

ALABAMA D.R.E.A.M. COUNCIL



BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I NAME

The name of the council shall be the Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council, D.R.E.A.M. stands for **“Dedicated, Responsible, Empowered and Motivated.”**

Mission Statement: The Alabama D.R.E.A.M. Council is dedicated, responsible, empowered and motivated to improving the foster care experience for youth. We will strive to be positive role models for all foster youth. We pledge to serve our communities. We seek the guidance and knowledge of our adult leaders in making this dream a reality.

ARTICLE II PURPOSE

The purpose of the council shall be to:

1. To make a difference in the lives of foster youth.
2. To assist in developing handbooks for youth in foster care.
3. To manage a newsletter for youth in foster care.
4. To provide peer counseling and mentoring for youth in foster care.
5. To promote leadership skills to youth in foster care.
6. To assist the policy makers on best practice methods for foster youths
7. To help foster youth make successful transition into adulthood.
8. To educate community and public leadership toward involvement in independent living program issues.

9. To assist in improving public relations and/or public perceptions of youth in foster care.
10. To advocate for new laws to improve the life of youth in foster care.

ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Classification

- A. **Official Youth Members:** Official Youth Membership shall be open to all youth that are currently in the foster care system.
- A youth must be at least the age of 14 but not older than 21 residing in the State of Alabama.
 - All potential members must apply for membership by completing the Alabama D.R.E.A.M. Council application process.
 - Alabama D.R.E.A.M. Council membership will review the applications and select candidates for membership.
 - Youth must not have failed more than one subject during the previous two-school grade reporting periods (report cards).
 - Youth must submit a copy of report card for each grading period.
 - Youth must be able to communicate effectively.
 - Youth must be able to act as a leader yet able to work as part of a team.
 - Youth must have a desire to motivate others to reach goals.
 - Youth must be creative.
 - Youth must be able to regulate behavior in a mature, responsible and positive manner.
 - Youth must require minimum amount of supervision and can be trusted to act appropriately.
 - Youth must be able to demonstrate well-developed values.
 - Youth must be able to listen and help other youth problem-solve.
 - Youth must be willing to accept assistance from adult facilitators.
 - Youth must be able to serve as a positive role model and act accordingly.
 - Youth must be able to commit to serve on the Council for at least one (1) year.
 - Youth must be able to meet on a regular basis for training and organizational meetings.
 - Youth shall have the right to vote and serve a two-year term. He or she may be nominated for and elected to office. Youth may apply for one additional two-year term.
 - Youth may apply to be an Alumni (former council member) if he/she is between ages of 21 to 23.

- B. Adult Facilitators: Adults who have more active involvement with the council by helping to facilitate discussion, encouraging youth leadership and mediating council conflict. Support the council in meeting goals by connecting council to appropriate resources, providing transportation and assisting with youth activities as requested by the councils.**

An adult facilitator actively participates in the Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council meetings and supports its effort and mission. Adult Facilitators must pass a review by the membership. He/she must sign an agreement pledging to actively participate in D.R.E.A.M. Council meetings and work toward achieving the goals of the Council. Adult facilitator shall not be paid an honorarium. Adult facilitator may not run or be elected to office. Adult facilitator maybe a caseworker, foster parent, an adult, Independent Living Program coordinator, Independent Living Program consultant and Alumni council members age 24 and above.

- Adult Facilitator must trust the youth
- Adult Facilitator must provide leadership
- Adult Facilitator must be honest, dependable, respectful and caring
- Adult Facilitator must provide sites for meeting to be held
- Adult Facilitator must provide food and transportation for meetings and activities
- Adult Facilitator must maintain a positive attitude and confidentiality
- Adult Facilitator will serve as a chaperone at various conferences, activities and meetings.

SECTION 2. NEW MEMBERS

Any youth interested in obtaining membership to the Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council must be a member of the local county Independent Living Program Youth Advisory Council, if there is a local council. If there is no local county council, youth maybe referred by a social worker from the assigned county. A youth may also be referred by an active council member in good standing.

Youth will be required to complete a membership application. Membership applications will be reviewed by the D.R.E.A.M. Council members and Adult Facilitators. Non-members will not be permitted to participate in the Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council events designated for members.

SECTION 3. ALUMNI MEMBERSHIP

- Youth shall have been in the Alabama foster care system
- Youth shall have been a member of the Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council in good standing.
- Youth shall continue to abide by the Council Code of Conduct, Bylaws and other requirements governing the Council.
- Youth shall be no older than age 25.
- Youth shall continue to work to achieve Council goals.

