



## 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.*

# Annual Report:

*December 2010 – December 2011*

In 2011, the OHIO (Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio) Youth Advisory Board continued to move forward to address the priorities identified in their 2010-2011 Strategic Plan: *higher education, workforce development, youth voice in court, national and statewide advocacy, and further development of strong state and county Youth Advisory Boards.*

### **Higher Education:**

- OHIO Youth Advisory Board members continue to support and promote Ohio Reach, a statewide initiative to increase the number of foster care youth who enroll in and graduate from college: <http://ohioreach.wikispaces.com/>
- During the 2011 Ohio Reach Summit, Adrian McLemore and Doris Edelmann co-presented the Wright State Independent Scholars Network workshop, and Ohio YAB President Cieria Rodriguez participated on the Youth Panel, facilitated by Lisa Dickson, who also serves on the event planning committee.
- Ohio YAB supporter Lisa Dickson shared about Ohio Reach during workshops for foster parents and caseworkers at the CORTC, NEORTC, SWORTC, Franklin County Teen Conference, Ohio CASA Conference, PCSAO Conference, Purple Project Conference, Partners for Forever Families Symposium, and during a meeting with the Todd A. Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male.
- Ohio YAB supporter Lisa Dickson also promoted Ohio Reach to youth and adult supporters involved in Bridges Out of Poverty, Getting Ahead, Village Network, and Syntaxis, as well as in Allen, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Lucas, Scioto, Stark and Summit Counties.
- Ohio YAB Alumni Supporter Adrian McLemore promoted Ohio Reach as a vital part of his keynote addresses during the Village Network-Columbus and Village Network-Wooster graduation events on May 23 and 26, 2011.
- On October 6, Ohio YAB Adult Supporter Lisa Dickson facilitated a Stark County Youth Panel on "Facilitating a Foster Youth's Journey from Middle School to College."
- On November 7, Ohio YAB Adult Supporter Lisa Dickson shared about Ohio Reach during the Franklin County Children Services' College Fair.

## **Workforce Development:**

- Ohio's first statewide Career and Entrepreneurship Event for Foster Care Youth and Alumni was held on Oct. 28, 2011. The event included a Resume Clinic, staffed by professionals, and Suits for Success, freely available to participating youth: <http://fostercareersuccess.wikispaces.com/>
- This vision was for Ohio to hold a statewide event for current and former foster youth, in order to connect young people with employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- Meeting Space was made possible due to the ODJFS funding allocation for the Ohio Youth Advisory Board. Continental Breakfast, Lunch and Beverages were provided courtesy of the Dave Thomas Foundation, Foster Care Alumni of America's Ohio chapter, New Beginnings Insurance Services, the Institute for Human Services, and Randi Lewis' generous donation to the support the Ohio Youth Advisory Board.

## **Youth Voice in Court:**

- In 2011, the Ohio YAB advocated for a consistent template to be used throughout the state, based upon the Court Discharge Form developed by Youth Fostering Change. This form could be used for 90-day exit plans, in order to ensure better outcomes for emancipating foster youth, and compliance with state and federal law. Our goal was to involve the courts in this process.
- Steve Hanson of the Ohio Supreme Court is currently spearheading efforts to pilot the Youth Developed Discharge Hearing Form in Hamilton, Lucas, Marion, Stark and Union Counties. Ohio YAB representatives regularly participate on conference calls related to this effort.
- The Ohio Bulletin is a publication of the Ohio Supreme Court, sent to each of Ohio's 88 judicial districts, as well as CASAs and other court-related professionals. Steve Hanson has invited the Ohio YAB to submit articles for a "Youth Corner," in each Ohio Bulletin publication.
- During the Ohio CASA Conference, Ohio YAB representatives, Dauntea Sledge, Alex McFarland, Adrian McLemore and Lisa Dickson co-presented two workshops on "Getting to What They Need: Effectiveness in Interviewing Youth."
- Ohio YAB members continue to meet with and support the development of Capital University's Foster Youth Legal Clinic.

## **Statewide Advocacy:**

- OHIO Youth Advisory Board members and adult supporters continue to track and follow legislation and regulations that affect or impact current and former foster youth and provide input and advocacy as necessary.
- In opposition to HB 86 Foster Child Community Notification Provisions, legislative testimony was offered before members of the Senate Judiciary-Criminal Justice Committee by Ohio YAB representatives Lamar Graham, Arlene Jones and Alex McFarland on June 21, 2011.
- In early 2011, representatives from the Ohio Youth Advisory Board met with ODJFS Director Michael Colbert, and asked him to be our champion in terms of helping to overcome the hurdles that Ohio youth face when "aging out" of foster care.

