FOSTER YOUTH MENTORING ACT PARTNER & GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

MENTOR

OVERALL MESSAGING

Main Message: Young people with experience in foster care face many challenges, including disruptions in education and a lack of stable and permanent housing that can make it difficult to maintain strong relationships. Mentoring relationships can help young people address mental health issues, support their identity development, and give them a sense of belonging. Further, mentoring at the time of emancipation from foster care can have a positive impact on transition-related outcomes such as employment, housing stability, and avoiding involvement in the criminal justice system. The Foster Youth Mentoring Act seeks to address the greater need for critical programs that support our country's most vulnerable young people.

Goal: To create a competitive federal grant program to provide foster youth with healthy volunteer and peer mentor relationships.

Priority Ask: We owe it to ourselves as a nation to support and protect foster youth by offering them quality mentor relationships and investing in them today. Congress can do that by passing The Foster Youth Mentoring Act.

Top Messages:

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that there are over 400,000 young people currently in foster care in the United States.
  - Most youth are in the system for at least a year, with 38% for two years or longer.
  - Unfortunately, as a result of the many challenges that can come with unstable and impermanent housing, disruptions in education, and a lack of strong relationships with adults, only 50% of youth in foster care complete high school by the time they are 18 years old, and only 20% enroll in higher education upon graduation.
  - We all have a role to play in supporting vulnerable young people to be the innovators, leaders and problem-solvers who shape our world.

- The evidence is clear that mentoring services for foster youth are effective prevention and intervention strategies that have a positive impact on a wide range of factors:
  - A 2017 research synthesis of over 30 studies on youth in foster care concluded that mentoring services had a positive impact on mental health, educational functioning and attainment, peer relationships, placement outcomes, and life satisfaction.
  - Additional research has demonstrated that mentoring at the time of emancipation can have a positive impact on several transition-related outcomes, such as employment, housing stability, and avoidance of involvement with a criminal justice system.
  - A study funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of a transition-age program found that these mentoring programs potentially provide a benefit of three times the public expenditure, for every day in jail that program participants avoid.

- Young people are facing a deficit in access to quality relationships with adults, which we know can lead to positive outcomes in their education, work experiences, mental health, identity development, and more.
  - In recent years, there has been an uptick in the number of youth reporting that they had no mentor at all growing up.

- Even people who grew up with mentors remember times when they wanted more mentoring.
- More than eight out of ten (83%) of Americans support at least some level of the use of government funds for youth mentoring programs.
- Mentoring programs that serve young people with ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) can cost up to twice as much per youth, highlighting the need for additional investment in these types of programs.

THE FOSTER YOUTH MENTORING ACT SUMMARY

- The Foster Youth Mentoring Act seeks to address the need for greater support of mentoring programs that support the country's most vulnerable young people. The bill provides funding to programs that aim to provide foster youth with healthy relationships with volunteer and peer mentors. Specifically, the bill:
  - Authorizes $50 million funding to expand and enhance mentoring programs that serve foster youth. Grantees may use funding for critical mentor recruitment and screening to ensure long-term and quality mentor-mentee relationships.
  - Provides evidence-backed training to volunteers who serve as mentors to foster youth to ensure that they have a strong understanding of child development, family dynamics, the child welfare system and other relevant considerations that affect foster youth.
  - Ensures that youth voice is included in program development, design, and implementation.
  - Provides funding to support peer-to-peer mentoring relationships for young people with experience in foster care.
  - Ensures that programs receiving a grant follow best practices for screening volunteers and matching mentors with mentees.
  - Increases coordination between mentoring programs and child welfare systems.

WAYS TO ADVOCATE FOR THE FOSTER YOUTH MENTORING ACT

- **Sign MENTOR's Coalition Letter of Support.** Use this form to sign your local, state, or national organization on to a letter to Members of Congress in support of the Foster Youth Mentoring Act.
- **Advocate and Share MENTOR's Action Alert.** Take just two minutes to write to your Member of Congress and advocate their support for this bill. Then, share the link with grassroots advocates in your network!
- **Help collect and uplift impact statements.** MENTOR is seeking stories from young people with experience in the foster care system to elevate in the digital media campaign in support of this bill. Selected participants will be compensated a stipend of $50 for participating. Potential participants can use this form to express interest.
- **Participate in the Foster Youth Mentoring Act Digital Campaign.** Use the social media templates below and other messages in this toolkit to publicly share your own and your organization's support for this bill.

