

Strengthening Families Act

On December 2, 2015, a group of stakeholders met to discuss the Strengthening Families Act (SFA). The group was asked to think about what resources were needed for the future success of the Act. Specifically the stakeholders were asked to give examples of who needs to be involved at both the ground level and at the higher administrative and policy levels. The group was also tasked to discuss how to get the identified individuals and entities involved with SFA. The following are tables that include the collective responses:

Who Should Be Involved?	
5,000 (Ground Level)	50,000 (Policy/Administrative Level)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster Parents and Families • Biological Parents and Families • Kinship Caretakers • Direct Support Staff/ Caseworkers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DHHS and Child Placement Agencies ○ Group Home Staff • Juvenile Justice/Probation • Licensing Unit • Medical Health professionals • Youth/Youth Councils • Educators/Schools • Foster Care Review Office • Legal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) ○ Attorneys • Community populations • Community Based Organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ YMCA ○ Girl/Boy Scouts ○ 4H • Civic Organizations • Advocacy Organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Right Turn ○ PALS • LGBTQ Population • CASA • Providers • Church/ Religious Organizations/ Faith Leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Makers • Probation Administration • DHHS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Licensing unit • Nebraska Families Collaborative • Provider Agencies • Urban Development • Department of Education • Department of Economic Development • Office of Juvenile Services • Behavioral Health Regions • Center on Children, Families and the Law • Foster Family-Based Treatment Association (FFTA) • Advocacy Organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project Everlast • CAFCON • NSAA • PE • Legal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy Aids ○ Judges •

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How to Encourage Involvement?	
5,000 (Ground Level)	50,000 (Policy/Administrative Level)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNO Community Center • Engage family support network • Families Inspiring Families • FNAPA • Child Care organizations • Communication between parents and foster parents • define roles and boundaries • develop continuum • identify questions • Awareness • Presentations - take it to the target audiences • culture change • transportation • utilize existing community meetings • continue to engage and include • Point persons from regions to convene local discussions and report back • Technology • Evening meetings to accommodate community and family members • Involve CBO's on scholarships • reaching out and a call to action • AR vendors • advisory groups • focus • messaging • training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the Eyes of the Child • Effective Leadership • Data • Providing the same information across agencies, consistently • Utilize associations as liaisons • Target 5,000 ft folks strategically as meetings need • Involve health care providers

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The following questions and responses revolved around four topics within the SFA including, Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), availability of resources, the grievance process, and training. These topics were reviewed in a round robin setting with each group engaging in discussion for 30 minutes per topic.

APPLA Questions

1. HOW ARE WE DEFINING THE “INTENSIVE, ONGOING EFFORTS” THAT MUST BE MADE BEFORE A PERMANENCY PLAN CAN BE CHANGED TO APPLA?

- Need a better term than “independent living” because no one can live independently at such a young age.
- We currently have a lot of steps and defining those efforts in one definition is difficult.
- Conduct family finding in some areas.
- Possibility of creating it as checklist style.
 - Current procedure of written documentation of steps is not mandatory but suggested. They are starting a new consultation with those youth who have been in care for an extended period.
- Also a legal component – how do we determine that intensive and ongoing efforts are occurring – concerned that we aren’t answering the question because it’s just changing the checklist or adding to it.
 - If it is a legal decision – who makes this decision? Senators?
 - They are separate but have to happen together
 - Not necessarily a checklist but find some strategies that can be implemented and suggested (look into best practices and put something in statute?)
- If a youth is set for an Independent Living (IL) plan, you have to describe all the steps for adoption, reunification, guardianship etc. that didn’t work and why IL will be most successful.
- The checklist is more for adoption.
 - There was a want for the youth voice to be more important than the checklist expressed.
 - Need to use judgment of maturity and responsibility of youth to reduce the reliance on a checklist and individualized decision.
 - Alternatively – There is a need for individualization - can’t have an overarching definition. There are some things that are important like involving youth in case but then there should be use of suggested strategies instead of checklist.
- Should IL only be allowed if it is a concurrent plan?
 - There are too many youth going into IL at 16.
 - Concurrent plan might not fit all
- Another option would be to only allow APPLA if parents’ rights are terminated. This would force the system to keep kids from falling through the cracks (or wipe their hands of the kid).
- Often when youth age out of IL, they move back in with the bio family.
- Many parents are required to do nothing with IL even though they still have parental rights.
- Raised the issue that “intensive and ongoing efforts” were a lot like active efforts under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).
 - Do we need to set out what these mean as they do with ICWA for active efforts?
 - Then how do we ensure the Judge doesn’t just say, fine you are doing it – leaving so much up to the court system?

