



Statewide Youth Advisory Board FY 18 Annual Report

Overview

In FY18, Be Strong Families partnered with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services to support their efforts in convening and implementing the Statewide Youth Advisory Board and Regional Advisory Boards in both the Cook and Northern Regions. The scope of work for this program included the successful planning, coordination, and implementation of 4 Statewide Youth Advisory Board meetings (one in each region, per quarter) and one annual retreat, which occurred during the first quarter. As part of the statewide scope, Be Strong Families was also responsible for implementing and supporting graduation events in each of the regions (during the fourth quarter). Additionally, Be Strong Families worked within the Cook and Northern Regions, partnering with the Regional Youth Advisory Boards to support the successful planning and implementation of monthly regional board meetings, which in addition to the formal meetings included the coordination of Interactive Leadership Meetings (ILM).

The Youth Advisory Boards (YAB) are mandated by statute and governed through bylaws. They are made up of youth and young adults between the ages of 14 and 21. Be Strong Families works with the youth to ensure that each meeting is properly planned and coordinated, but most importantly, partners with the youth, empowering them to take leadership roles and drive the mission of the board; to advocate, educate, and empower all youth in care.

Be Strong Families staff providing direct support to this program included BSF's Child Welfare Program Manager, who provides direct oversight over the contract, two Program Coordinators who work together to coordinate the delivery, outreach to agencies, and help recruit youth in care to participate and share their voice, and BSF's Office Manager who provides additional support of programmatic activities.

During the year BSF was successful in ensuring all of the RYAB and SYAB events occurred as planned:

- Regional Youth Advisory Board Meeting Coordination – 24 meetings held between July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018:
 - 12 – Cook Region
 - 12 – Northern Region
- Quarterly Statewide Youth Advisory Board Meetings – 4 meetings held in each of the four DCFS regions:
 - September 2017 – Cook Region
 - November 2017 – Central Region
 - February 2018 – Northern Region
 - May 2018 – Southern Region
- Annual Statewide Youth Advisory Board Retreat – 1 retreat held in August, 2017
- Regional Graduation Events:
 - Cook and Northern coordinated / planned by BSF and RYAB
 - Central and Southern coordinated / planned by Primed for Life and RYAB



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Annual Highlights

- **External Collaborations** – This year saw the inclusion of some new external partnerships from agencies working to strengthen the experience of youth in care. They actively presented and solicited input and voice from the SYAB throughout the year. These included, Therapeutic Residential Performance Management Initiative (TRPMI) who the YAB assisted in designing a youth in care residential survey to be administered in partnership with the board. Loyola who the YAB partnered with to develop an FAQ booklet (which is still in production) that addresses higher level policies. The questions in the FAQ were surfaced as a result of Loyola's involvement in several SYAB and RYAB (in northern and cook) meetings. IL Chapter of the Foster Care Alumni of America also partnered with BSF and the YAB to offer Thanksgiving celebrations in Champaign and Mt. Vernon in addition to the usual Chicago event which assisted in helping create positive memories
- **Increased DCFS Partnership / Presence at SYAB** – In the second half of the year, we were successful in building additional partnerships with DCFS departments who were able to attend the SYAB meetings, present on their role and in some cases solicit feedback and input from the board members. Examples include Juvenile Justice and Monitoring divisions.
- **Outreach to Youth in Foster Homes** - We have increased the number of youth and young adults placed in foster homes attending the regional youth advisory board meetings in the Northern region and they have become more involved as officers. Although it didn't grow in Cook, they maintained their participation of youth placed in foster homes. Our goal was to diversify participation in order to ensure youth from different placements types have the opportunity to share their perspectives which allows SYAB to provide recommendations to the department that reflect a broader youth in care audience.
- **Graduations** – Be Strong Families convened four IDCFS Graduation Celebrations. Northern and Cook were directly planned by Be Strong Families with assistance from the RYAB officers in the respective regions. Central and Southern were planned by Primed for Life with assistance from the officers in their respective regions. A representative from Be Strong Families attended each one to present the certificates signed by Director Walker and their \$50 gift. Each of the graduations was unique and effectively celebrated the graduating youth in care and their achievement. Youth from across the state reported that they enjoyed the celebrations and appreciated the food, music, and dancing.

