



News Release

33 Whitney Avenue
New Haven, CT 06510
Voice: 203-498-4240
Fax: 203-498-4242
www.ctvoices.org

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Contact: Roger Senserrich
Communications Director
203-498-4240 x117
rsenserrich@ctvoices.org

Foster Youth Share Their Stories at the Capitol of a Life Moving Between Homes, Seeking Stability

HARTFORD – On average, Connecticut children and youth in foster care move to a new placement 2.9 times every 1,000 days—a little more than once per year. This past Tuesday, several foster youths shared their stories at the “Youth at the Capitol Day” in the Legislative Office Building, discussing how these constant moves and changes impacted their lives. The event, organized by Connecticut Voices for Children, focused on how placement changes affect the development and well-being of children and youth in state care, and possible policy solutions to minimize the ensuring upheaval.

The discussion involved panels of foster youth, Department of Children and Families officials, lawmakers, advocates, and researchers offering their perspective on the impact and of new placements. “Placement changes you as a person,” said Jayvon Vereen, age 18, a foster youth on one of the panels. “You have to force yourself to adapt to the new home and sometimes become a person you’re not, just so you don’t have to move again.”

The youths pointed out that uncertainty often plays a critical role in their experience with placement changes, especially if they receive little to no advance notice before a move. Noah Barnett, age 17, who has been involved with DCF for about five years, quoted the novel *Frankenstein* to describe the importance of preparing youth for transitions: “Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change.”

Effective and constant communication between foster children, social workers, and foster families plays a key role, as well as providing support structures and services for foster parents before and during a placement.

“We need to do a better job at preparing foster parents so that youth can be who they are without fear of being rejected by their foster families,” says Joette Katz, Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families, alluding to the need to find families that will welcome a child into their lives forever. “State government should not be raising children: our children need permanency.”

Stephanie Luczak and Nicole Updegrove, researchers at Connecticut Voices for Children, stressed that although Connecticut is performing well at minimizing placement changes compared with other states, there is considerable room for improvement in communication, and giving youth a stronger voice.

“At the end of the day, it’s these young people who have grown up in the foster care system who have critical insights about how to fix that system,” says Updegrove. “We need to make sure that the experiences youth are having when they’re moved are better recorded and tracked so that it’s clear what parts of the process need to be improved.”

About Connecticut Voices for Children: Connecticut Voices for Children is a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. In furtherance of its mission, Connecticut Voices for Children produces high-quality research and analysis, promotes citizen education, advocates for policy change at the state and local level, and works to develop the next generation of leaders.