



V.I.T.A.L. "The Why"

December 18, 2020

What is the agency doing to support good outcomes for transitional age youth (TAY)?:

Over several months, stakeholder feedback has been gathered to build a practice model that embeds our shared values and aspirations into our work with transitional age youth (TAY). **The model is abbreviated V.I.T.A.L.** We are working to overhaul our policies and practice guide for transitional age youth to align with those values. Policy revisions focus on removing barriers that prevent young adults from achieving success. A new practice guide focuses on strengthening tangible skills and the soft skills young adults need to thrive. **There are 4 areas we hope to bolster in this process: Improving functional assessments of TAY, integrating that assessment into case planning, enhancing coaching, and improving living arrangement planning.** Capturing youth voice in individual case planning and to fuel Department efforts is a bedrock of V.I.T.A.L. The V.I.T.A.L. operating framework rests in positive youth development. We are also working on ways to track outcomes.

Why are we doing this?

TAY who leave foster care without achieving permanency are at increased risk for several adverse adult outcomes, including homelessness, high unemployment, lower educational attainment, incarceration, and early or unintended pregnancies. We want to do everything we can to launch TAY to a successful future. Developing a consistent and recognizable internal approach to adolescent practice is resource intense and requires several investments. **However, these costs are dwarfed by the long term social and emotional costs of the investments we don't make in support of our young adults and their families.**

And why now?

The adolescent work in Connecticut has been exceptional and we have a robust array of supports and partners. However, several converging factors that told us this was the right time to elevate our practice with this specific population:

- We want our policies and practice to reflect our values.
- We want the outcomes of our young adults to drive our decisions.
- We've learned that those most impacted by a system have a critical role in driving system change.
- Diversion, prevention, and permanency work have reduced the number of adolescents in care. The young adults we serve face multiple barriers and challenges.
- National conversations about racial injustice increased our motivation to support the youth of color who are overrepresented in the DCF TAY cohort.
- During the pandemic we questioned how we could do more to support young people.

What can we do if we have ideas or questions on how to support this?

We hope to launch a draft of the model in Spring, 2021. Please don't hesitate to call Administrator Linda Dixon or Director Latosha Johnson with thoughts, ideas, or questions. There's also a mailbox: Dcfadolescentpractice.ct.gov

Wherever you work in DCF we hope you make the commitment to talk to 5 people you know about the importance of embracing a new approach to this population.