

# Promoting a Culture of Shared Learning: New England Regional Advocacy Creates Systemic Change CWLA Conference April 2023



Wednesday April 26th 3:10 - 4:25 pm  
Presenters: Grey Hilliard-Koshinsky  
and Alexander Lopes

# Ice Breaker



# Ice Breaker



Write  
3 Prized  
Possessions  
and/or  
People



**FROM SEVERED TO TETHERED**

# Objectives



- ❑ About NEYC as Youth Adult Partnership
- ❑ Project Bank Account and Report
- ❑ How we revised our consensus building recipe and focus that resulted on LGBTQ+ Policy
- ❑ Lessons Learned
- ❑ Reflections from workshop participants

# Mission



- Working together to better the quality of life for youth involved with the foster care system through education, advocacy, and improvement of policy and practice
- Current + Former Foster Youth + Adult supporters

# Our Work to Change Systems



Sibling Bill of Rights

Education Committee

NEYC 4 Life Committee

Project Normalcy

Project Stability

Project Story

Project Driving to  
Success

Project Bank  
Account

Event Planning  
Committee

# Becoming a Member



## Youth Advocates

Age 16+

Connection to YAB or Leadership Role  
in your state

Committed to making positive change

## Adult Supporters

Passion for working with young people

Believe youth voice improves and  
benefits systems

Committed to youth adult partnership

Chosen by your state to represent your state regionally





2019 NEYC PROJECT BANK ACCOUNT



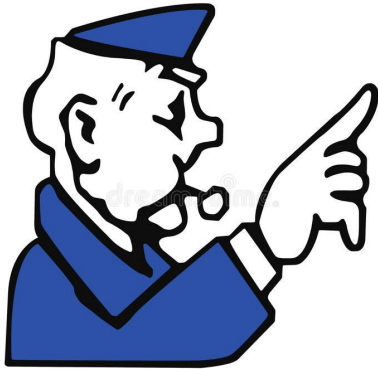


# Activity

## *Do Not Pass Go!*



**Imagine you are a  
young person in  
foster care...**



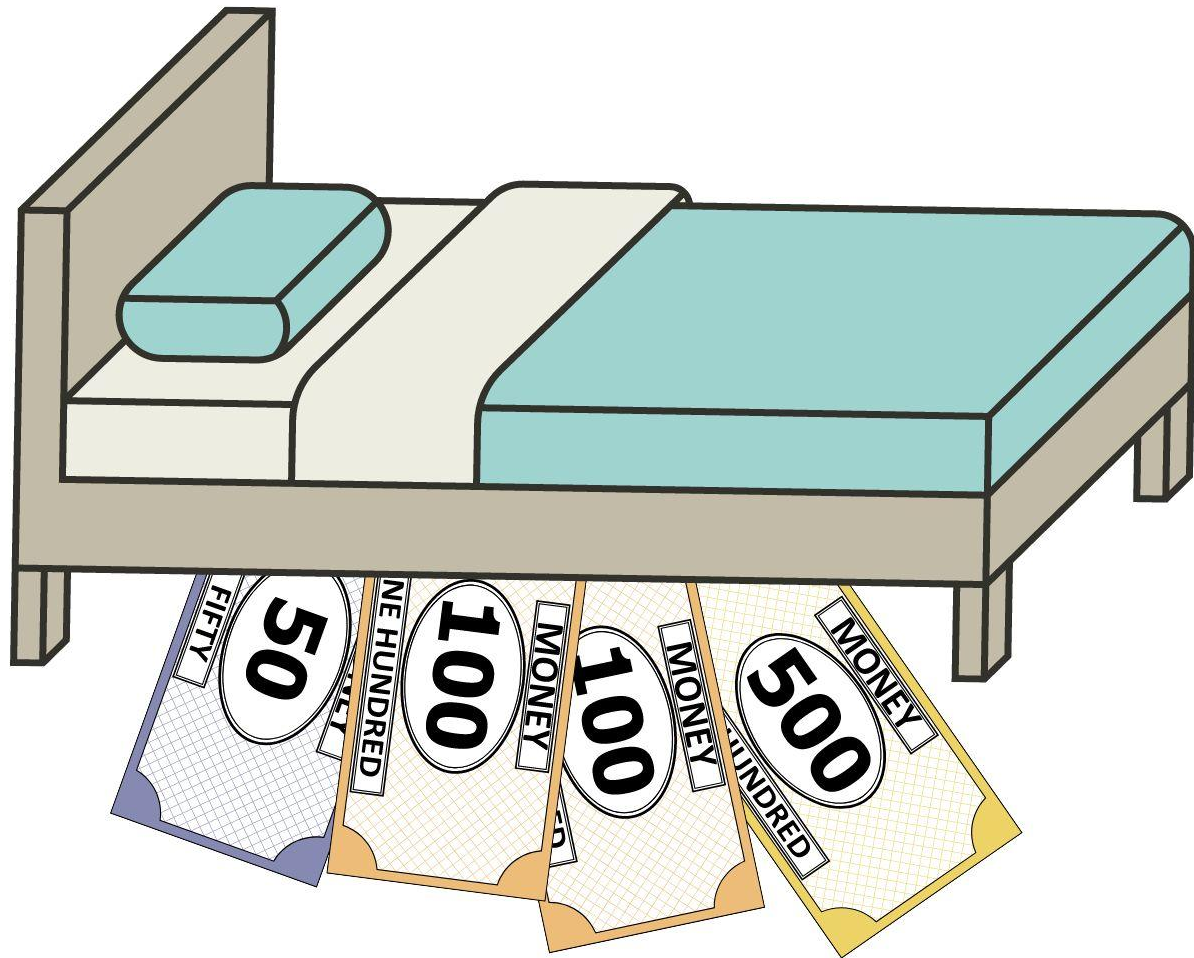
## Scenario 1:

