



OCFS Youth Newsletter

January 2015
Volume 4

OCFS Summer Interns

Over the summer, 13 student interns worked in various Division of Child Welfare and Community Services (CWCS) offices across the state. In addition to completing their work, the interns experienced a Youth Leadership Academy, two meetings with OCFS Executive Deputy Commissioner Sheila Poole, and Youth Speak-Outs. Read below about some firsthand experiences.

My Youth Leadership Academy Experience

By: Autumn

"This was my first time ever going to the Summer Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) held at the White Eagle Conference Center in Hamilton. I was one of five youth facilitators and it was an awesome time. The YLA is for youth who exhibit strong leadership skills and come to learn how to be leaders. Each day there was a workshop/presentation that a youth facilitator put on; workshops included 'What is My Message?', 'How to Share My Message,' 'How to Be a Leader,' 'How to Present My Message,' 'How to Make Change Happen,' and 'What is Feedback?', which I presented. I am happy I had to present on the last day; by the end of the YLA, I was more comfortable presenting in front of everybody because I got to know the youth that were there. Socially, the experience was a lot of fun. The first night, I was in the teepee room playing pool, and I sat by the fire and ate s'mores. By the second night, I was on stage dancing with some of the other youth and singing karaoke with them. Even though the YLA was only three days and two nights, I got to know some amazing people who are all different but the same. I learned a lot being there."

"Speak-Out"

By: Beverly Carroll, Prima James, and Dawt Hnem Sung

"This year, the Regions 1 and 2 Youth Speak-Out was held at SUNY Geneseo on August 7. The Rochester Regional Office interns worked with the Buffalo Regional Office interns and created a different experience with the Speak-Out. We tried to create a more relaxed environment for the youth and had a Jeopardy game for the morning program. We think that the game created an engaging atmosphere and made it more fun for everyone involved! We also worked on getting more youth talent involved so that we could focus more on the positive things youth accomplish. We had a rapper from Rochester, JJ Cold, and some spoken word poetry, from Charlene in the Buffalo Regional Office, as well as Hillside Varick's band performing some songs. This opportunity was a positive one for everyone involved, and we want to thank the youth again for participating!"

The Speak-Out was very emotional for everyone in the room. It can be a huge challenge to get up and speak in front of strangers, but all of the youth did

OCFS Marks January 2015 Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery where people profit from the control and exploitation of others. For more information, read the Human Trafficking Need to Know Series brochure on YouthInProgress.org or on the OCFS website (ocfs.ny.gov).



an amazing job! Even though everyone involved were strangers, it was so easy to speak to each other because we all had something in common. So many relationships were created and the part that meant most to us was not only the support from everyone, but the panelists' participation because it can be hard to find someone that wants to listen, cares, and make a difference. We appreciate you as well!"

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Division of Juvenile Justice and Opportunities for Youth—Express Yourself!

By: Raven P.

Youth at The Sgt. Henry Johnson Youth Leadership Academy unleash their inner creativity through the arts by creating pieces of pottery to send back home to their families. Some of the residents have even considered making pottery a hobby after they return home. Youth spend six hours a week making pottery to hone their skills and techniques, all while bonding and learning in a positive environment. So far, they've created name plaques, cups, bowls, plates, vases and other items. Let your creativity shine! Express yourself!

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How Credit Affects Your Future

By: Brandon S.

Credit is a system that allows you to borrow money from an entity, usually a bank or a credit agency. You must pay back the money,

typically by the end of the month with a little extra that is accumulated as interest. The interest is a certain percentage of how much you spend that you must pay back on top of how much you borrowed.

The most common form of credit is using a credit card, which is fast and efficient, but it can be very easy to lose track of how much you owe. You can build your credit by successfully paying back what you borrowed over time. If you miss payments frequently, your credit could be hurt. The more your credit is hurt, the lower your credit score. The lower your credit score, the less you can borrow.

