

## ***What is the Youth Leadership Advisory Team? (YLAT)***

Maine's YLAT is a dynamic group of young people and adult partners from across the state working together to make sure that youth in care have the best possible experience. YLAT is a team effort involving youth, the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the community.

**"I hope to show everyone that we are kids who care; kids who are taking action to change a not-so-great situation. We deserve praise and respect."**

Crystal, age 18

### **Who can participate in YLAT activities?**

- Maine Youth, ages 14-21, who are in care, in transition from care, in kinship arrangements, in reunification, or in adopted families
- Former youth in care, ages 22+
- Adults who are committed to supporting the efforts

### **What should I do if I want to join or if I know someone who wants to join?**

- Visit the YLAT webpage, [www.ylat.org](http://www.ylat.org). Check out the "People" page to contact someone you know.
- Call the YLAT Office: 780-5845 or toll-free at 1-877-792-YLAT.
- Email [sburnschong@usm.maine.edu](mailto:sburnschong@usm.maine.edu)

### **What happens in YLAT?**

- **District YLAT meetings.** Youth, former youth, and adult partners gather for monthly regional meetings statewide to address critical issues facing youth in care.
- **Panel presentations and speaking engagements.** YLAT youth share their experiences to train, educate, and challenge audiences.
- **Advisory groups and committee work.** Youth work with adult partners to help create and improve policies and practice.
- **Creative projects.** Youth use the arts to inspire change in the system.
- **Statewide events.** Youth are invited to design and attend statewide events.
- **Philanthropy and community service.** YLAT members give critical input on how to give away thousands of dollars to innovative projects helping youth in foster care.

### **What are the benefits to young people?**

- Connect with other youth in care and caring adults in a supportive, safe environment.
- Help to change the child welfare system.
- Make a difference in the community by speaking out and participating.
- Learn new skills in communication, advocacy, public speaking, and team work, while building confidence (and resumes).
- Connect with additional resources.
- Get a stipend (generally \$40) for speaking engagements and project work.

**What has YLAT accomplished?** The list is very long! Check out the website, [www.ylat.org](http://www.ylat.org) for more information and stories.

*...Answers for youth in care, by youth in care*