The Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative is a partner site of the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. "When I was in foster care, I was linked up with a mentor through a mentoring program; she was a strong, educated, and admirable woman, who I continue to believe is God's angel on Earth. In the beginning of our mentor and mentee relationship, I was going through a very rough time in my life. I spent four months in Detention Home when I was 15 and pregnant to my daughter. Everyday she would either call or come and visit me. To make sure that I was comfortable she brought me all pink hygiene products, that included: pink shampoo and conditioner, pink toothbrush to fit our lives. We understand that we need to be responsible to one another in order for extended care to be effective. We are not ready at 18 to be completely on our own. This is an opportunity to support us in our transition into making adult decisions and building our futures. We understand the need to be responsible partners, fulfilling our end of the agreement and making choices that will benefit our lives.

"Our Voices, Our Hopes for Transitioning Foster Youth in Hawai‘i"

The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board

The HI H.O.P.E.S. (Hawai‘i Helping Our People Envision Success) Youth Leadership Board is made up of young people between the ages of 14-26 who are currently in or were formerly in foster care. The boards provide the ‘youth voice’ for HYOI by identifying the needs of transitioning foster youth and advocating for policy changes and opportunities that will improve outcomes. They receive training, meet monthly, participate on the CP Hui and collaborate with community partners. There are HI H.O.P.E.S. Boards on O‘ahu, in East and West Hawai‘i, Kaua‘i and Maui.

Our Recommendations
- DHS-CWS and resource caregivers should support foster youth to participate in recreational, school, community, faith-based and family activities.
- Support young people to connect with a wide range of adults as well as to maintain healthy peer and family relationships.
- Resource caregivers who serve transition-aged foster youth should receive annual training and education around trauma, social capital and the need for healthy risk taking and youth development activities.

Our Values
In light of efforts to extend voluntary foster care beyond age 18 in Hawai‘i, the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Boards have developed and recommend the adoption of the following Core Values or “H.O.P.E.S.” by key stakeholders to assist in designing and implementing voluntary extended care that will address the unique needs of young adults transitioning from foster care into adulthood.

1. Social Capital is Critical forOur Success
Young adults need to develop a network of relationships with family, school, peers and community to reach their goals. We need less ‘program’ and more people in our lives in order to be successful young adults. Provide us with opportunities to connect with a wide range of adults and peers in the community who can assist us in accomplishing our goals.

2. Engage Us
Young people need to have a meaningful voice and say in the decisions they make about their lives. Engage us in making decisions about our lives in an authentic way. Our input throughout the development and implementation of the voluntary extended care process should be valued and incorporated.

3. Participation in Developmentally Appropriate Extended Care
Young people need to take on distinct social and developmental tasks to become healthy, connected and productive adults. Our brains are still developing as we become young adults and every young person develops differently and has individual needs. Extended care should provide support but also allow us to make adult choices, take healthy risks and learn from our mistakes.

4. Hold One Another Accountable
Young adults and stakeholders need to be accountable to one another in order for extended care to be effective. We are not ready at 18 to be completely on our own. This is an opportunity to support us in our transition into making adult decisions and building our futures. We understand the need to be responsible partners, fulfilling our end of the agreement and making choices that will benefit our lives.

5. Success Beyond 18: Core Values in Extending Care
Young people need to take on distinct social and developmental tasks to become healthy, connected and productive adults. Our brains are still developing as we become young adults and every young person develops differently and has individual needs. Extended care should provide support but also allow us to make adult choices, take healthy risks and learn from our mistakes.

6. Our Recommendations
- Support young people to connect with a wide range of adults as well as to maintain healthy peer and family relationships.
- Resource caregivers who serve transition-aged foster youth should receive annual training and education around trauma, social capital and the need for healthy risk taking and youth development activities.

Our Voice
The Hawai‘i Youth Opportunities Initiative is a partner site of the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. The Hawai‘i Youth Opportunities Initiative (HYOI) helps youth leaving foster care become successful adults in their communities. We work with young people and community partners to improve access to education, employment, health care, housing, social capital, family relationships and financial capability.

