



# SPEAKOUT

## VDSS Youth Advisory Board

### What is SPEAKOUT?

SPEAKOUT (Strong Positive Educated Advocates Keen On Understanding the Truth) is for youth in foster care and foster care alumni (an adult previously in foster care) who are interested in using their voice to help change and improve the foster care system.

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) recognizes the importance of hearing the voice of the youth to make a difference in the way youth are served in the foster care system. SPEAKOUT is responsible for providing feedback directly to VDSS, legislators, other state agencies, LDSS directors, the Board for Social Services, and others.

### Who can join the group?

Youth and alumni ages 15-26 who are either currently in the foster care system or those who have had experience in foster care are eligible to apply. The group consists of 15-20 youth from across Virginia. Group meetings are held in various locations throughout the state.

For Fiscal Year 2020, SPEAKOUT decided to focus on:

1. Improving social worker involvement (by reviewing VDSS trainings; speaking at VDSS worker trainings; meeting with child welfare stipend students; and participating on panels).
2. Improving foster parent training (by partnering with NewFound Families; and providing training to foster parents).
3. Branding SPEAKOUT (to recruit new members and increase visibility).

**To learn more, visit:**

<http://www.fostermynfuture.com>

**or email:**

[speakout@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:speakout@dss.virginia.gov)

