

# YAB ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

A toolkit designed to support the advocacy efforts of the  
Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board.

## YAB Advocacy Toolkit

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#### **Note for Presentation preparation:**

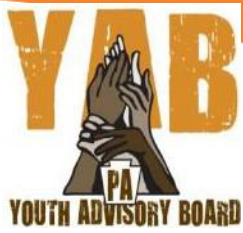
The Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board strongly recommends that youth receive the Strategic Sharing training before they share their personal story for advocacy efforts.

#### **Note for Youth Leadership Development:**

Trainings available for youth:

- Strategic Sharing
- Time Management
- Know Your Rights
- How to conduct Yourself in court
- Developmentally Appropriate Freedoms (DAF) Presentation: Teach youth about the YAB DAF recommendations!

**\*Note:** Training on the content of these trainings is available! Youth facilitators must sit through full training first.



Families and  
Communities United

# A Reflection Guide to Youth and Family Engagement

## Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation

*These different steps on the ladder represent levels of youth engagement. Remember that engagement also applies to families as well. The questions to the right will help you reflect on what engagement could look like in your agency.*

- 8.) Young people and adults share decision-making.
- 7.) Young people lead & initiate action.
- 6.) Adult initiated, shared decisions with young people.
- 5.) Young people consulted and informed.
- 4.) Young people assigned and informed.
- 3.) Young people tokenized.
- 2.) Young people are decoration.
- 1.) Young people are manipulated

The FreeChild Project – Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation, <http://www.freechild.org/ladder>

## Reflection

- Think about where on the ladder you or your agency stands.
- Using the questions below, begin assessing how families, youth and YAB can be engaged in policy engagement.

### Engagement

- What outreach and engagement strategies are you using to build a working partnership with the youth and family in your community?
- Are you willing to make adjustments in scheduling and meeting location to accommodate family and youth participation during key implementation stages?
- How are youth and family members involved in your agency's ongoing Continuous Quality Improvement work?
- Is the planning and implementation process youth and family-centered and responsive to agency and community culture?

### Role and Voice

- To what degree do youth and family influence agency practice?

### Need Resources?

- Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board [www.independentlivingpa.org](http://www.independentlivingpa.org)
- Families and Communities United <http://www.fc.u.pitt.edu/>
- Roadmap to Youth and Family Engagement <http://www.fc.u.pitt.edu/files/YouthRoadmap.pdf>

University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work  
PA Child Welfare Resource Center  
403 East Winding Hill Road  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
Phone: (717) 795-9048



## Section I: Things to know about standing up for your rights

- **You are the Expert on your story!** You are the only one who has lived your story. You know that having a normal life is important because you walked in your shoes.
- **Be honest:** You do not need to change your story, because your story is enough.
- **Advocacy:** When you speak up for something you believe in you are advocating for yourself or for others.
- **Know what you are advocating for!** Use your story to connect to the purpose of our work: a positive experience in the child welfare system.
- **Prepare:** Understand what rules exist in your county and living arrangements. This will help you know where to start within your county.
- **Understand who you are trying to reach out to.**
- **Gather your partners and supporters.** You can never have too many supporters. They help you keep going even if the going is tough.
- **Don't attack or shut down your audience.** Be honest but never bash any one organization or county. We want to win over agencies and build a partnership. Many professionals in child welfare do wish to help
  - a. Never use names and organization titles
  - b. Use positive language
  - c. Try to offer a solution to the problem
- **Be mindful of how you dress** because you want to show that you can be taken seriously.

