California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership

360°
WHOLE YOUTH. WHOLE LIFE.

SHARED LEARNINGS from CALIFORNIA'S COLLABORATIVE to TRANSFORM INDEPENDENT LIVING PRACTICE and PROGRAMS (ILP)

P R E F A C E

During 2007, the National Governors Association's Policy Academy on Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care provided leaders in California with a unique opportunity to envision the transformation of Independent Living Program (ILP) services and supports. This vision included integrated efforts by child welfare, caregivers and community partners (including ILP providers) in achieving the permanency, education and employment goals of foster youth. It also included moving transitional services for foster youth out of the ILP classroom and back into natural home and community settings where learning and skill building would be individualized, developmental and based on the youth's self-identified needs, goals and aspirations. It was understood that these activities needed to be a normal part of the youth's everyday life, learning and care from early ages, rather than beginning at 14 to 16 years of age, in order to better support youth success and improved permanency and well-being outcomes.

California leaders determined that using the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (Collaborative) methodology, which is designed for rapid testing of practice changes, would assist California partners in achieving the desired transformation and improved outcomes for youth in foster care. Collaborative funding was provided by public and private partners involved in the California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership (www.co-invest.org). Partners include the California Department of Social Services; the County Welfare Directors Association of California; the Administrative Office of the Courts; and private philanthropic foundations including the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs, the Stuart Foundation, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation and the Zellerbach Family Foundation. With their leadership and support, from September 2008 through May 2010, California's Collaborative to Transform ILP brought together nine county teams and a state team in shared learning and small tests of change for rapid ILP practice improvement and system transformation. For readers not familiar with Collaborative methodology, we suggest reading Part 4 of this report first, as it will clarify the Collaborative processes and provide a basis for understanding the learnings shared in Parts 1 through 3.

Child and Family Policy Institute of California and New Ways to Work partnered to coordinate the Collaborative, which was supported by staff, leadership and faculty who provided ongoing training and technical assistance to participating teams. All Collaborative teams were comprised of foster youth, caregivers, child welfare staff and leaders, and community partners with expertise in permanency, education, employment, mental health and/or probation. All brought a diversity of perspective and a richness of experience, including experience as youth in foster care, as kinship and foster caregivers, as career development, employment, education and permanency champions for foster youth, and as probation officers, child welfare social workers, supervisors and leaders. Together, these partners provided inspiration and guidance toward a transformed future.

We want to acknowledge all of the hard work, wisdom and support provided by our Collaborative teams, faculty trainers, leadership team and staff during the 21 months of the Collaborative and in the preparation of this report. The sections of this report share many Collaborative tools, resources, ideas and lessons learned from various perspectives. We hope this synthesis of the efforts of so many passionate and creative experts in the field of child welfare and ILP provides inspiration and guidance to the many individuals, organizations and communities who are working just as passionately in their own communities and organizations to improve the lives and outcomes of children, youth and families.

Participating County Teams:

- Fresno
- Los Angeles
- Monterey
- Napa
- Orange
- Sacramento
- San Francisco
- Santa Clara
- Solano

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- Kristina Gelardi, California Youth Connection
- Rhelda Shabazz, Collaborative Senior Leader, Los Angeles County

Faculty Trainers and State Team Co-Chairs

- Bob Friend, Center for Family Finding and Youth Connectedness
- Randi Gottlieb, Ready to Succeed
- Steve Trippe, New Ways to Work

Faculty Trainers

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A Collaborative Snapshot

California's Collaborative to Transform Independent Living Practice and Programs (ILP) convened from September 2008 through May 2010 to fundamentally change the way we help youth in foster care succeed in school, work and life. Rather than focusing on "independent living" or "programs," the Collaborative used rapid tests of change and a shared learning community (Breakthrough Series Collaborative methodology) to focus their systems and practices on partnering with youth and others in their lives to create the kind of individualized, relationship-based approach that most youth experience in their families and communities.

Youth learn skills developmentally as they grow and experience life, largely through everyday family, neighborhood and community experiences. As they transition into adulthood, many of these important relationships and supports continue to provide significant economic and emotional support. Youth in foster care need similar relationships and supports as they leave care and take on increasingly complex responsibilities and commitments in their lives.

A 360° Approach to Transformation

Helping foster youth succeed in school, work and life is about a 360° approach to the whole youth and the youth's whole life. It's about connecting youth in real ways to all the things they need in life through the people they have relationships with – not through books, guides, checklists or classes. Important concepts to put into action to achieve transformation include:

Whole Youth

- A focus on the whole youth means considering all aspects of a young person's life – helping them achieve educational goals, find meaningful work and careers, and have permanent loving relationships on which they can depend. It's about partnering with youth and all of the people they identify as important in their lives to ensure 360° support.
- Foster youth need real world learning, just like every youth. Teaching foster youth about everyday aspects of life – relationships, self-advocacy, problem solving – helps ensure that they will thrive after leaving care. These are skills that cannot be learned in the classroom but rather need to be taught and practiced in everyday ordinary family settings. These skills are vital to success.
- Every youth needs individualized attention since their needs, goals and aspirations are different. A 360° approach centers on youth-adult partnerships that provide this individualized attention and support – partnerships that develop the ability of youth to act as leaders and decision-makers in their lives and in their communities.

Whole Life

- Foster youth must have a strong voice in their lives. As they grow and develop, they need adults who will support them to take charge of their lives and futures. Youth must be active partners in this process in order to get what they need to live, love, learn, work and ultimately thrive.
- Youth need relationships with family members and with adults in their schools and communities to help them negotiate the world and explore the many opportunities and pathways available to them. These real world connections enable youth to learn skills developmentally and discover areas of interest as they grow and mature. Adults at home and in the community are important partners, providing information, encouragement and support to youth as they take charge of their lives and futures.

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- Every youth needs "Love and Belonging – Permanency for a Lifetime." This transformational concept ensures foster youth have adults in their lives that love them unconditionally and will provide the support and guidance they need. Family and loved ones enable young people to realize their potential. They also provide a crucial safety net as youth leave care.

Collaborative Teams

Nine participating county teams, comprised of former foster youth, caregivers, and child welfare leadership, staff and partners, helped to envision and bring to life the Collaborative's 360° approach. Teams utilized the training and guidance provided by twelve faculty trainers. That faculty team was also comprised of former foster youth, caregivers, child welfare leadership, staff and partners.

For More Information

To learn more about the work of individual counties in the Collaborative, see Section 1D of this report, "Collaborative Teams-at-a-Glance," highlighting how each participating county team focused their Collaborative efforts. In addition, each team's Collaborative nickname and county leads (at the time of writing this report) are included on the following page. If contacted and still available, these county contacts are likely to follow a long-standing Collaborative tradition and "share generously" with you about their successes, challenges and lessons learned.

**For more information about the Collaborative to Transform ILP,
contact the California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership.**

Tel: 916-993-7760
Email: info@co-invest.org with subject line "ILP Transformation"

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PART ONE

PART ONE OUTLINE & DETAILS

ENSURING YOUTH THRIVE TODAY & TOMORROW: FOR REAL. FOR LIFE.

360° YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP

SYSTEM SUPPORTS FOR TRANSFORMATION

COLLABORATIVE TEAMS AT-A-GLANCE

O U T L I N E & D E T A I L S

1A TRANSFORMATION STARTS HERE

Ensuring Youth Thrive Today & Tomorrow
FOR REAL. FOR LIFE.

