

YAB Welcome Binder

A Resource for YAB Supporters

The Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board (YAB) is made up of current and former substitute care youth. The purpose of the YAB is to educate, advocate, and bring about positive change in the substitute care system.

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Introduction

This is an in-depth guide for staff who are interested in beginning a board, supporting a board, or becoming a YAB Regional Coordinator. You can request electronic copies of any of the resources mentioned in this guide by emailing Stephanie Brooks at stb101@pitt.edu.

The mission of the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board is to educate, advocate, and bring about positive change in the substitute care system. The YAB structure is youth led and staff supported. There are many benefits for youth who attend YAB meetings. Youth have the opportunity to give back through advocacy and community service. They learn facilitation and presentation skills that look excellent on a college application or job resume. Youth also learn leadership and professional development skills. Many YAB alumni go on to have successful careers in social work or advocacy.

The YAB is a project of the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center:

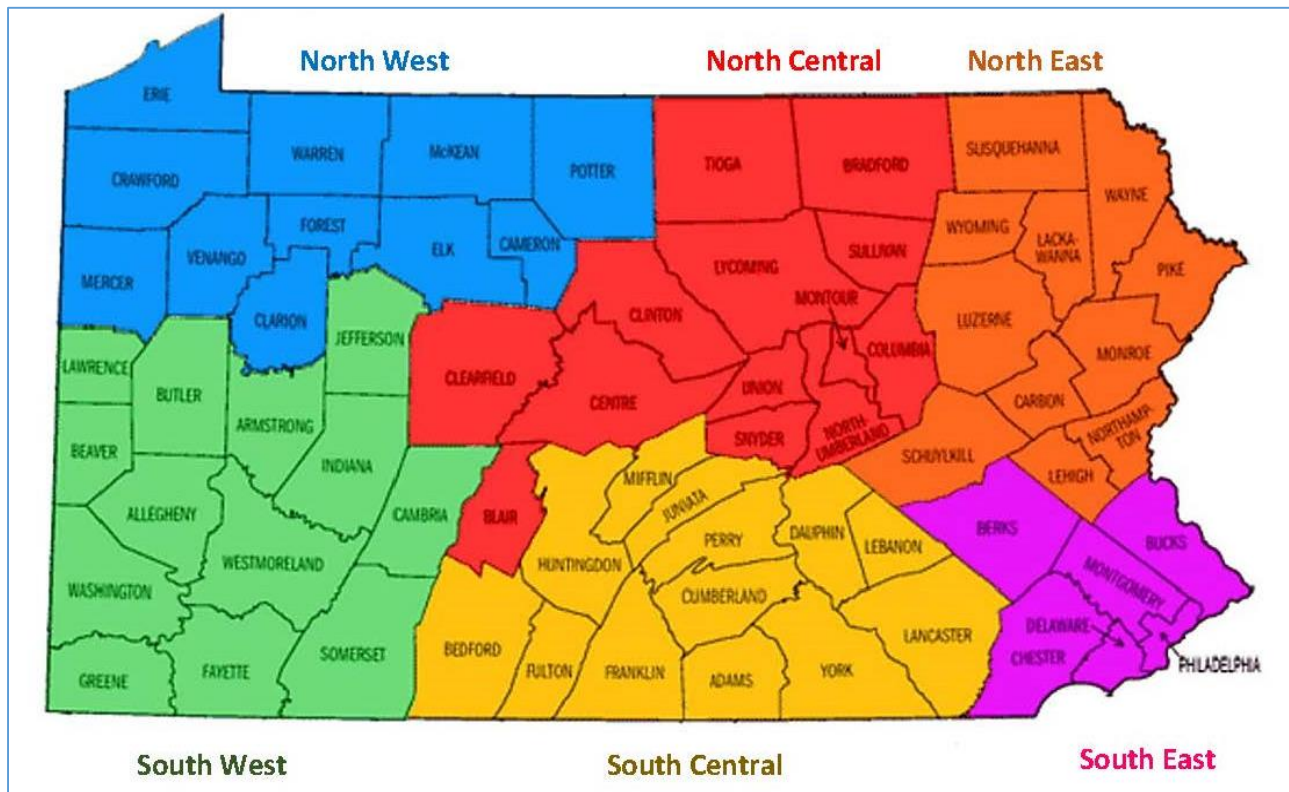


Our Work

Here are a few of the many accomplishments of the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board

