

# Youth Engagement Webinar Transcript

Foster Youth to Independence Webinar Series

October 19, 2021

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- Jie: Good afternoon everyone. My name is Jie Dong, and I'm from BCT Partners. I'd like to welcome you to today's webinar. This is part three of the Foster Youth Independence Webinars Series. For those of you who are new to the series, we'll welcome you, and those who are returning from attending the first two sessions, thank you for coming back and staying engaged. Today, we will be covering the topic of youth engagement. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the ongoing support from HUD Office of Public and Indian Housing that made this series possible. Next, I'd like to go over some housekeeping items. During today's session, we will ask you to use the chat box at the bottom right corner of the screen to input your questions, comments, and feedback throughout the presentation, and doing the Q&A at the end. Please direct your questions and comments to all panelists. If you experience any technical difficulties, please send me a direct message so that I can help you troubleshoot the issue. We will also be taking several live polls during the presentation. Please follow the instructions on the screen to access Mentimeter on your mobile device or your computer to participate in the polls. Now, I'd like to introduce you to today's panelists. First, my colleague from BCT Partners, Mrs Abigail Alfred. Abby is our in-house child welfare specialist, who has years of experience working directly with county and state level with child welfare agencies, as well as the Children's Bureau. The other panelists we have are Ms. Suzan Nambi, and Ms. April McMullen, our consultants with lived expertise. Suzan and April, our current FYI voucher holders whose insights and lived expertise help guide the development of this webinars series. Last but not least, we also have Ms. Michelle Daniels and Mrs Celia Carpentier from HUD Office of PIH with us today. Before I go over the agenda, here is the schedule for the entire webinar series. This information is also available on the FYI webpage. Due to time constraints, we will not be able to answer all of your questions during today's sessions. We respectfully ask that you hold off from asking questions that are not related to the topic of youth engagement. Content information for seeking clarification on matters related to the program guidelines and voucher administration will be provided at the end of the session. As you can see voucher program administration will be our final webinar, which will take place on January 25th, 2022. Any questions that we do not answer live today will also be forwarded to the appropriate panelists or HUD staff at the conclusion of the webinar. Now, let's move on to the agenda. In today's webinar, we will share some guiding principles and best practices to engage youth. Then we will explore how to identify and leverage supportive services and close it out with a discussion on how to engage youth in program development and implementation. And here are the goals for the webinar. Today, we're going to lean heavily on April and Suzan's lived experience at the foster youth and current FYI voucher holders. They're going to share with us some best practices, and we will ask everyone to actively reflect on your own experiences and youth engagement. Finally, we hope that you will walk away with some practical guidelines on how to incorporate youth in your program design and implementation. All right, next, we shall look at guiding principles. There are frameworks related to youth development and engagement that are useful in guiding effective approaches to engaging youth in your communities, both to consider the FYI voucher as an option for them as well as to engage in supportive services once the youth have an FYI voucher. Before we discuss

these framework, we would like to hear from you off in a poll. So please go ahead and go to [www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com) and use the code 1493 8804. And the poll question is what does youth engagement mean to you?

- Suzan: We will talk about two approaches that go hand in hand to working with young people here: Positive youth development and authentic youth development. As we're getting to this-

- Jie: Let's hold off. Give folks a minute to put their answers for this poll.

- Suzan: Okay.

- Jie: All right, I'm going to stop sharing, and share the poll real quick. Give folks a chance to ... All right, we'll wait for another 30 seconds before we move forward, some really good feedback here. Thank you all for participating in this poll. Thank you, folks. I'm going to go back into the slide back. One second, guys. All right, in the interest time, we're going to turn the floor over to Suzan to present the guiding principle number one, positive youth development. Go ahead, Suzan.

