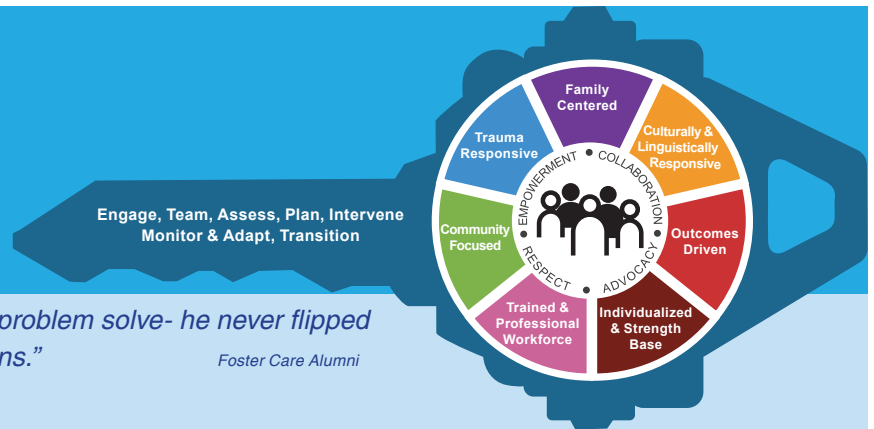


# Addressing the Needs of Emerging Adults<sup>1</sup>

*My worker "...listened to me and helped me problem solve- he never flipped my words never questioned me or my opinions."*

*Foster Care Alumni*



Preparing youth for adulthood is about successfully engaging and partnering with youth in planning for their future. At fourteen, youth have greater developmental awareness and opportunities to develop and practice new skills that promote self-efficacy, resiliency, and a sense of mastery, all with the safety and support of caring adults.

Our **GOALS** when working with older youth are to:

- Engage in a manner that is honest, respectful, and empathic; encourage open communication and a professional relationship that encourages the youth to meet his or her goals.
- Work with the youth and family to establish strong, positive, and lasting social and emotional relationships and connections who can serve as sources of concrete support.
- Partner with the youth and family to build a network of familial, community, natural, and professional, supports who will work together to help the youth achieve their goals.
- Build the youth's knowledge and skills related to health, education, finances, employment, and housing needs.
- Help the youth achieve developmental benchmarks (e.g., Ready be 21) and partner with the youth and family to create an individualized transition plan that meets the youth's identified goals within each life domain.

## Our Principles in Action: We Demonstrate

- We are **Family-Centered** when we honor youth's voice, experience, family history and relationships without bias, and encourage youth, supported by their family and loved ones, to lead the planning in meeting their current and future goals.
- We are **Trauma-Responsive** when we recognize that a youth's separation from their family has varying levels of traumatic impact on their cognitive development, social attachments, emotional and educational functioning. We partner with youth to sustain their relationships, and ensure they are engaged and empowered in all decisions about their care. We avoid additional traumatic stress created by placement and worker changes.
- We are **Outcomes-Driven** when we engage youth in a collaborative process to identify and achieve their personal, educational and professional goals, and when we partner with them in the development and fulfillment of their youth transition plan.
- We are **Individualized & Strengths-Based** when we identify and build upon the youth's specific strengths and recognize needs to create an individualized transition plan. We problem-solve with them in times of need and recognize and celebrate their efforts and accomplishments.
- We are **Culturally & Linguistically Responsive** when we help youth better understand and connect to their family history and culture, both that of their family of origin & their chosen family. We ensure that each youth

<sup>1</sup> Emerging adults are also referred to as young people, young adults, transition age youth, or youth age 14 to 21 years old.

has access to materials and services that are delivered in their primary language and congruent with their religion, cultural practices, sexual and gender identity, and gender expression.

- We are **Community-Focused** when we partner with a youth-identified community to plan for their current and future social, emotional and well-being needs.
- We are a **Safe, Engaged and Well-Prepared Professional Workforce** when we strive to understand “normal” youth experiences as well as the impact of trauma on development and seek guidance in determining in the difference.

## Reflective Prompts: Have I routinely ...

- Met with the youth in a place that the youth feels safe and comfortable to talk?
- Supported the youth in exploring and maintaining healthy relationships with biological family members and social network?
- Genuinely listened to the youth and included his/her thoughts in planning and decision making?
- Learned about the interests and dreams of the youth and helped them and identify the needed steps to achieve their goals?
- Assisted the youth with creating a meaningful plan that aligns with his or her future life goals/dreams?
- Prepared the youth for family team meetings, court and other activities to make sure they feel safe, prepared and have a full understanding of what could happen? Engaged the youth and provided opportunities to practice the skills necessary to get desired outcomes from difficult conversations”.
- Collaborated with the youth to identify potential mentors and design a network of positive supportive peers and adults that will assist the youth in meeting their goals and building lifelong connections?
- Advocated for the youth to gain access to needed resources?
- Worked with the youth to develop strategies to safely engage with their community and peers?
- Helped the youth reach out to his support team to ensure they are willing to partner in support of the youth’s goals and transition plan?
- Empowered the youth to embrace their strengths, skills, and potential?
- Role modeled and taught coping and stress management skills?
- Discussed critical health and wellness topics, including education, physical health, mental health, substance use, sexual behavior, and sexual and gender identity?
- Provided the youth with an understanding of the effects of trauma and traumatic stress and supported their participation in necessary and appropriate interventions which supports their recovery?
- Encouraged caregivers and other supports to help prepare youth for adulthood by providing opportunities to learn and practice new skills (i.e., developing a budget, cooking, cleaning, and laundry)?
- Connected the youth with appropriate peer support groups?
- Provided youth with frequent opportunities to make decisions, to learn from consequences, positive and negative, and to celebrate achievements and milestones?

