



The **Blast** NEWSLETTER

Spring Edition 2025

Official Newsletter of the
Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board

YAB
PA
YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

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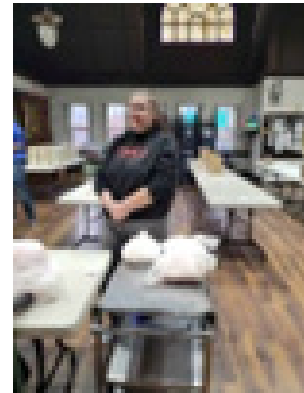
Upcoming Dates

Resources

County Shoutouts

Cambria: The youth met and planned projects for the year.

Butler: The youth served dinner and handed out hygiene bags at a local church.



County Shoutouts

Westmoreland: The local YAB met and worked on the SW Regional Project (Valentines for Vets).



The Southwest Region met on February 13th in Butler County. There were 11 youth and 7 staff present at the meeting. The youth created valentine's cards for the local VA hospital in Butler. The youth voted on a new statewide representative. The youth also had a new photo taken for the SW Region page on the YAB website.



SW/Local County YABs

Allegheny: The youth are working on expanding their volunteer work/opportunities to make Allegheny County better.

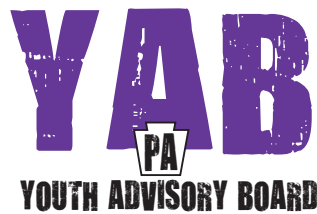


Butler: Their local YAB has been serving community dinners, delivered Christmas donations over the holiday, and filled the community box with food, clothes, and books.

Cambria: Their Local YAB is looking for new leaders, would like to complete the KYR Kahoot games, plans to partner with the community for playground clean-ups, are looking to build a community box by the IL program/community garden, are planning to volunteer at the community kids' events, and created valentines for the regional project.

Indiana: Their Local YAB worked on creating Valentines for Veterans in preparation for the Regional YAB meeting. At their second YAB meeting in February, they made decisions and prepared supplies and the activity (the sense of touch) for the Family Fun Fest event at their local mall. They had bags of items for children to touch and to guess what the items are. They started growing vegetables and flowers and working on the Food Drive Spaghetti Dinner.

Westmoreland: Their Local YAB voted for their officers, have been volunteering/setting up for local food banks, and created cards for the regional project.



Statewide Updates

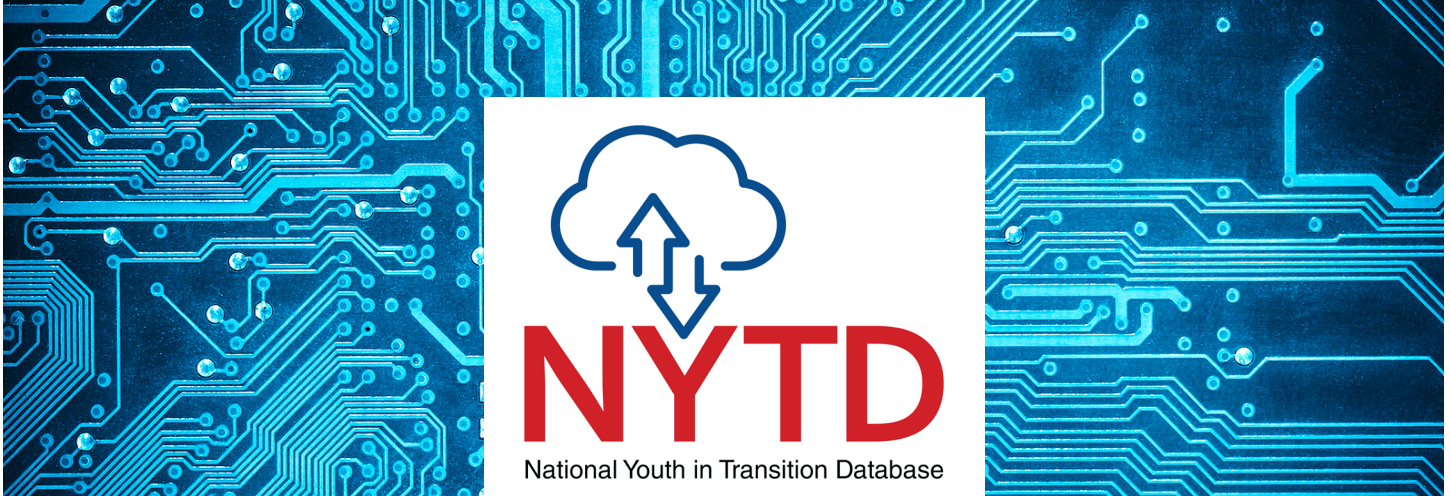
The first Youth Advisory Board (YAB) meeting of 2025 was held on January 23, bringing together youth from across Pennsylvania for a day of discussions, training sessions, and informative presentations. The meeting opened with remarks from Meghan O'Hare, Program Development Specialist at the Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC), followed by an engaging icebreaker activity led by Youth Ambassador Qasim Abrams. The activity encouraged participants to share a skill or piece of knowledge they would want to pass on to others, setting the tone for a collaborative and engaging session.