Collaborative Background

In 2006, California was selected as one of six states to participate in the National Governors Association (NGA) Policy Academy on Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care. Between June 2006 and December 2007, the California NGA Policy Academy Team worked together to identify cross-system changes that could more effectively support youth to learn skills developmentally through everyday family, neighborhood and community experiences. It was understood that youth who have these important family and community relationships have a safety net to sustain them – one that can provide significant economic and emotional support. To begin developing and strengthening similar relationships and supports for youth in foster care, the NGA team created a new vision for California's Independent Living Program (ILP). These are the core elements of its vision:

- Young people themselves are at the heart of planning and decision-making about their lives.
- Caregivers and service providers are engaged as critical partners who assist with skill-building and strengthening permanency and community connections starting at an early age and as a continuous developmental process.
- Permanency, education, and employment are primary practice areas to be integrated within a youth's daily life, rather than offered as training in single session workshops or handled by various professionals in separate case-management activities.
- Youth experience individualized planning and have access to a broad array of relevant, developmentally appropriate services, supports and opportunities to meet their needs.
- Transition services are community-based, leverage resources and opportunities, and are coordinated across public and private systems.

It was clear from this vision that the NGA team was recommending a significant change at both practice and systems levels. ILP classroom-based learning and attempts to provide a comprehensive set of transition services through the case-management activities of multiple professionals and organizations would not be sufficient. Improved practices needed to be embedded in a transformed system – one that builds family and other permanent relationships for youth and ensures those relationships provide individualized skill-building, reinforcing and supportive experiences for youth that are developmental in nature and occur in natural home, family and community settings based on youth's needs, goals and aspirations.

The Beginning Collaborative

California's Collaborative to Transform ILP grew out of the work and recommendations of the NGA team. Leaders of the NGA team determined that a collaborative approach, utilizing the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology, would assist California partners to translate the NGA vision into action and begin the process of creating innovative and sustainable changes to ILP in California. While the NGA vision and a traditional "framework for change" were used in the early work with the participating teams, it soon became clear that the initial direction was too limiting for the breadth, depth and

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complexity of true transformation. A simpler, more visionary road map was needed to guide teams toward transformative practices. Collaborative staff, faculty, and leadership grappled with the difference between system 'improvement' and system 'transformation'. Many challenging conversations ensued and intensive work occurred to define 'transformation' and create a framework that would go beyond basic improvements to ILP programs and practices and move more intentionally toward transformation. The sections below explain the developmental process and learnings that resulted in the Collaborative's Final Transformational Framework.

Understanding ILP Transformation and How to Achieve It: Six Key Characteristics

The desired transformation sought by the Collaborative required a large-scale shift in culture – moving from an ILP classroom-based process to providing individualized skill-building in natural environments. Reinforcing and supporting skill-building at home, at school and in the community by all those in the youth's life is more than a practice improvement – it is a fundamental shift in values, beliefs, organizational structures, partnerships and processes. Through a shared learning process, the Collaborative – its staff, faculty trainers, leadership, the nine county teams (Fresno, Los Angeles, Monterey, Napa, Orange, Sacramento, Santa Clara, San Francisco, and Solano) and the state team – began to unpack the concept of "ILP transformation."

Six key characteristics of transformation emerged to guide all system and practice changes. These transformational characteristics were very helpful in defining the path to transformation. Teams were able to draw clear lines between each practice shift and how it moved the system and individuals within the system closer to this new vision for youth in care. Youth in the Collaborative gave additional insight and meaning to these transformational characteristics from their unique perspective and in their own words. The following characteristics of transformation began to be infused in teams' thinking and practice changes.

- INDIVIDUALIZED ATTENTION: Youth need families, caregivers and professionals who understand them as individuals and support them in all aspects of their lives and planning for the future. This concept needs to be at the core of everyone's work with youth rather than at the discretion of individuals doing the preparation with and support of youth. As teams tested new practices, they considered whether the practice honored foster youth as individuals with unique strengths, needs, goals and aspirations, how the practice could be accomplished in an individualized way outside of ILP classroom or workshop settings, and how the practice identified services, resources and supports to meet youth's individual needs.

IN YOUTHS' WORDS: Treat us as individuals and don't apply standard cookie-cutter approaches to our lives.

- INTEGRATION OF THE THREE PRACTICE AREAS OF PERMANENCY, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT: Families, caregivers, neighborhoods and communities provide the natural context in which young people learn about behavioral norms, acquire new skills and capacities, and benefit from modeling about what is possible in their lives. The ability for child welfare, ILP, or other partners to help youth achieve their education and employment goals is greatly enhanced by coordinated permanency work and the involvement, support and encouragement of significant persons in the youth's life and

community. As teams tested new practices, they considered how the practice could simultaneously attend to and support permanency, education and employment, and how to maintain coordinated efforts in these three areas.

IN YOUTHS' WORDS: Have all the professionals involved in our lives talk to one another and not expect us to talk to each of the professionals separately.

- **REAL WORLD CONNECTIONS:** Foster youth need real world connections to help them explore the many opportunities and pathways that are available to them. Adults in the community are important role models and coaches as youth identify their areas of interest and pursue their goals. As teams tested new practices, they considered how the practice connects youth with adults outside the ILP service delivery system who have skills and talents in particular areas of expertise; whether these adult connections provide youth with experiential opportunities and perspective in areas of interest, services, resources or supports; and how youth can be supported in developing and maintaining these connections within their own communities, were all considered in evaluating new practice ideas.

IN YOUTHS' WORDS: We should be able to get what we need in real ways, like our peers, from people we have relationships with and not from books, guides, checklists, or in classes.

- **NORMALIZING EXPERIENCES:** Youth in foster care need real world learning and experiences, just like every youth. Home, school and community settings allow youth to learn and grow through participation in the same everyday activities their peers do, in ways that are supportive and non-stigmatizing. As teams tested new practices, they considered whether the practice normalizes foster youths' experiences rather than setting them apart; if it creates and supports opportunities for youth to develop a sense of community with other foster youth, peers and adults; and whether it supports foster youth in exploring, maintaining, and developing their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities.

IN YOUTHS' WORDS: Treat us 'just like other kids' who aren't in foster care.

- **CONNECTION TO RESOURCES:** Youth need to be connected to resources, supports and opportunities in the community that can help them be successful in all aspects of their lives and in planning for the future. Every aspect of a youth's life must be considered, including how to achieve educational goals, find meaningful work experiences, and have permanent loving relationships on which they can depend. As teams tested new practices, they considered how the practice ensures seamlessness and lack of duplication among the case manager, caregiver, ILP and community partners (many of whom have developed plans and perform case management and/or counseling supports). They also considered how resources, supports and opportunities are monitored, assessed and adjusted over time to ensure they are continuing to meet youths' needs.

IN YOUTHS' WORDS: Connect us to the things we need in life. Don't leave us out to find things for ourselves.

- SERVICES PROVIDED AT HOME AND IN NATURAL COMMUNITY SETTINGS: Home, school and community-based services are accessible to youth and are natural environments for providing individualized services. As teams tested new practices, they considered whether the practice provides services to youth in their home, school or community, who provides the services and what their relationship is with the youth, and how the services are responsive to and respectful of youths' race, ethnicity, and culture.

