

Mar 18, 2025

WYAC Monthly Meeting

Summary

This WYAC meeting, attended by Brian, Szabre, Bryan, Debra, Tyler, Nicole G., Nate, Sarah, Jayse, Valentine, and NJ covered various topics including updates on judges' resources (deadline March 31st), bylaws (voting April 15th), and an upcoming in-person conference (June 20th-22nd) with potential funding concerns. Next steps include finalizing the bylaws by April 15th, completing the judges' resource draft by March 31st, and determining foster parent inclusion in the conference pending funding confirmation.

Details

- **Meeting Logistics and Attendance:** The meeting began with attendance. Brian called roll, noting the presence of several individuals, including those from Cheyenne who were together in a car. They requested that participants turn on their cameras to foster familiarity.
- **Agenda Approval:** Szabre made a motion to approve the current meeting's agenda and the minutes from the previous meeting. Bryan suggested sending out agendas and minutes several days in advance to allow for review. Deb reiterated a previous discussion about posting minutes on the website a week prior to meetings. They ultimately decided to post minutes to the website after approval, allowing a period for comments and concerns.
- **Director's Update:** An update regarding communication with the director was discussed. Due to the director's busy schedule and frequent cancellations, they considered switching to email updates instead of in-person meetings. Deb suggested shifting to quarterly meetings instead of monthly ones. The proposed in-person meeting date of April 5th was noted as potentially incorrect.
- **Cabinet Appointments and Announcements:** Tyler was announced as the new Secretary of the Treasury. Nicole G. was added to the advisory committee.

Nathaniel Williams highlighted the success of the WYAC cabinet meeting and expressed excitement for Nicole G. contributions.

- **Leadership Video and Discussion:** Sarah shared a video on leadership, focusing on vision, communication, and empathy. The video emphasized inspiring versus motivating, and the importance of clear communication and empathy in leadership. They discussed the lack of a written plan outlining WYAC's goals and the need for a strategic plan to track progress.
- **Bylaws Update:** Topic four, regarding bylaws, was skipped due to their availability on the website. Deb noted that comments and suggestions had been incorporated, a 30-day extension was in place, and voting would occur at the next meeting.
- **Judges' Resources Update:** Brian provided an update on the judges' resource list, collaborating with Wyoming 211 to compile information by county. They planned to use 139 key points to organize resources, expanding to include organizations beyond the initial Wyoming 211 list. They aimed to complete a draft by March 31st and planned to involve WYAC cabinet members in outreach. The collaboration extended to other organizations seeking similar resources.
- **"Every Visit Matters" Discussion:** Deb initiated a discussion using clips from the movie Cars to illustrate the importance of communication and building relationships with DFS case workers. They discussed the reasons why DFS caseworkers visit youth, including checking on mental health, progress towards goals, and family environment. They also touched on the meaning of permanency in foster care.
- **Additional Discussion Points:** The conversation included a discussion about preferences for driving in snow versus rain and differing cultural norms regarding terms of endearment . They also discussed the challenges of traffic in North Carolina.
- **Youth Experiences with Caseworkers:** Participants shared their experiences with DFS caseworkers . Nathaniel Williams wished their caseworker had asked about their perspective on events leading to state custody and whether they hid anything from their parents due to feeling unsafe. Szabre suggested a question differentiating between "wants" and "needs" would have been helpful. Jayse emphasized the importance of their caseworker facilitating visits with siblings. Deb summarized that the group valued questions demonstrating genuine care and building trust.

- **Importance of Relationship Building:** The group discussed the crucial role of relationship building between youth and caseworkers . Nate highlighted the importance of caseworkers creating a safe space for youth to share their concerns without parental influence. They emphasized the value of a strong professional relationship to foster open communication.
- **In-Person Conference Planning:** The group discussed plans for an in-person conference on June 20th-22nd . They are seeking venues in Casper, Gillette, Rock Springs, and Cheyenne. The conference aims to foster collaboration between WYAC members and foster parents, involving activities and a guest speaker for team-building. Discussions centered around including foster parents, considering the budget constraints and the need for a clear itinerary to be shared with relevant DFS staff . Ultimately, the decision on whether to invite foster parents is postponed pending funding confirmation from their federal partner.
- **Funding Concerns for In-Person Conference:** Concerns were raised regarding the limited budget of approximately \$13,000 for the in-person conference. Szabre proposed a vote on inviting foster parents due to cost implications, while Nate advocated for their inclusion to increase visibility and garner further funding. Alternative cost-saving options, such as renting inexpensive rooms and ordering pizza, were also discussed.
- **Meeting Format: Virtual vs. In-Person:** A discussion ensued about the format of monthly meetings . Participants debated the merits of virtual versus in-person meetings, considering factors such as participation, engagement, background noise, and the ability of participants to attend. The decision was tabled for discussion at the leadership meeting, with the April meeting tentatively planned as virtual unless otherwise decided by the leadership.
- **Addressing Background Noise and Participation Issues:** Concerns were raised about background noise during in-person meetings impacting virtual participants' ability to hear and contribute. The difficulty in maintaining decorum during group in-person meetings was also highlighted. Suggestions for improving online meeting etiquette to mitigate these issues were made.
- **Addressing Concerns Regarding Overriding Conversations:** Nate addressed concerns about Szabre potentially overriding conversations during virtual meetings. Szabre acknowledged their tendency to ramble and apologized for any offense caused, noting the absence of the meeting's usual chair and their consequent need to manage the conversation.

