



JOURNEY TO SUCCESS

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION:

UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

The Journey to Success Community Conversation guide is a one-stop playbook to help advocates put the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s “[Fostering Youth Transitions 2023](#)” (FYT 2023) report into swift action. **This guide was created in partnership with lived experience (LEx) leaders — youth and young adults who have experienced foster care.** It will highlight the reasons to hold a conversation in your state and equip you with easy-to-use tips and examples. Be sure to check out [the Appendix!](#) First, let’s cover the basics...

WHAT ARE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS?

Community conversations are a powerful advocacy tool for reform. These events, which can be held in person or virtually, connect LEx leaders, advocates, and policy experts with policymakers, agency leaders, and other community members to understand, discuss, and act on the latest

research on youth who have experienced foster care. Through effective, data-driven community conversations, we can work together to raise awareness, support young people transitioning from foster care, spur data-driven systems, and create youth-centered policy change.



CREDIT: FosterClub

WHAT IS JOURNEY TO SUCCESS?

The Journey to Success campaign was built on the legacy of youth advocacy. We launched over a year ago to call for federal policy improvements to create better opportunities and outcomes for all youth and young adults who experience foster care by promoting their healing, family connections, and economic security. The Community Conversation Guide is one of **a set of campaign resources** to support progress toward that shared goal. This guide was designed and developed in partnership with LEx leaders as part of the Journey to Success value to center individuals with lived experience in foster care in all aspects of the campaign.

To shape **federal policy reform**, Journey to Success brings together a diverse network of local, state, and national organizations to share research, analysis, and a full range of perspectives with policymakers.

State-based campaign partners are co-convened by the State Policy and Reform Center, a project of the Partnership for America's Children, and FosterClub, the national network for youth in care. The Youth Law Center, Think of Us, and others are also working in partnership with the campaign.

WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

We are grateful you're planning a conversation in your community on securing better futures for youth in foster care. Please reach out to **Eddy Vanderkwaak** if you have questions as you plan an event in your community, and be on the lookout for virtual interactive forums for ongoing support.

WHAT ARE THE KEY FINDINGS OF THE FYT 2023 REPORT?

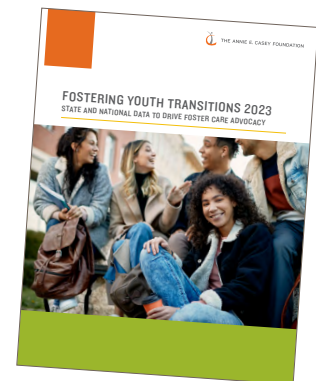
The newly released report reveals a clear picture of the unmet needs of youth in foster care and urges decision-makers to take immediate steps to better equip young people to thrive as they become adults. It **traces the experiences** of young people ages 14 to 21 who were in foster care from 2006 to 2021 across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

Advocates should familiarize themselves with both the national findings and their respective state-level profiles within the report.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Despite tremendous need, the Chafee program — one of the primary federal programs dedicated to supporting successful transitions to adulthood for youth in foster care — is **servicing fewer than half of all eligible youth**.
2. Our nation's foster care system is **failing to find permanent families for more than half of youth in foster care**, meaning that nearly 20,000 youth per year age out of foster care on their own. *At this stage, the steep climb these youth have already been on becomes more arduous and too often results in youth falling off the path to success as they struggle in school and work and often experience homelessness and incarceration.*

At the same time, the report emphasizes what we have long known: **There is enormous untapped potential to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of youth in foster care** through targeted support and resources during their pivotal adolescent years.



Specifically, the key findings in the report align with Journey to Success' recommendation to focus advocacy efforts on urgent reforms to:

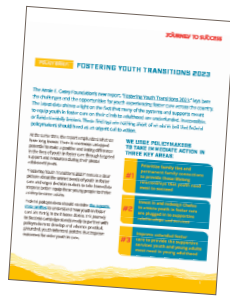
1. **Prioritize family ties and permanent family connections** to provide those lifelong relationships that are the basis for succeeding in school, work, and family life.
2. **Retool Chafee** to ensure youth in foster care are plugged in to supportive relationships and services they need to transition successfully to young adulthood.
3. **Improve extended foster care** so it can provide the supportive services young people ages 18-21 need to succeed on their journey to a thriving and successful adulthood.

The Journey to Success team has addressed the above priorities with recommended federal policy actions, as detailed below. Each recommendation is based on research, best practices, and extensive work alongside youth and young adults. Please choose from the following list of resources according to your stage of community conversation planning:

JOURNEY TO SUCCESS FYT 2023 POLICY RESOURCES

POLICY BRIEF

ALL THE DETAILS: We suggest using this [Policy Brief](#) to help your planning team digest the national data covered in the FYT 2023 report and recommended policy reforms at the start of your planning process.



POLICY TIPSHEET

JUST THE HIGHLIGHTS: The [Tip Sheet](#) is a condensed version of the Policy Brief to consider sharing with your community conversation attendees as part of your event.