Foundational Outcomes for ILP Transformation

Though the key characteristics of transformation described above helped counties begin to move their systems and practices toward the desired vision of "transformation," youth participating in the Collaborative brought the NGA vision alive as they articulated the three fundamental outcomes this work must always strive to achieve. As a result of the youths' clarity and advocacy on these issues, the Collaborative began to anchor its transformational efforts around these three fundamental outcomes that are critical in ensuring that foster youth thrive today and tomorrow:

1. *YOUTH have love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime.*

2. *YOUTH take charge of their lives and futures.*

3. *YOUTH get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*

These outcomes helped to inspire caregivers, leaders and practitioners. When paired with the six characteristics of transformation, these three youth-centered outcomes provide a clear conceptual model for ILP transformation and are recommended to guide efforts to improve practices, systems, services and outcomes for transitioning youth.

Three Youth-Centered Outcomes

1. *Youth have love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime.*

During the first six to nine months of the Collaborative, participating teams were provided training and technical assistance in the three primary practice areas identified by the NGA team (permanency, education, and employment), believing at that time that none should have primacy. However, it became clear to faculty trainers and staff that teams were continuing to talk about each separately, and certain aspects of their practice in these three areas remained largely within the child welfare agency while other aspects remained largely within ILP work and services. Additionally, much of the education and employment work with youth continued to be done in ILP classroom settings. Although teams were implementing practices that infused more youth-centered approaches, they were clearly struggling with how to move work with foster youth from formal settings to more natural home, school and community settings where youth typically learn these skills.

In addition, it appeared that few youth had reliable relationships with adults other than paid staff of agencies or programs. Despite the focus on integrating permanency, education and employment work with older youth, many older foster youth still did not have access to key permanency resources that were embedded in certain parts of the child welfare system. For youth who did have access, permanency resources were not coordinated with other agency or ILP services that focused on positive relationships, education or employment goals. The personal lives of the youth without these more permanent and reliable connections often remained chaotic, and the ability of child welfare, ILP or other partners to help them achieve their education and employment goals proved challenging.

As youth became vocal within their teams and with Collaborative staff and faculty, they communicated the critical importance of a solid family and a permanent foundation to support their success in life. As a result, the Collaborative began to understand that the outcome identified by youth, "Love and Belonging – Permanency for a Lifetime," is fundamental in ensuring that foster youth thrive today and tomorrow.

The concept of permanency refers to feeling a part of a family system that provides unconditional love – it is continuous, secure, consistent, fulfilling and permanent. It is driven by and responsive to youths' needs and includes birth families and other family and significant relationships as identified by youth, caregivers

"Permanency is a foundation – like going from artificial turf to natural grass under their feet."

— MONTEREY TEAM MEMBER

and community. The relational experience of permanency creates natural opportunities and support at home, at school and in the community, providing an ever-widening circle of real connections that enable youth to learn skills developmentally and discover areas of interest as they grow and mature. In the transition to adulthood, these permanent relationships provide significant economic and emotional support that is not dependent on age or eligibility. Family and loved ones act as a crucial safety net and enable youth to realize all aspects of their potential.

This key lesson learned from youth members moved the Collaborative from an emphasis on improving integration of the three practice areas of permanency, education and employment to the development of a framework in which love, belonging and permanency are foundational. Case workers, caregivers and other professionals must understand the critical role that permanency plays in the lives of youth as they grow and develop, pursue employment, post-secondary education and careers, and take on increasing complex responsibilities and commitments. Permanency is a transformational concept that must be explicitly infused in all work and practice in an intentional and continuous way such as using the permanency practice strategies outlined in Section 2b (Let's Talk; Discovery; Everyday People; Brothers-Sisters; Caregiver Connectors; The Heart of the Matter; Pursuing Permanency; I Belong; Become Part of My Life).

2. Youth take charge of their lives and futures.

One of the Collaborative's key strengths was that its framework for change had a solid foundation in youth-centered approaches and youth-adult partnerships. As the Collaborative grappled with how to effect transformation, its staff, faculty and teams began to develop a better understanding of the power of these concepts and strategies in supporting transformation. It became clear that the concepts of "youth-centered" and "youth-adult partnerships" were essential to building youth leadership and needed to be at the core of all work related to ILP transformation.

Youth-Centered

Strategies and approaches that are "youth-centered" focus on each individual youth and all aspects of the youth's life. A youth-centered system engages youths, their families, communities, caregivers, and other important adults identified by the youth, in planning and activities that help build the relationships and skills the youths need to negotiate the real world. While engaged in these activities, youths are involved in all critical decisions about their own lives. The strengths, needs, goals and aspirations as identified by each individual youth remains at the center of planning and activities, rather than drifting to the periphery. Youth guide the decisions about their lives, not agency and organizational rules and constraints.

Youth-Adult Partnerships

A youth-adult partnership focuses on individual youth development through relationship-based exchanges that benefit both the youth and the adults in their lives. In these partnerships, adults experience and support the process of youth giving voice to their own insights, wishes and dreams, and come to learn the skills and expertise that youth have in regards to their futures, while youth simultaneously experience the support of adults who they can turn to for guidance as they take charge of their lives. Self-advocacy and "voice" are important in this process and must be taught to youth and adults alike. The Collaborative used a Self-Advocacy Curriculum for this purpose. These skills can evolve to create powerful, effective and successful youth-adult partnerships where youth are true partners and leaders within the programs they access, within their communities, and in their own lives.

During the initial months of Collaborative planning, youth faculty challenged staff and the Collaborative overall to ensure that youth-centered practices and youth-adult partnerships were authentic, meaningful and embedded deeply in agencies' cultures. As counties began to test practice changes, emerging youth-adult partnerships demonstrated how adults can support youth in achieving their permanency, education, and employment goals, and how they can support active youth participation on their teams. These youth-adult partnerships provided individualized attention and support to youth while developing their ability to act as leaders and decision-makers in their own lives and in the work of system transformation. Teams found that actualizing youth-adult partnerships involved four components:

- Effective outreach
- Engaging young people in a meaningful way
- Pro-actively "holding on" to youth
- Adults letting go of control and youth taking charge

Effective outreach: This may take many forms and require numerous attempts and multiple efforts to get youth involved or to the table. Youth outreach related to team meetings, case planning, and other leadership and decision-making forums are important opportunities and steps in the youth engagement process. Outreach to youth conveys inclusion and demonstrates that their participation is valued and honored. Successful outreach may take various forms and will likely require repeated attempts and creativity. Adults need to: provide information and preparation for the youth prior to the meeting; explore locations and times that make meeting together comfortable and accessible for youth; and inquire of youth how they would like to focus the meeting and how best to communicate with them through the process.

Effective modes of communication will likely be cell phones (texting, calls) social networking (Facebook, MySpace) and e-mails, depending on the youth's preferences and the purpose of the contact. The communication might initially be via e-mail to schedule a meeting with all of the team, then a call to the youth to talk about the meeting including transportation, then a text a few days prior to the meeting, then a text the day of the meeting. If the youth is late, another text is in order and/or a call. When reaching out to youth for any purpose, a similar process of outreach should occur. Foster youth alumni and mentors can best support outreach efforts in this process. Youth are responsive to their peers and to others who have had similar experiences. Foster youth alumni come from a place of personal experience and expertise, enabling them to listen to the challenges and facilitate potential solutions with youth.