Success Beyond 18: Core Values in Extending Care
Young people need to take on distinct social and developmental tasks to become healthy, connected and productive adults. Our brains are still developing as we become young adults and every young person develops differently and has individual needs. Extended care should provide support but also allow us to make adult choices, take healthy risks and learn from our mistakes.
HOPE #1

The Issue
Medical coverage is a basic necessity for foster youth to become healthy, successful adults. On a national level, only 57% of former foster youth under 24 have health insurance, compared to 78% of their counterparts. Our peers may now be covered under their parents’ health care insurance until age 26. As wards of the State, we are asking for the same support. In Hawaii, 90% of young people ages 18 to 24 have health insurance. A recent poll of former foster youth in Hawai‘i showed that only 65% of them had some sort of coverage, while 41% did not have or did not know whether or not they had medical coverage. That means we are not accessing resources that may be available to us, even if we are eligible and need it. We often don’t know where and how to apply and how to access care. Ensuring that medical and dental coverage extends beyond foster care, preferably by automatic enrollment, will guarantee that we have access to these critical supports when we need them.

Our Recommendations
- Provide continued Medicaid coverage for foster youth to age 26.
- Provide dental coverage for foster youth up to age 26.
- Ensure that all foster youth who age out of foster care receive information regarding their coverage, as well as provide direct assistance in completing and submitting applications to access health care services.

Our Voice
“Medical and dental services will be provided to all young people who age out of foster care up to age 26.”

HOPE #6

The Issue
Most young people seek some form of employment when they exit foster care, whether or not they pursue higher education. National statistics show that youth exiting foster care have incomes below poverty level after leaving care. Statistics also show that by age 24, only 48% of young people who aged out of care were working, compared to 72% of their counterparts. They also earn significantly less than other young people their age. We need opportunities, while we’re in care, to gain work experience. Allowing us to work while in care and providing us with mentoring, internships and soft skills training will help us develop work ethics and connect us with employers and opportunities to grow and obtain skills that will help us gain and maintain employment.

Our Recommendations
- Mandate that vital documents be provided before exiting foster care (birth certificate, ID, social security card). We need these to obtain employment, education and housing.
- Provide employment opportunities, mentoring, internships, and soft skills training for us while we’re still in care. Supportive adults should help us with resumes and take us to job fairs.
- Develop community relationships that provide employment and continued skill building for us after we exit foster care and become young adults.
- Provide an advocate and opportunity for us to obtain a driver’s permit and license in care.

Our Voice
“At the age of 16, I entered my Senior year in high school. I was very independent and worked 3 jobs. Working and going to school on the weekdays and working doubles on the weekends gave me a positive set schedule, kept me out of trouble and taught me more independence. At 18, my credit was well off and I bought a brand new car! Working gave me many rewards and I am very proud to be so independent.” -Nadia, Kaua‘i

“I got a job when I was 14. My Hale Kipa worker helped me get my ID and everything to start work. It was a great experience, I learned at an earlier age than most to be independent. Everything I owned, I bought myself. I saved to buy my own car. I was motivated to make sure I would be ok when I aged out of foster care.” -Tiffany, Maui
The Issue
When we age out of foster care, we need stable, safe, affordable housing. National statistics show that 40% of former foster youth will experience some form of homelessness by age 24. Homelessness increases our exposure to substance abuse, mental illness and physical abuse. Support youth-led transition planning by age 16 and make sure that we are released from care with a place to live and a permanent adult connection. Priority access to subsidized housing and access to private-sector housing should be provided. Opportunities to further our education, pursue employment to sustain ourselves and financial education is vital to our success. Independent living programs and voluntary extended care until age 21 are important options.

Our Recommendations
- Help us begin to develop our transition plan at age 16 prior to transitioning from foster care.
- Make sure that we don’t leave foster care without a stable, safe, affordable place to live and a permanent connection with a caring adult.
- Transitioning foster youth should receive priority access to government subsidized housing.
- Improve access to private-sector housing.
- Raise awareness about and connect us with the people, services and resources that will provide us with financial education, employment, housing and transportation supports so that we are able to become self-sustaining, successful young adults.
- Ensure that social workers or other caring adult provides us with packets which include applications and information for subsidized or low income and affordable housing.