- Successfully advocated for Pennsylvania's adoption of Fostering Connections provisions which resulted in PA Act 80 and Act 91
- Creation of youth friendly documents including:
 - Fostering Connections Poster
 - Normalcy and Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard flyers/posters
 - Grievance Form
 - National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) flyer
- Participation on workgroups with internal and external stakeholders
 - Fostering Connections
 - Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) Elimination
- Children in Foster Care Act
- YAB Summit 2008 Youth Recommendations in Federal Child and Family Services Review
- Hosting annual YAB Leadership Summits since 2012
- Co-train presentations at SWAN/IL conferences and quarterly meetings, as well as local training for resource families and other professionals
- Focus Group Reports on Family Connections and Quality Case Management
- Creation of the Developmentally Appropriate Freedoms and Normalcy Recommendations

Regional Youth Advisory Boards and Contacts



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South Central YAB:

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Northeast, North Central, Northwest YAB:

Marvin Butts

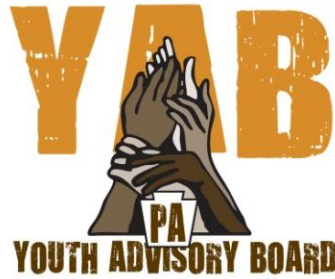
mdb112@pitt.edu

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Structure and Philosophy





The Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board Bylaws

Article I – Name and Purpose

Section I – Name

The name of this youth leadership entity is the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board (PA YAB).

Section II – Purpose

The purpose of the PA YAB is to educate, advocate, and form partnerships to create positive change in the child welfare system.

Article II – Membership and Structure

Section I – Membership Eligibility

All youth and young adults age 14 and above are eligible to become members of their local or regional YAB. Youth must be elected in order to be a member of the statewide YAB. See Article III for more details.

Section II – Regional YAB Structure

The PA YAB is divided into six regional boards as follows: Southeast, Northeast, North Central, South Central, Northwest, and Southwest. Each regional YAB has an appointed regional YAB coordinator.

Section III – Statewide YAB Structure

The statewide YAB is supported by the PA Child Welfare Resource Center and draws its members from the 6 regional boards. The statewide YAB is coordinated by the Youth Quality Improvement Specialists at PA Child Welfare Resource Center.

Section IV – Communication

All officers and alternates of the YAB shall have an appropriate email address. Regional YAB coordinators are responsible for ensuring communication occurs between members. PA YAB members and elected representatives have a

number of avenues to get information and updates about what is happening around the Pennsylvania Child Welfare System. It is the responsibility of the statewide coordinator and all PA YAB members to keep these updated and informational. PA YAB will maintain its quarterly newsletter, social media accounts, and website as informational and promotional needs change.

Article III – Officers and Elections

Section I – Regional Representation at Statewide YAB Meetings

Regional representatives at YAB statewide meetings will be elected by their peers from their regional YABs by the election process of their choice. There are four elected officers and four alternate officers from each region. Regional representatives must be active in their regions and be active in meetings.

Section II – Terms

Regional representatives serve a minimum of 1 year and may be re-elected up until they turn 21 years old. The officer must have not yet turned 21 by the time of the election in order to be elected. Youth are invited to be a part of their regional or local YAB after they turn 21, but their role should be that of an alumnus, and not a youth. (Note: Things to consider when working with alumni – need for clearances, transportation, and the inability to compensate them with stipend money).

Section III – Elections

Elections are managed by the regional YABs and can vary by region. To be elected as an officer, the person would have had to attend at least three YAB meetings; local or regional. Active participation via WebEx will count towards attendance. All elections should be held no later than February of each year. All regions should design election processes that are fair, competitive, and allow input from throughout the region.

Article IV – Meetings of Members

Section I – Regular Meetings

Regular meetings shall occur quarterly at the statewide level.

Section II – Meeting Attendance

Elected youth officers are required to attend at least two out of four statewide YAB meetings per year. Alternates may attend in the officer's place. Other regional YAB members may attend as space allows.

Section III – Voting

All issues to be voted on will be decided by a simple majority vote of those regional youth advisory board members present at the meeting when the vote takes place.