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Engaging young people in a meaningful way:
Youth need adults who listen to, support and value them every day. As the Collaborative progressed, participants began to embrace and recognize the special and unique relationship that caregivers have with youth, as they have everyday opportunities to listen to youth, hear what's important to them and then help them take action. An important lesson learned from the Collaborative was the importance of establishing youth-adult partnerships between youths and agency staff and community partners as well as with their caregivers. Even though these professionals may have less frequent, and at times sporadic, contact with individual youths, their agencies and organizations have critical information that caregivers do not have and they manage resources and processes related to planning, case management and decision-making that greatly impact youths' lives and futures. It became apparent that in addition to caregivers, it was important for professionals to listen to youths, using an appreciative inquiry process and asking open-ended questions to identify ways that they could partner with and support the youths' individual needs, goals and aspirations. The "discovery" story of Michael (below) provides a unique view of the impact and support that youth engagement can have.

> "The greatest thing that one can do to make a difference for our foster youth population is to learn from them, laugh with them, and love them no matter their troubles, struggles, or past."
>
> — SACRAMENTO TEAM MEMBER

MICHAEL'S EXPERIENCE[1]

June 2008 — Michael sat with his team at the first learning session in Sacramento, his arms crossed and looking somewhat confused. Along with other youths and partners in the room, he was unclear about his roles, unprepared to participate, desperately wanting to contribute his voice and experience but remaining somewhat quiet with his team. The purpose of the team's work, concepts about the BSC methodology, and expectations of youth members was unclear.

By Learning Session 2 something had clearly changed for Michael. Through affinity group meetings and calls and by connecting with other youth leaders and receiving the support of faculty and staff, Michael's role and expectations for his participation were clearer. Instead of remaining quiet, Michael talked often – interjecting with ideas, observations and recommendations. He had a lot to say about a lot. Even if he had little confidence that he was being heard, he clearly decided it was time to use his voice. And as his team sat by supportively, he gave suggestion after suggestion about what needed to change.

Five months later, Michael spoke during Learning Session 3 before the full group, about an extremely impactful practice that evolved from his personal request. He had become an eloquent advocate for himself, other youth, their rights, and their role in this work.

In May 2010, the transformation had become complete. Michael was now a leader among not only his peers but among the adult professionals across the state. In a room of more than 400 people representing 42 counties across California (during the ILP Institute), Michael described having the opportunity to review his own case record as a small change his team was willing to test per his recommendation. While he had never been allowed to see anything written in his record prior to this test, he finally had the chance to read about his life, about others'

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1 Michael's story is true and represents the real experience of a young man and his team in this Collaborative. Michael's story is not unlike other youths' experience on teams in the Collaborative. We deeply appreciate Michael's willingness to share this experience to illustrate what youth leadership looks like – and feels like – for the young people involved in this work.

perceptions about his life, and about things he never knew happened in his life, including the receipt of letters from a father he grew up thinking had no interest in him. While the case record review was extraordinarily painful for him, it provided Michael with long overdue information about who he was. Most important, the act of holding this written documentation in his hands was symbolic of his leadership in practices that support youth in care.

Youth engagement practices related to team meetings, case planning, decision-making and other youth leadership forums is also important. Finding ways to fully engage youth in these processes helps youth feel valued and more in charge of their lives and futures. Collaborative teams used a number of strategies to engage young people in these forums:

- Make the name of the meeting meaningful to youth (e.g., "My Time" meeting rather than "Emancipation Conference")
- Hold the meeting at times and locations that are accessible to and comfortable for youth
- Invite youth to partner in making various decisions about the meeting's participants and agenda
- Invite and support youth in determining the priorities and goals for the meeting (and ensure that the meeting facilitator agrees to respect those priorities and goals)
- Refrain from using agency jargon, talking about behavioral problems or discussing the youth in the third person
- State at the beginning of the meeting that the youth may interrupt it at any point that he or she feels it is straying from his or her priorities

Proactively "holding on" to youth: As the Collaborative grew in its understanding of the importance of youth-adult partnerships, the concept of an "adult ally" was developed by youth, faculty and teams. An ally is someone to check-in with, prepare and support youth around new activities, opportunities and system processes. Adult allies proactively hold on to youth, rather than expecting youth to "hang on" to people or programs. In the case of the youth who asked to and was able to read his family's case file, it was important to have a designated adult who could prepare the youth, provide whatever level of support the youth identified would be helpful while reading the case file, and to be available afterwards to listen and support the youth in processing the experience. In working with youth to develop adult allies, clearly "who" the youth will be comfortable with in the role of adult ally depends on the youth, the situation, the particular strengths and qualities of the various adult supporters around the youth, and the youth's relationship with those adults.

Participation of youth on Collaborative teams was definitely strengthened through the use of adult allies. It was helpful to have at least one Collaborative team member identified by the youth as an adult ally to proactively contact and prepare the youth to participate in Collaborative meetings or learning sessions, provide support during the meetings and learning sessions, and check-in and connect with the youth after or between meetings and learning sessions. This process greatly strengthened the degree to which youths felt "a part of" their teams and increased their willingness to advocate for themselves and contribute their thoughts and ideas.

Adults letting go of control and youth taking charge: As people grow and develop, it is important to have real life opportunities to learn, test out and practice skills such as leadership, self-advocacy, judgment and decision-making. Since youth in foster care have so many paid professionals and agencies in their lives whose roles and decision-making authority are established through policy and regulation, it is challenging to create and maintain an environment in which youth are heard and have everyday support in the process of taking charge of their lives and futures. The final step in creating strong youth-adult

partnerships requires that adults step back from perceived responsibilities and allow time and space for youth to take on responsibility instead. By learning to step back, adults create opportunities for youth to speak up, develop self-advocacy, judgment and leadership skills.

Families routinely experience the struggle of *letting go of control* as youth become more independent, like when they are learning to drive. Youth acquire their learning permits and adults "hold on" to them as they practice driving (experiencing starting, stopping, turning, critical thinking through complex driving situations, negotiating for more driving experience, etc.). This is all part of gradually letting go – parents set expectations, allow youth to practice driving, and then await to hear about the experience when they take them to get licensed. This process of "holding onto youth" while they learn and practice skills, and then gradually "letting go" as youth gain confidence, helps youth to develop skill, knowledge, critical thinking and problem-solving abilities that will assist them in all areas of their life and in planning for their future.

Another example of *letting go of control* and supporting youth as they take charge and develop important life and leadership skills can occur through the process of planning agendas and curricula for team meetings or trainings. During the Collaborative, youth faculty asked to develop a curriculum for a learning session – they wanted to highlight the youth perspective and help teams to better understand youth-adult partnership. The youth were given the time and space to develop the concepts they wanted to address. This ultimately required the Collaborative Director to let go of control and step back from her perceived responsibilities. Rather than managing this piece of the work, the Collaborative Director stepped aside and operated in a supportive role, making sure the youth faculty had what they needed to develop, facilitate, and be in control of the session as partners and faculty equals. The end result was an impactful learning session in which adults heard important messages from the youth, all youth in the Collaborative participated, and important youth-adult partnerships were cemented.

> "When we went into Learning Session 2, I went in with idea that adults knew what needed to change and they were going to work on changing it. At LS2, it was clear that the change was going to be coming from the youth themselves."
>
> — COLLABORATIVE FACULTY MEMBER

The clear lesson learned was that youth-adult partnerships provide the relationships and opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills and begin taking charge of their lives and futures. Practice strategies supporting youth to take charge of their lives are outlined in Section 2b (You've Got Rights; Partnering with Youth; Youth Voice; Youth Make the Call; Youth Take Charge).

