

# 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 Case Management Provider (CWCMP) region hosts a Regional Youth Advisory Council (RYAC). Each RYAC selects up to five peers from their RYAC to serve on the Kansas Youth Advisory Council (KYAC). In addition, up to four youth representing the tribes may serve in the East Region. The KYAC serves as the state level council.

The terms RYAC and KYAC will be used to distinguish between the Regional and State Councils.

### **KYAC MISSION STATEMENT**

The KYAC mission is to unite youth in care 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 CWCMP shall provide youth representation for their respective region's RYAC. The Department for Children and Families (DCF) Regional Independent Living Coordinator from each DCF region shall provide youth representation on the RYAC's. The tribes may provide youth to participate in 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 CWCMP, DCF, and the tribes. The RYAC advisor designated by each CWCMP, tribe, and DCF Region shall provide contact information to the State Independent Living Coordinator with DCF. 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 five youth members to represent their council on the Kansas Youth Advisory Council (KYAC). The East Region may select up to four additional youth to represent the tribes. 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 CWCMP is located shall be given opportunity to participate on councils. Coordination between the CWCMP and placement shall occur in order to provide this opportunity to all youth.

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP**

- 15 - 20 years of age;
- Is currently in care or was in care for any length of time on or after 15<sup>th</sup> 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, Foster Parent or guardian. Council participation shall not negatively impact school and/or work performance.
- Participates or has participated in self-sufficiency services.
- Must be a current Kansas resident.

### **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 7B). The application and agreement form shall be completed and turned in to KYAC advisor for the youth's region. The KYAC advisor shall make the final decision of the youth's membership after consulting with the youth's case manager and, if necessary, their placement. KYAC Advisors for each CWCMP and DCF Region shall provide the State Independent Living Coordinator and the KYAC State Advisor a copy of the completed Application and Participation Agreement (Appendix 7B).

### **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 ten 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;
- All needs for travel and accommodations for meetings and events shall be arranged by the youth with their RYAC adult advisor.

## **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 ten 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 two 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;
- Youth shall arrange with their KYAC advisor all needs for travel and accommodations for meetings and events at least ten days in advance.

## **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 18 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.
- Transportation accommodations or arrangements shall be made by adult advisors for all council members to attend scheduled meetings and events. The CWCMP is responsible for providing and/or arranging all transportation needs for youth under their care. If a council member is no longer served by the CWCMP, the DCF Region IL Coordinator/DCF Region Council Advisor where the youth resides 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 DCF may be reimbursed with approval through DCF Administration, State Independent Living Coordinator. An updated IRS W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification form shall be completed if there is a change of address;
- All advisors for CWCMP, DCF, and the tribes 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 held for not more than two years 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.

To run for the president or vice-president position, a member must serve on the state council for at least six months prior to the elections.

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

### **President and Vice-President Expectations:**

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

### **President and Vice-President 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 President and/or Vice-President 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 may 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 or KYAC State Advisor.

The alumni member must have served as an active member of KYAC for a minimum of one year. The alumni member must be in good standing with the KYAC guidelines to be eligible to continue to participate in 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 members may represent the Council at events upon approval from the KYAC State Advisor or State Independent Living Coordinator.

KYAC alumni members contribute to the Council by:

- helping increase the effectiveness and credibility of KYAC through recruitment of and outreach to youth in care;
- representing KYAC in a positive manner to areas outside of the scope of the Council's activities such as college, civic groups, or church;
- serve as positive role models to KYAC members, helping them develop strengths and skills to become officers, leaders and effective advocates for youth in care.
- through coordination with the State Independent Living Coordinator or KYAC State Advisor and the youth's worker, serve as mentor to individual KYAC members.

KYAC alumni will report directly to the State Independent Living Coordinator or designee for all arrangements concerning travel, participation, etc.

Youth who are interested in participating or learning more about the youth councils should contact their 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.

