



Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board

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

Ohio YAB Progress Report:

January 2010 – April 2011

2011 Statewide Officers:

Cieria Rodriguez-Toney, President, *Lorain County*
Rich Haag, Vice-President, *Stark County*
Traci Justice, Treasurer, *Athens County*
Chelsie Akers, Secretary, *Miami County*
Dauntea Sledge, Media Spokesperson, *Franklin County*
Roneishia Finney, Parliamentarian, *Montgomery County*

Ohio YAB Quarterly Meetings:

In effort to encourage and allow for more youth participation at the quarterly OHIO YAB statewide meetings, they are scheduled in correlation with the Ohio Independent Living Association's quarterly meetings.

- In 2010, Ohio YAB meetings were held on: Jan. 21, April 15, July 15 and Oct. 21
- In 2011, Ohio YAB meetings have/will take place on: Jan. 20, April 21, July 21 and Oct.20

Ohio YAB Membership:

- Ohio YAB youth membership (approximately 200 members) includes representation from the following counties: Ashtabula, Athens, Champaign, Cuyahoga, Delaware, Erie, Fairfield, Franklin, Hamilton, Lorain, Lucas, Mahoning, Miami, Montgomery, Stark, and Summit.
- It's important to note that, due to transportation issues and life transitions, not all Ohio YAB youth members are able to attend each quarterly meeting. The basic membership requirement is to be a current or former foster youth (ages 14+), and to sign the membership form.
- In order to represent the state board at state events, youth must be active members, and sign the *Ohio YAB Code of Conduct*, including the *Ohio YAB Internet Policy*.
- Ohio YAB adult supporters (45 members) represent most of the counties listed above, in addition to public and private agencies. The most active county agency staff members are from: Ashtabula, Athens, Champaign, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lorain, Montgomery and Stark Counties. Now that Summit County has established a county youth advisory board, they plan to attend statewide quarterly meetings as well.

Summary of Activities between 1/10/10 through 2011:

To best understand the overall purpose of these activities, please read the *2010-2011 Ohio YAB Strategic Plan*, available at: http://www.pcsao.org/OhioYAB/2010/OHIOYABStrategicPlan2010_2011.pdf

- Jan. 16, 2010, Ohio YAB Officer's Retreat
- Jan. 27, 2010, Conference call regarding Governor's Steering Committee on Transitional Youth
- Feb. 5, 2010, Governor's Steering Committee on Transitional Youth

- Feb. 16, 2010, Conference call with Athens County Youth Advisory Board
- Feb. 19, 2010, Governor's Steering Committee on Transitional Youth
- Feb. 24, 2010, Hamilton County Youth Advisory Board Meeting
- March 5, 2010, Stark County youth workshop on Education/Employment
- March 12, 2010, Governor's Steering Committee on Transitional Youth
- April 29, 2010, Governor's Residence: Close-out of Steering Committee on Transitional Youth
- May 1, 2010, Memorial Service for Chief Justice Moyer
- May 17, 2010, ODMH Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Training
- June 4, 2010, Governor's Steering Committee on Transitional Youth conference call
- June 25, 2010, Second annual Ohio Reach Summit
- July 21, 2010, Governor's Steering Committee on Transitional Youth/Young Adults
- Aug. 11, 2010, Youth Panel during SW Ohio Independent Living Summit
- Aug. 18, 2010, Governor's Steering Committee on Transitional Youth/Young Adults
- Aug. 31, 2010, Lorain County Youth Advisory Board training
- Sept. 7, 2010, Participation in Americorps Focus Group facilitated by FosterClub and FCAA
- Sept. 7-10, 2010, Led workshop during NILA Growing Pains Conference
- Sept. 20, 2010, Governor's Steering Committee on Transitional Youth/Young Adults
- Sept. 24, 2010, Judicial College video teleconference for juvenile court judges and magistrates
- Oct. 2, 2010, Youth Panel during Ohio CASA Conference
- Oct. 8, 2010, Met with youth leadership team of Franklin County Youth Advisory Board
- Oct. 20, 2010, Governor's Steering Committee conference call
- Oct. 29, 2010, Youth Panel during Ohio NE Independent Living Summit
- Nov. 30, 2010, Second annual Adoption Advocacy Day
- Dec. 10, 2010, Governor's Steering Committee on Transitional Youth and Young Adults
- Jan. 14, 2011, Conference call with Purple Project Conference Planning committee
- Jan. 15, 2011, Ohio YAB Officer's Retreat at the Dave Thomas Foundation
- Jan. 29, 2011, Stark County training on Navigating Relationships With Bio Families
- Feb. 13, 2011, Youth Panel for Franklin County Foster Parents
- Feb. 26, 2011, Summit County Youth Advisory Board Training
- March 11, 2011, Panel participation during CO-OP Conference for Foster Parents
- April 14-15, 2011, ODJFS/National Resource Center for Youth Development training

