

“Hear Me” kiosks amplify foster youths’ voices about needs

Understanding. Patience. Commitment.

These attributes are among those prospective foster parents must have to support them, foster youth say in recordings that will be disseminated for county residents to hear as part of the “[Hear Me](#)” project conducted by the CREATE Lab at Carnegie Mellon University for the Department of Human Services (DHS).

“Hear Me” records the opinions of children on a variety of issues, so that citizens and policymakers have the input of young people. The recordings are put into kiosks that can be strategically placed to reach people for whom the messages may resonate.

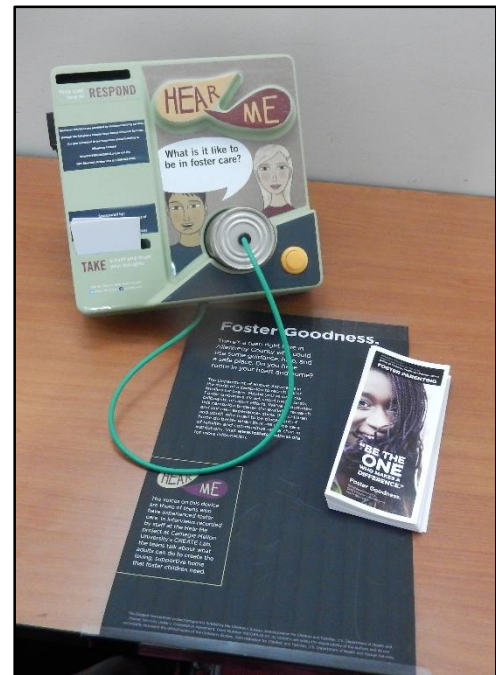
In the instance of foster children, DHS partnered with the CREATE Lab to record teens in foster care as part of its Families for Teens foster parent recruitment effort. Six teens were recorded for “Hear Me” and the first kiosk has been install in the Human Services Building, Downtown. Additional kiosks will be placed at events and locations around the county.

Each kiosk features a tin can that is actually a speaker, through which people can hear the recordings. They also can leave feedback about the recordings via notecards.

Twanda Clark, Families for Teens Training Specialist, said the Hear Me kiosks should help to increase awareness of teens’ experiences in and feelings about foster care with both workers and the community. She said the kiosks came about after Andrea Rudek, Training Supervisor in the Office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF), mentioned that she had previously work with the CREATE Lab on a “Hear Me” project.

“I’m hoping the recordings will shape and form our service delivery, with our professional staff here at CYF as they hear the voices of youth and hear what they are feeling and their perception of care,” Twanda said.

She noted that the “Hear Me” project also introduced youth to recording and editing processes, so they got a glimpse of an employment field they might want to pursue.



A Hear Me kiosk has been placed on the lower level of the Human Services Building so people can listen to youth discuss what they need from prospective foster parents.