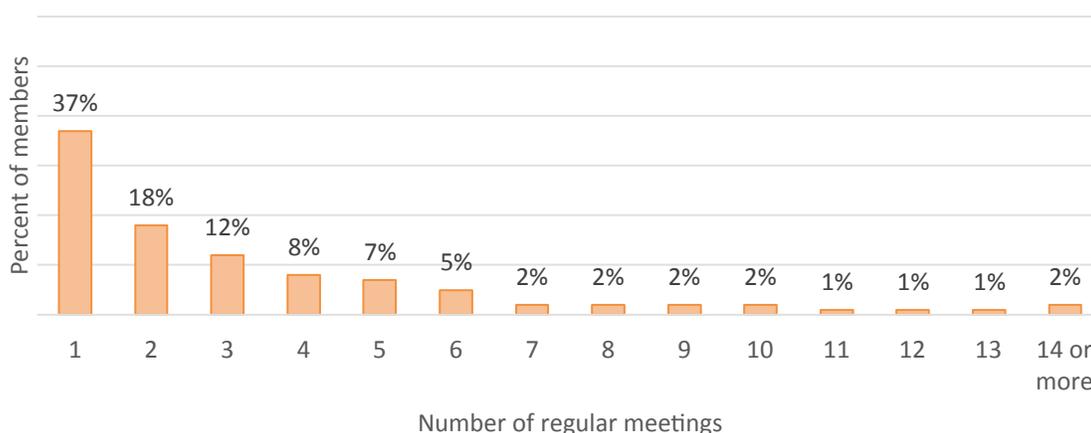
Meeting attendance has remained steady during the report period, although it remains lower than in the previous year. This may be for a few reasons. First, the largest council, Eldora-STS, did not have meetings during July and early August, due to a new facilitator being trained. Second, there are fewer councils during the current report period, as the councils in Mason City and Davenport were not having meetings. Finally, some councils experienced abnormally adverse weather during the winter of 2019, so meeting occurrence and meeting attendance in February are lower than normal.

AMP Monthly Attendance, SFY 2019 vs. SFY 2018



Nearly 40% of all members have attended just one meeting during the report period. Another 45% have attended between 2 and 5 meetings, and the remaining 18% of members have attended 6 or more meetings. It is reasonable to assume that the higher proportion of youth in congregate care settings, such as shelter and residential treatment, may account for many of the youth attending for only one meeting.

Number of regular meetings attended by individual members  
(*n*=572)



It is important to note that 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**

Facilitators have been encouraged to make their councils mobile; therefore, the summary sheet was updated to ask whether the meeting was stationary or mobile. About 19% summaries entered were for a mobile meeting from July to February, an increase from 6% in SFY 2018.

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 are represented with at least one meeting entry. Most councils submitted at least twelve meeting summaries. Three councils submitted fewer than ten meeting summaries over the report period (Dubuque: 4 meetings, Sioux City: 8 meetings, Marshalltown: 9 meetings).

### **Activities**

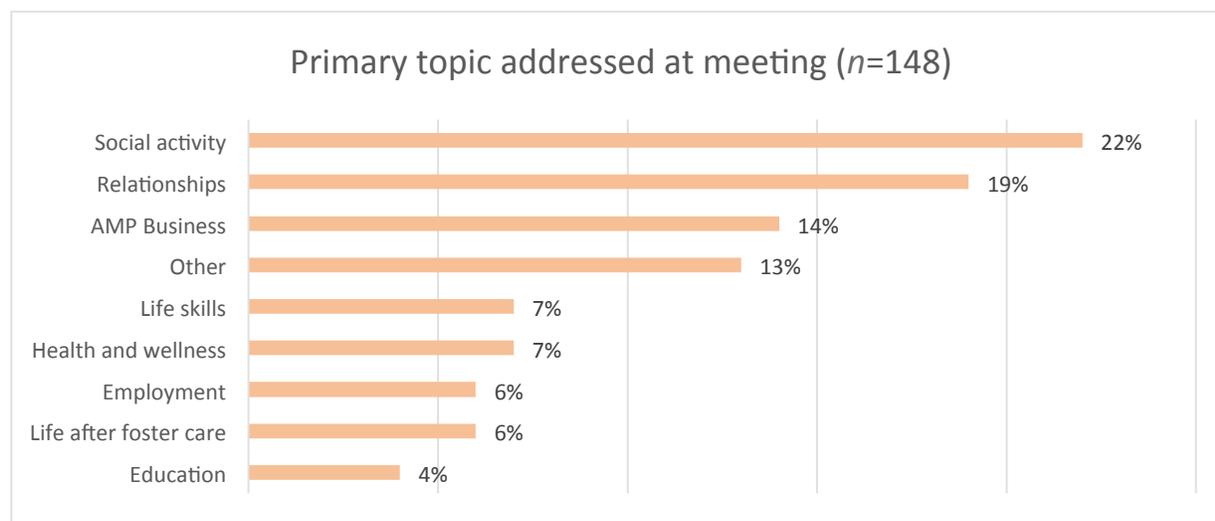
Many AMP facilitators combine more than activity during a meeting, as indicated by the chart above. Social activities occur the most often, followed by a speaker or specific topic of discussion, AMP-related information, and skill-building activities. Service activities occurred the least often at 7% 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. Facilitators selected the primary topic, 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 service projects and volunteerism.