Section IV – Vacancies, Resignations, and Terminations of Officers

If officer misses more than two meetings during a fiscal year, he or she is not eligible to be re-elected. It is up to the youth representative to let staff know that their absence is for a valid reason prior to the scheduled meeting. If an officer resigns or is terminated during his or her term, the Regional YAB Coordinator shall hold votes to appoint one of the alternate officers to take his or her place. Terminations occur at the discretion of the Regional YAB Coordinator or Statewide YAB Coordinator.

Article V – Committees

Section I – Committee Formation

Youth officers are able to join committees based on personal preferences and skills. Regional YABs may organize themselves however they see fit, although, they are encouraged to mirror the committee structure adopted by the statewide YAB.

Section II – YAB Core

YAB Core is made up of five elected regional representatives. These members are responsible for planning and facilitating statewide YAB meetings. They will participate in up to four conference calls prior to each statewide YAB meeting.

Article VI – Amendments

Section I – Amendments

These bylaws may be amended when necessary by members of the statewide YAB and a two-thirds majority of the elected officers and alternates of the PA YAB.

Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board Expectations

In an effort to continue to provide a learning environment for all youth who attend Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board meetings, we have come up with meeting expectations. Please review these expectations with youth members before they participate in a meeting. We expect all participants, youth and staff to model these expectations. The YAB statewide meetings also have group guidelines that YAB leaders developed.

Guidelines

- Confidentiality and Privacy – what is shared during a meeting, remains in the room
- Respect Others – this includes opinions and personal differences
- Raise hand to speak
- Respect the facility
- Please be respectful with cell phone use
- Avoid side conversations
- Stay open to participate and to learn
- Keep conversations PG-13
- Communicate information with your regions
- Dress code for statewide YAB meetings is business casual

Dress Code

- Definition of Business Casual: A style of clothing that is less formal than traditional business wear, but is still intended to give a professional and businesslike impression
 - Business Casual Suggestions: Sweater, collar without a necktie, polo, blouse, black/brown/navy/gray pants, pressed khakis, knee length skirt or dress
 - Quote: “Dress for the job you want, not the job you have.”
 - Quote: “Always dress like you are at a job interview.”
1. This is an opportunity for **leadership, learning, and advocacy** – the purpose of YAB meetings and activities is for youth to have the opportunity to advocate for changes in the child welfare system and to learn how to be leaders. Youth should volunteer to participate and see this as more than an opportunity to miss school for the day. While we do all that we can to make activities fun and engaging, sometimes projects require work and patience. This will require youth to be willing to be trained on current trends in the foster care system and to share this information with their regional or local youth advisory boards.
 2. It is important that youth have a history of participating and playing a leadership role in their local or regional youth advisory boards before participating at the Statewide Youth Advisory Board, so that they can get the most out of this experience.

3. This is an excellent **learning opportunity**, however, when meetings take place during school hours, it is important that attendees are in good educational standing. Meaning that they have permission from their teachers and advisors to miss school for a day, and that they have made arrangements to catch up on any work that is missed.
4. **Respect for others** – It is really important that all of our meetings and YAB events are safe for all youth to attend. This includes respecting other opinions that may be different from your own (agree to disagree). Bullying, disrespect, and making fun of another youth member will not be tolerated.
5. **Respect of their environment** – It is important that all participants clean up after themselves. That means they should throw away their lunch when they are finished and take all of their meeting materials with them.
6. **Hotel Expectations** – Youth Advisory Board members and their staff who are traveling over 2 hours or 200 miles to statewide YAB meetings at the Child Welfare Resource Center are able to request hotel reservations. The cost of hotel reservations comes out of regional YAB budgets. Please discuss with your regional YABs on how you would like to handle hotel reservations for statewide meetings.

Note: Due to changes in Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), the Child Welfare Resource Center will no longer room youth who are over the age of 18 with youth who are under the age of 18. Keep this in mind when requesting hotel reservations for statewide meetings, as it will impact the number of rooms needed.

Statewide YAB Core Member Structure

Goal

The goal of the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board (YAB) is to educate, advocate, and form partnerships to create a positive change in the substitute care system. The YAB does this with a youth led, staff supported structure. In order to be more in line with a youth-led philosophy, a structure is being implemented to hear more input from youth. In September 2016, youth voted to create a YAB core structure so that youth leaders can learn how to facilitate meetings and to have more input into the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board.