- Suzan: Yeah, thank you, Jie. Yeah, just like I was saying, positive youth development here where we'll talk about two approaches that go hand in hand while working with young people. The first one is the positive youth development, and then the authentic youth development, as we're getting to this information, it's important to note that we talk about approaches because working effectively with young people is not about a series of tasks that you check off a list. Rather it's more of how important or how you understand their needs as you work with the young people. The first approach we'll discuss today is positive youth development. This is a holistic approach. It focuses on creating a developmentally appropriate learning setting for young people. It's important to keep in mind that FYI is about preventing young people exiting, and those who have already existed foster care from becoming homeless, engaging these young people in self-sufficiency services to keep them from becoming homeless is very important. So it's about creating opportunities for these young people to learn to be self-sufficient. When you use positive youth development approach, it means adapting the series of strategies. And these include developing a positive relationship with the youth, strengthening skills, creating and fostering safe and trustworthy spaces while offering opportunities to succeed for the youth in many meaningful ways for them. And crucially, it's very important for you to understand that youth are to be treated as equal partners, and are supposed to be engaged in ways that are both constructive and positive here. I have pulled to April.

- April: Hello, how are doing, everybody? So I'm going to be talking about authentic youth engagement, which is the second guiding principle into youth engagement overall. So authentic youth engagement, which as we said, goes hand in hand with positive youth development. This framework for effectively partnering with young people includes four key components, each of which we'll discuss in a bit more in depth, further along in this webinar. So the four components include youth adult partnerships, preparation, opportunity, and support. As we dive into each component, we'll also ask you to reflect on your practices when working with young people. So the first component is youth adult partnership. When engaging youth, it's essential to view them, not merely as beneficiaries of your services, but as equal partners with you and other adults

involved in making decisions that affect their lives. Doing so helps to cultivate trust because by being in a partnership, you inherently must share information, have honest conversations, and respect various experiences and opinions. It's important to set clear expectations about roles and decision-making. Doing all of this helps build young people's self-esteem and support development of problem solving and leadership skills. I'm going to ask you all a reflection question now, which is, will you take a minute to reflect on your own practices? You can just think about it or write it down for yourself, but please think about it. The question is, in what ways do you listen to, and integrate opinions, experiences, and suggestions of youth within your work?

- Suzan: Thank you, April, there. So we'll talk about another key aspect here in authentic youth development, and that's preparation. Preparation has to be about the youth being ready to benefit from the opportunities. This means providing them with the information they want and they need, and ensuring that they understand this information and they have enough time to consider what this information says so that they can be able to make informed decisions. Preparation requires time, effort, and patience from all those that are working with youth. It also involves building relationships and understanding an individual's unique developmental needs that gets on a personal basis of each youth. To do it this well, you need to be flexible and open to practicing new skills and approaches. And in this case, I want you to reflect on this question here, what skills and goals are you preparing your youth for?

- April: Once again, just take a second to write that down on a piece of paper or keep it in the back of your head. All right, so next, we'll talk about the third component of authentic youth engagement, which is opportunity. Youth need opportunities to be engaged and to partner with you. Youth and adults should consider how opportunities will further a young person's development and specific goals, and in creating opportunities to truly partner in decision-making, you're building opportunities for youth to acquire skills and develop their leadership abilities. So once again, having opportunities for your youth is very important within your work. So I would like you to think about how do you identify opportunities to engage youth in planning for FYI?

- Suzan: Thank you, April, for that. We will continue on one last framework here that writes and that helps authentic youth development, engagement, sorry. And this involves maintaining an authentic and trusting relationship. And this is support, it's called support. Support is tailored to meet the unique needs of a young person. Support is not one-size-fits-all approach, as you all know, every person needs a unique kind of support depending on who they are and what they need as individuals. So here we'd rather understand specific needs like I told you. And support comes in different forms. It includes being physically present and available. It includes providing emotional and encouragement support, and also material support. So as I told you, it's like a one-shoe-fits-all size. And I want you to reflect on how do you identify the support youth need in order to be successful? You can note that down or think about it at the back of your mind. And then we have to understand why do we need to engage the youth? Before we move into best practices, let's take a minute and talk about why it's valuable to engage the youth. Like anyone would want, young people should have a significant voice in decisions that affect their lives. Doing so helps them build important skills and relationships as well as self-esteem. And when youth are truly engaged, involved in decision-making, they are more likely to achieve a greater stake or to be more aware of the situation, the program, and their community. When I look at

