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Session 1 **Personalizing Youth Work**

To introduce the concept of positive youth development

- Activity 1.1 Welcome and Introduction
Participants will understand the challenge of providing growth opportunities for youth in care.
- Activity 1.2 Introduction to Curriculum
Participants will understand the concept of positive youth development and how the *Interdependent Living Curriculum* will address the skills necessary to implement this approach.
- Activity 1.3 Identifying Significant Adults
Participants will be able to identify how adults contribute to positive youth development.
- Activity 1.4 Session Video
Participants will understand how youth in care perceive supportive adults.
- Activity 1.5 Promoting Interdependence
Participants will be able to recognize the relationship between interdependence and positive youth development.
- Activity 1.6 Wrap-up
Participants will be able to recall session information and learning.

Session 2 **Measuring Success**

To emphasize how workers can use youth development outcomes successfully with youth in care

- Activity 2.1 Welcome and Introduction
Participants will be able to acknowledge ways that adults contribute to the personal development of youth.
- Activity 2.2 Safety, Permanency and Well-being
Participants will be able to connect program goals of safety, permanency and well-being to positive youth development outcomes.
- Activity 2.3 Session Video
Participants will be able to identify how youth perceive success.

- Activity 2.4 **Helping Hands**
Participants will be able to increase their knowledge of agency services, community resources and interactions that promote youth development.
- Activity 2.5 **Approaches and Behaviors**
Participants will be able to recognize how various approaches affect youth in care.
- Activity 2.6 **Wrap-up**
Participants will be able to recall session information and learning.

Session 3 Connecting with Youth Culture

To identify challenges and barriers to, and opportunities for, youth input and participation

- Activity 3.1 **Welcome and Introduction**
Participants will be able to set aside labels and stereotypes in order to build positive action strategies with youth.
- Activity 3.2 **Session Video**
Participants will understand how youth in care view the differences in generations.
- Activity 3.3 **Symbols of My Generation**
Participants will be able to identify similarities and differences in youth cultures.
- Activity 3.4 **Youth as Objects, Recipients and Resources**
Participants will be able to distinguish behaviors associated with approaching youth as objects, recipients and resources.
- Activity 3.5 **Recognizing Approaches**
Participants will be able to demonstrate the differences between approaching youth as objects, recipients or resources.
- Activity 3.6 **Wrap-up**
Participants will be able to recall session information and learning.

Session 4 Seeing Me through Your Eyes

To present approaches for increasing youth input and participation

- Activity 4.1 **Welcome and Introduction**
Participants will be able to recognize the benefits of approaching youth as resources.
- Activity 4.2 **Session Video**
Participants will understand how youth in care want to be treated by adults.
- Activity 4.3 **Room for Growth**
Participants will be able to identify the incremental steps that youth need in becoming self-managing.
- Activity 4.4 **Incorporating Youth as Participants and Resources**
Participants will be able to identify skills that encourage youth self-management.

Activity 4.5 Recognizing Personal Power
Participants will be able to identify levels of power through case scenarios.

Activity 4.6 Wrap-up
Participants will be able to recall session information and learning.

Session 5 Opportunities for Positive Youth Development

To promote application of worker knowledge and skills for positive youth development

Activity 5.1 Welcome and Introduction
Participants will be able to understand opportunities as a strategy for competency.

Activity 5.2 Roles Promoting Positive Development of Youth in Care
Participants will be able to identify worker roles that promote positive youth development.

Activity 5.3 Session Video
Participants will understand how youth in care view opportunities for their development.

Activity 5.4 What We Know About Youth Development
Participants will be able to describe the stages of adolescent development.

Activity 5.5 Promoting Opportunities for Positive Development
Participants will be able to identify strategies that promote opportunities for positive youth development.

Activity 5.6 Wrap-up
Participants will be able to recall session information and learning.

