



Youth MOVE National: Youth as Change Agents

Youth Motivating Others through Voices of Experience (Youth MOVE) National is a youth-led national organization devoted to improving services and systems that support positive growth and development by uniting the voices of individuals who have lived experience in various systems including mental health, juvenile justice, education, and child welfare.

The youth movement began years ago when youth coordinators and youth across the country were advocating for national involvement. Their passion and determination continued on until 2003 when the National Youth Development Board was formed with the support of a diverse group of youth coordinators from communities across the country.

The National Youth Development Board existed in an advisory capacity in the early years. In 2007, the Board took the first step toward becoming an independent organization. Members of the Board asked the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health to consider acting as Youth MOVE's fiscal agent. The family movement—and the National Federation itself—has had over 20 years

of experience in empowering families and creating positive system change. Board members thought that it would be of great benefit for Youth MOVE National to learn from this experience. This relationship would also allow for professional mentoring of Board and staff, and would have the added advantage of providing office space in the National Federation's home office, which is close to both SAMHSA (the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) and our nation's capitol. The conversations led to Youth MOVE becoming a subsidiary of the National Federation of Families.

In October 2007, with start-up funding from SAMHSA, the National Youth Development Board transitioned into a national youth-led advocacy organization known as Youth MOVE National. With this start-up funding, Youth MOVE National was able to hire a full-time Director, Carl Yonder, and part-time administrative assistant, Brian Campbell. Moving forward in January 2008, Youth MOVE National was officially incorporated to become Youth MOVE National, Inc.

Today, Youth MOVE National's main goals are:

- To assist in developing the Youth Leadership program at meetings
- To create youth movement principles and policies
- To develop training tools, guides and other documents
- To unite the voices and causes of youth
- To act as consultants to youth, providers, families, and other adults
- To create youth movement principles and policies
- To provide national youth leadership representing youth served by mental health and other youth-serving systems
- To coach others in the area of authentic youth involvement

Youth MOVE National is working to become a model of successful youth involvement in consultation and policy work at the national level.

With members from around the country—from Montana to Florida,

YOUTH MOVE MISSION STATEMENT

We the members of Youth MOVE National will work as a diverse collective to unite the voices and causes of youth while raising awareness around youth issues. We will advocate for youth rights and voice in mental health and the other systems that serve them, for the purpose of empowering youth to be equal partners in the process of change.

New York to Hawaii—the board of Youth MOVE National is a diverse group. One board member is a former gang member, while others were involved in foster care for their entire lives. Board members bring their own personal beliefs and values, yet all are committed to using their personal success on behalf of Youth MOVE National.

This diverse coalition has already achieved positive work within the mental health system. For example, one of Youth MOVE National's early projects was to develop a definition of what it means to have a youth-guided system of care. Youth-guided means that young people have the right to be empowered, educated, and given a role in making decisions, both about their own lives and about the policies and procedures governing care for youth in the community, state and nation.

Creating this definition was important to the work of building systems of care, and board members charged forward with passion to create more tools to inspire change through youth involvement. Youth MOVE National board members had the unique opportunity to travel and learn of the youth movement occurring in our neighboring nation, Canada. From this relationship, the project Dare to Dream was brought to the United States by Youth MOVE National. Based on the successful Dare to Dream Program from Ontario, Canada, the U.S. program promotes positive mental health by providing

funding to youth (23 years of age and under) to facilitate awareness-raising and stigma-reduction projects in local communities. Between 2008 and 2009, Dare to Dream America, with startup funding from SAMHSA, has awarded 20 grants to youth across the country who demonstrated high interest and energy around unique and creative projects. The ideas of youth astounded Youth MOVE National, with concepts ranging from ad campaigns to creative theatre productions to a Battle of the Bands. This program has offered many youth the opportunity to improve the knowledge and understanding of each local community around mental health.

Beyond Dare to Dream America, Youth MOVE National provides several services such as serving as consultants on panels at the national, state and local levels; assisting in developing youth-guided programs and projects for improving services and systems; and providing youth speakers for conferences and workshops across the country. Board members have participated in high-profile opportunities such as the Georgetown Transition Policy Academy and the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership, for which board members traveled to New Zealand and Australia! Other board members have presented to the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists and served on the Council for Coordination and Collaboration. Youth MOVE National was fortunate to be able to participate in the first-ever Youth Coordinator Conference in Washington DC, where close to 80 youth coordinators met to discuss their work and the need for future collaboration to continue the youth movement. There is a lot of important work being done by youth coordinators across the country and Youth MOVE National is there to help support the positive change for youth-serving systems every step of the way.