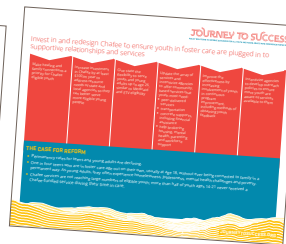


POLICY ONE-PAGERS

THE QUICK VERSIONS: We recommend sharing these with community attendees for meetings with their legislators and other decision-makers after you've spent time briefing them on the data and policy recommendations.



[Family Connections One-Pager](#)



[Chafee One-Pager](#)



[Extended Foster Care One-Pager](#)

WHY HOST A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON THE FYT 2023 REPORT?

Foster youth advocates — and their real-life stories and expertise — have been a driving force for policy change for over 20 years. Their work has secured **meaningful legislative improvements** for youth in foster care, dating back to the 1999 Chafee program enactment. Your FYT conversation has the power to:

- 1. Steer decision-makers** toward actions that better serve adolescents and young adults, especially those that support family ties and permanence, retooling the Chafee program, and improving extended foster care.
- 2. Ensure the inclusion of lived experience perspectives** within discussions of the FYT 2023 data.
- 3. Build a deeper understanding** among policymakers, program leaders, and other decision-makers of the experiences of youth and young adults in foster care in your community.
- 4. Spur the next era of policy and program improvements** to better serve young people, centered on data and lived foster care experiences by creating an environment where all community members feel empowered to engage.
- 5. Facilitate healing and a sense of belonging** for community members through shared conversation and open dialogue where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.

WHO CAN USE THE GUIDE?

This guide was created for LEx leaders and all local and state-based organizations and advocates working to improve the outcomes of children and youth who have experienced foster care.

- We strongly recommend those using this guide incorporate the key principles of youth-adult partnership¹. Organizations may utilize other youth engagement models, including youth-led models. Regardless of the model, it's critical that youth with lived experience and adult allies partner throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the community conversation.
- To ensure this guide is helpful to advocates of all levels of experience, we've provided a menu of accessible tips and examples to choose from when hosting community conversations.



CREDIT: Iowa Department of Human Rights, Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning

¹ “Youth-adult partnerships happen when young people and adults become engaged together in their communities; they are relationships between youth and adults where there is mutuality in teaching, learning, and action.” Source: Zeldin, S., McDaniel, A., Topitzes, D., & Lorens, M.B. (2001). “Bringing young people to the table: Effects on adults and youth organizations.” *CYD Journal*, 2(2) p. 20-27.

If you are interested in convening a community conversation and don't feel you currently have the network to support you, reach out to [Eddy Vanderkwaak](#) of the Journey to Success team for help getting plugged into advocacy organizations in your state dedicated to youth in foster care.

WHY DOES THIS GUIDE FOCUS ON PERMANENCY, RETOOLING CHAFEE, AND IMPROVING EXTENDED FOSTER CARE?

This guide focuses on these three key areas of the Journey to Success agenda because:

1. The FYT 2023 report data clearly highlights the pressing need for their reform.
2. Reinforcing these **foundational** areas is essential to create better outcomes for youth in foster care overall.
3. Our campaign's recent work with Congress tells us lawmakers are open to our collective advocacy efforts within these areas.

These factors create a real opportunity to improve the outcomes detailed in the FYT 2023 report. We must seize this moment by sharing our voices now and sharing our voices together.

GRATITUDE

Journey to Success is grateful to the team responsible for this guide, including researchers, advocates, communications professionals, and project managers. Specifically, we thank our LEx Leaders, Addison Anderson, Deza'Rae Collins, Eltuan Dawson, Kayla Powell, Mariah Thompson-Grissett, Ashawntae James, and Huyanna Tyneshia. We appreciate their deep expertise and time spent planning and developing the guide. **LOOK FOR THEIR WORDS OF WISDOM AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ADVOCATES THROUGHOUT THE GUIDE.**

We thank Cherae McWilliams and Todd Lloyd of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Rachel Rosenberg of ChildTrends, and Eddy Vanderkwaak of the Journey to Success team for their collaboration in developing this guide. We thank Margaret Martin, consultant to Journey to Success, for her collaboration as lead writer of the guide; Meridith Paulhus for her expert graphic design; and Angel Petite of FosterClub for her leadership and excellent project management. We also thank Florida's Children First and Kentucky Youth Advocates for their review of the guide and their advocacy partnership. Finally, we are grateful to our philanthropic partners for their support, including the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.



CREDIT: Kentucky Youth Advocates

PHASE ONE:**PREPARING FOR THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION**

We devoted the most space to this phase of the community conversation because thoughtful preparation, alongside LEx leaders, will set your event up for success. Remember that our team is here to support you whenever questions arise!

