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2007
CFSR Toolkit
for Youth
Involvement

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development

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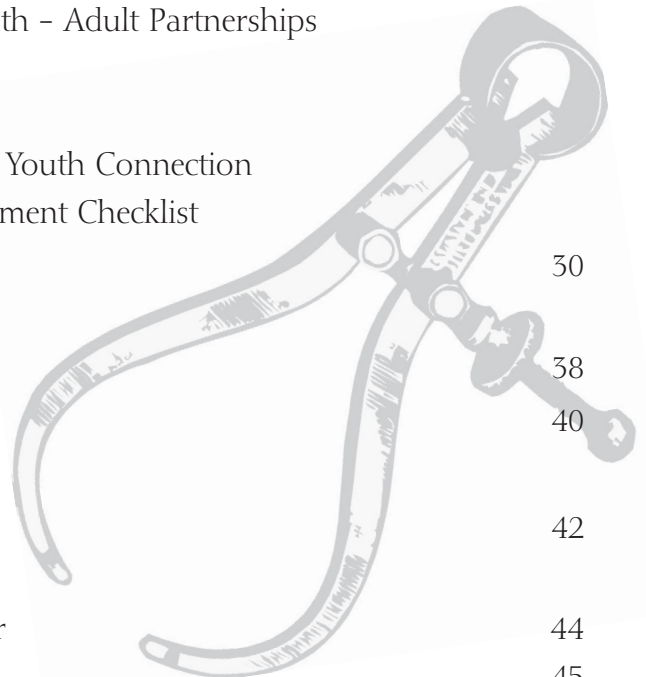# 2007 CFSR Toolkit
for Youth Involvement

Dorothy I Ansell
Clay Finck
Robert W. Peck, Jr.
Kathy Sutter
Eddie Screechowl
NCWRSYS

Anne Bernard
Penthea Burns
Marty Zanghi
NCWRCOI

DRAFT

Table of Contents

Preface

Developed by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NCWRCOI) and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development (NCWRCYD), the *2007 CFSR ToolKit for Youth Involvement* offers practical strategies for collaborating with youth in the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). The *ToolKit* is available in two formats: a printed document with digital files and a web document that will be updated over time with best practice information from the field.

The *ToolKit* currently contains:

- information to keep in mind when partnering with youth;

- feedback forms and de-briefing strategies for youth and adults to use while working together;

- a CFSR Youth Involvement Checklist;

- condensed descriptions of the CFSR purpose, process, and components;

- a glossary explaining the "CFSR language";

- strategies for implementing surveys and conducting focus groups;

- sample survey instruments and focus group questions to solicit youth input;

- PowerPoint presentations that can be adapted to your state.

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Introduction

In 2001, the Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau began an ambitious review of the nation's child welfare system – one state at a time. Although a great deal of thought and planning went into the first round of Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR), the process evolved and improved as the Reviews were conducted between 2001 and 2004.

When young people became involved in the various stages of the CFSR process, the value of youth voice was apparent. Youth offered insights, based on their personal experiences, about what worked and what did not work well in the child welfare system. When invited, they served on Program Improvement Plan (PIP) Advisory committees to develop and oversee the implementation of improvements.

In 2005, the Children's Bureau conducted an extensive assessment of the CFSR process. As a result, many improvements and innovations have been implemented for the second round of the CFSR. As state child welfare agencies embark on this review process, they now expect that youth will be actively involved as key stakeholders in all phases of the process.

This *ToolKit* is designed to help states fulfill that expectation.

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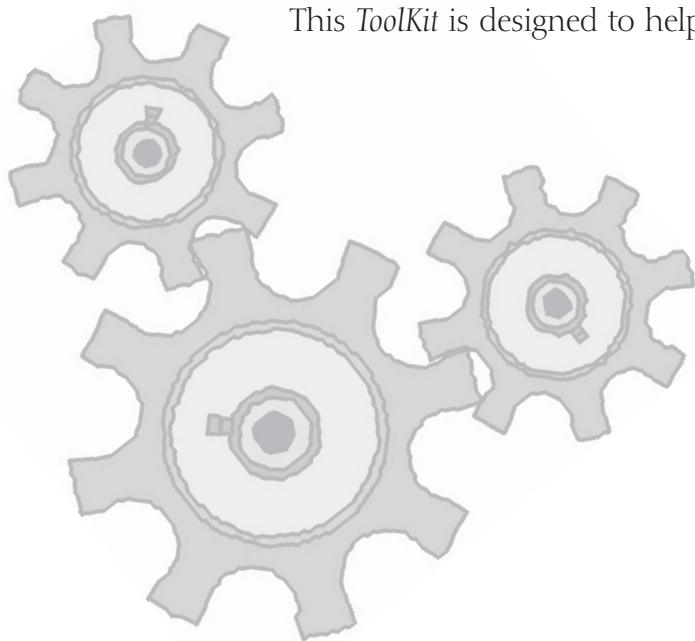
What have we learned about youth involvement?

The first step in involving youth in a process like the CFSR is to understand how it benefits everyone involved – the agency administrators, the adult reviewers, and the youth themselves.

Engaging youth in civic activities, including policy development and action research, has recently garnered attention about the benefits to community development initiatives and to the development of youth. Youth offer perspectives and ideas not often discussed by their adult counterparts in the community, on boards of directors, and as policy-makers. As key stakeholders in their communities, youth are being formally recognized in many communities as important members of society worthy of a voice in decision-making opportunities.

Formal and informal research indicates that involvement in their communities and schools results in positive outcomes for youth. Stoneman (2002), from YouthBuild USA in Somerville, Massachusetts, describes experiences she has had with youth in civic leadership roles by stating, "Young people who have successful policymaking experience often become permanently involved in community leadership" (p. 225). She explains that youth, particularly those with low incomes, move from being disenfranchised and cynical to being optimistic and motivated when involved in community development.

Some adults harbor misconceptions and assumptions that youth need protection and control, have little to offer their communities, and do not desire to become contributing members of society. According to Zeldin (2004), current research fails to support these beliefs. Zeldin provides insightful data about the level of involvement of youth in their communities, showing that a significant percentage of youth volunteer and participate in community events and programs and are increasingly involved in community governance and decision-making. Zeldin also explores avenues for engaging youth in community-related decision-making, reducing the mutual isolation that youth and adults often experience and providing

positive outcomes for youth. Zeldin suggests reaching out to disconnected youth and engaging them in community initiatives, broadening adult perspectives of youth by involving both age groups in collaborative efforts, and creating policies to engage youth in civic activities and youth development.

Although youth have the ambition and skills to engage in and lead successful projects and programs and promote changes in policy, a review of the literature demonstrates that they often require guidance from experienced adults. Stoneman (2002) indicates that an adult guide should act as a support person to assist with logistics, facilitation and document editing, and to mentor youth by talking with them and helping them think through their ideas and concerns.

Best practices suggest that adults who become involved in youth initiatives should respect the opinions and skills of youth and be willing to collaborate with and foster youth leaders. They also must acknowledge that young people should be involved in key decisions, programs, and systems that affect youth and their communities (Finn & Checkoway, 1998; Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006). Libby, Rosen, and Sedonaen (2005) indicate that:

> the most effective way to work with young people was to see them as experts in their own experiences, as members of the community with an important perspective and a right to share it, and as energetic and innovative resources to each other and to adults in their communities (p. 112).

Confident, connected, civic-minded youth are not at all rare. However, the process of engaging youth in their communities in a manner that is positive and worthwhile is still an emergent, concept in many communities. Supporting and encouraging youth to take ownership of their neighborhood interests helps youth build character and leadership skills as well as a community network. Pittman (2002) summarizes this concept effectively by stating:

> long term community development...requires not only an investment in building the human and social capital of young people, but a commitment to use that capital as it is being built and to see participation in community problem-solving as the best way to build skills and connections (p. 40).

DRAFT

What have we learned about youth involvement?

