

YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL HANDBOOK

State and Regional Youth Advisory Councils

INTRODUCTION

The Youth Advisory Councils are designed to empower youth by having an organized structure for youth to provide advice and recommendations concerning the Child Welfare system in Kansas and on a National level.

The Youth Councils are organized by two levels of council participation. Each Child Welfare Community Based Service Provider (CWCBS) region hosts a Regional Youth Advisory Council (RYAC). Each RYAC selects up to three peers from their RYAC to serve on the Kansas Youth Advisory Council (KYAC). The KYAC serves as the state level council.

The term Service Provider will be used in place of CWCBS Provider(s) throughout the remainder of this document. RYAC and KYAC will also be used to distinguish between the Regional and State Councils.

KYAC MISSION STATEMENT

The KYAC mission is to unite foster youth in an empowering way and enable them to speak for themselves concerning issues that affect them directly, while obtaining the life and leadership skills that will be advantageous to each later in life.

COUNCIL REPRESENTATION

Each of the five Service Providers shall provide youth representation for their respective region. The Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) Regional Independent Living Coordinator from each of the five SRS regions shall also have youth representation on the RYAC's. Youth representation on the RYAC's can include an unlimited number of youth who are residing in the respective region.

Each RYAC shall have at least one adult advisor for each agency that is represented by youth on the council. This will include each of the Service Providers and SRS. Each Service Provider and SRS Region shall designate an RYAC advisor and provide contact information to the State Independent Living Coordinator with SRS. Each RYAC shall also have an adult advisor to the KYAC. This advisor may be the same as the RYAC designated advisor or another adult involved with the RYAC.

Each RYAC shall select up to three youth members to represent their council on the Kansas Youth Advisory Council (KYAC). In addition, an alternate may also be selected. If a KYAC

representative is unable to fulfill his/her one year term, the alternate may fulfill the remainder of the term.

Youth who are residing in a region different from the region where their Service Provider is located shall be given opportunity to participate on councils. Coordination between Service Provider and placement shall occur in order to provide this opportunity to all youth.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP

- 15 –21 years of age;
- Currently or were in foster care for any length of time on or after 15th birthday;
- Good attendance record for activities such as life skills/independent living classes, meetings, school, work or other community activities.
- School and/or work performance is at least satisfactory. This will be based on direction from Case Manager/Social Worker, Resource Parent or guardian. Council participation shall not negatively impact school and/or work performance.

ADDITIONAL MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENT FOR KYAC

- The KYAC requires a minimum of a one year commitment from the applicant. This commitment includes a willingness to participate in meetings and other scheduled events.

KYAC MEMBERSHIP SELECTION

Representatives to the KYAC are selected by their peers from their RYAC. Each candidate will complete an Application and Participation Agreement (Appendix 7C). The application and agreement form shall be completed and turned in to KYAC advisor for your region. KYAC Advisors for each Service Provider and SRS Region shall provide the State Independent Living Coordinator a copy of the Application and Participation Agreement (Appendix 7C).

GUIDELINES FOR RYAC's

- Each member is responsible for attendance at meetings and other events as scheduled by the respective council and advisor(s). If unable to attend the scheduled meeting or event, the council member shall notify his/her advisor at least two days in advance;
- RYAC members shall participate and follow all rules of the meeting and/or event;
- RYAC members shall be role models for all youth in care and shall act as leaders when participating in any meeting or event;
- Arrange with your RYAC adult advisor all needs for travel and accommodations for meetings and events.

GUIDELINES FOR KYAC

- Each member is responsible for attendance at meetings and other events as scheduled by the KYAC and advisor(s). If unable to attend the scheduled meeting or event, the council member shall notify his/her advisor at least two days in advance;

- KYAC members shall participate and follow all rules of the meeting and/or event;
- KYAC members shall be role models for all youth in care and shall act as leaders when participating in any meeting or event;
- If a KYAC member misses three or more unexcused meetings in a one year period, the KYAC and advisors will make a recommendation to the council as a whole either possible dismissal from the KYAC, or a probationary period, depending upon the reason(s) for the absences;
- Excused absences include school, work, family commitment and other reasons determined to be of important value by the KYAC member and their advisor;
- If members leave the KYAC before their term is up, they are requested to submit a formal letter of resignation to the KYAC and signed by their advisor;
- Arrange with your KYAC adult advisor all needs for travel and accommodations for meetings and events.

