



# Alabama Independent Living Program D.R.E.A.M Council By-Laws

## Article I Name

The name of the council shall be the **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 advocate for new laws to improve the life of youth in foster care.
2. To assist the policy makers on best practice methods for foster youth.
3. To promote leadership skills to youth in foster care.
4. To provide peer counseling and mentoring for youth in foster care.
5. To manage an electronic newsletter for youth in foster care via ILconnect.org.
6. To educate community and public leadership toward involvement in Independent Living Program issues.

## Article III Membership

The **D.R.E.A.M Council** will be made up of members and out of those members, a leadership team. The leadership team will be called the **D.R.E.A.M Ambassadors**. There are 25 slots for the **D.R.E.A.M Ambassadors**. Regular membership is not limited.

### **Section 1.**

Classifications

**All Dream Council members:**

- Youth must be at least 14 but no older than 21, residing in the State of Alabama.
- Youth must be able to communicate effectively.
- You must be a team player.
- Youth must have a desire to motivate other youth.
- Youth must be able to listen and help other youth problem solve.
- You must be creative
- Youth must be able to demonstrate well-developed values.
- Youth must be able to attend **D.R.E.A.M Council** meetings regularly.
- Youth should be a member of the local county Independent Living Program Youth Advisory Council. \*\* If there is no local county council, youth may be referred by a social worker from the assigned county or an active member of the **D.R.E.A.M Council** may refer a youth. \*\*

#### **D.R.E.A.M Ambassadors Criteria:**

- Must be at least 14-19 years of age.
- Required to submit a completed **D.R.E.A.M. Ambassador** application with references included.
- Presently in foster care in the state of Alabama.
- Must have been in foster care at least ONE YEAR
- Youth must be active in local Youth Advisory Council.
- Must not plan to emancipate and/or leave care within a year of application
- Demonstrate leadership qualities/abilities.
- Must be socially responsible.
- Require minimum supervision on overnight trips/meetings.
- Must not have a criminal background.
- Be present at all **D.R.E.A.M. Council** monthly meetings.
- Must commit to serving a minimal of two (2) years as an Ambassador.
- Be willing to work as a team member.
- Be willing to motivate self and others.
- Work to make a difference and to be the difference in the Alabama foster care system.

#### **Section 2**

##### **Alumni Membership:**

- Youth should have been a member of the **D.R.E.A.M Council**.
- Youth should be no older than age 25

#### **Section 3**

##### Council Code of Conduct:

The **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 and actively participate throughout meetings to the best of my ability.
- I agree to be willing to express what I feel, think and believe in a positive manner.
- I agree to be a positive role model to all youth in foster care.
- I agree to be a person on integrity.
- I agree not to indulge in substance abuse and to be drug free.
- I agree to observe confidentiality

- I agree to dress in proper attire when attending meetings, activities, conferences and other scheduled functions.
- I agree to provide a written statement to the Council if I am unable to maintain membership.

#### **Article IV** Meetings

- **D.R.E.A.M Council** meetings will be held 6-9 months out of a year. Meeting locations will be in various counties at that counties DHR office or a local venue. Meetings will be held on Saturday mornings from 10:00am to 2:00pm. Dream Ambassadors will meet every Friday prior to the Dream Council meeting.
- Council shall have an opportunity to visit educational/ leadership sites and/or participate in community service projects.
- Meetings will follow an agenda.
- The Secretary or designated representative must take Minutes at all meetings. Minutes of all general meeting must be approved by the membership at the following meeting.
- All members must adhere to the **D.R.E.A.M Council's** Code of Conduct at all meetings and scheduled activities.
- All meetings shall be planned by council members and adult facilitators.
- All members and adult facilitators will maintain confidentiality unless the safety and well-being of a member is at risk.
- Notification of meetings will go out one month prior to members by email.
- All members should contact their social worker or Independent Living Program coordinator to RSVP each meeting.
- All members and adult facilitators must sign a sign-in sheet for each meeting.

#### **Article V** Governing Board

##### **Section 1**

Executive Board/Committee:

The Executive Board/committee shall consist of the elected officers (from within the **D.R.E.A.M. Ambassadors** body). Officers shall oversee all **D.R.E.A.M Council** functions. Officers shall assist all committees, official youth member and adult facilitator with grievances against the **D.R.E.A.M Council**.

##### **Section 2**

Elected Officers:

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

##### **Section 2a**

The Dream Ambassadors shall have four slots available for emancipated/alumni and adopted youth. 2 slots for youth who are alumni who have left foster care between the ages of 16 -25 years old. These two slots are available to alumni up until the age of 25 years old. Former Ambassadors are eligible for these positions.

2 slots will be for youth who have been adopted. Youth must be between the ages of 14-25 years old.

All four of these slots can be filled by one person for a maximum of 2 years only. Youth must complete an application, complete the interview process and attend the Ambassador Leadership retreat. Youth who serve in this position must abide by all bylaws outlined for Dream Ambassadors.

### Section 3

Term of Office:

All officers must be voted in by the membership. The officers shall be elected by membership at the last meeting of the year. The term of office shall be for two (2) years according to the Ambassador fiscal year. The President cannot serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.

### Section 4

Vacancies:

Vacancies shall be filled through the majority vote of the Ambassador membership. Vacancy in the office of President shall be filled by the Vice-president. If an elected officer is discharged from the 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.** The President or an adult facilitator may make a motion or select a member that is in good standing to serve temporary for a vacant office until a special elections is held.