FY18 Annual Outcomes

Program Level Outcomes

- SYAB elected officers will submit at least one (1) recommendation per quarter to the Department on ways to improve services provided to youth in care (SYAB Goal):

100% / 50% - By the numbers, BSF has submitted 5 recommendations to the department through the year on behalf of the SYAB. As reported previously, recommendations did not come out of the first two quarters, but 4 recommendations were brought forward and voted on during SYAB's 3rd quarter meeting and an additional recommendation was brought forward and voted on during SYAB's 4th quarter meeting. In addition, SYAB executive officers met with Director Walker in June and their concerns were brought forward regarding the SYAB program structure, mission, and goals.

- SYAB will participate in monthly calls on committees (education, employment, legislative, and ad hoc committees as identified).



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Convening monthly committee calls have been an extreme challenge this year. Youth participation on a monthly basis hasn't been realistic given the demands of their schedules even with a schedule in place. To address the challenge, portions of SYAB agendas are explicitly devoted to sub-committees meeting which have been effective in providing an outlet for recommendations to be presented and voted on by the full board.

The Committees (LGBTQ, Education, Legislation, Employment, and Communications) met during the fourth quarter SYAB meeting in May. Each committee developed recommendations and presented them to the full advisory board before they were passed along verbally to IDCFS Director Walker by the SYAB president.

- The regional boards will conduct an educational workshop to inform youth of DCFS educational resources. A pre- and post-test will be administered. The results of youth knowledge will be reported as an outcome. - The Educational workshop was conducted and the pre and post-test outcomes show that 12/ 19 youth who took the tests scored higher on the post-test than the pre-test.

Completed – The Educational workshop was conducted and the pre and post test outcomes show that 63% (12 of 19) of youth increased their knowledge as a result of the workshop.

Client Level Outcomes

- The regional boards will conduct emancipation readiness workshops. A pre and post-test will be administered. The results of increased youth knowledge will be reported as an outcome.

Completed - Emancipation Readiness Workshops were delivered at RYAB meetings during the 2nd quarter in October. 100% of youth increased their knowledge as demonstrated by comparing pre/post tests.

- 100% of youth issues and concerns turned in during the regional meeting will be submitted to DCFS staff within 5 business days of the regional meeting (RYAB Goal).

100% - BSF Has submitted 100% of Youth Issues and Concerns documented in Cook and Northern RYAB Meetings through the third quarter within 24 hours

Statewide Goals

- 70% of elected officers will increase their knowledge / understanding of the RYAB / SYAB structure and functions (pre/ post-test).

A pre-/post-test was administered at the annual retreat in August as part of an Officer Role and Responsibility training. The results of that survey showed that 61% of elected officers increased their knowledge / understanding of the RYAB / SYAB structure. Throughout the course of the entire year, 100% of officers have had the opportunity to continue learning and master their roles. Mid-year BSF delivered additional workshops at each of the RYAB meetings which gave the program team the opportunity to visually evaluate the officers in their role during the meeting portions and provide additional instruction individually to strengthen their knowledge. Unfortunately, due to a coordination error, an additional post-test intended to be administered at May's SYAB meeting was not provided, in order to fully report on this outcome, although as they were evaluated visually, the officers demonstrated their knowledge and understanding.



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- 75% of SYAB elected officers will increase their communication skills with a minimum of 10 hours of public speaking training and practice.

100% - All of the SYAB elected officers received a minimum of 10 hours of public speaking training and practice. This outcome was formally completed during May's SYAB meeting.

- 70% of SYAB elected officers will participate in bi-monthly facilitation exercises to increase learning and model leadership skills by facilitating RYAB / SYAB.

100% of SYAB officers have met this goal. Each of the SYAB Officers have communication instructions during Regional ILM calls, Ex-Co planning meetings, and at the SYAB meetings. All SYAB Officers play an active role in facilitating their meetings and each are assigned to lead a portion. 100% of SYAB Officers meet this outcome.

- 80% of SYAB elected officers will engage in semi-annual public policy education and civic engagement training to increase their effectiveness in addressing issues impacting all youth in care (pre/post-test).

100% of RYAB / SYAB Officers have engaged in semi-annual public policy education and civic engagement training.

Client Satisfaction Survey

17 surveys were collected. The following results were tabulated:

1. Please Rate your experience of the YAB.

- 15 answered- Excellent
- 2 answered - Good

2. The information that I receive is relevant and helpful.

- 17 answered - Yes

3. Circle the number that best describes how you feel about coming to the YAB.

- 14 answered - Excellent
- 3 answered - Good

4. I enjoy coming to the YAB meeting.

- 17 answered – Yes

5. I would recommend the YAB to other youth in care.

- 17 answered - Yes

6. What did you enjoy most about the meeting? If this is your first meeting what do you hope to get out of the meeting?

- The advocacy portion and being able to craft recommendations
- Seeing everyone work together while still having a good time