Goals for YAB Core:

- Youth will have more opportunities to make decisions about the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board including project and event planning
- Youth will practice leadership, presentation, and advocacy skills
- These youth will continue to develop professionally through these opportunities

Role

The primary role of YAB Core members is to plan and facilitate statewide YAB meetings. The tasks include:

- Participating on 3-4 YAB Core planning calls between each statewide YAB meeting with a total of 10-12 conference calls for membership
- Completing tasks and handouts
- Preparation to facilitate statewide YAB meetings that happen on a quarterly basis

Membership

YAB Core will have five youth members elected by members of the statewide YAB. These youth should have experience leading their regional YABs and have participated at the statewide YAB meetings. YAB Core members will serve for a one-year term, starting in January of each year.

Election

YAB Core elections will take place in January of each year at the YAB Statewide meeting. Youth who are interested in being a part of YAB Core should let Marvin Butts know at MDB122@pitt.edu. Youth who are interested in YAB Core should prepare a speech that is about 3-5 minutes in length. Presentations can be speeches, pre-recorded, in person, or written statements. Youth will present and also have a chance to answer questions from their peers. After all of the presentations are completed, statewide YAB members will fill out their ballots and an employee of the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center will tally up votes. YAB Core members who are elected will stay after the statewide YAB meeting to give Marvin their availability for planning calls.

Structuring a Local or Regional Youth Advisory Board

Each regional or local board does have the autonomy to structure its board to meet the needs of their youth. Here are some examples of some local and regional boards are structured:

- Regional leaders are chosen and nominated by staff
 - Youth must show commitment and a level of maturity
 - Communication is essential
- Workgroups are created to work on projects faster
- Hold elections as needed
- Intercession work is assigned to county participants so that progress is efficient
- Schedule meetings for officers and general members every other month
- Development of board member requirements
- An interested youth must attend a certain number of meetings and be nominated by a staff person
- Members elect their regional YAB Core members



Administration and Forms



Meeting Tracking Forms and Sign-in Sheets

For strategic planning, it is important to have an understanding of how many youth are participating in various activities. This allows us to target our growth and prioritize our outreach efforts. It also allows us to capture data for state and federal reporting in which we highlight the great work being done at all YAB levels (local, regional, statewide). After each regional or local YAB activity, please forward the following to Stephanie Brooks at stb101@pitt.edu.

- Sign-in Sheet
- Minutes or Summary of Activity
- Tracking Form – Blank tracking form is in appendix and link to form is here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TBFFYGV>
- Next meeting or activity dates

Multimedia Releases

The YAB has various outlets for highlighting our YAB leaders. We utilize our website (<http://www.independentlivingpa.org/>), videos, and social media (<https://www.facebook.com/PAYouthAdvisoryBoard/>). In order for us to post pictures of our members, they need to have a Multimedia Release Form signed by their parent or guardian if they are a minor. These need to be filled out for each event. You can find these forms on our YAB website at <http://www.independentlivingpa.org/>. Simply update the event, location, and date.

- Minor Multimedia Release Form
- Adult (18+) Multimedia Release Form

Supply Requests

The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center wants to assist YAB supporters who are taking the time to coordinate and encourage regional youth advisory board events. Please contact us if you have any supply needs to support your youth advisory board. We may be able to provide YAB brochures, YAB logo items, and printed materials for meetings and trainings.



Resources and Support



Trainings Available for YAB Members

The YAB is a great opportunity for youth to learn as much as they can about advocacy, professionalism, and the child welfare system. The following trainings will assist youth in sharing their own story, educating others, and effectively recommending changes to the child welfare system. These trainings are available for local, regional, and statewide members. If you are interested in receiving any of the trainings below, please contact Marvin Butts at mdb122@pitt.edu or your Regional YAB Coordinator. Contact information for coordinators can be found on page 4 of this welcome packet.

