

New guide assists youth in foster care

For youth entering foster care, the system can be daunting; however, a new guide may help to ease the transition.

“Make It Happen: How to Navigate Your Way through the Allegheny County Foster Care System” is a resource guide designed collaboratively by Emily Ianacone, former DHS Foster America Fellow, and Meredith Joos, Office of Community Relations (OCR) graphic designer, with input from the Youth Speakers Bureau; Systems Improvement through Youth (SITY); Youth Support Partners (YSPs); and Kids Voice. The 27-page guide is designed for youth over the age of 14, and offers information around how the child welfare system works, including definitions, lists of youths’ rights, and local resources. It is youth-friendly, engaging and trauma-informed, with eye-catching graphics and motivational quotes selected by the youth reviewers.

“From the start of the project, Emily and I wanted to create something that would be useful and meaningful; we didn’t want a guide that kids wouldn’t respond to or would have a hard time interpreting,” said Meredith. “After a rigorous review process and gathering feedback directly from youth with lived experience, we’re happy to get something circulated that has the potential to make a traumatic experience for cross-system youth a little bit easier to navigate.”

Printed guides will be distributed by Allegheny County judges to youth during their first hearing. The guide is also available on the [DHS website](#) under the section titled “For Youth Involved in the Child Welfare System.”