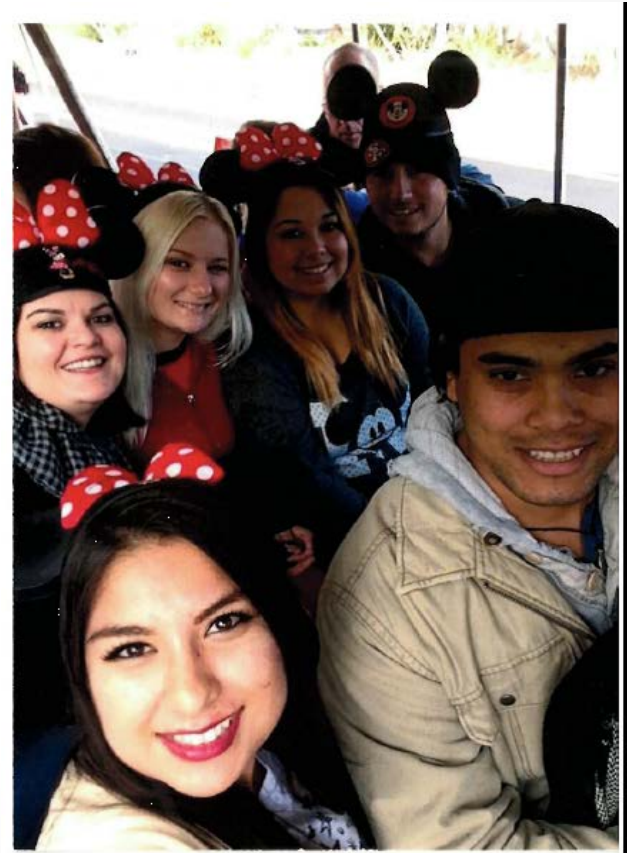


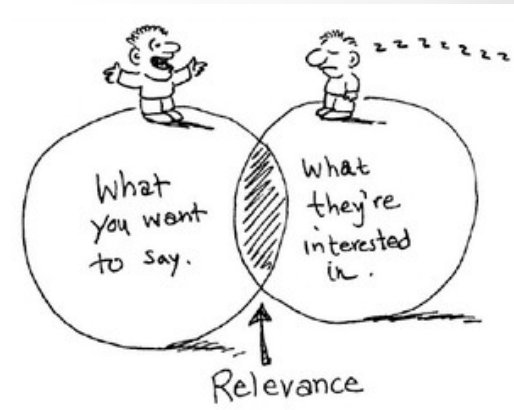
# Integrating Youth Partners to Improve Service Delivery & Outcomes in Child Welfare

## Two Models



# The Importance of Youth Engagement in Shaping Services

- History of Sonoma County's experience with youth engagement
- Patchwork Lives
- Community support for the new VOICES program
- Understanding the importance of engaging youth