Session 6 Supports for Positive Youth Development

To teach participants three types of support that youth need for positive development: emotional, motivational and strategic

Activity 6.1 Welcome and Introduction
Participants will understand the value of supports for youth competency.

Activity 6.2 What Do Youth In Care Need To Be Successful?
Participants will be able to identify internal resources and external supports needed by youth transitioning out of care.

Activity 6.3 Session Video
Participants will understand how youth in care view supports.

Activity 6.4 Providing Supports for Development
Participants will be able to develop strategies for supporting youth in care.

Activity 6.5 Wrap-up
Participants will be able to recall session information and learning.

Session 7 Family & Community Connections for Positive Youth Development

To promote strategies for connecting youth with relationships and resources that support their positive development

- Activity 7.1 Welcome and Introduction
Participants will be able to use supports as a strategy for youth competence.
- Activity 7.2 Session Video
Participants will understand how youth in care view relationships and resources.
- Activity 7.3 Strategies Connecting Youth with Supports
Participants will be able to identify strategies to connect youth in care with support networks.
- Activity 7.4 Strings of the Heart
Participants will be able to describe strategies to support and strengthen family connections.
- Activity 7.5 Wrap-up
Participants will be able to recall session information and learning

Session 8 Walking the Talk

To review the knowledge and skills participants obtained through the training and how these will be applied to promote positive youth development

- Activity 8.1 Welcome and Session Video
Participants will be able to apply some of the advice from youth in care to their own work.
- Activity 8.2 Promoting Development of Youth in Care
Participants will be able to develop a plan for a specific youth in care that embodies youth development strategies covered in this curriculum.
- Activity 8.3 Positive Youth Development and Case Planning
Participants will be able to use positive youth development principles in developing case plans.
- Activity 8.4 ILC Highlights
Participants will be able to recall lessons of previous sessions.
- Activity 8.5 Incorporating Positive Youth Development in Our Work
Participants will recognize and understand how training information can be incorporated in their work.
- Activity 8.6 Wrap-up
Participants will be able to recall session information and learning.

Facilitator Introduction

Welcome to the *Interdependent Living Curriculum*. This eight session training program is the result of a three year federally funded project to enhance the skills of child welfare practitioners working with youth who are transitioning out of foster care. This introductory section presents the need and rationale for the curriculum, its unique contributions to independent living services, and specific suggestions for training delivery and evaluation.

Background

Approximately one-third of the nearly 500,000 children in out-of-home care across the country are teenagers. Every year, about 20,000 youth between the ages of 18 and 21 emancipate or “age out” of the nation’s foster care system. While the transition to adulthood is often a challenging time for all young people, the hurdles are especially high for youth who have lived in foster or group care, under the protective supervision of the child welfare agency or juvenile probation. A large majority of young people in the foster care system have experienced neglect and physical or sexual abuse, experiences which make it more difficult to build the interpersonal and life skills needed for self-sufficiency. Further, foster care youth have difficulty establishing needed support systems, since they experience an average of 1.25 placements per year and rarely have a family network that is fully functional (Courtney & Piliavin, 1998).

While in the minority, a significant number of foster care youth have engaged in behaviors that are counterproductive to developing the skills and resources they need to support themselves. These risky behaviors include abusing substances, breaking the law, running away, and becoming parents. National studies have demonstrated that four years after leaving foster care, 46 percent of young people lack a high school diploma; 25 percent have experienced homelessness; 62 percent have not maintained employment for a year; 42 percent have become parents; and 30 percent have faced arrest and incarceration (Barth, 1990; Blome, 1997; Courtney & Barth, 1996; Jonson-Reid & Barth, 2000; McMillen & Tucker, 1999; Westat, 1991).