Youth benefit by:

- Gaining skills they will need to become successful adults.
- Creating new relationships with adults and peers, further connecting them to their community and enlarging their support network.
- Gaining a better understanding of the community and its diversity.
- Acquiring a more positive stature in the community.
- Gaining a better appreciation for adults and the multiple roles they can play.
- Beginning to see their own potential as limitless.
- Beginning to view the world, and their ability to affect it, in a positive way.
- Feeling needed and useful.
- Feeling enhanced power, autonomy, and self-esteem.

Adults benefit by:

- Feeling a stronger connection with the youth their program serves.
- Gaining a better understanding of the needs of youth.
- Feeling a renewed energy for their work.
- Experiencing improvement in morale stemming from youths' spirit of flexibility and playfulness.
- Gaining an expanded resource base so that they no longer feel "responsible for everything."

Organizations benefit by:

- Becoming more focused on the needs of the youth they serve.
- Having programs that are more relevant for youth.
- Widening their impact, as reflected by increased program attendance.
- Absorbing the unconventional thinking of youth, which can lead to new solutions.
- Stimulating greater ownership of the program by the youth (and ownership by the community).
- Growing potential new leaders and workers who come from the communities they serve.
- Using their youth as positive role models for other youth.
- Gaining new resources and support as youth reach out to their parents and other adults.

(*Participants in Partnership: Adults and Youth Working Together,* New York State Youth Council from the National 4-H Council Youth Adult Partnerships Training Curriculum)

Why involve youth in child welfare reform?

Youth in care can offer an important perspective on services and practice in child welfare. As recipients of child welfare services, youth, along with their parents, understand better than anyone the impact of those services on their growth and development. Program administrators and others in the child welfare system can learn much from youth when evaluating agency policies and practice. Youth may or may not know the policy and practice guidelines being evaluated, but they know their experiences within the system of services. From these experiences, youth can describe how services and staff impact their identities, relationships, hopes, goals, and aspirations.

Many states have developed leadership opportunities for older youth in foster care. Youth leadership groups are involved in a number of successful initiatives including training, workshops, advocacy, and policy development. Although the structure of the groups may differ from state to state, most appear to be engaged in similar work: increasing awareness and educating both youth and adults through youth presentations. The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development maintains information on states with active youth leadership groups. http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/state_pages.html

Over the next few years, the CFSR will provide specific opportunities to engage youth in the process of evaluating state child welfare services, to actively engage young people in all aspects of service delivery, to strengthen child welfare systems, and to learn more about youth–adult partnerships.

Engaging youth in the CFSR

Youth in foster care are deeply concerned about the child welfare system inwhich they, and often their siblings, are involved. For the last 14 years, foster care youth have attended the annual Destination Future National Youth Leadership Conference to learn and practice leadership skills and become advocates for themselves and others. Youth attending this confer–ence have repeatedly expressed the desire to make things better for the children and youth who will receive child welfare services in the future. In 2006, 198 youth participated in the conference, offering practical strategies for developing permanent connections, engaging youth in case planning, and involving youth in their own court reviews. Forty–seven percent of the conference participants served on youth leadership groups in their own states and expressed eagerness to partner with their state leaders in the CFSR process.

Given this level of enthusiasm, engaging youth in the CFSR process from the beginning makes sense. As states evaluate child welfare policies and practice, ensuring youth input and involvement will be essential. Strategies for engaging youth in each step of the CFSR follow:

2007
CFSR ToolKit
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Involvement

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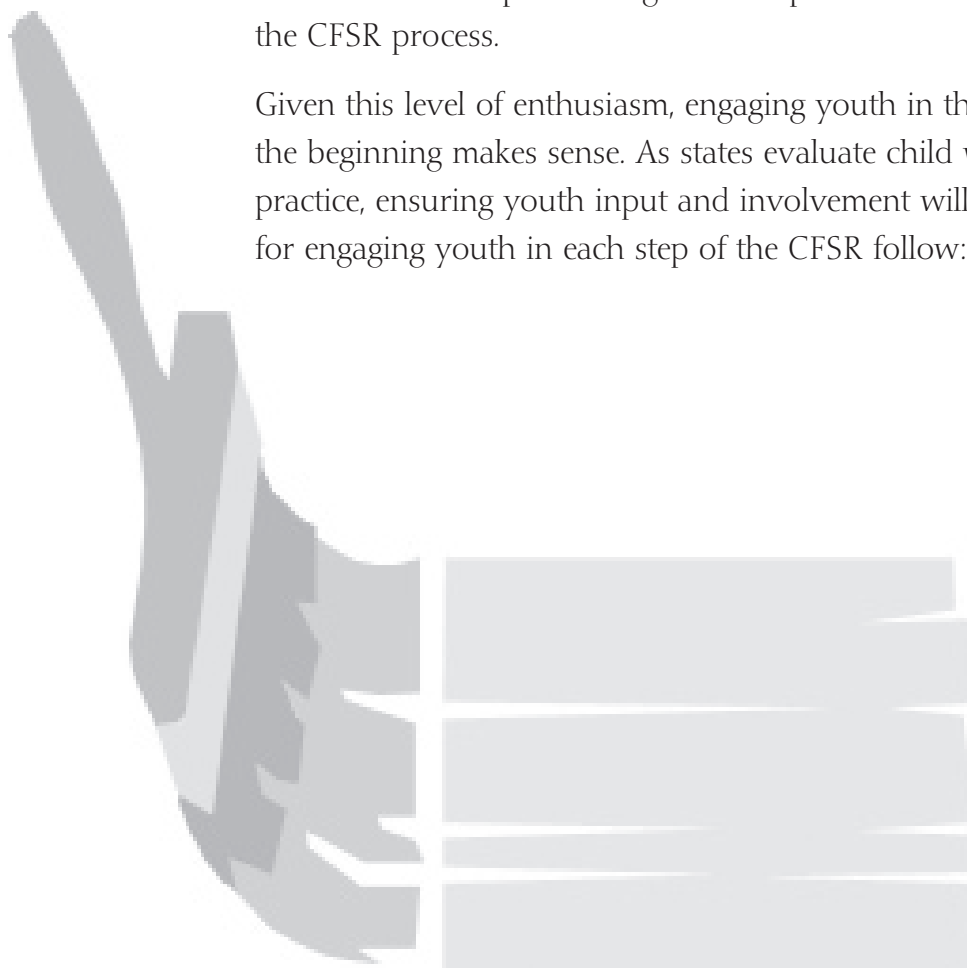
Engaging Youth in the CFSR

Statewide Self-assessment

- Identify youth who might be involved in each step of the CFSR process.
- Promote the engagement of youth in the CFSR through existing statewide youth organizations, advisory/advocacy groups.
- Train youth and staff on collaboration strategies (experienced youth can serve as co-trainers and co-facilitators).
- Support states' efforts to solicit input from youth regarding CFSR items through individual and group youth meetings with the CFSR Coordinator or state team, surveys of youth, and focus groups with youth.

On-Site Review

- Prepare youth to participate in stakeholder interviews by letting them know who is on the review team, the type of questions they might be asked, and the purpose of the CFSR.
- Invite youth to CFSR-related public forums or trainings.
- Conduct practice stakeholder interviews with youth.

Exit Conference

- Invite youth to the state's exit conference.
- Have youth participating in the exit conference pass along this information to other youth (through websites, newsletters, group meetings, etc.).

Report

- Invite youth to review the final report.

PIP Development

- Include youth in PIP development.
- Either involve youth in work groups as members, or have youth meet with work groups at key points for information gathering, plan design, and decision making.

PIP Monitoring

- Engage youth in PIP oversight. If there is a PIP Advisory Committee, make sure youth are members!

Who to engage?

The Child and Family Services Reviews Procedures Manual, Appendix J offers many suggestions on where to recruit youth who are or have been served by the child welfare system. Child welfare agencies can engage youth who are already involved in existing youth organizations and youth advisory boards, such as Governor's youth councils; local, regional, and/or state child welfare youth advisory boards; youth life skills groups; transitional living programs; and community–based youth serving organizations. A sample recruiting flyer is included in the Appendix (page 44).