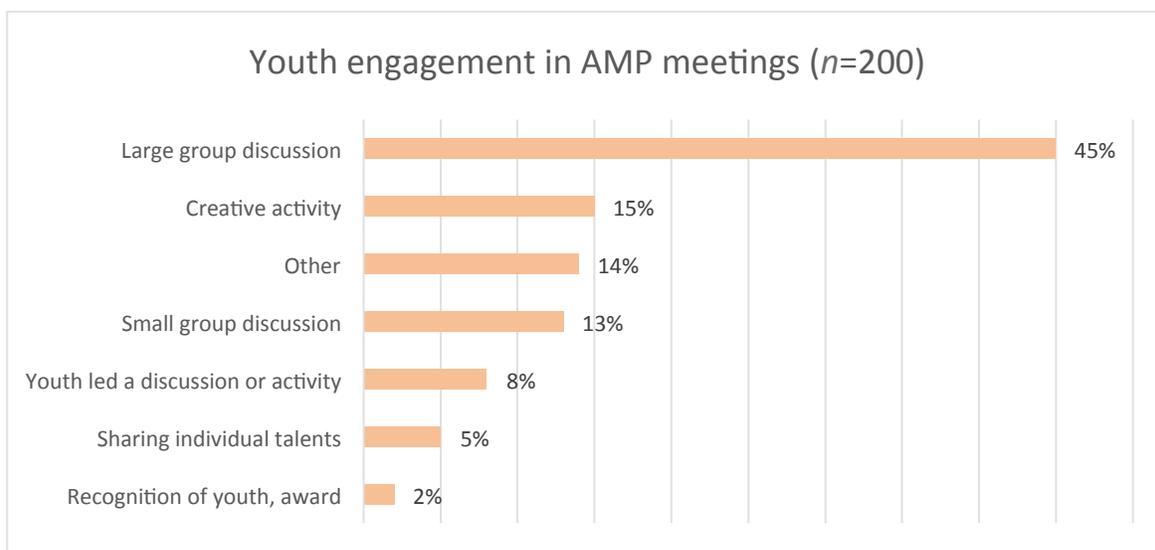
Conducting AMP-related business during Council meetings provides opportunities for youth to practice communication, decision-making and advocacy skills and reinforces AMP’s commitment to a youth-

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> =66
AMP Camp	4.5%
Day on the Hill	19.7%
Legislative agenda	30.3%
New member training/What is AMP	15.2%
Planning for other AMP or council events	13.6%
Satisfaction survey	7.6%
Preparing or supporting AMP youth speaking at event	9.1%

AMP is well-supported by community organizations, businesses and individual volunteers. When volunteers or community members were present at meetings, an average of over two and a half people were in attendance.

AMP facilitators understand the importance of engaging youth in multiple ways for positive youth development and relationship-building. Nearly half (45%) of meetings included a large group discussion, 13% included breaking into small groups for discussion, and another 15% included a creative activity (like art, music, or writing). Other opportunities for youth to engage with adults and their peers in meaningful ways included sharing individual talents, youth-led discussion and recognizing youth in front of the council.



**SUMMARY of MAJOR PROJECTS**

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

***Variety AMP Camp***

Variety AMP Camp is a key tool to help foster and adoptive youth to become successful. The camp offers campers some key elements such as swimming, fishing, paddle boats and canoes. More importantly, it also allows campers to become close to their mentors and close to each other. Many youth share similar life experiences and have met previously in placements around the state. They are “family”.