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- Support of the active efforts-like plan but feel it's leaving too much up to the judicial discretion.
- Needing to shift the conversation away from safety
 - There are issues because we are still built on a system of safety and need to switch to a system of well-being to make normalcy work.
 - Need to change thinking that youth doesn't have to be in IL to begin getting transition to adulthood skills.
 - Without court order to teach life skills, the caseworker with 16 youth will have to focus on the safety of the youngest.
- Need for specialized caseworkers who work with kids once they reach a certain age, or reach the decision of IL.
- How are we holding the workers accountable to implement these life skills?
 - Specified that caseworker doesn't have to teach the life skills, just need to make sure it happens.
- Youth input shows that team meetings should include what is being done and what skills are being developed as well as discussion around if they are gaining the skills they need for 19 or an IL that may happen before.
 - Struggled with how to do this for group homes. Becomes harder the deeper into placements the youth goes. What if they are placed out of state?
- What would be the ramifications of removing APPLA all together?
 - Affect B2I
- Current efforts of DHHS
 - Don't have that question or that definition now, but have reasonable efforts (documenting all the services/actions taken).
 - Is it similar to reasonable efforts – since it is similar it will still get to the courts for final decision. No matter how much is put into policy and how difficult it is made to cut corners, it will still be out of our control.
- Young people panic when it turns to IL are scared they won't have a roof over their heads.
- When we put IL as the permanency objective we forget about everything else; we forget to look for adults that could be supportive connections.
- IL is an easy out for the youth that we don't know what to do with. Easier also for the youth who don't want to go back with family when the family is working to get the child back.
- Balance between allowing the parent and child to have say vs. saying this is how it is going to be
- There is a practice component to this: Things like DHHS policy for education, employment, housing, skills that are preparing for adulthood starting at a certain age.

2. WHAT KIND OF SHOWING MUST BE MADE BEFORE WE CAN MOVE TO APPLA AND MAINTAIN THE PLAN OF APPLA?

- Have to show that intensive efforts were made before going to APPLA.
 - Ongoing intensive efforts are important.
 - Example: Youth didn't find out until out of the system why he didn't go back home.
 - Need to exhaust everything and need to make the efforts step by step listed. Need someone to hold the family and caseworkers accountable beyond just the checklist. An outside auditor is needed.
- Youth voice needs to be heard

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- Lack of communication and access to personal files increases feelings of distrust in youth and create the appearance that access to information is purposefully being obstructed.
- Part of the definition needs to include that the young person needs to be made aware and informed of what the plans and ongoing steps that are being taken and the progress towards those.
- Court needs to provide oversight
- There is a need for someone independent (FCRO, Courts) to make sure that the caseworkers are held accountable.
- If made a concurrent plan, it just becomes an administrative process and is not as strong as only allowing APPLA with TPR. This would push back on the entire system.
 - Concern would be that we have no control over the filing of TPs and county attorneys will not want to file TPRs for 16 year olds
- Potentially looking at continuum of care from 16 to 24 years old – including B2I, Chafee – need that type of worker for 16 and older.
 - Would this mean two workers or switching workers?
 - Nathan - talked with Doug and will NOT be changing caseworkers in DHHS
 - At KVC aren't changing workers either
- The search for ongoing efforts to look for connections need to continue beyond the decision/showing of moving to APPLA
- If we need a best practice does it need to be legislated?
- Does it open to much judicial discretion?
- Judges might be open to having training, education, guidelines, and best practices on how to deal with this.