ASSESS

1. **The entire planning team should be up to speed on the FYT 2023 report data** — both at the national level and **within your state** — and the opportunities to improve permanency and retool foster care it reveals.
2. **Next, begin narrowing the focus of your conversation and determining what a successful outcome looks like.**
 - a. Refer back to **page 4**, which includes several “whys” behind hosting a community conversation. Use this as a jumping-off point to identify the specific goals for your event.
 - b. **The three Journey to Success priorities and your state data can guide the focus of your conversation.** As a team, review the **Journey to Success brief** and the following discussion questions as you plan your agenda.

IMPORTANT NOTE: In addition to covering the **Discussion Questions on page 7** as you *plan* your event, you may include the most relevant questions below as part of the *community conversation agenda* itself for attendees to consider. We'll come back to this later in the guide.

3. **Conduct an up-front assessment of what your team will need to convene a successful community conversation**, including team members with the experience and time to invest in the partnership and participation of individuals with lived experience, including:



“STAY PASSIONATE AND PERSISTENT ... ADVOCACY WORK CAN BE CHALLENGING AND PROGRESS CAN BE SLOW, BUT IT IS IMPORTANT TO STAY COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE.”

- ADDISON ANDERSON

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How well is your state doing at ensuring young people have been connected to permanent families before they leave foster care?
2. Can more be done to ensure connections for them to mentors and other supportive, caring adults?
3. As the reported reasons for entry to foster care shift, how well are systems responding with solutions addressing the level of need?
4. Are workforce shortages hampering the ability of agencies to put aid in the hands of eligible young people?
5. What more can be done to prevent homelessness among young people who age out of foster care without a family?
6. What communities have designed replicable solutions with their young leaders to deliver support to those who most need it, where and when they need it?
7. How well is your state doing at ensuring young people have access to education, employment, and other chances to learn, grow, and heal during what is a key developmental phase in their lives?
8. Are the young people most in need of extended foster care disconnected from or distrustful of agencies' ability to help them gain access to services designed with their needs in mind?
9. Are the available transition services programs keeping up with technology and the needs of today's young people?



JTS TEAM TIP: Community conversations should be ongoing. Don't feel you need to cover every issue important to the community in your first convening. You may want to focus first on the issue your collective team feels is most pressing, then come back to other topics in future convenings.

- a. Assess organizational capacity to support individuals with lived experience in **partnering to design and hold the community conversation and individuals with lived experience in participating in the community conversation.**

Considerations should include:

- Providing and/or ensuring LEx leaders have received strategic sharing training (see [the Appendix](#) for more) to help them share their experiences safely. This is an opportunity for LEx leaders partnering in the event design to train participants in strategic sharing if familiar and experienced.
- Ensuring LEx leaders can review the data report and discuss how to connect

their own experiences before the community conversation.

- Identifying the budget available to support LEx partners and participants by providing compensation, transportation, childcare and/or other supports such as access to internet/laptops at your agency to participate virtually.
 - Developing a plan for how your organization can engage and support LEx leaders beyond the community conversation event.
- b. Identify the network of LEx leaders that your organization could bring into this effort, including youth advisory boards in your state. **The Journey to Success team can help facilitate those connections if needed.**

- c. Meet with LEx leaders as partners to determine the specific goals of the event and the diverse range of participants who will contribute to a successful outcome.



JTS TEAM TIP: Involving LEx leaders early in the process will help keep event planning centered around those the community conversation aims to help.

- d. Communicate and promote the event, including among other important stakeholders like lawmakers and the media.
- e. Coordinate the logistics, including identifying the location/virtual platform and any audio-visual equipment or other supplies needed.

Taking the time to think through the above will help you decide if you currently have the resources within your team or if you will need to call in partners to support you.

PLAN

1. **Choose attendees:** Keep in mind your conversation focus from [page 4](#) and create a list of invitees. This list should be compiled alongside LEx leaders. If you want to invite a large number of attendees, consider using breakout sessions to give everyone the space and psychological safety to participate.

Recommendations include:

- a. LEx leaders (Reminder: LEx leaders should be both event partners and participants.)
- b. Policymakers
- c. Agency/Program leaders
- d. Service providers
- e. Community members
- f. Other state and local decision-makers
- g. The media (We'll provide more considerations for press engagement later in the guide.)

“AS A LIVED EXPERIENCE LEADER AND ADVOCATE, YOU HAVE THE POWER TO DRIVE CHANGE IN YOUR COMMUNITIES, ORGANIZATIONS, POLICY, AND AN ARRAY OF OTHER AREAS. YOUR VOICE, EXPERTISE, AND EXPERIENCES MATTER.”

- MARIAH THOMPSON-GRISSETT

2. **Guiding principles:** Mutually agree upon the values that will underpin your event. We've shared several resources in [the Appendix](#) to help you.
3. **Compensation:** Allow for compensation for LEx participants and support for transportation and childcare, if not providing on-site care.
4. **Choose your event date and venue (in person or virtual):**
 - a. **Date considerations:** We encourage you to begin planning right away and aim to host your first convening in June or July 2023.



