

# REPORT ON YOUTH PROGRAMS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2015

THE MOCKINGBIRD YOUTH NETWORK

YOUTH ADVOCATES ENDING HOMELESSNESS

This report provides an overview of a) The Mockingbird Society's youth programs and participation trends and b) youth program and advocacy outcomes for 2015.

**PREPARED BY THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY**

# Report on 2015 Youth Programs: Executive Summary

THE MOCKINGBIRD YOUTH NETWORK | YOUTH ADVOCATES ENDING HOMELESSNESS

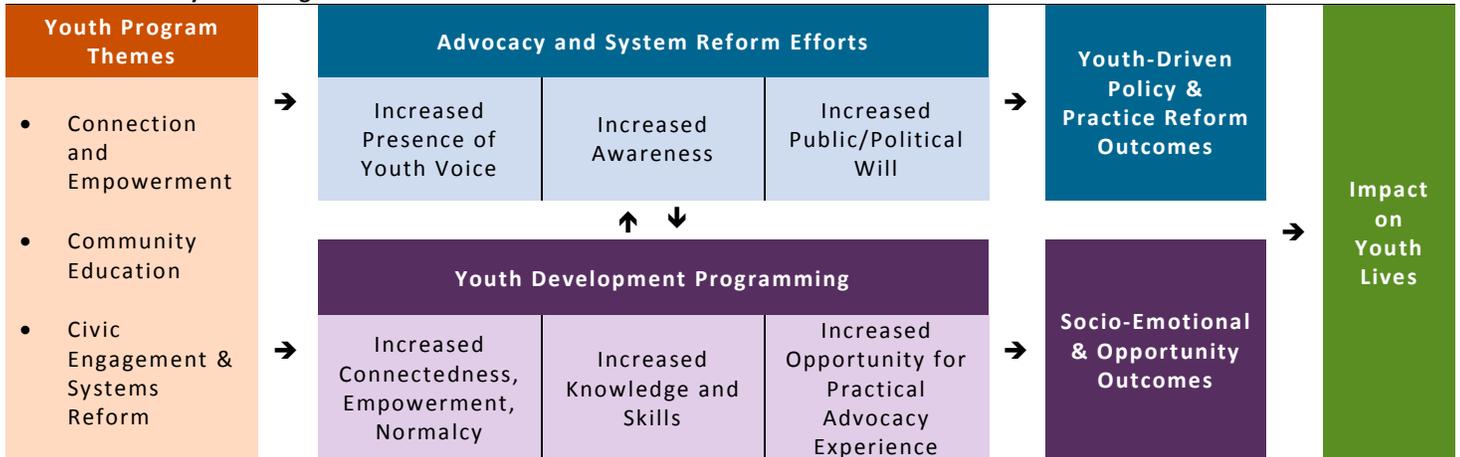
## Overview of The Mockingbird Society’s Youth Programs

The Mockingbird Society (TMS) operates two youth programs tailored for foster and homeless youth and young adult (YYA) participants, respectively: The Mockingbird Youth Network (MYN) and Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness (YAEH). These programs engage foster and homeless YYAs across Washington State in activities designed to build skills, confidence, and relationships to enable effective, youth-driven foster care and youth homelessness system reform efforts.

## Youth Programs’ Theory of Change

TMS’s youth programs pursue simultaneous youth development and system reform outcomes, with the ultimate goal of improving the lives of foster and homeless YYAs today, as well as the lives of young people in the future. This dual-focused program model is described in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Theory of Change**



## Youth Participation Trends

Since 2013, overall YYA participation has declined 18%, decreasing from 521 to 487 annual participants. However, there is significant participation growth within the YAEH program: a 93% increase since 2013. As a result of these two countervailing trends, the MYN as a percentage of total YYA participation has decreased from 87% to 72% over the past three years (Table 2).

