



ONE UNITED VOICE FOR CHANGE

# 2019 Youth Leadership Summit Report

The Mockingbird Society's 14th Annual Youth Leadership Summit brought together youth leaders from each of Mockingbird's seven Chapters in Washington state to present their proposals to transform foster care and end youth homelessness statewide.





## Youth-Created Solutions

This year, all Chapters were encouraged to develop a specific topic around how race, gender, disability status, and other socioeconomic identities impacted their experiences.

Chapter Leaders and Engagement Coordinators worked closely with the Public Policy and Advocacy team to pull data, investigate potential policy proposals, and connect with experts on their topics.

Day

1

Day one included a Systems Reform Workshop, during which Chapter members practiced presenting their proposals in front of policy experts in child welfare and/or youth homelessness, Mockingbird staff and alumni, and other community partners who each provided the young people with insightful feedback.

Day

2

On day two, young people took center stage to present their proposals to the Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care and the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs Advisory Committee, plus an audience of invited community partners and policy makers.





## OLYMPIA CHAPTER

### **Topic: Revised vulnerability assessment tools for young persons experiencing homelessness that account for equity, disability, and other factors**

The Olympia Chapter proposes that the Department of Commerce select or create a vulnerability index assessment tool designed for youth, which equitably and accurately assesses vulnerability for young people experiencing homelessness. Vulnerability assessment tools are used to determine an individual’s vulnerability, and to prioritize the most vulnerable people

for housing resources. Currently, agencies in Washington state use different tools to assess vulnerability for young people. The assessments do not often include key factors that contribute to youth and young adult homelessness including disability, domestic violence, foster care history, and other categories.



## YAKIMA CHAPTER

The Yakima Chapter proposes that LGBTQ+ training be mandatory for all foster care parents. Currently, LGBTQ+ youth in foster care face a variety of challenges at increased rates compared to their peers, such as entering care, placement instability, and mental health challenges. The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being found that 19.6% of LGBTQ+ foster youth were moved from their first foster placement at the request of their caregiver compared to only 8.6% of heterosexual youth.

This is problematic on its face. Further, the Washington Administrative Code 388-148-1520 provides that foster parents must demonstrate understanding, ability, physical health and emotional stability to meet the physical, mental, emotional, cultural and social needs of children in their care. They must also have the ability to provide children with a nurturing, respectful and supportive environment. So, it is a serious problem if LGBTQ+ foster youth are not receiving the same level of care as their peers.

### **Topic: Mandatory LGBTQ+ training for anyone seeking to obtain a license to be a foster parent**



## SEATTLE CHAPTER

**Topic: Culturally responsive and inclusive in-person core-curriculum training for all people supporting youth in foster care**

The Seattle Chapter proposes that Washington state require all people that support youth in foster care and extended foster care receive a comprehensive core-curriculum and ongoing training. This would include social workers, foster parents, therapists contracted by the state, and group home and shelter staff. These trainings would be in-person, involve young people in their creation and review, and cover cultural responsiveness, crisis deescalation, trauma-informed disciplinary practices, trauma-informed care, casefile interpretation, and acceptance of beliefs.



## EVERETT CHAPTER

**Topic: Elevate youth voice in foster care case planning documents**

Although DCYF requires social workers to include youth voice in creating permanency plans, it does not include their voice in placement referral. But it should. Not doing so prevents young people from having a say about their potential homes and families. The Everett Chapter proposes that young people should be able to see their placement referral forms and have the opportunity to tell their own stories for possible foster parents to see, in the form of a written statement. The written statement provided by young people should be placed at the beginning of their referral form, so potential foster parents can get to know who they are before learning further information.

## YOUTH ADVOCATES ENDING HOMELESSNESS CHAPTER

**Topic: Expansion of low-barrier, master lease programs for youth experiencing homelessness**



People of color and those who are LGBTQ+ are more likely to be evicted and have a harder time getting a lease. Master lease programs for young people could help address these inequities. However, master lease programs for young people experiencing homelessness are not available statewide and are limited to a small number of agencies. Additionally, in the Chapter's experience, young people are not aware of existing master lease programs. The YAEH Chapter proposes to expand master lease programs for young people experiencing homelessness across the state. All programs under master lease will be low barrier, meaning that no one is turned away from the program due to substance use, poor or non-existent credit, and/or criminal history.