## **Section II: Steps to prepare for a meeting or presentation**

1. Meet with your team and talk about what you want to advocate for.
2. Make a plan on how you want to do it.
3. Assign the people responsible for each task.
4. Write a letter (or email)
  - a. Send them an introduction letter, the DAF guide and Teen Success Agreement
  - b. Request information from them
  - c. Offer to meet with them in person
5. Make phone calls after you send information to answer any questions and to set a date for any meetings.
6. Practice your “elevator speech” which is a speech that a person has prepared and memorized so that they can speak about a topic quickly.
  - a. Basic elevator speech outline:
    - i. Introduction or reintroduction
    - ii. Why you would like to make a connection with your listener
    - iii. What do you want?
    - iv. How does it benefit the listener?
    - v. How you think this issue can be resolved
    - vi. Call for Action
    - vii. Ask to speak again

### Section III: Steps to take during the meeting or presentation

<u>Creating a meeting agenda</u>	<u>Tips for meeting in person</u>	<u>Steps to take after a meeting or presentation</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Outline your goals for having a meeting. What are some of the outcomes you want to achieve?</li> <li>b. Create an agenda and assign facilitators to run the agenda, and for each part of the agenda</li> <li>c. Your facilitator’s guide can be as detailed as you need it to be.</li> <li>d. Your agenda needs to be within the timeframe you have. Sometimes you will have time to review everything you have been working on, and other times you may only be able to review pieces of it.</li> <li>e. If there is time, you can choose an interactive activity. Adults sit in meetings all day. If you are creative with their time, they are more likely to remember your requests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have an agenda, have defined speaking roles and talking points</li> <li>2. Send information ahead of time</li> <li>3. If it is a presentation or training, have a sign-in sheet. This is the quickest way to gather contact information. YAB also uses these along with the tracking form to track our activities.</li> <li>4. Be on time, arrive early</li> <li>5. Be professional, dress professionally</li> <li>6. Bring pen and paper</li> <li>7. Be courteous to staff/receptionist</li> <li>8. Always introduce yourself and those that you’re with</li> <li>9. Give out information at beginning and end of meeting</li> <li>10. Thank him/her for any previous support/connect/partnership</li> <li>11. Get down to business quickly</li> <li>12. Build on what each person says</li> <li>13. Stick to your agenda, defined roles, and talking points</li> <li>14. Continually suggest how you can help him in this particular field</li> <li>15. Always tie back to the subject at hand</li> <li>16. Thank them for the meeting</li> <li><b>17. Leave on time</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Send a thank you note!</li> <li>2. Make a follow up call or letter</li> <li>3. Request another meeting to discuss action steps and projects</li> <li>4. Send Sign in sheet and Tracking form to Melissa at <a href="mailto:mcm141@pitt.edu">mcm141@pitt.edu</a>. Your YAB supporters have these documents.</li> </ul>

## Sample Meeting Facilitator’s Guide (For facilitators)

Set Up: We need to be at meeting location at this time: 2pm  
 Set up meeting space: Are there enough tables/chairs? (Jim and Brianna)  
 Folders ready? Are there enough handouts? (Sally)  
 YAB Sign in Sheet (Cole)

Time	Facilitator	Content	Resource/Handout
3:00 – 3:10 (10 minutes)	Jim	<b>Welcome, Introduction, Meeting Goals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin the meeting by welcoming and thanking everyone for coming.</li> <li>• Review the agenda and have everyone introduce themselves. Request that everyone sign in.</li> <li>• Introduce the YAB and let them know there’s a YAB Brochure in each folder</li> </ul>	Agenda YAB Brochures YAB Sign in sheet
3:10-3:30 (20 minutes)	Sally	<b>Why Developmentally Appropriate Freedoms are important to youth in care</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review why these are so important to youth in care</li> </ul>	DAF Recommendations
3:30 -3:50 (20 minutes)	Brianna	<b>Review Developmentally Appropriate Freedoms recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review each of the recommendations in the document</li> </ul>	DAF Recommendations
3:50 – 4:10 20 minutes	Jose	<b>Developmentally Appropriate Freedoms Next Steps</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the next steps your YAB would like to see happen and where they would like to begin their work.</li> </ul>	
4:10- 4:20 10 minutes	Jim	<b>Any questions or comments?</b>	
	Cole	<b>Conclusion and Follow Up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review what was covered today</li> <li>• Review next steps</li> <li>• Outline how participants can expect your YAB to follow up on any requests or opportunities that were brought up.</li> </ul>	