3. HOW ARE WE PROVIDING PERMANENCY SERVICES TO OLDER YOUTH?

- Is different for each service area. Resources vary.
 - Omaha has a substantial amount of services, Lincoln has a moderate amount, but Scottsbluff is limited.
 - There are some adoption services, but they are limited to a few communities.
 - PALS is available across the state but gets thin in some areas.
 - Family support workers available, but again gets space in areas.
 - No family finding beyond Grand Island.
 - Best practices would need to consider the geographical resources.
- All of SENECA searches for youth 14 and older – computerized family members and numbers, SE has family finding, DHHS is starting the work group that do not have permanency to strategize options and IL. The Tri group also does this in Eastern service area
- Don't look at emotional supports and committed adults that are needed in permanency with IL.
 - Should have to have 2 permanent connections before the age out. Consideration of using case reviews.
 - If workers are doing it they are doing it on their own, not happening across the board.
- Have councils for 14-24, but unsure there are enough efforts to connect them to community members so they have social connections beyond the time limited groups.
- Similar scenario as when you move to a new town. It is difficult to make those connections.
- Eastern service area family finding, feels like there are some initiatives for permanency in the legal definition

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- A cultural shift is necessary
 - Organizations need to realize the importance of connections, even when youth already have the APPLA plan.
 - Does not mean that birth family are all bad people
- To get services, youth have to be moved east, so they are removed from their communities and supportive connections and family
 - The cultural shift is easy but the access to resources is difficult (can't talk to kids about permanency if they are being moved out of their communities)
 - Before this idea, need to stay in the home and get the services they are needed. Often don't need to be removed.
- Don't have a child mental health system – so many children are made state wards so they can get mental health services.
- What is the dual focus for prep for adulthood that lies in the communities and from the state?
 - Look at what is going well now
 - Shouldn't be a concurrent plan that is the only way to get these transition skills

4. DO WE PROVIDE ANYTHING THAT IS OLDER YOUTH/TEEN FOCUSED?

5. DO WE ADEQUATELY CONVEY TO YOUTH THAT THEY CAN BE PREPARED FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING AND HAVE PERMANENCY? CAN WE HAVE BOTH AND HOW DO WE DESCRIBE THAT?

- Youth don't have a concept of what the word permanency means.
- We do not prepare youth for IL. There aren't enough services and there is a need to have it be more of a focus.
- So much time is spent working towards all the other options that IL ends up happening in the 10th hour and it's not to the youth's benefit. Young people compare it to cramming for a final. A PALS worker is only available for so many hours a week and that's not enough time to build those skills.
- IL planning should be concurrent with other permanency plans.
- There is a need for trainings in placements like group homes. It needs to be a part of the discussion in larger Normalcy conversation. They need quality interactions with everyone they come into contact with.
- We look at outcomes instead of relationships. We are too crisis focused, so there isn't enough focus on quality.
- Groups felt like both elements of the question were areas that we do not do well.

6. ARE OUR PROGRAMS AND POLICIES STRUCTURED TO REFLECT THOSE DUAL OBLIGATIONS?

- Groups discussed at what point you switch from the permanency goal to IL.
 - It is on a case by case decision and is different for each service area
 - Most have a permanency team
 - Felt that there needed to be consistency across the state
 - Workers are too focused on the safety of the little ones. There needs to be specialized folks to work with IL and focus on relationships, life skills, etc. They should be trained to work with older youth, because it's very different.
- DHHS is already required to have the two supportive adults

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- Youth should have a list of age appropriate trainings to gain life skills (like age 16 how to balance a check book, 17 credit score, etc.)
- Need to think about what IL skill buildings looks like in a congregate care setting?
 - Much more difficult to learn these skills in group homes. Need a group home IL setting where they can learn those skills and not harm the safety of younger children. This needs to be influenced by the youth because there are a lot of varying opinions on this.
- Have discussed strategies like the concurrent plan, only APPLA with TPR, etc.
- Isn't going to happen in HHS to have a specialized worker/consultant. Could happen through partnering, or with public-private partnership
 - Family and youth often relay that there is stigma that exists, so having this be more community encompassing, making connections with other generations and older people to forge relationships.
- Needs to be community focused because youth act out and do socially inappropriate things if they are disconnected from community.
 - Sometimes government agencies are not best for these roles- continues the stigma
- What questions should the bench be asking for when a youth has a plan of APPLA to ensure work has been done? Another bench card is overkill – heard this from judge in New Mexico.

7. DO WE WANT TO REQUIRE THAT FOR THE PERMANENCY PLAN OF APPLA TO BE SELECTED OR MAINTAINED THAT AT LEAST ONE INDIVIDUAL MUST BE IDENTIFIED WHO IS A SUPPORTIVE ADULT THAT HAS A POSITIVE CONNECTION WITH THE YOUTH?

APPLA Recommendations

1. ARE THERE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED?

- How can IL skills be taught in congregate settings?