why we should engage the youth, it kind of takes me back at the time when I have to get my first apartment with the FYI, as I was exiting foster care. And I was engaged in a way that I had to make a decision with my Chafee worker, who is Alison, on what apartment, on how I want it to be like, and how, if I appreciate the size of the apartment and all those things that go with choosing an apartment. And that kind of like compelled me to be accountable in meeting my part as a youth in the FYI program. So it was very important to engage me in the way that I developed at self-esteem and it gave me skills in determining my next apartment and my next apartment and what I would like, require, or need in an apartment. So that was very good when it comes to engaging the youth and was very, very useful to me.

- Jie: All right, now that we talk about general approaches to engaging youth, we will share some best practices for engaging FYI youth. Before that, we want to hear from you again in a poll question. And the question is what are the biggest challenges in engaging FYI youth in supportive services? Again, please go to [ww.menti.com](http://ww.menti.com) and use the code 1493 8804. I'm going to give folks a couple of minutes to input your answers here. Are folks having trouble with the poll, or just taking the time to input their answers? Let me know if they have any technical issues in the chat. Oh, here we go, they're coming. And we're going to use your input tomorrow to help facilitate a peer-to-peer learning session. That's going to take place tomorrow at 2:00 PM Eastern Standard Time. Everyone who was attending today's webinar session will automatically get a link following the conclusion of the session to be able to join the peer-to-peer learning session tomorrow. And the PowerPoint presentation will be sent out to all the attendees as well. Really good feedback here. Really nuanced input as well, we appreciate that. All right, in the interest of time, I'm going to stop sharing this and go back to this slide deck, but feel free to continue to take your time to answer the poll question here. We go back to the slide deck. So I'll turn it back to Suzan and April to talk about the best practices.

- April: All right, so once again, when you're engaging youth, I feel like the most vital part of this whole, like when you're trying to engage a youth is the understanding of your youth that you're working with. When working with and trying to engage young people, the first thing you have to do is understand them. This starts broadly with understanding needs and experiences of the youth, but it also has to happen at, but it's ... like the needs and understanding of the youth happens at a population level. But when you get more personal, it has to happen at an individual level as well with you demonstrating genuine curiosity about the youth that you're working with, their experiences, interests, and hopes for their own future. Everyone is different. So understanding the unique developmental needs, the motivations of a young person you're working with and also understanding their family's involvement within their life is essential when you're trying to develop a relationship and engage them in services. So personally speaking, I share the same Chafee worker Suzan does, Alison. She's a wonderful person. I met Alison when I started attending Chafee programs. Chafee is an independent living group that she offers 'cause she's the Chafee worker of Jefferson County. So through the groups and our personal one-on-one interactions, Alison was able to develop an understanding of who I was as a person and not just what I was on the paper she received, for me, like entering into her services of Chafee. So with that information, she was able to develop that understanding to efficiently engage me in services that Chafee provides and/or community resources that she thought I would be interested in and be successful in. So once again, that understanding of the youth from where they are and like what their hopes and aspirations are for the future will make it easier to engage

them down the road in services they may need, but they don't realize that they do need. So with that said, I'm going to pass it back over to Suzan, which she's going to talk about another great example of engaging youth.

