

Governor's Office and Ohio Department of Education

January 30, 2023



The Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board is a statewide organization of young people, ages 14-24, who have experienced foster care.

The OHIO YAB exists to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that impact youth who have or will experience out of home care.



**December 2015, Congress passed the
Every Student Succeeds Act.**

Educational stability of children in foster care is a joint responsibility between schools and child welfare agencies

Districts must designate a foster care point of contact to work with the local child protection agency.

Ohio's ESSA Plan requires:

Every school district to identify a single point of contact for students in foster care:

- To coordinate with child welfare
- To develop a process for making best interest determinations
- To facilitate transfer of records and immediate enrollment
- To support enrollment and regular attendance in school
- To coordinate transportation
- To share data with child welfare agencies
- To provide professional development training for school staff

Feedback from Ohio Foster Youth

Why haven't I
heard of this
before?

There's nobody
there for me at
school.

I need somebody
who understands
me as a foster
youth specifically.

I don't have the
parents I was born
to, so I need more
support.

District Foster Care Liaisons

These positions exist on paper but not in practice.

Lack of outreach to students.

Every school district differs in their approach.

Role is often assigned to principal or staff member wearing many other hats.

For Foster Care Liaisons
throughout the state to be
designated not only by name,
but also by training, support and
by their daily actions to support
our vulnerable population.

This is our vision...

Structural Recommendations

- **Oversight by the Governor's Office and/or Ohio Department of Education** to ensure every district has a Foster Care Liaison. This would need to be done by a team of people to be effective and lasting.
- **Accountability measures:** Tracking, signed forms so there is no question that student-liaison connections are actually happening.
- **ESSA to know who students are and vice-versa:** School to maintain records of which students are in/from foster care --- along with policies and procedures, similar to safeguards regarding students with special needs.

Identification of District Foster Care Liaison

- **Not a Principal:** Conflict of interest; perception of being punished.
- **Not wearing multiple other hats,** because this can lead to burnout, secondary traumatic stress, becoming overwhelmed, things pile up and they can't be their best for the student.

Youth Recommended Qualifications of District Foster Care Liaisons



Ideally a former foster youth

Sense of urgency

Knowledgeable

Dedicated to their role

Good record keeper

Organized

For Foster Care Liaisons
throughout the state to
receive mandatory training,
in order to be well-informed
about the rights and
resources of foster youth.

This is also our vision...

Training for District Foster Care Liaisons

**Know what ESSA is,
and what the role requires**

**Understand the foster
care experience, and
how it can impact
educational progress.**

Trauma-informed



**Share the Foster Youth
Bill of Rights with students**

**Let students know about the
Youth Ombudsman Office**

**Knowledgeable about
resources (ETV, FAFSA, etc.)**

For Foster Care Liaisons
throughout the state to
consistently demonstrate
initiative to proactively
reach out to foster youth
in grades K-12.

This is also our vision...