2. WHO SHOULD BE A PART OF THIS DISCUSSION?

- Youth, courts,

3. SHOULD THERE BE A SUBCOMMITTEE GROUP?

- Yes.
 - Subcommittee could work on what the transition skills should be? When should they be occurring? Who must make them happen? Etc.

4. OTHER KEY CONSIDERATIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS?

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Availability of Resources Questions

1. Is there any current mechanism in place for funding activities?

Round Table Participants identified the following existing funding mechanisms:

- Foster parent payment utilizing foster care reimbursement rate
- Organizations who assist
 - Friends of Foster Care
 - CASA
- Request for Activity Scholarship or Assistance Directly from Organization
 - YMCA
 - Sports Council
- Grants/Funding
 - Cox Family Fund Grants at Children's' Fund
 - Wellness Grant Blue Cross Blue Shield
 - Project Everlast Need Based Fund
 - Churches
 - Agencies pay for their youth
 - HHS caseworker
 - Large corporations could donate to the fund
- Driver's Ed
 - Nebraska Safety Council
 - State Farm

Round Table Participants identified the following funding gaps:

- Child Care Stipend Issue - Could childcare stipends be used towards camps?
 - Idea - Maybe childcare provider could be paid a "holding fee" so that the child's spot could be reserved, while the child attends a camp.
 - Title 20 funds must be used for childcare, and the provider is only paid if the child is in the childcare, so there is an issue when a child wants to attend a summer camp, and the childcare provider and the camp must be paid.
- Alternative to Medication
 - Instead of spending hundreds on medication, could these funds be used for the child to participate in activities?
- Time Delay - the activity or registration period may have passed by the time the funding was approved by an agency/organization
- Activities not always available in rural areas

2. Do we have a sense of the general or average cost of participating in a range of age-appropriate activities?

- Consensus across groups that there is not a cost range. Various factors keep a range from being a reliable option including variance in cost based on activity/region
- Not all youth may be interested in participating in activities
- Transportation can influence the cost of activities

a. If yes, what is the range?

- Research would need to be done to determine if there is a range that could be applied. It would need to take into consideration the costs associated with geographical location.

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- Is there the possibility to have DHHS match fees spent by foster parent?
- b. If no, do we need to convene a subgroup to do some calculations?**
- Generally, the groups felt there should be a sub-committee of some kind.
 - Groups suggested that some of these issues be addressed with revision to the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility (NCR) tool. Changes to this tool would fall to the Level of Responsibility Workgroup under the Children's Commission.
- 3. Do we know whether the foster care and group care rates adequately cover the cost of participation in activities?**
- About half of the groups thought that the rates sufficiently covered the cost of the child. The other half met no consensus on the issue.
 - Whatever the rate, it needs to be conscious of rural/urban accessibility/travel costs.
 - The groups wanted a way to make foster parents more accountable. They mentioned the need to empower the foster parent to support the child and to change the focus to the benefit of the child.
 - Again, there was talk about using the NCR tool to address this issue. Using a tiered approach to the expectations. It was suggested that there be communication with Peg Harriot of the Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee regarding revisions to the tool.
 - Concern that bio parents were not allowed to contribute to the costs.
 - Is there a way to have a fund to match the foster parent contributions? The creation of a fund match would encourage parent buy-in.
- 4. Do we know if Chafee funds are being used to cover the costs of participation in age-appropriate activities?**
- The groups were unsure on this item. Additional discussion/research would be needed.
- 5. Do we have any community stakeholders groups that can help us understand what resources or funds exists in the community that could be used by youth in care to cover the costs of some activities? (I.e. funds that exist for all youth that foster youth could tap into, fee waivers, opportunities to negotiate special rates).**
- Would need to take a systematic approach.
 - FFTA could organize all of the organizations/activities willing to waive fees/give discounts
 - Example - Soccer Association would have a good idea of the fees associated with each soccer club
 - Nebraska School Activities Association & Nebraska Coaches Association need to be at the table
 - School Activities
 - Free/Reduced Lunch, Waiver for Sports/Activities

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Availability of Resources Recommendations

1. Are there any other questions that need to be addressed?

- How can we handle the issue of foster children having accessibility to activities that the foster parent's biological child may not have access to?
- Is there a way to provide some kind of matching expectation?
- Do we need to look at licensing regulations or contract to ensure accountability?

2. Who should be a part of this discussion?

- FFT would need to organize supports to collect information on resources.
 - Part of the resource mapping would be to identify a point person in each community.
- Stakeholders, school, agencies, DHHS, legislators, economic development, and youth were several to be listed.