### Section 5

Removal from Office:

- a) Any officer or chairperson may be removed by the membership by a majority of vote of the entire Ambassador 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 **D.R.E.A.M Council**.
- c) Any officer found to have acted in a manner detrimental or inappropriate to the **D.R.E.A.M Council** can be expelled from the council by a majority vote of the Ambassador membership. The council shall not take action until such officer or chairperson had 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.
- d) A **ZERO TOLERANCE policy** is activated for any drug use and/or alcohol use identified by either drug test, reported by youth or social worker or indication on any social media platform. Known use by test results in immediate removal as a Dream Ambassador. (Dec 28, 2017).
- e) Ambassadors are only permitted 3 unexcused absences to events hosted throughout the year. The year will run from September through August of each calendar year. Excused absences include, but are not limited to major illness, with doctor's excuse, major school event. All excused absences can only be approved by Sponsoring Agency and/or State DHR. Excused absence must be submitted AT LEAST two weeks in advance (unless sudden illness, in this case must be submitted two weeks prior to absence)
- f) After three unexcused absences, Ambassador will enter inactive status and will receive a letter. Inactive status can only be lifted following an interview and approval by Sponsoring Agency and/or State DHR.

### Section 6

Dues and Expenses

There shall be a \$1.00 due per meeting. Payment of dues shall be rendered at each designated meeting unless special provisions are announced. All members, elected officers, alumnus and adult facilitators shall pay dues. All dues will be deposited into a saving account to assist with:

- Materials needs for the **D.R.E.A.M Council**
- Council Trips
- Service projects
- Gas for alumni **\*\*must be approved by the President and Independent Living Youth Coordinator\*\***
- Etc. (other things Council would like to use money for, after approval)

All travel, food, lodging, transportation expenses for anyone not 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. The **D.R.E.A.M Council** may provide assistance to Alumni through dues if it is needed. A fine of no more than \$1.00 will be computed to the meeting dues for late payment until the balance is paid in full. If overdue balance is not paid 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 incentive for attendance. Active Ambassadors shall receive a \$75.00 incentive for attendance. Members that provide own transportation to and from monthly meetings shall receive compensation to cover gas. These incentive shall come from the county the member is from.

## **Section 7**

Duties of the Officers:

### **President:**

The president shall be the chief officer at all D.R.E.A.M council meetings. The president shall be limited to two (2) consecutive terms. The president shares responsibility of overseeing all **D.R.E.A.M Council** events, including, but not limited to assisting in planning the agenda and conducting meetings with the Independent Living youth consultant. The president shall have the ability to get along well with others and preside with mutual respect for all.

### **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 Youth Consultant, the treasurer coordinates and maintains financial records of the **D.R.E.A.M Council**. All **D.R.E.A.M Council** members must submit written expense requests to the Treasurer. The President will approve the request. The treasures must process the request with the Alabama ILP Consultant.

### **Secretary:**

Shall record minutes of all meetings and reports from each committee in regard to their actions and plans. Shall maintain membership database that consists of member contact and demographic information. Composes and coordinates all incoming and outgoing correspondences as directed by the president and independent living youth consultant.

**Assistant Secretary:**

Serves as secondary recorder for secretary. Assists in all needs of secretary both when secretary is present and most importantly when secretary is absent. Shall maintain membership database in partnership with secretary and assists president with correspondence and any other written needs.

**Parliamentarian:**

The parliamentarian must know the council By-laws and the procedures for conducting meetings. The parliamentarian explains the rules for the council. The parliamentarian with the assistance from the Independent Living Youth Consultant shall provide prior notice of upcoming election. He/she shall also inform the members of the election process and the rules.

**Historian:**

Will prepare in narrative, brief, or outline from chronological account of past or current events of the Council. Assembles historical data by consulting sources of information, such as news files, archives, minutes, miscellaneous published and unpublished materials and photos of meeting and events.

**Section 7a:**

**Ambassador Code of Conduct:**

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

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- I agree to attend all meetings and/or activities and actively participate throughout meetings to the best of my ability.
- I agree to be willing to express what I feel, think and believe in a positive manner.
- I agree to be a positive role model to all youth in foster care.
- I agree to be a person of integrity.
- I agree not to indulge in substance abuse and to be drug free.
- I agree to observe confidentiality
- I agree to dress in proper attire when attending meetings, activities, conferences and other scheduled functions.
- I agree to no more than 3 unexcused absences from meetings and other events.
- I agree to provide a written statement to the Council if I am unable to maintain membership.

**Article VI**

**By-Laws Review**

- A. The Alabama **D.R.E.A.M Council's** by-laws shall be reviewed by the Executive Committee, Membership and Adult Facilitator. Suggestions for revisions shall be made prior to the 8<sup>th</sup> month 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 the revision.
- C. On an emergency basis section B will apply unless all members are present, then the Bi-Laws can be changed immediately.

**Article VII**  
Voting Stipulations

- A. Voting Rights: are vested in those members who satisfy the membership qualifications and in good standing (not disrupting placement, no behavioral problems, good attendance – miss no more than 3 and availability). Each duly authorized member in good standing shall be entitled to one vote.
- 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 have convened, votes related to any specific actions, issues or amendments to the ‘Bi-Laws’ 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 D.R.E.A.M Council is supported through a grant made to the State of Alabama Department of Human Resources’ Independent Living Program. The **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 **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 Department of Human Resources Independent Living Program

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

EDITS ADOPTED: October 18, 2008  
February 17, 2014  
October 1, 2015  
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