In 1986, the Federal Independent Living Program (ILP) was initiated to enable child welfare agencies to prepare youth emancipating from foster care for independent living. A report of the experiences and outcomes of the first ten years of the program (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999) acknowledges the progress made during that time and suggests information which would lead to more successful interventions:

- Independent living services need to be a continuous process, starting as young as possible and extending past emancipation
- Youth need assistance in identifying appropriate mentors and support networks that can provide ongoing support following discharge from care
- Services should be grounded in a youth development approach that moves beyond occasional youth involvement to ongoing engagement of youth in planning and implementing ILP services

These findings, coupled with troubling research on outcomes for foster youth, spurred Congress to pass the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, creating the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. The new program provides states with increased funding and flexibility for a broad range of services and supports to help youth transition successfully from foster care to self-sufficiency. These services include life-skills training (budgeting, housekeeping, food shopping), counseling, case management support and employment assistance. The new legislation allows the use of these funds for IL services to youth younger than 16 and services such as room and board, post secondary educational assistance and Medicaid for young people who are between the ages of 18 and 21, demonstrating a renewed commitment to provide services to older and former foster youth.

Since public policy changes are only as good as their implementation, considerable work is needed across the country for developing a training and partnership process that will strengthen child welfare staffs' ability to work with youth as they prepare for self-sufficiency. In October 2000, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau funded twelve three-year projects to develop training for child welfare practitioners to work effectively with youth transitioning out of foster care under the guidelines of the Chafee legislation. The twelve projects address several common knowledge and skill areas within the framework of a competency-based approach that views youth as active participants in their own transition to adulthood. Each project, however, has its own unique approach for the development of a particular curriculum and subsequent training program.

The Jordan Institute for Families at the School of Social Work, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill received one of the Children's Bureau awards and, together with the Southeastern Network of Youth & Family Services and child welfare staff and youth in eight southeastern states, focused on a partnership model of curriculum development.

The Interdependent Living Project Partnership

The principal aim of this project was to develop and deliver curriculum in partnership with youth that effects changes in the attitudes, knowledge and skills of child welfare practitioners, particularly on involving youth in making decisions that affect their well-being. Studies suggest that youth who experience a multitude of developmental assets have better outcomes in all areas, including education, employment, sense of well-being and civic responsibility (Scales & Leffert, 1999). Foster care youth will more likely increase their developmental assets if youth-serving adults involve youth as partners and resources in developing their own life plans. Our youth-focused curriculum provides practitioners access to the partnership skills necessary to improve these practices, resulting in youth who are more self-sufficient and successful adults.

Youth actively participated as partners in each phase of this project. More than 700 youth in foster care throughout eight southeastern states completed surveys, telling us what could make their experiences better and what they needed as they transition to adulthood. Youth wrote, produced and starred in a video in order to provide youth voices to accompany the curriculum. More than 20 youth participated as members of the project advisory committee, attending meetings and helping to craft the curriculum. Youth also participated as co-trainers in three pilot trainings of the curriculum and as members of eight state training teams in a training of trainers' workshop for delivery of the curriculum throughout the southeast.

Interdependence, Not Merely Independence

A strong youth partnership with child welfare staff, foster parents and other caring, supportive adults enables youth to feel cared for, respected and in control—conditions which will then provide youth the motivation and skills to develop and stay connected to a support system that will sustain permanency, safety and well-being. Life is not an independent experience; it is an interdependent journey. This *Interdependent Living Curriculum* equips practitioners with the knowledge and skills necessary to help youth become successful, integrated members of society.

Training Delivery

Training Sessions

The 24-hour *Interdependent Living Curriculum* has been designed in eight three-hour sessions. These sessions can be delivered in half-day training segments, or two sessions can be combined for a full day of training. We recommend that the sessions be deliv-

ered with time in between for trainees to practice newly acquired skills and to initiate dialogue activities with youth in care, as suggested in the curriculum. We also suggest that the training sessions be delivered in sequential order, since each session builds upon prior curriculum content. Finally, the training will be less effective for participants and group learning if new participants join in the middle of the curriculum or miss a session.