3. Youth get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.

Helping foster youth get what they need to live, love, learn and work is about the "whole" youth – a 360° approach to the whole youth and the youth's whole life. Youth learn the life and leadership skills they need to thrive through their relationships with family, at school, through employment and internship experiences, at church, on teams and in other youth-focused clubs and organizations, and in tribal and cultural gatherings. Youth-adult partnerships, as described in the above, not only effectively engage and empower youth to "take charge of their lives and futures," they simultaneously ensure that youth have adults in their everyday lives who are there to listen and support them in individualized ways based on their goals, needs and aspirations. When families, caregivers and professionals work together and coordinate their support and their partnerships with youth, they are more likely to support the whole youth in all aspects of their life and in planning for the future. This individualized attention and support

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builds relationships and skills at home and in the community where they are most natural, relevant and useful to young people. As active partners in this process, youth can invite these significant adults into planning and teaming processes so they can contribute resources and support for everyday learning opportunities that will assist the youth to achieve their goals.

By focusing on the whole youth and the youth's whole life, youth-adult partners can begin to transform the lives of youth in foster care. Practice strategies to leverage and coordinate key youth-adult relationships in transformational ways to support youth success are outlined in section 2B (Ordinary Places; Being There Every Day; No Matter Where You Live; Someone to Count On; What Happens Next?; Friend to Friend; Putting It All Together; Making Sense of It All; What Youth Want; Opportunity Knocks).

Child welfare practice has often resulted in adults making decisions for youth based on what the adult thought was in the best interest of the youth. In the eyes of youth, the evolution to "youth-adult partnerships" is perhaps the most critical driving concept in ILP transformation. These partnerships enable youth to feel – and actually be – in charge of their own lives and at the center of getting what they need to live, love, learn, work and ultimately thrive.

Supporting Caregivers to Get Youth What They Need

Caregivers play a pivotal role in the lives of foster youth and in the child welfare system. Caregivers are asked to provide youth with physical care, nurturing and support; they are asked to negotiate with youth as parents would and make some but not all of the daily parenting decisions related to the youth; they are expected to teach some life skills and to advocate for youth to get what they need at school and in many other situations; they are expected to transport and support youth in activities and decision-making about their lives and futures; and they are asked to and oftentimes do form loving, familial type relationships with youth. The interplay of these broad but at times vague roles and responsibilities of the caregiver, in combination with the relationship dynamics between a caregiver/family and the youth and their family, creates incredible complexity in the youth-caregiver partnership. This complexity and the caregiver's unique position in the everyday life of a youth mean it is critically important to provide resources and support to caregivers and assist them in developing a strong partnership with youth.

To help youth get what they need to live, love, learn, work and ultimately thrive in life, we need to support caregivers in this effort. This may include resources, coaching and support regarding their role, relationship with the youth, and how to partner with and support the individual needs, goals and aspirations of the youth in their care. In focusing on this area during the Collaborative, issues that came up for caregivers included the rights of youth in their care, using an appreciative inquiry approach with youth, developing both the youth's and the caregiver's self-advocacy skills, facilitating life-skills development, connecting youth with family and loved ones, supporting youth in career exploration, and accessing all resources available to youth. Though the Collaborative made progress in this area, there is much more to be tested and learned about developing and supporting youth-caregiver partnerships and the extent to which this relationship holds important keys to ILP transformation and ensuring foster youth live, love, learn, work and ultimately thrive.

From Concept to Action: The Five Youth Challenge

As the understanding of ILP transformation and what it would take to achieve it developed over the course of the Collaborative, it became clear that the scope of system changes envisioned were too large to attempt with mere practice changes. As a way of bringing this picture of transformation to life and

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applying tests of change to it both at the practice and system levels, teams were guided through the Five Youth Challenge to help them leapfrog from "the concepts" into "application of the concepts" in their work and organizations. Each team was challenged to immediately identify five youth in their target population. Teams were then led through a process of identifying: (1) resources and processes used in the county for permanency work with youth, (2) current team meeting practices, and (3) staff with specific expertise (training and experience) to support these five youth in finding permanency. As the work unfolded, teams were also guided through the process of integrating education and employment work into their permanency efforts for the five identified youth.

Through repeated use of this exercise over the next several months as well as at the final learning session, teams developed confidence in identifying resources and supports to do the work, and found small successes at various intervals along the way. It began with an intensive focus and emphasis on permanency while honoring the fact that supporting youth to set and reach their education and employment goals was critical to their success in life. Engaging in this process helped teams grasp the possibility of real ILP transformation – moving from a classroom-based, service-focused program to a true youth-centered, developmental model.

Based on what teams began to see as necessary on the practice level, they also began to gain insight into what was needed at the system level. Contracts were already in place staffing patterns were established; budgets had been developed; and organizational cultures and ways of doing business created challenges. The Five Youth Challenge assisted teams in beginning to tackle these system level issues as well. To move toward an individualized approach to the whole youth and to move the youth's whole life forward meant shifting contracts during renewal periods; teaching skills at home and in the community; working with caregiver training to focus on developing skills to teach and coach youth; preparing youth for self-advocacy, partnership and leadership development; and helping staff and other adults understand how to develop, nurture and coordinate youth-adult partnerships.

Conclusion

Ensuring foster youth success means an unwavering focus on individual youth – and all of what each youth needs today and tomorrow to grow, develop and thrive. California's Collaborative to Transform ILP involved teams of youth, caregivers, child welfare agencies, ILP and community partners in developing innovative approaches to connect youth to the things they need in life, in the same ways as their peers – through the people they have relationships with. All of the elements in the following framework were developed over the course of the Collaborative as a result of many challenges and lessons learned. In combination, they proved quite helpful in guiding teams toward transformative systems and practices.