Typically, if you want to buy a car or even a house, you will need a high credit score. So, help out your future self by making sure that you don't borrow more than you can pay back by the end of the month, and by not missing any payments.

Here is more helpful information from the Federal Trade Commission: www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/setting-out-your-own-money-management-and-credit-101

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New York State Combating Heroin and Prescription Drug Abuse

The increase in the use of heroin, prescription, and synthetic drugs has devastated lives across New York State and the nation. Young people are becoming addicted to heroin because it is cheap and easily accessible. Using drugs causes developmental delays for early teens, inhibits growth, and may even cause death.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2007, one overdose death occurred every 19 minutes. Synthetic drugs include bath salts, K2 (also known as "spice"), LSD, PCP, Ecstasy, synthetic marijuana, and more. The usage of these drugs can cause permanent health damage. Side effects include loss of ligaments (the tissue that binds bones together) as a result of infections from syringe injections, paranoia, violent behavior, elevated blood pressure, seizures, heart attacks and strokes.

Addiction can happen to anyone, in any family, at any time. Your life is worth more than drug addiction. For help, call 1-877-8-HOPENY or visit combatheroin.ny.gov.

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The Importance of Budgeting Your Money

By: Brandon S.

Budgeting can be dreadful, but it's very smart to do. Without a budget, you can lead yourself right into debt, and more often than not, it is very hard to escape. It can only take a minute of recklessness to create a lifetime of hardships.

First, what is a budget? It is a tool that is used to help take out certain amounts of your income (most likely a paycheck) for certain things like your water, electric and heating bills, rent, clothes, food, and recreational activities. It is valuable to know what is more important and what you need versus what is less important and what you want.

When you are on your own, it is about survival and sustaining. Do

not expect to live the life of luxury. You will need to work hard to have the things you had as a teenager. Through good budgeting skills and a ton of hard work, you may live that luxurious life in the future.

Follow this link and save this file to your desktop: it's a Personal Budget Excel Spreadsheet that will help you create a personal budget and stick to it. www.vertex42.com/ExcelTemplates/personal-budget-spreadsheet.html

4 Apps to Help You Succeed this Semester

By: Raven P.

In today's world, students are using their electronic devices as notebooks. Not only does it lighten the load of carrying your textbooks and notebooks with you to class, but it also presents the opportunity to take notes the best way you see fit. Here are a few apps you can download to increase productivity this semester.

Evernote

Some students are audible learners, others are visual, and some students may be both audible and visual learners. Audible learners absorb more information listening. Visual learners learn through sight. Evernote is a great application for students regardless of what type of learner you are. Evernote not only allows you to create notebooks but it also allows users to create and archive webpages, save photographs, and create audio and handwritten notes.

Google Keep

Create notes in style! Google Keep allows you to keep track of all of your responsibilities no matter where you are. It stores notes on a smartphone device similar to that of sticky notes. The notes can be created and stored in different colors allowing users to archive and categorize notes in different ways. It also includes imaging features and more.

AudioNote

Thousands of students and schools all over the world are using the AudioNote app. Some students are calling the AudioNote app one of the best note taking apps available in app stores. AudioNote allows students and schools to record classroom lectures both visually and audibly, import lecture slides as the background of notes, highlight key terms, and add or edit playbacks from recordings.

Mindnode

Are you a visual learner? Do you enjoy drawing charts, graphs, pictures or other images to map out your thoughts or ideas? If so, Mindnode is a great app for you. Mindnode is an application that allows you to organize, brainstorm and present your thoughts in unique ways using canvases and nodes. These canvases can be turned into PDF documents, texts and images.

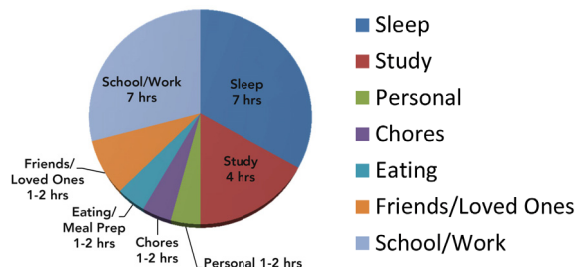
Ten Tips to Help You Manage Your Time

By: Raven P.