Variety AMP Camp was held in June 2018 at Forest Lake Camp in Bloomfield. Details about the camp were provided in the AMP Year-End Report for SFY 2018. Planning for SFY 2019 AMP Camp, which will be held in June 19-24, is underway. Details will be provided in the AMP Year-End Report for SFY 2019.

***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 on April 8, 2019 (rescheduled from January due to the weather) with over 50 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<sup>6</sup> that AMP members share with Legislators during the Day on the Hill event.

This year, AMP partnered with the Child & Family Policy Center to create a legislative cohort sponsored by a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Five youth attended a legislative training on March 30, 2019 to learn about the Families First Act, how Iowa is planning to implement changes from the Act, and review the Iowa NYTD. Angelica Cardenas from CFPC, traveled to four AMP councils to educate AMP members on advocacy and AMP’s legislative priorities, and to gather personal stories to support the NYTD data as a means to educate legislators. Three of these youth delivered speeches at AMP Day on the Hill and will write articles for their local newspapers. Youth also plan to reach out to key legislators this session by phone and email in support of current pending legislation.

Plaques were presented to State Senator Herman Quirnbach and State Representative Bill Kressig for their continued support of youth in the foster care system. The press conference was filmed to be shared with youth who were not able to attend.

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix for Legislative Agenda.

To date, the bills and ideas AMP has advocated for have been progressing through the legislative process. Three bills that AMP has supported passed this year and are becoming new laws. The State's commitment to Subsidized Guardianship has been very reassuring to AMP youth who have worked on this for four years. DHS has reported it will be piloted beginning July 1, 2019.

### ***Annual Foster Care Youth Conference – Rise Up!***

The 4th Annual AMP Conference took place on April 6, 2019 at Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) in Ankeny and Des Moines, Iowa. AMP facilitators collaborated with the college to provide a venue for youth to learn about the college experience. Sixty youth from seven different councils participated in this event.

The morning session took place at the Ankeny campus and featured hands-on experiences with a wide range of academic programs. The Vice President of Enrollment Services opened the day with a wonderful presentation regarding the youth's future. Following her inspiring words, the enrollment team discussed DMACC and the steps to enroll in any college. The team went through the different types of programs available at the different DMACC locations.

A student panel representing several different cultures took questions from the youth and did a fantastic job of answering them. Following the panel, the youth had the opportunity to attend the DMACC faculty and staff program fair. They had the opportunity to interact and ask questions to members of DMACC staff about the different programs they offer. After the program fair, all the youth got a campus tour.

DMACC was gracious enough to feed all the youth lunch. The afternoon session was held at the Des Moines campus for the keynote speaker, Kameron Middlebrooks, head of the NAACP of Iowa. He did a great job relating to the youth and sharing his story. There was another panel with Urban Campus students, and then the youth split up into groups for breakout sessions. The different sessions included a campus tour of the urban campus, The Career Journey, Dominos Activity, and Be You.

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

Beginning last year, AMP began implementing both mini-camps and mini-conferences to draw youth into AMP and to link them with opportunities in higher education. The pared down version is a smaller commitment for foster families, and allows community colleges, Aftercare Advocates, and programs for transition-aged youth to have face-to-face interactions with youth who may not be able to attend the statewide camp or conference.

#### Forrest Lake Ottumwa Camp Reunion

Through the generosity of Varsity, AMP youth were able to participate in an AMP Camp Reunion which was held at Forrest Lake Camp in Bloomfield in October 2018. Twenty youth and several staff who had participated in the summer 2018 AMP Camp were able to return to Forrest Lake for a weekend adventure. Two full days of activities and guest speakers were planned around the theme of DOWN TIME, teaching youth to decompress and recharge themselves.

The weekend started Saturday early afternoon by getting youth signed in and letting them reunite with their camp friends. The Des Moines Art Center came to camp and led the campers in completing an art

project with the youth. Following the art project, the youth participated in an activity called the Pool Noodle Game.

Before dinner, Ruth brought some of her therapy dogs to the camp and explained to the youth about therapy animals and how they are used. The youth got time to interact with the animals. Following dinner, the camp hosts took the youth on a hayride. Then youth participated in a camp fire, then a movie and a snack before heading off to their cabins for the night.

Youth woke up early Sunday morning. Following breakfast, guest speaker JCO Secalee Comstock lead the youth in a session on “working through trauma.” This was a great explanation about how self-care and working through trauma is so important at any age. The camp was wrapped up with lunch and saying good-byes. It was a great weekend for the youth, with a lot of interactive activities and learning experiences.