3. Should there be a subcommittee group?

- No consensus reached.
- Unsure that there would be sufficient time to calculate the numbers prior to the start of session.
- Another thought was to establish a subcommittee to look at pooling resources in order to create a list of scholarships/grants for each activity throughout the state.
 - Finding existing resources would limit the amount of work done

4. Other key considerations or recommendations?

- Do not provide a list of approved activities.
 - There is too much variance.
- Take a grant-like approach for accessibility of funds.
- Allow youth to ask to access these activities.
 - If they qualify for free/reduced lunch, could they have a similar process for school activities?
- Mapping out resources that are already available.
 - Find free programs/activities
- Address issues of transportation.
 - Some foster parents may be willing to transport, but too busy to do so. This can be especially challenging in rural areas with longer travel distances.
- Look into the court processes.
 - Even if funding exists, will the judge approve certain activities?
- How to help parents prioritize activities.
 - Example: an activity is at the same time as therapy – which activity takes priority?

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Grievance Questions

1. What existing grievance or oversight processes exist and what changes or improvements are needed?

Round Table Participants identified the following existing processes:

- Legislative: Ombudsman’s Office, Office of the Inspector General of Child Welfare
 - OIG looks mostly at systemic issues and though often does make improvements in cases, mostly focuses on systemic issues. The length of the investigation process means that issues may not be resolved when needed.
 - Ombudsman also handles complaints. Ombudsman is within the legislature and handles many citizen grievance cases. The length of time needed to investigate a case and reach a resolution makes it appropriate for systemic issues, but for a dispute over an activity, a quicker resolution may be needed.
 - OIG and Ombudsman have good rapport with agencies and have the experience to approach an investigation as a learning/improvement process and not “gotcha” to accuse agencies.
- Executive: HHS Grievance Process, Family Team Meetings
 - Inspector General’s report indicates that there were only two complaints filed in the last calendar year.
 - HHS grievance process is unclear, complainants do not know where the complaint is going, and it is unclear if it is anonymous or if there will be protection against retaliation.
 - There is an inherent issues in the decision making body determining the validity of its own decisions.
 - Most roundtable participants were surprised to hear that there was a grievance policy in HHS.
 - Family team meetings are a neutral place for resolution on disputes over activities.
- Judicial: Appeals Process, relief within the existing juvenile court case
 - Foster Parent shared a story about sending a letter to the judge. She did not realize that it would be sent to every party. The Judge is ultimately the decision maker and should know what is happening in the case, but when every party is aware of the grievance, it can lead to retaliation and a breakdown of relationships. She did not know at the time there was an internal HHS grievance process.
 - One youth sent a letter to the judge and it was read aloud in front of everyone. The judge was clearly upset about the things contained in the letter and made a number of changes via court order – a new FPS worker, request for documentation from GAL on visits, and other issues that were going in in the facility.
 - Filing complaints in juvenile court would give the process more “teeth,” as the judge could issue an order resolving the grievance.
- Other: Nebraska Families Collaborative Grievance Process
 - NFC utilizes Ethics Point program that allows individuals to make anonymous reports over the phone.
 - There is a designated staff member who handles grievances who has built relationships with staff to approach investigations as a process for improvement, not a “gotcha” approach.
 - Staff tries to make it clear that there is an invitation to contact their supervisors or file a grievance if necessary.

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- When people file a grievance, they are informed when they should expect a response or a resolution.
- Many suggested that the NFC process be a model for establishing a statewide grievance system.
- Other Potential Grievance Resolution Processes:
 - Establishment of a third party to resolve grievances:
 - This would make youth feel more comfortable telling the whole truth about what is going on. One youth voiced fear that explaining everything would cause the GAL or Judge to look at her in a different light.
 - Creation of a Child Ombudsman who is empowered to resolve these grievances is an option.
 - Many felt that grievances must be heard by a third party and questioned the ability of an agency to appraise its own shortcomings.
 - Some suggested establishing an oversight committee that contains youth on the committee. Youth may not want to discuss their problems with an adult and feel more comfortable with a young person. One participant suggested that young adults between the ages of 18-24 who have been system-involved do the intakes and screening, since they will have the perspective to know what a true grievance is and what resolutions would be appropriate.
 - Others suggested providing guidance to providers to set up a grievance resolution system, since they often have the most immediate contacts with children and families.
- Pennsylvania:
 - Participants reviewed Pennsylvania's grievance form, and though the majority liked its clarity, others felt that it was too long.
 - Participants liked that there was a clear process, notification, confidentiality, and non-retaliation policy.