**Table 2: Three-Year Participation Trends**

	2013		2014		2015	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Everett	66	13%	71	14%	81	17%
Olympia	96	18%	71	14%	59	12%
Yakima	53	10%	61	12%	59	12%
Tacoma	77	15%	65	13%	56	11%
Spokane	36	7%	43	9%	45	9%
Seattle	109	21%	60	12%	43	9%
Network Representative	10	2%	6	1%	9	2%
General Network / Unassigned	4	1%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>MYN Total</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>72%</b>
<b>Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>TMS Youth Programs Total</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>100%</b>

*\*% figures based on TMS Youth Programs Total*

**Program Areas and Activities**

TMS Youth Programs engage and train YYA participants in activities designed to promote confidence, create positive relationships, build skills, and provide practical leadership and advocacy opportunities. TMS frames its activities through the following three levels of impact:

- **Connection and Empowerment:** Activities that enable YYAs to develop the skills, confidence, and relationships necessary to engage in public-facing community education and system reform activities.
- **Community Education:** Youth-led public speaking and training efforts that improve public perceptions and raise awareness for foster and homeless youth issues.
- **System Reform & Civic Engagement:** Activities that enable YYAs to identify systemic problems and advocate for policy solutions that will improve outcomes for young people affected by foster care and homelessness.

In 2015, nearly **70%** of participants engaged in Connection and Empowerment activities, more than **50%** participated in Civic Engagement & Systems Reform efforts, and more than **33%** led Community Education events (Chart 1).

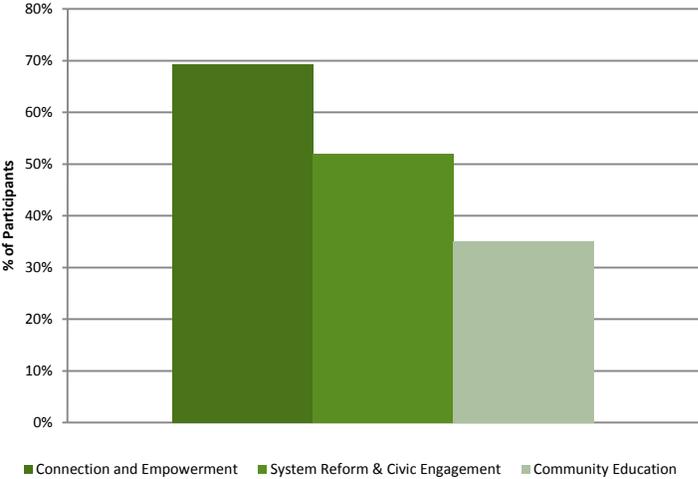
**Community-focused Speakers Bureau** events offer YYAs the opportunity to build community awareness for foster and homeless youth issues by sharing their expertise and experiences with audiences ranging from small groups to auditoriums of 15,000. In 2015, YYAs conducted **101** Speakers Bureau events (Chart 2) with audiences including the WA Children’s Justice Conference, Leadership Tomorrow, the National Alliance to End Homelessness’ Youth and Families Conference, University of Washington’s Law School, and WE Day Seattle.

**Participation Intensity**

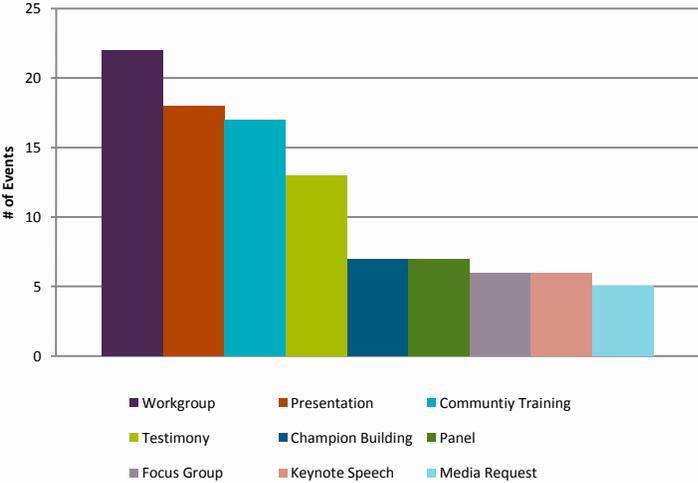
Participation intensity examines the frequency with which YYAs are involved in program activities annually. The distribution is skewed toward the Connect level (71% of YYA participants), with a strong cohort also appearing at the highest, Leaders, level (15% of YYA participants). We feel there are inherent efficiencies within this engagement model:

1. **Grassroots Mobilization:** The MYN and YAEH are large networks of YYAs that can be organized at key times throughout the year for powerful advocacy events.
2. **Impassioned Youth Leaders:** There is a core group of highly engaged YYAs leading youth development, system reform, and community education activities across WA State.
3. **Pipeline of Emerging Leaders:** As youth leaders become alumni of TMS youth programs, there is a queue of emerging youth leaders poised to take on increased responsibility within the MYN and YAEH programs.