JTS TEAM TIP: The U.S. Congress is typically in “recess” throughout August, which lawmakers spend in their home districts. This is an excellent time to invite your U.S. senator or representative to a follow-up community conversation, sending an invitation well in advance given their busy schedules. See tentative federal legislative calendars [here](#) and [here](#), as well as a compiled state-level legislative calendar [here](#).

b. Venue considerations:

- + **In person:** Aim for a location convenient to the most participants, and consider going to the community rather than the community coming to you. Providing food and refreshments, childcare, and translation services where needed will help support an equitable, productive experience for all participants.
- + **Virtual:** Ensure participants have access to the connectivity and online platform needed, and provide ample instruction for using the platform — including “how to” screenshots — for a smooth virtual experience for everyone.

5. Build an agenda: (See [the Appendix](#) for sample agendas you can repurpose to fit your goals.) Essential elements of a community conversation include:

a. Welcoming attendees and creating connections:

- + Plan for attendee registration upon arrival, and ask for participant emails for post-event follow-up communications.
- + Share a meal and/or create time for icebreakers to help attendees connect.

b. Introduction of attendees, meeting ground rules, and community conversation goals

c. Data overview:

- + Confirm the most impactful local themes to highlight from the data and incorporate them into the conversation.
- + **The following resources will support your data presentation:**
 - The Journey to Success [Policy Brief](#) and [Tip Sheet](#) will help your team digest the national data and share with attendees.
 - [State-level data profiles](#) are available for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.
 - For additional messaging support explaining key issues in a way that motivates understanding and action, see this [quick messaging guide from FrameWorks](#).

“CREATING THE COMMUNITIES WE ALL DESERVE IS BEST LED BY US, PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE. KEEP PERSISTING, AND DON’T BECOME WHAT YOU’RE TRYING TO CHANGE.”

- KAYLA POWELL

d. Data discussion:

- + Make time for group discussion, with breakout sessions as needed. Ideally, the format includes groups of 12 participants or fewer so those who wish to share have that opportunity.
- + Refer to the three Journey to Success priorities and the [Discussion Questions on page 7](#) most relevant to your state data for possible topics and questions to weave into your community conversation.
- + Draft any additional conversation questions in partnership with young leaders; this will help prevent framing questions that perpetuate stereotypes, introduce biases, or stigmatize attendees.
- + Prepared questions and a trained moderator and notetaker are recommended. If splitting into smaller groups, you will need these roles in each breakout session.

e. Key takeaways:

- + Build in time to summarize the key takeaways of the conversation. If using breakout sessions, one participant from each group can volunteer to share verbally from their respective group or post sticky notes with feedback to be read by a moderator.

- + Provided they feel comfortable doing so, participants with lived experience are also encouraged to share their expertise related to the data.
 - + Create space for LEx partners and other key community stakeholders to highlight relevant policy solutions.
- f. Close by sharing gratitude for attendee participation and planned next steps.**
- g. After finalizing your agenda, assign roles, including facilitators devoted to the following roles:**
- + Welcome and registration
 - + Discussion moderation
 - + Notetaking
 - + Tech management
 - + Media relations, if press is included
 - + Make space for LEx leaders to partner with you in these key roles and ensure you've spent prep time together so everyone is set up for success.
- h. Review the agenda and distribute any essential information invitees should have before the meeting or pre-work necessary for a successful event.** Make a plan to have the materials needed to support your agenda ready for event day — including necessary handouts, pens, sticky notes, etc.

ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITY



Did you know June 30 is an important deadline to weigh in on your state or tribe's plan to strengthen its child welfare system?

Each state and tribe is required to establish specific goals to strengthen its child welfare system through a five-year Child and Family Services Plan. And each year, states and tribes are required to submit a report, called the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR), on the progress made toward those goals.

States and tribes are also required to engage young people and other stakeholders in developing their APSR and to report on how this stakeholder feedback informed policy. Importantly, their reports cover many issues related to the Chafee program and older youth, including how states and tribes are doing in coordinating critical services like Foster Youth To Independence vouchers, Medicaid, and support for LGBTQI+ youth and young adults.

This reporting requirement impacts future state/tribal child welfare plans and presents an excellent opportunity to advocate for issues important to transition age youth and meaningfully include LEx voices in the process.

Take the following actions as part of your community conversation before June 30 to reflect LEx feedback in your state or tribe's APSR.

- Ask the child welfare agency their process for getting stakeholder feedback. You can start by asking your child welfare agency director who is coordinating the APSR process.
- From there, create a plan to invite your state/tribal agency to your community conversation to hear LEx participant feedback directly, or build time into your agenda for attendees to share written feedback.
 - For written feedback, develop a template for attendees to easily make comments.
 - Submit comments to your child welfare agency to ensure LEx voices are heard!

Read the [APSR Program Instruction](#) for more detail.

PROMOTE

1. Develop promotional material for your event alongside LEx leaders, for example, emails, flyers, and social media posts.