You're 16 and you've been paid \$500 for your summer job. Your Job wants to set up direct deposit but....

You Cannot Pass Go Because:

You need a co-owner to open a bank account





**Scenario 2:**  
You don't have a bank account so you keep a Cash box under your mattress. You're trying to save for a car. So far you have \$750. You live in a group home.



### Scenario 3:

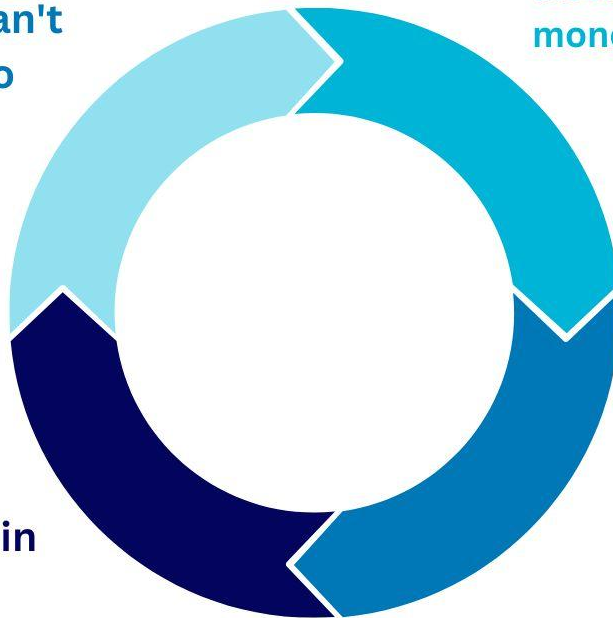
You're an NEYC member and we paid you a stipend for presenting/attending a conference. Your funds are usually so tight that you prefer to use a check cashing place rather than a bank because of the fees. In the past when your check didn't clear in time, you overdrafted your account.



**Scenario 4:**  
As part of  
Independent  
Living, you're  
supposed to learn  
financial literacy  
but...

You want to overcome  
the cycle of  
intergenerational  
poverty but you can't  
figure out where to  
start

You weren't given  
opportunities to learn,  
practice  
and fail at decision making  
discipline around  
money



You weren't able to  
establish a  
relationship  
with a bank so you  
were  
incentivized to  
spend your  
money as soon as  
you got it

Some barriers  
exist because you're in  
foster care  
and some are related  
to the structure of the  
Banking industry



# Project Bank Account Report



61%

Obtained  
Bank  
account  
Before  
leaving  
care



But  
No clear  
Process  
For creating  
an account



# Barriers to Passing

COLLECT  
\$200 SALARY  
AS YOU PASS



“I got  
**lucky** w/  
my SW”