Our Voice
"I was fortunate to obtain my own stable housing by the age of 19. Many others haven’t been so fortunate. How do I know? Because many of them end up on my couch! Housing is a basic need in life. If your basic needs aren’t taken care of, how can you even begin to look at what’s next in life?”

-Nellie, East Hawai’i

"For my first year in college, I had class every weekday. I live far from school and had no reliable transportation. I would get dropped off early in the morning and catch a ride home in the afternoons, skateboard or hitchhike because the bus only goes by my house a few times a day. Safe transportation is important, it eliminates the stress of finding a ride to school, work, or a doctor’s appointment."

-Alana, West Hawai’i

HOPE #5
Young people will have safe, stable, and affordable housing with access to transportation, to work and school.

HOPE #2
Every young person will have an adult to rely on for a lifetime and a supportive family network.

The Issue
Having a supportive network of caring adults and family while we are in care and when we exit care is critical to our success as young adults. Support our connections with family and kin, as well as adults that can serve as mentors or permanency. Sibling connections are very important to us. Our siblings represent the longest, most enduring relationships we will ever have. Maintaining connections with our siblings in and out of care is critical to our stability, emotional and mental health and self-worth and adds to our social capital. Remaining with our siblings helps to lessen our anxieties and fears and makes the traumatic transition into foster care a little easier. If we are separated, keep us in the same school districts and allow regular and consistent contact.

Our Recommendations
- Place siblings together in foster care. When that’s not possible, help them maintain family and community connections by placing them in the same school and/or community.
- Support efforts to maintain consistent sibling connections by ensuring frequent visits, phone calls, and other forms of communication.
- Support practice of adult siblings as legal guardian of younger siblings in care, when appropriate.
- Support consistent and respectful connections with self-identified kin and biological family.
- Connect every foster youth age 14 or older with a mentor or other permanent, caring adult.
- Help youth develop and maintain healthy relationships with a support network.

Our Voice
"I was able to have visits with my dad and I was grateful for that. I could call my family and keep up on everything going on in their lives. There are no words to describe how happy I was to see my dad or hear my sister’s voice. It really helps.”

-Rachel, West Hawai’i

“A great foster parent can be a strong backbone for foster youth, they may contain a wealth of resources and counseling for adolescents and young adults.”

-Keola, East Hawai’i

"Being in foster care, staying connected with my family members was really important. I relied on my weekly visitsations with my mother. I got updates on what was going on at home. When I aged out, I was able to move back home with my biological family while keeping in touch with my recent family.”

-Karen, West Hawai’i
The Issue
Education provides young people with more options for stable employment and increased earnings. Only 3% of former foster youth complete a four-year degree and 6% complete a two-year degree by age 24, according to national studies. Help us prepare for post-secondary education and training early. When it is time for post-secondary education and training, help us with applications and make sure we know about all of our educational and financial resources. Having adequate financial and educational supports will increase our chances of completing a college degree, which will increase our opportunities and our earnings. It is also important for us to have adequate housing, support with counseling, mentoring, academic planning and tutoring, as well as someone to share our challenges and achievements with.

Our Recommendations
- Prepare foster youth for post-secondary education and training starting at age 14.
- Help us apply for and access all information about educational assistance: Higher Ed payments, scholarships, ETVs (Education Training Vouchers) and financial aid.
- Provide connections for resources in the community and various post-secondary institutions to support us with counseling, tutoring, mentoring, and finding affordable, stable housing and transportation to promote retention and completion of education.
- Establish a contact person for former foster youth to connect with at each community college on O’ahu, Maui, Kaua’i, East and West Hawai’i.
- Educate high school faculty and community about educational needs and challenges of foster youth.