To assist in promoting the engagement of youth in the CFSR process, a PowerPoint presentation titled "Positively Engaging Youth in the CFSR" is included in the CD that accompanies this ToolKit. Produced by Fosterclub, this slide show illustrates the benefits and opportunities for states to engage youth in the CFSR, offers strategies for successfully engaging youth, and provides national resources states can access for information, support, and help. This PowerPoint presentation is a helpful tool for promoting youth involvement and can be presented to child welfare professionals working with the state's CFSR process and youth serving organizations to aid in recruitment efforts.

Regardless of where recruitment occurs, child welfare agencies should ensure that the youth participating in the CFSR have a variety of child welfare experiences and represent diverse backgrounds and characteristics. Agencies should involve youth with varying caseplan goals and placement settings to gain broad input on the services provided. Youth who are being reunified and adopted, as well as those with uncertain permanency plans, should all be involved in the Review. Youth who reside in a variety of placements, such as family homes, group care, and college dorms, as well as those without safe homes, will have valuable perspectives. In addition, characteristics such as age, gender, race, and ethnicity should be considered when recruiting youth.

Youth may be engaged through surveys, individual interviews, or focus groups. Child welfare agencies will also find opportunities to partner with youth interested in conducting surveys, interviews, and leading focus groups in partnership with state review teams.

DRAFT

What preparation do youth need?

Whether youth are recruited to complete surveys, participate in focus groups, or partner on CFSR tasks and activities, all youth will need some degree of preparation to fully participate in the state's CFSR efforts. A 2006 survey conducted by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement indicates that youth leaders lack understanding about the Child and Family Services Review.

One group of youth participants at the 2006 Destination Future Conference was asked, "What are the challenges to engaging youth in the Child and Family Service Review?" With little or no information regarding the CFSR, this group was unsure about the purpose and process of the CFSR. They asked questions such as "Who are the stakeholders?" "What are they asking the stakeholders?" and "What and how do the stakeholders respond?" Despite this uncertainty about the CFSR, the group was quick to identify challenges, barriers, and possible solutions.

This group identified ensuring "real" youth involvement in the CFSR process as a significant challenge. "Real" involvement requires good planning and preparatoin in relation to notification, education, emotions, awareness, buy-in, tokenism, acronyms, jargon, intimidation, and preparation. The group pointed out that youth need to be informed that there is such a thing as a CFSR. Youth need to be educated about the "who-what-when-where-why" of the various CFSR processes and how they can participate in each of these.

The group also identified getting the buy-in of youth as important. Many youth do not feel that their voices are heard or that their input makes a difference in the system. Comments like these were heard during the discussion:

"We are lied to and not listened to."

"Why should we be involved?"

"Our opinions really don't matter."

"Social workers and foster parents agree on what is 'best' for us, without our opinion."

These are common thoughts that youth in care might have when asked to participate in the CFSR process.

DRAFT

Participation of youth needs to go beyond token involvement. Youth have been clear that to be a part of the process, "we all need to speak the same language." Acronyms and jargon need to be explained. Intimidation and fear of intimidation need to be addressed. Youth need to be prepared for meetings, knowing what to wear, who is going to be there, what is going to take place, what their role is going to be, and what is expected of them.

These youth also wisely pointed out that emotions may be evoked from the experience. For example, the group expressed concerns when they learned that case record review was part of the CFSR process. The contents of a case record are very personal. Reading a case record may seem much like reading a diary without permission. Understanding the intent and importance of case record reviews and what the reviewers do with the information will be important for youth.

Break it down

Prior to engaging youth in the CFSR process, states may need tools that help describe the purpose and components of the CFSR to youth. One such tool is included on the CD in this Toolkit. *CFSR Youth Training*, produced by the State of Kansas, is a PowerPoint presentation that illustrates an effective way to inform youth about the CFSR process and why youth involvement is important to the Review. Identifying the CFSR measures, the steps of the CFSR, and ways that youth can be involved, can better prepare youth for their role at the various stages of the process.

Two handouts, *CFSR 101* (page 18) and *Know Your Alphabet Soup*, (page 22) were created prior to the 2006 Destination Future Conference to educate youth and adult attendees about the CFSR process. The handouts are short and to the point. Electronic files of these documents are available on the CD. States may choose to tailor the documents to their own Reviews and create their own educational materials based on these resources. Following the 2006 Destination Future Conference, Kansas used the CFSR 101 to create its "CFSR Youth Training" PowerPoint presentation to educate Kansas youth board members about the CFSR. A copy of this PowerPoint is also on the *ToolKit* CD.

DRAFT Most states have youth leadership activities and youth conferences dur-
ing the year. Both types of events provide great opportunities to educate
youth about the CFSR. For more information on events such as these,
state independent living coordinators or Chafee program managers can
be contacted. A listing of state coordinators can be found on the web at
www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd.

Debriefing the experience

After youth participate in stakeholder meetings or other CFSR-related
events, debrief the experience with them. Debriefing meetings provide
youth an opportunity to give valuable feedback that will impact other
events. Ideally, the debrief session should take place soon after the event,
involve all of the youth who participated, and last no more than an hour.
Use the debrief session to find out whether the youth had enough knowl-
edge and information to fully participate in the meeting and whether they
felt able to express their ideas and opinions. If they didn't, more prepara-
tion is needed the next time.

The debrief session can also be used to explore what youth found
interesting in the meeting and what was boring or hard to understand.
Chances are the adults in the room had the same reaction, signaling
necessary changes to meeting agendas and presentations.

Use the debrief to find out whether some or all of the youth are interested
in participating in future CFSR activities. This discussion gives youth an
opportunity to opt in or out and to request additional information. (A
sample debrief form is included in the Appendix on page 45.)

CFSR 101 ~~DRAFT~~

(Handout to be used in aiding youth to understand the CFSR and it's components - available in the Toolkit CD)

What is the CFSR?

"CFSR" stands for the Child and Family Services Review. It is the federal government's review of state child welfare systems. The CFSR examines the delivery of all child welfare services, including child protective services, foster care, adoption, family preservation and family support, and in-dependent living. The CFSR focuses the outcomes for children, youth, and families in three main areas:

- safety,

- permanency, and

- child and family well–being.

The CFSR also reviews how each state supports and could improve various components of child welfare service delivery in regard to staff training, computer systems, policy and practice changes, and the recruit-ment and training of foster parents. The CFSR determines if states are complying with federal laws and provides states the chance to improve the quality of services and programs for children, youth, and families.

What happens during the CFSR?

The CFSR process involves the steps below and may take as long as 3–4 years to complete.

1. The Statewide Self-assessment.

During the Self–assessment, each state completes a self-analysis by look-ing at data and other information to determine the impact of its policies and practices on achieving positive outcomes for children and families in the areas of safety, permanency, and well–being. The state compares its performance on some safety and permanency outcomes to established national standards through a review of data on the children, youth, and families being served; an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the agency; and feedback about services and programs from key stake-holders.

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2. The On-site Review.

A federal–state team conducts an On–site Review of the state child welfare program, evaluating the state's performance by:

- reviewing case records;

- interviewing children, youth, and families engaged in services; and

- interviewing other stakeholders, such as the courts, youth, community agencies, foster families, caseworkers, supervisors, and service providers.

At the end of the On–site Review, the federal team gives their initial review findings to the state representatives and invited stakeholder groups in an Exit Conference.

The Final Report from the federal government gives the final determination of the state's performance in the Review. This report describes in which areas the state has met or not met the requirements of the CFSR and is normally sent to the state about a month after the On–site Review. The Final Report is a public document and a copy can be requested from the state child welfare agency or downloaded from the Children's Bureau website at http://basis.caliber.com/cwig/ws/cwmd/docs/cb_web/Search-Form.

3. Development of a Program Implementation Plan (PIP).

When a state does not meet the requirements for any area of the CFSR, it must develop a plan to improve those areas needing improvement. This plan is called a Program Improvement Plan (PIP). Each state develops its own PIP. States are strongly encouraged to involve key stakeholders in developing and carrying out the PIP. The PIP must be submitted to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regional Office for approval within 90 days of the state receiving the CFSR Final Report.