Journey to Success is here to answer questions or offer best practices as you promote your event.

2. Recruit LEx leaders, policymakers, program leaders, community members, and other state and local decision-makers to participate.

“LIVE YOUR LIFE, AND LIVE YOUR TRUTH. REMEMBER TO BE THAT SOMEONE THAT YOU NEEDED.”

- ASHAWNTAE JAMES

Visit this link, where you can enter your address to obtain a list of your federal, state, and local elected officials and their contact information. Elected representatives keep very busy schedules, so it's important to put your event on their radar with as much notice as possible. Sometimes, elected officials will send staff to represent them if they cannot personally attend. Don't be discouraged by this! Staffers are excellent contacts to have as part of your advocacy efforts.



JTS TEAM TIP: Find out if your U.S. senator or representative serves on the Senate Finance Committee or the House Committee on Ways and Means. These members are in a great position to advance federal policies that improve outcomes for youth who experience foster care.



CREDIT: Iowa Department of Human Rights, Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning

3. Determine how, or if, you will include media.

Press coverage is an effective tool to bring attention to foster care issues; however, press involvement must be handled carefully so LEx participants do not feel exploited or pressured to speak with members of the media. Key considerations for inviting media to your event include:

a. Establishing expectations and ground rules:

- + Communicate to attendees that media will be in attendance — including on all promotional materials — so there are no surprises.
- + Make clear to LEx participants that they have zero obligation to speak with members of the media if they do not wish.
- + Designate a planning team member to liaise with media ahead of time to establish ground rules — e.g., parameters around the use of attendee names or photos and any aspects of the agenda that are off limits to press.

b. Preparation:

- + Determine ahead of the event, in partnership with LEx participants, who will be available as a media spokesperson(s). Color-coded name tags are one way to indicate those available for media interviews.
- + Prep your LEx spokesperson/spokespeople for media interviews by supporting them in key message development and drafting mock interview questions for practice.
- + Develop strategies to defer questions LEx participants do not wish to answer to your media liaison.

c. Access:

- + Consider whether you will invite media to the entire event or limit access to select portions.

For example, you may invite media to listen to the data presentation, then hold breakout discussions closed to press to make space for authentic and vulnerable conversations.

- + If the media is not invited to the conversation, you may promote press coverage through a follow-up statement or a meeting readout that summarizes the key points of the meeting. Make sure to engage LEx leaders in developing this message.
- + Advocates have found success in inviting reporters who understand the subject matter, have existing relationships with advocates, and can be trusted to cover the event with integrity. Your media liaison should educate reporters as necessary before the event for more accurate coverage.

d. Follow up:

- + Immediately after the event, check in with media attendees to ensure they have everything they need for their article. This step often presents an opportunity to learn more about what the reporter is planning to write and to answer their questions — leading to more accurate stories.
- + Offer to have a LEx leader review the reporter's article before publication. Reporters will not always grant this opportunity, but it doesn't hurt to ask.
- + Share the published article with any LEx leaders participating in interviews before sharing with the larger group to confirm they don't have any concerns with the coverage. Thank them for sharing their story and expertise!

Navigating press engagement can sometimes feel daunting, but we've got your back! [Reach out](#) to the Journey to Success team with any questions as you're creating your media plan.

PHASE TWO:**HOSTING THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION**

Here, you get to put your great planning from Phase One to work! In this section, we'll cover best practices and reminders to help you get the most out of your community conversation.

The facilitator(s) welcoming attendees should cover the following:

1. Share event goals

→ For example, do you hope to educate policymakers and the media, or come away from the gathering with specific recommendations for elected officials? Clearly articulate to attendees where the meeting is headed.

2. Cover meeting expectations

→ Involve meeting participants, including LEx, in establishing shared meeting agreements to create a respectful meeting environment. Compile a list of shared agreements and post them in a prominent space.

→ Facilitate an ice-breaker to promote a comfortable, psychologically safe space for attendees. (See [the Appendix](#) for examples.)

3. Share appreciation

→ LEx participants, lawmakers, the media, and the broader community all play an important role. Thank them for devoting their time to a conversation on youth in foster care.

→ Key messages to share with LEx participants include:

- + Emphasize that the expertise gained from their lived experience gives them an especially important point of view.
- + Express that youth are not expected to share their stories if they do not wish. (Creating a psychologically safe space is paramount.)

- + Highlight that their engagement can change policies, pointing to the legacy of youth advocacy.

The facilitator(s) presenting the data should:

1. Be familiar with the data and the audience, sharing information in a way that's both relatable and clear. Aim for a nonpartisan, neutral, and trusted community member familiar with engaging with LEx leaders to create a psychologically safe environment.
2. Avoid jargon or sharing acronyms without explanation.

The facilitator(s) moderating the discussion of the data should:

1. Come prepared with ideas to engage the audience if participation is initially low, for example, using feedback walls with sticky notes instead of verbal responses.
2. Foster a respectful environment and redirect unproductive comments toward the focus of the community conversation.