**Chart 1: TMS Youth Participants Engaging in Program Themes**

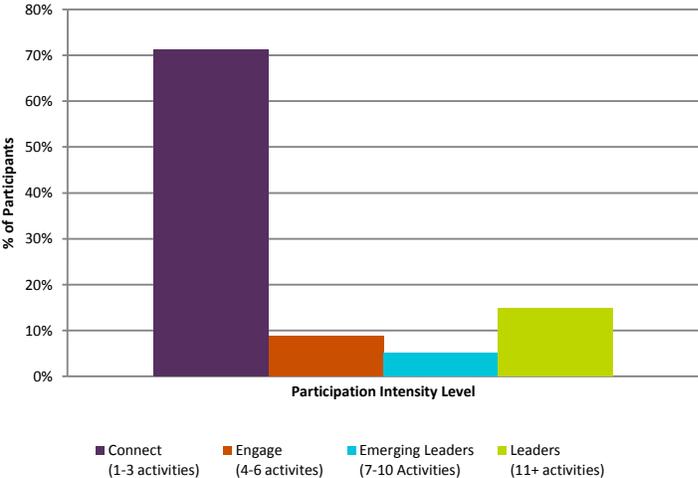


**Chart 2: Community-Focused Speakers Bureau Events**



The distribution is skewed toward the Connect level (71% of YYA participants), with

**Chart 3: TMS Youth Program Participant Intensity Distribution**



## Youth Development Outcomes

In 2015, through a program survey developed and managed by an AmeriCorps Vista volunteer, a broad range of well-being indicators and program outcomes data was collected from more than 100 YYAs. Select YYA outcomes are as follows:

- 96% usually or always feel safe while participating in TMS activities
- 82% report learning public speaking skills from their involvement with Mockingbird
- 80% feel that they are more able to advocate for themselves and what they need [in their personal lives] as a result of participating with Mockingbird; 80% are able to more effectively advocate for systems reform
- 89% feel positive or very positive after sharing their personal story for an advocacy purpose with Mockingbird
- 80% believe TMS has helped them become a better leader

In 2016, TMS plans to implement a new survey methodology that will enable relationships to be drawn between YYA socio-emotional/opportunity outcomes and participation intensity. The TMS program model hypothesizes that as participation intensity increases, so too will the likelihood of positive youth development outcomes. Examining correlation data is a **new way TMS will begin evaluating its programmatic impact in 2016.**

## Youth-Driven System Reform Outcomes

At TMS, we believe it is critical for young people impacted by foster care and homelessness to play a leadership role in bringing about positive system reform. Equipped with first-hand experience, their unique insight informs decision-makers and helps create better policies, laws, and budgets. The 2015 advocacy efforts of TMS young people resulted in four significant policy reforms that are positively changing the lives of foster and homeless YYAs. Advocacy achievements during the 2015 legislative session include:

- **Extended Foster Care (SB 5740):** This final bill completes TMS' nearly decade-long effort to ensure that young adults aging out of Washington's foster care system at age 18 can avoid homelessness and transition into adulthood with support.
- **Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Act (SB 5404):** The Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection (HYPP) Act established one of the first offices of its kind, the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs in the Department of Commerce, to improve statewide services and opportunities available to homeless YYAs.
- **Medication Management for Foster Youth (HB 1879):** A proposal long-supported by TMS YYAs, this bill addresses the overmedication of foster children and youth.
- **Mockingbird Family Model Funding:** The Legislature approved a \$506,000 budget allocation for the 2015-17 biennium that will directly support the eight existing Hub Homes in WA.

