



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# Foster Care Alliance and the YMCA

of Rock River Valley

# FRAMES FOR ACTION

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Nurturing the Potential of Every Child and Teen

### CRITICAL SOCIAL ISSUES AFFECTING OUR COMMUNITIES:

- Erosion in social-emotional development leading to negative youth behaviors
- Increase in academic disparity among children and teens of different backgrounds
- Inadequate adult and community supports

### OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES:

Youth in Y programs demonstrate improvement in the skills needed for successful living.

Youth in Y programs demonstrate improvement in academic proficiency—from birth to career.

Ys incorporate a holistic approach to development in their youth-serving programs.

Ys advocate to make youth development a priority at the local, state, and national levels.

### OUR SHARED INTENT:

To ensure youth realize their potential to become active, engaged, and thriving members of the community, the Y will nurture their social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development through holistic youth programming, experiences, and supports.

# PARTNERSHIP SUMMARY BETWEEN FOSTER CARE ALLIANCE AND THE YMCA

The YMCA of Rock River Valley has committed within its Strategic Plan that all branches will provide supplemental support services for the County's foster care system. Through the passion and commitment of various leaders, we work hand in hand with representatives from various foster care agencies in our community to provide support in whatever ways we can. There are a variety of ways in which the YMCA supports and partners with Foster Care agencies. Generally, support can be categorized into Membership and Program services, Family support and education, and Parent recruitment.

## Membership and Program Services

- Family memberships for Foster families paid for by the Foster Care Alliance when available. For those who do not qualify to have their memberships paid for, the YMCA offers a 15% discount on membership.
- The YMCA also offers a 15% discount on all paid programs within our facilities to all youth within a "foster family." This includes the family's biological children. Our aim is to ease the burden on families, and to provide equal recreational opportunities for biological and foster children.
- The YMCA also offers financial assistance as needed for families in additional need beyond the 15% discount. Financial assistance is available for membership, programs and child care.

## Family Support and Education

- The YMCA offers space at no cost to support groups and parent classes led by the agencies. The YMCA is an ideal location for these meetings/trainings because child care is available on site at no additional cost. This removes a barrier that prevents many from attending support groups and classes in other settings.
- The YMCA holds an annual Foster parent appreciation event in coordination with local agencies, to give families an opportunity to recreate together, and with other families experiencing similar situations, environments etc. As needed, the Y will enlist our members and staff in giving "drives" to collect necessary items for families in need. For example, this past Christmas our local representatives shared with us that there is a great need for gifts/gift cards for teens within the system. People frequently donate toys and other items for small children, but the teens are often left out. In response, the YMCA held a gift card drive for teens within the foster care system, seeking to fulfill an unmet need.

## Parent Recruitment

- This is a known challenge within the foster care system so the YMCA provides, at no cost, opportunities for representatives to talk to members and share information in an attempt to educate the public, and recruit new parents and families to support kids in need. Representatives have attended major Y events, had tables and festivals and fairs, and often set up shop in the lobby of the Y just to catch people coming and going.

As we are always seeking to support these efforts, and to serve others, we continue looking for new opportunities to be of assistance and plan to distribute a survey to families regarding what services would be most helpful to them. Under committed leadership, the partnership continues to expand and grow and together we hope to make a significant impact on a most vulnerable population.