



FosterClub

Oregon Teen Retreat Report 2023

Theme: Follow Your Compass

Event Dates:

Tuesday, August 1, 2023 - Friday, August 4, 2023

Event Location:

Camp Cedar Ridge
Vernonia, OR

Total Participants (See Appendix A):

41 Youth in attendance
18 Adult Supporters
12 FosterClub All-Stars and Coaches
4 Full-time FosterClub staff

Event Overview (See Appendix B):

Day 1: Check-in, Opening Session including Team Shields and Campfire
Day 2: Wellness Activities, FosterJEDI workshop, Free Time Activities, Follow Your Compass
AllStar Panel and Campfire
Day 3: Wellness Activities, Workshops, Free Time Activities, Closing Ceremony and Drum
Performance and Open Mic Challenge
Day 4: Closing Session and Departure

Appendices:

Appendix A - Full Participant List
Appendix B - Full Agenda
Appendix C - Participant Evaluation Summary
Appendix D - Workshop Descriptions

Overview of Evaluation Learnings

(See Appendix C)

What went well:

- **Collaboration with Camp Cedar Ridge** - Camp Cedar Ridge staff were very invested in hosting our event, responsive to practice recommendations and adjusted their typical ways of operating to better support our participants. We were deeply impressed by and grateful for their positive energy and proactive communication.
- **Campsite Amenities** - Camp Cedar Ridge had really exciting amenities that became highlights of the Oregon Team Retreat. It was noted that conference attendees really enjoyed free time, particularly using the camp's pool and giant slip and slide. The camp also offered excellent programming opportunities for the retreat through its newly built labyrinth and staff led low ropes course.
- **Wellness Sessions** - In previous conference feedback, it was shared that attendees prefer slower, less intense programming in the mornings. The Wellness Sessions created this opportunity while also implementing the wellness themes of the retreat. These sessions included the drumming workshop, low ropes course and labyrinth where participants got to do very unique activities to this conference.
- **Team Shields** - Using the Team Shield group model throughout the conference offered consistent relationship building with fellow team members- this observation was particularly highlighted during the low ropes course team exercises and interactions. Using Team Shields also allowed for easy transitions for activities, such as workshop sessions and campfire evenings. Finally, the Team Shields groupings also allowed conference attendees to build trust with the AllStars supporting them. This was an improvement to previous conferences where teams were less integrated throughout the structure.

What could have gone better:

- **Adult Supporter Engagement** - From the point of conference registration, Adult Supporter understanding and commitment to conference agreements was not clear despite direct attempts from FosterClub to share expectations. Some conference attendees arrived without adult supporters to the event and FosterClub staff had to adapt to be able to support them. Another major challenge with some Adult supporters was lack of initiative to hold youth accountable to being on time, being at conference activities, and reminding them of community considerations at the campsite. Some modeled this for their peers, others were completely disengaged from the conference. FosterClub would like to figure out how to integrate adult supporters more effectively into activities and programs.
- **Nursing Support/Collaboration** - Although the nurse onsite was pleasant, she was not very communicative about medication processes. This included confusion from the conference attendees about going to the nurse or the nurse coming to find them based on inconsistent practices. Lastly, Adult Supporters reported to staff that on one of the conference nights, the nurse went to bed without giving all participants their medications and without communicating which youth had not taken their medications. Staff noticed these difficulties and offered her support throughout the conference. We have found that keys to successful collaboration include consistent place and times for medicine administration,

communication with key staff about youth who have not yet taken medication and accessibility of location for medication administration.

- **Sleeping Accommodations and Food** - Several youth and adult conference attendees shared that the bunkhouse bunk beds were physically uncomfortable. We noticed group sleeping accommodations can be stressful for those who have sensory concerns and also make it difficult for young people to decompress at a reasonable hour. It was also reported in surveys that some participants did not enjoy the food. Though some reported that the food was tasty and there were inclusive options, there was only one option available for each meal- which did not always cater to varied preferences. The kitchen staff were accommodating to special dietary needs and made sandwiches for those who asked for an alternative meal option.

Recommendations for the future:

- **Registration Process** - Assuring that all youth registered for the conference have Adult Supporters. Reviewing registration information with ODHS more intentionally for gaps in participation from counties and consistent adherence to this policy.
- **Clarity and Commitment to Adult Supporter Role** - Continuing to seek processes that explain the expectations of Adult Supporters in a way that encourages presence at the conference with youth as well as collaboration with conference staff to ensure positive youth engagement. Activities before and during conferences can assist with this issue.
- **Collaborative Agenda Structure** - Adult Supporters have consistently asked for space on the agenda to check in or spend time with their youth participants. This might be a cohesive way to create programming for conferences while also giving conference staff - specifically the AllStars- some down time.
- **Nursing Support** - Share good practice recommendations with nursing support prior to the event.
- **Venue** - Several Adult Supporters made venue recommendations for the future. FosterClub will continue to explore venues with comparable amenities, while considering potential to reduce the number of youth per sleeping space and weighing quality of accommodation as a factor for host site.