

CWLA THE NETWORKER

September, 2022

Connecting child-serving professionals
with resources, events, and each other.



Interview with Emerging Leaders Committee

“A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself.” — Oprah Winfrey

At CWLA, our passion for lifting up the child welfare workforce extends far beyond Workforce Development Month. Several years ago, CWLA created an advisory group, the Emerging Leaders Committee (ELC), to assist CWLA in its efforts to cultivate the next generation of leaders. In recognition of their efforts to nurture growth in the workforce, we sat down with the ELC’s tri-chairs, Alycia Blackwell, Bacall Hincks, and Terrell Thomas to discuss their upcoming projects and their vision for the future work of the committee. Below are excerpts from that conversation.

Riva: You’re partnering with NCWWI on Thursday, September 29 at 1pm ET to present [*Supporting a Culture of Wellness for Emerging Leaders*](#); what can attendees expect to learn at the webinar?

Bacall: This webinar will feature strategies that the organizations of members of the ELC are employing to incorporate wellness into their programs to facilitate and support staff retention, and how that helps people stay at and love their jobs and be happy and healthy and well in their jobs.

Alycia: In today's world, it's not okay for employers just to focus on what employees can do for them, they must think about what they can do for employees. Folks entering the workforce, especially the younger generations, expect more of their employers. With child welfare work there's secondary trauma and burnout; it's not easy work, and even in the most well-resourced agencies we see that employees are looking for more than just good pay and benefits in an employer (though those are important too!). This panel will discuss ways that agencies are promoting psychological and physical safety in their agencies, and strategies for work-life balance, emotional wellbeing, and opportunities for professional growth.

Riva: The Emerging Leaders Committee is also hosting a four-part webinar series this fall, *Building the Next Generation of Child Welfare Leaders: Leading, Learning, & Linkages*; what topics will be covered?

Alycia: This series will showcase the work that featured members of the ELC are doing to create leadership development and mentorship opportunities at their respective agencies, regardless of whether its public or private, or has a small or large budget. Presenters will share ways that agencies can leverage their existing staff or fiscal resources to provide opportunities to grow leadership.

Our [October webinar](#) will feature Keith Luebcke from the Indiana Department of Child Services, who was able to build a statewide leadership opportunity on a shoestring budget by developing some of the curriculum using free materials. The end result was a cost-sustainable program for coaching and peer learning that includes valuable professional development opportunities for staff. The program participants then go on to become mentors in the next cohort. It's an agency-grown program created with the resources that they had.

Our [November webinar](#) will feature Jacqueline Martin from the NYC Administration for Children's Services, who was able to usher through a program that offers stipends for Child Protective Services (CPS) supervisors and CPS staff to be mentors. This has been an excellent incentive for folks who feel a little stuck in their professional development, and has also supported retention efforts because people who serve as mentors are more likely to report a deeper sense of purpose in their work. The ability to grow skills, nurture talent and literally create the next generation of leaders imbues a sense of commitment and investment in staff.

The [December webinar](#) will feature Ellen Keithley from Options Counseling & Family Services who will share information on advancing opportunities for leadership through an equity lens. And the [January webinar](#), presented by Grey Hilliard-Koshinsky, who has lived experience, will provide information on a peer leadership model to support professionals. There will be one presentation each month from October through January. It's a really exciting opportunity for us

to showcase the work several of our committee members are doing to nurture and grow the profession.

Riva: What drove you to get involved with the Emerging Leaders Committee?

Bacall: I felt a calling because in my current role I am always the youngest person in the room, so there were a lot of barriers that kept me from moving forward and advocating for my program or advocating for my clients to my best ability. When I learned CWLA was looking to develop a young professionals support system (that's what we used to be called) I was drawn to the idea because nothing is more valuable than meeting with others who have the same barriers as you and collectively figuring out how to step forward.

Alycia: Similar to Bacall, in a lot of spaces, I might be the last person to get asked questions because I don't fit others' perception of what a leader or deputy director should look like. And sometimes when other people question you, you start to question yourself as well, and you can't safely expose that vulnerability in your workplace.

When you're a practitioner climbing the ladder, you don't get a handbook on how to leverage your practitioner skills and transition them to an administrator set of skills. Sometimes you're just thrust into administration because you're a strong performer, but you don't get a lot of handholding around how to demonstrate leadership at this different level.

