



National Edition 9

Our Voices & Experiences: Make the Difference!

June Edition 2023

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June is here, and we're ready to talk the talk and walk the walk when it comes to supporting our Community. And what better way to do that than by exploring the amazing resources for pride month and learning about great ways to share and express our voices and lived experiences with the release of two reports. So, let's stroll down the virtual halls of Voice of Foster Care and see what we can learn, share, and apply to our lives and communities. After all, talking the talk is great, but walking the walk is what truly creates change.

Here's to a fantastic June filled with learning, growth, and advocacy!

Your Voice Matters!



Over two years and more than 6,000 voices recorded, you completed we are proud to have released last month our second annual *Voice of the Foster Care Community* report. This report builds on the Voices Report 2022 and tells the real story of foster care from Youth in Foster Care, Caregivers, and Frontline workers.



Being homeless and unable to get myself into school because I'm so focused on basic needs"

— FORMER FOSTER CARE YOUTH, ARIZONA



We have programs for everything. What is lacking is the easy access to these services and the personnel to make it happen. Everyone seems to be "too busy" to intervene and support these families."

— FOSTER PARENT, STATE UNKNOWN



Coaches/Allies to walk along families and see them as the experts of their own experience - to facilitate their access to the supports they need to care for their children."

— CHILD ABUSE PRIMARY PREVENTION SPECIALIST, MASSACHUSETTS

Furthermore, this year's report goes a step further in uncovering clear, practical recommendations for the change covered in its companion *Lived Experience Guide to Fixing Foster Care*. With the release of these two documents, we will work to make sure our elected officials, agencies, and the

public hear you loud and clear.

READ: the second annual *Voice of the Foster Care Community* report - hear and share your words amplifying your Voice at - www.voiceoffostercare.org

SEE & SHARE: Throughout the report, you will discover an array of artwork created by young people who have experienced foster care firsthand. Their unique and expressive pieces are featured prominently on the report's pages. If you would like to share art to express your thoughts and feelings about foster care, we are accepting work to highlight as we continue to share your voices - [SUMIT YOUR ARTWORK](#)

During the week of June 12th, foster youth will share the report and lived experience guides with Members on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. IFoster is committed to making sure your voices are heard. We take our duty to amplify your voices seriously. With your collective Voice, we can improve the child welfare system and make it about the child's well-being. Thank you for sharing.

Meet Our Partner OkaySay

Are you looking for a supportive space to ask questions about sex, relationships, identity, and or more? OkaySo is an organization that provides free, anonymous support to individuals seeking answers to their personal questions. With OkaySo, you can create a personal account, select a team of experts, and ask your questions without fear of judgment or shame.



OkaySo strives to remind its users that they are loved and valued just the way they are. Whether it is questions about sexual orientation or gender identity or wanting to learn more about the LGBTQ+ community, OkaySo has resources and experts to support you every step of the way.

How does it work? Within 24 hours of submitting your question, a real person with expertise in your topic will respond. And if you're curious about what others are asking, you can check out the questions that other users have given permission to share.

At OkaySo, they believe that everyone deserves access to accurate and compassionate information about their bodies, relationships, and identities. So, why settle for a Google search when you can get your questions answered by a real human?

Ready to get started?

Your Experiences Are Making a Difference!

This year we released our first-ever *Lived Experience to Fixing Foster Care*. We kicked the release of the guidebook and the Voices report off with a youth panel sharing the valuable input of over 4,500 Youth, Caregivers, and Frontline Workers; coupled with last year's report, 6,000 lived experience voices have shaped this compendium's comprehensive findings and recommendations. During the event, a panel of remarkable youth shared their personal experiences within the child welfare system, delving into the seven key findings and recommendations highlighted in the guidebook.



A few of our biggest takeaways from the conversation:

Putting the child at the center: Child welfare needs to provide contextual guidelines to what they have available to youth. They, the youth, can better ask for help and provide concise and conducive feedback to the adjuncts they may be asked of and from. Because it takes a village, no one worker or caregiver can do it all.

Prevention through poverty alleviation: Instead of removing the children because of poverty, the parents should at least be offered resources to recover from the poverty in at least a timeline or timeframe.



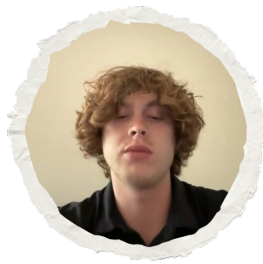
"I feel like instead of removing the children because of poverty, the parents should at least be offered resources to recover from the poverty in at least a timeline or timeframe—then after that, if they don't do the necessary things, then take [the children]. I feel that we should not take [kids] just because of poverty."

— Jasmine Gibson, TAY Peer Navigator

Caregiver profession: Making caregiving a profession would instill a swath of standards that will then serve as the structural foundation for the profession to build upon.