- **Leadership Roles and Responsibilities:** Concerns were raised regarding the distribution of leadership roles in the absence of certain members. Valentine suggested clarifying the roles and responsibilities of cabinet members if absent. Szabre indicated that a system was in place, but not yet enacted due to unfinished bylaws.
- **Future Meeting Topics:** Potential topics for the next meeting were brainstormed . Ideas included discussions about community involvement, fundraising strategies, trust fund resources, and developing meeting agreements to improve participation and communication.
- **DEI Statement on Website:** Deb clarified that the inclusion statement on the WY website is intended to be supportive and inclusive, and does not exclude anyone. They emphasized the importance of everyone's contributions to the group.
- **Meeting Preparation and Attendance:** Szabre suggested sending action items to attendees in advance to aid memory and encourage input. They also proposed requiring RSVPs for meetings to better gauge attendance and allocate time appropriately, noting that many attendees don't currently confirm their presence. Sara suggested this be added to the meeting agreements, acknowledging that some may not know how to RSVP or may have unforeseen circumstances. Nate proposed creating a guide on RSVPing, as well as Google account creation, considering that not everyone uses Google or email, and some lack the funds for Google services. NJ confirmed that IL coordinators usually assist youth in setting up accounts and that they could provide further assistance or training. Szabre offered to create a tutorial on email setup and address issues with phones that don't support Google services.
- **Bylaws Finalization:** The group discussed the upcoming finalization of the bylaws, with a deadline of April 15th. Nate provided the date, clarifying a previous discrepancy. Szabre proposed sending reminders on April 6th and 12th to ensure all suggestions are submitted in time for the final vote at the April 15th meeting.
- **Foster Parent Training Topics:** Sara initiated a discussion on identifying training topics for foster parents. Szabre suggested brainstorming these topics collaboratively, possibly via comments on the action items list.
- **IL Services Expansion:** Szabre revisited the idea of expanding IL services to better reach individuals in smaller towns like Rock Springs and Riverton. They suggested that IL coordinators could collaborate with youth on this initiative.

Suggested next steps

- ☐ The group will add to the agenda items regarding the Inerson conference, the DEI statement, and the announcement of advisory cabinet appointments.
- ☐ Nate will send meeting minutes and agendas several days before the meeting, allowing ample review time before posting them to the website after official approval.
- ☐ The group will discuss the frequency of meetings with the director (monthly vs. quarterly) at the next leadership meeting and update the WYAC council.
- ☐ The group will develop a strategic plan outlining goals for the next 1, 2, and 5 years to track progress.
- ☐ Brian and Nate will create a document of resources available by county for judges using Wyoming 211 and contacting additional resources (e.g., Volunteers of America). WYAC cabinet members will contact resources not listed on Wyoming 211.
- ☐ The group will include a reminder that the bylaws have a 30-day extension until April 15th, and that suggestions can be submitted on the website.
- ☐ The group will send reminders on the 6th and 12th about the upcoming deadline for bylaws finalization.
- ☐ The group will consider adding a requirement to click 'accept' or 'decline' meeting invitations to better track attendance.
- ☐ The group will create a guide to help people understand how to respond to meeting invitations, considering different email clients like Outlook.
- ☐ Szabre will create a guide on how to set up email addresses, and present it at next month's meeting.
- ☐ Szabre will find and present ways to access Google on phones that don't natively support it.

You should review Gemini's notes to make sure they're accurate. [Get tips and learn how Gemini takes notes](#)

Please provide feedback about using Gemini to take notes in a [short survey](#).