Our Voice
“Education is important to foster youth because it not only provides youth with skills for the real world but it gives the youth confidence and self-esteem.”
- Robyn, O’ahu

“Not having an education is a big problem. Every youth should have an option to go to college and have a part-time job. Without education youth will have trouble looking for jobs.”
- Michael, Kaua’i

“I was able to be on track to graduate with my Bachelor’s degree this semester because my foster mom allowed me to stay with her, so I had safe, stable, affordable housing and a great support system behind me.”
- Gernani, O’ahu

HOPE #4
Young people will be provided opportunities to develop financial capability through education, opening a bank account and receiving matched funds for assets.

The Issue
Young people aging out of foster care often have not learned how to manage money and may leave care without basic financial skills. Many have difficulty finding housing, finding and keeping a job, taking care of their health, and undertaking educational and training opportunities, and they often end up experiencing financial and legal trouble. One way to change these outcomes is to provide them with opportunities such as the experience of saving money through an individual development account, known as a matched savings account. It can help young people learn financial management, obtain access to the mainstream banking system and save money for assets. It is important that young people in foster care are afforded similar opportunities as their peers such as having the resources to rent an apartment, purchase a car, and attend college or other post-secondary training. Data shows that those who purchased assets reported being employed, and having safe, stable and affordable housing, and they experience greater rates of improvement over time.

Our Recommendations
- Provide all young people with developmentally appropriate financial literacy training.
- Make Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) available to all current and former foster youth ages 14-26 by building partnerships with financial institutions within their communities.
- Secure funding for specified matched asset purchases that will assist young people in their transition into adulthood. Matches should be provided for housing deposits, transportation, medical and educational expenses, investments, business start-up and credit repair.

Our Voice
“Taking financial literacy training was extremely helpful. It gave me a better understanding of what credit and budgeting is. I was able to open up an IDA account, which matches funds for an asset purchase. Every transitioning foster youth can benefit from this training for uses such as school, down payment on a vehicle and first month’s rent and deposit.”
- Karen, West Hawai’i

“Having been provided with Financial Literacy Training, I was able to gain knowledge and the chance to make an asset purchase for a laptop computer. Purchasing this item made it easy for me to complete school.”
- Ashley, West Hawai’i
**HOPE # 3**

Ensure that all current and former foster youth ages 14-26 are aware of their post-secondary education and training options and resources.

**The Issue**

Education provides young people with more options for stable employment and increased earnings. Only 3% of former foster youth complete a four-year degree and 6% complete a two-year degree by age 24, according to national studies. Help us prepare for post-secondary education and training early. When it is time for post-secondary education and training, help us with applications and make sure we know about all of our educational and financial resources. Having adequate financial and educational supports will increase our chances of completing a college degree, which will increase our opportunities and our earnings. It is also important for us to have adequate housing, support with counseling, mentoring, academic planning and tutoring, as well as someone to share our challenges and achievements with.

**Our Recommendations**

- Prepare foster youth for post-secondary education and training starting at age 14.
- Help us apply for and access all information about educational assistance: Higher Ed payments, scholarships, ETVs (Education Training Vouchers) and financial aid.
- Provide connections for resources in the community and various post-secondary institutions to support us with counseling, tutoring, mentoring, and finding affordable, stable housing and transportation to promote retention and completion of education.
- Establish a contact person for former foster youth to connect with at each community college on O'ahu, Maui, Kaua‘i, East and West Hawai‘i.
- Educate high school faculty and community about educational needs and challenges of foster youth.

**Our Voice**

- “Education is important to foster youth because it not only provides youth with skills for the real world but it gives the youth confidence and self-esteem.” -Robyn, O‘ahu
- “Not having an education is a big problem. Every youth should have an option to go to college and have a part-time job. Without education youth will have trouble looking for jobs.” -Michael, Kaua‘i
- “I was able to be on track to graduate with my Bachelor’s degree this semester because my foster mom allowed me to stay with her, so I had safe, stable, affordable housing and a great support system behind me.” -Gernani, O‘ahu

**HOPE # 4**

Young people will be provided opportunities to develop financial capability through education, opening a bank account and receiving matched funds for assets.

