



## Young Leaders Meet to Develop a Foster Care Advocacy Agenda

**Des Moines, Iowa – July 22, 2017** – The Youth Policy Institute of Iowa hosted a Young Leaders Collaborative to begin development of an advocacy agenda to promote policy and practice improvements in foster care. Nine young people from around the state attended the day-long event, at which they identified issues, brainstormed solutions, and came to consensus on priority recommendations to improve foster care policies and practices in Iowa.

Participants prioritized issues and generated recommendations based on their own involvement in the foster care system and knowledge of what many of their peers have experienced in care. Corey, a participant from Cedar Rapids, commented that the process “helped to narrow down and start to create an overall message.” The young people valued the opportunity to not just identify problems, but to focus on ways to improve the system. Christian, a participant from Ames expressed how “we all came with views, and we came up with solutions.”

Issues discussed during the meeting ranged from improving connections and relationships with families, peers, and professionals in the system to seeking ways to ease the transition from foster care to adulthood. Alanna from Cedar Falls expressed how “I was challenged to think of my ideas in a different light.”

Next steps for the group will be to refine their recommendations and produce an advocacy document to share with policymakers on behalf of all youth who have been in foster care. Odalis, a participant from Story City commented how excited she felt regarding the progress during the event. “We were very thorough. I want to have more discussions.”

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