4. Monitor the implementation of the PIP.

After development of the PIP, the state has two years to complete PIP activities and improve practice in those areas where the requirements were not met. All activities related to improvement must be completed within the two years; however, the state has an additional year for its data to show if the state met its goal for improvement. The ACF Regional Office, in conjunction with the Children's Bureau, monitors implementation of the plan through quarterly reports submitted by the state. States

are encouraged to have a PIP Advisory Committee, comprised of agency and community stakeholders, that meets regularly to oversee progress in achieving improvements. If a state does not complete its agreed upon activities or achieve its goals of improvement for areas addressed in the PIP, financial penalties will be assessed.

Who are the stakeholders?

Youth are! Youth served by the child welfare agency have expert knowledge about the child welfare system. Other stakeholders include:

- State agency director;

- State agency social workers and supervisors;

- Public agencies such as mental health, physical health, and education;

- Court representatives such as judges, Court Improvement Program (CIP) representative, and guardians ad litem;

- Foster and adoptive parents;

- Private agencies such as youth serving agencies;

- Tribal members;

- Birth parents; and

- Members of administrative review board.

Why should youth be involved?

As consumers of child welfare services, youth can help identify what works and what does not. Young people bring a unique and important perspective to the CFSR process and can offer insight into how services for youth can best be provided. Youth can also give information about what works with younger children who may be your brothers and sisters.
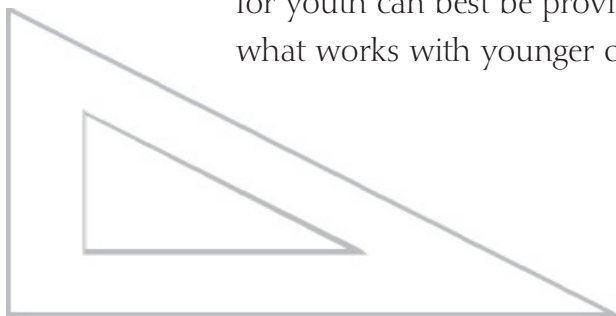
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How can youth become involved?

State child welfare agencies have involved youth in the CFSR process in various ways. States may involve youth (who may or may not serve on a local or statewide youth advisory committee) in the Statewide Self-assessment or On-site Review, on the CFSR review team, and/or the PIP Advisory Committee.

How can youth benefit?

Getting involved in the CFSR will allow youth to make a meaningful contribution to their community, the child welfare system, and other youth in care. Youth will also meet new people, learn new skills, and have the opportunity to speak on behalf of other children and youth in foster care.

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Know Your Alphabet Soup
(Handout to define frequently used terms – available in the Toolkit CD)

What do all of the terms and words mean? People who work in child welfare have created their own language. It is a good idea to learn the words and the terms if you want to advocate for yourself and other children and youth in foster care. Here are some of the terms you will hear when people talk about child welfare in general and the CFSR process specifically.

ACF **Administration for Children and Families –** The ACF is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Federal agency which provides oversight to many social service programs for families, children and youth.

ASFA **Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 –** legislation to improve the safety of children, to promote adoption and other permanent homes for children who need them, and to support families.

CASA **Court Appointed Special Advocate –** CASAs are trained community volunteers appointed by a judge to represent the best interest of abused and neglected children in court.

CB **Children's Bureau –** CB is located in Washington, DC and is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Children's Bureau works with state and local agencies to develop programs that focus on preventing the abuse of children in troubled families, protecting children from abuse, and finding permanent placements for those who cannot safely return to their homes.

CFSR **Child and Family Service Review –** The monitoring of the operation of State and Tribal Child Welfare agencies. "CFSR" is what the review is called.

CIP **Court Improvement Program –** The CIP is a program for state court systems to conduct assessments of their foster care and adoption laws and judicial processes, and to develop and implement a plan for changes statewide that will signifi–cantly improve the handling of child welfare cases.

GAL — **Guardian ad Litem –** A GAL is an attorney who represents the best interest of abused, neglected, and abandoned children within the court system.

HHS — **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services –** The federal department implementing the CFSRs.

MOA — **Memorandum of Agreement –** An MOA is an agreement made between two or more agencies or organizations.

PIP — **Program Improvement Plan –** States are required to submit a Program Improvement Plan on any of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors subject to review that don't meet federal requirements.

RO — **Regional Office –** There are ten federal ACF regional offices.

TA — **Technical Assistance –** TA is help provided by skilled agencies and individuals to States and Tribes.

Title IV–B — Federal grant money provided to states.

Title IV–E — Federal funding for State foster care programs for children placed in out–of–home care, usually due to neglect or abuse..

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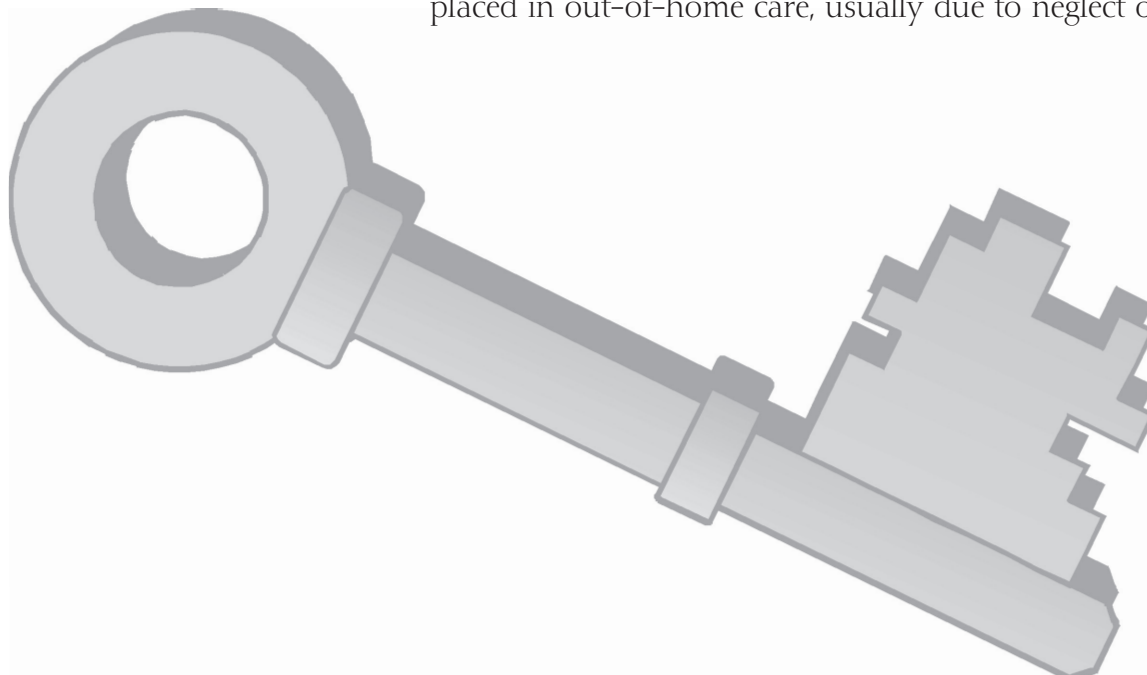
Preparing Adults for Youth Participation

Youth participation can take place at many levels. Youth may be involved as stakeholders and, as such, complete stakeholder surveys or participate in stakeholder meetings and focus group sessions. Youth may be involved as team members and work in partnership with adult staff on some or all of the CFSR tasks. Regardless of the youth's level of involvement, both youth and adults need to be prepared to enter into a youth–adult part-nership.

The Fundamentals of Youth-Adult Partnerships

A true partnership exists when each person has the opportunity to make suggestions and decisions, and when everyone's contribution is recognized and valued. A youth-adult partnership exists when adults see young people as full partners on issues facing youth and the programs and policies that affect youth.