Several mentors and colleagues helped me with this transition, and we are looking to offer an opportunity that provides a safe, professional space where people can build relationships and have guided communication and growth outside of the four walls of their agency.

Bacall: I've always felt very passionate about making sure that we don't just worry about direct service work, but we also think about how we connect with others, train with others, support each other.

Riva: What is the Emerging Leaders Committee's charge?

Alycia: Our purpose is grounded in supporting CWLA to create opportunities for career growth for folks in the field ranging from new graduates to those who have less than 20 years of experience. As we began evolving, we thought about how age could be an exclusionary factor as much as we wanted it to be targeted and inclusive. We realized that leaders function at so many different levels that we didn't want to limit it to a specific age.

I love that we have this balance of members from the public and private sectors on the committee, which brings both perspectives and helps keep us balanced.

Terrell: We also work to include individuals with lived experience in the committee and in our presentations.

Alycia: It's made our committee even more valuable by giving us the dimension of depth we need to make sure that we're being inclusive in our voice and looking at the workforce not just from a staffing perspective but also from the perspectives of those we serve.

Terrell: We've sent out a few surveys to get input on what professionals in the field need in order to feel supported and connected. Much of our workplan and our initiatives have been developed directly off of that feedback.

For example, the need for mentorship was highlighted in the assessment and in the responses we received from our work at the last conference. Because this group is comprised of leaders at different levels, there were also folks expressing a desire to give back to the field by serving as that mentor for others.

Riva: I understand you're working on helping CWLA develop a peer-mentor program now. Can you share any details?

Bacall: We're still conceptualizing what that might look like, but we recognize that value in mentorship is two-fold – you're not just developing and supporting and guiding someone, you sometimes learn more from your mentees than you teach them, so there's a reciprocal, cyclical nature to mentorship that's really beautiful.

Alycia: When I was beginning in the professional world, I was so fortunate to have mentors and supervisors who held my hand and walked me through the work. They were there to help support me when I felt frustrated, and also saw potential in my ability to grow. I feel compelled in a very organic way to give back to the profession that I feel like has given me so much.

Riva: Do you have any advice for young professionals, currently in the field, who want to grow into positions of leadership? Is there anything they can do themselves to jumpstart their professional growth?

Alycia: When growth feels stagnant, if you can't find the resources and support within your agency, think about your network externally – who else is there and available to help you? Also, keep in mind that each experience is building towards your growth. So, while it might be natural to feel a little discouraged at times, either through the work or the administration, try to create a network of support for yourself – social and emotional support but also professional development and support. It's really your job to do that and make it part of your work to grow and network for yourself. My network was not necessarily handed to me. I had to recognize that there were people invested in me and I had to open up and be vocal about the things that I was looking for and what I hoped to get, and when I did open up people kept me in mind for opportunities.

Bacall: And if you don't have a network, we've got one for you! If you don't know where to go, come to us.

Alycia: Find your purpose, find your passion, find your people!

Leadership happens at all levels, and we believe wholeheartedly in growing and nurturing current and future leaders. Whether you are new to the profession or further along in your professional journey and want to lend your experience through collegial connections or mentorship, we encourage you to share your interest in our committee by contacting MemberServices@cwla.org



Alycia Blackwell, MSW, JD serves as Deputy Director of Programs and Services for Fairfax County, Virginia, Department of Family Services. In this role, she oversees four divisions covering the span of human services programs, which include: Adult and Aging; Children, Youth, and Families; Domestic and Sexual Violence Services; and Public Assistance and Employment Services. Her professional background includes being an attorney and serving in former human services roles as a senior policy advisor, statewide program coordinator, curriculum developer and trainer, adjunct faculty, frontline supervisor, and direct practice social worker. She has special interests in the intersections of social work and the law, advocacy, policy development, mentorship, and workforce development.



