

Foster Care as a Support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents

Learning From Stories of ‘Displacement’

I am part of a youth voice movement in Florida, called One Voice IMPAACT (OVI). OVI seeks to harness authentic youth voice, create space for youth and young adults with lived experience to work alongside system leaders to find solutions to local issues, and provide a platform for statewide collaboration.

Through OVI I had the opportunity to co-create and co-present a statewide webinar with Dr. Peter Pecora from Casey Family Programs. The webinar “The Value of Youth Voice in Placement Stability” gave me a chance to share my foster care placement transition story and provide recommendations on how listening to youth in care can help maintain placement stability.

I entered foster care at age 16 and went to live with a family friend. I thought all was good, but the family I was with needed financial assistance to care for me. My case manager kept telling them that resources were coming. Then, one day I got a call from my case manager who told me to pack up because I was moving in an hour. She took me to a different foster home.

I listened to the foster parent and case manager talk about me like I wasn't there. It felt like a transaction not like someone welcoming me into their home. It left me shaking and crying. I was moved a third time into another foster home. This was a new foster parent who did not seem to have much training. She had trouble balancing caring for her biological child and a foster child. She made me feel subhuman. I share my stories of displacement with the hope that no other child will have the same experience.

As youth leaders, we listened to other youth share their transition stories and below are their recommendations to support placement stability.

To reduce placement moves, youth recommend that during monthly visits, case managers ask the questions on the exit interview in a private place. This would allow youth to raise issues that could be resolved rather than blowing up.

To create a smooth transition, youth should be notified when a 30-day notice for placement change has been submitted. As youth, we need this time to process our feelings, prepare to leave, and if possible, resolve issues to maintain the placement.

Youth recommended that if a stability staffing is held regarding our placement, that youth have a seat at the table. Youth recommended that efforts are made to keep our therapist during and after the move and to stay in the same school. Lastly, youth asked to have more time to complete exit interviews and



that we are provided information about how our responses will be used to improve foster and group home placements.

More information about One Voice IMPAACT is available on its [website](#).



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