Youth Solutions Council Agenda

October 8, 2026
9:30 am - 11am

Youth Solutions Council Vision: We are committed to youth-led solutions, envisioning a collaborative network to increase viable housing options, eliminate barriers, and apply equitable standards of care within our community.

Attendees:

Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions: *Name, organization and what brought you here today, check-in?*
- Review Progress on This Quarter's Rocks Based on 1 Year Goals
    - **Prevention and Diversion:** Identify a strategy and recruit *X* number of former foster youth who are interested in mentoring current foster youth.
        - Lead: Shakerah McRae
        - YAB Point of Contact: Myracle Watkins
    - **Access:** Start the groundwork and research for a dedicated resource "hub" by understanding timeframe, cost, and community buy-in and feedback.
        - YAB Lead: Noah Davis & Courtney Salisbury
    - **Youth-Centered Approach:** Have social media up and running, ensuring all posts honor youth but do not exploit their stories.
        - YAB Lead: Piper
    - **Education and Employment:** Compile a list of what skills-building programs exist for career development/education readiness and evaluate them: What exists, Are people connecting, Is it enough?
        - YAB Lead: Moe Barnes and Celina Lee
- Vote for top issues and solve
- Next Steps/Adjournment

To Do List Review:

- **Maddie Martin**: Email new contacts to invite them to YSC and send follow-up emails to those who haven't responded.

Issues List

1. YSC leadership lacks time to offer additional support
2. ~~What is the role of YSC? How do YSC and YAB integrate with each other?~~
3. ~~Do we want to have another We Exist event in November? Or a different awareness event?~~
4. ~~Contacts needed to invite more providers to the table~~
5. ~~What to do with the Education & Employment list Rock.~~
6. Youth HOPE Month
7. Attendance, keeping YSC providers at the table.
8. SNAP and Medicaid Changes for Youth

Youth Solutions Council Minutes

September 10, 2026
9:30 am - 11 am

Youth Solutions Council Vision: We are committed to youth-led solutions, envisioning a collaborative network to increase viable housing options, eliminate barriers, and apply equitable standards of care within our community.

Attendees: Maddie Martin, Alyssa Anten, Lauren VanKeulen, Stephanie Collier, Jules Kusneske, Shelby Sichta, Casey Gordon, Myracle Watkins, Courtney Salisbury, Noah Davis, Lynn Nee, Dani Shields, Tanise Clipper, Charles Sanders, Celina Lee

Agenda:

Welcome & Introductions: ***Name, organization and what brought you here today, check-in?***

Lauren shared that one-year goals have been established, and quarterly Rocks are then developed in four focus areas to support those goals. The Youth Action Board (YAB) has taken the lead on developing and tracking the Rocks and has done an excellent job of keeping the work moving forward.

Review Progress on This Quarter's Rocks Based on 1 Year Goals

Prevention and Diversion: Identify a strategy and recruit *X* number of former foster youth who are interested in mentoring current foster youth.

Myracle reported that two former foster youth have been recruited and that she is working with Shakerah to recruit additional participants.

Myracle also shared several accomplishments related to this Rock, including identifying a project focus, launching the Miracle Project, hosting two informational sessions, creating social media accounts and gaining 20 followers, developing a website, and creating a live project that highlights foster youth who have achieved success in their careers.

Looking ahead, Myracle identified several next steps for the Miracle Project, including recruiting additional mentors, establishing community partnerships, and hosting a panel discussion to share information about the project.

Lynn asked whether the mentorship program would have any geographic limitations. Myracle shared that her goal is to serve individuals throughout Michigan. Lauren suggested initially focusing efforts within Kent County, and Myracle agreed that this would be a good approach.

Lauren then asked whether Myracle would be willing to present the informational session to the group at next month's meeting, and Myracle agreed.

Access: Start the groundwork and research for a dedicated resource "hub" by understanding timeframe, cost, and community buy-in and feedback.
Courtney provided an update on this Rock and shared that there has been limited progress since the last meeting. Jason had previously provided his business card, and Courtney reached out via email but experienced difficulty connecting with him. Courtney noted that without additional support, it was challenging to move the project forward and expressed frustration with not being able to secure time on Jason's calendar. Courtney suggested that the group may need to move forward without Jason's involvement if communication challenges continue.

Alyssa asked for a reminder of the resources the group had hoped to access through Hope Network. She also shared that CoC staff may be able to help connect youth to available resources.

Lynn shared that the Youth Action Board in Southeast Michigan utilizes a Google Map that allows users to click on and locate resources. Noah expressed interest in this approach and asked Lynn to share the map with the group.

Casey added that 2-1-1 has a resource landing page that may also be helpful for this work.

Youth-Centered Approach: Have social media up and running, ensuring all posts honor youth but do not exploit their stories.
Tanise shared that the YAB social media accounts are now up and running. Piper recently met with a team from Ferris State University to learn how to schedule posts and has developed a plan for the group's social media presence moving forward. The team is also interested in incorporating video content into its strategy. With YAB scheduled to table at Grand Valley State University the following day, members discussed the possibility of capturing video content during the event for future social media use.