Lindsey and Teresa from the Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF) introduced the NYTD Council, a new initiative designed to connect youth directly to the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). The council aims to enhance data accuracy for NYTD reviews and improve the overall experience for youth involved in the process.

Following this, Qasim Abrams and Regional Consultant Beth Wyatt led a training session on strategic sharing, emphasizing the importance of clear and effective communication. Participants learned how to focus on key messages, minimize unnecessary details, and share their experiences in impactful ways. Several youths had the opportunity to practice these techniques by sharing personal stories using the strategies learned.

The meeting concluded with regional report-outs, where participants reflected on the day's discussions, identified successes, and suggested improvements for future meetings. Before departing, youth received YAB-branded swag as a token of appreciation.

The meeting was both informative and empowering, equipping youth with tools to enhance their leadership, advocacy, and communication skills.



What is NYTD?

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) is a program designed to collect and track data related to the experiences of youth transitioning out of foster care in the United States. It is a key component of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, which aims to improve the outcomes for youth aging out of the foster care system. NYTD gathers data on youth at different points in their lives to measure their progress and identify areas where additional support or services may be needed.

The data collected by NYTD is used by states and federal agencies to shape policies, improve services, and ensure that youth in care are receiving the necessary support for a successful transition to adulthood.

Building the NYTD Council and Update

- The NYTD Council for Youth is an exciting new initiative aimed at empowering youth with lived experience in foster care to provide valuable feedback and insights that will influence state-level policy decisions. The council will allow youth to engage in discussions about their needs, challenges, and opportunities, giving them a platform to shape the future of youth services.
- By fostering a sense of community and shared purpose, the council will also focus on developing leadership skills, advocacy, and providing a space for peer support. This initiative underscores the importance of youth participation in policymaking and ensures that youth voices are integral in shaping the programs and services that affect them.
- The first meeting will take place on March 26 as a kickoff event, marking the beginning of this impactful initiative. More information will be provided as the council develops and as resources become available.



The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) played a vital role in developing key resources to support youth entering foster care and transitioning out of it. These resources were created to address the unique challenges foster youth face, helping them navigate the complex journey with stability and confidence.

Essentials for Youth Entering Foster Care focus on ensuring youth understand their rights, stay in their original schools for continuity, and have access to mental health support. Stipends provide financial assistance for educational and personal needs, promoting independence. Additional resources are also available for teen parents to help balance childcare with their own growth and independence.

The Benefits of Staying in Care: A Pathway to Success emphasizes the importance of remaining in foster care, where basic needs like food, shelter, and healthcare are consistently met. This stability allows youth to focus on education and personal growth. Emotional support from mentors, caseworkers, and peers fosters strong relationships that contribute to overall well-being. Youth in care also gain access to educational resources, job training, and life skills programs, which are essential for their future success. Staying in care helps reduce the risk of homelessness and financial instability, making for a smoother transition to independent living.