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- The bond of every youth
- The consensus activity
- The outing
- I enjoyed everything
- Seeing everyone have a good time
- Seeing the youth/staff
- The bonding of friends
- The icebreakers
- The bonding, activities, and a lot of work done
- That you can make something out of nothing
- Collage activity •
- Everything
- We all got along and it was a lot of information
- How we got everything done
- Good Communication

7. Name 3 of the most resourceful things you learned at a youth advisory board meeting?

- Lack of availability of placements coming out of residential
- Youth need access to documents
- It is hard to craft solid recommendations
- Name and phone numbers
- The benefits you are required to have
- Benefits with in education through DCFS
- Emancipation goals in benefits and life skills
- Appreciative inquiry
- DCFS monitor
- More thing available for LGBTQ committee
- Change of policy
- The information I got from Ms. Robyn's Boss (AI)
- Committee Report
- Robert's Rules of Order
- Commonly asked questions
- Survey's for youth getting out of care
- Laura Coffey leaving
- TRPMI
- LGBTQ Committee
- The advocacy director
- CEO of BSF
- Educational rights



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- New contract policy
- Monitoring
- Residential
- Laura Coffey
- Team work
- Help youth in care
- Come up with ideas
- How to communicate
- How to have friends
- How to be a leader
- Public speaking
- Antwan Presentation
- Listening to others speak
- Coming up with ideas to do for legislative committee
- Participating in the survey feedback

8. If you could change anything about the board or how it is run what would it be?

- I believe BSF has taken the appropriate steps in their program Plan has allowed transparency for us all to advocacy, empower, educate, and advise the department in the most appropriate way in FY 19.
- I would like to change some of the interaction w/ peers
- The disrespect between youth. We need to be accepting
- More people who has this passion
- No side bars
- Raise the bar

Number of youth and young adult participation (Northern & Cook Regional YAB)

Table 1 – Age of Youth and Young Adults

Age Range	(14-15)	(16-18)	(19-21)	(unknown)	Total
Quarter 1	28	63	14	0	105
Quarter 2	36	70	23	0	129
Quarter 3	12	48	25	0	85
Quarter 4	20	75	23	0	117
TOTAL	96	256	85	0	436

Table 2 - Race of Youth and Young Adults

Gender	White	Black	Hispanic	Biracial/ Other	Total
Quarter 1	37	63	4	1	105
Quarter 2	31	79	7	12	129
Quarter 3	32	42	6	5	85
Quarter 4	41	54	13	9	117



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TOTAL	141	238	30	27	436
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Table 3- Gender of Youth and Young Adults

Gender	Female	Male	Transgender	(unknown)	Total
Quarter 1	66	39	0	0	105
Quarter 2	78	49	2	0	129
Quarter 3	46	39	0	0	85
Quarter 4	66	49	2	0	117
TOTAL	256	176	4	0	436



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Table 4- Adult Participants (21 and above).

	Not including Coordinator/ Manager	Including Coordinator/ Manager (16-18)
Quarter 1	48	58
Quarter 2	60	70
Quarter 3	42	53
Quarter 4	65	75
TOTAL	215	256

Number of youth and young adult participants (Northern & Cook Regional ILM)

Table 5- Age of Youth and Young Adults

Age Range	(14-15)	(16-18)	(19-21)	(unknown)	Total
Quarter 1	1	14	11	0	26
Quarter 2	3	8	14	0	25
Quarter 3	3	7	6	0	16
Quarter 4	0	9	3	0	12
TOTAL	7	38	34	0	79

Table 6 - Race of Youth and Young Adults

Race	White	Black	Hispanic	Biracial/ Other	Total
Quarter 1	6	17	3	0	26
Quarter 2	5	18	2	0	25
Quarter 3	4	11	1	0	16
Quarter 4	6	6	0	0	12
TOTAL	21	52	6	0	79

Table 7 - Gender of Youth and Young Adults

Gender	Female	Male	Transgender	(unknown)	Total
Quarter 1	15	11	0	0	26
Quarter 2	16	9	0	0	25
Quarter 3	12	4	0	0	16
Quarter 4	12	0	0	0	12
TOTAL	55	24	0	0	79



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Table 8 - Adult Participants (21 and above)

	Not including Coordinator/ Manager	Including Coordinator/ Manager (16-18)
Quarter 1	0	2
Quarter 2	1	3
Quarter 3	0	5
Quarter 4	0	3
TOTAL	1	13

Table 9 - Graduation Celebration Youth

Region	Graduates
Northern	15
Central	34
Cook	19
Southern	4