Unfortunately, we live in a society that does not give young people many op-portunities to make their own decisions. The idea that children should be seen and not heard is still common for many adults. Add to this the media's repre-sentation of young people as criminals, slackers, selfish, and disinterested; with this much bad press, it's no wonder that young people are underutilized!

You will discover (if you haven't already) that when given a proper forum, today's young people are full of ideas and energy to make positive change in their communities, schools, and families. As the accepted "leaders" in society, it is often up to adults to create these opportunities for young people to show their talents and concern for their society.

If these opportunities are merely for show, young people will know it because they are looking for genuine ways to contribute. Tokenism is a level of youth involvement that is merely about youth being present, but it holds very little purpose or meaning for those involved.

To be effective partners, adults must respect and have confidence in youth. If they are truly sharing the power to make decisions with young people, it means adults are letting go of their traditional roles, listening rather than telling, and working with, rather than for youth. Giving young people the authority to make decisions and a platform to share their opinions is a way to show respect.

Making It Work: A Guide to Successful Youth-Adult Partnerships, Texas Network of Youth Services, 2002.

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Attitudes and Logistics

To create a successful youth–adult partnership, attitudes and logistics are important factors to address. Many adults, even within the social services arena, believe that young people's opinions do not matter. Youth in the foster care system are often viewed as problems and not capable of contributing to an effort like the CFSR. Attitudes like these often lead to token youth involvement.

William Lofquist, a noted practitioner in the field of youth development, points out that youth are generally viewed in one of three ways:

- **Youth as Objects –** Adults with this view believe they know what is best for youth. Adults make the decisions and generally believe that youth have little to contribute.

- **Youth as Recipients –** Adults with this view believe they must help youth prepare for the adult world. Youth are permitted to take part in decision making because it would be "good for them." Youth are not really expected to make contributions. Adults generally retain the power and control.

- **Youth as Partners –** Adults with this view believe that youth can make real contributions. Youth have an equal voice in decisions. It is recognized that both youth and adults have abilities, strengths, and experience to contribute.

A positive youth development philosophy that endorses the "youth as partners" perspective is critical to the success of a youth–adult partnership. Concepts such as these may be new to the adults on Review teams. Team members may need an opportunity to explore positive youth development. Training sessions like those provided by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development can prepare staff to work successfully with youth team members.

How would adult members of a CFSR team respond to these questions:
- How are you able to give youth team members encouragement?
- How are you able to provide resources for activities?
- How are you able to listen carefully to youth team members?
- How are you able to promote active youth participation?
- How are you able to help youth get organized?
- How are you able to encourage critical thinking?

25

DRAFT

Youth Development Curriculum: The Vital Link

The Vital Link provides a philosophical base for including youth in program design, implementation, and evaluation. Through the training, staff explore their attitudes about youth and learn to recognize youth as valuable, often overlooked, resources. Participants will learn creative ways to engage youth by allowing them to take on leadership roles and aid in decision-making. Participants explore the various levels of youth involvement including participation at stakeholder meetings and serving as facilitators and/or focus group leaders.

The Vital Link Training is available through the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development in both direct and training-of-trainers formats.

Even with a "youth as resources" perspective, the CFSR team has to pay attention to logistics. The youth participants at the 2006 Destination Future Conference identified logistics as a fundamental concern when planning to engage youth as team members. They defined logistics to include time, compensation, transportation, and scheduling. Meetings need to be scheduled at "youth friendly" times, taking into account school schedules.

Transportation needs to be arranged and a backup plan in place. The plan should include the use of buses, taxis, and carpools. Youth need to be consulted about the transportation plan. Many youth reported that often, if a transportation plan is developed, their schedule is not consulted. Many times conflicts occur and a new plan is hardly ever arranged in time.

The group felt that youth need to be compensated for their time and participation. They pointed out that compensation does not have to be in a monetary form. It could be school credit or community service credit. However, youth who take time off from work need to be financially compensated for their missed hours. If compensation comes in the form of payment by check, will the youth have the ability (checking account) to cash a check? If youth are expected to stay at a hotel and pay for transportation and meals, develop a plan for how these expenses will be covered. Youth do not have credit cards or cash on hand to cover expenses such as these up front.

The California Youth Connection offers the following recommendations for involving youth in foster care in policy making.

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Tips from California Youth Connection

Invest in Preparation! Invest the time and effort into preparing foster youth and adults to work together on foster care policy. Without sufficient leadership development and preparation, youth are not able to participate meaningfully, and adults are not able to benefit from the valuable expertise they can offer.

Be aware of Power Dynamics! Foster care policymakers and providers often operate without any input from youth, even when youth are directly affected by their decisions and practices. Often, adults in the foster care system underestimate the wisdom and creativity of foster youth, and may attempt to control situations where foster youth are involved or try to protect youth from the potential consequences of their mistakes. The flip side is that growing up in the foster care system, youth are subjected to every aspect of their life being controlled by adults, and expect their ideas and opinions to be ignored, derided, or vetoed. Youth feel that they are treated like objects, and have never experienced being an equal partner in decision making. These factors contribute to a power dynamic, where working jointly on policy issues can be difficult and requires deliberate effort and attention.

Change Your Own Organization! Be open to changing rules and practices to involve youth. Here are some areas that you will probably need to change:

- *Hours for Meetings and Work* - Policy meetings usually conflict with times that youth are at school or work. To involve youth, an effort must be made to hold meetings at nontraditional times such as late afternoons, evenings, or weekends. When a change can't be made, help youth find out if they can receive school credit for participation. Also, remember that foster youth often need early notice of meetings in order to get permission from the court, social workers, and caregivers.

- *Transportation* - Many foster youth struggle because they don't have transportation to get to and from meetings. Hold meetings in locations that are easy to get to on public transportation or convenient to youth, and provide travel vouchers, advances, and immediate reimbursements for transportation costs.
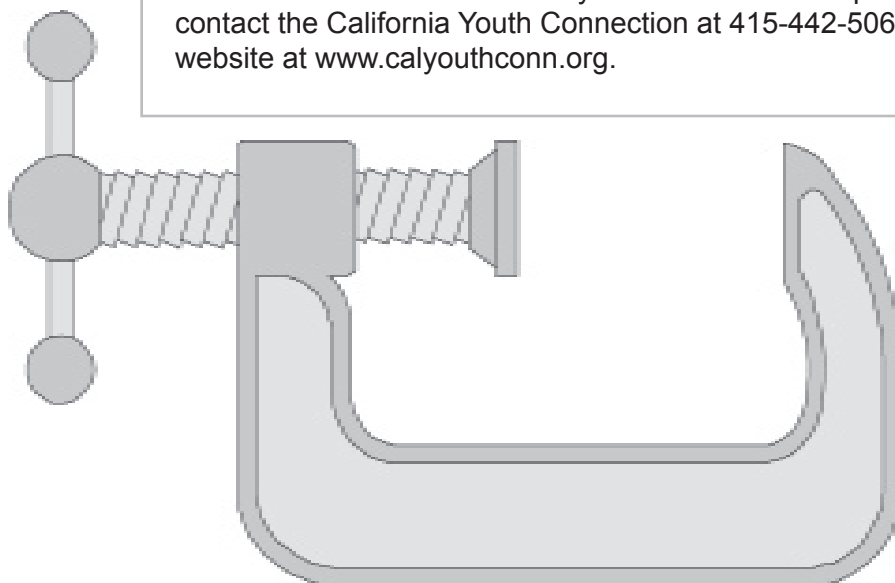
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- **Food** - Most current and former foster youth will not have the income to eat out. When meetings are around meal times, make sure to provide youth with food or with a stipend to pay for meals.

- **Agency Staff and Policies** - Almost all agencies that affect foster youth have operated from an exclusively adult perspective, so be aware that staff will need cultural competency training BEFORE attempting to meaningfully involve youth. It is important that staff are on the same page about the importance of changing rules to accommodate foster youth and make youth feel they are valued contributing members of the policy team, not just token members.

- **Language** - Youth are the only experts in how effective and helpful services are, but they often do not know the technical language, acronyms, and terms used to discuss foster care programs and issues. Nothing will make a youth feel that they are not an equal partner quicker than everyone else speaking a different language.