- The Ohio YAB deeply appreciates the thoroughness with which ODJFS Director Michael Colbert has followed up on concerns expressed by Ohio foster care youth by reinstating TANF Independent Living Funds, and launching an Aging Out of Foster Care Initiative, with detailed strategies and a timeline.
- On June 7, 2011, ODJFS Director Michael Colbert and Ohio YAB Alumni Supporter Adrian McLemore were interviewed by Mary Kuhlman of Public News Service, Ohio. ODJFS Director Colbert pointed out that today's foster teens are Ohio's future citizens and leaders, and that by supporting them when they first enter young adulthood, they won't need other types of support in the future: *"What you don't want is for young people to leave our system and come back, right back in another system. You want them to leave our system and go on to become productive citizens in life."*
- On Sept. 29, Doris Edelmann and Ohio YAB youth representatives from Montgomery County participated in the ODJFS Symposium on Meaningful Visitation.
- On Dec. 9, Dauntea Sledge and Lisa Dickson participated in the Ohio Attorney General's Roundtable on Child Safety.
- During the Ohio Partnership Forum on Housing Options for Transition Age Youth, the following Ohio YAB representatives gave presentations: President Cieria Rodriguez-Toney, Media Spokesperson Dauntea Sledge, former Secretary Vanessa Jackson, and adult supporters Doris Edelmann and Lisa Dickson.
- Ohio YAB members continue to share youth voice on Ohio rules and regulations, at the invitation of MCWIC and the ODJFS Office of Families and Children.
- Throughout the year, Doris Edelmann, Adrian McLemore and Alex McFarland have participated on the Youth and Youth Adults in Transition (YYAT) Steering Committee, working to align and consolidate policies, efforts, and resources; and identify any major service gaps for this particularly vulnerable and often overlooked population.

### **National Advocacy:**

- Ohio YAB Media Spokesperson Dauntea Sledge was chosen as Ohio's 2011 FosterClub All-Star. He attended an intensive leadership training session at the FosterClub headquarters in Seaside, Oregon, and received training in public speaking, presentation, advocacy, and professional development.
- 2011 OHIO YAB President Cieria Rodriguez-Toney was chosen as one of FosterClub's Outstanding Young Leaders.
- Ohio YAB representatives Dauntea Sledge and Lamar Graham participated in the National Resource Center for Youth Development training.
- Ohio YAB representatives Dauntea Sledge, Bethany Workman and Doris Edelmann attended the 2011 NILA conference, and assisted with pre-conference youth activities.

### **State/County Youth Advisory Board Development:**

- The Ohio YAB continues to promote and support involvement in county, regional and state youth advisory boards, including providing training for Allen, Lucas, Stark and Summit Counties. We had planned a workshop to launch a Fairfield County YAB; however, it was postponed until 2012.

- Ohio YAB President Cieria Rodriguez-Toney co-presented a workshop with Lisa Dickson for Stark County foster care youth/alumni on Navigating Relationships with Biological Families on January 29, 2011.
- On February 26, Lisa Dickson led a Youth Advisory Board training for the newly established Summit County YAB, "Leaders of Tomorrow."
- On August 19, Dauntea Sledge and Lisa Dickson led a Youth Advisory Board training in Allen County.
- On Sept. 10, Dauntea Anthony Sledge and Lisa Dickson co-presented a workshop for CASA volunteers, guardian ad litem and foster care youth on Navigating Relationships With Biological Families. This led to Lucas County requesting a follow-up training on how to start a local Youth Advisory Board in 2012.

### **Youth Voice in Ohio Child Welfare Training**

- Ohio Media Spokesperson Dauntea Sledge has participated on Panel Presentations for the purpose of training Franklin County foster parents at the CORTC.
- On May 12, Lisa Dickson facilitated a three-hour youth panel made up of Summit County Youth Advisory Board representatives, "Leaders of Tomorrow," during the 2011 NEORTC Foster Parent conference.
- On May 19, Adrian McLemore presented as part of a Youth Panel during the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Summit: Attendees included adoption recruiters and their supervisors from all 50 states and Canada.
- During the 2011 Purple Project Conference, Ohio YAB adult supporters Doris Edelman and Lisa Dickson each presented five workshops. President Cieria Rodriguez-Toney assisted conference registration and co-presented a workshop on "Exit Plans and Healthy Connections." Since then, Cieria has served on the planning committee for the 2012 Purple Project Conference.
- On Oct. 19, Dauntea Sledge and Lisa Dickson co-presented two workshops on "Overcoming Hurdles for Youth Preparing to Emancipate From Care" during Ohio PCSAO Conference.
- On Nov. 5, Lisa Dickson facilitated a two-hour youth panel made up of Hamilton Youth Advisory Board representatives during the 2011 SWORTC Foster Parent conference.

### **Appreciation of Partners/Supporters**

- OHIO Youth Advisory Board officers send their sincere appreciation to Montgomery County Children Services, FCAA Ohio, ODJFS, OACCA, OHILA, PCSAO, OCWTP, Ohio CASA, the Supreme Court of Ohio, and the many other organizations and individuals who have contributed to our success.
- Many thanks to the Dave Thomas Foundation for sponsoring the 2011 Ohio YAB Officers Retreat and the cost of food and beverages for youth during Ohio YAB Quarterly Meetings.
- During 2011, the Ohio YAB was able to expand its circle of partners to include Bridges Out of Poverty's Getting Ahead Program, OSU Starr House, the Hispanic Leadership Conference, and the Todd A. Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male.