



## Youth Voice: Jamole Callahan (continued)

Jamole trains OCWTP's Independent Living Training series: *Preparing Older Youth for Independent Living*. When he stands before an audience of caseworkers and foster caregivers, he is able to provide first-hand experience regarding the challenges facing youth who transition into independent living. Jamole shares the following insights:

### **What is one of your specific advocacy areas related to foster care?**

One of my specific advocacy areas related to foster care is emancipation. I strongly favor beginning the process of preparing youth for independent living as soon as the youth enters care.

### **Can you give some examples of why this area needs reform?**

Youth who are not properly prepared for independent living will likely face major challenges in the areas of employment, housing, financial management, life-long connections, medical needs and decision-making. It's a terrible and frightening existence for an emancipating youth who has no plan, no direction, no support, and no place to go.

### **What about this issue do you want caseworkers/foster parents/adoptive parents to know?**

Everything! I want people charged with the responsibility of preparing older youth for independent living to be knowledgeable, skilled and sensitive to the feelings and needs of transitioning youth. We need a workforce of child welfare professionals, caregivers and mentors who can work with each youth individually to make sure they are ready for independent living. Fortunately, I

received a lot of nurturing and support in my last foster home just before my emancipation, which has made a huge difference in my life.

### **Do you have any creative ideas regarding how this information might be shared in a workshop setting?**

I believe to help combat some of the outcomes mentioned above, every caseworker and foster parent should take all three workshops in the OCWTP's Independent Living training series including *Youth Development: The Vital Link*, *Life Long Connections* and *Engaging Older Youth in Transition Planning*. Not only are they innovative trainings, they are designed to change the mindset of helpers from "doing for" to "doing with" youth. These trainings help create a partnership between the youth and the adult, something needed in today's practice.

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Jamole has a Bachelor's degree in music education from Central State University. He is a popular guest speaker and uses his musical talents to perform at many community events. In addition to having an independent training contract with the OCWTP, Jamole is an alumni consultant for the National Resource Center for Youth Development. He is also a member of Foster Care Alumni of America. Jamole has started his own business: "90 Degree Entertainment." He is married and a father of four children.