- Suzan: April. Yeah, so another one of the best practices is power sharing. Traditionally, we have to understand that the youth have not been included in their decision-making because they are coming from foster care and the child welfare system, most of the things are dictated. So it's very important to recognize that the youth, they're often very, very disconnected from things going on in their lives. So when we come to power sharing, let's give them that power. Let's give them that choice. Often they don't want to engage in these services because it feels like they're just a way caseworkers and systems are trying to control their lives just as it's been before. But it's very important to shift the mindset and engage the youth in these activities that will be valuable to them. And this comes with sharing power in making decisions about things in their lives. And this can happen in a few steps here. We have to be aware of the power differentia between you and the youth, and identifying the power structures that prevent the youth from being considered experts, even in their own lives. Doing this requires self-reflection, humility, honesty, and accountability. So look into your power structures in your system. Are there any that prevent the youth from being considered experts? You can answer that question better. Also ask yourself who is determining what youth in your community need. Yeah, who is determining what services they are getting? What requirements they must meet? Some requirements are very unattainable. What requires the youth and what are they based on? Remember engaging your youth as young adults and not children. So you should trust them as such. Young people are likely to avoid or run away from things that will feel like an imposition on what they need. I'll give an example here. With my team in a FYI program, I've always been given choices, such that it doesn't make me feel like it's being imposed on me. I've always been given choices between, "Hey Suzan, would you want to go for a workshop about employment empowerment? Would you want to go for a workshop about youth development?" So based on my interests, there've always been options and choices given to me. And that really makes me feel accountable. That really makes me feel like I'm involved in decisions or in things that are trying to build my life and lead me to self-sufficiency. So be transparent in decision-making processes, and be clear about your own motivations while working to understand theirs. Model vulnerability. How do we model vulnerability? This is developed when we meet deadlines, when we meet commitments. You just don't want to create fantasies for the youth. Engage them in things that are realizable, things that are viable. And once you create that kind of relationship while modeling vulnerability, they will trust you, they will turn to you to be vulnerable with you. So let the youth guide the conversation in most cases. And above all, be mindful that words carry connotations that can either support or disempower youth and young people and be sure to signal language that shows respect. Yeah, that's what I will say about that. Thank you. April, you can take over from there, honey.

- April: Thank you, Suzan. So I just want to reiterate what Suzan's last comment was. She stated, be mindful that words carry connotations that can either support or disempower young people. With that said, we move on to communication. Communication is an essential part of any relationship. And as you're engaging youth, it's particularly important to be mindful of your communication practices. Communication with youth should be regular, consistent, and reliable as well as open and honest. I mean, who isn't open and honest with their other relationships? We're all human, our connection matters as well. So you should be following up when you say

you will and following through with what you say you'll do. You might also have to be patient and persistent offering multiple opportunities to engage as youth exiting the foster care system if you will, are very put off a little bit like we kind of want to be done. So we might be a little standoffish, but if you give us that room and opportunity to engage, we most likely will engage with you. And also you need to think about what modes of communication you're using and what is most comfortable for the youth that you were working with. Do they prefer written communication, phone calls, in person conversations, texts? It should always be personalized to make sure it's safe. However, overall, it's important to develop communication plans and strategies that are sustainable both long-term and short-term. So you should be mindful of the kind of relationship you are trying to build and what communication should look like based on that. If your relationship is transactional and short term, communication must be respectful and should consider the most effective ways to communicate. If your relationship is longer-term, it's more important to spend time building trust as a foundation and create direct person-to-person forms of communication. So I just want to highlight what Suzan said earlier with the comment that your words can carry connotations that can either support your youth or disempower your youth. I personally experienced bad form of communication with my person that is supposed to represent me, my caseworker, if you will. She was using improper forms of written documentation to represent me within court. So I responded in a respectful manner to show her that the communication she was using had a profound impact on how I like interacted with her. So once she changed the way she communicated with me and then also represented me when I was not there, when she improved that, I was able engage with her more personally, because I felt like she developed that understanding of who I was and not what she thinks I was. So, communication is just very important, when you're speaking to someone and/or speaking about them. What you say does affect how they will interact with you. So just focus on that communication and just always be respectful. With that said, I'm going to pass it back over to Suzan.