To offer a more comprehensive view of how TMS's youth development programming intersects and is enhanced by YYA advocacy efforts, the case study below highlights the sequence of events and youth involvement leading to the passage of the Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Act. A logic chain (Table 3) detailing this process, while mirroring the theory of change described in Table 1, further demonstrates how TMS's dual youth development and advocacy efforts combine to affect meaningful policy reform.

### Case Study: Youth Development and Advocacy in Action – The Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Act

**Advocacy Outcome Description:** The Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection (HYPP) Act, which was introduced by Executive Request of Governor Inslee and sponsored by Senator Steve O'Ban, received strong bipartisan support as it passed through the Legislature during the 2015 session. Representative Ruth Kagi sponsored the companion bill (HB 1436). The final budget allocated funding (\$867,000 for the 2015-17 biennium) to establish a statewide Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs ("the Office") in the Department of Commerce. The act was signed into law on April 24th, 2015, and became effective July 24th, 2015. One of the first state-level offices of its kind in the nation, the Office will: a) Establish the goal that YYAs are never discharged from state systems of care into homelessness, b) Improve data collection and identify service gaps, c) Coordinate service delivery so youth in rural areas will not have to leave their home communities to access the support they need, and d) Maintain a funding stream to support effective programs.



TMS YYAs, staff, and advocates gather as Governor Inslee signs SB 5404 in Olympia, WA.

**Contribution of TMS and YAEH Program Participants:** Historically, TMS has understood the link between foster care and youth homelessness. Consequently, addressing systems gaps that lead to youth homelessness has always been at the heart of our mission. However, beginning in 2013 the organization began to focus more intentionally on youth and young adult homelessness advocacy. In the spring of 2013, TMS launched the YAEH program to organize young people to

advocate for improving local (King County) and statewide systems of care for homeless youth. The agency simultaneously began convening homeless youth service providers, funders, and other stakeholders from around the state to do the same, leading the Washington Coalition for Homeless Youth Advocacy (WACHYA). Both groups began considering what an ideal system could look like to address the needs of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness throughout the state. Their collective ideas formed the basis for the HYPP Act.

In June of 2014, First Lady of Washington Trudi Inslee requested a meeting with YYAs from the YAEH program to discuss their initial proposals. With such a strong political champion identified, and leveraging the support of over 40 WACHYA member agencies, TMS and the YAEH program quickly elevated the HYPP Act to become one of its top advocacy priorities for the 2015 legislative session.

Meanwhile, the YAEH program continued its outreach and engagement efforts with King County YYAs who had experienced or were homeless at that time, building a network of more than 130 participants. YYAs took part in trainings and practical advocacy opportunities that supported them in developing the skills and confidence necessary to effectively advocate and build community awareness for YYA homelessness issues.

To begin building stronger awareness and will for the HYPP Act, YAEH YYA leaders began a) leading public forums attended by funders and policymakers, b) hosting community trainings that illuminated the issues of YYA homelessness, and c) engaging in strategic planning meetings with policymakers regarding the HYPP Act. These efforts not only heightened awareness and built public/political will for the HYPP legislation, but also enabled YYA participants to continue to positively challenge and develop their leadership skills.

As the HYPP Act was debated at public hearings in the WA House and Senate, WACHYA and TMS youth advocates led direct advocacy efforts to support the bill's passage. YAEH participants testified at all public hearings, sharing their first-hand experience with homelessness and expressing their support for the HYPP Act. Throughout this process, the Governor's Office provided incredible leadership and support, and First Lady Trudi Inslee testified at several public hearings as well.

In February 2015, TMS hosted its annual Youth Advocacy Day in Olympia, WA. Leveraging its vast network of YYA participants, more than 50 YYAs from TMS's YAEH program were in attendance to advocate in favor of the HYPP Act (total YYA attendance from across WA exceeded 150). YYAs met with 32 policymakers that day, discussing their views of the HYPP Act and urging their support of the bill. First Lady Inslee was also in attendance to once again demonstrate her commitment to the bill. This signature event demonstrated the advocacy capacity of TMS, its ability to mobilize YYAs and partner agencies, and the importance and value of involving youth voice in the policy process.



YYA advocates participating at Youth Advocacy Day, 2015.