Guiding Youth Through the Transition Out of Foster Care provides essential resources for youth aging out of the system. These include educational opportunities through programs like the Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver and Chafee Education & Training Grant, as well as housing assistance and IL aftercare services that ensure stable living arrangements. These tools help youth develop the skills needed for financial management, career planning, and housing, promoting a successful and independent future.

The resources provided by YAB are designed to give foster youth the support they need to succeed as they transition to adulthood. For more information or a full description of these resources, visit [here](#).

Mark Your Calendar



August 26-27, 2025

2025 Statewide Housing Conference

Join Inglis on August 26-27, 2025 for their Annual Statewide Housing Conference, where accessibility meets innovation. Connect with thought leaders from across Pennsylvania as we explore the latest advancements in service delivery, creative support solutions, and assistive technologies. Stay informed on key advocacy efforts and policy changes shaping housing access for individuals with disabilities and aging adults.

Don't miss this opportunity to be part of the conversation and drive meaningful change!

[LEARN MORE](#)

Foster Love Scholarship

— OVER —
\$500K
IN SCHOLARSHIPS



Foster Love is on a mission to empower foster youth and remove barriers to education. We are reaching out to connect with incredible organizations like yours to identify and support eligible foster youth across America.

Our annual scholarships allow access to financial stability, family-like support, career networking, and life-changing opportunities that propel scholars to achieve their academic and career goals.

We are thrilled to announce that over **\$500,000 in Foster Love scholarship funding will be available in 2025!** Please share this email within your networks and encourage your youth to apply!

Older Youth Services *Agency of the Year Award*

13th Annual Older Youth Services Agency of the Year Award



The Older Youth Services Agency of the Year Award is recognition of an agency in Pennsylvania that is exceptional and positively impacts the lives of older youth and alumni. An agency can be nominated by any youth or alumni of the child welfare system ages 14-23 who currently receives services through a County Children and Youth agency or private provider agency in Pennsylvania. To nominate an agency, please complete this form no later than May 2, 2025. Youth and alumni members of the youth retreat steering committee will vote on the winning agency after reviewing all applications.

[START NOW](#)

Trauma Tip Sheet

March 2025

Trauma Tip Sheet

OCYF Trauma Team



Trauma-Informed Workforce Development

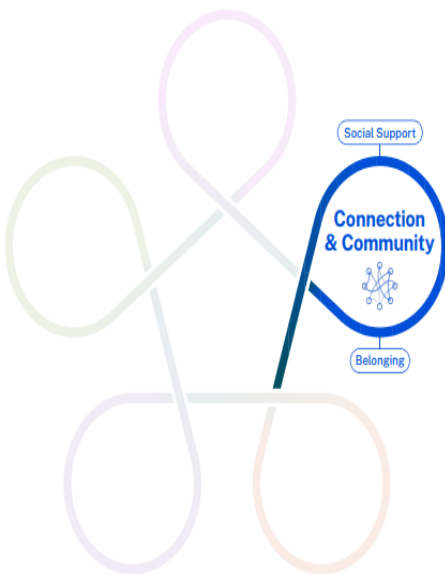
In the January 2025 OCYF Trauma Tip Sheet, The U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being was introduced. Over the next several months, each of the essential items will be discussed in further detail.

The second essential of the Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being is Connection & Community. This essential is grounded in two fundamental human needs: Social Support and Belonging, as seen in the diagram below.

March Activity Suggestion: Although the Groundhog may have forecasted an early spring, March can still bring plenty of chilly days and nights. It's the perfect time to light the fireplace and snuggle up by the fire. For a fun indoor activity, let's create our own paper bag fireplace! Using the instructions provided [here](#), you can make a cozy paper bag fireplace, fill it with your favorite treats, and enjoy a movie or story time by your handmade "fire."