How Can You Help?

There are several ways to help Youth MOVE National continue its work as an organization devoted to improving youth-serving systems and

increasing authentic youth involvement in this process of change.

You can become an individual member of Youth MOVE National!

Your support of Youth Move National is valued and appreciated as your membership dues enable Youth MOVE to broaden its ongoing efforts to build programs and policies for positive youth involvement across the country. The Youth MOVE National board is eager to support and work with its members in order to bring about positive systems change. Please check our website, www.youthmove.us as we will post updates on activi-

YOUTH MOVE VISION STATEMENT

We the members of Youth 'Motivating Others through Voices of Experience' (MOVE) National envision systems in which every young person that enters a youth-serving system is being prepared for life through genuine opportunities and authentic youth involvement throughout all systems levels. We help guide the redevelopment of the systems so that no youth falls through the cracks. We advocate for youth to utilize their power and expertise to foster change in their communities and in their own lives.

Youth MOVE National works toward the day when all people will recognize and accept the culture of youth, their families, and the communities that serve them in order to be truly culturally competent. Youth MOVE National looks forward to the day when youth are no longer treated as numbers, problems or caseloads, but as individuals and humans. We will all stand as partners: youth, youth advocates, supporters, parents, and professionals to see our youth become successful.

ties pushing forward the national youth movement. We are also in the process of creating an email listserv for all Youth MOVE National members.

You can create a Youth MOVE chapter!

Youth MOVE National is excited to offer the opportunity to youth groups around the country to become chapters of Youth MOVE and become part of a network of youth actively involved in creating positive systems change. Our chapters will be free to run in their own individualized way while carrying out the mission and vision of the national board. The Youth MOVE National board will serve as the connection to keep a tight relationship between national and local levels. The voice of youth at a community level will be proclaimed and addressed by our national organization while the chapters will serve as the eyes and ears of Youth MOVE National at the state and local level.

Collaborate with Youth MOVE National

Youth MOVE National realizes that we cannot do it alone. We need help and welcome the opportunity to collaborate with other organizations to further the mission and vision of Youth MOVE National and to work towards the day where positive system changes are a reality.

A Local Example: Youth MOVE Oregon

Youth from across Oregon are beginning to organize themselves to bring a strong and united youth voice in the design, implementation and evaluation of youth mental health services, organizations and systems. This work has gone on across the state with many different organizations and programs. The newly formed Youth MOVE Oregon (YMO) is aiming to unite these groups and bring a strong youth voice for improving all youth-serving systems.

Recently, at the Governor's Wrap-around Initiative Youth Work Group meeting, youth from across Oregon met and decided it was time to join

together and be formally recognized as Youth MOVE Oregon. The young people are organizing within the Oregon Family Support Network (OFSN, a chapter of the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health) until they are ready to leap out on their own. Martin Rafferty, a youth leader in Oregon, has been assigned the role of Director for this newly forming organization. He says that "This work is about uniting systems. This work is about youth leadership."

The group's first statewide stigma-reducing activity is helping to plan Children's Mental Health Day at the capitol in May 2009. Members of the group will also be participating in the national anti-stigma "BUST IT" campaign. Our youngest youth member stated, "We're going to have free t-shirts, singing, dancing, food... oh, and legislators and stuff—it will be a blast!"

Serving youth with professionalism, respect, and commitment is YMO's top priority. YMO members believe young people are a great asset to their communities and should be encouraged, supported and recognized for their contributions. They wish to support youth advocating for positive change. If you would like to get in touch with YMO please email Martin Rafferty at martinrafferty@gmail.com or call OFSN at (541) 342-2876. We look forward to Youth MOVE-ing into your area of the state and nation!

Authors

Carl Yonder is the first director for Youth MOVE National. Though he doesn't always like speaking about himself, he feels his work in whatever form will.

Johanna Bergan, Youth MOVE National Board Member, is passionately dedicated to removing the stigma around mental illness and improving mental health awareness, especially in rural areas.

Laura Rariden strives to serve youth with professionalism, respect, and commitment.

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