- **Know Your Rights Training**
This interactive training teaches youth in the foster care system about their rights in the system. They learn how to use the “Know Your Rights” manual and can discuss how to speak up for themselves during case planning and court hearings.
- **Know Your Rights Training Part II: How to Conduct Yourself in Court**
This training prepares youth for attendance in courtrooms. Youth will discuss: what to wear, how to speak, and how to present themselves so that they will be ready for their court date.
- **Strategic Sharing**
Sharing your story is one of the ways the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board advocates for positive change in the foster care system. This training teaches youth how to share their stories safely and strategically. *This training is required in order for youth to participate in YAB panels or presentations.*
- **Time Management**
Tips on how to manage your time as a busy young adult! Fight time bandits, color code your calendar, and learn how to meet your goals!
- **An Introduction to the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board**
This training is great for the new or veteran YAB member. Learn about our structure, mission, and goals. Pick up pointers on how to get started!
- **The YAB Developmentally Appropriate Freedoms and Normalcy Recommendations**
The Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board gathered their recommendations about Developmentally Appropriate Freedoms and Normalcy. If you want to support this work, this is a great way to understand what we are advocating for.

- **An introduction to Advocacy**

There are a lot of ways to get your voice heard in advocacy. This training will fill your advocacy toolbox, practice skills, and find how your individuality and talents can help support the causes you are interested in!

YAB Developed Materials

YAB has a long history of collaborating with stakeholders to develop youth friendly resources for its members and youth who are in the substitute care system. Below is a catalog of our products. Electronic or hard copy of materials can be requested by contacting Stephanie Brooks at stb101@pitt.edu.

- YAB Developmentally Appropriate Freedoms and Normalcy Recommendations
- Advocacy Toolkit
- Youth Friendly Flyers
 - Affordable Care Act
 - Fostering Connections – Re-entry
 - Normalcy
 - Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standards
 - National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

YAB's Orientation Packet

It can be intimidating for a youth to attend their first YAB meeting. Members put together a welcome packet which can be used to teach new members about the YAB. Please contact Stephanie Brooks at stb101@pitt.edu to request these documents.

Contents of Packet

1. Welcome Letter
2. Brochure
3. PowerPoint Presentation
4. Bylaws
5. YAB Accomplishments
6. NYTD Flyer

How Do I Make YAB Activities and Meetings Youth Led? Youth Developed Suggestions

- ❖ While staff, supporters, or external partners can participate in discussion, only youth have voting rights
- ❖ When there are opportunities to report out, youth should take the lead
- ❖ Youth design the agenda and meeting materials
- ❖ Youth lead project planning and activities
- ❖ Let youth facilitate the meeting
- ❖ The first half of each discussion should only include youth voices
- ❖ Staff, supporters, and external partners can leave the room for certain conversations and discussions to create safe sharing space for youth members
- ❖ Youth sit at main tables, while staff, supporters, and external partners sit on the outside of rooms
- ❖ Distribute certificates for accomplishments and trainings – This will help youth feel like they are making an impact
- ❖ ADVERTISE to reach youth who aren't part of YAB
- ❖ Inspirational / keynote youth speakers
- ❖ Leadership retreats
- ❖ Bring youth forward and have staff sit in the back of the room. Need more independence
- ❖ Less restrictions
- ❖ Have YAB spread the word, take it back to other friends in care, not just local boards
- ❖ Use youth friendly language, don't be afraid of slang here and there
- ❖ Advertise free food, everyone enjoys free food
- ❖ Raffle items that are needed in a youth's personal life
- ❖ Provide recommendation letters for their resumes and portfolios. This can support future jobs and academic goals
- ❖ Youth create and plan the activities, this allows youth to be in control, and more youth will come as a result
- ❖ Speaking classes are needed to help develop public speaking skills
- ❖ Leadership classes, or meet beforehand, skype meeting
- ❖ Youth should collaborate together to create the agenda. Help youth set up meetings where they can set the agenda and be prepared for decision-making
- ❖ Ensure every youth's voice be heard

Recruitment and Retention of Board Members

Step 1: New Members/Recruitment

- Make sure that everything you do has some element of fun or building friendships
- Hand invite youth in your programs
 - Handmade card
 - Ask them in person
- Schedule meetings in advance, choose a few of those meetings to really focus on recruitment
- Have a welcome packet for new members
- Explanation on what YAB is and the purpose and importance of the YAB
- Taking the time to try to get to know those who come to the meetings
- Keep new members up-to-date on projects and events
- Understand youth interests
 - Talk about what your YAB has accomplished
- Recruitment games
- Utilize Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) resources such as the Practice Improvement Specialists, Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) staff, and work with Independent Living Coordinators
- Use your external members and partners to make invites to new counties
 - Utilize judges, administrators, caseworkers, lawyers, and even the receptionists
- Have recruitment parties
- Youth from North Central YAB sent out nomination forms to IL coordinators asking if they knew of youth who have leadership characteristics and who might be interested in participating in YAB
- Request YAB space and make it eye-catching
 - Can you display your local or regional YAB information in a waiting room or high traffic areas in your building
 - Can your YAB have a bulletin board where important meeting information and news can be displayed