**The Issue**

Young people aging out of foster care often have not learned how to manage money and may leave care without basic financial skills. Many have difficulty finding housing, finding and keeping a job, taking care of their health, and undertaking educational and training opportunities, and they often end up experiencing financial and legal trouble. One way to change these outcomes is to provide them with opportunities such as the experience of saving money through an individual development account, known as a matched savings account. It can help young people learn financial management, obtain access to the mainstream banking system and save money for assets. It is important that young people in foster care are afforded similar opportunities as their peers such as having the resources to rent an apartment, purchase a car, and attend college or other post-secondary training. Data shows that those who purchased assets reported being employed, and having safe, stable and affordable housing, and they experience greater rates of improvement over time.

**Our Recommendations**

- Provide all young people with developmentally appropriate financial literacy training.
- Make Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) available to all current and former foster youth ages 14-26 by building partnerships with financial institutions within their communities.
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**Our Voice**

- “Taking financial literacy training was extremely helpful. It gave me a better understanding of what credit and budgeting is. I was able to open up an IDA account, which matches funds for an asset purchase. Every transitioning foster youth can benefit from this training for uses such as school, down payment on a vehicle and first month’s rent and deposit.” -Karen, West Hawai‘i
- “Having been provided with Financial Literacy Training, I was able to gain knowledge and the chance to make an asset purchase for a laptop computer. Purchasing this item made it easy for me to complete school.” -Ashley, West Hawai‘i
HOPE # 5
Young people will have safe, stable, and affordable housing with access to transportation, to work and school.

The Issue
When we age out of foster care, we need stable, safe, affordable housing. National statistics show that 40% of former foster youth will experience some form of homelessness by age 24. Homelessness increases our exposure to substance abuse, mental illness and physical abuse. Support youth-led transition planning by age 16 and make sure that we are released from care with a place to live and a permanent adult connection. Priority access to subsidized housing and access to private-sector housing should be provided. Opportunities to further our education, pursue employment to sustain ourselves and financial education is vital to our success. Independent living programs and voluntary extended care until age 21 are important options.

Our Recommendations
- Help us begin to develop our transition plan at age 16 prior to transitioning from foster care.
- Make sure that we don’t leave foster care without a stable, safe, affordable place to live and a permanent connection with a caring adult.
- Transitioning foster youth should receive priority access to government subsidized housing.
- Improve access to private-sector housing.
- Raise awareness about and connect us with the people, services and resources that will provide us with financial education, employment, housing and transportation supports so that we are able to become self-sustaining, successful young adults.
- Ensure that social workers or other caring adult provides us with packets which include applications and information for subsidized or low income and affordable housing.

Our Voice
"I was fortunate to obtain my own stable housing by the age of 19. Many others haven’t been so fortunate. How do I know? Because many of them end up on my couch! Housing is a basic need in life. If your basic needs aren’t taken care of, how can you even begin to look at what’s next in life?" -Nellie, East Hawai‘i

"For my first year in college, I had class every weekday. I live far from school and had no transportation. I would get dropped off early in the morning and catch a ride home in the afternoons, skateboard or hitchhike because the bus only goes by my house a few times a day. Safe transportation is important, it eliminates the stress of finding a ride to school, work, or a doctor’s appointment." -Alana, West Hawai‘i

HOPE # 2
Every young person will have an adult to rely on for a lifetime and a supportive family network.

The Issue
Having a supportive network of caring adults and family while we are in care and when we exit care is critical to our success as young adults. Support our connections with family and kin, as well as adults that can serve as mentors or permanency. Sibling connections are very important to us. Our siblings represent the longest, most enduring relationships we will ever have. Maintaining connections with our siblings in and out of care is critical to our stability, emotional and mental health and self-worth and adds to our social capital. Remaining with our siblings helps to lessen our anxieties and fears and makes the traumatic transition into foster care a little easier. If we are separated, keep us in the same school districts and allow regular and consistent contact.

Our Recommendations
- Place siblings together in foster care. When that’s not possible, help them maintain family and community connections by placing them in the same school and/or community.
- Support efforts to maintain consistent sibling connections by ensuring frequent visits, phone calls, and other forms of communication.
- Support practice of adult siblings as legal guardian of younger siblings in care, when appropriate.
- Support consistent and respectful connections with self-identified kin and biological family.
- Connect every foster youth age 14 or older with a mentor or other permanent, caring adult.
- Help youth develop and maintain healthy relationships with a support network.