- Suzan: Okay, let's go into when to present services. Okay, our goal here is to engage young people into services that will be valuable to them. Your best bet is to think about when the best time it is to present this information to the youth. Yeah, as we've discussed before, build trust first. It might not be best to present services right away, right on. They will kind of like, "Oh, this is overwhelming." That will be the implication there. So decide and discover when to present the services. On the other hand, if connecting young people or youth to a purchaser service is likely to be well received, it might be a good way to build trust, and therefore you might do it sooner. Like I told you, understand this individual, understand this youth, and their experiences and interests, and then get to this. You also want to present options in advance, particularly if there's a preparation of work to be done for this kind of service, or this kind of engagement, or for some youth, you might have to have many conversations on and on about that particular service before they are ready to accept it, or before they even trust you, or even before they are ready to engage. So you want to give them enough time on that. And as we have said, focusing on services that are likely to be valued by the young people and helping them see the benefits of that such services before any drawbacks is very important. I remember when I got my apartment office, I was very excited and I felt like everything is going to be roses in the rain, but that wasn't the case. Once I settled in, I felt so lonely. I felt like overwhelmed as well. And I felt like my mental health was starting to draw me back. And that's when my caseworker comes in. She's part of the services that I received. She's like, Suzan, maybe you should talk to a therapist. Maybe you

should go in and talk to this specialist. So it was very important at that point when she presented that service. I wouldn't have, maybe I'll be very compromising maybe before, but because she brought it at a time whereby it was just an addition to prevent me from drawbacks, I really went in full swing. So, generally, the best practice is to follow the young people's lead as well, where they point, yeah, sometimes it's what they want. And where they are like, sometimes it's not in the interest yet. So, when they're ready to engage, they're more likely to do so. So rather than when they feel like it's being imposed on them or simply can't see how it will benefit their lives. That's very important to understand when, what, at what time to present the services. I'll pass on to Jie.

- Jie: All right, folks, it's time to take another poll question here. Going to advance the poll so you will have access to it. And the poll question is what do you do if a young person is not engaging in or not interested in the services you are offering? We'd like to hear from your experience. Give folks couple of minutes.

- April: You all have some great answers to all these poll questions. I really appreciate it.

- Jie: All right, in the interest time, we're going to go back to the slide deck. You can take your time finishing up the poll. I'll leave it up here.

- Suzan: Okay.

- Jie: All right, you guys can go ahead. Not engaged or not interested session.

- Suzan: Yes. So let's talk about the not engaging or not interested. That's very frustrating when young people don't engage in services that you think they need or will be valuable. Unfortunately there is usually a quickie or simple solution to that, but there's some practices that can help when this is happening. First off, spend time understanding what's really going on in their lives. What do the youth need? Why aren't they engaging? You might be focused on what you see as the pros of accessing the service, but try to understand the cons from their own perspective. Why the cons seems to be outweighing the benefits? And importantly give the youth space to express their feelings about these services without judgemental correction. Take time to get to know what motivates the young person, because that will help you figure out how to engage them in a service that's right for them. I remember when we were having our Chafee supportive classes, the one that gave us skills to attain self-sufficiency, we had a very low attendance. And at some point, Alison was very frustrated, was like, "You guys are not coming." And then all of a sudden she started to provide a 6:00 PM dinner before we started the group. And I saw an increase in the number of attendance. That made me understand that maybe a youth was worried about going and attending the class and then having to come back and not having maybe something to eat, or maybe, okay, when will I get something to eat? So that was very important in helping improve engagement. The other thing that I remember we did was giving transportation to and from where the service is. So some don't have transportation, don't have means of getting to those services. There are some setbacks in between there. So understanding those is very important. And when she'd give transportation to the youth that needed to get back and forth to their houses, youth were engaged, and that made a huge difference. And then how classes went on and on until at least, until the pandemic. So that's very important to know. From there, you can also

begin to explore if there are any alternatives to the services being offered that might meet a bit their needs, or what they're likely to engage in. The work with the young people is to understand from their perspective, what does the potential engagement look like? It might not be what you envision or hope, but might be what's going to work for them at this point in time. So all this is very important to consider. Thank you. I'll put off back to Jie.