The California Youth Connection is guided, focused, and driven by current and former foster youth with the assistance of other committed community members. California Youth Connection promotes the participation of foster youth in policy development and legislative change to improve the foster care system. California Youth Connection strives to improve social work practice and child welfare policy.

For more information on foster youth involvement in policy making, contact the California Youth Connection at 415-442-5060 or visit their website at www.calyouthconn.org.

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CFSR Youth Involvement Checklist

This checklist is intended to help you think through youth involvement in your state's CFSR. Review it with your CFSR Team, your state's independent living coordinator, your young people, or other concerned parties.

Organizational and Team Commitment

1. Beyond satisfying a federal expectation, do you know why you want to involve youth in your state's CFSR?

2. Have you talked to and determined the commitment from the state child welfare director?

3. Have you talked to and determined the commitment of your state team, your youth, and your independent living program coordinator?

4. Have you determined your model for youth involvement? For example, youth participate as stakeholders. Youth participate as team members and work with staff to complete some or all of the CFSR tasks.

5. Have you and members of your team assessed your own stereotypes about young people?

6. Are you and members of your team open to suggestions that youth might make?

Youth as Stakeholders

7. Do you have a plan for recruiting youth?

8. Do you have a plan for educating youth about the CFSR?

9. Do you have a plan or process for seeking the input from youth?

10. Do you have a plan to provide youth stakeholders with follow-up information after the stakeholder's meeting?

Youth as Team Members

11. Do you have a plan to orient youth regarding their role on the team?

12. Do you have a plan for training youth to complete the tasks assigned?

13. Do you have a plan for arranging youth travel and paying for lodging and per diem?

14. Do you have a plan for compensating youth for their time?

Conducting Surveys

A survey allows information to be gathered from a sample of a given population. When developing a survey, questions must focus on the facts and data to be learned and the group from which this information will be obtained.

In this instance, the focus is on engaging youth in care in the CFSR process. Because the CFSR is a very involved process, child welfare agencies should consider several facets when seeking input from youth. In addition to gathering data on the number of youth served or the type of service provided, child welfare administrators must also realize that youth can offer much more than what data alone can provide. Youth can tell the story behind the data. In essence, youth can describe experiences of service delivery, such as the impact of a caseworker's visit or a therapy session. Understanding this aspect of engaging youth in the CFSR process is beneficial when developing the survey.

In selecting a survey sample focused on youth in care, consider what is known about the population of youth in care and create a sample that fits that pattern. Agencies should ensure that the youth participating in the survey have a variety of child welfare experiences and represent diverse backgrounds and characteristics. Agencies should involve youth with varying case plan goals and placement settings to receive wide-ranging responses to survey questions. Youth who are being reunified and adopted as well as those with uncertain permanency plans should all participate in the survey. Youth who reside in different placements such as family homes, group care, and college dorms and even those youth without any safe homes will also provide valuable input. In addition, characteristics such as age, gender, race, and ethnicity should be considered when sampling the population.

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Writing Effective Survey Questions

1. What's the purpose of your survey?

You have a reason for writing the survey…remember it, and refer back to this question if you find yourself feeling lost in the writing process!

2. When in doubt…, throw it out.

Questions need to pull out answers that are useful to you in some way. If your question isn't providing you with useful information, don't use it.

3. If you have to take a breath, it's too long.

KEEP IT SIMPLE!! Use clear, concise questions that keep the respondent focused on the information you really want. Short questions that are easy to understand and do not force the reader to keep information in their head are best.

4. Ask for what you want.

If you want to know when someone last went to a movie theatre, then ask them that! Otherwise readers may tell you the last time they rented a video, when you asked, "When did you last see a movie?"

Another consideration is not to be too vague. For example: Please rate your satisfaction with the Youth Summit? The reader is forced to lump his/her satisfaction with the various components of the summit into one category. What you really want to know is if they were satisfied with the (1) training, (2) food, (3) hotel, and (4) activities. Break it out into all its parts!

5. Avoid misinterpretation.

Beware of language/terminology. Words that mean one thing to you may not mean the same to others. For example: "Dinner" may be the evening meal for you; however, to some it is the mid–day meal. Use terminology correctly.

6. Beware of "and."

Specific recommended actions require specific questions. If your question has options, the reader has options as to which option they answer. For example: a question about G.A.L.'s and DHHS is a "double–barreled" question and will be difficult for you to determine if the answer is in regards to the G.A.L. or DHHS.

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7. Don't lead the respondent.

The idea is to draw out the respondent's view/opinion. Writing a question that appears to have a right answer is easy to do; however, it will not get accurate results. For example: Your Guardian Ad Litem is your voice in court. Do you agree? You are essentially asking the respondent to agree with the statement.

8. Avoid alienation.

Avoid alienating the respondent or making them feel like they are telling on someone. When writing questions about sensitive topics, people are likely to protect their privacy and others from judgment. For example: Guardians Ad Litem are supposed to be your voice in court, do you feel that your G.A.L. represents your voice?

9. Check for complete understanding.

Asking respondents "How effective is your Guardian Ad Litem?" may not be as effective as "Do you have a Guardian Ad Litem?" followed by "Have you met your Guardian Ad Litem?" followed by "How often do you see your Guardian Ad Litem?" Breaking down the questions will give you more accurate information.

Remember:

Well-written survey questions will keep your respondents interested. Questions that are difficult to answer because they feel emotionally threatening may cause response rates to go down and increase potential for response bias to go up.

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Tips for Answers

1. Limit response options.

This is most important. Giving the respondent more than one legitimate place for their answer is confusing, and will defeat your desire for accurate information. Response choices like, "1 to 2," "2 to 3" and "More than 3" is a problem for someone whose answer is "2." Also, be sure to provide response options that cover every possibility. If the list of options is too long, provide an "Other" choice or allow a write–in response.

2. Minimize open-ended questions.

While sometimes valuable, overuse can cause "respondent fatigue" and can be difficult to categorize for analysis.

3. Pay attention to time.

People judge time differently... "Always," "Sometimes," and "Never" mean different things to different people. A frame of reference or specific time units are best (minutes, days, months, etc.).

4. Its okay to say you "Don't Know."

Giving respondents a "Don't Know" option can be useful. There are times when you want to know if someone doesn't know! However, be careful not to make this the "fatigue" response for your readers! Use it carefully.

5. Scaling

The most common scale is the Likert Scale system. Using this scaling method requires you to develop appropriate labeling. Most commonly used labels are "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree," corresponding with a number scale 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5.

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Sample Survey

The survey that follows was created by members of the Maine Youth Leadership Advisory Team (YLAT). The questions were tested with youth to determine comprehension. Time to complete the survey ranged from 7 minutes to over 30 minutes. Though it may seem straightforward, some of the questions are challenging. Counting the number of schools attended is a tough question. All youth who tested this survey expressed an openness to work with a helper or a small group when completing the survey to assist with questions about the instrument.

Helpers need to define terms like "permanency," and remind youth that surveys are not tests and that only they can provide this information.

The Youth Leadership Advisory Team (YLAT) is a team of Maine youth in care (in state custody), ages 14-21, engaged in the education of the government, general public, caregivers, and peers regarding the needs of children and young adults in the child welfare system. Advocating for positive changes in the child welfare system, YLAT members help develop, guide, and revise the Bureau of Child and Family Services policies in order to create safety, comfort, and opportunities for all youth in care.

YLAT is a group of youth in care working together to have fun and...

• advise, assist, and connect with other youth in care.

• speak out to educate government, general public, caregivers, and peers.

• promote positive changes in the system while working with the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS).

• build positive long-term relationships in the community.

• perform community service projects.

To learn more about YLAT, visit their web site http://www.ylat.org.