Our Voice
"I was able to have visits with my dad and I was grateful for that. I could call my family and keep up on everything going on in their lives. There are no words to describe how happy I was to see my dad or hear my sister’s voice. It really helps." -Rachel, West Hawai‘i

"A great foster parent can be a strong backbone for foster youth, they may contain a wealth of resources and counseling for adolescents and young adults."

"Being in foster care, staying connected with my family members was really important. I relied on my weekly visitsations with my mother. I got updates on what was going on at home. When I aged out, I was able to move back home with my biological family while keeping in touch with my recent family." -Karen, West Hawai‘i
HOPE #1
Medical and dental services will be provided to all young people who age out of foster care up to age 26.

The Issue
Medical coverage is a basic necessity for foster youth to become healthy, successful adults. On a national level, only 57% of former foster youth under 24 have health insurance, compared to 78% of their counterparts. Our peers may now be covered under their parents’ health care insurance until age 26. As wards of the State, we are asking for the same support. In Hawaii, 90% of young people ages 18 to 24 have health insurance. A recent poll of former foster youth in Hawai‘i showed that only 65% of them had some sort of coverage, while 41% did not have or did not know whether or not they had medical coverage. That means we are not accessing resources that may be available to us, even if we are eligible and need it. We often don’t know where and how to apply and how to access care. Ensuring that medical and dental coverage extends beyond foster care, preferably by automatic enrollment, will guarantee that we have access to these critical supports when we need them.

Our Recommendations
- Provide continued Medicaid coverage for foster youth to age 26.
- Provide dental coverage for foster youth up to age 26.
- Ensure that all foster youth who age out of foster care receive information regarding their coverage, as well as provide direct assistance in completing and submitting applications to access health care services.

Our Voice
“I had great support in completing and submitting the application and documents needed to continue to receive Medicaid and dental assistance when I exited care. I wish for other young people to be as fortunate as I was in the process to receive continued coverage as a young adult.” -Jade, East Hawai‘i

“Not a lot of foster youth have the knowledge of where to go or what to do to receive Medicaid and dental coverage. I was that person. Having medical and dental for foster youth up to age 26 will guide youth and provide the coverage that they need to have a better life.” -Samantha, Maui

HOPE #6
Programs and supports that provide job skills and employment opportunities will be provided to current and transitioning foster youth.

The Issue
Most young people seek some form of employment when they exit foster care, whether or not they pursue higher education. National statistics show that youth exiting foster care have incomes below poverty level after leaving care. Statistics also show that by age 24, only 48% of young people who aged out of care were working, compared to 72% of their counterparts. They also earn significantly less than other young people their age. We need opportunities, while we’re in care, to gain work experience. Allowing us to work while in care and providing us with mentoring, internships and soft skills training will help us develop work ethics and connect us with employers and opportunities to grow and obtain skills that will help us gain and maintain employment.

Our Recommendations
- Mandate that vital documents be provided before exiting foster care (birth certificate, ID, social security card). We need these to obtain employment, education and housing.
- Provide employment opportunities, mentoring, internships, and soft skills training for us while we’re still in care. Supportive adults should help us with resumes and take us to job fairs.
- Develop community relationships that provide employment and continued skill building for us after we exit foster care and become young adults.
- Provide an advocate and opportunity for us to obtain a driver’s permit and license in care.

Our Voice
“At the age of 16, I entered my Senior year in high school. I was very independent and worked 3 jobs. Working and going to school on the weekdays and working doubles on the weekends gave me a positive set schedule, kept me out of trouble and taught me more independence. At 18, my credit was well off and I bought a brand new car! Working gave me many rewards and I am very proud to be so independent.” -Nadia, Kaua‘i

“I got a job when I was 14. My Hale Kipa worker helped me get my ID and everything to start work. It was a great experience, I learned at an earlier age than most to be independent. Everything I owned, I bought myself. I saved to buy my own car. I was motivated to make sure I would be ok when I aged out of foster care.” -Tiffany, Maui
The Hawaii Youth Opportunities Initiative is a partner site of the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. 