The facilitator liaising with the media should:

1. Ensure that any invited reporters adhere to ground rules by only interviewing LEx leaders who have volunteered as spokespeople.
2. Remember that LEx participants should lead responses to media interview questions, as they are comfortable, and facilitators should play a supporting role.

PHASE THREE:**BUILDING MOMENTUM AFTER THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION**

The conversation is not over when the event ends! The goal is to link the community conversation to meaningful action and sustained advocacy.

Post-event actions your team can take include:

- 1. Creating a follow-up communication** summarizing the key themes and policy recommendations using your notetaker's documentation. Ask LEx participants for permission to use their quotes from the event to highlight their perspectives. (Be sure to thank all participants and distribute a prompt follow-up note.)
- 2. Contacting decision-makers to convey the above policy recommendations;** share any response received from lawmakers with participants.
- 3. Surveying all participants** to gather attendee feedback and refine future events.
- 4. Debriefing with the planning team on next steps.** Create space for LEx leaders to continue engaging on these topics, including inviting them to suggest next steps.

"THE GUIDE IS A HELPFUL AND SKILLFUL PRACTICE. I'D ENCOURAGE FOLKS TO NOT GIVE UP AND STAY PERSISTENT"

- ELTUAN DAWSON

- 5. Maintaining an ongoing relationship with press** covering your community conversation by sharing important developments in your advocacy work, helping keep foster care issues in the headlines in your state.



CREDIT: Iowa Department of Human Rights, Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning

APPENDIX:

RESOURCES AND EXAMPLES TO SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Use these resources and templates to support your own community conversation!

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND RESOURCES FOR YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

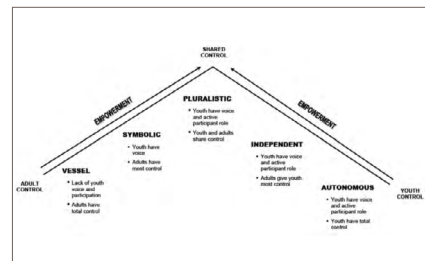
Authentic Youth Engagement

Authentic Youth Engagement is grounded in an understanding of adolescent development. It requires that adults and professionals working in partnership with young people recognize how they mature emotionally, mentally, and physically and anticipate what they may need to encourage and support that growth. The four core components of authentic youth engagement as defined by the **Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative** include: 1. Youth-adult partnership, 2. Preparation, 3. Opportunities, and 4. Support. Importantly, authentic youth engagement positions young people and adults as equal contributors to decision-making, fosters a balance of sharing ideas and information between youth and adults, maintains a focus on policy and practice improvement, and supports young people’s leadership and professional development.



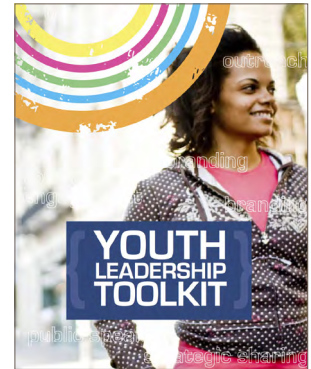
Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment (TYPE)

Several models of youth-adult partnerships exist and can provide a basis for decision-making structures and organizational self-examination. **FosterClub** recommends Wong, Zimmerman, and Parker’s empowerment framework which focuses on shifted control and access to resources in both its process and outcomes. Wong et al.’s **Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment (TYPE)** is represented as a pyramid. Within the pyramid continuum, empowerment becomes a process toward shared control as a way to initiate change. In that shared, transactional process, youth and adults bring their own strengths to decision-making.



FosterClub Youth Leadership Toolkit

The **Youth Leadership Toolkit**, from FosterClub and the National Resource Center for Youth Development, is designed to support young people and adult supporters who would like to increase the effectiveness of their youth engagement. This guide provides key tools to prepare young people for engagement and can be used by both young people and adult supporters. The guide includes information on strategic sharing to help young people share stories with meaning and purpose. It also includes practical ways to prepare them for multiple engagement opportunities, including public speaking, focus group, outreach, and travel.



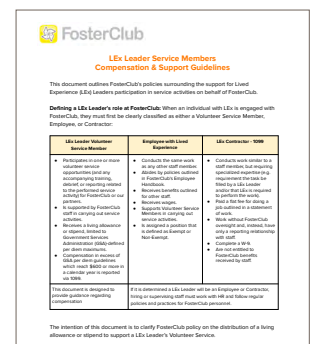
Community Engagement Guide

Planning an event that engages the broader community can be complex. This **Community Engagement Guide** from the Washington State Department of Health provides many tips and tools to be effective, recognize and respect the diversity and assets of the communities you're seeking to engage, and approach all groups with humility. Following these key principles can help you build trusting relationships with community members, leaders, and partners.