1. Your first priority is school!
2. Fight procrastination by setting study goals.
3. Use a monthly calendar to record dates of assignments and exams.
4. Consider creating a daily or weekly to-do list to keep you on track.
5. Use your electronic devices or smartphones to follow your daily schedule.
6. Consider what type of person you are. If you are not a morning person, schedule time to get work done during the afternoon.
7. Never bite off more than you can chew. In other words, if you notice the quality of your work decreasing, consider letting go of some extracurricular activities.
8. If you are overwhelmed, don't be afraid to ask for help. Seek out help from your professors, your peers or tutors.
9. Take small breaks in between studying, preferably less than an hour.
10. Remember to factor in personal time, cleaning, laundry and other responsibilities.

How Your Time Can Be Managed

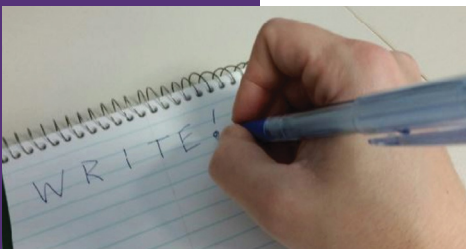
Remember, flexibility is key!



Submit Your Work to the OCFS Youth Newsletter

Do you have ideas for the newsletter? Do you want your story, artwork, or poem featured in our next newsletter? Submit a reflective essay about your experiences, challenges, and inspirations in foster care! To submit material or ask questions, email Kenneth Kirton: Kenneth.Kirton@ocfs.ny.gov

Next deadline:
3/16/15



How Do You Finish an Essay? WRITE!

By: Raven P.

W: Write it down. The worst mistake students make is telling themselves “I’ll remember this, I don’t have to write this down.” Writing things not only helps you remember the concept better but it also gives you something to refer back to when you are reviewing your notes. Writing things down in a notebook, electronic device, or notepad is essential to writing anything whether it’s an essay or an idea.

R: Read. Don’t just rely on one source for information, especially when writing essays for school. Many teachers require their students to have at least two or three sources to support their work.

I: Include and cite the sources in your essay. Not only do you want to avoid plagiarism (using someone else’s ideas as if they were your own) but you also want to make sure you are giving credit to the authors of the sources you are using. This allows the reader to learn more about where you got your information from. Think of citing your sources as a road that allows the reader to see the steps you took to reach your conclusion.

T: Take your time. Rushing to write an essay can lead to mistakes. Think about what you are going to write about first, draft an outline and create bullet points for each paragraph. This will allow you to organize your ideas. Have others proofread your writing as well.

E: Evaluate the sources you are writing about. Take notes and highlight important points.

Bullying: Breaking the Silence

By: Josiah A.

Bullying is something that can be done in many ways. The four common ways of bullying are physical, mental, emotional, and verbal. To me, bullying is something that nobody should experience. In my elementary and middle school days, life for me was tough. I was always getting bullied for either being in special-ed or not living with my parents. After some time, the bullying just kept getting worse by the day and I started to believe that what everyone was saying about me was true: that I was dumb, ugly, stupid, and worthless, and many other things. I started to bully myself at times saying that I was unloved and how I was a waste of time and space, how it would be better if I just disappeared. It got to the point where I, myself, started to have suicidal thoughts. I attempted suicide three times and after the third time I thought to myself that committing suicide wouldn’t fix the problem.



Some facts about bullying, compiled by dosomething.org:

- More than 3.2 million students are victims of bullying.
- Approximately 160,000 teens skip school every day because of bullying.
- About 17 percent of American students report being bullied three to four times per month or more within a semester.
- By age 14, 30 percent of boys and 40 percent of girls report bullying to their friends.

Bullying is something that we need to stop. Bullying hurts, and some people take it differently. Together, we can end it and be friends to one another.