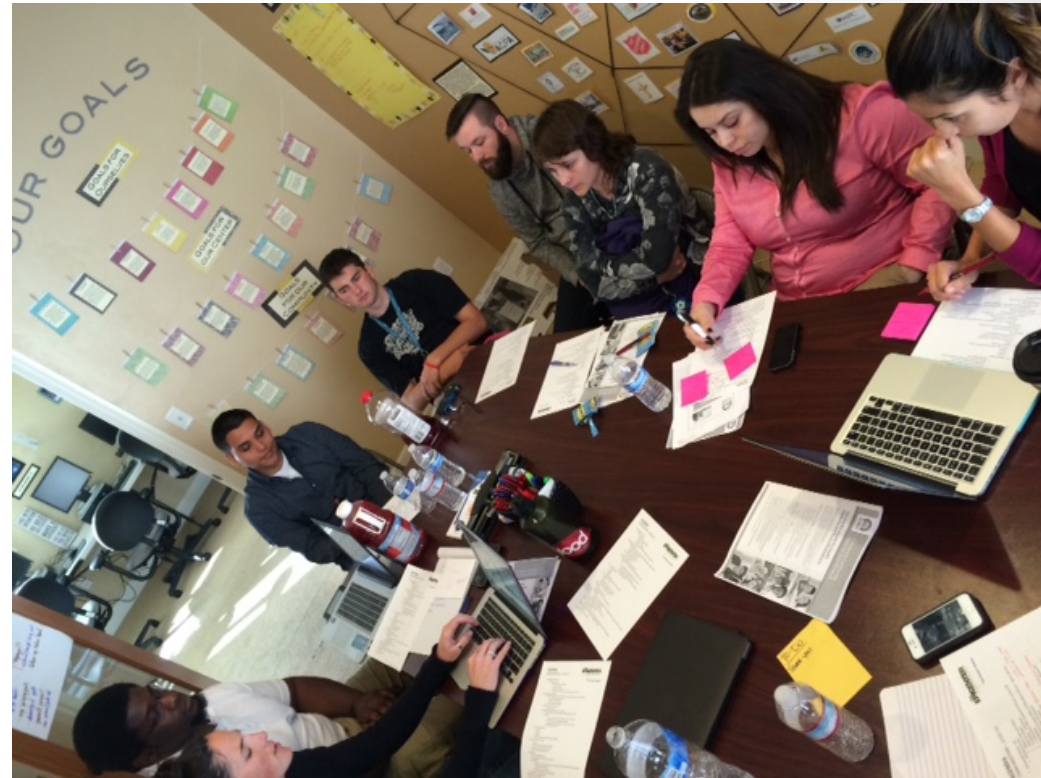


# From a Funder's Perspective...

- Roles of philanthropy, nonprofit & government in these types of collaboratives
- Why should philanthropy support policy?
  - Policy: The Essential Investment for Funder
    - <http://www.blueshieldcafoundation.org/publications/executive-summary-policy-essential-investment>

# Voices

- Introduction of VOICES
  - Youth Leadership
  - Youth Engagement
- Review of a project focused on systemic change within Child Welfare





# Sonoma County AB12 Project Overview



Developing youth  
leaders as  
subject matter  
experts to  
recommend  
changes to  
systems within  
Child Welfare

# Project Process

- Timeline
  - No shortcuts
- Learning
  - Begin at the beginning
- Activities
  - Engaging our partners



# Review of the Proposed Recommendations

- Education
  - Extensive support for entry into post-secondary programs
- Probation
  - Working to ensure all youth are connected to services
- Housing
  - A place for healing



# Youth Leadership



Why does the youth voice matter to youth?

Why is the opportunity for leadership roles important to youth?



# Riverside County Internal Youth Partners

Created from desire to include voice especially for AB12 engagement

Parent/Youth Partner

Para-professional classification

Full Time \$13.03 - \$20.50 Hourly

Benefits



Current or previous experience as a parent/youth who has received child welfare services

# Youth Partners Vision and Mission Statement

## Vision Statement

Instill hope for future success

## Mission Statement

Children's Services Division Youth Partners collaborate with youth and young adults to bridge services and resources by empowering through advocacy, mentorship, accountability and supportive transitions.



# Youth Partners Goals

Formal Youth Partner Program in Children's Services with several goals in mind:

- Increase **placement stability** for teens in foster care
- Increase **lifelong connections** and **permanency**
- Enhance **well-being** (physical and emotional health, education)



# Strategies

Working along side social workers

- Advocacy in meetings for youth and families
  - Team Decision Making
  - Child and Family Team Meetings
- Mentoring youth
- Youth voice in policy and initiatives
- Community outreach
- Liaison
- Translator for CSD “lingo”





# Youth Partner Program Principles

Guiding principles for program success of Youth Partners:

- Perspective is Valued
- Role is **Integral** to improving outcomes
- **Unique Insight** that is solicited
- **Supportive** work environment



# Improving Outcomes

The Youth Partners work with staff and partners toward system wide improvements.

- Youth identify feeling **heard, supported, and cared about**
- Youth exit care **prepared to succeed**



# Youth Partners Impact

Our approach has lead to the following:

- Structure meetings with youth and family voice tantamount
- Direct how we develop our forms
- Engage caregivers
  - recruitment & support
- Inform youth of education options
- Train youth & community on human trafficking