## **Sample Meeting Agenda (For meeting participants)**

- 1. Welcome and Introductions**
- 2. Developmentally Appropriate Freedoms and why they are important**
- 3. Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board Recommendations**
- 4. Discussion**
- 5. Next Steps**



## Sample Presentation Outline

1. Introduction
  - a. Introduce presenters
  - b. Ice Breaker
2. Training Overview
  - a. Purpose
  - b. Learning Objectives
3. What's in it for me?
4. Learning Objective #1
  - a. Talking points
  - b. Activity
  - c. Discussion
  - d. Handouts and Resources
5. Learning Objective #2
  - a. Talking Points
  - b. Activity
  - c. Discussion
  - d. Handouts and Resources
6. Learning Objective #3
  - a. Talking Points
  - b. Activity
  - c. Discussion
  - d. Handouts and Resources
7. Tying all of the Learning Purposes together
8. Conclusion
9. Evaluation

## Facilitation Tips for Youth Facilitators

**Set The Tone.** Set ground rules for mutual respect from the outset. Make your training a safe space in which students can open up about their experiences and questions.

**Be Flexible.** While it is important to adhere to a curriculum/facilitator's guide, it is also important to allow a topic to come to fruition, and to let the discussion develop naturally. Expect and prepare for changes in your plan. To bring it back to the topic, you can connect discussion back to the agenda and learning objectives of the presentation. Discuss changes with your co-facilitators.

**Rephrase, Repeat and Validate.** To keep discussion flowing, listen and record youth comments. Repeat and say "Am I getting that right?" Ask follow-up questions based on those statements.

**Diffuse Tension.** Deal with tense situations before they get out of control. If you sense people in the training space not getting along or feel some tension you can bring awareness to it by stating, "Wow I feel that there is something in the room. Does anyone want to give me more information about it?" You can also choose that moment to take a break or to move into the next segment if you feel the feeling in the room won't interrupt the learning and/or discussion.

**Recognize Learning Styles.** Just like people have different personalities, participants will have different learning styles. Some people are visual learners, others need to actually do something to understand it, while others can just hear directions once and understand what they are supposed to do. Make sure you think about how different people learn as you go through the presentation, and some of this will be incorporated for you. Someone may seem like they're not paying attention or just wanting to rush into something but that might just be how they learn.

**Lead by Example.** You know the curriculum the best. So, you have the ability to be engaged, have fun, and keep things moving. If your participants in the presentation see you enjoying yourself and putting 100% into everything you do, they'll be more likely to do the same.

**Prepare, Prepare, Prepare.** Before you go into a presentation, understand the main goals and what is being communicated. Know what you are responsible for doing, and what your game plan is to get it done. This may involve reviewing the curriculum at night or other times during the day to make sure you're ready. Ask your staff co-facilitator(s) if you have questions or are struggling with anything related to the curriculum.

**Voice.** This is a leadership position, so your voice carries a lot of weight. Think about the message you want your voice to carry. What do you want to accomplish with this opportunity?

**Roles.** Your role is to facilitate activities, games and discussion. You are also here as a friend and support to other youth. Listen to their stories and help them feel included and that they belong here.

**Make Connections.** Get to know the individuals in your classroom. You could be friends or project partners in the future. This opportunity is an excellent place to network with other youth.

**Be Their First Friend.** Take the time to get to know people in your learning environment. Make the first move. Be friendly.

**Strength Based, Solution Focused.** This one can take a little bit of practice. When facilitating participants, they are more likely to hear and engage with you if you lead with strengths and you give them solutions to implement. Stay away from too much talk that does not have any real solutions.

**Credibility.** What you wear and how you present yourself is really important. Would you want your doctor showing up to your appointment in dirty clothes and dirty fingernails? The same is true for your presentation. Be positive. Smile. Interact with your participants.