Terrell Thomas, MSW is the Strategic Initiative Officer at Stanford Sierra Youth & Families. In her role, she is responsible for developing new partnerships and programs to support the organization's strategic growth, innovation, and commitment to improving outcomes for children and families served. Terrell's background includes expertise in fundraising, business development, relationship building, advocacy, and strategic planning. She has an exceptional history of fundraising and business development in child welfare, mental/behavioral health, education, and juvenile justice. She has worked in both the nonprofit and government sectors, successfully securing funding to sustain vital community resources, as well as launch new and innovative programs. Terrell earned her Master's degree in Social Work, with a concentration on Leadership Administration, from Texas State University. She is honored to serve as a member of the Child Welfare League of America and Co-Chair for the Emerging Leaders Committee.



Bacall Hincks, LCSW is the Chief Clinical Officer for Dahlia's Hope, a complete aftercare program for survivors of sex trafficking. She has her Master's of Social Work and her Bachelor's of Psychology from University of Utah and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the State of Utah. Bacall has over 15 years' experience working in the social work field, specifically with children and families that have experienced trauma. Bacall is currently trained in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, EMDR, and Parent Child Interaction Therapy and believes that it is important to take a trauma informed approach in all the work that she does.

Bacall is also an associate professor at the University of Utah teaching courses in Mental Health Practice, Policy and Social Justice and Community Development.

MOVING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

CWLA NOV 1 - 3, 2022
VIRTUAL CONFERENCE



Virtual Conference Registration Open!

Registration is now open for CWLA's virtual conference, [Moving Research to Practice](#)! Join us for this three-day event as we examine the practice implications of research collected in recent issues of the *Child Welfare* journal and other upcoming CWLA publications.

In the opening panel, the editors will discuss how this research can be used as a driver for significant change. Four additional panels, spread across three days, will feature the trailblazing authors who contributed to the publications. These panels will focus on:

- New approaches to building relationships between child welfare/other systems, communities, and families
- Practice improvement and innovation
- Empowering and supporting the workforce
- Implementing change through policy and funding

Each day will conclude with breakout sessions, affording attendees an opportunity for discussion and shared learning with peers. In the closing session, the editors will return to provide a summary and a call to action for the field.

[Register today!](#)

CWLA THE NETWORKER

September, 2022

Connecting child-serving professionals
with resources, events, and each other.



Learning Opportunities

Webinars:

[Developing a Culture of Wellness at DC's Child and Family Services Agency](#)

Tuesday, September 20 at 3pm ET

This **members-only** webinar will provide participants with recommendations for implementing strategies that address secondary traumatic stress and promote wellness, based on lessons learned at DC CFSA. Space is limited; contact MemberServices@cwla.org for information.

[Supporting a Culture of Wellness for Emerging Leaders](#)

Thursday, September 29 at 1pm ET

This webinar will feature a panel of public and private agencies implementing multifaceted strategies that support employee wellness and professional development to promote overall well-being of the child welfare workforce.

[SOAR for Children](#)

Thursday, October 13 at 2pm

This webinar introduces the SAMHSA SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) initiative – a national program designed to increase access to the disability income benefit programs administered by the SSA for eligible individuals who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a substance use disorder.

Virtual Trainings:

[Crisis Assessment and Intervention When Trauma Strikes: A Five-Step Approach to Foster Hope, Collaboration, and Change](#)

Tuesday, October 4, 11, 18 and 25, 2022 at 1pm ET

This four-part skills-based training will feature facilitated conversations using a five-step approach as a way to foster the hope, collaboration, and change needed to assess and intervene when trauma and tragedy strike.

[Dear Black Male](#)

Wednesday, October 5, 12, 19 and 26, 2022 at 1pm ET

This four-part training, produced in partnership with Welcome2Reality, LLC, will provide an overview of the history and culture of African Americans with a focus on recognizing cultural mistrust, issues faced, and perceptions of Black males.

CWLA THE NETWORKER

September, 2022

Connecting child-serving professionals
with resources, events, and each other.



Good News in Child Welfare

At times, the news media's bad news bias towards child welfare can lead us to feel disheartened, dispirited, discouraged.

But we know the truth – that all over the country, in communities both rural and urban, at agencies big and small, dedicated child-serving professionals are having an immense positive impact on the lives of children and families.



In partnership with the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice, & Research, each month we will highlight one inspiring, joyful news story from the child welfare system. We hope this segment brings some levity and delight into your day.

