

Meeting Name:	YAB Statewide Meeting	Date:	January 22, 2026
Type of Meeting:	In Person	Timeframe:	10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Attendees:	Youth and Staff from Allegheny, Bucks, Butler, Cambria, Carbon, Chester, Crawford, Dauphin, Delaware, Erie, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Mifflin, Montgomery, Philadelphia, Susquehanna, Wyoming, and York Counties, as well as staff from CWRC, OCYF, SWAN, and the Dept. of Human Services.		
Attendees Not Present:			
Minutes Prepared By:	Julie Hill		

Meeting Minutes	
1	Welcome / Ice Breaker (Carl Butler) • Carl welcomed everyone to the meeting. • The group did an ice breaker led by the SE Region: “Snowball fight” ○ Round one, each person wrote what county they are from, if they are a youth or staff, and something they like to do. They crumbled the papers and threw them around the room. Then they each picked up a snowball paper and tried to match it with the person who wrote it. ○ Round two, on another piece of paper they wrote something about their family, favorite music or song, and a place they visited. ○ Round three, they wrote a fun fact about themselves, what superpower they would want, and a goal for themselves for the year. Statewide YAB announcements • A new NYTD video presentation is scheduled to be recorded by Carl and Qasim this month. It will then be distributed at the regional and local levels. • Robin Braum’s last day as a Youth Ambassador was January 5, 2026. This position will be open soon for applications. Meghan shared some information about the position: ○ It will be a part-time, temporary position. (Up to 28 hours per week.) ○ The candidate does not need to be a student, but they must have a driver’s license and reliable transportation. ○ It is a remote position, except for travel. ○ The candidate must have had lived experience in the foster care system. ○ If anyone has any questions about the position, they are welcome to discuss with Meghan or Qasim. • Meghan shared that they are looking for creative youth to perform at a conference in June at the Poconos. Youth in Pennsylvania will be highlighted at the opening of the

	conference. If anyone would like to perform (sing, reading something they wrote, etc.), they may let Meghan know. This will be for over 500 staff and family members. - Summit dates: June 10 - 11, 2026 - The evening activity will be at ABC Bowling Alley. - The Keynote Speaker is still being decided. - Speaker's Bureau applications are being accepted until the end of February. For information on the Speakers Bureau, youth may speak with Carl, Qasim, or Meghan. QR codes for the application are in their folders.
2	OCYF Updates (Lindsey Glezen) - Lindsey introduced herself as the IL Coordinator for PA. - She shared that the Chafee Education Training Grant (ETG) is available for youth ages 16 and older. It assists with post-secondary schooling. 2025/2026 applications are open on PHEAA's website. March 31 is the deadline to apply. 2026/2027 applications have not opened yet. ETG does not need to be filled out again each year. If youth are changing schools, then they will need to let PHEAA know. - FosterEd is a tuition waiver program that is automatically evaluated when youth apply for ETG. FosterEd offers tuition and mandatory fee waivers once all federal, state, and any other scholarships have been applied. It does not cover room and board, meal plans, or books. All institutions are required to have a point of contact on site for FosterEd and ETG. There is a link on the YAB website to find contact information. - NYTD is a federal requirement and is attached to Independent Living funding across the state. October 1 started Cohort 6 which begins with a 17-year-old baseline survey. It is a short survey to ask about demographics, milestones, and time in the foster care system. The youth surveys help OCYF to know how to better assist youth in care. Counties are encouraged to provide a stipend to youth who complete the survey. 19 and 21-year-old surveys may be asked of youth who completed a 17-year-old survey. All youth must be registered 2 weeks prior to their 17th birthday, even if they are unwilling to complete the survey. - CWRC in partnership with OCYF continues to work on building a NYTD Council. Interested youth should have a passion for advocacy and creating change. This group will play a role in advocating for youth and spreading the word about the surveys. If anyone is interested in joining NYTD they may let their IL workers know, or speak with Cindy, Carl, or Qasim.
3	YAB Questionnaire (Meghan O'Hare, Qasim Abrams) The group reviewed the Youth Questionnaire that was developed by the YAB a few years ago as a tool for foster youth to introduce themselves to potential families. The form must be completed on the YAB website. Youth enter the email addresses that they would like the survey to go to. It does not go out to staff or anyone that is not specifically requested by the youth.

- A staff shared that they used the survey with a couple of their youth and found it to be very helpful, and they had a lot of positive feedback about it. Teresa added that it is about sharing who you are besides what is in your records, and it is a way to share your voice and tell your story.
- Youth's suggested changes to the form:
 - Make each section a dropdown with questions, so that it's not as overwhelming.
 - Make it clearer that it is confidential and that it is only shared with individuals the youth choose to share it with.
 - Make the line at the beginning that says "all fields are not mandatory" more reader friendly for youth.
 - Provide the form to youth in all counties when they go into care. Youth under 14 should be able to receive it and fill it out. Make a shorter version for youth under a certain age.
 - Add a line for the youth's preferred name/nickname.
 - Add a line for their phone number.
 - Change "My religious preference is" to be "religious/spiritual preference."
 - Make the gender identity checkboxes more current or just have them write them in instead of using check boxes.
 - A lot of the questions are too vague.
 - Reword "My ideal preference for a resource home would include" to say "respite" instead of "resource."
 - In the Living Environment section, a couple of the questions are too similar. Give some examples or be more specific around the first question in that section.
 - In the question about who the youth's personal connections consist of, ask if they need help restoring those connections.
 - Under the Coping section, when it talks about connections there should be a question about how youth enjoy spending time with those connections.
 - Under the Goals and Expectations section, be more specific on the question "These are some of the things I can do on my own." (Life skills? Simple skills?)
 - Reword "Overall my mental health is" to say "I'd consider my mental health to be," so it is not quite as open-ended.
 - Add boxes/options for attachment styles under the question of developing trust under the Coping section.
 - Reword the question under Goals and Expectations "To me my future looks like" to say "In five years, I'd see myself."
 - Add a question about how youth would feel best supported during the holidays.
 - Add a question about whether youth would like to stay in contact with biological families.
 - Add a question about what makes youth's anxiety worse or better / comfort items.
 - Add a question about things the youth would like to improve on.
 - Add a question about goals the youth have for their life.
 - Add a question about characteristics/qualities they are not proud of.
 - Add a question about good/bad habits they have.