## ***Top 10 Tips for Sharing Your Story***

1. Share what you're comfortable sharing and what is appropriate.
2. Keep your audience in mind and connect with them. Eye contact is important.
3. Share your story; don't attack the audience with it.
4. Project confidence in what you have to say – this includes speaking loudly enough for everyone to hear you.
5. Stay aware of your own emotions about what you are sharing.
6. If answering a question makes you uncomfortable, don't.
7. Focus on those positively affected by your sharing, which will not be everyone.
8. Be mindful of your posture and appearance while presenting. Try not to fidget, move around too much, or do anything else that can be distracting to the audience.
9. Be concise and to the point when sharing your story.
10. Sharing sensitive and difficult personal experiences can be challenging. Be sure you are ready to share those experiences before you actually present them in front of an audience.

**To learn more about sharing your story effectively request a Strategic Sharing training from your YAB supporter!**

## Children in Foster Care Act: Foster Youth Bill of Rights

Pennsylvania's Children in Foster Care Act became a law in 2010 because of the work of the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board and other youth in care at the time. This law created what is known as a "Bill of Rights" for all children and youth in care. **To learn more about this topic request a Know Your Rights Training from your YAB Supporter!**

- You have the right to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect.
- You have the right to be treated without discrimination based on race, color, religion, disability, national origin, age, and gender.
- You have the right to be treated without harassment, corporal punishment, unreasonable restraint, or physical, sexual, emotional, and other abuse.
- You have the right to live in the most family-like setting that meets your needs.
- You have the right to be given enough food and food of good quality.
- You have the right to clothing that is clean, seasonal, and age and gender appropriate.
- You have the right to get all of the medical and mental health services that you need.
- You have the right to take part in developing your medical or mental health treatment plan.
- You have the right to agree to medical and mental health treatment, including medication.
- You have the right to visit your parents at least every other week.
- You have the right to have contact with your family.
- You have the right to be placed with your siblings, or visit with them at least every other week.
- You have the right to be placed with your kin and relatives if possible.
- You have the right to be placed with families that have supported you before if possible.
- You have the right to have all the contact information for your guardian ad litem, attorney, court-appointed special advocate, and members of your planning team.
- You have the right to be in a place that maintains your culture.
- You have the right to be able to stay in the same school when you change placements.
- You have the right to be able to take part in extracurricular, cultural, and personal enrichment activities.
- You have the right to have the opportunity to work and develop job skills.
- You have the right to get life skills training and independent living services.
- You have the right to have your case and personal information kept confidential.
- You have the right to get notices of court hearings for your case, and have the ability to attend the hearings.
- You have the right to take part in religious services and observances.
- You have the right to a permanency plan that you helped create and that you can review.
- You have the right to get notice that you can ask to stay in care after you turn 18.
- You have the right to get notice of the grievance policy from the county or private provider agency.
- You have the right to be able to file a grievance, to receive the agency's grievance policy, and to have your rights and the grievance policy explained to you in way that you understand.
- You have the right to exercise parental and decision-making authority for your child (if you are a parent).

# The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act

Throughout 2013, multiple members of Congress proposed multiple ways to improve foster care with their own individual bills. In an effort to work together, Congress agreed to make one new bill, combining parts of the old ones. H.R. 4980, sponsored by Representative Dave Camp, has several parts and many important new rules to help foster youth everywhere in the United States. Most importantly, these new rules were a result of conversations with foster youth.

Yep, you heard it: lawmakers heard your voice and are making improvements to the foster care system as a result.