[Arizona Camp Teaches Foster Children Cowboy Skills](#)

This video from PBS NewsHour highlights a unique opportunity for youth in foster care in Arizona. Opportunity, Community, and Justice (OCJ) is a local organization that reaches out to youth in foster care and "gives them the opportunity to be cowboys." Participating youth spend time as campers at the Flying E Ranch in Wickenburg, AZ, where they have a chance to get out of the city and experience Western life with activities like horseback riding and archery. OCJ creates a support system for the youth while they are at camp, and maintains that connection through a mentorship program in the city.

CWLA THE NETWORKER

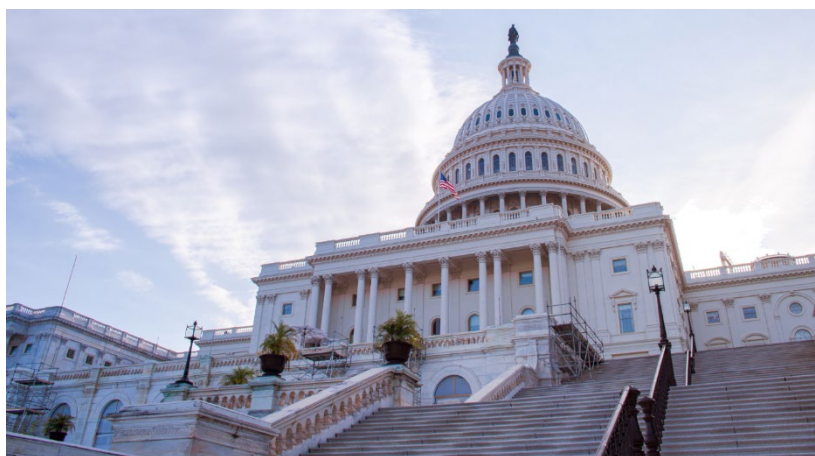
September, 2022

Connecting child-serving professionals
with resources, events, and each other.



CWLA Policy Department Interview

CWLA is a small but mighty team that works with, and on behalf of, hundreds of members. To learn more about that work, we spoke with our own Public Policy Manager, Kati Mapa, about how CWLA's Policy Department gets things done behind the scenes.



Riva: What has the policy department been working on lately?

Kati: A lot of our time is spent in meetings with Senators, Representatives, and their staff. Lately, we've been having a lot of meetings around appropriations, reconciliation, and Title IV-B reauthorization. Our team of interns is working on a legislative tracker that will keep track of every bill in Congress that impacts children. It will be separated into categories and searchable by Representatives and Senators to see what bills they've sponsored and cosponsored. Currently, we have about 65 bills in several different categories. We plan to launch it in the next congress.

Riva: How does CWLA use its influence and expertise to effect policy change?

Kati: Every two years we develop our legislative agenda based on the expertise of our members along with our *Standards of Excellence*. When we meet with legislative staff, whether it's about reconciliation or appropriations or other pieces of legislation, we look to our members' expertise to come up with our policy recommendations. We also spend our time on the Hill educating staffers about best practices in the field, pointing out gaps in funding and explaining

the needs of the population. Child welfare is not adequately funded – we see that in the workforce, we see that in turnover rates, we see that in the difficulties our members have in meeting the needs of the families they serve. That’s why we are focusing on appropriations and looking for increases in the budget line items that will most impact our members.

Riva: How can our members get more involved in federal policy?

Kati: As we work on our legislative agenda, we’ll be holding small discussion groups with members to find out their priorities and see how their struggles can be addressed legislatively. Members are always encouraged to reach out to Joe and myself with ideas or questions about policy, or if they need help getting in touch with their members of Congress. If members aren’t signed up for action alerts yet, they should [visit our action center](#). Action alerts help people reach out to their Senators and Representatives about specific pieces of legislation. Action alerts come fully written, so they can either just hit send or they can edit and personalize the message if they like, but it’s an easy two-click process to send an email to their Representatives and Senators! We hear from legislative directors that they count the number of times they hear about a single issue, so even if they’re receiving a standard, formula message from multiple constituents, those issues rise above the others.

Riva: How can members have more influence on policy on a local level?

Kati: A great starting point is to build those relationships by inviting your state and federal legislators or mayor to come visit your program and see how you’re helping the community. Then follow up with them on issues you’re passionate about, or if they’ve made legislative decisions that you agree or disagree with. The goal is to build your relationships so that when these legislators have a question about a certain issue, your organization comes to mind. It takes time, but it’s a great way to build your influence locally.