- Jie: All right, folks, we're going to talk a little bit about leveraging, identifying supportive services. In the last webinar, we talked about developing and maintaining partnerships and the need to understand what services and resources exist in your community coupled with understanding the needs of young people in your community. In addition to PHAs and PCWAs, it's valuable to bring in other organizations to provide services, particularly those required for the FYI initiative. As a quick refresher, we'll remind you of the types of services required to be offered to FYI voucher holders, which include basic life skills, information, and counseling, counseling on compliance with the rental lease requirements, providing such assurance to owners of rental property as are reasonable and necessary to assist eligible youth, to rent a unit with a voucher, job preparation and attainment counseling, and last but not least educational and career advancement counseling. I'm going to pass it back to Suzan and April to talk about identifying partners.

- April: All right, so when identifying partners to provide services for FYI youth, there are some key questions you should be asking yourself. What do young people in your community need? What are the unique needs of the young person in front of you? What resources exist already within the community? What resources have been proven successful/effective with youth in your community? And what role can other youth play within the youth slice that you're trying to help? These questions will help make sure you are connecting with services that young people need and want, and are most likely to engage with. I'm going to pass it on to you, Suzan.

- Suzan: So as we were trying to connect the youth to the services and really leverage what existing in your community or in our communities here, there are more questions to consider which should help guide you and lead you to a better successful engagement of the young people in what you're offering. First off, what motivates the youth? What does the youth want? What are the future aspirations for the youth? Some youth would like to go into certain careers. You got to consider services that point to those careers. How can PCWs and PHAs bring in supportive services provider to directly engage the youth? Identify and address the access barriers that are creating the setbacks in the youth accessing the supportive services.

- Jie: All right, we've now reached the final section of the webinar. We're going to talk about how to incorporate youth in your program, design and development as well as implementation. I'll hand it over to Abby to start us off. Abby.

- Abby: Yeah, so, most of what we've discussed regarding youth engagement today has been related to engaging individuals you're working with in supportive services that will help them directly, but it's also important to zoom out of it and think about how you can engage young people in the development and implementation of programs. As with their personal lives, young people are more likely to buy into what you're offering, if they've been part of creating it and their experiences and perspectives are included. So one helpful tool that we'll look at today for



organizations to use, to think about how to engage young people in program development and implementation is this youth engagement blueprint, which was developed by the Child Welfare Capacity Building Center for States. This blueprint outlines four essential design elements for effective engagement. And we'll go through each one to help you think about how you can engage youth within your organization. So the first part is viewing youth as organizational assets. So this means really recognizing that the young people you provide services to are not merely beneficiaries, but if they're included in processes, they can actually add tremendous value and improvements to the work that you do. That's because they bring knowledge, skills, and insights based on lived experience to the policies, programs, and practices you're developing that can help increase buy-in, retention, and engagement. So I'm going to ask April to talk about a recent experience she had, where she was peer-reviewed as an organizational asset and the impact it's had on her and the organization's effort.

- April: So recently, Jefferson County was looking for a new Chafee worker since Alison Pierce was only Chafee worker in Jefferson County for many, many years. Like she's done worked with all the youth spontaneously for over the past, I don't know how many years, just a long time, like she's been very lonely in her work. So they finally got some funding to hire a new Chafee worker. So, you know, the process of hiring someone, you have to sit in and do interviews. I was asked to be like one of the interview people on a panel of interviewers to interview the new Chafee worker and help select the new Chafee worker. So I was viewed as an organizational asset, bringing in my youth knowledge of my personal experiences. I connect with most youth. We all have similar experiences, although the outcomes may be very different. I was able to bring in my knowledge of what we need as a youth, and interpret that to an individual coming into this work. It made me feel powerful to be honest with you. I mean, it was hard. I felt like I was really valued. I had my own set of interview questions I came up with and I got to sit in on, I think we did a total of eight interviews. And then after the last one, we had to sit down and do all the organizational scoring. And that was very hard. It was very useful to see that process and how you would do it. And I was very grateful to be part of that process because I was able to bring in my youth expertise of what a youth wants out of Chafee services and what they need, and then also what a Chafee worker should look like and what they should bring for the youth. So, yeah, I'm going to pass it back to Abby. I'll talk more about that here in a little bit.