GUIDELINES FOR ADULT ADVISORS/CHAPERONES

- An advisor or designated chaperone is required at all meetings and/or events scheduled by the councils and advisors;
- Advisor or designated chaperone is responsible to advise their youth on all rules and expected conduct for the meeting or event;
- Any overnight travel will require the adult advisor or designated chaperone be in attendance if a council member under the age of 21 is participating from your region;
- Advisor or designated chaperone is responsible to advise the youth on all travel and lodging policies;
- Advisor or designated chaperone shall assume responsibility for the youth they are accompanying at any meeting or event. This includes any disciplinary action that is required.
- Provide transportation accommodations or arrangements for all council members to attend scheduled meetings and events. If a council member is under the responsibility of a Service Provider, the Service Provider is responsible for providing and/or arranging all transportation needs. If a council member is no longer served by the Service Provider, SRS Region IL Coordinator/SRS Region Council Advisor shall make arrangements to accommodate transportation needs of the council member. Transportation and/or mileage to scheduled meetings and events for council members served by SRS may be reimbursed with approval through SRS Central Office, State Independent Living Coordinator;
- All advisors for the Service Providers and SRS shall communicate and work together regarding all aspects of the RYAC's and KYAC.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

RYAC's may elect officers for their council. If RYAC's choose to elect officers, the term for an elected RYAC position shall be for one year and shall follow all appropriate guidelines set out by the individual RYAC and this handbook. Each RYAC may determine what officer positions are held on their respective RYAC. If an officer does not fulfill the one year position, the council may fill the position as appropriate.

KYAC officer elections are held at the Strategic Planning Conference of each year. Elected positions shall be for one year and shall follow all appropriate guidelines set out by the KYAC and this handbook. If an officer does not fulfill the one year position, the council may fill the position as appropriate.

Suggested officers for use by the councils are Chair, Co-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Historian. Some suggested expectations and duties for the officer positions are as follows:

Chair and Co-Chair Expectations:

- Positive role model
- Leadership abilities
- Open minded
- Responsible
- Accountable
- Communication skills

Chair Duties:

- Lead meetings
- Calls for votes
- Act as liaison to other organizations

Secretary Expectations:

- Positive role model
- Leadership abilities
- Open minded
- Responsible
- Accountable
- Ability and willingness to take minutes

Secretary Duties:

- Takes attendance
- Takes minutes for all meetings
- Prepares agenda in consultation with Chair and/or Co-Chair and provides to State IL Coordinator or designee two weeks prior to next schedule meeting
- Provides typed minutes to State IL Coordinator or designee

Historian Expectations:

- Positive role model
- Leadership abilities
- Open minded
- Responsible
- Accountable
- Creative

Historian Duties:

- Save pictures and articles relating to the council for a scrapbook
- Maintain council scrapbook with assistance from State IL Coordinator or designee.

Treasurer Qualifications (Expectations):

- Positive role model
- Leadership abilities
- Open minded
- Responsible
- Accountable
- Ability to balance a checkbook or willingness to learn

Treasurer Duties:

- Review monthly checking account statement
- Make recommendations to council concerning finances

KYAC ALUMNI

Current KYAC members who turn 21 years of age while serving on the KYAC are encouraged to continue to participate as an alumni member of the KYAC. Alumni members may continue to serve on the KYAC for a length of time determined in consultation by the Alumni member and State Independent Living Coordinator. The alumni member must have served at the state level for a minimum of one year. Alumni member must be in good standing with the KYAC guidelines to be eligible to continue to serve on the council. Alumni membership to the KYAC will allow members to continue to provide leadership and guidance to the KYAC and participate in all scheduled meetings and events. KYAC alumni will report directly to the State Independent Living Coordinator or designee for all arrangements concerning travel, participation, etc.

If you are interested in participating or learning more about the youth councils please contact your Case Manager/Social Worker or the State Independent Living Coordinator at 785-296-4653.

This handbook was created in partnership between the KYAC and Adult Advisors.