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
• Introduction of VOICES
  o Youth Leadership
  o 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
  o Extensive support for entry into post-secondary programs

• Probation
  o Working to ensure all youth are connected to services

• Housing
  o 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
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 alongside 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
  o recruitment & support
• Inform youth of education options
• Train youth & community on human trafficking