- Suzan: Thank you, April. So the next element of the youth engagement blueprint is using science and technology effectively. It's important to apply current research-based knowledge of adolescent brain development, trauma-informed care, and other relevant areas to programs, practices, and policies. And using science and technology engages young people and increases the likelihood of providing healthy age-relevant experiences. One example of this is just creating safe ways for youth to provide feedback without fear of repercussions, but giving them the space to be honest and feel like their voice matters. The third element of the youth engagement blueprint moving on is having the right people within your organization. So it's important to have people that are accessible, connected to youth and eager to learn about and from young people. People within your organization should be trained appropriately and provided the support to work with young adults as equal partners. And I'm going to ask April to again, talk about how having someone in the child welfare organization like this has helped increase engagement of young people in decision-making.

- April: So once again, Alison, she got this news and they were like, "Oh man, you're going to hire a new Chafee worker?" Well, I'm going to be very persistent with my supervisor and declare that a youth should sit in on these interviews. So she asked her supervisor and brought it to her attention that she feels it would be very important and vital for the selection of the new Chafee worker to be viewed and interviewed by a youth of her own choosing because having that youth's knowledge of the Chafee system, and I'm going to say and her would make it very impactful and just a better, you would find a better suited person for the job with some input from a youth in her or her eyes. I mean, also just sitting in on these interviews, it was also very easy to, I don't know, to kind of determine who would work best with Alison and be able to share, once again, that power sharing thing, the program of Chafee, because Alison has been doing it alone for so long. So having the right people is very vital to the success of a program. So me being able to sit in on the interviews for the new Chafee worker made it, I dunno, it was easier for everyone to see different perspectives of how this individual would impact the program itself. Is this individual going to just help the program in the budget area, or is it going to be impactful for the youth? I'm just going to say it was a really hard decision. There was a lot to think about and come to consider when thinking about is this person right for this job? So once again, just having the right people was vital for the success of a program. And I was part of that decision-making and I was a valuable asset and still am. I was able to use my expertise to conclude a decision with the rest of my team members.

- Abby: Thank you, April. Great examples you're sharing. So the last element of the youth engagement blueprint is implementing flexible and innovative programs and practices. So we started this webinar talking about youth engagement as being about how you approach the work, rather than a series of tasks to check off a list. When you're developing and implementing programs, it's crucial to keep this in mind as well, and to think creatively and openly about how you include young people in decision-making. So this means being flexible and allowing young people to make mistakes both as they work with you on a programmatic level and in developing programs that give space for young people to make mistakes. So I will now pass it back over to Jie for our final poll question.

- Jie: All right, folks here is our final poll question of the day. What opportunities do you see to engage youth in developing your FYI program, where they have not been engaged yet? You should be able to see this poll question on mentee.com, same code. And I will go to the live poll results now. We'll take the next two to three minutes for folks to input your feedback here. And then we'll do a Q&A with the last five minutes remaining. All right, I want to give folks a couple of minutes to post your questions in the chat box for April and Suzan, while I'll leave the poll live, and you can take your time to input your feedback for the poll questions. You can feel free to hop back in the chat box to drop your questions if you have any for Suzan, April as was my colleague Abby. I have a question from Greg Williamson, April and Suzan, did you have other experiences in life prior to FYI where adults and systems came to you for opinions, guidance, or with options? And Greg send this to me. Probably, so what I'm going to do is I'll put it back out there to all of the attendees so you all can see the question he posed.

- April: So the question was, do we have any other life experience with like having opportunities or people asking us for input other than FYI?

- Jie: Right, prior to you all coming to FYI where adults and systems came to you for opinions, guidance, or with options? Or is FYI, the first time you were engaged in this manner?