Maine CFSR Survey

1. At what age did you enter state care? _____

2. How old are you now? _____

3. How long had you or your family been involved with DHHS prior to you entering care?

4. What is your current placement? (*Select one.*)
   - ☐ Birth parents
   - ☐ Adoptive parents
   - ☐ Foster home
   - ☐ Group home
   - ☐ Shelter
   - ☐ With a family member
   - ☐ Own apartment
   - ☐ Other: _____

5. How many placements have you lived in since you entered care? _____

6. How many times have you changed schools due to a change in your placement? _____

7. How close are you to the town you lived in before you entered foster care?
   - ☐ Same neighborhood
   - ☐ Same town
   - ☐ Same county
   - ☐ Same state
   - ☐ Different state

8. Were any family members considered as a placement option for you? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
   8a. If no, do you know why?

9. If you have siblings, are they placed with you? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   9a. If no, do you know why?

10. How often do you see: (check the most appropriate option)

	I live with them	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Once a year	Never
Siblings							
Birth mother							
Birth father							
Grandparents							
Extended family							
Current friends							
Friends prior to coming into care							
Caseworker							
Religious institution							
Clubs or community groups							

11. How often do you speak, either by phone or email, with: (check the most appropriate option)

	I live with them	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Once a year	Never
Siblings							
Birth mother							
Birth father							
Grandparents							
Extended family							
Current friends							
Friends prior to coming into care							
Caseworker							
Religious institution							
Clubs or community groups							

12. Are visits or contact with important people in your life:
   a. Safe? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   b. Going the way you want? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   c. Frequent enough? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   d. Occurring in a comfortable location? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. What could be done to make sure that visits and contact with key people in your life go smoother or are more natural?

14. Please describe how your DHHS caseworker or your relationship with your caseworker affects the quality of your life (educationally, socially, and within your family).

15. Besides your caseworker, who else is involved in your case planning? (check all that apply)
   ☐ Bio or birth parents
   ☐ Foster parents
   ☐ Adoptive parents
   ☐ Grandparents
   ☐ Other relatives
   ☐ Counselors
   ☐ GAL/CASA
   ☐ Other:_____

16. Do you have a permanency plan? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure

17. Did you feel you were informed of your permanency options?
   ☐ No, not at all
   ☐ Yes, a little
   ☐ Yes, pretty well
   ☐ Yes, very well

18. Are you expecting to be reunified with your birth parents? ☐ Yes ☐ No

19. Are you encouraged to have your birth parents involved in your life? ☐ Yes ☐ No

20. Are you encouraged to have your other relatives involved in your life? ☐ Yes ☐ No

21. Have you been adopted? ☐ Yes ☐ No

    21 a. If no, has anyone ever asked you if you wish to be adopted? ☐ Yes ☐ No

    21 b. If yes, how long were you in care before being adopted? _____

22. Are you connected with religious or community groups of your choosing? ☐ Yes ☐ No

23. Are your physical health needs being met? ☐ Yes ☐ No

24. What could be done to better meet your health needs?

25. Do you see a doctor regularly? ☐ Yes ☐ No

26. Do you feel your mental and emotional health needs are met? ☐ Yes ☐ No

27. What could be done to better meet your mental health needs?

28. Were your opinions included when:

	Not at all	Very little	Some	Almost always	Always
Your case plan was being developed?					
School plans or changes were occurring?					
Placement decisions were being made?					
Permanency plans were being created?					
Court was reviewing your case?					
Family visitation plans were being made?					
Health care providers were being selected for you?					
Mental health care providers were being selected for you?					

29. Do you have any other comments or feedback regarding the successes or challenges of child welfare services in your state? ☐ Yes ☐ No
29a. If yes, please provide your comments here:

Conducting Focus Groups

Focus groups are another way to include youth in the CFSR process and may be conducted as a follow-up to a survey or as the sole means of soliciting youth input. Focus groups usually involve six to ten youth. Within this small group environment, it is possible to obtain a great deal of information in a short period of time.

As with every other aspect of the CFSR, planning is required to conduct productive focus groups with youth. Consider the following:

1. Schedule sessions that are one to two hours in length at a time when youth are available. Avoid times near holidays or school exams.

2. In advance of the session, create five or six focus questions.

3. Hold sessions in a space that offers few distractions. A community conference room or library meeting room is ideal.

4. Recruit youth who have had a range of experiences while in foster care and who have achieved or will achieve a variety of outcomes.

5. Develop a transportation plan for those attending.

6. Provide refreshments, particularly if youth are coming from school to participate.

7. Provide "table toys" for youth to "play with" during the session. Pipe cleaners, plastic Slinkys, and other inexpensive manipulatives work great.

8. Provide name tags to facilitate communication.

9. Create an agenda which includes the following items: welcome, review of agenda, review of goal of the meeting, review of ground rules, introductions, questions and answers, wrap up.

10. Determine how you will record the session. If a co-facilitator is not available, arrange for audio recording.
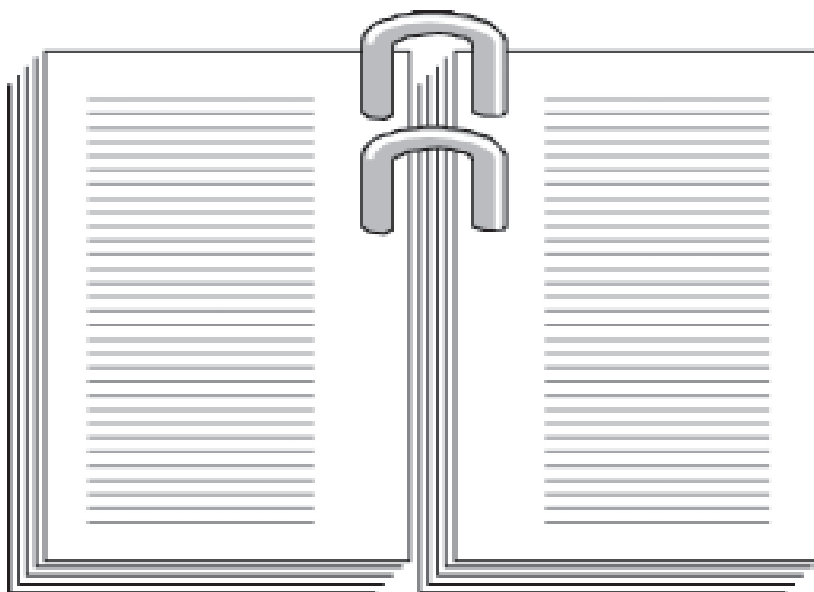
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Most youth will welcome participating in a focus group that will ultimately lead to better services for youth in foster care. Emphasize that, although they will only be spending one or two hours together, they will be contributing to a much larger perspective that can make a difference for all children, youth, and families in the child welfare system. Several samples of focus group questions are included in the Appendix (pages 46–49).

Summary

Youth involvement in the CFSR process will benefit the Children's Bureau, states, adult partners, and young people. This *Toolkit* was designed to provide strategies, resources, and tips on how to effectively engage youth and adults in the process. We hope that you find the information valuable and useful. As we learn more about the CFSR youth/adult partnership and successful strategies, we will add them to future editions of the *Toolkit*. If you need further consultation, technical assistance, or training, please contact the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development and/or the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement. Information about both Centers follows.

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The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement strengthens and supports State and Tribal agencies committed to the welfare of children, youth, and families through training, technical assistance, and evaluation. The aim is to improve management and operations, bolster organizational capacity, promote service integration, and develop supervisory and management systems, resulting in improved outcomes for children and families.

Address:
Muskie School–USM
P.O. Box 15010, 400 Congress Street
Portland, ME 04112–5010
Phone: (800) HELP KID or (207) 780–5810
Fax: (207) 780–5817
E–Mail: helpkids@usm.maine.edu
Web site: http://www.nrcoi.org
Contact: Peter Watson, Director

The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development

The University of Oklahoma National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development (NCWRCYD) increases the capacity and resources of States and Tribes to help youth in care meet the goals of safety, permanence, and well–being. The Center can help States incorporate youth into all areas of programs and services, implement services that address legislative requirements, and prepare for Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and Program Improvement Plan (PIP) development and implementation. The Center bases its technical assistance and training around four core principles: youth development, collaboration, cultural competence, and permanent connections.

