

Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative (GYOI)



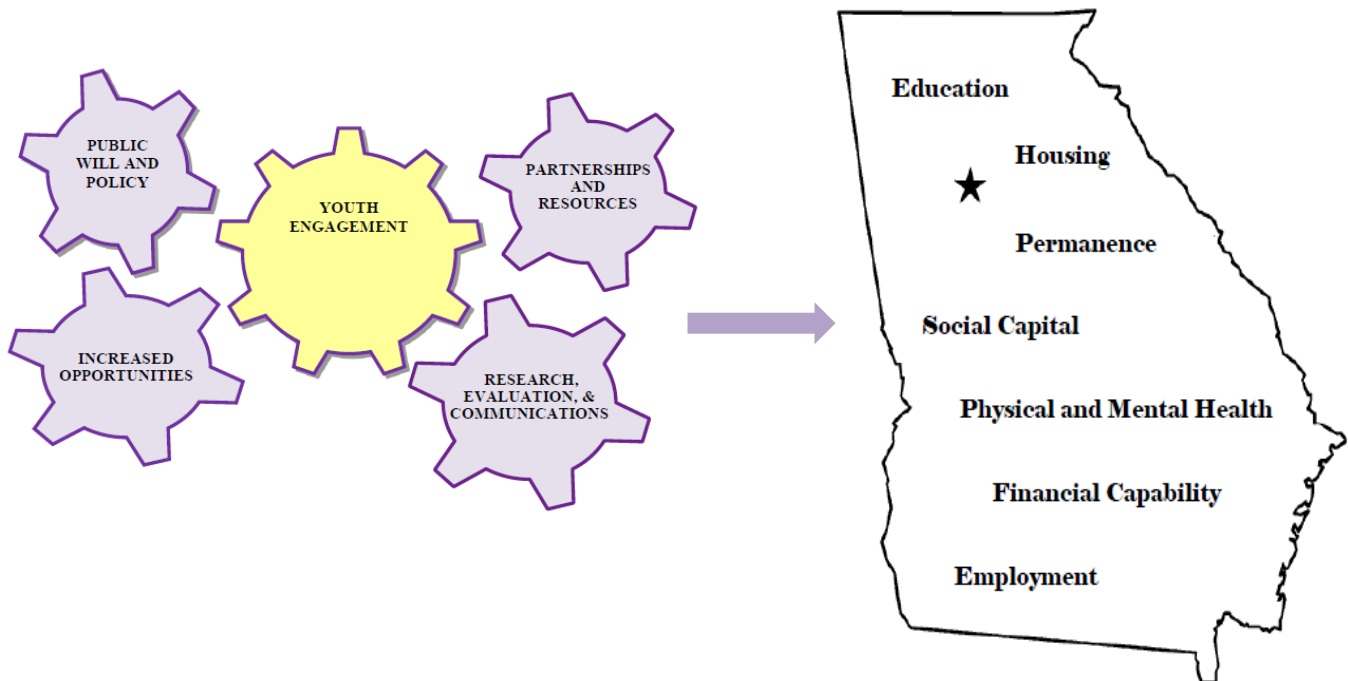
The Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative (GYOI) is part of the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. **Our vision is that all young people leaving foster care will make successful transitions to adulthood.** GYOI works as a public-private and youth-adult partnership to improve outcomes in the areas of permanence, education, employment, housing, physical and mental health, social capital and financial capability. EmpowerMENT, a part of GYOI, helps guide what areas and regions need focus and help or “door openers.” Started as a Jim Casey pilot site in 2002 as the Metro Atlanta Youth Opportunities Initiative, GYOI is expanding state wide and is housed at the Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (MAAC). MAAC is a collaboration between nine agencies who network together to provide placement and support for at-risk youth.

In addition to EmpowerMENT, two key components of GYOI are the Community Partnership Group and the Individual Development Account. **The Community Partnership Group is a public/private, youth/adult partnership group working on a state-wide level to leverage resources and community support for youth transitioning from care.** The group creates door openers to help youth successfully transition. Door openers are connections and relationships that can help youth successfully transition. This could mean health care, insurance; education in making large purchases, access to needed items, etc.

The Individual Development Accounts are for ILP eligible youth ages 14-21. Participants receive approximately nine hours of financial education training and are able to have their savings matched towards the purchase of an asset such as needs for education, housing, transportation and employment. Participants may match multiple times for a lifetime match of \$1,000.

Strategies to Outcomes

GYOI utilizes five core strategies to affect seven core outcomes, with Youth Engagement (EmpowerMENT/Youth Voice) being the driving strategy.



Georgia EmpowerMENT



EmpowerMENT is an initiative founded by former and current foster youth in Georgia who are working with community leaders to change the foster care system. EmpowerMENT is comprised of regional leadership boards at different stages of development, which the youth chose to call “tribes” to represent a close network of support. Each tribe focuses on specific issues deemed most relevant within their region. **EmpowerMENT’s motto is “Nothing about us without us,” and our primary goal is to equip youth to be proactive in shaping both their present and their future.** We would love to see you at our next EmpowerMENT event!

EmpowerMENT’s priorities as identified by young people:

- Continued monitoring of access to Medicaid benefits up to 26th birthday
- Improved access and support to obtain drivers’ license
- Foster youth need a stable school experience.
- Continued efforts to improve relationships with case manager
- Advocacy for a network of caring, consistent permanent relationships and social capital
- Continued monitoring of policy and practices regarding babies of youth in care remaining with their parents
- Reduce homelessness among transitioning youth
- Continued support and monitoring of psychotropic medication oversight
- Youth voice and choice in court hearing process
- Monitoring of implementation of 2013 Juvenile Justice Reform legislation
- Designing and developing appropriate foster care options for youth between 18-21

Five ways adult supporters can get involved

- GET YOUTH INVOLVED
- Help identify door openers youth need
- Link concerned community member, or “champions,” with GYOI
- Tell people about EmpowerMENT and GYOI
- Educate others on the unique challenges facing youth transitioning from foster care and advocate for change and better systems.

We would love to hear from you and are always seeking youth willing to sit at the table with adults and community leaders to discuss these needs and solutions. You can find more information on Facebook, at www.gyoi.org, www.georgiaempowerment.org, or by contacting us at the contact information below.

Key Contact Information

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