

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, June 13, 2014.

CONTACT:

Carolynn Bright
Communications Officer, SAF
(406) 495-7506

Jon Ebelt
Public Information Officer, DPHHS
(406) 444-0936

SAF/DPHHS to Host “A Step Ahead – Building a Path to Success” Summit for Youth in Foster Care at MSU June 16-19

(BOZEMAN) Students from throughout Montana will be gathering at Montana State University June 16-19 to participate in “A Step Ahead – Building a Path to Success” Summit for Youth in Foster Care.

Hosted by nonprofit Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) and the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, the free summit provides an opportunity for youth in foster care to prepare for life after high school — whether that includes postsecondary education or employment.

“We have 30 youths from across Montana registered for this year’s summit,” said Rhonda Safford, one of the event coordinators. “We are so excited to meet them and get them connected with the resources they need for whatever their futures hold.”

Students attending the camp will stay in dorms, attend life skill classes, eat in the cafeteria, and experience college life firsthand.

In addition to finding out how to search and apply for scholarships, and apply for Education and Training Vouchers (ETVs) that provide up to \$5,000 for education-related expenses, the participants will learn essential career and life skills. Those include how to find and maintain housing, build relationships, locate community resources, obtain employment, and manage money.

Youth in attendance will also work to draft a foster care bill of rights, as part of the State’s Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project, that will be adopted as part of the Child and Family Services Division’s policy. The concept of a bill of rights for children in foster care originated in 1973, and many states have adopted them since that time to ensure that youth in the foster care system have a voice and a say in their futures.

Finally, students receive a laptop as they embark on the path to higher education, or a package of applicable tools and resources to help them get a step ahead on life after high school.

“I would definitely recommend this (summit) to other foster kids,” said Austin AfterBuffalo, who attended the summit last year. AfterBuffalo will be attending this year’s summit as a teen lead and plans to attend Miles Community College in the fall to study animal science.

2014 marks the ninth year that youth in foster care have had the opportunity to attend the summit.

Student Assistance Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Montana corporation that provides students with knowledge and tools to finance and pursue their postsecondary education. Funds generated by SAF are returned to Montanans in the form of education grants and public benefit programs - to date more than \$28 million. For more information, visit www.safmt.org or www.SmartAboutCollege.org.

The mission of the Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) is: Keeping Children Safe and Families Strong. CFSD works three hundred and sixty five days a year, twenty-four hours a day, to fulfill its mission. CFSD is responsible for ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children who have been victims of, or are at substantial risk of being victims of, child maltreatment.