## Some important parts of the bill:

- **Youth Rights:** States are required to provide any youth age 14 or older with a list of their rights, as well as a signed acknowledgement that the youth received the list.
- **Prudent Parenting:** New requirements for “prudent parenting” standards (this means states will make plans to allow foster parents and group homes, instead of just caseworkers or agencies, to decide whether a youth can participate in age appropriate activities like sports or other extracurricular activities).
- **Normalcy:** For older youth, the ability to participate in “normal”, age appropriate activities must be discussed at the youth’s case planning meetings; Congress has also given money to pay for these activities starting in 2020.
- **Case Planning:** Starting at age 14, youth will be given the opportunity to become involved in the development of their case plan and transition plan; youth will also have the option to invite two people of their choice to attend planning meetings.
- **Preventing Long Term Foster Care:** Discourages the use of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) as a permanency option for youth; requires states to provide more evidence to the court that aging out is the best option for older youth in care.
- **Documents when exiting care:** Youth must be provided a copy of birth certificate, social security card, driver’s license or state ID, health insurance and medical records.
- **Tracking Disrupted Adoptions:** Requires states to track disrupted and dissolved adoptions and guardianships.
- **Sex Trafficking Prevention:** Requires states to track the sexual exploitation of foster youth and youth who runaway and/or are missing from care; increases training requirements for those who work with youth to identify sex trafficking as it occurs.
- **Adoptions:** Makes adoptions and guardianships easier for families by revising incentives for those families.

Source: FosterClub - <https://www.fosterclub.com/groups/house-passes-hr-4980-improve-foster-care>

## Potential Partners

Stakeholder	Example Organizations
Resource Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● County Foster and Resource Parent Associations</li> <li>● Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association (PSRFA)</li> </ul>
Youth in resource homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Local Congregate Care settings</li> <li>● Youth Advisory Board Regions and Local Boards</li> </ul>
Private Providers and Permanency Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● County Providers</li> <li>● Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN)</li> <li>● The Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services (PCCYFS)</li> </ul>
Judges and GALs and CASA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● County judges</li> <li>● Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC)</li> </ul>
County Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators (PCYA)</li> </ul>
County Case Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● County Children and Youth Case Workers</li> <li>● County Administrators</li> <li>● County Commissioners</li> </ul>
Youth Advisory Board Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pennsylvania Partnerships For Children (PPC)</li> <li>● Juvenile Law Center (JLC)</li> <li>● Kids Voice</li> </ul>
Parents and Community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Families and Communities United (FCU)</li> <li>● Citizen Review Panels (CRPs)</li> </ul>
Independent Living Coordinators and providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Regional YAB Coordinators</li> <li>● IL Coordinators</li> </ul>
Technical Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PA Child Welfare Resource Center</li> </ul>
Solicitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Solicitor's Association</li> </ul>
Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teachers</li> <li>● Principals</li> <li>● Guidance Counselors</li> </ul>

## Sample Cover Letter

To Whom It May Concern,

The Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board is an organization made up of former and current youth in the substitute care system who use their stories to affect positive change for child welfare communities. The mission of the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board is to educate, advocate and form partnerships to create positive change in the substitute care system. More information about the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board can be found on our website at [www.independentlivingpa.org](http://www.independentlivingpa.org).

In light of the recent federal legislation, “Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act,” (H.R. 4980) it is with much excitement that we present to you the Developmentally Appropriate Freedoms recommendations that address some of the needs for older youth in the substitute care system.

Developmentally Appropriate Freedoms (DAF) are important to older youth in the child welfare system. They can aid in the process of guiding a foster care youth toward a happy, healthy adult life. Here are some other reasons why participating in these activities benefit youth:

- It helps them feel normal.
- It builds their self-esteem and can help them cope with stress.
- It prepares them for adulthood by giving them access to safe experiences and decision making.
- Increases interactions with friends.
- Connects them to a more natural support system.

Please find attached recommendations that address the following:

- **Practices and policies that promote adolescent development.**
- **Resources to use in the development of policies that promote normalcy and developmentally appropriate freedoms.**

We are distributing these recommendations in an effort to spark conversation and to be a part of youth achieving normalcy. We look forward to working and speaking with counties and organizations on this work. The YAB would love to work with organizations interested in learning more about developmentally appropriate freedoms. Please feel free to contact Barbara Huggins at [bmh75@pitt.edu](mailto:bmh75@pitt.edu). We look forward to working with you!

Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board