



American Youth Policy Forum

Harnessing the Potential of Young Adults: How Programs Are Using Youth Voice, Education, and Workforce Development to Transform Systems

An AYPF Study Tour

October 8-10, 2019

Boston, Massachusetts and East Providence, Rhode Island

Nationally, there are 4.6 million young adults between the ages of 16-24 that are not in school or working. These outcomes are more troubling for young adults “aging out” of foster care and/or involved in the juvenile justice systems due to additional barriers. For example, incarcerated youth can face [systemic discrimination](#), as many employers and workforce development programs can perceive them as less reliable and workforce ready due to their past convictions. For young adults aging out of foster care, their unemployment rates can be as high as [69% compared to only about 10%](#) of young adults ages 16 to 24 who are not in foster care due to their lack of stable housing and other critical supports. Despite these numbers, three nationally recognized programs in Rhode Island and Massachusetts have found a way to successfully combine youth voice, education, and employment to create a new narrative for the young people they serve. The programs offer social enterprises, job training, case management, mentoring, and share a deep commitment to harnessing the potential of young adults.

The Study Tour will consist of multiple policy discussions, site visits, testimonies from young adults, and presentations from labor/workforce, child welfare, and juvenile justice leaders about the steps they are taking to coordinate systems and streamline services to achieve greater outcomes for youth. Additionally, we will discuss relevant federal legislation and programs that are supporting this work.

Our goals include:

- Highlighting three effective programs that are using education and workforce development as a key strategy for achieving success with young adults.
- Elevating youth voice and hearing directly from young adults about how their involvement in workforce and education programs have changed their trajectory.
- Identifying and including state government departments to highlight the importance of government systems partnering with programs to increase support for youth.
- Discussing how federal/state policies can be improved to better serve young adults involved in the foster care and juvenile justice systems.

Agenda

Tuesday, October 8th

1:00pm-3:00pm **Hotel Arrivals**
[Hyatt Regency Boston Harbor](#)
101 Harborside Drive
Boston, MA 02128

****Participants will arrive at the Boston Airport (BOS) by 1:00pm and take the Hyatt Regency Boston Harbor Shuttle to Hotel***

3:00pm-3:45pm **Welcome and Introductions**
Hyatt Regency - Aquitana Room (First Floor)
Betsy Brand, Executive Director, AYPF

3:45pm-4:00pm **The Road Ahead: Overview of Agenda, Program Book and What to Expect**
Samaura Stone, Senior Director, AYPF
Maria Duarte, Policy Associate, AYPF

4:00pm-4:20pm **Drive to Site #1, Artists for Humanity via charter bus.**

[Artists for Humanity](#)
100 W 2nd St., Boston MA, 02127

Site Description:

Artists For Humanity (AFH) is one of the largest employers of youth in the City of Boston, with 250 under-resourced teens employed as artists and designers each year during critical out-of-school hours. During the summer, the teen artists work 25 hours per week and 9 hours per week during the school year. Nearly 83% of their youth employees are from low-income diverse families. Moreover, 54% live in the Boston neighborhoods most beset with violence, and 44% live in single-parent households. These factors place their youth at higher risk for failing or dropping out of school and for significantly decreased employability. AFH counteracts the risks facing young people by giving youth a job; enrichment that comes from the arts and cultural experiences; a safe place to go with their peers after school; an opportunity to learn and conduct business in the innovation economy; and essential life skills.

4:20pm-5:00pm **Artists for Humanity (AFH) Tour**

Richard Frank, Marketing Director, AFH

Participants will have the opportunity to tour AFH's five creative studios and talk with teen artists and designers.

5:00pm-6:00pm

Youth Guided Art Activity

An important part of the study tour and learning experience is for participants to interact with youth as much as possible. We'll be visiting AFH during an evening when youth artists will be working on various art projects throughout the studio. Participants will have the opportunity to experience first-hand how AFH youth artists work with clients and attain workforce skills. They will showcase their knowledge by leading our group in a very brief and fun art activity.

6:15pm-7:30pm

Dinner at Worden Hall

22 West Broadway, Boston, MA 02127

7:30pm-8:15pm

From the Field: Program Sneak Peeks

- Bernadette Tavares, Program Coordinator, Foster Forward
- Geoff Foster, Director of Organizing and Policymaker, UTEC

Staff from Foster Forward and UTEC will provide brief overviews about their programs, populations served, and what we can expect to see during tomorrow's visits.

Wednesday, October 9th

7:30am-8:30am

Breakfast Available

Hyatt Regency - Aquitana Room

8:30am-9:30am

Walking in Their Shoes: Ice Breakers and Reflections

In preparation for a full day of site visits and engaging with young people, participants will gain more context around the barriers that young adults in the programs face in their pursuit of workforce and education opportunities.