Equitable Compensation

Meaningfully engaging young people as partners or participants should include compensation and clear communication regarding that compensation. **FosterClub's LEx Leader Service Member Compensation & Support Guideline** outlines FosterClub's policies for supporting LEx leaders participating in service opportunities on behalf of FosterClub, including defining their role, guidelines for living allowance, volunteer service activities, and Q&A.



Effective Prep and Support Checklist

Effective preparation empowers young people to make informed decisions and meaningful contributions to partnership opportunities. Preparation should happen well in advance of the event and requires time, effort, patience, relationship building and awareness of a young person's unique needs and strengths. Adults and young people must be open to practicing new skills and being flexible in adjusting agendas and schedules. Preparation enables adults to support young people in leveraging their expertise and asserting their leadership. Use this **Jim Casey Initiative preparation checklist** as an example for specific events.

Effective Preparation and Support in Practice		
Consider the Opportunity	Initial Preparation for Opportunity	Final Preparation for Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What's the opportunity? Why this young person? What are the organization's beliefs? Insights about the work? What knowledge/ experience does the organization have? What are the benefits for the young person? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extension/ outreach calls Secure and review/ end results/objectives Providing necessary tools/material/ technology Work with youth on key messages, practice, practice, practice with the young person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review expectations Review key messages Review techniques for managing inputs Review techniques for managing the audience Check out physical space Final check-in/ prep
Show Up for the Opportunity	Support During Opportunity	Support After Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Book flights and arrange transportation Provide a letter for work/ school/ school Provide important details and/or help them obtain the information Provide reference and local needs planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alert the opportunity with the young person Check out physical space If attending in not possible, plan for immediate technology Listen non verbal cues to support timing and self-care Provide encouragement and praise Key message refresher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debrief Provide feedback and praise Listen and respond to feedback Answer questions Continue to encourage self-care Follow-up on results of the project, meeting and next steps

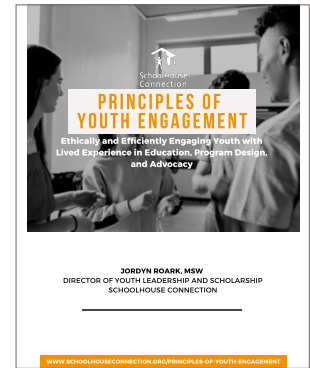
Key Message Development

Key messages influence the way people frame an issue and its solutions. The best key messages combine both data and story-telling elements to compel the audience to take action. Use [this template](#) as a tool to support young leaders and other key constituents in developing a key message.

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative® YOUTH ADVOCACY MESSAGE TEMPLATE					
OUTCOME OR POLICY (What is the problem you are trying to solve?)	IMPACT ON YOUR STORY (How does a part of my story relate to the issue or why is it important to you?)	DATA OR RESEARCH (How does data support your point?)	IMPACT ON ALL YOUNG PEOPLE (How does this issue affect more than just one person?)	RELEVANT AUDIENCES (What groups do I target to include an action?)	KEY MESSAGES (Don't forget to include an action!)

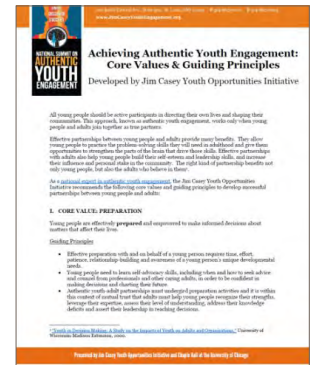
Partnership Agreements

Partnership opportunities provide avenues for young people to develop their own skills as well as advocating, learning, contributing and educating others. When developing a partnership opportunity, take time to draft a written partnership agreement that you can share with young people early on. [Schoolhouse Connection's Principles of Youth Engagement](#) highlights important questions to consider like: What is your agency or organization's intention for this partnership? What role or combination of roles do you envision for young people? How do you envision this opportunity benefiting your agency or organization and those that hear and learn from the youth? How will this opportunity benefit the youth participating?



Achieving Authentic Youth Engagement Fact Sheet

This resource is a two-page fact sheet that presents [Core Values & Guiding Principles](#) that the Jim Casey Initiative believes young people in foster care need to truly have a say in planning their own future.



ICEBREAKER EXAMPLES

ICEBREAKER EXAMPLE #1

Invite participants to test their knowledge before the presentation of the data via a **data quiz**, making clear the quiz is for participants' eyes only and no one else will see their responses. The **Urban Institute Guide to Data Chats** has some great examples.

ICEBREAKER EXAMPLE #2

Invite participants to share their stories through a **photovoice exercise**, also from the Urban Institute. Please note that this exercise should be communicated to participants in advance.

ICEBREAKER EXAMPLE #3

Invite participants to write out positive affirmations for themselves. Ideas to share with the group, courtesy of **True Up**, include:

- "Good things happen when I speak my truth."
- "My voice is unique to me and worthy of hearing."
- "I hold space for others to share their truths."
- "I heal myself and others by speaking the truth."
- "I am an active and compassionate listener."