SECTION 4. COUNCIL MEMBER NUMBER & REPRESENTATION

The Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council shall consist of at least ten (10) members but no more than twenty (20) members. The membership shall be representative of foster youth throughout the State. To insure that this occurs the membership shall be made up of youth currently in care from various counties and youth that are alumni that have not obtained age 25.

Member in Good Standing: A duly authorized member in good standing of the Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council shall (i) be in and/or alumni of the State of Alabama Foster Care system; (ii) between 14 and 20 years of age; if alumni no older than 25 and (iii) be a member of the county Youth Advisory Council, if county Youth Advisory is inactive a referral by a county social worker and/or active council member in good standing. All fees must be paid in full.

SECTION 5. COUNCIL MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT

The Alabama D.R.E.A.M. Council membership is a privilege not a right. Therefore, you are required to abide by the following Code of Conduct:

- I agree to respect myself, fellow Council members, staff and guest.
- I agree to attend all meetings and/or activities, be on time and actively participate throughout the meetings.
- I agree to be honest and expect honesty from others.
- I agree to be willing to express what I feel, think and believe in a positive manner.
- I agree to set a good example for other youths at Independent Living Program functions
- I agree to accept responsibility for my actions.
- I agree to not use any illegal drugs, alcohol and cigarettes.
- I agree to observe confidentiality. Unless it is a matter of life or death.

- I agree to be willing to try new experiences.
- I agree to be a good role model for younger youth in foster care.
- I agree to maintain passing grades. If enrolled in a GED program; I will show progress in completing requirements.
- I agree to request help if need it.
- I agree to dress in proper attire when attending meetings, activities, conferences and other scheduled functions.
- I agree to behave in a manner that brings respect to the D.R.E.A.M. Council at all times.
- I agree to not have more than three (3) unexcused absences.
- I agree to provide a written statement to the Council if I am unable to maintain membership.

Section 6. Membership Termination & Provisions for Appeal of Terminations

Any member who is found to have acted in a manner detrimental or inappropriate, who has violated the ALABAMA Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council operating agreement, or who misses more than three (3) unexcused meeting, may be expelled from the Council by a majority vote of the membership.

The Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council shall not take action until such member has been given thirty (30) days written notice of the charges and given an opportunity to be heard before the Council. If the member opts not to respond, the Council will inform the member in writing of the decision within ten (10) days of the vote by the membership.

Section 7. Dues and Expenses

There shall be \$1.00 per meeting and no more than \$25.00 for annual dues. Payment of dues shall be rendered at each designated meeting beginning at the 22nd meeting, unless special provisions are announced. All members, elected officers, alumnus and adult facilitators shall pay dues. All travel, food, lodging and transportation expenses shall be paid for by County & State Independent Living Program funds. Alumni members must provide own funding for food, lodging, transportation and various activity cost. Council may provide assistance to Alumni through other funding sources. A fine of no more than .25 cent will be computed to the meeting dues for late payment until the balance is paid in full. If overdue balance is not pay within three (3) months, disciplinary actions will be taken. The disciplinary action for non-payment will be classified as an unexcused absence. Active Council members shall receive a \$25.00 monthly incentive for attendance. Active members that provide own transportation to and from monthly meetings shall receive \$50.00 to cover gas. No member shall receive more than \$75.00 per monthly meeting. All incentives shall be rendered if funds are available. Active council members shall receive funds to the cost of hotel, food and activity for meeting requiring overnight accommodations. All active Council members must signed a W-9 Taxpayer Identification form prior in order for a check to be processed. **All dues will be deposited into a saving account.**

