



LEGISLATIVE AGENDA – 2015 SESSION

Collected from all 16 AMP Foster Care Youth Councils:

Ames, Burlington, Calmar, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Eldora State Training School, Ft. Dodge, Iowa City, Mason City, Mobile Facilitator, Ottumwa, Sioux City & Waterloo

AMP is thrilled with the signing into law of Federal H.R. 4980; we look forward to its implementation by the state of Iowa to improve outcomes for children and youth served by the child welfare system.

2014 Carryovers

Aging Out / Transitioning:

1. **AMP youth request that peers adopted after the age of 16 be eligible for PAL (Preparation for Adult Living), health insurance and Aftercare services.** Youth should not have to choose between permanent families and finances. Their adoptive families have not had time to save for the transition needs of older youth. Iowa needs to match the spirit of the federal law in this regard (Chafee Act).
2. **AMP youth request that Juvenile Court jurisdiction over foster care youth be permitted (legally authorized) to continue up to the age of 21, as long as this is done with the consent of the youth.** The transition period between the ages of 18 to 21 is a time when support networks and essential services such as housing, health care, educational and vocational needs must be available to developing young people. The continued court oversight will assure improved transitioning of youth to adulthood, with knowledge of their entitlements to available aid and supports, their rights through the continuing assistance of a court-appointed attorney or guardian ad litem and court-appointed legal advocacy.¹

Safety in Shelter:

1. **AMP youth request emergency shelters be used by youth in immediate crisis and an alternative placement option (like a hospital or PMIC shelter) be identified for youth struggling with severe mental health needs.** Our current emergency shelters are not staffed or trained as treatment centers and this creates risky situations for youth with, and without, extreme mental health issues residing 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.

New in 2015

Human Trafficking:

1. AMP youth request that:
 - **Human Trafficking prevention education be mandated for all mandatory reporters**
 - **State service contracts be developed and offered for bid to assure that appropriate services are available statewide for human trafficking victims**

Increased Permanency for Foster Care Youth:

1. AMP youth appreciate the improvements made related to APPLA through H.R. 4980 but request that **Iowa better serve youth age 16 and older by following the recommendation of the American Bar Association made in February 2014, which states:**
 - Eliminate the case goals or outcomes of “Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement” (APPLA) or “Emancipation” and
 - Add in their place a goal and outcome of “Safe and Secure Housing/Permanent Significant Adult Connections”
2. **AMP youth request that 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.** Currently 32 states offer the federal Guardianship Assistance Program, but Iowa does not.

OR

 - **Allocate state funding to provide financial assistance to relatives who have assumed legal guardianship 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 state in that role, and offers children/youth permanency when parental rights are not or will not be terminated.

3. **AMP youth request that to decrease adoption disruptions, the state require mandatory adoption training for any and all adoptive parents BEFORE they can adopt,** so they understand the rules and expectations related to adoption and the need to access post-adoption support services before the adoption is nearing disruption. AMP youth want to eliminate adoption disruptions!

Improved Outcomes for Foster Care Youth:

1. **AMP youth request all mandatory reporters be educated through an approved anti-bullying curriculum, including LGBTQ specific information.** The Iowa Department of Education has such curriculum developed and this education must be required, not optional, to ensure the safety of our youth. AMP youth know bullying is rampant in their schools and on social media. It is time for adult-driven action on this topic as it is serious and deadly to youth.
2. **AMP youth request that more classes of PS-MAPP be offered throughout the state, including the specialized training for kinship care providers,** so that families can be licensed sooner, resulting in less placement changes and more siblings placed together.
3. **AMP youth request that homes that accept teen placements receive enhanced foster parent training related to behavioral needs, mental illness, and medication management.** Foster parents providing this level of care should receive additional reimbursement.

¹"Continuing Court Jurisdiction in Support of 18 to 21 Year-Old Foster Youth", American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, April 2008 Update