

Tip Sheet

V.I.T.A.L. Steps Applied to Case Practice

Focus: Supporting Authentic Youth Engagement

Best Practice Summary: Authentic youth engagement helps young adults enhance their self-esteem, leadership, advocacy and professional development skills. It can increase a young person's influence within the community. Youth adult partnerships lead to well-informed decision making, practice design and policies. This is youth in foster care who may have been excluded from decisions that affect their lives.

References:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2019). Guide on Authentic Youth Engagement. Baltimore, MD. Retrieved from www.aecf.org.

Goals: Authentic engagement of young people in all Department efforts.

V.I.T.A.L. values and essential principles in action: Authentic youth engagement, shared power, voice and choice.

In preparation for activity or during the activity?

Encourage team members to consider all opportunities to engage youth. This includes case planning, policy making, and practice efforts. Engagement with youth is authentic when partnerships with adults in various areas are offered, when youth and adults have buy in/interest in the activity and are prepared for the activity/task in advance, and when youth are given the support they need to participate.

Specific suggestions during a meeting or conversation include:

Team members use skills involved in authentic youth engagement every day. For example, skills for adults interested in authentic youth engagement include:

- Listen to young adults thoroughly and without bias. Be genuine and transparent in interactions.
- Talk to youth on both their needs and strengths.
- Allow youth to have decision making power (in case planning as well as policy and practice meetings).
- Be intentional in your efforts to involve youth: How will you incorporate feedback in a meaningful way.
- Support youth driven community outreach.
- Allow youth to speak in meetings. Ask if youth have specific feedback and give them time and space to share

- Invite young adults to the table early
- Coach youth in advance about the activity, the expectations
- Provide support needed for a young adult to participate, to tell their story
- View youth as an asset and arrange compensation prior to the activity.

For coaching and support of skill development in supervision: Reflective prompts:

Consider the V.I.T.A.L. core practice principles: Engage and exchange information, assess and understand strengths, fortify & support, and reflect & adjust. Has the staff member demonstrated these skills in practice? In daily work and when planning practice changes that impact the office?

Suggested CQI measures:

- How often do offices involved youth in planning?
- How often are choices given in case planning conferences?
- Are youth compensated for their time?
- Do all youth have opportunities for engagement?

Level of Mastery Demonstrated: Consider the level of skill mastery demonstrated by staff on this task.

Foundational: The team member is at an early stage of core practice and skill acquisition. The team member is supported in learning the skills. The team member has an opportunity to develop skills. Coaching agendas may target specific skills for development. The skills are demonstrated and actively coached by team leaders.

Rising: The team member occasionally applies the practices and skills independently. Coaching agendas focus on generalizing skills. The team member demonstrates increasing understanding of the practices. Skills are demonstrated and coached by team leaders.

Secure: The team member consistently applies skills independently to a wide range of settings and aspires to apply knowledge and understanding. There is a range of evidence that shows a deeper understanding of concepts and that skills are sustained over time.