As the HYPP Act and YYA homelessness issues gained recognition, so too did the reputation of participants from the YAEH program: Several participants were invited to present and share their advocacy experiences at national conferences and high profile events including the National Alliance to End Homelessness' conferences in San Diego (*youth and families focus*) and Washington D.C. (*national conference*), a policy briefing on youth homelessness at the White House, and the United Way of King County's All-Star Softball Classic attended by policymakers and local celebrities. These speaking engagements generated even greater awareness and momentum for the HYPP Act, and the work needed to support the successful launch of the office.

Notably, when the director of the office was hired in December of 2015, several YAEH participants were invited to be members of the hiring panel. This was another strong indicator that the Office is seeking to institutionalize the practice of incorporating meaningful youth input as a way of doing business.

The coordinated efforts of WACHYA, TMS and YYA leaders engaged in the YAEH program strongly influenced the advancement of the HYPP Act through both the House and Senate. As a result of the Act being signed into law, YYAs experiencing homelessness in WA will have better access to services necessary to make their homelessness experience rare, brief, and one-time.

**Table 3: Youth Development and Advocacy in Action – The Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Act**

		SYSTEM REFORM MILESTONES							
		Champion Building	Strong Collaborative Action Among Partners	Policy Development	Building Public/Political Will and Awareness	Increased Organizational Visibility & Issue Momentum	Direct Advocacy	Community Mobilization	
Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness (YAEH) Program	→	<p><i>Legislative Champions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senator Steve O'Ban</li> <li>• Representative Ruth Kagi</li> </ul> <p><i>Political Champion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Lady Trudi Inslee meets with YYAs at TMS headquarters to discuss potential legislation.</li> </ul>	<p>The Washington Coalition for Homeless Youth Advocacy (WACHYA), a collective of &gt; 40 organizations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YYAs participated at monthly meetings.</li> <li>• Meetings staffed by TMS public policy experts.</li> </ul>	<p>Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection (HYPP) Act developed by WACHYA with YAEH YYA insight and expertise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SB 5404 and HB 1436 sponsored by Sen. O'Ban and Rep. Kagi.</li> </ul>	<p>YYAs led discussions at community forums, trainings, and strategic meetings, offering their personal expertise on homeless issues with funders, policymakers, and public audiences.</p>	<p>YYAs delivered presentations on homeless issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Alliance to End Homelessness' conference on youth and family homelessness</li> <li>• White House public policy briefing on youth homelessness</li> </ul>	<p>YAEH YYAs, TMS policy experts, WACHYA members, and political champion Trudi Inslee, testified in favor of HYPP Act at both WA House and Senate hearings.</p>	<p>TMS mobilized &gt; 150+ YYAs and representatives from &gt; 40 partner agencies at Youth Advocacy Day in Olympia, WA, demonstrating broad community support for the HYPP Act.</p>	→
	↑ ↓		YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES						
		Developing Connections, Empowerment, & Relationships	Building Knowledge and Skills			Engaging in Practical Experience Opportunities			
	→	<p>YYAs engaged in monthly chapter activities where YYAs develop the confidence and relationships necessary to engage in public-facing system reform and community education efforts.</p>	<p>YYAs participated in TMS Legislative Advocacy Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum designed to teach YYAs effective direct advocacy strategies.</li> </ul>	<p>YYAs participated in TMS Voice Development Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum designed to teach YYAs to create effective advocacy messages with clear problem statements and proposed solution(s).</li> </ul>	<p>YYAs participated in TMS Storytelling for Advocacy Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum designed to teach YYAs how to share their personal stories effectively and with an advocacy purpose.</li> </ul>	<p>YYAs refined leadership skills at quarterly State Leadership Council gatherings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter leaders discuss advocacy strategy, consult with advisors, and plan for Youth Advocacy Day.</li> </ul>	<p>YYAs wrote articles about homelessness in the <i>Mockingbird Times</i> and produced digital stories published online, developing communication skills and building public awareness.</p>	<p>YYAs facilitated the <i>Stories of Youth Homelessness</i> training and other public speaking events, developing their public speaking skills, building awareness for homelessness issues, and improving public perceptions of homeless YYAs.</p>	