## TACOMA CHAPTER

### Topic: Youth-informed evaluations of trainings for all shelter staff funded by the Office of Homeless Youth

In many Tacoma Chapter members' experiences, shelter staff are not consistently trained to support young people of color, LGBTQ+ young people, those with disabilities, or youth experiencing mental health crises. To address these issues, the Tacoma Chapter proposes that the Office of Homeless Youth conduct youth-informed evaluations

of training for shelter staff, including focus groups, to ensure that staff are utilizing what they have learned. Tacoma also proposes that, before starting their jobs, all Young Adult Shelter staff receive comprehensive training, including racial equity, Mental Health First Aid, young adult development, care for disabilities, and trauma-informed care.



Youth experiencing homelessness (ages 13-17) have a more difficult time obtaining Washington state Identical cards than their peers in foster care. Without an Identical card, youth cannot successfully transition into adulthood. Not having an Identical card creates barriers for youth in applying for jobs, getting into housing, and pursuing higher education. Youth without an Identical card are also unable to provide identification to law enforcement when asked. In addition, youth who do

not have an Identical card will face barriers in obtaining the Enhanced Identification Card which will be required to board an airplane or enter federal buildings starting in October of 2020. The Spokane Chapter proposes that McKinney-Vento liaisons or a designated state agency be able to verify identity for youth who are homeless in the process of obtaining a state ID, so that they will more easily be able to obtain an Identical card.

## SPOKANE CHAPTER

### Topic: Access to Identical cards for youth experiencing homelessness





## 2019 Awards

### 2019 JIM THEOFELIS ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

The Jim Theofelis Advocate of the Year award recognizes Mockingbird Youth Network and Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness participants who demonstrate exemplary leadership and dedication to advocacy and to The Mockingbird Society. The winner of this year's award, MJ Negrón, will have the opportunity to shadow a legislator in Olympia during the following legislative session.



**Award winner MJ Negrón with Jim Theofelis, founder of The Mockingbird Society**



**MJ embodies a strong commitment to transform the foster care system and end youth homelessness."**



**Award winner Paula Carvalho**

### 2019 ACE AWARD

Paula Carvalho, the winner of this year's Ace Award, did incredible work with The Mockingbird Society as the Director of Youth Programs. The Ace Award celebrates those who have made a significant impact in the lives of young people. Paula is moving on to the Raikes Foundation as their new Youth Homelessness Program Officer, where she will work on addressing youth and young adult homelessness in King County and across the nation.



**Every day at Mockingbird, Paula embodied her belief that 'the power of our young people and families has and always will be the backbone of this agency.'"**

# Impact on Youth and Young Adults

## QUOTES FROM SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

During Summit I learned...

"That being true to yourself is okay."

During Summit I learned...

"That it seems like these departments we spoke to already have been thinking about a lot of our topics. I think between Mockingbird and them we can really improve these systems quickly and easily."

My favorite moment at Summit was...

"Realizing that there are important and powerful adults who really want to listen and really help us make actual change."

During Summit I learned...

"How to feel empowered by empowering future generations."

"I had an opportunity to preview each Chapter's proposal, and I was extremely impressed by the thoughtfulness and insights that went into each one."

Katara Jordan, Chair of the Office of Homeless Youth Advisory Committee

During Summit I learned...

"That all of our topics are connected and they are all supported by the others."

My favorite moment at Summit was...

"Working collectively with other members to advocate for change."

"Not only have you cared about youth who are involved in the systems, but you are trying to move the needle for all youth in this state."

Jody Becker, Deputy Director for the Department of Children, Youth and Families

During Summit I learned...

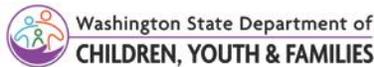
"How my voice can make a difference."





## Special Thanks

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