2. What issues should a grievance process cover?

- RPP - There are long term grievances and short term grievances.
 - Some felt grievance process should be long term, for youth who are consistently not being listened to or respected.
 - Short term grievances (such as not being allowed to go to a party or attend a basketball game_ are more difficult, a grievance process for these could lead to foster parents feeling scrutinized or unsupported. There is also not a blanket way to solve all of these short term issues, and youth often feel they are being treated unfairly.
 - Issues that are planned for, such as prom, winter formal, graduation parties, etc., can be built into family team meetings and discussed.
 - Most youth do not want to fill out paperwork to get permission to join a football team.
- Youth Bill of Rights
 - Part of the SFA includes a youth Bill of Rights. Will this be enforceable through Court or a grievance process or will it have no teeth?
 - The term "Bill of Rights" suggests court enforcement of the rights.
 - If Bill of Rights is not enforceable, it will create more frustration for youth, because there is no recourse when their rights are violated.
 - Participants questioned the purpose of creating a Youth Bill of Rights if youth will be allowed to only submit Normalcy related grievances.
- GAL Issues

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- A complaint process dealing with youth legal representation and Guardians ad Litem does not exist. Some youth do not receive adequate representation and do not have recourse.
- Participants noted it is hard to concentrate on activities and normalcy when youth are confused about what is happening in their case.

3. How should the grievance process be structured to be accessible and meaningful for young people?

- It should ensure youth are free from retaliation and give them the option to be anonymous.
- There should be a timeline for when a resolution will be reached.
- The desired outcome should guide the structure of the grievance process. As the process develops, data should drive changes and statutory codification.
- There will need to be a culture change, so that the subject of the grievance views it as a good thing, as part of the learning process. We are all learning about the implementation of SFA, and will make mistakes along the way. A shift to learning and correcting over “gotcha” and accusations.
- Grievances should be heard by a third party so that youth will not fear retaliation.
- Look at NFC’s model for potential ideas.
- Youth should know who exactly is receiving their grievance, and what options are available to resolve it.
- There should be a panel process with more than one person considering the grievance, and youth involvement.
- Grievance process can be structured for all parties, not just youth.
- There has to be teeth to the process, if not, people will not use it. This is why juvenile court may need to be involved, there may need to be a process where a copy of the resolution is filed with the court so there is oversight of it.
- There should be a chance to be heard, filing a grievance should not mean that the decision will be overturned, but there is a chance to have youth voice heard.
- Another option is a peer to peer process to help youth feel more comfortable.
- There could be as a starting point an RPP section of the family team meeting where activities are discussed

Grievance Recommendations

1. Are there any other questions that need to be addressed?

- Will the grievance process be open to all parties or just youth?
- Will the Bill of Rights be enforceable through the grievance process?

2. Who should be a part of this discussion?

- OIG, Ombudsman, NFC’s complaint specialist, DHHS staff that handles complaints, youth

3. Should there be a subcommittee group?

- Yes. Consensus that this issue needs a subcommittee.

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4. Other key considerations or recommendations?

- Consider other state's models.
- Make sure that forms are youth friendly.
- Give youth help in filling out forms.
- The grievance process has fallen to the wayside with all of the changes and the time is right to create an accessible and effective process.
- Create a culture change where grievances are invited and welcomed as a part of learning, and not as a negative accusation.

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Training Questions

1. DO WE WANT A SINGLE UNIFORM CURRICULUM MANDATED FOR ALL PROVIDERS OR DO WE WANT TO CREATE A TEMPLATE WITH AREAS THAT MUST BE COVERED?

- Provide the base materials to allow entities to use for their own training. Use the TTT model. Create a “cheat sheet” of sorts to build off of.
- Create uniform objectives, but the curriculum will change based on the audience. There is a need to encompass language differences.
- RPPS doesn’t necessarily flow off of the tongue. Maybe a concept that is easier to understand. Normalcy is another term that may not be familiar with the audience.
- Each agency will be accredited differently so they will need flexibility with training materials. This would ensure that they can have the core concepts.
- It will have a baseline of information with rolled out information
 - Should be baseline training on the federal law, the conceptual framework, what is currently in place, and what is coming.