Auto-enrollment: Auto-enrollment would make sure that everyone knows what's available to them, and then it's their choice on whether they want to take the services or not.

"Youth do not know what programs are available, and workers don't always know either—what the programs are or how to



enroll in them. Auto-enrollment would make sure that everyone knows what's available to them, and then it's their choice on whether they want to take the services or not."
 — Perry Randolph, TAY Peer Navigator

Self-sufficiency is a choice: Placing youth back into their original homes when the root of the cause of the issue that they were removed from in the first place hasn't been fixed only causes more damage.

We are delighted at the receptions that the guidebook has already received from experts and community members in the field on the impact of sharing these solutions grounded in the experiences of the people who have gone through it. The 2023 Voice of the Community report and the Lived Experience Guide are available at VoiceOfFosterCare.org. These valuable resources will serve as powerful references, enabling us to continue our collective efforts to enhance the well-being and outcomes of children and youth in foster care. Watch the panel to hear firsthand all of the recommendations by clicking the image below:



CALIFORNIA, DID YOU KNOW?

Hey there, tech-savvy CA Youth! In NEED Of A NEW PHONE?

Are you a current or former California foster youth between the ages of 13 and 26? Do you need a new smartphone with unlimited talk, text, and high-speed data, including hotspot capability? Well, you're in luck because T-Mobile and iFoster have got your back!

Thanks to their amazing program, you can now get a brand new Android smartphone for FREE. That's right - no hidden fees, no strings attached, just a shiny new device to help you stay connected and informed. And if you're feeling extra generous, you can even refer a friend and be entered to win up to a \$100 gift card for every eligible youth who gets a device. Talk about a win-win situation!

So, don't wait any longer - head sign-up below, and remember, in today's world, staying connected is more important than ever, and we're here to help you do just that.

[Sign up for your phone now](#)

Already in the KNOW? Then REFER A FRIEND!

If you have already received a FREE phone from the iFoster Phones Program we've got some exciting news for you - you can now refer a friend and win up to a \$100 gift card!

For every eligible foster youth who mentions your name when they apply for the program, you'll be entered into a monthly drawing. And the best part? There's no limit to how many times you can enter, so the more friends you refer, the more chances you have to win!

So, if you're interested in learning more about this fantastic opportunity, click the button below, because sharing is caring, and we're all about spreading the love (and the free phones!).

[Refer a Friend](#)

Earn Your Union Card-MAKE-\$21.12 Starting off-AND Earn up to \$650 Bonus for 6 Months

Are you an LA Youth and interested in a union job and career in heavy construction??? Thanks to our new partnership with COLAS, a \$16 billion multinational company operating in 50 countries, you can now have a pathway to your union card OSHA certification and guaranteed employment in 3 weeks. And the best part? You can earn a starting salary of \$21.12 with the opportunity for salary increases every six months (

As this is a new partnership for us, we want to get candidate feedback on the process. If you are willing to check in with iFoster's Jobs Specialist on a weekly basis, you can earn up to \$650 a month stipend in addition to your salary from June through December 2023.

Apply now! Applications close Friday, June 9 at 5 pm

[Apply now](#)

COLAS
UNION JOBS IN HEAVY CONSTRUCTION AT LAX

Earn Your Union Card \$21.12 to Start \$650 Bonus for 6 Months

Starting Salary: \$21.12 with the opportunity for salary increases every six months (\$25.34 at 6 months, \$33.78 at 1 year).

BONUS: Earn up to \$650 a month stipend in addition to salary from June through December, 2023 if you have perfect attendance at COLAS bootcamp and are willing to check in with iFoster's Jobs Specialist on a weekly basis to provide your input into what is working well and what can be improved.

Steps to Employment:

1. Complete application
2. Interview with iFoster
3. Complete self-directed job training or alternative
4. Perfect attendance at June 19 to June 24 COLAS Bootcamp (earn your OSHA and CPR certificates)
5. Pass drug and background checks
6. Pass Laborer Union boot camp
7. Gain your Union Card and start working

Interested in building roads, runways and bridges?

iFoster has partnered with COLAS, a \$16 Billion multi-national company operating in 50 countries to create a pathway to union jobs and certifications in the heavy construction industry. If you like working with your hands and could see yourself becoming a laborer, cement mason, carpenter or engineer with the opportunity to travel the world building the newest transportation infrastructure - this opportunity is for you.


iFoster is looking for 10 current/former foster youth, age 18+, for our first cohort who want to enter heavy construction. Must be able to pass a drug test and background check. Must be physically fit and be able to lift and carry 40+ pounds.

[Apply Now](#)

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For more information, please contact: iFoster Support at
855-936-7837 / text 530-550-8001/ support@ifoster.org
Must be an iFoster Member/ Register at www.ifoster.org, it's free!

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