ARTICLE IV MEETINGS

- A. Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council meetings will be held eleven (11) times a year. Meeting locations will be held at various County DHR offices on the fourth Saturday morning from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. or 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. depending on location. Future meeting dates, times, location will be schedule at previous meeting.
- B. At least one (1) out-of-state national conference will be attended by Council.
- C. Council shall have an opportunity visit educational and leadership sites out of the State of Alabama.
- D. Meetings will, in most cases, follow an agenda. All members must follow the agenda.
- E. The Secretary or designated representative must take Minutes at all meetings. Minutes of all general meetings must be approved by the membership at the following meeting.
- F. All members must adhere to Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council's code of conduct at all meetings and scheduled activities.
- G. All meetings shall be planned by council members and adult facilitators.
- H. All members and adult facilitators will maintain confidentiality unless the safety and well-being of a member is at risk.
- I. Notification of meetings will be submitted one month prior to the scheduled meetings. Notification will be submitted via mail, e-mail and telephone.
- J. All members should contact their county Independent Living Program coordinator to RSVP each meeting. County Independent Living Program coordinator should RSVP to contact person listed on the notification. If a member does not RSVP the member will not be permitted to attend the meeting and/or activity.
- K. All members should receive at least three (3) to five (5) days notification of change/ cancellation of meeting.
- L. All members must submit at least three (3) to five (5) days advance notification if he/she cannot attend the meeting. Members must supply a written statement of reason(s) he/she is cannot attend the meeting. Adult facilitator will present statement at the meeting.
- M. All members and Adult Facilitator must sign a sign-in sheet for each meeting. The sign-in sheet will have the month, date, year, section for name, county and social worker.

ARTICLE V GOVERNING BOARD

SECTION I EXECUTIVE BOARD/COMMITTEE:

The Executive Board/Committee shall consist of the elected officers. Officers shall oversee all Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council functions. Officers

shall assist all committees, Official Youth Members and Adult Facilitator with grievances against Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council.

SECTION I ELECTED OFFICERS:

The elected officers shall be the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Historian and Parliamentarian. Officers shall be elected by the majority vote of the membership.

SECTION II TERM OF OFFICE:

All officers must be voted in by the membership. The officers shall be elected by the membership at **the last meeting of the year**. The term of office shall be for two (2) years beginning in the 11th month to the 22nd month. The President cannot serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.

SECTION III VACANCIES:

Vacancies shall be filled through the majority vote of the membership. Vacancy in the office of president shall be filled by the vice-president. If an elected officer is discharged from the Alabama Foster Care system or terminated from the council before his/her term expires, a special election shall occur thirty (30) days following the discharged date or termination date. Members shall have attended eight (8) meetings and be in good standing in order to run for any office. Member must be current with dues. Elected officers will serve a ninety (90) day probation period prior to officially accepting the elected office. The President or an Adult Facilitator may make a motion or select a member that is in good standing to serve temporary for an vacant office until a special elections is held.

Section IV REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

- A. Any officer or chairperson may be removed by the membership by a majority of vote of the entire membership. Written notice must be filed with the membership and voted on by membership within thirty (30) days of intent to remove.
- B. A committee chairperson can be removed for failure to perform his/her duties as specified in these by-laws, or for being found to have acted in a manner detrimental or inappropriate to the Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council.
- C. Any officer who is found to have acted in a manner detrimental or inappropriate to the Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council can be expelled from the Council by a majority vote of the membership. The Council shall not take action until such officer or chairperson has been given a thirty (30) days written notice of the charge(s) and given an opportunity to be heard before the Council. A notice shall be sent prior to the next meeting, giving the members the option of voting by mail.

SECTION V. DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS

President: The president shall be the chief officer at all Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council regularly scheduled meetings. President shall be limited to two (2) consecutive terms. The President shares responsibility of overseeing all Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council events, including, but not limited to planning the agenda and conducting meetings with the Independent Living Program Consultant. He/she shares responsibility of directing and supervising all programs and projects with the Alabama Independent Living Program Consultant. The president shall be a member in good standing and know the purpose of the Council. The president shall have the ability to get along well with others, presided with mutual respect for all and have a sense of humor.

Vice-President: Shall assist president with all duties. Fills in for and replaces the president when necessary. The vice-president shall have the skills, knowledge and qualities of the president.

Treasurer: The treasurer shall be honest with the capacity to handle money and simple bookkeeping. In conjunction with the Independent Living Program Consultant, coordinates and maintains financial records of the Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council. Helps to keep accurate records on each account and reports financial status to council. All Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council committees must submit written expense requests to Treasurer. The treasurer must process the request with the Alabama Independent Living Program Consultant. The President or Vice-President must approve the request.

Secretary/Assistant Secretary: Shall record minutes of all meetings, reports from each committee in regard to their actions and plans. Composes and coordinates all incoming and outgoing correspondences as directed by the President and Independent Living Program Consultant. Maintain the membership database that consists of member contact and demographic information.