Riva: What else should members know about the CWLA Policy Team?

Kati: We can’t finish without highlighting how important our team of interns is. We take interns every semester. We are such a tiny organization and department so having three or four interns makes a huge impact in our work. Our interns are all studying different subjects, and that speaks to how policy touches so many different aspects of our society. Most of our interns come from the social sciences, from public policy, and a lot of them focus on behavioral health and mental health. All of those different perspectives lead to really great discussion, and creative ideas for where to take projects. If anyone is interested in applying for a CWLA internship, they can find more information [on our website](#).

CWLA THE NETWORKER

September, 2022

Connecting child-serving professionals
with resources, events, and each other.



CWLA Member Highlight

CWLA's members are a diverse coalition of child-serving professionals. These members partner with us to fulfill our mission of advancing policies, strategies, and best practices that result in better outcomes for children, youth, and families. This month, we'd like to highlight the efforts of one of our members: The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research (member since 2004), so we sat down with Dr. Johanna Greeson, Managing Faculty Director, to learn more about their work.

Riva: What is [The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research](#)?



The Field Center
FOR CHILDREN'S POLICY,
PRACTICE & RESEARCH

Johanna: We're an interdisciplinary, university-based center at the University of Pennsylvania that brings together the Schools of Social Policy & Practice, Law, Arts and Sciences, Medicine, Nursing, the Graduate School of Education, and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. We are comprised of faculty from all of those schools, and we come together to work on issues related

to child welfare and child and family wellbeing. We specialize in research and education, and our work informs local and national policy and practice.

Riva: How does being a university-based center make your work unique from other child welfare organizations?

Johanna: All of these disciplines are within the University of Pennsylvania, and this close proximity facilitates collaboration. The interdisciplinary nature of our work gives us a broader set of perspectives, providing multiple angles on issues that not every entity similar to us might have. That's one of the things that's so special about this collaboration among disciplines – the ability to look at a single problem from all these different perspectives. We are able to learn so much from each other.

Riva: Can you tell me about C.A.R.E.?

Johanna: C.A.R.E. stands for Caring Adults R Everywhere. It's a natural mentoring intervention, designed to address the crisis of youth aging out of foster care. It's a relationship-based intervention that prioritizes emotional and social support and connection with a caring adult in the young person's life, and the focus on skill building comes within the context of that relationship. It really takes a different approach than the independent living programs that youth who age out of foster care often go to, where the focus is on cultivating life skills. We believe that you can't develop those kinds of skills if you don't have a stable relationship with at least one adult. C.A.R.E. is really an effort to push us to think about helping young people build interdependence rather than independence.

Riva: What motivated you to create C.A.R.E.?

Johanna: The first job I had after finishing my MSW program was in a foster care agency, working as an internal program evaluator, and I was really appalled at the lack of understanding about the older youth population in child welfare as well as the complete lack of services for this population. It seemed like the field didn't have a handle on how older youth have different needs than young children. Thankfully, we have all come a long way since then in thinking about this population as a distinct group.

I realized that I didn't have the knowledge or skills at that point to effect change the way that I desired in response to the need that I saw, so I went back to school. While I was in the middle of my course work, I learned about the concept of natural mentoring, and it was like a light bulb went on in my head. Natural mentoring is the concept of building a mentor relationship with an adult who is already in a youth's life, rather than a programmatic mentoring program where a youth is matched with a stranger. It's someone the youth already feels comfortable with – a teacher, friend's parent, neighbor, coach, pastor, rabbi – there are all sorts of adults that youth come in contact with in their lives. I thought there must be adults in these kids lives who care about them, it's just that no one is looking for them. I realized there could be an intervention designed to help support, cultivate, and nourish, and even before all that – identify who these

adults are in these kids' lives – and then have a program designed to really help foster that relationship, so that the adult is in a position to be a significant resource for the young person when they age out of foster care.

We've done focus group studies designed to get feedback on the intervention from young people who were about to age out of foster care, as well as social workers who would be the type of worker who would deliver this intervention. C.A.R.E. has evolved over the years based on that critical feedback.