ILP Transformation Framework At-a-Glance

YOUTH ADULT PARTNERSHIP

Individualized Attention

Real World Connection

Connection to Resources

YOUTH

Have love and belonging permanency for a lifetime

Youth take charge of their lives & futures

Youth get what they need to live, love, learn, work & thrive

Normalize Experiences

Integration of Permanency Education & Employment Practice
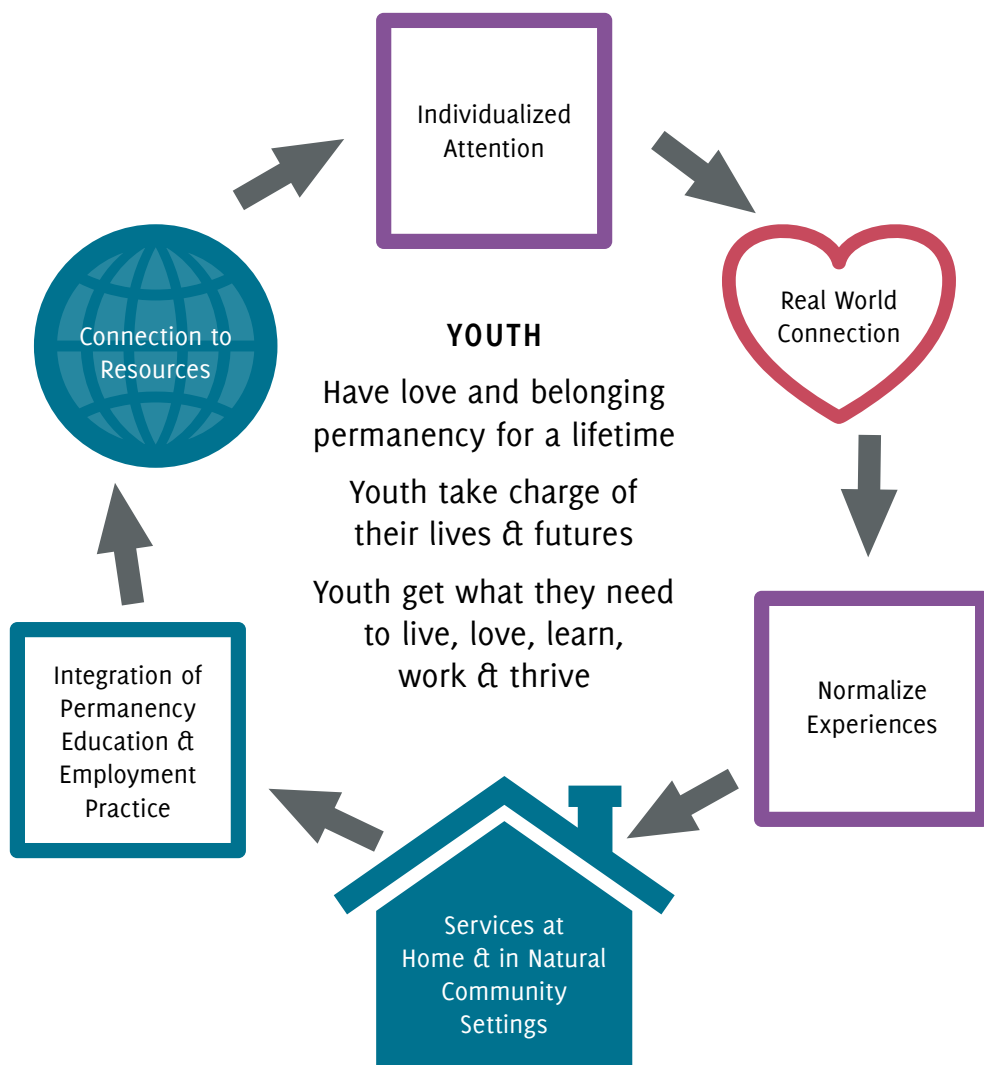
Services at Home & in Natural Community Settings

1B TRANSFORMATION STARTS HERE

360° Youth-Adult Partnerships
WHOLE YOUTH – WHOLE LIFE

Youth-adult partnerships are central to a 360° whole youth-whole life approach. Youth need real world learning and relationships that support all aspects of their lives and development – helping them to achieve educational goals, pursue meaningful work and careers, and have permanent loving relationships on which they can depend. As youth grow and develop and take on increasingly complex responsibilities and commitments, they turn to adults in their homes, schools, neighborhoods and communities for guidance and support. Through these relationships, adults have everyday opportunities to support, value and listen to youth. Both youth and adults benefit from these relationships. As youth give voice to their needs, goals, insights and aspirations, adults experience and understand them in new and meaningful ways. Simultaneously, youth learn they have the support and experience of adults to rely on as they begin to take charge of their lives and futures. Self-advocacy and "voice" are vital skills in this partnership and both youth and adults benefit from learning these skills.

Caregivers and Other Adult Partners

Teaching foster youth about everyday aspects of life – relationships, problem solving, money management – helps ensure that they will thrive after leaving care. These are skills that go beyond the classroom and that are taught and practiced around the kitchen table in ordinary family settings as children learn and grow. Youth-caregiver partnerships are essential in providing this day-to-day support.

In addition, youth need adults in the community to help them explore the many opportunities and pathways that are available to them. As youths identify their areas of interest and pursue their goals, these adult partners provide important "real world" connections and serve as role models and coaches. Youth often identify adult partners at school, among friends' families, at church, in tribal and cultural gatherings, and through other youth gatherings both formally (sports teams, clubs and youth groups), as well as informally (relationships with family, friends, neighbors and others who touch their daily lives). These youth-adult partnerships support youth to explore careers, learn and practice skills, and develop life-long connections that inspire, support and encourage youth to "be all that they can be."

As youth-adult partnerships are vital in developing the life skills essential for youth's success in school, work and life, the Collaborative engaged caregivers and other adults in developing youth-adult partnerships that effectively support the whole youth and the youth's whole life. This included caregivers and other adults playing active roles in three areas:

- Establishing and supporting family relationships and connections
- Participating as adult partners in planning and team meeting processes
- Integrating permanency, education and employment goals

Establishing and supporting family relationships and connections: Caregivers and other adults in youths' lives have important opportunities to talk with youth and observe who they enjoy interacting with and who is important to them, even when relationships are difficult or strained. Phone calls, texts, on-line social networks such as Facebook, interactions at school and work, and other people the youth visits

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or spends time with, all provide helpful information and opportunities for discussion about important issues and supports.

Although caregivers are in a unique position to know or inquire about a youth's relationships on a daily basis, employment services professionals and other adults working with youth on specific goals are also important partners in this work. For example, an employment partner may converse with youth about important relationships in their life, recognizing that these adults are potential resources for assisting the youth in obtaining needed documents and transportation to support employment activities. By paying attention to these relationships, the employment professional may learn about important permanency resources in the youth's life and talk with the youth about how these important individuals can be included in supporting the youth to achieve their goals and aspirations. Adult partners may find the Career Development Guidebook helpful in developing questions to ask youth in a situation like this. By talking with youth and observing who and what is important to them, caregivers and other adult partners can support a youth's relationships with family, friends and loved ones, and help them develop new relationships, so that youth have a strong safety net and important connections that will endure over time.

Participating as adult partners in planning and team meeting processes: Caregivers are critical partners with youth in planning and in team meeting processes. Caregivers, in partnership with youth, can identify specific activities where youth can practice skill development at home and in the community. Setting up a bank account and managing money is often a key goal for youth. Supporting youth development skills in this area is best done at home in a youth-caregiver partnership. The youth and caregiver might decide on an activity, such as the caregiver taking the youth to the bank to open an account and then provide support at home so the youth learns about managing the account on-line. This might include the caregiver supporting the youth to develop a budget and do a weekly check-in of the bank account online. When a barrier occurs, such as a resource issue or a conflict in the caregiver-youth relationship, other team members can be called upon to help the caregiver and youth work through the issues.

Family members, teachers, coaches, church members, friends' parents, tribal elders and others identified by youth may be critical partners in planning and team meetings with youth. These adults, in partnership with youth, may be aware of specific skill development activities that can occur at home or may be aware of specific opportunities in the community that would support the youth to identify and achieve their goals. For example, learning to ride the bus so that a youth can get a job might be a key goal for a youth. Supporting youth development in this example is best done in the community, with an adult who can assist the youth to learn and practice this in the real world. The youth and adult might decide that they will get a bus schedule and ride the bus together for a period of time, and then the youth may ride the bus on their own and debrief the experience with the adult, and transition to riding the bus with a sense of competence and confidence. Once this skill is developed, the youth-adult partnership may decide the next activity is to begin applying for jobs, and may go through a similar process. As youth will have many youth-adult partnerships, it is important that all team members come together in planning and decision-making meetings and activities to ensure all aspects of the youth's life and planning for the future is supported and coordinated.

Integrating permanency, education and employment goals: Rather than working separately, it's important for caregivers, professionals and other adults working with youth in the areas of permanency, education and employment to build on each other's efforts and provide coordinated support so youth can be successful in all aspects of school, work and life. Caregivers and relatives, in partnership with youth and other adult team members, are in key positions to foster this type of integrated support. They are often at the nexus of the youth's home and community activities and can initiate experiences

that build skills and connect the efforts of multiple individuals and organizations. For example, a caregiver can engage and support a youth in career awareness and exploration by orienting them to the CareerZone website and having them go through the self-assessment process. Once completed, the youth and caregiver can explore next steps. This might include making an appointment with the school guidance counselor together and bringing the self-assessment to explore how education can support the youth in a particular career goal or interest.