Address:
4502 East 41 st Street
Building 4W
Tulsa, OK 74135
Phone: (918) 660–3700
Fax: (918) 660–3737
E–Mail: pcorreia@ou.edu
Web site: http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/nrcyd/
Contact: Peter R. Correia III, Director

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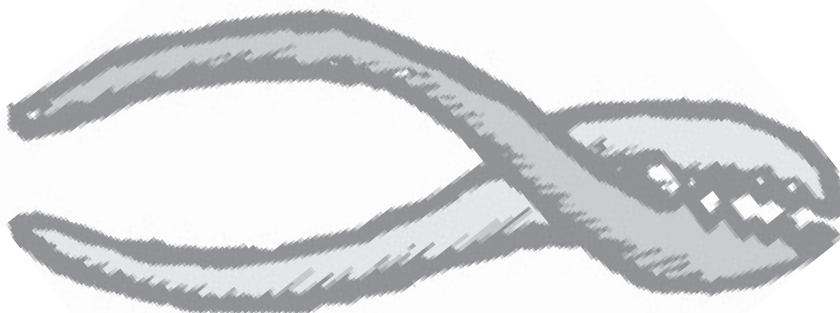
Other Resources

Checkoway, B. & Richards-Schuster, K. *Youth Participation: Participatory Evaluation with Young People.*

This workbook is for young people who want to develop knowledge for action and change, whether through program evaluation, community assessment, policy analysis, or other studies. It is based on the belief that people have a right to participate in the institutions and decisions that affect their lives, and that evaluation is a vehicle for participation.
> http://www.wkkf.orgDesktopModulesWKF.00_DmaSupport/ViewDoc.aspx?fld=PDFFile&CID=281&ListID=28&ItemID=5000022&LanguageID=0

Checkoway, B. & Richards-Schuster, K. *Facilitator's Guide for Participatory Evaluation with Young People.*

This Facilitator's Guide is intended for use in conjunction with the workbook Participatory Evaluation with Young People. It follows its format, and provides additional information, ideas, examples, and exercises to strengthen its facilitation.
> http://www.wkkf.org/DesktopModules/WKF.00_DmaSupport/ViewDoc.aspx?fld=PDFFile&CID=281&ListID=28&ItemID=5000021&LanguageID=0

Matarese, M., McGinnis, L., & Mora, M. *Youth Involvement in Systems of Care: A Guide to Empowerment.*

The goal for *Youth Involvement in Systems of Care: A Guide to Empowerment* is to provide a resource to youth, youth coordinators, family members, professionals, and other adults working with young people. This guide is a starting point for understanding youth involvement and engagement in order to develop and fully integrate a youth-directed movement within local systems of care.
> http://systemsofcare.samhsa.gov/headermenus/docsHM/youthguidedlink.pdf

Texas Network of Youth Services. *Making it Work: A Guide to Successful Youth-Adult Partnerships.*

This resource contains ideas and tips to help you build effective youth and adult partnerships in your organizations and communities. This guide highlights the many ways that youth and adults can become partners, the levels of partnerships, and what it takes to form and sustain these partnerships.
> http://www.tnoys.org/TNOYSServices/PromotingYouthDev/Youth%20Adult%20Partnerships%20Guide.pdf

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Get involved!!!

Be THE Youth Voice for Your
Child and Family Services Review

What is it? It is the federal government's review of state child welfare systems. The CFSR examines the delivery of all child welfare services including child protective services, foster care, adoption, family preservation and family support, and independent living. The CFSR looks at the outcomes for children, youth, and families in the areas of

Safety   Permanency   Well Being

WHY SHOULD YOU BE INVOLVED?

- A voice in what services you need and receive;

- A voice in how you keep a relationship or connection with your family;

- Improve the system for other children/youth, could be a sibling;

- Permanency and stability in your life;

- Input on how your State provides services and works with children/youth and families;

- Opportunity to learn new skills and meet new people;

- A youth's voice is heard.

Contact: Name
               CFSR Coordinator
               Email address
               Phone

YOU ARE THE EXPERT!

If you need more information regarding youth involvement in the CFSR, contact the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development

(918) 660-3700   www.nrcys.ou.edu

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Debriefing the Meeting

Patsy's comment: about breaking the questions down. – your call

Let us know about your experience at the CFSR Stakeholder Meeting.

1. Did you have enough information in advance of the meeting to fully participate?

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

2. Did you have an opportunity to express your ideas, concerns, and opinions?

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

3. Did you feel that your ideas and opinions were taken seriously?

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

4. Did you learn something about yourself as a result of this experience?

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

5. What was the most interesting part of this meeting?

6. What could have made this a better meeting?

7. Would you be interested in
    participating in other meetings like this?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

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Oklahoma Youth Systemic Interviews

Please answer the following.

Age _____

Race(s) _____

Male _____ Female _____

Placement _____

Number of placements you have had _____

How long have you been involved with Child Welfare (CW)? _____

How many workers have you had? _____

What is your case plan goal? _____

Top ten things that you would change about the CW system.
1)
2)
3)
4)
5)
6)
7)
8)
9)
10)

Top ten things you like about the CW system
1)
2)
3)
4)
5)
6)
7)
8)
9)
10)

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Maine CFSR
Focus Group Questions for Youth

1. Does your caseworker include you in making case plan decisions? (deciding where you will live, your permanency goal, what services you need and will receive, your contact with your family members, evaluating how things are going for you)

    * Does your caseworker encourage you to discuss the issues described above?

    * Do you get a copy of your case plan?

    * Does your case plan help you to understand what to expect from your caseworker, what your caseworker expects from you and others involved in your case?

2. Do you have an independent living case plan?

    * Who helped you develop the independent living plan?

    * What suggestions do you have to improve the case planning process or the case plan itself?

3. How often do you see your caseworker?

    * Do you feel like you have enough contact with your caseworker?

    * Are the meetings with your caseworker helpful? Suggest ways that these meetings are helpful or might be improved.

4. Have you been given the opportunity to participate in services that will help you achieve your goals? Elaborate.

    * Which services have been the most helpful in assisting you to achieve your goal of returning to your family or to achieve independence?

    * Which services have been the most helpful to your family?

5. Do you see your siblings and/or your family? What suggestions or comments would you make about having visits with your siblings and/or family members?

6. What do you think a caseworker could do to prevent youth from having to move to multiple placements?

7. In what ways are you included in policy development with DHS?

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Louisiana Chafee Program
Focus Group Questions

1. What is the best service/program you received to help you prepare for leaving care?

2. What scares you the most about leaving care?

3. In what ways have you been involved in your case planning? (be specific)

4. How can the state involve you more in your case planning?

5. Do you have someone you can call with problems (or something you are really proud of) after you leave care?

   Is that person:

   • Relative

   • Foster parent

   • Facility staff

   • Teacher

   • Other (list)

6. What could help you have a great school year this year? What worries you most about school?

7. What do you plan to do after high school?

8. Are you aware of the ETV?

9. If the state could do one new thing to help youth prepare to leave care, what should it be?

10. What didn't we ask that we should have?

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Questions to use
as a guide for responses

How does your program prepare you for discharge?
- How are family and adult relations encouraged?
- How is community involvement encouraged?
- How are your strengths identified?
- How are negative stereotypes dispelled?

How does your program allow you to take ownership of your treatment plan?
- How is the treatment plan right for you?
- What would you change?
- How much have you participated in creating it?

Describe your permanency plan.
- What does your permanency plan mean to you?
- Do you know how you got it?
- Do you agree with your permanency plan?

How are you able to pursue your personal goals?
- How do your goals become part of your treatment plan?
- What resources are available to help you pursue your goals?
- Who do you credit for helping you reach your goals?

How has the program helped you develop lasting relationships?
- What advice would you give to adults about creating relationships with you?

What supports do you need to help you be successful?
- What are you successful at?
- What is important to you today?
- What emotional support do you need?
- What community support do you need?

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