**Co-owner**  
Vs  
Co-signer

Designated  
Time

Cross System  
Collaboration

Liability for  
SW's and  
caregivers

Legislation  
and  
Regulation

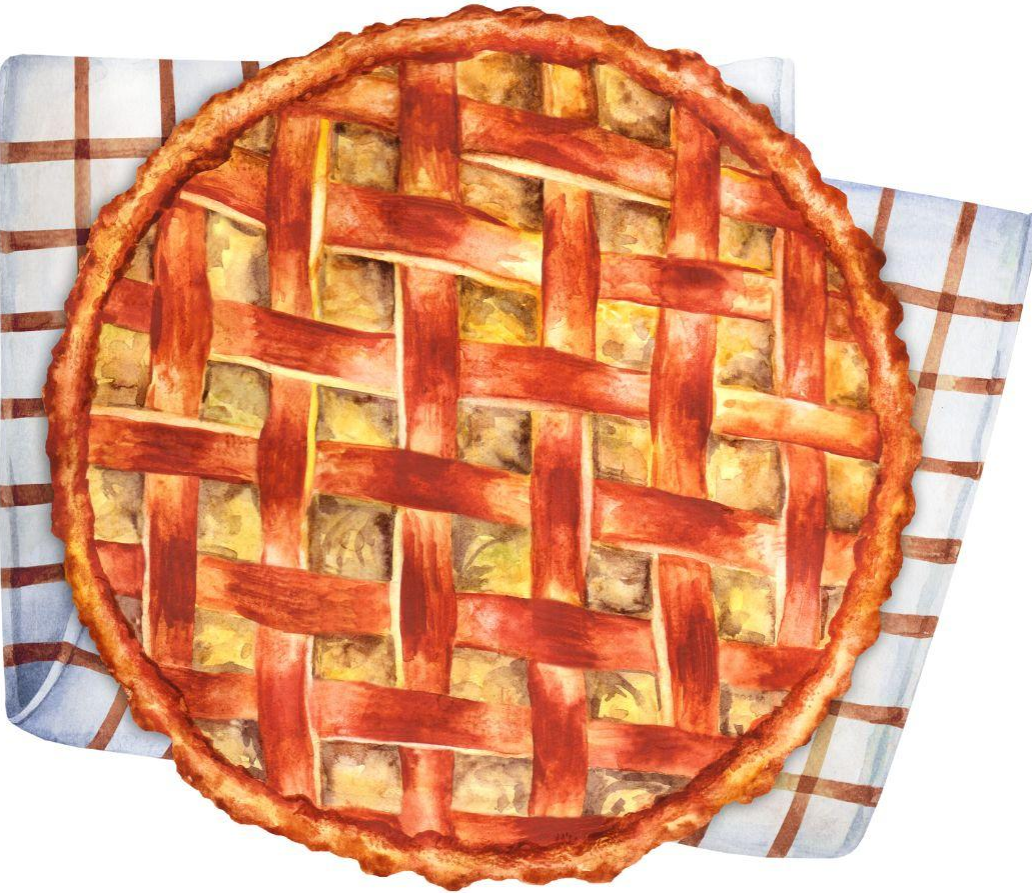
# Helping Youth Pass



- ☐ Address barriers for youth without “I was lucky that”
- ☐ Legislation Cosigner vs Co-owner
- ☐ I think 16+ you can get a job you should -be able to have your own bank account without overdraft fee
- ☐ Allowances at 13+



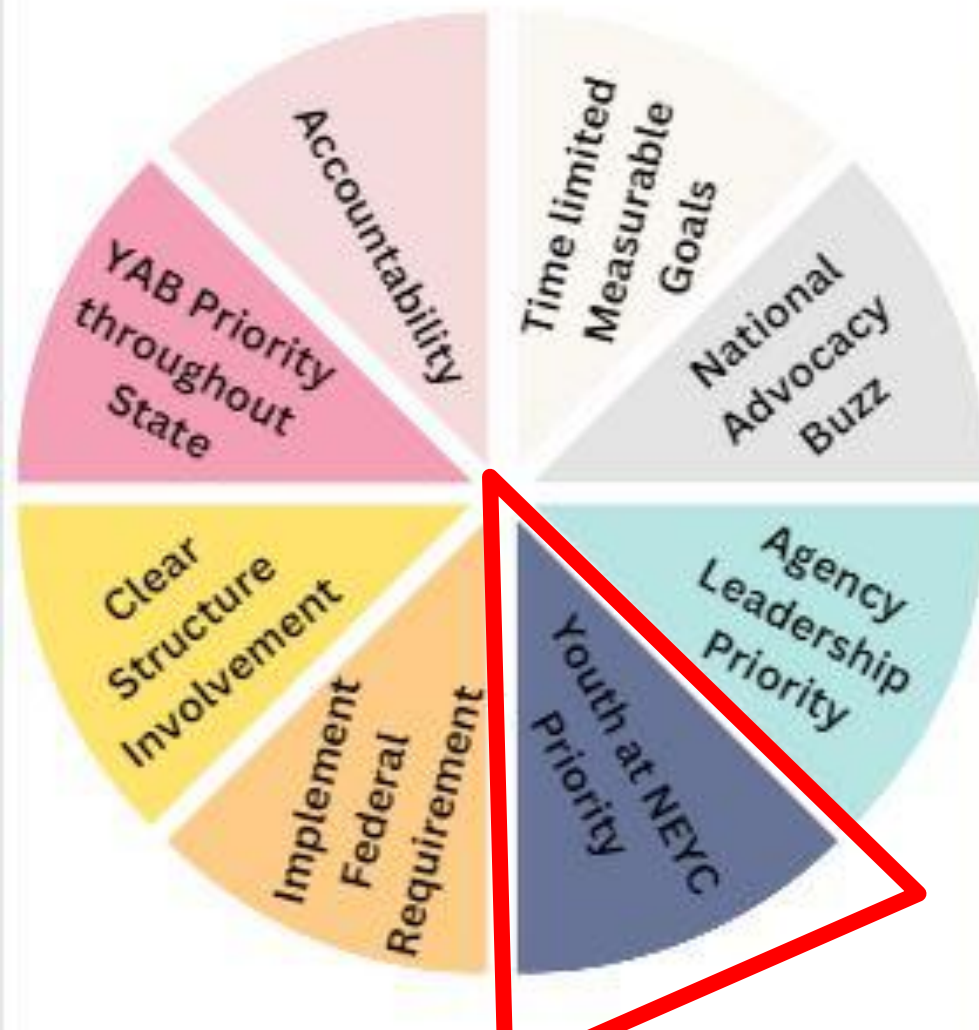
**Activity:**  
***Recipe for a  
Regional  
Project***