	○ Add a question about how they feel the most cared and loved. ○ Add a question about the ways the youth ask for help. ○ Add a question about comfort foods, movies, activities, etc. ○ Add a question about when they feel the most alone. ○ Add a question about their political beliefs. ○ Add a question about their preferred living space. ○ Add a question about their hobbies and if they play sports. ○ There are currently no pregnant or parenting questions, so it was suggested to add the following: ▪ Are you/your partner pregnant? ▪ How many children do you have and what are their ages? ▪ What traditional things do you like to do with your kids? ▪ What is your family's daily routine? ▪ What are your family's housing needs? ▪ What is your desired foster/adopted family involvement in the parenting of your child(ren)?
4	Top 10 reasons to Adopt Teenagers (Alfredo Gonzales - SWAN) • Alfredo asked the youth to look at the Top 10 Reasons to Adopt Teenagers flyer and give suggestions of things that should be changed in it. The form is intended to be for families who are considering adopting. • A few suggestions included: ○ The form should either be a different color other than red, or it could have hearts behind the numbers instead of boxes. ○ #1 could be reworded to say, "You might be able to find similarities and values that you share with them." ○ #2 – youth strengths should go first in the list. ○ #3 should be reworded. It could say "Older youth are more able to practice independence," or "Older youth are growing and stepping into independence." ○ #4 – The outcome of the question could be good, but this might not be the place to have this specific question. The youth all agreed that it should be re-worded to put more effort into providing support to the youth and not vice versa. It could say, "Your family's support network can bring extra love and attention to the teen's life." ○ #5 - Add "For example:" before the goals and add birthdays as an example. ○ #6 – Not all youth will want to open up right away.
5	Caring Place presentation on Grief and Loss (Alexa Livelsberger) • Alexa attended from the Caring Place and shared a PowerPoint regarding grief in young adulthood. • She informed the group of the Caring Place and the resources they offer. Their mission is to help grieving youth feel less alone and to be able to express their feelings in a safe space.

	• It is a no-cost, non-insurance-based program for children, families, and young adults who have had a loved one die. • It is peer support that is child-focused and family-based. • The program is facilitated by clinical staff and trained volunteers. • There is in-person support provided in four Pennsylvania locations, as well as virtual support provided nationwide for young adults.
6	Work on CRP Recommendations: (Carl Butler, Qasim Abrams) The regions continued their work on their CRP projects. • Southwest - Parenting Youth Continuation (Fathers) ○ This is a multi-level project, so the group is trying to collect data first. They are working on a survey to help collect that data. Anyone who knows someone with this experience that would be willing to complete the survey may reach out to Meghan, Carl, Qasim, or Beth. ○ The resources will be assembled into a document that will be accessible to fathers in care. • Northeast – Family Connection: They have been working on age-appropriate worksheets: ○ “Who is at my table” - who they would like to be surrounded with. ○ Social atom - shows good, neutral, and bad connections and how close the youth are to those individuals and how close they would like them to be to them. ○ Visit inventory – who they would like to have more frequent visits with. ○ Feeling chart – how did you feel before and after court. • Southeast – What to Expect After Adoption: The group is creating a brochure. Today they focused on some possible general positives and negatives of adoption. ○ Positives: ▪ Right to wills – Adoptive youth have the same rights as biological children. ▪ More freedom to travel or go to friends’ homes – You can just get permission from adoptive parents instead of case workers. ▪ Stability - Shows you that you are not going anywhere and that you have a legal place to stay. Youth will have resources and security in knowing that the adoption is final. It provides a sense of belonging. ○ Negatives: (Will include the helpline number to call when there are major issues.) ▪ Not eligible for some grants if adopted before the age of 16. ▪ Stigma from being adopted. ▪ Long process of adoption and lots of paperwork. ▪ Different environment / lifestyle changes. If adopted from a different county, youth services move to the county they are adopted in. ▪ There are restraints from biological families unless permission is given from the permanent family. Grief over biological family, or changes in life with the adopted family. ▪ Emotional stress and changing sense of self / feeling out of place.

	• South Central – Employment Resources: The group discussed the next steps towards their project and researched bracelets to print QR codes on that will link to the employment resources online. • Northwest – Stop Normalizing What’s Not Normal
7	After-Action Review & Closing (Carl Butler) • What went well? ○ There was a lot of involvement in today’s conversations. There were a lot of good, thoughtful questions and feedback from the youth. ○ The ice breaker was good. It allowed everyone to get out of their seats and to talk to people from other counties. ○ They found the Caring Place presentation helpful. They appreciated that it is a resource that may be utilized in all regions. ○ The agenda was very concise and well-spaced out. • What could we do better? ○ A youth mentioned that they would like to see some new people attend. ○ Better accommodations for food allergies – less cheese, no nuts in candy, provide ingredient lists. Staff will continue to share the meals when the agenda is sent out. If youth have suggestions for meals, they are welcome to share those with the CWRC staff. • This is Victoria Delgado’s last Statewide YAB meeting, so CWRC staff took a moment to recognize her contributions and years of service to the Youth Advisory Board. Next Meeting: March 19, 2026