



OHIO Youth Advisory Board Summary of Youth Recommendations Regarding the ICCA Form

ICCA stands for the *Individual Child Care Agreement*; a form that is used each time a foster youth changes placements. During the 2020 January statewide OHIO Youth Advisory Board meeting, participating foster care youth expressed heartfelt, articulate, and well-thought, valid concerns regarding this form.

They shared that:

- Every time they transfer to a new placement, **the ICCA form is the paperwork that defines them.**
- Their firsthand experience has been that the **ICCA form just grows longer**, without ever evolving to reflect their growth, accomplishments, or recovery from trauma.
- They shared that the current ICCA document has a **very small section for positives and strengths**, followed by a much larger section for any struggles that they might have had in the past, without any context to explain what might have precipitated that behavior.
- This creates preconceptions regarding how foster youth are perceived, and what people expect from their behavior.
- Ohio foster care youth are greatly concerned that the way the ICCA form is currently worded and organized could **create roadblocks by discouraging foster parents, who might be just the right fit for them, from taking them in** - ultimately adding up to **missing out on opportunities** that might otherwise help them build their future.

Multiple concerns were expressed regarding the lack of overall context to this document. For example: *Imagine being a young person in foster care who has been entrusted to a residential placement that operates on a daily basis like a dumping ground (and is currently under investigation by 10-TV). To want and try to run away from an unsafe placement like that -- or to fight for survival in the moment -- does not mean that young person is normally violent or AWOL. There is a context to this behavior.*

Additional notes from Flip Chart and discussion during the January meeting:

- *“ICCA forms are opinionated and not strengths-based”*
- *“They use your situations against you and your emotional health”*
- **Words matter:** *“One incident in my past doesn’t define me in the future” and “That might be the past me, but it isn’t the real me.”*
- **Situations influence how you react:** ICCA forms need to include the context of the behavior, and explain the situation (ie unsafe residential)
- **The ICCA form needs to be a growing and evolving document** – not just getting longer. Need to update case files and ICCA forms as needed.
- Concerns about foster placements using the ICCA form against the youth in a way that **labels and stigmatizes them**. On an emotional level, this severs trust and makes the young person feel unworthy and unwanted.
- *“Before putting something on the ICCA, they need to investigate if that actually happened, and put in the background details”* regarding the context of the behavior, because if not, **can create a roadblock to getting a good foster home**.
- Why doesn’t the ICCA form include **what might trigger a youth**, and how to help them/coping skills?

Ohio CASA representatives during the meeting suggested that it might help to pilot a companion piece to the ICCA that was written by youth, with the help of a trusted adult. CASA volunteers could share this opportunity with foster youth.

That way, when the new placement received an ICCA form, it would be accompanied by a form filled out by the youth that included their strengths, hopes, dreams, goals and “is there something you would like people to know about your last placement?”

During an OHIO YAB Officers call that took place shortly after the January statewide meeting, youth Officers agreed that the ICCA paints a false picture of what a youth is like when being placed. The OHIO YAB Vice President compared this to a youth during a war, who was nervous and vigilant - but in a safer situation, this might not be how that young person would behave. The OHIO YAB President expressed the need for a **revision of the form when those specific issues were no longer prevalent**.

During follow up discussions in April 2020:

- Youth were grateful to learn that the ICCA Form is currently under review at ODJFS, and would like to be involved in those discussions.
- They would like for the form to include more strengths-based language, and larger box for "Youth Strengths"
 - *"The box on the first page for youth strengths is too tiny. There's not enough room to write positive stuff on there."*
- Questions that youth asked:
 - *"What about the need to describe situations from the child's POV or in general because the environment can play a big role in the child's behavior?"*
 - *"What about the process to revise old information?"* One young person shared a copy of her ICCA form, and it referred to her by the wrong name and said that she had two brothers instead of one.
- Additional suggestions from Ohio foster care youth:
 - They felt that children and teens in foster care need to be informed of what an ICCA is: *"Many people don't know that they have it and that's where the problem is... How can you advocate for yourself if you didn't know something was advocating against you?"*
 - They suggested that it might help for the young person to read through their current ICCA form with a trusted adult, and then come up with additions/updates to give strengths that counteract the negatives.
 - One young person shared that her guidance counselor wrote an addendum to her ICCA to counteract the negative wording and to share the strengths she sees in this young person every day.
 - *"When a kid comes into foster care, there needs to be a paper done based on their family medical history. Like me - I don't know any medical history regarding my birth family."*