

**Government Accountability Office:
At-Risk Youth Community of Practice Home and Family Outcomes Committee
Information for February 2019 Panel**

Title of event: *Voices of Experience: A Conversation with Former Foster Youth and Parents Affected by the Child Welfare System*

Date and location: Thursday, February 28, 2019 from 1-2:30 pm ET
GAO headquarters (room 4N30): 441 G Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20548

(Please enter the GAO building at the G Street entrance between 4th and 5th and show government issued ID to sign in. An escort will meet the panelists at the entrance at 12:45 pm ET and take them to the meeting location)

Type of event: Panel with a moderator, with additional Q&A from audience. Panelists will include:

- Angel Petite, Moderator
- Eric Warner & Joe DeBiew, FosterClub Young Leaders
- Edwin Daye, Birth Parent National Network

(GAO expects about 50 participants, with some joining via videoconference. The event may also be recorded for internal viewing by GAO staff who are unable to attend, pending agreement from the panelists)

Advertising blurb:

Children enter foster care when they have been removed from their parents or guardians and placed under the responsibility of a child welfare agency. Reasons for a child's removal can vary, though the vast majority of nearly 275,000 removals during fiscal year 2016 involved issues of neglect and substance abuse by the parent. What happens next can unfold in many different ways—children may be placed with relatives, with unrelated foster parents, or in congregate care settings until they are reunified with their parents, are adopted, or “age out” of the system. Courts, social workers, and policymakers have been involved in decisions about when to remove a child and whether reunification is possible. However, the voices of those directly affected oftentimes get lost. Please join the At-Risk Youth Community of Practice as we listen to and learn from former foster youth and parents affected by the child welfare system.

Agenda

1:00 - 1:10pm

GAO Director **Kathy Larin** provides opening remarks about GAO's work related to child welfare policy and the At-Risk Youth Community of Practice (5-10 minutes)

1:10-1:20pm

Angel Petite, moderator, provides opening remarks and context setting using powerpoint slides; acknowledgement of the 3 organizations working in partnership (FC, Alliance, CFP) (10 minutes)

1:20 - 2:05pm

Moderator uses the following questions to guide a discussion with panelists (45 minutes)

1. *Introduce yourself, your lived experience within the child welfare system; consider adding how are you advocating or working in child welfare now.*

2. *Based on your experiences: if removal of a child from their parent is necessary, what is necessary to reduce harm and trauma?*
 - keeping siblings together
 - placement with relative/fictive kin
 - school stability
 - normalcy
 - visits between parent and child and making them as normal as possible
 - foster-bio parent relationships

3. *What kind of supports and services helped strengthen your family? Was there anything that could have been helpful that wasn't offered to you and your family?*
 - a. *For Edwin - are there things you have found that work especially well with dads? We know that parents need different kinds of support at different times - what kind of supports have helped you and your family a you care for your niece and nephew? (if he's able to talk about the supports after his niece and nephew started living with him - it may be helpful for the audience to get a better sense about the need for post-permanency supports)*
 - b. *For Eric - can you talk about what the congregate care placement for you was like and what you wished was different?*
 - c. *For Joe, what supports could have benefited your grandparents in caring for you?*

4. *What is one takeaway you hope the audience leaves with as they think about policies and practices that will keep children safe and strengthen families?*

2:05-2:25pm

The moderator invites questions for the panelists from the audience, including those on the videoconference and in the room (20 minutes)

2:25-2:30pm

GAO Director Kathy Larin thanks the moderator and panelists, and discusses any follow-up items for GAO staff (5 minutes)