2. DO WE WANT TO REQUIRE THAT YOUTH BE INCLUDED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRAINING AND MUST BE PART OF DELIVERING THE TRAINING?

- Yes. Encourage peer training – maybe they provide training.
- Create a video of interviews of youth and their experience with normalcy.
- Panels of youth at training.
 - Ensure that youth offering peer training know what message needs to be communicated.
- May need to provide incentives in order to get the youth to attend
- Maybe there needs to be a shift in who provides the training. If a GAL trains on legal resources youth may be more inclined to attend.
- Need to find a way to infuse these training topics into existing training.

3. DO WE WANT TO ESTABLISH THE CORE AREAS THAT MUST BE COVERED IN THE TRAINING? (AREAS TO COVER COULD INCLUDE: 1. THE RPP AND HOW TO EXERCISE IT, 2. UNDERSTANDING LIABILITY; 3. UNDERSTANDING CHILD/ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT; 4. UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVITIES AND SOCIAL CONNECTION TO DEVELOPMENT; 5. ENGAGEMENT OF PARENTS AND FAMILIES; 6. ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH IN DECISION MAKING; 7. UNDERSTANDING THE RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTIVITIES IN THE COMMUNITY)

- Critical thinking training is another important but difficult element.
- These topics would need to be in steps, and each subdivision could be individual modules.
- Need to add training on locating and identifying resources.
- Need to address the issue of activities that may not be continued after leaving Foster Care.
- Understanding liability training
 - Shared with the legal, providers, and caseworkers. Behavior is a common fear when dealing with liability.
 - The best way to avoid legal problems is to include everyone from the beginning.
- Addressing age appropriateness for the youth involved added to #3
- A lot of this training is included in foster parent training. It may just be an infusion of these concepts into current training.
- Addition of a module that discusses the relationship with the birth parents.

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- There needs to be an easily accessible person or place to contact with questions.
- Mediation training for case managers. It's falling on the providers currently.
- Cultural and religious training
- Working with TIPS Map (?)
- Inclusion of the bio parents – training for legal staff as well as FPs
- Training needs to be done on APPLA in order to shift the culture

4. HOW AND WHEN SHOULD TRAINING OCCUR? HOW OFTEN?

- See previous discussions
- Primary target audience should have a time limit to complete the required training.
- There may need to be a strategic plan for how to roll out training
 - Could work trainings into other entity trainings.
- Using the grievances to develop new training.
 - Overarching taskforce to examine the grievances and address deficiencies with trainings.
- First train the supervisors, using the same language consistently.
 - It must be built into a reflective supervision process. There needs to be an accountability to integrate the culture and language for the administration.
- Should also be introduced into the pre-hearing conferences – find a way to institutionalize the change.

5. SHOULD WE REQUIRE THAT PEOPLE OTHER THAN CAREGIVERS BE TRAINED?

- Youth should be trained on how this information affects them.
 - Starting at age 14. They need to know their rights, and be aware of their situation.
- Respite homes should be included in training.
- Have training available, but not required for groups like Community organizations.
- Use different spears of influence to require various groups to engage in training.
 - Caseworkers, foster care providers, congregate providers.
- Need to find a way to require Kinship homes to participate in trainings

Training Recommendations

1. ARE THERE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED?

2. WHO SHOULD BE A PART OF THIS DISCUSSION?

- Most important audiences to reach first are birth parents, foster parents, caseworkers, and legal providers.
 - Start with legal parties, caseworkers, and providers. Focus on what training is right now – minimum standards. Everything can always be improved. “Voice and Choice.” Need to find a training model that is effective and spread it around.

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- Others include: judges, GAL, CASA, councilors, congregate care, CCFL, youth, Tribes, attorneys, DHHS, Probation, NFC, Foster Care providers, community organizations, local FCRO boards, respite homes, community forums for the general public, schools
- The people who train should be at the top of the list as well.
- For the youth, training would be available for them to understand their rights. Could also involve the trained youth from groups like Project Everlast. Know your rights could also be helpful for foster parent, birth parents, approved homes, kinship, respite homes, and licensed homes.
- It is important for the communities to know about this culture shift and how to support the community
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3. SHOULD THERE BE A SUBCOMMITTEE GROUP?

- Yes. These concepts are too big to not be addressed on their own.

