

Skill Building and Transitional Age Youth

The more skills that transitional age youth possess as they launch DCF care, the better chance they must succeed and thrive. Providing opportunities for this skill development while the youth is in DCF care is important for their overall well-being. One area of focus for work with youth is building skills. Some skills would be considered tangible skills that reflect technical knowledge and training. Other skills are "soft" skills that reflect personality, traits, and interpersonal styles. There are many types of skill building opportunities available for youth. These skills can be strengthened through formal services or through experiences and practice.

Learning Inventory Skills Training (LIST): Life skills represent a collection of some tangible skills needed to function as adults. LIST is a life skills assessment with recommended training resources. Youth 14 years and older whom are committed to DCF are required to have a LIST assessment and instructional components provided. Youth referred to DMHAS Young Adult Services are required to have a LIST assessment in their initial referral packet regardless of their legal status. Trained providers administer the LIST to adolescents ages 14 and up in DCF care, create a teaching plan and teach life skills.

Those responsible to complete assessment and instructional components include:

- providers who serve youth in congregate care programs,
- therapeutic foster care (TFC);
- DCF operated facilities;
- Community Based Life Skills (CBLS) credentialed providers;
- Work to Learn (WTL);
- Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP/CHEER) -

It is essential that the LIST be submitted at age 16 years old with the youth's case plan for a formal review.

Resource: <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/LIST/Home>

Soft Skills: are skills, behaviors, and personal qualities that help people to navigate their environment, relate well with others, perform well and achieve their goals. Increasing youth soft skills is critical to many developmental outcomes. There are many ways to develop soft skills in young people. For example, participation in outdoor experiential education, such as the Wilderness School, can help strengthen self-confidence.

The following is a summary from, Guiding Principles for Building Soft Skills among Adolescents and Young Adult. These principles may be helpful in augmenting the techniques used by regional teams.

These six guiding principles can also be applied to work with young adults.

Principle 1: Promote experimental learning (through challenge, experience, practice and reflection). Soft skills development occurs primarily through feedback, reflection, learning, and growth that results from new experiences. Program and activities should give youth ways to practice and apply soft skills to tasks in everyday, meaningful situations so they can see the value and the "how to" of soft skills.

Principle 2: Address skills in combination rather than isolation, recognizing how they interconnect. Developing skills is often done in cycles. Key soft skills are introduced, revisited, and reinforced in a sequence that provides many chances to practice the same skill in different settings.

Principle 3: Promote strong relationships between adults and youth and among youth themselves. Strong supportive relationships help youth feel secure and allows them to safely try new activities, roles, and behaviors. Supportive relationships are meaningful, caring, and two-way; they respect youth's contributions, and are based on shared power, when youth are valued partners and contributors.

Principle 4: Promote positive staff practices. Staff should adopt a core set of basic practices that promote developing soft skills. Modeling - staff demonstrate high proficiency in soft skills they want youth to develop reinforce positive attitudes and behaviors and give constructive feedback.

Principle 5: Create a safe, caring, supportive, and enriching program environment. A safe, caring and supportive environment allows youth to feel comfortable expressing themselves, even on difficult topics, knowing that they will be accepted and not bullied or ridiculed.

Principle 6: Promote integration of learning contexts. Effective programs promote integration of learning contexts by adopting approaches that involve families, the local communities, educators and the workforce. Skills learned in one environment can be reinforced in another and overtime providing further rationale for combining learning contexts.

Many of these principles can be utilized in work with young adults. Practicing and modeling soft skills is often productive. Soft skills such as "grit" and resiliency are especially important. **For information on building grit and resiliency, please see the Tip Sheet of building Grit and Resiliency in this practice guide.**

Resource: [Guiding Principles for Building Soft Skills Among Adolescents and Young Adults | Youth Economic Opportunities](#)

There are opportunities for young adults to further utilize, practice and master these skills through civic engagement.

Youth Advisory Boards (YAB): DCF Youth Advisory Board is an assembly of extraordinary young people who provide the Department with great advice and policy recommendations from the

viewpoint of youths that are involved in the child welfare system. Teaching self and system level advocacy is the essential focus of the YAB. The YAB encourages young adults to highlight their self-advocacy skills. Youth from each region who are in out of home care are eligible to participate in their local YAB. A statewide youth advisor, which comprises a representative from each region's YAB, meets with the Commissioner on a quarterly basis.

Through their work, the YAB sponsored Public Act 19-44 which establishes a Bill of Rights and expectations for children placed by DCF in out-of-home care. A subcommittee of DCF team members created an educational learning series that will be connected to the local YAB. Topics will focus on civic engagement and preparing transitional age youth for life as young adults. One topic on voting would provide information on how to register to vote, the importance of voting, staying informed and how to get involved in local issues and politics. These learning forums would include the youth to assist with preparing the curriculum and presenting the topics. (for more information see <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/Adolescent-Services/Home#YAB>).

Another skill to build relates to understanding practical money applications. The Bank Commission provides free financial literacy training through local banks. Information on where to find this training is on the V.I.T.A.L. Resources website. Learning the importance of money management and how to manage a bank account is an important skill that is very beneficial to TAY.

Youth Service Bureaus: are local diversionary systems that offer resources and opportunities for children, youth and their families. A wide range of services and programs are offered with the goal of helping youth to develop positivity and to function as responsible member of the community. There are 103 youth service bureaus serving 142 towns across Connecticut. Please feel free to contact the TSS Division for guidance on YSBs.

Resource: <https://www.ctyouthservices.org>

Involvement in a Youth Advisory Board and Youth Service Bureaus or other organizations that build skills in transitional age youth is also connected to positive youth development. The Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs defines PYD as: "is an intentional, prosocial approach to engaging youth within their communities, schools, organizations', peer groups and families in a manner that is productive and constructive, recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people's strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths."

Resource: <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>

In preparing youth for their life after DCF, we need to provide opportunities for them to engage in positive youth development.

Opportunities for PYD include involvement in a host of teams, clubs, organizations, including but not limited to:

- School clubs, athletic/recreation leagues, student council
- Youth mentoring
- Advisory or advocacy groups
- Youth Service Bureaus
- Faith based groups
- Music groups
- Community organizations
- Legislative subcommittees as youth member
- Local community youth groups

Self-Advocacy is learning how to speak up for oneself, making own decisions about life, learning how to get the information, knowing rights and responsibilities, problem solving, effectively communicating and listening. YAB participation is strongly encouraged for transitional age youth. Access to Youth Ambassadors is also important as the Youth Ambassadors model self-advocacy. For more information on the Youth Ambassadors please contact Transitional Supports and Success.

In preparing TAY and helping them develop into confident, prepared self-advocating young adults, it's critical that they also have the documents they need to launch into adulthood. Without these documents, they can quickly face obstacles that delays them from moving forward.

- Original social security card along with a copy
- Original birth certificate along with a copy
- Drivers permit/licensure
- State ID
- High school diploma and school records
- Insurance card and medical records
- Passport
- Immigration and citizenship papers

Health and Wellness: To support TAY in understanding the importance of their physical and mental health, a health and wellness curriculum has been developed and will be offered through the Academy of Workforce Development. The information will provide the youth with the importance of annual physicals and how to navigate the medical community. Developing the skills to self-advocate regarding physical and mental health is necessary for their overall wellbeing. Please also refer to the Health and Wellness Guide for TAY in the V.I.T.A.L. practice guide.

Please note that a one-time stipend is available for young adults who complete a financial literacy (which can be in the L.I.S.T. or it can be completed separately) and the health and wellness curriculum. Please contact the TSS Division for that stipend.