Parliamentarian: Shall call to order all Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council meetings at which he/she is present. The parliamentarian must know the council By-Laws and the proper procedure for conducting meetings. The parliamentarian explains the rules for the council. The Parliamentarian with the assistance from the Independent Living Program Consultant shall provide prior notice of upcoming election. He/She shall also inform the members of the election process and the rules:

- A. Candidates must be Official Youth Members of Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council
- B. Nominations and elections shall be held during the 21st meeting of each year. Nominees must be in attendance to acknowledge his/her acceptance or declination.

- C. Nominations for officers are made through motions. The motion must be seconded by a D.R.E.A.M. Council member in order for the nomination to be upheld.
- D. Once the motion has been made and seconded, the candidate must acknowledge the nomination by signifying that he/she accepts or declines the nomination.
- E. Accepting or declining the nomination does not prohibit the member from being nominated for another position. No member shall be nominated for more than two positions in any election. Member shall be elected to one office.
- F. Each candidate will have the opportunity to present a campaign speech prior to the election.
- G. Voting shall occur after each candidate for the particular position has completed his/her campaign speech. Campaign speeches shall be no more than two-minutes in length. Votes shall be secured and be tallied by the Parliamentarian with assistance from the Independent Living Program Consultant and one (1) Adult Facilitator and at two (2) official youth members. The Parliamentarian shall count the votes and record the results immediately after collecting the votes from the members.
- H. The two official youth members assisting with the election shall not be current officers or in the running for an officer position.
- I. Should the Parliamentarian be a candidate for re-election of his/her post or elected to another office, the Independent Living Program Consultant and/or Adult Facilitator shall temporarily assume the responsibilities of the Parliamentarian. Once the votes have been secured, the Parliamentarian shall re-assume his/her responsibilities.
- J. Winners are determined, as the person receiving the highest number of votes.
- K. An official youth member who assists in the counting process shall announce the results of the election at the time set forth in the agenda of the 22nd meeting.
- L. Elected officers shall be seated (take office) in the month of January of the following calendar year. Officers shall hold their positions for a two (2) year term and serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms.
- M. All votes shall be recorded on an official tally and election sheet that will be provided to the Independent Living Program Consultant and Secretary for record keeping.

HISTORIAN: Shall prepare in narrative, brief, or outline form chronological account of past or current events of the Council. Organizes and evaluates data on basis of authenticity and relative significance. Assembles historical data by consulting

sources of information, such as news files, archives, minutes, miscellaneous published and unpublished materials.

ARTICLE VI OPERATING AGREEMENT REVIEW

- A. Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council's Operating Agreement shall be reviewed by the Executive Committee, Membership and Adult Facilitator. Suggestions for revisions shall be made prior to the 21st meeting of the year. These revisions must be mailed to the membership for consideration at the next meeting. Revisions and Amendments will require a quorum vote of the membership to pass.
- B. Any suggestions for revisions from the floor shall be presented in writing to the membership prior to the next meeting for their consideration. A quorum vote of five (5) council membership is required to pass this revision.
- C. On an emergency basis section B will apply unless all members are present, then the Operating Agreement could be changed immediately.

ARTICLE VII VOTING STIPULATIONS

- A. **Voting Rights:** are vested in those members who satisfy the membership qualifications and in good standing. Each duly authorized member in good standing shall be entitled to one vote, which may be cast either in person, by written proxy.
- B. **Quorum:** The minimal number of officers and members necessary for valid transaction of business. In order for a meeting to be considered official there must be a "Quorum" present. A Quorum shall be defined as one-fourth (5) of the total members and officers. Once a Quorum is present, any actions and decision (i.e. votes) shall be considered official and standing.
- C. **Voting:** Once a Quorum has convened, votes related to any specific actions, issues or amendments to the 'Operating Agreement' must be approved by a majority of at least three (3) of the members present.
- D. Official Youth members will vote by show of hands, written ballot and voice.
- E. Alumni members and Adult Facilitator will not have voting rights, unless in the event of a tie and the Alumni member and Adult Facilitator will each have one vote.

ARTICLE VIII
ROLE AND RELATIONSHIP OF SPONSORING AGENCY

The Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council is supported through a grant made to the State of Alabama Department of Human Resources Independent Living Program. Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council will act in an advisory capacity to the sponsoring Agency, providing information and guidance on a range of issues impacting children and young people involved in the foster care system. The Agency Commissioner, Director and State Independent Living Program Coordinator will support the efforts of the Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council. Prior to dissemination, information, resources, and/or publications made through any medium must be reviewed and approved by the sponsoring agency.

ADOPTED: Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M. Council

DATE: August 18, 2007 at 12:28 p.m.

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