9:30am-10:30am

Drive to Site #2, (From Boston, MA to Lowell, MA)

UTEC

35 Warren St., Lowell, MA 01852

Site Description:

UTEC's mission is to ignite and nurture the ambition of its most disconnected young people to trade violence and poverty for social and economic success. UTEC offers several programs and opportunities for

young adults, including transitional coaching, workforce development training through social enterprises, GED classes and a dual-enrollment program to earn college credits. In 2018, UTEC served 148 young adults in their intensive enrollment program, and nearly a total of 600. Of enrolled young adults, 94% had a criminal record; 66% lacked a high school credential; and 52% were expecting/parenting. As a result of working with UTEC, 97% had no new convictions or technical violations; 88% had no new arrests or technical violations; and 63% received an industry-recognized certification.

10:30am-10:40am

Welcome to UTEC (Main Building)

Geoff Foster, Director of Organizing and Policymaking, UTEC

Geoff will provide participants with an overview of the various programs at UTEC that young adults can participate in and their recruitment process to find young people with prior involvement in the juvenile justice system. Additionally, participants will be provided with a brief history of the organization, their program model, and success rates.

10:40am-11:00am

Eliminating Barriers: 2Gen Early Childhood Education Center Site Visit

More than a third of UTEC's young adults are also young parents and finding affordable, high-quality child care is often a major barrier to seeking employment and education opportunities. In 2017, UTEC opened an onsite, UTEC-operated early childhood education center to help young families break the cycle of poverty. With a child-centered, social-emotional based curriculum, their 2Gen Center is inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy that encourages children to lead their own learning. With experienced, educated teachers supporting independence and self-regulation, children at the 2Gen Center are building on the same Core Competencies that their parents are working on next door.

11:00am-11:50am

Youth in Action: UTEC's Food Manufacturing, Café, and Woodwork Social Enterprises Tour

UTEC's social enterprises offer young adults paid work experience to develop the job and life skills required to excel in any workplace. Their social enterprises achieve a triple bottom line by: 1) facilitating positive youth development, along with paid work experience; 2) generating earned revenue to support their mission; and 3) supporting the communities' economic development.

11:50am-12:30pm

Shifting Gears: How UTEC's Work is Shaping Policies and Programs

- Peter J. Koutoujian, Sheriff, Middlesex County Sheriff's Office
- Edward Donlan, Commissioner of Probation, Massachusetts Department of Probation

The Middlesex County Sheriff's Office and Department of Probation will join us to discuss two new programs that UTEC is implementing to connect young adults with opportunities and reduce recidivism rates. Program descriptions below:

Young Adult Unit: Working with the Vera Institute of Justice and UTEC, the Middlesex Sheriff's Office created a program for young adults with histories of incarceration, to operate a unit for individuals ages 18 to 24. The Middlesex Sheriff's Office is the first local jurisdiction in the nation to create such a specialized unit. UTEC will be able to integrate their education, job training, and counseling services to support young adults before they are released. This shift will help to improve opportunities for success, and ultimately reduce recidivism among young adults.

Transitional Youth Early Intervention Probation Pilot: The Office of the Commissioner of Probation, the Trial Court, and UTEC will work together to develop strategies to reduce recidivism among young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 who are at the highest risk of reoffending. Participation in the pilot program may occur as a court-ordered condition of probation, as an intermediate sanction prior to incarceration, or as a voluntary referral for services by a probation officer. Participants will receive specialized recidivism-reduction programming as well as education and employment services.

12:30pm-1:00pm

A Youth's Perspective: Why This Work Matters

Participants will have the opportunity to hear from several young adults about their experiences and which key elements of UTEC's programs have been the most meaningful to them.

1:00pm-2:00pm

Drive to Site #3, (From Boston, MA to Pawtucket, RI)

Foster Forward

50 Ann Mary St.,
Pawtucket, RI 02860

Site Description:

Foster Forward is a nationally and locally recognized leader committed to empowering lives impacted by foster care. In Rhode Island, the youth unemployment rate is 20%, it is more than double at 52% for youth who have experienced foster care. Works Wonders, a program of Foster Forward was originally started as a research initiative funded through a Children's Bureau grant to research ways to help Rhode Island's foster

youth who have aged out of or are about to age out of state care succeed in the workplace. About 60% of youth in the Works Wonders program did not have previous work experience. The program has grown into an evidence-supported career development and employment engagement program that provides 8-10 hours of skills-based training, 12 weeks of one-on-one career coaching, and paid work-based learning opportunities.