ESSA and the Role of District Foster Care Liaisons

Caring approach; not just legal obligation

Someone youth can call and rely on

Proactively share resources

Educate school staff

Genuinely care

**Not just 9-5:
It's a lifestyle**



Impact of Active District Foster Care Liaisons

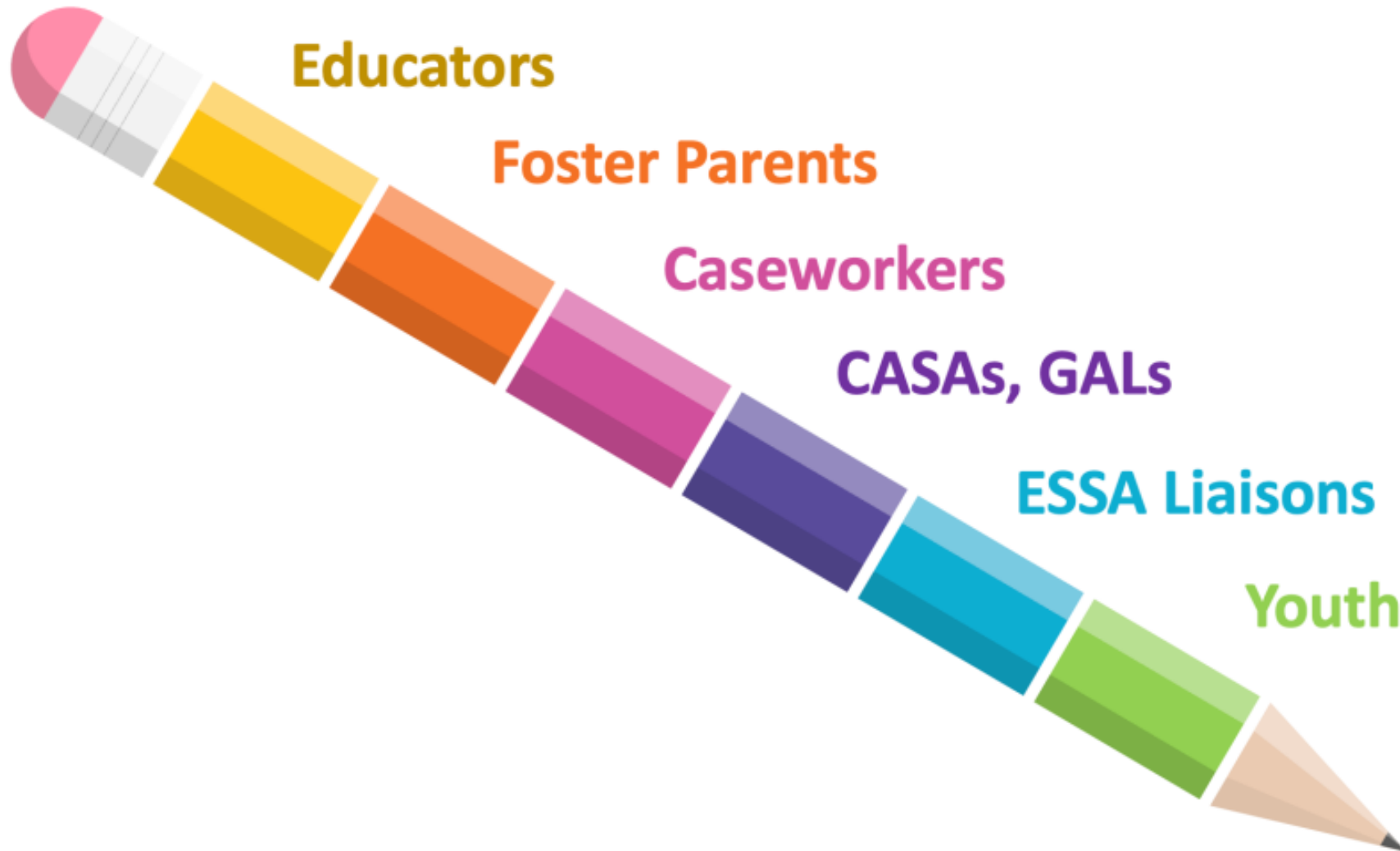
Importance of building trust and providing guidance.

Ask student how they feel about school.

Support for foster youth during transitions.

Changing placements can make school feel like a blur.

Working as a Team to Support Foster Youth's K-12 Educational Success



Foster Youth Engagement in K-12 Education

Youth Identified Educational Needs and Preferences

Example: "Do you want to change schools, or stay at the same one?"

Youth Educational Rights

Every Student Succeeds Act and the Foster Youth Bill of Rights

Youth Voice in Court

Youth quote: "Don't take me out of school unnecessarily,- but please listen if I ask to personally have a voice in court."

Include Youth in Meetings

Youth voice in education and child welfare meetings: "Nothing about me without me."

Work As A Team

Foster parents, caseworkers, educators, CASAs/GALs and ESSA Liaisons

Special Education

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA).



Empowering Youth
as Educational
Self-Advocates

