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Achieving Maximum Potential (AMP) is a youth-driven, statewide group that seeks to unleash the full potential for personal growth among foster and adoptive children in Iowa. AMP works to help youth become independent adults who can successfully educate others about the child welfare system and take an active role in making life better for themselves and others in state care.

AMP 2017 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Collected from all 16 AMP Foster Care Youth Councils: Ames, Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Des Moines Mobile Facilitator, Dubuque, Eldora State Training School, Fort Dodge, Iowa City, Marshalltown, Mason City, Ottumwa, Sioux City and Waterloo

STATE OF IOWA LEGISLATION

- 1. To increase permanency for foster care youth, AMP youth request the State of Iowa access federal funding to implement the Guardianship Assistance Program to provide legal guardians financial assistance for the care of their relative children/youth.**

A subsidized guardianship program provides relative caregivers the opportunity to become the legal guardians of their children/youth, thereby replacing the role of foster care, and offers children/youth permanency when parental rights are not or will not be terminated. Foster youth achieve “normalcy,” maintain relationships with caring adults and under subsidized guardianship there are fewer administrative costs associated with state paid care such as home visits, court hearings and case management. Currently 32 states offer the federal Guardianship Assistance Program, but Iowa does not.

- 2. AMP youth request funding to implement the Anti-Bullying Bill, which has been assigned to the Domestic Violence Center in Cedar Falls, Iowa, per the governor’s proclamation.**
- 3. AMP youth request the State of Iowa adopt Erin’s Law, which requires all public schools implement a prevention-oriented child sexual abuse program.**

Twenty two states have already adopted a version of Erin’s Law to educate and increase safety for all school-aged minors. Iowa needs to adopt Erin’s Law, so minors know the resources available to protect them.

- 4. AMP youth request additional specialized housing options be available for youth with high mental health needs and those youth transitioning out of foster care. This would include:**
 - + Despite where a youth lives, he/she will receive appropriate mental health and behavioral services to meet their needs.
 - + Emergency shelters are not staffed or trained as treatment centers, creating risky situations for youth with, and without, extreme mental health issues who reside in shelter care. AMP youth request safety, protection and continued family and community connections in our shelters while our peers who need mental health services get their services at treatment facilities with trained staff.
 - + Special living situations for youth, age 18-21, who would benefit from structure and supervision to prepare them successfully for adulthood.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

- 1. AMP youth request minor youth struggling with emotional and behavioral issues should be able to meet with a counselor without parental consent.**

Federal 42 U.F.C. and regulation 42 CFR Part 2 needs to be expanded to allow counselors to meet with minor youth struggling with substance abuse without parental consent. This law needs to be expanded in Iowa to include emotional and behavioral issues.

- 2. AMP youth request Iowa encourage the employment of transition age foster youth.**

Employer Tax Bill amends the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to include transition age foster care youth as categorially eligible for purposes of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). Employers may be eligible to receive a credit of up to \$2,400 annually for hiring foster youth.

2016 CARRYOVERS

- 1. AMP youth request Iowa ban conversion/aversion/reparative counseling/therapy for LGBTQ youth.**

The potential risks of conversion/aversion/reparative counseling/therapy are great, including depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior, since therapist alignment with societal prejudices against homosexuality may reinforce self-hatred already experienced by the youth. Six U.S states and the District of Columbia all have passed legislation banning conversion therapy for minors.