#### Ames Mini-camp

The Ames mini-camp will be held at the Buckels farm near Story City in the spring/early summer of 2019. Details about the minicamp will be provided in the AMP Year-End Report for SFY 2019.

#### State Training School Mini-Conference

The second AMP mini-conference at the Eldora-STS council will be held on April 13, 2019 from 12:00pm to 5:00pm. Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC), Aftercare Services, Hawkeye Community College and Iowa Finance Authority will have booths at this event.

There will be 2 breakout sessions for youth to attend. Session 1 is Transition 101. Session 2 is “How to get a Job” presented by Marshalltown Workforce. The keynote speaker will be Robert Robertson, who was a student at STS twice in his teen years and served two prison sentences before changing his life. Robert now operates a community center that focuses on men in addiction in Newton, with the support of the Newton Police Department.

It is estimated that 45 students will attend this experience. After hearing the Keynote speaker, the students will have the opportunity to walk around to the booths, collect literature, and ask question. Youth will complete surveys sharing their thoughts on the conference, what they enjoyed and learned, and what they would change.

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

The second AMP mini-conference at the Burlington council was held at Southeastern Community College (SCC) on March 2, 2019. Young House Family Services worked with staff at SCC to organize the conference. Approximately 40 youth attended the mini conference. Unfortunately, Job Corp cancelled out the day before, which would have added about 12-15 more youth.

The theme for the mini conference was DEFY GRAVITY, and the entire day was designed to encourage the youth to rise to their potential, prepare for their future, and learn about college. It was also an opportunity for them to participate in hands-on activities and presentations, all focused at empowering the youth and helping them discover their potential to advance their education beyond high school.

The conference started with SCC President, Dr. Michael Ash, welcoming the student to SCC. As he addressed the youth, he also shared his life story with them. He was the son of a truck driving father and

a cafeteria working mother. He was the first in his family to attend college. He never believed as a young child he would become the president of a college, but through his perseverance and the encouragement he received from others, he has become an accomplished leader. He told the youth that they too could achieve their dreams.

After Dr. Ash's address, the energetic and upbeat Paisley, a local DJ spoke to the youth. Paisley talked about her own personal learning disabilities, how she overcame them, and how she still compensates for them. She first pursued a career in television and now is a radio personality in Burlington. Paisley also did some team building exercises with the youth.

Lunch was served in the Blackhawk Cafeteria, courtesy of SCC. After lunch there were more team building experiences, conversations with college professors, and a campus tour, which included the use of virtual computer equipment in the new health science building. The day ended with each youth getting an SCC t-shirt and numerous door prizes. The overall event was enjoyed by the youth and the adults who accompanied them.

### **WEBSITE and COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES**

AMP maintains a website, [www.ampiowa.org](http://www.ampiowa.org), which serves to share information about AMP councils, statewide activities, and original work of its members. The website includes personal journeys written by AMP teens and nearly 100 poems submitted by youth. New stories and poetry are added throughout the year. Many of the photos have been taken by an AMP youth who started her own photography business. This youth takes senior pictures for foster teens, to give back to a program that helped promote her talent.

The website has a new resource section that contains six transition videos from collaboration with Iowa Department of Public Health and Juvenile Justice. Using the first word "Got" at the beginning of each topic, the videos cover: Got Money? Got Meds? Got School? Got Housing? Got People? Got Help? These videos featured AMP youth sharing their experiences transitioning to adulthood and are supported by a new website where youth can access several resources that are updated regularly. The videos are a great way for youth to access information at their own time and location; especially teens who live in a rural setting and who cannot attend an AMP council meeting.

Facebook is an additional communication channel AMP uses to connect with young people. At last count, there were 3315 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. Page features instant communication and feedback that AMP uses to get answers/opinions on topics from youth statewide. Resources, contests, scholarships and information are posted to the Facebook page. The group 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. In February 2019, AMP reached out to sisters, one a foster parent living in

Carroll and the other a community college professor in Denison. Our intentions are to reach the foster care population in this area of the state as well as the college/Job Corp youth in Denison. This new combined council will begin hosting meetings in April 2019.

AMP is working with Buena Vista University in Marshalltown, Southeastern Community College in Burlington, and DMACC in Ankeny. In the next fiscal year, AMP will outreach to five more community colleges to host mini-conferences in hopes of encouraging youth to put college on their life-path. To our knowledge, AMP is the only foster youth program in the nation reaching out to multiple educational facilities to connect to our youth. The purpose of this is to address one negative outcome identified by Aftercare youth: fear of college and not understanding resources.