Riva: I hear you've also recently been awarded a Research Challenge Grant to work with Agape Children's Ministry in Kenya. What will you be evaluating in your work with them?

Johanna: This is a small grant from the Christian Alliance for Orphans; I was selected as one of five researchers from all over the globe to work with one of five NGOs that are affiliated with the Christian Alliance for Orphans. We each got paired with an organization based on our interests and our expertise. Our project with Agape Children's Ministry is to evaluate their field counseling program (which is analogous with in-home services in the US). Field counselors go into homes where children who have been living on the streets have been reintegrated with a family member, and work to keep the family together. What the organization was finding is that shortly after reintegrating the children with their families, the children were back on the streets. This program that we are evaluating will provide weekly in-home services such as therapy for 3-4 months with the goal of keeping the family from dissolving again.

It's a relatively new program for them so we are evaluating the stability of the family by comparing caregiver and child perceptions of family together before and after the provision of the field counseling. My colleague and I are headed to Kenya in October to do a site visit.

Riva: What's next for the Field Center?

Johanna: We're doing a [webinar series](#) this academic year regarding the Indian Child Welfare Act, which is the subject of a Supreme Court case. The series will be produced in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School. The first session, on Thursday, September 29, will focus on the background and implementation of the law and the second session, on Thursday, December 1, will discuss the consequences and implications of the Supreme Court case.

Johanna Greeson is an Associate Professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice where she is the Director of the Child Well-Being & Child Welfare Specialization. She is also the Managing Faculty Director of the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research. Her published work includes scholarly articles and book chapters on natural mentoring, evidence-based practices for older youth in foster care, and relationships. She received her PhD in Social Work from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in 2009.

[Learn about C.A.R.E., a natural mentoring intervention](#)

CWLA THE NETWORKER

September, 2022

Connecting child-serving professionals
with resources, events, and each other.



Renew your *Child Welfare* Journal subscription!

Don't let your subscription lapse. As a committed professional, you know the value of receiving CWLA's *Child Welfare* journal — the only peer-reviewed publication devoted solely to the welfare of children. Our general and special-themed issues provide a fresh approach to problem solving and proven, practical ideas that work. You get comprehensive coverage of the latest research, practice issues, program developments, and more — all vital for informed, thoughtful decision-making. *Child Welfare* sheds light on important and sometimes controversial topics, like child abuse and neglect, immigration, racial equity, out-of-home care and family reunification, kinship care, adoptive parenting, research evidence, substance use and more.

[Renew today!](#)

CWLA THE NETWORKER

September, 2022

Connecting child-serving professionals
with resources, events, and each other.



September is Kinship Care Month

Kinship care, the practice of an adult family member providing a caring home for a child who is not able to live with their parents, is a valuable permanency option for children in out-of-home care.



Although the practice of relatives caring for children is a time-honored tradition in many cultures, and particularly celebrated in Black communities, there was no nationally recognized, consistent name for the policies and practices of placing children with relatives until 1991, when CWLA began widespread promotion of the term *kinship care*. As the use and understanding of the term began to gain traction, so too did new policies and practices that appropriately recognized and supported the important role of kinship caregivers.

September is Kinship Care Month, a great opportunity to [learn more](#) about this crucial permanency option.

CWLA Resources:

[Kinship Care: Continuing the Tradition of Caring, Collaborating, Navigating and Advocating](#)

[Reflections on Kinship Care: Learning from the Past, Implications for the Future](#)
[Child Welfare Journal Vol. 95 Special Issue: Kinship](#)

View more resources:

[Reflections: Stories of Foster Care](#)
[Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)
[Grandfamilies](#)
[NY Kinship Navigator](#)

CWLA THE NETWORKER

September, 2022

Connecting child-serving professionals
with resources, events, and each other.



CWLA Supporter Spotlight

LYFT Learning designed [Life Skills Reimagined](#) to overcome many of the hurdles organizations face in delivering an effective, consistent, evidence-informed life skills program for their transition-age youth. Youth voice guided every phase of Life Skills Reimagined's development, and, to date, organizations in 25 states have implemented the program. LYFT Learning is dedicated to ensuring that organizational leaders have robust data to drive decision making and every youth in care has access to a proven life skills curriculum regardless of demographics, location, placement or placement type.

