



WRISING VOICES

VOC SPOTLIGHT

Betsy Echeverria

Betsy joined the VOC because she is passionate about making sure foster youth have access to the resources, rights, and benefits they deserve. She believes advocacy is essential—whether through social media, conferences, or one-on-one conversations—and wants youth in care to feel informed, supported, and empowered.

Betsy is currently enrolled at SKYCTC, working toward an associate's degree with plans to continue into the surgical technology program, and she believes that taking small steps is just as important as dreaming big. She is also deeply interested in the political state of the world and hopes to one day share accessible, reliable information to help her community make informed decisions, especially around issues that impact foster care. Her own experience in foster care motivates her to ensure youth feel heard and supported by trusted adults who understand their journey.

In her free time, Betsy enjoys sewing, thrifting, fashion, makeup, and art, often using creativity as a way to express herself. We're excited to have Betsy's voice, creativity, and advocacy as part of the VOC!



IN THIS ISSUE

UPCOMING EVENTS

BALANCING SCHOOL, WORK, AND LIFE

MEET THE VOC



Christina Mangrum

Lexi Salamone



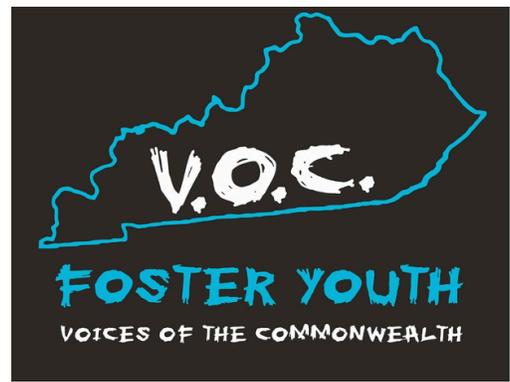
Andrew Gomez



Brianna Moore



Betsy Echeverria



The VOC is comprised of Kentucky foster care youth and alumni aged 16-23 and is instrumental in communicating to foster/adoptive parents, out of home care staff and community partners the issues and needs of youth in care and those who have aged out of the system.

The VOC advocates for positive change in the foster care system. Members of the VOC work closely with various people including CHFS staff, judges, CASA staff, state officials, private childcare agencies, educators and more. The VOC also works with current and former foster youth to develop strategies for a brighter future as well as to educate them about their rights, responsibilities, available resources and the policies that effect their life.

WE'RE HIRING!

**THE VOC IS LOOKING
FOR **YOUTH!****

**APPLY NOW AT
KYRISE.KY.GOV**

**REPRESENTATION IS ESPECIALLY
NEEDED FROM THESE REGIONS:**

JEFFERSON

SALT RIVER TRAIL

NORTHERN BLUEGRASS

EASTERN MOUNTAIN

CUMBERLAND

SOUTHERN BLUEGRASS

UPCOMING EVENTS



Their Truth Screenings

April 23: Lyric Theatre Lexington KY

Regional Events

Jan 29: Northern Bluegrass Educational Event

March 13: Salt River Trail Educational Event

June 4: Lakes KYRISE Event

June 16-17: 2026 Youth Empowerment Conference

Register online at kyrise.ky.gov

NATIONAL THINK TANK

SELFLESS LOVE FOUNDATION

Our VOC member Betsy recently had the opportunity to attend the National Think Tank, an invitation-only collaborative forum that brought together individuals with lived experience, policymakers, child welfare leaders, and researchers from across the country. The event focused on elevating youth voice and developing actionable federal policy solutions to strengthen how adoptions are conducted, supported, and sustained nationwide. Betsy's participation ensured that the perspectives of those with lived experience were represented in important conversations aimed at protecting families and promoting equitable outcomes.

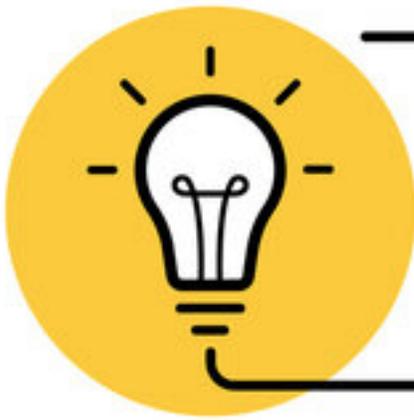


Balancing School, Work, and Life



Balancing school, work, and personal life can feel overwhelming—especially when it seems like everything needs your attention at the same time. Between classes, assignments, work schedules, appointments, and relationships, it's easy to feel stretched thin or burnt out. Finding balance doesn't mean doing everything perfectly or all at once; it means learning how to manage your time and energy in a way that works for you. Developing these skills now can help reduce stress, build confidence, and set you up for long-term success in adulthood.

- **Use a planner or calendar:** Write down classes, work shifts, deadlines, and appointments so nothing sneaks up on you.
- **Prioritize what matters most:** Some days school comes first, other days work or rest might—and that's okay.
- **Break tasks into smaller steps:** Big assignments feel less overwhelming when you tackle them one piece at a time.
- **Schedule rest on purpose:** Rest is not a reward—it's a necessity. Make time for sleep and breaks.
- **Ask for help when you need it:** Reach out to teachers, supervisors, or support staff if things start to feel like too much.
- **Give yourself grace:** You're learning and growing. Progress matters more than perfection.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Aetna SKY program was created just for youth like you! They provide services, resources, and support beyond health care.



Aetna Sky

Check it out here:

<https://www.aetnabetterhealth.com/kentucky/supporting-kentucky-youth.html>

Kentucky RISE app launches!



» Explore resources for current & former foster youth

» Get the latest news

» See events calendar

» Message support staff

» Use the lockbox to secure important documents



Free in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Scan this code for fast access!



EARN & LEARN

SPOTLIGHT

Xzabrious exemplifies the resilience and determination we strive to foster through the Earn and Learn Program. Although he completed all required steps on time to participate in the Fall session, delays in obtaining vital documents postponed his pay for the first two months of the program, resulting in eight missed pay periods. His state ID was initially sent to a former foster home and later remained at the DCBS office for several weeks before being located.



Despite these challenges, Xzabrious stayed committed to his educational goals, attending class consistently and actively engaging with his program success coach throughout the semester. His perseverance paid off as he excelled in the culinary program and successfully passed all of his courses. Xzabrious is now continuing his culinary studies this semester at KCTCS.

Learn more at [kyvoc.com/earnandlearn](https://www.kyvoc.com/earnandlearn)

COORDINATOR CORNER

Krystal Carver-Dickens

Krystal is the Independent Living Coordinator for the West side of Kentucky. She graduated with her Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology (2016) and her Master of Arts degree in Sociology from Western Kentucky University (2018). Krystal has experience working with youth in out of home care as a Case Manager and Program Coordinator.

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Ally Holtrey

Ally is the Independent Living Coordinator for the East side of Kentucky. Originally from Owensboro she graduated with her Bachelor of Social Work degree from Murray State University (2022) and her Master of Social Work degree from Campbellsville University (2024). Ally interned with the Training Resource Center and has experience with community outreach and working with at risk youth.

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