The Issue

Social capital is made up of networks and relationships that support healthy development and is essential for all young people, particularly those who are aging out of foster care and into adulthood. Sources of social capital include family, school, community and peers. The foster care experience often disrupts several of these sources, leaves us vulnerable and can hinder our healing and progress. Support our participation in activities and our connections with family and peers. This will broaden our opportunities, promote healthy risk-taking and aid in the building of healthy relationships with members of the community that will help us to achieve our goals.

Our Recommendations

- DHS-CWS and resource caregivers should support foster youth to participate in recreational, school, community, faith-based and family activities.
- Support young people to connect with a wide range of adults as well as to maintain healthy peer and family relationships.
- Resource caregivers who serve transition-aged foster youth should receive annual training and education around trauma, social capital and financial capability.

The HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board

The HI H.O.P.E.S. (Hawai'i Helping Our People Envision Success) Youth Leadership Board is made up of young people between the ages of 14-26 who are currently in or were formerly in foster care. The boards provide the ‘youth voice’ for HYOI by identifying the needs of transitioning foster youth and advocating for policy changes and opportunities that will improve outcomes. They receive training, meet monthly and participate on the CP Hui and collaborate with community partners. There are HI H.O.P.E.S. Boards on O‘ahu, in East and West Hawai‘i, Kaua‘i and Maui.

The Hawai‘i Youth Opportunities Initiative

The Hawai‘i Youth Opportunities Initiative (HYOI) helps youth leaving foster care become successful adults in their communities. We work with young people and community partners to improve access to education, employment, health care, housing, social capital, family relationships and financial capability.

OUR VALUES

In light of efforts to extend voluntary foster care beyond age 18 in Hawai‘i, the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Boards have developed and recommend the adoption of the following Core Values or “H.O.P.E.B.” by key stakeholders to assist in designing and implementing voluntary extended care that will address the unique needs of young adults transitioning from foster care into adulthood.

Participation in Developmentally Appropriate Extended Care

Young people need to take on distinct social and developmental tasks to become healthy, connected and productive adults. Our brains are still developing as we become young adults and every young person develops differently and has individual needs. Extended care should provide support but also allow us to make adult choices, take healthy risks and learn from our mistakes.

Hold One Another Accountable

Young adults and stakeholders need to be accountable to one another in order for extended care to be effective. We are not ready at 18 to be completely on our own. This is an opportunity to support us in our transition into making adult decisions and building our futures. We understand the need to be responsible partners, fulfilling our end of the agreement and making choices that will benefit our lives.

Engage Us

Young adults need to have a meaningful voice and say in the decisions they make about their lives. Engage us in making decisions about our lives in an authentic way. Our input throughout the development and implementation of the voluntary extended care process should be valued and incorporated.

Social Capital is Critical for Our Success

Young adults need to develop a network of relationships with family, school, peers and community to reach their goals. We need less ‘program’ and more people in our lives in order to be successful young adults. Provide us with opportunities to connect with a wide range of adults and peers in the community who can assist us in accomplishing our goals.

H.O.P.E.B.

Support young people to connect with a wide range of adults as well as to maintain healthy peer and family relationships.

Our Options, Our Hopes for Transitioning Foster Youth in Hawai‘i

Our Voice

“One day I was in foster care, I was linked up with a mentor through a mentoring program; she was a strong, educated, and admirable woman, who I continue to believe is God’s angel on Earth. In the beginning of our mentor and mentee relationship, I was going through a very rough time in my life. I spent four months in Detention Home when I was 15 and pregnant to my daughter. Everyday she would either call or come and visit me. To make sure that I was comfortable she brought me all pink hygiene products, that included: pink shampoo and conditioner, pink toothbrush to match my pink toothpaste, etc. It’s been almost five years since I first met her and we continue to go out to lunch and she still comes to all of mine and my daughter’s celebrations.” - Noy, O‘ahu

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