AMP 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 2019 camp is to have 60 youth attend daily (some will be shelter youth so they will sleep at the shelter and attend daily activities) in order to learn leadership, healing, advocacy and community building skills.

## **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 youths attend AMP because of their involvement with one of the partner agencies.

Beginning in 2018, each facilitator was encouraged to become more "mobile" by hosting AMP at one or more locations each month, successfully reaching more youth. To reach youth in foster homes, AMP and Four Oaks have compiled an outreach list specifically for foster family homes that take in teenagers. AMP assists Four Oaks at recruitment events in the four regions it serves.

AMP reaches out to DHS Transition Planning Specialists and Aftercare Self-Sufficiency Advocates to promote AMP with their clients. AMP provides educational materials with Aftercare providers to share with participants. Aftercare Advocates in each AMP area have been, and will continue to be, included in all AMP activities for reciprocal promotion of activities.

AMP also has maximized the administration of Foster Fund\$, DHS scholarship funds for system-involved families to cover special needs (i.e., graduation, prom, instruments). In processing the funds, AMP includes informational materials with an invitation to join. To date in SFY 2019, over 60 youth have been invited.

AMP continues to utilize print-media, radio and television opportunities to promote AMP. AMP Day on the Hill received significant exposure in both January and April. There is an AMP Facebook page, newsletter, and website. Finally, awareness of AMP is spread through word of mouth.

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 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 survey provides a snapshot of the youths' perspectives. Feedback forms are collected after a guest speaker 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. Regular meetings and trainings for facilitators also provide opportunities for feedback and identifying concerns.

YSS has quality improvement (QI) and QA teams that include AMP staff to make sure AMP policies and programs meet CARF certification. In March 2018, AMP received a three-year CARF certification.

#### *Youth Satisfaction Survey*

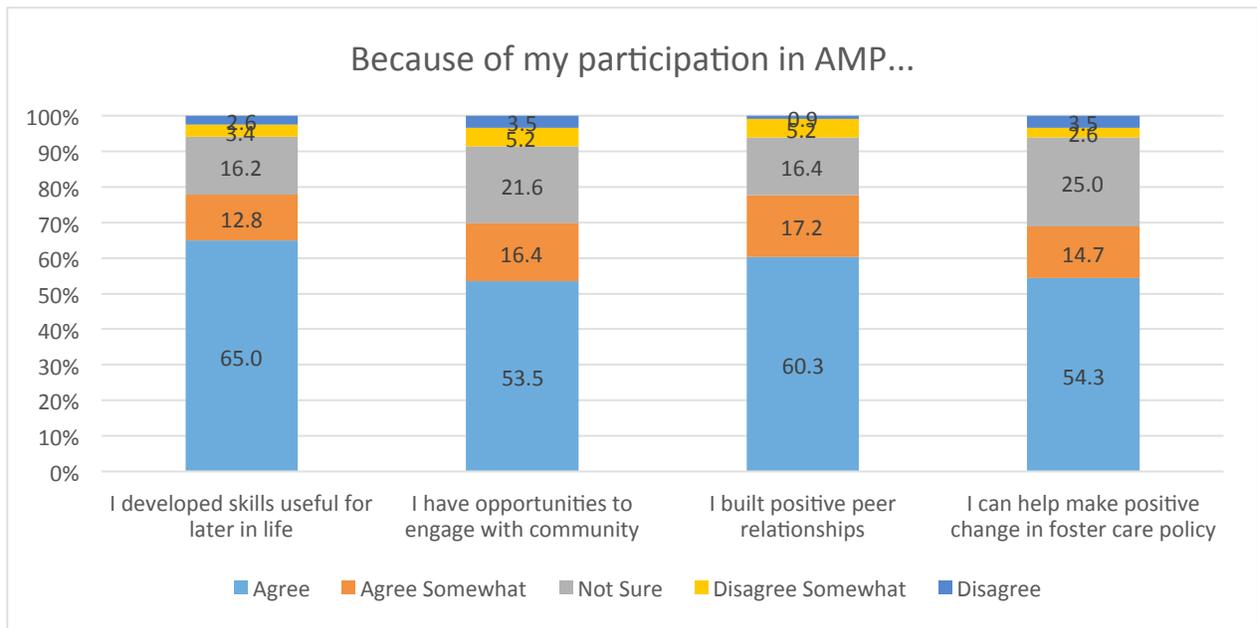
Across age and race/ethnicity, the youth who completed the satisfaction survey are representative of AMP's total membership. Despite the large group of survey participants from Eldora-STs, the proportion of males who completed the survey (56.9%) is slightly less than of the total membership (62.1%).