- April: I personally have other life experience where my input was valued and or asked for other than FYI. There's a large variety of options I could give you there. I'm just a very social person. So I feel like I always give my opinion, even if sometimes it's not asked for, but it's always there. Especially in work, I think the biggest example would be when I worked at Hobby Lobby as a customer service manager, I implemented the new way to train a cashier, which made it a whole lot easier for the customer service manager to manage like eight cashiers at one time. So I made a new set of rules, I guess, for Hobby Lobby when I worked there. That was pretty cool.

- Jie: Yeah. Thank you, Greg, for the question. And he also had a followup question, which is what could schools or foster care systems have done better earlier?

- April: Will you repeat that Jie, I'm sorry, you're kind of cut out.

- Jie: Yeah. So Greg had a follow-up question that says, what could schools or foster care systems have done better earlier, I guess, in terms of engaging youth?

- Suzan: I'll comment on that. I think there's so many power structures that are kind of like preventing the youth to engage. There's so much bureaucracy that puts the youth out of the picture in the foster care system and all child welfare systems. Why? Because they see the youth or the child as only the benefactor, not as a contributor, or not as someone who has to be involved. So if they had done that earlier on, some things would have been better.

- April: If you approach each differently than just what, oh, this is just another youth on my caseload, I'm going to do what's in their best interest without having that level of trust, that communication, you're not going to get very far with youth engagement. Most youths' voice are not ever heard from their caseworker or GAL, unless they are very persistent. And being persistent is very difficult when you have people that are not already asking you, like how you feel, or how does this make you feel? Or is this what you want? Like, what do you want for your future? I don't think that was ever a question my caseworker asked me until six months into my case, and they're looking for longterm permanency option. So if you enter a case like child welfare system with youth, that you should always be asking for their input, don't just not ask because they're not already giving it to you if that makes sense.

- Jie: Thank you, April. We had a question from Lynn. What helped you come to this point for excellent sharing and presenting? I think our attendees are impressed with April and Suzan set up presentation today. So feel free to share you guys' experience of delivering content and talking to a group of people.

- April: Practice. Practice getting over the nervousness of what I have to say is not important or vital for other people's success. I think that was a big fear of mine before becoming a youth consultant with HUD, with Abby and Jie here, but they made me feel like what I had to say was valuable and important and that I could be successful in sharing my knowledge with other

people. So having that support and confidence in myself and within other people helped me today.

- Suzan: The thing is I think we've had a great deal of a great Chafee worker who has always taken us as stakeholders in this whole thing about FYI. And at this point she is, we have been empowered. I won't say she alone empowered us. So many people have empowered us, caseworkers. We feel empowered to the point that we want this to be better for everyone. We want this to be the same for every youth. So yeah, it's been a great empowerment deal coming from Jie as well believing in you and valuing your experience has involving your knowledge, yes.

- Jie: Thank you, thank you. I'm just now getting a lot of private messages thanking April and Suzan for sharing so much of your experience with everybody. I think our attendees have very much appreciated to hear from you all directly. Unfortunately, we have to cut this webinar short. Actually, we went over three minutes, so at this point I have to close it out to be considerate of folks' time here. But I welcome you all to join us for tomorrow's peer-to-peer learning at two o'clock. With this, I thank you for participating in today's webinar. We will send out a follow-up email shortly that will include a link for you to join tomorrow's conversation. We encourage you to reply to that email message if you can't make it tomorrow, but we'd like to have further clarification on what was covered today, we'll have any additional questions and comments. Again, this entire webinar series is being recorded and the recording is along with the copy of each presentation will be made available on HUD Exchange. If you have any questions pertaining to the FYI program guidelines and voucher administration, please direct them to [fyi@hud.gov](mailto:fyi@hud.gov). For additional information and resources, including sample MOUs and FAQ's, please visit their URL listed on this page here. Thank you again. And this will conclude today's session. We look forward to seeing you at the next session on November 16, where we will cover the topic of data analytics. Have a great rest of your day, everyone. Bye bye now.

- April: Thank you, everyone.

- Suzan: Bye, everybody.

- Jie: Bye.