

# Recommendations for Engaging Young People in Child Welfare Services

## Prepare, support, and train young people

- Educate participants about different opportunities and allow them to choose what interests them.
- Provide clear expectations to help young people understand the purpose of their involvement and how their lived experience matters.
- Provide hands-on preparation/training before an engagement opportunity (e.g., mentoring/shadowing opportunities).
- Create a safe and supportive environment.
- Have check-ins before, during, and after engagement opportunities and hold debriefs.
- Provide mental health support or have supportive staff on site (e.g., counselors, youth advisory boards/council advisors).
- Provide breaks.



## Offer young people with lived experience employment and leadership opportunities in child welfare work

- Offer entry-level roles.
- Establish compensation before starting an opportunity.
  - Compensation for time and participation should be via cash, direct deposit, or mobile payment apps as these methods allow flexibility in the way funds can be used.
  - Additional mechanisms to compensate young people include letters of recommendation, community service hours, and language to use for their resumes and profiles (e.g., LinkedIn).

**"We know the ins and outs of it...Let's get people who've actually experienced the system in charge of changing the system."**

**-Focus group participant/lived experience expert**

## **Provide young-people-friendly data visualizations and materials**

- Develop data, data visualizations, and materials that are young-people-friendly.
- Develop engaging briefs and summaries for a non-technical audience.

## **Provide young people with ongoing engagement, outreach, and recruitment opportunities**

- Advertise child welfare opportunities in places where young people are (e.g., schools/universities, community organizations).
- Partner with those who have relationships with young people (e.g., national volunteer organizations, state youth councils).
- Use technology to advertise opportunities and provide updates in multiple ways (e.g., social media, calls, texts, emails, newsletters).
- Inform young people about opportunities for engagement while they are still in care and create a system for contacting them once they are no longer in care (e.g., email sign-up).
- Ensure young people receive results or products that stem from their involvement.
- Disseminate results and data to young people to show how their input has helped and/or led to change within the child welfare system.

## **Engage more than one young person for diverse perspectives**

- Include multiple young people to prevent tokenization.
- Create opportunities for young people to build a sense of community and peer-to-peer connections.
- Use peer networks to recruit, train, and retain young people.
- Gather feedback using diverse methods, including focus groups, surveys, phone calls, web-based/virtual meetings (including allowing the use of a chat feature), round-robin-style talks, and feedback walls/talking walls.



# Roles for Young People With Lived Expertise

## Data Roles

- Allow young people to help gather data and evidence (e.g., from young people in care).
- Ask young people to review the data and identify key themes.

## Training Roles

- Invite young people to develop training materials that are young-people-friendly and young-people-sensitive.
- Allow young people to provide the training to other peers.

## Outreach Roles

- Encourage young people to support states with outreach to peers.
- Encourage young people to support states with outreach to populations who are marginalized to encourage more diverse representation.

## Closing the Feedback Loop Roles

- Ask young people if they see their experiences or those of their peers represented in the data.
- Invite young people to present the data to audiences.

## Content Creation Roles

- Ask young people to help create materials/resources.
- Invite young people to design more engaging visuals that present data using language for the general population.