Ohio YAB Outreach:

For further details, please read the *Ohio YAB December 2009-December 2010 Annual Report*, available at: http://www.pcsao.org/OhioYAB/2011/OHIO_YAB_Annual_Report_2010.pdf

- April 1, 2010, Workshop for Independent Living Skills Group at Pressley Ridge
- April 24, 2010, Village Network Graduation Event in Wooster
- May 15, 2010, Higher Education Mentoring Initiative Event for foster youth and their mentors
- May 22, 2010, Purple Project Conference for foster care youth at Cleveland University
- June 9, 2010, Franklin County Children Services Teen Conference
- Oct. 15, 2010, Met with Ohio CASA to discuss future partnerships
- Nov. 4, 2010, Starr Commonwealth Banquet
- Nov. 9, 2010, College Fair hosted by Franklin County Children Services
- Dec. 16, 2010, Explore possible partnership with ECOT
- Dec. 19, 2010, Meet with CHIP regarding their 16th annual Hispanic Leadership Conference
- Jan. 6, 2011, Phone call with Ohio CASA regarding Citizens Review Boards, and printing the Ohio YAB Handbook for youth: <http://www.pcsao.org/OhioYAB/2009/09YouthBook.pdf>
- Jan. 10, 2011, Assist FCAA Ohio in facilitating Independent Living activities at Village Network
- Jan. 24, 2011, Meeting with Ohio CASA regarding Citizens Review Boards
- Feb. 14, 2011, Assist FCAA Ohio in facilitating Independent Living activities at Village Network
- March 4, 2011, Meeting to discuss making the Getting Ahead program available for foster youth
- March 14, 2011, Assist FCAA Ohio in facilitating Independent Living activities at Village Network
- April 16, 2011, Hispanic Youth Leadership Conference in Lorain

Ohio YAB Recommendations for State Policy

The OHIO (*Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio*) Youth Advisory Board exists to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that effect all youth who have or will experience out of home care. From the time of the Ohio YAB's inception in 2006, their *Core Recommendations* have remained the same: <http://www.pcsao.org/OHIOYouth/2008/Reccomendations.pdf>

Ohio YAB officers are dedicated to overcoming the hurdles and barriers that might otherwise prevent foster youth from becoming independent and successful adults. Previous advocacy efforts by Ohio YAB youth led to the creation of *2009 Ohio Independent Living Legislative Workgroup Policy Recommendations*, available at: <http://www.oacca.org/resourcelibrary.html>

Over the past six years, the Ohio YAB has worked successfully with partners, including OACCA, OCWTP, ODJFS, and PCSAO, to address some of these issues by:

- Promoting *Ohio Reach*, Ohio's statewide initiative to increase the number of foster care youth/alumni who enroll in and graduate from college: <http://ohioreach.wikispaces.com>
- Working with colleges (such as Wright State) to advocate for year-round housing
- Including the voices of current/former foster youth in the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program
- Working with ODJFS to improve the quality of Caseworker Visits

In terms of current Ohio YAB Recommendations to the state, the top concerns that Ohio YAB Officers and youth members have expressed in 2010 and 2011 are:

- **A lack of consistency in the level of independent living preparation and availability services across the state.** Ohio YAB members are concerned that the level of preparation and support that youth receive prior to emancipating from foster care differs greatly by county.
- **Being unable to access the same services when they move from one county to another.** The requirements are different, and youth report having to go through the exact same eligibility process twice, which slows their access to services.
- **Continued barriers to success.** Ohio YAB officers and members also continue to express concerns regarding lack of affordable housing, not having a drivers license – or even knowing how to drive, and lack of connection to the workforce/higher ed (i.e. “disconnected youth”).
- **Lack of medical insurance between ages 21-26.** Beginning January 2014, Medicaid eligibility will be extended to cover children formerly in foster care who are under the age of 26. However, many emancipated Ohio foster youth between ages 21-26 currently lack access to health insurance.
- **Lack of medical insurance between ages 18-21.** Although Ohio has extended Medicaid coverage for foster care youth until age 21, actually being able to access that coverage has been a major challenge for many transitional foster care youth. In Ohio, for example, several transitional foster care youth have waited months to receive their card, only to then have their Medicaid services dropped prematurely.
- **Desire for streamlined services.** Former Ohio YAB Presidents Adrian McLemore and Alex McFarland both participated on the former Governor's *Youth and Young Adults in Transition Steering Committee* in order to advocate for streamlined services, believing that, not only would this be more cost-effective, but it would also result in better outcomes for youth: <http://www.fcf.ohio.gov/dotAsset/12183.pdf>

Finally, it should be noted that the Ohio YAB greatly appreciated the ongoing support of all of our partners – and, in particular, we wish to thank ODJFS for investing in the long-term sustainability of the Ohio YAB and the creation and support of county youth boards throughout the state. *Details regarding the state and county funding allocation will be shared in a separate report, available at the end of April.*