4. OTHER KEY CONSIDERATIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS?

- There needs to be work to have collaborative training among agencies/entities.
- Have trainings count towards CLE & GAL training hours
- Potential for a place or site that people can go to for training.
 - It could be applied to various licensing requirements. Would utilize both face-to-face and online options for training.
 - Possibly have this training as part of the required training to get their FP license.
 - Complications could arise when determining who should house this project. Even with online sessions, there needs to be ways for questions and comments to be voiced. Need to ensure that everyone is involved.

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The next set of recommendations include, Normalcy, Cultural Considerations, Pregnant and Parenting Supports, and the Youth Bill of Rights. These topics were reviewed in a round robin setting with each group engaging in discussion for 15 minutes per topic.

Normalcy Recommendations

1. ARE THERE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED?

- How can we change the definition of Normalcy for youth involved in juvenile justice/probation?
- There needs to be a set of questions for the 3a, 3b, etc. They need to be targeted to the specific population.
 - Are we using processes already in place to their best advantage?
 - Could we add these questions to existing processes?
- How does school punishments such as isolation affect normalcy?
 - There is a population of youth who already have truancy problems, and suspension isn't going to help.

2. WHO SHOULD BE A PART OF THIS DISCUSSION?

- Probation needs to be involved
- YRTC should be involved
- Schools
- All legal parties including judges
- The general public
 - Need to ensure that Normalcy becomes a familiar term

3. SHOULD THERE BE A SUBCOMMITTEE GROUP?

- Some felt a subcommittee should be formed, while others felt that the topic would be entwined in many of the other groups already.

4. OTHER KEY CONSIDERATIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS?

- For youth in juvenile justice or probation, the culture of punishment should be shifted to a culture of natural consequences.
 - Many these youth don't know what Normalcy is and need to be exposed to what it can look like.
 - Group addressed that there may be restrictions/legal aspects when dealing with this population.
- Many found the term Normalcy unappealing.
 - For many youth the idea of "Normal" is foreign.
 - Groups voiced a want to find a term that is more relatable

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Pregnant and Parenting/Cultural Considerations Supports Recommendations

1. ARE THERE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED?

- Pregnancy/Parenting
 - Consider needs of youth in congregate placements.
 - Use “and/or” language for pregnant and/or parenting.
 - Include considerations for fathers specifically, including their rights and involvement. Or say normalcy for “moms and dads.” (since most will just think of mothers who are parenting, although this is the majority)
- Cultural Considerations
 - Include refugee and immigrant population.
 - Include traditions, morals and values in the religion/spirituality category.
 - How to get this info and resources on child’s culture to the foster parents, and where do the agencies get the information?
 - Question about the process on cultural topics that should occur with bio and foster parents.

2. WHO SHOULD BE A PART OF THIS DISCUSSION?

- Reps from each of the groups listed
- Birthparents
- Tribes
- All cultural centers

3. SHOULD THERE BE A SUBCOMMITTEE GROUP?

- Pregnancy/Parenting
 - Subcommittee recommended.
- Cultural Considerations
 - Subcommittee was recommended by some, others though cultural considerations should be infused in all other committees and subcommittees, not a separate group.

4. OTHER KEY CONSIDERATIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS?

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Youth Bill of Rights Recommendations

1. **ARE THERE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED?**
 - What happens if one of the rights is violated?
 - Reference recommendations from focus groups & survey results

2. **WHO SHOULD BE A PART OF THIS DISCUSSION?**
 - Young People
 - Will need to address which youth; what age, background, in care, etc.
 - System experience
 - Current youth in the system
 - Legal folks - knowledge of law and grievance

3. **SHOULD THERE BE A SUBCOMMITTEE GROUP?**
 - No consensus
 - Suggestion that it be rolled into the grievance process

4. **OTHER KEY CONSIDERATIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS?**
 - Add these rights:
 - Right to Grieve
 - Constitutional rights/basic rights
 - Right to participate in normalcy/normal childhood
 - Include “Responsibility to” section
 - Example: Responsibility to Speak Up, Responsibility to Participate
 - Is in an encouragement or requirement for the youth to fulfill the requirement?
 - Re-visit the Bill of Rights in team meetings
 - Youth friendly language
 - Older Youth focused committee blend: pregnancy, APPLA, Bill of Rights
 - Need to find a way to make the Bill of Rights meaningful
 - Utah, as an example, has an Ombudsman specifically for Foster Care