Caregivers and relatives also are in unique positions to provide permanency for youth. Kin relationships are often enduring when youth come into care, and their commitment to permanency is firm. Youth-adult partnerships that have been nurtured by foster parents while youth are in their care also provide important permanency resources for youth if family members are not able to provide permanency. Through these youth-caregiver partnerships, skills are developed through everyday living while permanency relationships are simultaneously developed and strengthened.

Other adult partners (e.g., family, teachers, church members, tribal members) are also in key positions to support coordinated permanency, education and employment work with youth. For example, rather than the caregiver engaging youth in CareerZone, another adult partner can engage and support a youth in career awareness and exploration by having them access CareerZone and complete the self-assessment process. Then the youth and adult partner can explore next steps, which might include sharing the self-assessment together with the caregiver and developing a plan for the caregiver and youth to share it with the youth's guidance counselor at school. At this time, the adult partner can also share with the caregiver any adults that they are aware of that are important to the youth. It's important for those involved in youth's lives not to assume that others already have information or know what is happening. Youth specifically want the adults involved in their lives to talk together and not to expect the youth to talk to each separately. While coordination is needed, it is critical during the on-going process of a youth-adult partnership that adults maintain confidentiality and clarify with the youth what can be shared, with whom, and how it is to be shared. With the many people involved in the life of each youth in care, it is important that everyone work as a team and have opportunities to come together in planning and decision-making. Periodic team meetings ensure coordination among team members and provide support as youths' opportunities, goals, resources and aspirations develop and change over time.

Conclusion

Youth need partnerships with adults in their everyday lives and relationships. As they grow and develop, these youth-adult partnerships ensure youth have a voice in their lives and are supported in getting what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive. Youth-adult partnerships are critical in all areas of a youth's life, especially at home, at school, with friends and family, at church, in tribal and cultural gatherings, and in all places where youth gather, both formally (sports teams, clubs, youth groups) and informally (with friends, family, caregivers and significant others).

Going forward, youth leaders in the Collaborative expressed a vision that:

- Youth will be engaged in youth-adult partnerships that empower them to participate in planning and decision making about their futures and in system-wide improvements both in their communities and at a state level; and

- Families, friends and others important to youth will participate in planning and decision making with youth about their futures.

1C TRANSFORMATION STARTS HERE

System Supports for Transformation

Moving multiple individuals and systems involved in a youth's life toward effective youth-adult partnerships, ensuring coordinated skill-building, and reinforcing supportive processes for each youth at home, at school and in the community is more than a practice improvement – it requires a fundamental shift in organizational beliefs, structures, partnerships, agreements and training. Systemically embedding the six key characteristics of transformation into training, practice, supervision, contracts and interagency/ community networks will support the practice shifts that are required.

The Six Key characteristics of ILP Transformation

- Individualized attention
- Integration of the three practice areas of permanency, education and employment
- Real world connections
- Normalizing experiences
- Connection to resources

Based on what teams in the Collaborative began to see as necessary at the practice level to support ILP transformation and the new vision for youth in care based on the three fundamental outcomes (i.e., youth have love and belonging-permanency for a lifetime; youth take charge of planning and making decisions about their lives and futures; and youth get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive), members also gained insight into what was needed at the system level to support and sustain those practices.

In the experience of the Collaborative, transformational practices for youth require major system supports in the following areas:

- Contractual Partnerships and Relationships
- Cross-system Integration
- Staffing Resources and Training
- Reflective Supervision and Coaching
- Caregiver Training and Support
- Finance and Budgets
- Organizational Culture
- Measurement for Improvement

Contractual Partnerships and Relationships

As contracts come up for renewal, agencies must consider how they can be re-designed to support the multiple requirements of a transformed ILP system that focuses on individualized teaching and skill building at home and in community settings, such as schools and local businesses. Attention must be given to how these contracts promote and support the following transformational practices.

- YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS: Key to transformation is shifting away from adult-led planning and decision-making to youth-centered planning and decision-making within the youth-adult partnership. Adults must learn to appreciate and value "youth voice." They need training and support to prepare for roles and expectations in these partnerships as well as to shift their activities and behaviors. Caregivers need specific training and support, and adults need to understand and honor youth-caregiver partnerships as described below. Guidelines need to be developed explaining roles, responsibilities and expectations for adults in the youth-adult partnership. Clarity about decision-making should be shared clearly with youth to ensure they understand what decisions are theirs and what decisions may/must be made by, or in partnership with, others.

  Strategies from the Collaborative
  - Ask facilitators to prepare participants prior to planning and decision-making processes using clear guidelines related to roles, expectations, goals and participation in youth-adult partnerships.
  - Be sure facilitators leading these processes and meetings are experienced in facilitating youth-adult partnerships and skilled in the components of developing youth leadership.
  - Have facilitators partner with youth to facilitate meetings whenever possible.
  - Train adults in youth partnerships (including social workers, attorneys, caregivers, service providers, etc.) in using "appreciative inquiry" approaches in planning and decision-making processes.
  - Engage youth and adults in facilitation training, coaching, role playing and other activities designed to understand youth development and practice and develop facilitation skills and competencies.
  - Engage youth in self-advocacy training to develop competency in leadership skills and leadership roles in their own lives.
  - Engage youth with adults in developing training materials, tools and guidelines that help facilitate and develop competencies in youth-adult partnership.

- YOUTH ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP: Agencies need to consider how contracts will support broad-based opportunities for youth in care to develop and practice leadership, self-advocacy and decision-making skills. Opportunities need to be developed for youth to be in positions of leadership, as trainers, mentors, coaches and staff. Agencies need to provide ways for youth to be involved in system improvement, policy development and review, and practice implementation. Youth, based on their experiences in foster care, are in the best position to facilitate learning and improvements in programs, services, and supports as well as support youth who are currently in care. By employing youth in the agency and community, youth are given the voice and authority to connect with other youth to get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.

  In partnership with youth, agencies can review existing projects, initiatives, and workgroups and consider how youth could be brought in to inform this work. By identifying temporary and permanent funding for positions for youth, agencies can ensure these roles will not disappear if a single funding source dries up. It is helpful to have processes developed for identifying and recruiting former and current youth in foster care interested in working with/for the county. Once youth are recruited, training should be provided on skills needed for specific roles along with advocacy, leadership, management, and consultation skills. In addition, it is important to provide a network for youth in these roles to receive support from peers as well as from adult allies who they identify.

  Once youth are in these roles, agency staff need to be skilled in including them in the work as partners. This means that agency staff use language that is understandable and meaningful to youth, are

prepared to honor the youth's schedule and work style, and are able to respect and listen to youth voice. Agency training can support staff in learning how to interact with youth as colleagues and co-workers, how to partner with and support youth, and how to supervise youth staff. As these roles are created within agencies, it is important to think about how to ensure stable ongoing pathways for youth leadership to ensure youth will continue to play these roles in the county going forward.

Strategies from the Collaborative

- Look to existing groups of youth advocates (e.g., California Youth Connection, V.O.I.C.E.S. Youth Training Centers, Youth In Mind, Youth Advisory Boards) to identify youth who might be able to participate in leadership roles.
- Use guidelines and tools (e.g., Self-Advocacy Curriculum) to support youth skill development.
- Work with youth to identify adult allies in their lives and in the agency to help support them in their roles.
- Lead off meetings by asking youth representatives to share their feedback, recommendations, reflections and concerns. Ensure that youth staff are included in all conversations.