Although the highest percentage of youth reported attending their first meeting, over 50% of youth have been attending AMP meetings for more than 2 months. Of the 123 youth who completed the survey, 41 youth (33.3%) have participated in at least one AMP event, including AMP Day on the Hill, Variety AMP Camp, and an AMP service activity<sup>7</sup>.

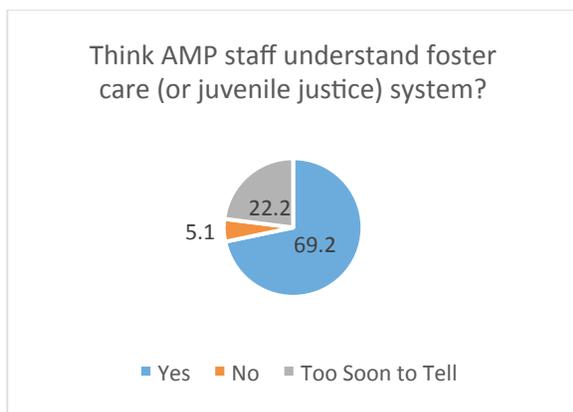
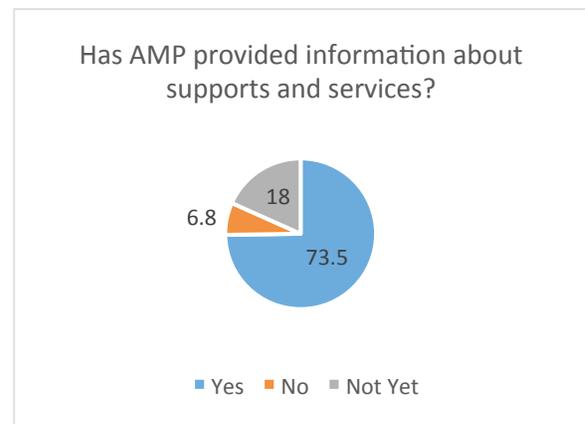
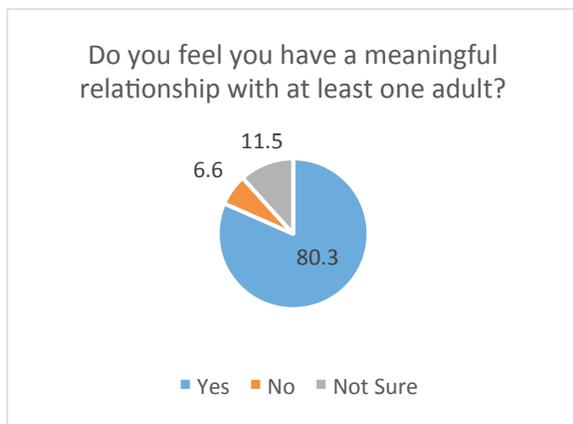
Length of involvement	SFY 2019	SYF 2018
First meeting	29.8%	20.3%
Less than 2 months	14.1%	16.3%
Between 2 and 6 months	19.0%	22.2%
Between 6 and 12 months	9.1%	14.4%
Between 1 and 2 years	8.2%	11.8%
More than 2 years	19.8%	15.0%

AMP appears to have had a slightly greater impact on youth personal development and immediate relationships with peers than with the larger community or the foster care system, although overall the feedback is positive. Nearly 80% of youth agree or somewhat agree that because of AMP, they have positive relationships with peers (77.9%) and have developed skills for later in life (77.8%). Fewer youth agree or somewhat agree that because of their participation in AMP, they have been able to engage with their community (69.9%) and make positive change in foster care policy (69%).

<sup>7</sup> Eldora-STs youth have limited opportunity to attend other AMP events.



Four contract-required question were asked of youth, who were given options to respond with “Yes”, “No”, “Not sure/Too soon to tell/Not yet”, or “Decline”. Those who responded with “Decline” are excluded from the percentages.



Unlike the satisfaction survey last year, the open-ended question asking about how their participation in AMP makes them feel was removed for the SFY 2019 survey<sup>8</sup>.

