

The Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio (OHIO) Youth Advisory Board's Policy Recommendations

Created in May 2006 by Ohio youth in foster care.

Adopted July 20, 2006 by the statewide Founder's Group (now OHIO Youth Advisory Board)

As seen in the DVD, Our Voices: Recommendations for Ohio's foster care system from youth in care

Courts

- Give youth an opportunity to speak to the judge about their case.
- Ensure meaningful interaction with CASAs or GALs prior to them representing youth.
- Youth should be present whenever a move for them is being considered at court or elsewhere.

Independent Living Skills

- Agencies need to give youth, core opportunities to gain hands-on, real life experience paying bills, managing a checking account, obtaining housing, and accessing public transportation, etc. so they will be prepared to transition out of foster care.

Normalcy

- Foster parents need the authority to make certain decisions for foster youth, such as whether or not the youth can spend the night at a friend's house, whether they can leave the county, if they can date, etc.
- Foster youth need to complete driver's education prior to their release, or prior to aging out of foster care.

Siblings

- Keep siblings together when at all possible
- Absolutely maintain strong, regular contact between siblings (and other kin) when placed apart.

Mental Health Issues

- Strongly consider a need for youth to have continuity with the same therapist especially in a new placement.
- Provide accessible, in-home, community based mental health services for youth in foster care.
- Caseworkers and foster parents should receive increased training in mental health issues.
- Provide support groups and group work opportunities for foster youth.

Communication

- Foster youth need to be able to contact their caseworker directly.
- Meetings concerning the youth should include the youth, foster parent and caseworker.
- Meetings regarding reunification should include the youth's parent, or parents, the foster parent and the caseworker.

Foster Parents

- Foster parents need to participate in training and meet strict qualifications.
- Foster parents need to be evaluated on an ongoing basis.
- Foster parents should be observed interacting with youth before they become licensed.