Essential 2:

Connection and Community



[Office of the Surgeon General - Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being](#)

The initial component of the Connection and Community Essential is to **create cultures of inclusion and belonging**. This may be accomplished by promoting prosocial behavior, guarding against barriers to connection, combating bias and discrimination, encouraging inclusive environments, and supporting workers' voices without fear of retaliation.

The second component emphasizes the importance of **cultivating trusted relationships**. Supportive work relationships enhance performance and are linked to increased worker engagement and innovation.

Building trust between workers and leaders requires clear and consistent communication, listening to worker concerns, and explaining key decisions. Trust can be fostered through small, everyday interactions and by encouraging sharing important moments.

The third component is to **foster collaboration and teamwork**. In remote and hybrid work environments, organizational leaders should emphasize the importance of regular communication, provide effective collaboration tools, and encourage non-work connections. Leaders can also address social issues such as racial injustice and LGBTQI+ inequities by considering community liaisons or Asset-Based Community Development. Supporting worker well-being and fostering connections within the broader community can ultimately improve business outcomes.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES: OCYF continues to offer free trauma training facilitated through Lakeside Global for the Pennsylvania child welfare community. Workshops: <https://register.lakesidetraining.org/pa-ocyf-workshops-2025/> and Intensive courses: <https://register.lakesidetraining.org/pa-ocyf-intensive-courses-2025/>. Additionally, the *Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Congregate Care Staff* course has been released through the E-LEARN system at https://www.e-learn.pitt.edu/visitor_catalog_class/show/1557287 This is offered free to all PA licensed child welfare providers.

Know Your Rights

with the Police and Immigration Agents

IF ICE AGENTS SHOW UP AT YOUR DOOR

1. You do not have to open the door. If you do, stay calm—you have rights.
2. Ask what they are there for (and ask for an interpreter if you need one).
3. If they ask to enter, ask if they have a warrant signed by a judge and if so, ask to see it (through a window or slipped under the door).
4. If they do not have a warrant **signed by a judge**, you may refuse to let them in. Ask them to leave any information at your door.
5. If they force their way in, do not resist. Tell everyone in the residence to remain silent.
6. If you are arrested, you have the right to remain silent. Do not sign anything until you speak with a lawyer.

KNOW
YOUR
RIGHTS

ACLU

SI AGENTES DEL ICE LLEGAN A TU PUERTA

1. No abras la puerta, pero mantén la calma. Tú tienes derechos.
2. Pregunta para qué están ahí (y solicita un intérprete si necesitas uno).
3. Si piden entrar a tu casa, pregúntales si tienen una orden firmada por un juez y si la tienen, diles que te la muestren (por la ventana o que la pasen por debajo de la puerta).
4. Si ellos no tienen una orden **firmada por un juez**, puedes negarte dejarlos entrar. Pídeles que dejen cualquier información en tu puerta.
5. Si entran a la fuerza, no te resistas. Dile a todos que estén en la casa que permanezcan en silencio.
6. Si eres arrestado, permanece en silencio y no firmes nada hasta que hables con un abogado.

CONOCE
TUS
DERECHOS

ACLU

IF YOU INTERACT WITH ICE AGENTS AT WORK

1. Ask if you are free to leave. If so, you may calmly walk out.
2. You have the right to refuse consent to a search.
3. You have the right to remain silent. You do not have to discuss your immigration status with anyone, such as about where you were born, whether you are a citizen, or how you entered the country.
4. If you have valid immigration documents, you should show them. Never provide fake documents.
5. If you are arrested, say that you wish to remain silent until speaking with a lawyer.
6. You have the right to record your interaction with immigration agents as long as you do not interfere.

KNOW
YOUR
RIGHTS

ACLU

SI AGENTES DEL ICE LLEGAN A TU LUGAR DE TRABAJO

1. Pregunte si puedes marcharse. De ser así, salga tranquilamente.
2. Tú tienes derecho a no prestar consentimiento a una búsqueda. Diga en voz alta que no consientes a que registren tus pertenencias.
3. Tú tienes derecho a guardar silencio. No tienes que discutir tu estatus migratorio con nadie, ni dónde naciste, ni si eres ciudadano, ni cómo entraste al país.
4. Si tienes documentos de inmigración válidos, deberías mostrarlos. Nunca presente documentos falsos.
5. Si eres arrestado, diga que quieres permanecer en silencio hasta que hables con un abogado.
6. Tú tienes el derecho a grabar tu interacción con los agentes de inmigración, siempre y cuando no interfiera.

