



The **O**vercoming **H**urdles In **O**hio
Youth **A**dvisory **B**oard

www.fosteractionohio.org

We exist to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that impact youth who have or will experience out of home care.

I wanted to start by offering my thanks to Governor DeWine for caring about foster care outcomes and to the Children Services Transformation Advisory Council for hosting the series of forums.

My name is Stevie Hayslip, I am a former foster youth. I serve as Vice President of the Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board. The OHIO YAB is a statewide organization of young people (aged 14-24) who have experienced foster care. We exist to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that impact youth who have or will experience out of home care.

I want to share a challenge facing foster youth and a proactive suggestion on how this can be improved. One challenge foster youth are facing today is sibling connections. Many foster youth don't have the opportunity to see you even get to talk to the siblings. One suggestion I have is to focus on sibling visitation and realizing how important sibling connection really is.

To some foster youth like myself that's the only family they have left. I have five siblings and I was not allowed to see them when I was in foster care. By the time I was old enough to ask about visitations, my siblings were already adopted.

Seeing my siblings would've helped me so much with my mental state of mind while I was in the system. Being told I was not allowed to see my siblings was like them telling me I can't see my own kids. To some youth siblings are the only thing they have left.

So please take this time to acknowledge and realize how critical sibling connection really is: **Sibling Connections Matter.**

Stevie Hayslip
OHIO YAB Parliamentarian