### ***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 twelve AMP Councils in February 2019. 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 92 people responded in the most recent assessment – 43 youth; 24 facilitators/support person; and 25 volunteers/community members. Staff will be discussing the results of the PAAT assessments during face-to-face meetings, as we use the results to improve the quality of programming. The full PAAT report is shared with DHS.

### ***Facilitator Meetings and Training***

Each new facilitator is required to attend a minimum of ten hours of training when they begin working with AMP. Facilitators must complete the required training with Youth and Shelter Services, where they are oriented to YSS policy, AMP policy, and program expectations. Facilitator training is focused on the website, so each council can manage their own page on the AMP website. Follow up training can be requested available on any topic.

Each subcontracting Agency has training requirements for facilitators in addition to AMP's training. YSS invites all AMP Facilitators to any YSS hosted training offered throughout the year. Mental Health First Aid for youth and Human Trafficking Awareness have been two popular trainings for facilitators to attend. YSS asks facilitators to have CPR/First Aid and general safety classes completed by all direct line workers.

In June 2019, additional training – selected by the facilitators – will be provided at the annual meeting. An annual plan will also be developed for each council, and for AMP as a program. AMP is part of the YSS Strategic Plan with weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual goals to achieve based on contractual expectations and youth requests.

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix for complete satisfaction survey results.

**STAFF AND COUNCIL CHANGES**

AMP had some significant changes in council status during the report period:

- The Eldora-STS facilitator started in August 2018. After training was completed, meetings with youth began in late August.
- The Mason City council closed in December 2018. The facilitator resigned and YSS Leadership decided to re-evaluate programming based on youth needs. There were no community youth attending meetings, and staff were concerned that topics were too repetitive to require programming.
- The Davenport council is pending. There has not been a facilitator or meeting held since March 2018. At this point, there is not a Davenport AMP due to lack of facilitator applicants. YSS has reached out to Family Resources, who has expressed interest in a sub-contract.
- New councils are opening in Carroll and Denison. Two part-time staff have been hired. The facilitators began work in March 2019 and will begin hosting meetings in April. This is an area of Iowa AMP has never reached before.

**GENERAL OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS EXPERIENCED**

The number one barrier AMP faces in almost every council (except Mobile and Eldora-STS councils) is getting the youth transported to AMP meetings. Most AMP youth do not have their own vehicles, so transportation must 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 onsite, and one is in the community so youth can get to one meeting location that is comfortable to them.

**APPENDIX**

AMP Council Meeting Summary Form

AMP Member Information Form

2019 Satisfaction Survey

2019 Satisfaction Survey Results

AMP 2019 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.

 Speaker, presentation, or topic discussion

 Social activity, party, or game  
 Skill-building activity

Comment:

 AMP-related business or information

 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.

 Education

 Life skills

Comment:

 Employment

 Relationships

 Health or mental health

 Other

 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.

 AMP Camp

 Satisfaction survey

Comment:

 Day on the Hill

 Preparing or supporting AMP youth speaking at event (foster

 Legislative agenda

parent class, community

 New member training/What is AMP

meeting, etc.)

 Planning for other AMP/council events

 Other

---

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.

 Break into small groups for discussion

 Creative activity (art, music, etc.)

 Large group discussion

 Recognition of youth, award

 Youth led a discussion or activity

 AMP member graduation

 Sharing individual talents

 Other (please specify)

---

Additional information about the meeting, activities or occurred?

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---

## AMP Member Information Form

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**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) |   |

## 2019 Satisfaction Survey

*Please feel free to skip any questions that you are not comfortable with or ready to answer.*

**Council Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_Female \_\_\_\_\_Male \_\_\_\_\_Other

**Which race or ethnicity do you most closely identify with? (Choose one)**

\_\_\_\_\_African American or Black \_\_\_\_\_American Indian  
 \_\_\_\_\_Asian \_\_\_\_\_Hispanic or Latino \_\_\_\_\_Multiracial  
 \_\_\_\_\_Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_White

**About how long have you been involved with AMP?**

\_\_\_\_\_ More than 2 years  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Between 1 and 2 years  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Between 6 and 12 months  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Between 2 and 6 months  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Less than 2 months  
 \_\_\_\_\_ This is my first meeting/event

**In addition to Council meetings, what other AMP events have you attended? (Check all that apply)**

\_\_\_\_\_ Variety AMP Camp \_\_\_\_\_ Local Mini Camp  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Rise Up Annual Conference  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Mini Conference \_\_\_\_\_ AMP Day on the Hill  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Visit government officials (local or state)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ AMP Service Activity \_\_\_\_\_ AMP Suitcases