Youth as Co-Facilitators

In order for trainees to be convinced of the value of partnering with youth, it is important for the training team to model this value by including a youth in care or a former foster youth as a full member of the team. The *Interdependent Living Curriculum* was developed in partnership with youth, and our experiences demonstrated that well-prepared youth can be effective trainers of this curriculum. Youth, as well as adult, facilitators will become proficient trainers through participating in a training of trainers' workshop that focuses on adult learning principles and training skills and that helps youth become familiar with this curriculum. Projects are beginning to develop guides for using youth as trainers, which will also aid in the successful implementation of this approach. One such guide is being developed by the Institute for Public Sector Innovation at the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Services, University of Southern Maine, with input from the Jordan Institute for Families.

Training Video

The *Interdependent Living Curriculum* (ILC) video is a central part of the curriculum, because it weaves youth voices into the training experience. Produced by young people, it also showcases youth in care. Youth in front of the camera speak spontaneously about their experiences in foster care in response to questions posed by the youth behind the camera (see **Introduction Handout a** for a list of the questions). These are the same questions which participants are asked to use throughout the training in dialogues with youth with whom they work. This technique gives participants the opportunity to validate the similarity of experiences of all youth in care.

The ILC video is divided into eight segments to accompany the eight training sessions. Each video segment is self-contained, beginning with an introductory theme and ending with credits and a repeat of the theme. When several sessions are combined into one or two full days of training, the facilitator may want to end each video viewing before the credits and theme, reserving that part of the video for the final day's training session. This limited showing of the video theme with the words and voices of youth in care will then be more powerful. Facilitators should preview the video and carefully note the beginnings and endings of each segment, in order to plan how to present each video segment smoothly and effectively.

Training Evaluation

The *Interdependent Living Curriculum* contains two types of evaluations:

- An embedded evaluation which measures participants' understanding and application of their learning in the classroom
- A transfer of learning assessment which measures the impact of the training on participants' satisfaction, knowledge, skills and effectiveness with clients on the job

Embedded evaluations use exercises that are built into the training (Sessions 3, 4 and 8), both to promote participant learning and to provide evaluative feedback to facilitators. Participants are asked to apply training concepts to realistic job-related examples. Ideally, they note their responses on NCR (carbonless) paper so that one part may be handed in to the facilitator, while participants retain a copy for discussion. If no NCR paper is available, facilitators may use regular paper and ask trainees to write their responses twice or remember them during the discussion. Forms are scored by comparing participants' responses to the responses agreed upon by a panel of experts

familiar with the subject matter. These responses are listed on the Trainer's Notes in each of the three sessions containing embedded evaluations.

Transfer of learning assessment comprises two postcards for participants to complete. The first postcard is completed at the end of Session 8 and asks for participants' satisfaction with the training, their predictions of how they will incorporate the learning on their jobs and their assessment of how youth will benefit from participants' training. Three months after the training, participants will receive follow-up postcards to complete and return. They will indicate whether or not they have been able to use any of the knowledge or skills acquired from the training on their jobs, as well as their satisfaction with the training and its impact on their work with youth.

Facilitator Preparation

The following steps will help facilitators prepare for training delivery:

- Make a sticky wall.** Purchase 2–3 yards of nylon-based fabric (rip-stop or nylon material) and hem rough edges to prevent the fabric from unraveling. Purchase a can of Spray Mount (temporary bond) from a local office supply store and lightly spray only one side of the material. This sprayed side of the sticky wall will hold paper on its surface without any need for tape or staples. Hang the sticky wall on the wall using double-sided tape, with the sprayed side facing out. The sticky wall is then ready to use in the training for posting signs, half sheets of paper and index cards, among others.
- Distribute interview questions (Introduction Handout a)** to trainees two to four weeks prior to the training and ask participants to dialogue with 3–4 youth in care about questions for the first session, writing down youth comments on paper. This activity is meant to be a discussion between youth and adults, not a survey for youth to fill out.
- Print “Quotes for Child Welfare Practitioners” (Introduction Handout b)** onto separate sheets of card stock.
- Print the twelve positive youth development outcome areas** below onto separate card stock of two different bright colors, one for each type of outcome.