2:00pm-2:10pm

Welcome to Foster Forward

Lisa Guillette, Executive Director, Foster Forward

2:10pm-2:30pm

The Power of Community: Foster Forward’s Storefront Tour

As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” This sentiment rings true especially for youth and families involved in the foster care system. Foster Forward’s Storefront is an amazing space where those impacted by foster care in Rhode Island may gather for activities and shop for donated clothes, toys, and other household needs. Youth, foster parents, and others can shop for free items during designated days and times. We’ll make a brief stop to check out the space and hear about how the storefront began and its impact on those involved in the foster care system.

2:30pm-2:45pm

Drive to 55 S. Brow St., Providence, RI (FF’s Main Location)

2:45pm-3:00pm

Where the Magic Happens: Foster Forward’s Main Building Tour

Foster Forward runs several programs focused on providing critical supports to older foster youth. These programs include: Works Wonders; Youth Establishing Self-Sufficiency (YESS) Aftercare Services through the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF); Aspiring Young Leaders; Real Connections Mentoring; and ASPIRE, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and IDA matched savings account. We will chat briefly with program staff as we take a quick tour of their building.

3:00pm-3:45pm

Youth In Transition: The State’s New Legislation to Extend Foster Care Services to Age 21

- Senator Louis DiPalma, District 12, Rhode Island General Assembly
- Blanca Goetz, Foster Forward Participant
- Hailey Cote-Grenon, Foster Forward Participant
- Victoria Ferrara, Director of Programs, Foster Forward (Moderator)

Last year, Rhode Island passed legislation that would provide eligible 18-year-old youth in foster care with the option to stay in foster care and request services, such as housing assistance and job training. This policy

existed in Rhode Island, until it was eliminated in 2007 due to a budget shortfall. Shortly after, the 2008 federal *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act* allowed states to extend foster care to 21 with federal reimbursement through the Social Security's Act for foster care. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, there are now approximately 25 states and the District of Columbia that have enacted legislation to extend foster care beyond age 18. Youth remaining in foster care after 18 doubled their odds of working or completing high school at 19 and are twice as likely to complete one year of college.

3:45pm-4:10pm

Using a Systems Approach to Implement Change: How Foster Forward Leveraged their Partnerships with the Department of Labor, Providence Housing Authority, and DCYF.

- Pauline Abetti, Director of Career Pathways, Rhode Island Department of Labor
- Lisa Guillette, Executive Director, Foster Forward

Aligning systems continues to be one of the greatest priorities and challenges for state, federal, and nonprofit leaders serving young adults involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Many organizations and policymakers struggle to engage with labor and housing stakeholders, despite how critical their involvement is with the youth populations. We will learn about how Foster Forward was able to skillfully develop partnerships with housing and labor to strengthen their programming for youth transitioning out of foster care.

4:10pm-4:45pm

What Makes Foster Forward Different?

Several young adults from Foster Forward's programs will talk about their experiences and which key elements of Foster Forward programs have been the most meaningful to them.

4:45pm-6:30pm

Drive via charter bus from East Providence back to Hyatt Regency Boston

6:30pm

Dinner on Your Own

Thursday, October 10, 2019

***Please check out of your hotel rooms by Noon. You can store luggage in the meeting room.**

7:30am-8:45am

Breakfast Available
Aquitana Room

8:45am-9:15am	<p>Program Reflections</p> <p>We will open the day with brief reflections from our program visits and discuss a few of the key takeaways.</p>
9:15am-10:30am	<p>Putting It All Together: How Do We Create Stronger Policies Using the Voices of Young Adults Involved in the Foster Care and Juvenile Justice Systems?</p> <p>After a day of program visits and conversations, the group will be divided to reflect upon several questions pertaining to creating or improving state and federal policies. The questions will be guided by policy recommendations from youth.</p>
10:30am-11:05am	<p>Group Share Out</p> <p>The full group will reconvene to discuss the various themes that emerged within their groups.</p>
11:05am-11:15am	<p>Break</p>
11:15am-12:30pm	<p>The Path Forward: Reforming our Policies to Support Youth (Closing Discussion)</p> <p>There is a strong momentum and incentive to create policies for young adults that are focused on prevention, youth development models, holistic family supports, and encompass restorative justice approaches. The Family First Prevention Services Act, Foster Youth to Independence Housing Initiative through HUD, the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act (JJDP A) and the Cross-Over Youth Practice Model, as well as other state efforts are several examples of new or expanded approaches to serving youth. We will end our day on a positive note, by highlighting and discussing many of the new and exciting policies and initiatives at the federal, state, and local level.</p>
12:30pm-1:00	<p>Lunch</p>
1:00-1:30pm	<p>What Are You Taking with You? Closing Activity</p> <p>Participants will complete a final reflection about their key takeaways and “aha” moments from the trip.</p>
1:30pm	<p>Adjourn</p> <p><i>*Shuttles from the hotel to the airport will be available and scheduled based on participant’s departure times.</i></p>