Because of my participation in AMP...	Agree	Somewhat agree	Not sure	Somewhat disagree	Disagree
...I have had a chance to develop skills that may be useful later in life. <i>(Like cooking, banking, getting a job)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
...I have had new opportunities to engage with my community. <i>(Like community service, speaking events)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
...I have built some positive relationships with my peers or made new friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
...I can help make positive change in foster care policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**Do you feel like you have a meaningful relationship with at least one adult you can really count on? *(Like AMP staff, parent, mentor, foster parent, facility staff, counselor, teacher, etc.)***

Yes  No  Decline  Not sure

**Has AMP provided you information about supports and services available to you? *(Like Aftercare, Transition planning, health insurance)***

Yes  No  Decline  Not Yet

**Do you think AMP staff understand the foster care system (or juvenile justice system)?**

Yes  No  Decline  Too soon to tell

**Have you had at least one experience in the past year where you practiced leadership in AMP? *(Like lead part of a meeting, volunteer to speak, help set up a meeting)***

Yes  No  Decline  Not Yet

## 2019 Satisfaction Survey Results

Average age of respondents: 16.4

Council	# of responses
Ames	20
Burlington	12
Cedar Rapids	15
Council Bluffs	7
Des Moines	3
Dubuque	12
Eldora STS	16
Fort Dodge	7
Marshalltown	6
Ottumwa	14
Sioux City	0
Waterloo	12
	<b>123</b>

Gender	
Male	70
Female	52
Other	1
	<b>123</b>

Race/ethnicity	
African American or Black	27
American Indian	4
Asian	1
Hispanic or Latino	10
Multiracial	13
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0
White	67
	<b>121</b>

Length of participation	
More than 2 years	24
Between 1 and 2 years	10
Between 6 and 12 months	11
Between 2 and 6 months	23
Less than 2 months	17
First meeting	36
	<b>121</b>

In addition to council meetings, what other AMP events have you attended?	
Variety AMP Camp	18
Local Mini Camp	14
Rise Up Annual Conference	11
Mini Conference	17
AMP Day on the Hill	19
Visit government officials	10
AMP Service Activity	18
AMP Suitcases	8
	<b>41</b>
<i>Note: Youth may have attended more than one event, so the total number of events is more than the number of respondents (n=41).</i>	

Because of my participating in AMP, I...	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Not Sure	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	# of responses
Have had a change to develop skills that may be useful later in life.	76	15	19	4	3	117
Have had new opportunities to engage with my community.	62	19	25	6	4	116
Have built some positive relationships with my peers or made new friends.	70	20	19	6	1	116
Can help make positive change in foster care policy.	63	17	29	3	4	116

	Yes	No	Decline	Not Sure/ Not Yet/ Too Soon to Tell	# of responses
Do you feel like you have a meaningful relationship with at least one adult?	98	8	2	14	122
Has AMP provided you information about supports and services available to you?	86	8	2	21	117
Do you think AMP staff understand the foster care system or juvenile justice system?	81	6	4	26	117
Have you had at least one experience in the past year where you practiced leadership in AMP?	57	18	6	37	118

### AMP 2019 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

**Collected from all 14 AMP Foster Care Youth Councils:** Ames, Burlington/Mt. Pleasant, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines/Des Moines Mobile, Dubuque, Eldora State Training School, Fort Dodge, Marshalltown, Mason City, Ottumwa, Sioux City and Waterloo

### STATE OF IOWA LEGISLATION

#### 1. AMP youth request more foster homes for teens.

- + Youth deserve to grow up in a family. Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) will restructure child welfare to decrease congregate care. Family foster homes are not prepared for the high level of care needed, Resource families need specialized training (basic, therapeutic, enhanced) to match youth's needs.
- + Recruit more resource families willing to commit to teens.

#### 2. AMP youth request safe and affordable housing for youth adults aging out of the foster care system.

- + Tax incentives/tax breaks for landlords who rent to transitioning youth.

#### 3. AMP youth request when a youth adult turns 18, they need contact information for their adopted siblings.

- + Education adoptive parents on the value of sibling contacts.
- + Consider cooperative adoption for youth adopted out of Iowa's child welfare system.

#### 4. 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).

- + The youth can waive this if not needed.
- + It tends to be needed when the perception of "best interest" varies.

#### 5. 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.

### LEGISLATION FROM LAST YEAR

#### 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.

#### 2. 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.