Partnering for Results

**Des Moines, Iowa – December 16, 2019** – The Mid-Iowa Health Foundation, in collaboration with the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, hosted a “Partnering for Results” training as part of its HealthConnect Fellowship Initiative. HealthConnect Fellows, and other service providers, community leaders, and local advocates attended the learning session aimed at authentically engaging individuals in partnerships that promote policy change and leadership development. The training, created and facilitated by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, focuses on the principles of engagement, intentionally sharing power, and the benefits to participating partners.

“As advocates for social change, we are driven by the strengths children, families and communities possess and the challenges they face,” stated Andrea Dencklau, Senior Associate at the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa and one of 18 HealthConnect Fellows, at the conclusion of the training. “The training reinforced the principle that people directly impacted by social problems are the best experts in developing solutions to social problems. It is imperative that as advocates, we partner with these experts to ensure the solutions match real-life challenges and reflect the strengths and needs of families and communities.”

Participants learned the philosophies and practices related to authentic engagement, participated in discussion and activities that will support integration of concepts into their work, and left with action plans and commitments to activate authentic engagement post-training. While the training was focused on partnering with youth in the child welfare system, the philosophies and practices easily translate to multiple issues and vulnerable populations.

“We were pleased to partner with the Mid-Iowa Health Foundation to bring this training to Iowa,” said Carol Behrer, YPII’s Executive Director. “Young people bring wisdom and often unexpected insights to our policy discussions. But it takes effort and skill to engage them in meaningful and productive ways. This training reinforced the importance of doing so.”

The training team included Jamie Bennett LMSW, ACC, Senior Fellow, Case Commons, Alex Hudson Senior Fellow, Case Commons, and Kayla Powell, a young adult with lived experience in Iowa’s foster care system, a Young Fellow with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, and a passionate advocate for improvement of the child welfare system in Iowa and nationally.

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**About Youth Policy Institute of Iowa**

Founded in 2000, the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII) works to expand and improve the delivery of services and supports for Iowa youth by partnering with public and private entities throughout the state. YPII is involved in a wide range of initiatives but specializes in policies and programs affecting youth transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, particularly those who have been involved in child welfare (foster care) or juvenile justice systems. YPII also provides coordination, outreach, and evaluation support to the Iowa Aftercare Services Network.

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