Positive Youth Development Outcome Areas

Identity

Safety and Structure
Self-worth
Mastery and Future
Belonging and Membership
Responsibility and Autonomy
Spirituality and Self-Awareness

Ability

Physical Health
Mental Health
Intellectual Ability
Employment
Civic and Social Ability
Cultural Ability

- Print evaluation handouts (Handouts 3i, 4f and 8d)** on NCR paper (carbonless paper), so that a copy can be collected by the facilitator, with a copy for each participant. If the training budget does not allow for special printing of the forms, collect single copies of the forms and review responses with the participants.
- Purchase folders** for each participant to use to collect the session handouts, which should be brought to each training session.
- Read *It's My Life*** by Casey Family Programs (September 2001) and *Preventing*

Problems, Promoting Development, Encouraging Engagement: Competing Priorities or Inseparable Goals? by Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem and Ferber (September 2001). These articles are in the Facilitator curriculum binder.

- **The Curriculum Journal**, also included in the binder, has been designed for participants to:
 - Capture insights and ideas about applying what they learn in training to their jobs
 - Encourage reflection at the end of each session
 - Provide participants with a reference tool following the training

The Journal is the personal property of each participant and should not be read by others, including the facilitator. Stress to participants that while they may not be comfortable with journaling as a learning activity, they should respect the journaling time at the end of each session and attempt to use the tool.

Dialogue Questions for Youth in Care

- Please dialogue with 3–4 youth in care about their answers to the following questions. Please record youth comments to the questions for discussion in the related training session.

Session 1

- Why is it important for adults to like young people?
- What are some characteristics of supportive caseworkers?

Session 2

- What do you need to be successful on your own?

Session 3

- How might age differences influence how youth and adults work together?
- What are some stereotypes of and assumptions about youth today?

Session 4

- How do you know if an adult cares about or understands you?
- How would you like to be treated by your foster care caseworker?

Session 5

- Why is it important for youth in care to have real life experiences?
- What opportunities are necessary for youth to learn to become self-sufficient?"

Session 6

- How can/do workers support youth to be on their own?
- What supports are needed to be healthy and successful after youth leave care?

Session 7

- Who is part of the family that you have created to support you once you leave care?
- Why is a support system important for you to be successful on your own?

Quotes for Child Welfare Practitioners

- Despite significant challenges, youth in out-of-home care have the strength and power to succeed, if they receive resources and support from caring adults.
- Developing and sustaining hope in youth is critical to long-term success.
- Encouraging youth to create their own vision is the foundation of effective transition planning.
- It's my life. And I can make choices that will help me to be healthy and productive. I can dream of a brighter future.
- Youth deserve the opportunity to achieve their potential as healthy adults and productive citizens.
- Research shows that two critical factors help youth overcome challenges – a positive, trusting relationship with an adult and an external support system.
- All youth deserve permanent homes where they feel valued by adults who are willing to invest in their futures.
- Youth involvement is necessary for successful transitions.
- All children and youth need to know that their family and friends will be there for them – no matter what mistakes they make.
- The primary psychological task of adolescence is individuation – the process of separating from family and finding a place in society as a complete person.
- Long-lasting, supportive and strong connections to family members, friends and other adults are critical to the healthy development of youth while in foster care and throughout life.
- Research shows that foster youth who have contact with their birth parents have better outcomes than youth who do not maintain contact.
- Community supports promote positive youth development by expanding the support network for youth.
- Participation in cultural and spiritual activities are vital for identity formation and can help youth form community connections.

Adapted From

Casey Family Programs. (2001, September). *It's my life: A framework for youth transitioning from foster care to successful adulthood*. Seattle, Washington: Author.