CONOCE
TUS
DERECHOS

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State of Black and Brown Mental Health

A graphic featuring several overlapping circles in various shades of brown and tan. In the center, the text "BLACK COMMUNITIES & MENTAL HEALTH" is displayed. "BLACK" is in large, bold, black capital letters, while "COMMUNITIES & MENTAL HEALTH" is in white capital letters. To the right of the circles is a small white circle containing a right-pointing arrow. At the bottom center is a small logo of the Golden Gate Bridge with a graduation cap on top, and below it, the text "FACES EDUCATION". To the right of the logo is a long black arrow pointing to the right.

BLACK
COMMUNITIES &
MENTAL HEALTH



Graphics from Faces Edu Incorporation with NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)

MENTAL HEALTH & TREATMENT ACCESS FOR BLACK AMERICAN ADULTS



About 30% of Black adults with a mental illness receive treatment, compared to 46.3% of White adults.



Black Americans are less likely to receive mental health care and, when they do, they are more likely to receive lower-quality care.



Only 4% of psychologists in the U.S. are Black, making it harder for Black individuals to find culturally aligned providers.



20%

**OF BLACK AMERICANS
REPORT HAVING A MENTAL
ILLNESS**



**1 IN 3 BLACK ADULTS
WITH MENTAL ILLNESS
RECEIVE TREATMENT**

www.nami.org

3%

**OF THE US PSYCHOLOGY
WORKFORCE IS BLACK IN
THE U.S.**

according to data from the American
Psychological Association (APA)



Resources

Mental Health Support

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

Call: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

National Crisis Text Hotline

Text "HOME" to 741741

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Visit:

988lifeline.org

Available 24/7/365.

Call, chat, or text.

ASL Videophone available for

Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

Housing & Safety

Homeless National Hotline

Call: 1-800-786-2929

National Youth & Teen Runaway Hotline

Call: 1-800-Runaway

National Domestic Violence Support Hotline

Call: 1-800-799-SAFE

Visit: www.thehotline.org

Health & Wellness

National STD Hotline

Call: 1-800-227-8922

Legal Support

Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network Call:

1-800-322-7572

Child Protection

National Child Abuse Hotline

Call: 1-800-422-4453

LGBTQ+ Support

988 LGBTQ+ Line

Dial 988, Press 3

Text "PRIDE" to 988

Talk with an LGBTQ+ trained crisis counselor, available 24/7 for individuals under 25.

Visit: 988lifeline.org/help-yourself/lgbtqi/

Call Blackline

Call or Text: 1-800-604-5841

24/7 support for Black, LGBTQ+, and Black Femme communities

Visit: callblackline.com

LGBT National Hotline

Call: 1-888-843-4564

Visit: lgbthotline.org

Hours: Mon-Fri: 1 PM - 9 PM PT /

4 PM - Midnight ET

Sat: 9 AM - 2 PM PT / Noon - 5 PM ET

Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity (MASGD)

Call: 717-QTM-INARA (717-864-6272)

Hours: Fri-Sat, 5 PM - 11 PM CT

Visit: themasgd.org/Inara-helpline

Youth Support

Q Chat Space

Chat with peers in live, facilitated chats (Ages 13-19).

Visit: qchatspace.org

The QTP Loveline

Call: 1-855-578-5683

24/7 on-demand service.

Visit: queertransproject.org

Upcoming Events

YAB Statewide Meetings:

Thursday, May 22, 2025

Youth Summit:

June 11 and 12, 2025

Youth Retreat:

July 28 - August 1, 2025



University of
Pittsburgh

School of
Social Work

Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center