



## PEER TO PEER SUPPORT CO-DESIGN REQUEST



### ISSUE & BACKGROUND

#### KEY ISSUE

Youth in foster care often face significant challenges with stability, connection, and guidance during their time within the child welfare system. Lack of supportive, relatable mentorship can exacerbate these issues, impacting their ability to navigate the system as well as their overall educational, social, and emotional outcomes.



#### CONTEXT

Research has shown that mentorship positively impacts youth development, yet foster youth need this specifically because they have to operate within an incredibly complex system. Current support programs lack specialized peer mentorship designed to address the unique challenges faced by these youth.

While mentor support for parents within the system exists, structured peer mentorship programs specifically designed for foster youth are lacking, leaving a gap in support.

#### IMPACT

Without adequate mentorship, foster youth are at a higher risk of disengagement, social isolation, and adverse outcomes, making it much more difficult for them to transition successfully into adulthood.

### PROPOSED SOLUTION



- **Administrative/Regulatory Action:** Work with Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA) to initiate a co-design process, collaborating with foster youth and community stakeholders to develop a peer mentorship program tailored to the unique needs of youth in foster care.
- **Resolution:** By engaging in a co-design process, OCLA will work with youth and community experts to create a robust and effective program structure. This will ensure the program is grounded in lived experiences and directly addresses the barriers foster youth face.



## BENEFITS & OUTCOMES

### Positive Outcomes:

- Development of a community-centered, evidence-informed mentorship program.
- Creation of pathways for foster youth to access tailored guidance and support.

### Who Benefits:

- Youth in foster care aged 12-17
- Young adults (18-24) with potential lived experience in foster care who will serve as mentors.

### Social, Economic, or Public Health Benefits:

The program is expected to improve foster youth outcomes, reducing future reliance on social services and strengthening social connections, ultimately benefiting public health and reducing costs associated with disengagement and mental health challenges.

### Measurable Results:

Key metrics will include program participation rates, mentor-mentee match success, and measurable improvements in youth stability and mental well-being.

## TAKE ACTION

There is a critical need to act now to establish a structured support system for foster youth, reducing the risk of negative outcomes. Legislators are encouraged to support this funding request, enabling OCLA to engage community voices and experts in crafting a mentorship program that will bring lasting benefits to foster youth.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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