- The YAB Social Media accounts can be found at:
    - Instagram: *@kent_countyyab*
    - Facebook: *Kent County Youth Action Board*
    - Twitter: *Kent County Youth Action Board*
    - TikTok: *Kent County YAB*
    - BlueSky: *Kent County YAB*

Education and Employment: Compile a list of what skills-building programs exist for career development/education readiness and evaluate them: What exists, Are people connecting, Is it enough?
Celina shared that she is feeling stuck on her Rock and has encountered challenges similar to those discussed previously. She attempted to contact Jason but was instead referred to Stacy Datena. As a next step, Celina plans to focus on communicating available resources through Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC). To support this effort, Lauren shared that Maddie or DeYonte from AYA would likely be willing to meet with Celina to discuss educational and employment resources that could be highlighted and shared with youth.

Vote for top issues and solve

Issue Decided: Youth Hope Month is November, and Lauren thinks we should do something.

Lauren shared that November is Youth Hope Month and suggested that the group consider ways to participate in awareness and engagement activities. Lauren explained that the observance was formerly known as Runaway and Homeless Youth Awareness Month before being renamed Youth Hope Month approximately two years ago.

- The group discussed potential opportunities to tie activities into National Homelessness Awareness Month and Giving Tuesday efforts. Lauren noted that past participation has included observing National Wear Green Day, an annual initiative held on November 13 and supported by a social media toolkit from the National Runaway Safeline. Shelby also shared an activity previously conducted by Mel Trotter Ministries in which employees were given green backpacks and challenged to rely only on the items they could fit inside for a week, helping raise awareness of the experiences faced by youth and individuals experiencing homelessness.

The group decided that it wanted to focus on awareness-based activities for Youth Hope Month and discussed several potential ideas. Ultimately, three areas of focus were determined:

1. Content Creation: Create youth-led video introductions to AYA and The Bridge, as well as a Kent ISD-focused video highlighting that "there's someone at your school who can help." Another idea is a “day in the life at drop in.” Myracle also asked whether local high schools would be interested in participating in a "Wear Green for Youth Homelessness Awareness Day" campaign through a spirit day at those schools. Casey said she could reach out to ask if schools would be interested.
2. Wear Green Day (November 13): Promote participation in Wear Green Day across local schools. The group discussed the possibility of creating T-shirts, with any funds raised supporting YAB. Members also explored the idea of pairing T-shirt sales with a backpack donation campaign.
3. Green Backpack Campaign: Organize a green backpack drive, with YAB developing a recommended list of items to include in the backpacks.

Lauren noted that there will be a significant need for supplies and suggested creating a clear call to action that providers and community members can help promote and share. The group discussed several campaign ideas, including "366 Backpacks for 366 Youth." Charles suggested modifying the concept to "365 Backpacks for 365 Youth," aligning one backpack with each day of the year. Tanise shared that she could connect with Piper and AYA's advancement team to lead a social media campaign in support of the initiative and to help raise awareness throughout Youth Hope Month.

Another Issue: What is the role of the YSC + how does it integrate with YAB? What is our lane? We are busy.

The group discussed several opportunities to strengthen YSC's structure, communication, and connection to YAB.

Some group participants shared confusion around how YSC connects to the By Name List.

Noah shared that there needs to be a more concrete channel and accountability structure for YAB members to communicate with their support persons and collaborate between meetings. The group agreed, and added the importance of clearly identifying who is responsible for collaborating on each issue and documenting those responsibilities in meeting minutes. Members emphasized the need for accountability while also being realistic about individual capacity.

- Charles suggested that the number of Rocks may be too ambitious and could potentially be condensed. Courtney noted that each participant currently has a designated support person, making the work more manageable.
- The group also discussed creating space for members to provide updates even when they are not seeking solutions to challenges. Alyssa suggested regularly sharing the youth functional zero dashboard and providing a brief overview of current trends and data.

The group decided that YSC's role is to bring awareness to bigger issues, to remove barriers for YAB, and to engage with the By Name List.

Next Steps/Adjournment

The next meeting is November 12 at 9:30 AM.

To-Do's:

- **Group:** Share Myracle Project information, like/share/engage with social media. Help recruit potential members. Help get donations and get other people involved in the fundraiser. All on the website.
- **Group:** Follow Kent County YAB on social media.
- **Providers:** Prepare for sharing a headline (if applicable) at the next meeting on anything relevant they are seeing in the sector.
- **CoC Staff:** Share data related to youth homelessness in the state/region with YSC.
- **CoC Staff:** Create "wear green day" content.
- **CoC Staff:** Order the green tshirt and collect orders.
- **Maddie:** Add Myracle's presentation to next month's YSC agenda.
- **Maddie:** Share Myracle's website and social media information to YSC to share with their networks.
- **YAB:** Create & share a tshirt design with the CoC by Wednesday at 12 PM.
- **YAB:** Make a list of what needs to go in each backpack.
- **Courtney, Noah, Lauren, and CoC:** Meet to discuss the resource hub.
- **Lynn:** Share the SE Michigan Youth Resource Hubs Google Map with the YAB.
- **Myracle:** Prepare for a presentation on The Miracle Project at next YSC meeting.

- **Tanise:** Connect with Piper for sharing social media and content creation for Wear Green Campaign
- **Stephanie:** Reach out to contacts from Leadership GR.