Step 2: Commitment of Members

- Organize a yearly calendar of all the meeting dates
 - Have upcoming dates listed big and bold on the bottom of meeting materials
- Even out the amount of work
- Have a location that meets everyone's needs as best you can
- Have a meeting with youth to find out what they want to work on/start with
- Incentives for attendance
 - Creating a punch card system where after a few meetings, participants can receive prizes
- Allow several weeks in advance of next meeting

- Projects to stay interested
- Youth Outreach
 - Reach out to youth after meetings to check in with them

Step 3: Activities to Get Involved In

- Coordinate youth panels where youth can share their personal experiences to caseworkers, foster/resource parents, judges, and/or administrators
 - Before youth share their story, we strongly encourage them to participate in Strategic Sharing Training. This training is specifically designed to help youth share their personal story in a way that is meaningful, effective, and safe
- Encourage your youth to make submissions for YAB's social media
- Attend the Older Youth Retreat which is held on University of Pittsburgh's Johnstown Campus
- Partner with pre-existing projects! This is a great learning opportunity
 - Fundraiser walks
 - Ronald McDonald House
 - Adopt a Highway
 - Shelters
 - Spending time with the elderly or young children
- Attend a regional or statewide YAB meeting with youth or visit another youth advisory board
- Peer Mentoring: Invite alumni speakers to your YAB
- Incorporate youth advisory board elements into your life skills classes

youth

SUBMISSIONS

Wanted:

Poetry • Artwork • Articles • Blog Posts • thoughts • "Real Talk" • Resources • Photos • Music • Videos • Shout outs • YAB Updates • Links

Send your Submissions to:

Marvin Butts MDB122@pitt.edu
717-795-9048

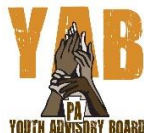
Facebook, Tumblr, & THE BLAST (Your Source for Everything Y.A.B.), YAB YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

YAB Social Media and Website

Youth are encouraged to submit to the YAB social media and marketing outlets. We keep a wide array of options available so that youth can participate as freely as possible.

Resources for Life After Foster Care

Stay Connected. Utilize Resources. Be Successful.



Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board Website

<http://www.independentlivingpa.org/Resources.htm>

The Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board's Resource Tab has a lot of resources that can help youth navigate education, budgeting, health and wellness, and much more! The website is in the process of being reorganized so keep checking back!



Juvenile Law Center – A County by County Resource Guide

<http://www.jlc.org/resources/county-resource-guide>

The Juvenile Law Center created this database as a resource for older youth and young adults in Pennsylvania who are aging out of the foster care system.



Foster Club

<https://www.fosterclub.com/>

Being placed in foster care can be a chaotic and anguishing experience for a young person. Foster Club is dedicated to providing a peer support network for children and youth in foster care.

Fostering Change Network

(<http://www.fosteringchangenetwork.com/>)

Coordinates a yearly conference for transitioning foster youth (18 -20) and adults who are alumni of the foster care system.



Foster Focus Magazine

<http://www.fosterfocusmag.com/>

Judges, lawyers, caseworkers, advocates, foster parents, adoptive parents, foster care alumni, guidance counselors, teachers, principals, and current foster youth all read Foster Focus. The go-to source of foster care news and information for anyone involved in any way with the foster care industry.

- List of Famous Former Fosters and Adopted Kids: <http://www.fosterfocusmag.com/famous-foster-kids>
- What Foster Care feels like Gallery: <http://www.fosterfocusmag.com/what-foster-care-feels-photo-gallery>



The Chronicle of Social Change - <https://chronicleofsocialchange.org/>

Launched in 2013, *The Chronicle of Social Change* is an online news publication dedicated to solution-based news coverage of child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, and educational issues faced by vulnerable children.