



Engaging Foster Care Youth and Alumni

Levels of youth/alumni participation	Example	Who makes the decisions?	Roles and responsibilities	Level of leadership development and skill building
Led by Foster Care Youth and Alumni	Youth plan, implement and evaluate a program/policy	Youth make the decisions; they may consult adults	Carried out by youth. Adults may mentor or coach youth.	High
Youth engage in partnerships with adults/allies	Working together at every stage, this team plans and facilitate an event	Decision-making and planning is shared.	Share roles and responsibilities, based on skills and interests	High
Adult/Ally-led with youth consulted	Youth give input on a project and help run a portion of the program	Youth input is sought, but adults/allies make the final decisions	Youth input into a significant activity, with adult/ally approval	Medium to High
Adult/Ally-led with youth interests considered	A program is designed and developed by professionals, but with consumer interest in mind	Youth have little role in decision-making, and are not asked to share their input.	Low level of meaningful involvement between youth and decision-makers	Low
Adult/Ally-led, with "token" youth/alumni as decoration	One consumer representative on a board; outnumbered in terms of voting, and assumed to represent all foster youth	Youth have little/no opportunity to share input, and have no real decision-making power	No meaningful role for youth. Also referred to as <i>tokenism</i> or <i>window-dressing</i> .	Low to Nonexistent

Ladder of Youth and Alumni Engagement

Voices of Youth was a groundbreaking program, based out of New York and Texas, that came into existence shortly after the passing of the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act. At a time when the value of youth voice was not yet widely recognized, VOY was a pioneer program that inspired others to follow their example. Before this program ended, it won multiple awards and was considered to be one of the most innovative foster care programs in the country.

The diagram below was developed by to measure the level of foster care youth and alumni participation and engagement:

