

**Missouri Department of Social Services
Children's Division**



**Policy and Procedures Handbook
Of the
Missouri State Youth Advisory Board**

***"We are the Voice of those who count - The Youth in Foster Care of
Missouri"***

Developed by: 1997-1998 Missouri State Youth Advisory Board

Latest revision: June 2021

Introduction

The Missouri State Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) was established December 1992, with the first meeting being held on June 25, 1993. The SYAB meets on a quarterly basis. Each member of the board is an outstanding youth in foster care or youth that obtained guardianship or adoption from foster care after the age of 16. Members on the board represent seven geographic regions throughout the state. Each Chafee Contracted Agency nominates at least three youth to serve on the State Youth Advisory Board. Transitional Living Program (TLP) Youth and Native American Youth are encouraged to participate as well. Recognizing that each SYAB member represents all children and youth who have been or are in Out-of-Home placements, each SYAB member is responsible for providing children's services policy and procedural input to Children's Division administrative staff and Juvenile Court. The SYAB decides what goals and activities they want to pursue for upcoming meetings and carry those out accordingly. The SYAB also works as a network by bringing back important information to the Area Youth Advisory Board (AYAB) and other youth in their region. When recommended to serve on the SYAB, the membership term is one (1) year, however, once a member there are guidelines to follow in order to continue membership. Membership may continue for additional terms as long as the youth meets the requirements within this handbook.

SYAB Mission Statement

The mission of the SYAB is to provide input into the policies and procedures for Out-of-Home Care; provide meaningful leadership training and experiences for board members; and to empower board members who, in turn, can empower children and youth who have experienced Out-of-Home Care.

Recruitment, Requirements, Orientation of Members

Recruitment

- The youth must be nominated by their local AYAB, if one is in place, and/or Chafee provider/TLP provider.
- Interested youth shall submit an application and two reference letters to their Chafee or TLP provider.
- The application packet is brought to the SYAB meeting. The application packet consists of the application plus two reference letters, one letter from their Chafee or TLP Provider and preferably one from someone who works with the youth such as a case manager, juvenile officer, or Guardian-Ad-Litem. A community member's reference letter is acceptable as well. Although it is preferred that youth bring reference letters to the meeting, if the youth does not have the required number for the interview, there will be an allowance of one week in which the letter(s) shall be sent to the State Coordinator. However, letters do aid in the selection process so potential candidates should make all efforts to bring a completed application packet to the meeting.
- The handbook is reviewed with the Censor prior to the meeting beginning.
- SYAB members interview applicant.

SYAB Interview Process:

- SYAB members review application and Chair and Co-Chair discuss potential member's application with all SYAB members. A discussion is held prior to the interview beginning to see if additional questions need to be asked to clarify information provided on the application or in the reference letters. Potential member is brought into meeting room. There are no questions asked of potential members during the interview process unless they are posed by the Chair or Co-Chair.
- Chair and Co-Chair alternate leading interview of applicant with the following questions:
 1. What does commitment to the SYAB mean to you?
 2. What activities are you involved with that give you skills that you could apply to SYAB?
 3. What accomplishments have you made on your AYAB?
 4. How do you communicate your thoughts and feelings so that you are heard?
 5. Tell of a time when you did not get along with someone and what you did to change the situation.
 6. What strengths do you feel you can contribute to the board?
 7. What do you believe your weaknesses are? How will you develop those into strengths?

8. What characteristics do you think a good leader possesses?
9. Does the applicant have any special concerns or questions?

At this time the applicant will leave the room.

The Chair or Co Chair ask members: Does the SYAB have any special concerns or questions for the applicant regarding answers provided to a question?

If there are questions, the youth is brought back into the room and the Chair or Co-Chair ask the additional questions.

- Chair asks potential member to leave the room and asks for one positive and one negative. If there are no negatives, the Chair calls a vote on membership. If there is a negative, this is discussed and then another positive is called for. Voting remains confidential in terms of how many for and against votes were received and who voted for whom. Discussion is on relevant factors pertaining to membership. Each member is responsible for getting to know potential members so comments should not focus on applicant not speaking to current members. Members should assess leadership traits and potential for growth.

Requirements

- At least three youth from each region shall be nominated to become a regional delegate to the State Youth Advisory Board (SYAB).
- The youth must be participating in the avenue that their region has in place for youth to communicate their thoughts and feeling on issues that are important to them. This is preferably in the form of an AYAB.
- The youth must be age 15-21, but if turns 21 during the term, or leaves Children's Division custody, can finish the remainder of the term if they left in good standing. If allowable, youth no longer in care and still on the SYAB should continue participation on the AYAB for remainder of the SYAB term. During a conference planning year, if a youth turns 21 and their term ends prior to the conference, the youth may remain on the board until the conference is completed.
- The youth must be an active participant of a Chafee or TLP program.
- The youth must have a good attendance record for activities in which they are involved, such as Chafee and TLP activities, AYAB meetings, school, work, etc.
- The youth must be performing adequately in school (according to case manager and foster parents or guardian).
- The youth must be willing to contact other youth in Missouri when necessary to get information and input on policy and programs.
- The youth must be willing to speak on behalf of youth in out of home placement.

- The youth must be willing to represent the SYAB at activities.
- Youth must be willing to provide input outside of meeting time.

Orientation

- This handbook will be given to potential SYAB members at the first meeting and is available on the Children's Division website: [Policy and Procedures Handbook \(mo.gov\)](http://www.mo.gov)
- The first meeting is the time when potential members have the opportunity to learn about the SYAB and current SYAB members have the opportunity to learn about potential candidates.
- At the first meeting, time will be allotted for the Censor to answer any questions and go over the handbook with the new member. This time can be used to further explain the purpose and responsibilities of an SYAB member, if necessary.
- The Code of Conduct must be agreed to and signed by all potential new members.
- If a youth opts to not join, they may come back and go through the process at a future meeting, if all other requirements are met.

Member Expectations

- To be open-minded.
- To energetically participate in board activities by being active, fun, creative, dependable and motivated.
- To work hard and to reach goals.
- To be a positive role model for other youth.
- To be willing to share opinions, in a positive manner.
- To be supportive of and encouraging to other board members and youth.
- To represent all other youth who experience out-of-home care.
- Be yourself.
- To get to know members for their uniqueness.
- To work together on a team and communicate effectively.
- Be respectful to Chaperones and others youth encounters at the meetings.
- Keep confidential anything personal stories that youth share during meetings unless given permission to share.
- To participate in providing feedback as requested outside of the meetings.
- To participate in speaking engagements as requested outside of the meetings.
- To check e-mail regularly between meetings. If a youth does not have access to e-mail, a mentor will be assigned to keep the youth up to date by phone or in person contact.
- To abide by the Code of Conduct.
- To communicate AYAB activities to SYAB.
- To communicate SYAB activities to AYAB.

- Upon acceptance to the SYAB, the selected youth is requested to make a verbal commitment to the board, to attend and be an active participant for their term.

Elected Officials Requirements

Chair

- Maintains order in the meeting.
- Recognizes speakers.
- Calls for votes.
- Official vote counter.
- Does not vote, unless there is a tie, then tie breaker.
- Leads interview of new members.
- Communicates with other board members as needed in between meetings, specifically contacting members that miss meetings to inquire about absence.
- Acts as a positive role model at all times.
- Welcomes potential new members.
- Provides input on all requests.
- Assists with preparation of meeting agenda.
- Participates in pre-planning calls.
- Completes tasks as assigned and unfinished tasks as needed for youth conference.

Co-Chair

- Assists Chair with duties as necessary.
- Fills in as Chair when Chair is absent.
- Option to take over as chair when term is up, if elected by board.
- Documents meeting discussions on flip-chart, as needed.
- Acts as a positive role model at all times.
- Welcomes potential new members.
- Provides input on all requests.
- Assists with preparation of meeting agenda.
- Participates in pre-planning calls.
- Completes tasks as assigned and unfinished tasks as needed for youth conference.

Scribe

- Takes minutes.
- Prepares the meeting minutes within two weeks after the meeting.
- Types other information as needed.
- Takes attendance.
- Responsible for getting any materials needed (minutes, notes, typed materials) to the State Coordinator.

- Acts as a positive role model at all times.
- Welcomes potential new members.
- Provides input on all requests.
- Assists with preparation of meeting agenda.
- Participates in pre-planning calls.
- Completes tasks as assigned and unfinished tasks as needed for youth conference.

Co-Scribe

- Fills in when Scribe is absent.
- Same duties as Scribe.
- Acts as a positive role model at all times.
- Welcomes potential new members.
- Provides input on all requests.
- Assists with preparation of meeting agenda.
- Participates in pre-planning calls.
- Completes tasks as assigned and unfinished tasks as needed for youth conference.

Censor

- Assists Chair in maintaining order.
- Circulates the room as necessary to maintain order.
- Holds instructions for Robert's Rules of Order.
- Distributes all handouts and other materials.
- Ensures that meeting starts on time.
- Ensures that all members are at the meeting location on time.
- Orientates potential new members by reviewing the handbook
- Reviews Code of Conduct and collects signed copies.
- Facilitates interview order.
- Acts as a positive role model at all times.
- Welcomes potential new members.
- Provides input on all requests.
- Assists with preparation of meeting agenda.
- Participates in pre-planning calls.
- Completes tasks as assigned and unfinished tasks as needed for youth conference.

Media Specialist

- Prepares brochures, flyers and other documents for events such as the conference and Child Advocacy Day.
- Writes articles as requested on SYAB happenings.
- Assists with technological needs at the youth conference.

- Acts as a positive role model at all times.
- Welcomes potential new members.
- Provides input on all requests.
- Assists with preparation of meeting agenda.
- Participates in pre-planning calls.
- Completes tasks as assigned and unfinished tasks as needed for youth conference.

All positions are for a one year period.

In order to be considered for an officer position, youth must serve on the board for one year.

If there are no members who have served on the board for at least one year, or no members who have served on the board for at least a year that want to be an officer, the election will be opened up to those who have been a member the longest under a year starting with the meeting induction closest to a year until the positions can be filled.

In the event that an officer resigns prior to the term ending, the position will be offered to current officers first. If a consensus can be determined between current officers, restructuring will occur with no further steps needed. If a consensus cannot be reached as to who will assume the vacant position(s), all members will decide between a vote of the officer candidates. Any remaining vacant positions will then be filled via election following normal procedures.

Ex-Officio Members

- Up to three (3) non-voting members per term.
- Do not have to be 21 years old to be nominated as an Ex-Officio.
- Appointed by the Division Director or Designee.
- A letter of interest must be submitted to the State Coordinator for consideration. Upon nomination and recommendation by the State Coordinator, a letter will be submitted to the Division Director for approval and appointment.
- Application via a letter of interest must be made on an annual basis for consideration as term will expire after one year.
- Serves no more than two (2) consecutive or non-consecutive one-year terms.
- Served at least a one-year term as a board member or alternate, within the last three (3) year.
- Must follow the same rules/guidelines as state board members.

Community Members

- Dedicated individuals from the community.
- Must be invited by state board members based on topic.

- No more than three community members per meeting.
- Understands and respects the guidelines that are adopted by state board members.
- Non voting member.

Rules

- Each member must be committed and is responsible for attending quarterly and/or other meetings as scheduled by the SYAB.
- For any SYAB approved event that a member participates in, the member will receive a stipend of \$25 per day plus reimbursement for mileage, at the state mileage rate, if the member drives himself/herself to the event.
- Health or an emergency situation shall be considered as an excused absence if communicated to the State Coordinator prior to the meeting or verified immediately following the meeting.
- If an SYAB member has two (2) unexcused consecutive absences after being voted onto the board, the youth will be dismissed from the board for lack of commitment.
- If any SYAB member misses two (2) meetings in any one (1) year period, the SYAB will consider dismissal from the board, or a probationary period, depending upon the reason(s) for the absences. If any SYAB member misses one (1) meeting without notifying their Chafee Specialists/TLP Provider or the State Coordinator, the SYAB will issue a letter of concern to that member regarding their absences with a copy to the Chafee or TLP Specialist.
 - Probationary period defined as: The member will have no voting privileges for two consecutive meetings. To receive probation a member must provide a verified explanation to the SYAB as to why they missed the SYAB meeting(s).
- A member will be immediately removed from the board if they are adjudicated of a criminal offense.
- If the SYAB member is in Juvenile Court custody, he/she must have adult supervision while at meetings. If the youth is no longer in CD custody, he/she is not required to have supervision during overnight stays; however all conduct rules apply and the youth must stay on the premises during the duration of the meeting.
- If members leave the SYAB, before their term is up, they are requested to submit a formal letter of resignation to the Board or the ILP Coordinator, signed by their Chafee Specialist or TLP Provider and send an alternate. If possible, notification to the SYAB is requested prior to the last meeting attended.
- SYAB member attendance at the youth conference is mandatory and members may be ejected from the board. The following reasons will be

given consideration on an individual basis at the discretion of the board: medical emergency, unplanned hospitalization, military leave, funeral of close family member. Documentation showing evidence of these events will be provided to the board and must be provided prior to the conference when possible.

- If you witness or become aware of a rule violation, report it to your chaperone immediately.
- Adhere to SYAB Chaperone and Youth Travel Policy.

Chaperone and Youth Travel Policy

Youth involved with the SYAB program have occasion to travel to meetings, camps, conferences, etc. We are confident that a youth chosen for such privileges will exercise good judgment and avoid doing things in poor taste that would bring discredit to him or her and others. Therefore, it is understood that the following policy will be observed when traveling to and from and during youth leadership activities. If there are questions the youth should ask his/her chaperone.

The chaperone is responsible for going over the travel policy with the youth to make sure everyone understands what is expected and to periodically check with the youth to make sure things are going well. The chaperone is also responsible to make sure the youth is in his/her room when it is time to sleep.

Safety Issues

- Be cautious about talking to strangers. Never give your hotel room numbers or key to anyone. If someone you don't know knocks on your room door, contact your chaperone and/or the hotel front desk to verify whether or not it is safe to open the door.
- Do not switch rooms/roommates that are not assigned to you unless approved by the State Coordinator.
- There is no mixed company allowed in rooms at any time – only youth staying in the room are allowed in the room.
- Be respectful of other's personal boundaries and space.
- The use of or possession of alcoholic beverages and/or recreational drugs by chaperones or youth is strictly forbidden.
- Smokeless tobacco products are not allowed during activities.
- Always stay in a group during and after activities except when you are in your room.
- Read the instructions for fire safety on the back of the door in your room. If you are of age to smoke, do so only where smoking is designated. Never smoke in bed.
- All activities during free time should be discussed with specialists/chaperone.
- Observe designated curfews. Individual curfew should be discussed with chaperone. All members must be in their rooms by midnight.

- Youth should ride to meetings/events with chaperone when possible. If member is driving self to SYAB meeting, then once the member has arrived to meeting their vehicle must be parked at meeting location and not driven again until adjournment of meeting and departure.
- Follow all requests from Chaperones, regardless of whether they brought the youth to the meeting or not.

Meeting/Activity Issues

- Follow the schedule. Be where you are supposed to be when you are supposed to there.
- BE ON TIME.
- Listen to presenters. Participate freely and actively.
- Ask questions.
- Be courteous of others in your group(s) at the activity. Introduce yourself to others around you when it is appropriate to do so.

Considerations for Member Dismissal:

If there are conduct issues during the meeting weekend, a member or member(s) will bring this to the executive team's attention. **The executive team will address the issue in private and with the youth. After three occurrences, it will be recommended that the member resign or risk being voted off of the board.**

Conduct issues include but are not limited to:

- Electronic device usage during the meeting, ex.: laptops, cell phones.
- Sleeping during the meeting.
- Destruction of hotel or state property.
- Excessive side talking that is disruptive to the meeting.
- Offensive language.
- Bullying.
- Not being at the location you are supposed to be at and your whereabouts are unknown.
- Not completing assigned tasks.

*Members will automatically be dismissed if there is a violation of the having others in the room rule.

*If hotel or state property is destroyed, youth will be expected to make retribution.

*If it is deemed that the youth cannot be safely supervised due to their behaviors, they will be dismissed from the board per the State Coordinator.

*If a youth is dismissed or resigns and would like to rejoin, consideration will be given after one year.