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

Facebook

- Youth with experience in foster care often face difficulties including disruptions in education and a lack of stable and permanent housing. But positive relationships with a trusting adult can help them navigate these obstacles. The Foster Youth Mentoring Act helps facilitate these relationships through mentoring programs. Take action today here: https://www.votervoice.net/MENTOR/Campaigns/104707/Respond
- The Foster Youth Mentoring Act establishes funding for mentoring programs that serve foster youth. We must invest in the future of opportunity youth in our country! (@ Tag Member of Congress), please support this bill!
- Foster youth represent some of the most vulnerable young people in the United States. There is no time to waste: Congress must invest in relationships and mentoring for foster youth! (@ tag member of congress), as a constituent, I urge you to support this bill!
- Did you know: There are over 400,000 children currently in foster care in the United States? The Foster Youth Mentoring Act would provide mentoring services to prepare foster youth for a better future. Take action today here: https://www.votervoice.net/MENTOR/Campaigns/104707/Respond

Twitter

- The Foster Youth Mentoring Act will protect and support foster youth today through relationships and mentoring programs. Support the FYMA today! (@ tag Member of Congress) #MentoringAmplifies
- All youth deserve relationships that support them through life. The Foster Youth Mentoring Acthelps do just that. (@ tag member of Congress), as your constituent, I urge you to support this bill. #MentoringAmplifies
- EVERY young person deserves to receive quality relationships, which lead to a better education, mental health, and work experiences. That's why we need The Foster Youth Mentoring Act! Take action here: https://www.votervoice.net/MENTOR/Campaigns/104707/Respond
- Our nation's mentoring services and programming must include quality training for mentors & volunteers to support foster youth. The Foster Youth Mentoring Act does just that. Take action to support it today: https://www.votervoice.net/MENTOR/Campaigns/104707/Respond #MentoringAmplifies

Instagram

- American society faces significant challenges to ensure vulnerable youth are adequately prepared to enter higher education. Now, there's a bill in Congress that would help address those gaps! Tell your member of Congress: Support The Foster Youth Mentoring Act. #MentoringAmplifies

- It's critical that vulnerable young people have access to mentoring relationships that help them prepare for quality education. Tell Congress: invest in young people by supporting The Foster Youth Mentoring Act! #MentoringAmplifies

LinkedIn

- The Foster Youth Mentoring Act invests in mentoring programs serving foster youth serving. Tell your Member of Congress: Invest in the future of the most vulnerable young people in our country: https://www.votervoice.net/MENTOR/Campaigns/104707/Respond
- Foster youth often face many challenges: disruptions in education and a lack of stable and permanent housing, just to name a few. Mentoring services could be the key to help reverse this trend for them. Take action to support this bill today: https://www.votervoice.net/MENTOR/Campaigns/104707/Respond
- Did you know there are over 400,000 children currently in foster care in the United States? The Foster Youth Mentoring Act would provide mentoring services to give youth the stable relationships they need to build a happy and healthy future. Take action today: https://www.votervoice.net/MENTOR/Campaigns/104707/Respond

Graphics

DOWNLOAD GRAPHIC 1

DOWNLOAD GRAPHIC 2

DOWNLOAD GRAPHIC 3

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Mentoring and Foster Youth Research Summary, MENTOR.
- Foster Youth Mentoring Act, 117th Congress, Congress.gov.
- Mentoring for Youth in Foster Care Model/Population Review, National Mentoring Resource Center
- Resources for Youth in Transition, Child Welfare Information Gateway.
- Resources for Current & Former Foster Youth, Foster Coalition.
- Foster Care Statistics, Child Welfare Information Gateway.