



# WHAT IS PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS?



## #1 WHAT IS LIVED EXPERTISE?



### LIVED EXPERTS

- Individuals currently in or recently transitioning from having child welfare involvement
- Individuals with prior personal experience in child welfare who work in professional capacities within the field
- Youth- and family-led advocacy organizations and coalitions

Lived expertise refers to the unique ability to translate personal experiences in the child welfare system into meaningful system change. Developing lived expertise is a process that takes ongoing training, support, and skill building.

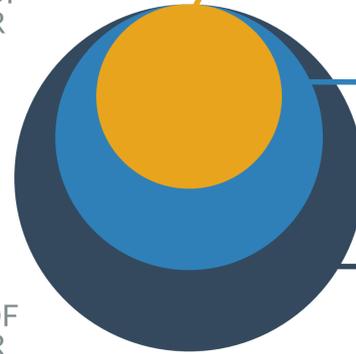
## #2 WHAT IS PARTNERSHIP?

**PARTNERSHIP:**  
Youth and families have equal power, input, and investment

HIGHER LEVELS OF SHARED POWER



LOWER LEVELS OF SHARED POWER



**INVOLVEMENT:**  
Youth and families are invited to share feedback and ideas through more formalized structures (e.g., advisory boards)

**ENGAGEMENT:**  
Youth and families are consulted, typically in a time-bound or sporadic manner (e.g., satisfaction surveys)

“Partnership occurs when child welfare systems intentionally and equitably integrate people with lived expertise at every level of decision-making, design, and delivery”

## #3 WHAT DOES PARTNERSHIP LOOK LIKE ON DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### POLICY/ POLITICAL:

Federal, state, & local policymakers with jurisdiction over child welfare. Depending on the system and whether it is state or county-run, this may include Senators, Representatives, Governors, Mayors, and County Board of Supervisors.

### SYSTEM/ GOVERNANCE:

This includes the entities tasked with implementing child welfare policy at the state and local levels. It might be a state-level Department of Social Services or a local-level child welfare agency, or both.

### PROGRAM/ COMMUNITY:

This includes referral partners and programs within the local child welfare agency (e.g., the Extended Foster Care Unit, Residential Services, etc.).

### SERVICE/ INDIVIDUAL:

This includes direct services and contacts between members of the child welfare workforce and children, youth, and families throughout the life of a case

## #4 HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Partnership is a process that requires changes in attitudes and cultures. To start considering where your child welfare system is and how you might improve partnership, consider the following steps:



### STEP 1

#### ASK QUESTIONS

Gather stakeholders with diverse roles and perspectives to discuss reflections on areas of strengths and opportunities for growth.

### STEP 2

#### ASSESS FOR AREAS OF STRENGTH

- What are areas at various levels (e.g., individual/service, policy/political, etc.) where youth and families have shared power with child welfare?
- What successes have you had employing lived experts in meaningful positions within child welfare?

### STEP 3

#### ASSESS FOR AREAS OF GROWTH

- What are areas where youth and families don't have equal decision-making authority?
- Are there areas where youth and families could have more decision-making authority?
- What are the challenges you've had employing lived experts in meaningful positions within child welfare?