# **Activity:** ***Recipe for a Regional Project***





***Maintaining Momentum***





# ***Maintaining Momentum***





# ***Maintaining Momentum***

# 2022 January Winter Meeting



## NEYC Advocacy Strategic Planning Questions

1. Are there ways for NEYC Youth leaders to be engaged in regional advocacy efforts, supported by agency staff, and where learning can happen across state lines?
2. If one regional issue can't be identified, what role can NEYC play in helping to prepare youth with the skills and knowledge needed to be effective leaders at the state level?

# 2022 July Conference



## Priorities from NEYC Mtg C&D's

### NEYC Youth

- Barriers to resources available to undocumented youth in care
- NEYC Meeting with C&D on a more regular basis (Quarterly?) and youth meeting with C&D in their state regularly
- Addressing quality of case management and lack of consistency with workers
- Policies on gender affirming care, training for foster parents on LGBTQ youth and Collecting LGBTQ+ data
- More therapists to work with you quicker
- DCF supporting youth who are non-compliant and over 18
- Unprofessional relationships between workers and caretakers
- Caseloads affecting quality and consistency of care and resources for youth
- DCF monitoring how foster parents spend the money given to take care of kids

# 2022 July Conference

## Priorities from NEYC Mtg C&D's

### Commissioners and Directors



- **CT** - Full continuum of mental health services - address children languishing in the ER for mental health, Workforce is our main priority. What would make our work more attractive to come into this field?
- **RI** - Workforce development including behavioral health, Affordable housing for children and families
- **VT** - Engaging youth at all levels of Family first legislation and the implementation
- **NH** - Prevention - move away from needing families and children to engage in the formal court system with (JJ) juvenile justice, utilization of kinship placement and support of kinship placement
- **ME** - Workforce is our underlying singular issue across all areas including child welfare and behavioral health
- **MA** -Perhaps there are areas we are all interested in working on more such as LGBTQ policy

# 2022 August Synthesis Summer Conference



## Agency Priorities

- Creating a continuum of mental health services
- Workforce recruitment, retention & training
- Affordable housing for families and youth
- Engaging youth in Family First (FFPSA) implementation
- Increase utilization of kinship care
- LGBTQ+ policies

## Youth Priorities

- Worker turnover and inconsistent case practice
- Quality of case workers
- Barriers related to serving undocumented youth
- Policies on gender affirming care/LGBTQ+
- Increase access to mental health treatment
- Desire for more Frequent conversations with agency leadership

# 2022 September Synthesis Report Out to Agency Leaders

**NEYC  
Youth**

**Workforce Development  
Mental/behavioral Health  
LGBTQ+ youth**

**Commissioners  
& Directors**







# 2023 Winter Meeting Preparation

## Test Priorities: Transition Age Youth LGBTQ+ youth Policy





# 2023 Winter Meeting Preparation

**Priorities Evolve:**  
**Transition Age Youth**  
**LGBTQ+ youth Policy**  
**Cultural celebration**  
**and Acceptance**



# LGBTQ+ Policy Regional Focus



**Regional  
priority of NEYC  
for one year  
then  
revisit**



# Synergy between NEYC and CT YABs



- ❑ Revamp LGBTQ+ Trainings and Make them mandatory for Foster Parents and DCF Staff
- ❑ Writing policy on gender affirming care
- ❑ Writing proposal to give youth ages 13+ an allowance (Legacy of Project Bank Account)
- ❑ Transition Age Youth Continuous thread

# Lessons Learned



Establishing the relationship, creates trust, accountability

More Communication "I feel like there isn't enough"

Working with other people affected by the issue not only foster youth

You need to have a certain level of relationship to work efficiently with other people

# Your Turn! Dessert, Picky Item, New Flavor



## Dessert

The best thing you're taking away from this workshop



## Picky Item

Something challenging about this workshop and/or implementing the content



What you would have liked to learn more about

## New Flavor

One thing you're looking forward to bringing back with you when you head home





# Thank you! Questions?????