SAMPLE AGENDAS AND FORMATS

You may borrow either agenda or use aspects of each to create a custom agenda best suited to your event goals.

SAMPLE AGENDA #1 (Total time: 2 hours)

- Welcome, registration, and meal sharing | 20 MINS
- Opening remarks, introductions, meeting ground rules, and icebreaker | 15 MINS
- State and national data presentation | 30 MINS
- Small group discussions on data presentation | 25 MINS
- Sharing of small group discussion takeaways and policy recommendations via verbal feedback or sticky notes on feedback walls read by a moderator | 20 MINS
- Close, appreciation, and next steps | 10 MINS

SAMPLE AGENDA #2 (Total time: 2.5 hours)

This agenda was inspired by the work of True Up Kentucky and The TRC Truth Telling Young Adult Team, co-led and co-created by Eltuan Dawson.

- Welcome, registration | 10 MINS
- Opening remarks, introductions, meeting ground rules, and icebreaker | 15 MINS
- State and national data presentation | 30 MINS
- LEx truth telling testimony | 30 MINS
 - Youth share personal insights related to the data from their lived experience.
 - As this is a brave and vulnerable exercise, ensure youth feel well-supported and consider limiting media access to this portion of the event.
- Journal reflection | 10 MINS
 - Ask meeting attendees to reflect on the LEx stories shared and write questions for LEx to consider answering later in the agenda.
- Break, time for a snack and conversation | 15 MINS
 - During the snack break, meeting facilitator gathers submitted questions, screening each to ensure it is germane to the data and the event goals. From there, questions are shared with LEx participants to review and choose those they are comfortable answering.
 - You may wish to plant questions similar to the following to begin a productive conversation:
 - + *“After listening to the data and hearing testimony from the other youth participants, what would you like those working within the system to know?”*
 - + *“What is your one call to action for the full group today?”*
- Panel discussion | 30 MINS
 - Moderated discussion of submitted questions, answered by LEx participants, who may call in the event facilitator for support if needed.
- Close, appreciation, and next steps | 10 MINS

“DON’T BE AFRAID TO STAND UP FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN EVEN IF AT FIRST YOU ARE STANDING ALONE.”

- HUYANNA TYNESHIA

EVENT PLANNING CHECKLIST:

IMPORTANT NOTE: *Individuals with lived experience should be both partners in each of the below steps and participants in the conversation. Please see [page 7](#) for detailed guidance and reach out to Journey to Success for help with any questions.*

Prior to Your Community Conversation:

- Convene your planning team and ensure everyone reviews the [Fostering Youth Transitions 2023](#) national data and your respective state-level data
- Define the goals of your community conversation
- Define the focus of community conversation discussion using the three Journey to Success priorities and your state data as a guide
- Make a plan to invest in the partnership and participation of individuals with lived experience
- Assess your organization's capacity to coordinate logistics and communicate and promote the event
- Choose attendees
- Establish guiding principles for the event
- Create a plan for compensating LEx participants, including transportation and childcare
- Choose your event date
- Choose your event venue — in person or virtual
- Create your agenda
- Create your presentation, including any slides or handouts.
- After finalizing your agenda, assign roles, including facilitators devoted to the following key roles:
 - + Welcome and registration
 - + Data presentation
 - + Discussion moderation
 - + Notetaking
 - + Tech management
 - + Media relations, if press is included
- Review the agenda and distribute any essential information invitees should have before the meeting or pre-work necessary for a successful event
- Decide your policy for media and observers (e.g. elected officials)
- Develop event promotions and send invitations
- Make follow-up calls to underscore the importance of the event and recruit LEx leaders, policymakers, program leaders, community members, and other state and local decision-makers to participate
- Create workgroups for the various aspects of the event (logistics, data presentation, media, etc.)
- Establish a cadence of planning meetings to ensure everyone feels set up for success
- Conduct additional participant recruiting as needed to ensure attendees are representative of the community
- Send follow-up reminders to participants
- Continue to follow up with media if included
- Reconfirm logistics — food, location, equipment

Following Your Community Conversation:

- Debrief immediately following the event with the planning team
- Follow up with media and share meeting readout or statement where appropriate
- Create a follow-up communication summarizing the key discussion themes, policy recommendations, and thanking attendees — including any communications tailored for lawmakers or other decision-makers
- Survey all attendees to refine future events
- Share any response received from policymakers or other decision-makers with participants
- Partner with LEx leaders on next steps, including sustained advocacy activities and the co-creation of the next event

“NEVER FORGET WHY YOU STARTED THIS WORK AND THE COMMUNITIES DEPENDING MOST ON YOUR BRAVE ACTIVISM AND ADVOCACY FOR A BETTER FUTURE.”

- DEZA'RAE COLLINS

JOURNEY TO SUCCESS

POLICY SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR ALL YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS WHO EXPERIENCE FOSTER CARE

COVER CREDIT: FosterClub