- **LOVE AND BELONGING – PERMANENCY FOR A LIFETIME:** In maintaining a focus on integrating permanency with the more traditional education and employment development practices of ILP, specific roles and responsibilities regarding youth permanency work should be included in contracts, as well as clarification on how the agency's and provider's permanency activities will be coordinated.

- **PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY:** All youth need skills and supports to live, love, learn, and work. While these skills and supports are most often taught at home in informal ways, for youth in foster care this at-home learning is often supplemented and reinforced through classes, programs and events. Embedding skill development, supports, services and events at school, where youth are, make them more accessible and more likely to engage youth in participation. Working with partners in formal contracted ways is essential to providing seamless and integrated services and supports to youth. These partnerships help to individualize and integrate ILP services in the youth's daily life and community. They can include working with schools and school district personnel to provide ILP services to local youth and engaging caregivers in local school and ILP programming. Further, inviting service partners to integrate their work with youth on the school campus provides better access and normalizes the experience.

Partnerships between the child welfare agency and high schools should be formalized to create multi-layered programming that supports all youth in foster care in ways that normalize their experiences in school and life. These partners should share and leverage resources to make the program mutually beneficial in terms of outcomes and finances. These partnerships should exist at multiple levels, from leadership through managers to direct service staff, including social workers, teachers, probation officers and employment supports. Partners who identify desired benefits with a focus on improved outcomes for youth are more likely to make a lasting commitment to the collaboration. Caregivers and other community partners, including businesses, faith-based organizations, therapists, social workers, school counselors, among others, should be brought on campus as part of the partnership so that adults can collaborate and coordinate services and supports with activities and resources provided on campus.

Strategies from the Collaborative

- Cross-train each other in the partnership.
- Reach out to programs that have been successful to talk about potential concerns youth, schools and districts might have and how those have been addressed.

- Co-locate staff in the local high school and ensure accessibility to students in foster care during school hours.
- Conduct weekly classes for all students in foster care during standard school hours (e.g., home room block period). These classes could include skills (e.g., financial planning), concepts (e.g., love and belonging for a lifetime), future planning (e.g., interviewing for jobs), peer support, and other topics and needs raised by youth.
- Hold "mixers" for youth in foster care as part of the high school club structure to allow for sharing of experiences and support, and providing an opportunity for youth to plan and reach out to others.
- Ensure that resources are available to allow youth in foster care to have "normal" high school experience, including free access to all school social activities and opportunities (e.g., yearbooks, dances, etc.).
- Include caregivers in activities, classes and school events to keep them connected to both the school and the youth.
- Utilize appreciative inquiry process to engage youth and other partners.
- Support caregivers by holding "caregiver mixers" on campus and scheduling caregiver activities to support skill-building opportunities on campus.

In summary, during contract renewal periods and when new contracts are issued, agencies can begin to make the shift to more individualized approaches to the whole youth and youth's whole life by focusing on: teaching skills at home and in the community; working with caregiver training to focus on developing the skills to teach and coach youth; preparing youth for self-advocacy, partnership, and leadership development; and helping staff and other adults to understand how to develop, nurture and coordinate youth-adult partnerships.

Cross-System Integration

Youth in foster care are typically involved with many systems (child welfare, probation, mental health, courts, schools), multiple service providers (counselors, therapists, teachers, social workers, probation officers, attorneys, health care providers), and multiple assessment and case planning processes at the same time. Finding ways for these systems to work together in partnership with youth creates a coordinated network of support and reduces fragmentation in the lives of youth. It is critical that "youth voice" remain in the forefront of all conversations and guide decision-making in this cross-system work. Oftentimes there is information that youth want to share that is relevant and important for people across many systems (social workers, school administrators, judicial officers, court personnel) to know and understand. Cross-system issues such as confidentiality need to be resolved so timely and accurate information can be shared without youth having to repeat the information through many individual conversations. This may require cross-training of staff on appropriate processes for documenting and sharing information about youth across systems.

Additionally, team meetings and assessment processes should be coordinated, integrated whenever possible, and focus intentionally, explicitly and consistently on understanding youths' hopes, dreams, and needs. Resulting plans should be reviewed, coordinated, and integrated across systems and providers. Systems should have joint processes in place to follow up with goals, plans, and activities that support success and promote accountability of all participants. Forms and plans should be integrated in ways that are accessible and understandable to youth, while also meeting the needs of the collaborating agencies and partners. And most importantly, youth voice must guide all planning and decision-making.

Information collected and shared across agencies should also be streamlined and integrated. Agencies should identify information that is common across them and reach consensus, together with youth and caregivers, about what would be most meaningful, useful and reasonable to share. Written documentation should always be supplemented with verbal communication and discussions. Regular opportunities should be created to review and discuss data that are collected to ensure they are actually used to help youth attain their goals – and these reviews and discussions must be conducted together with youth and caregivers.

> *Strategies from the Collaborative*
> - Partner with youth in developing and/or reviewing questions, tools and plans that will be used by systems.
> - Develop "appreciative inquiry" processes to guide all conversations and activities.
> - Develop appreciative inquiry and other training tools, guides, plans and questions to help staff across systems (including child welfare staff, mental health providers, education partners, employment partners, Judges, hearing officers, probation staff, and court staff).
> - Train staff across systems to use these tools to ask questions and plan together with the youth.
> - Prepare and support youth to be active partners in planning and decision-making with a focus on developing their self-advocacy skills.
> - Partner with and support youth in identifying allies who can support them in planning, decision-making and completing activities and tasks to meet their goals.
> - Let youth know ahead of time who will be at meetings and what each person's role will be. Encourage youth to invite supportive people to attend meetings with them to ensure they do not feel overwhelmed by the number of professionals and service providers who are there.
> - Prepare adults to participate in these processes and meetings in a way that is centered on the youth.
> - Ask youth and caregivers what information they would find most helpful to share across agencies and partners. Also ask if there is anything they do not want shared and ask why. Determine if it is necessary to share, and if it is necessary, explain why.
> - Identify and avoid duplicative work by asking youth and caregivers what information they are asked for/about repeatedly.

Staffing Resources and Training

As part of supporting practices that transform ILP, staffing patterns must focus on individualized case-management activities and supports, moving away from ILP classroom-based activities. Agencies should develop integrated team approaches that are inclusive of agency, caregiver and community resources as well as expertise related to permanency, education and employment, rather than doing siloed work with youth by ILP coordinators or in ILP programs. The staffing resources and training that should be considered and developed include:

- CASE MANAGERS AS FACILITATORS: Case managers should be facilitators of youths' partnerships with their caregivers, family and other adults in their lives, rather than as the solitary decision-makers about youths' lives. By supporting youth to bring adult partners together for ongoing team meetings, planning is individualized and adult partners support follow-up and coordination of the youth's activities, resources and relationships.
- DEVELOPING YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS: Team meetings provide case managers important opportunities to develop youth leadership and self-advocacy skills by having

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youth help plan agendas and facilitate them. Case managers can also help prepare youth for and connect youth to other leadership and self-advocacy opportunities. Individualized case management is best focused on preparing youth for self-advocacy, partnership and leadership development.

- DEVELOPING, NURTURING, AND COORDINATING YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS: Individualized case management should also help staff, caregivers and other adults understand how to develop, nurture and coordinate youth-adult partnerships. To make this shift, it will be helpful to provide training, coaching and supervision focused on appreciative inquiry; engaging and empowering youth through youth-adult partnerships; developing and supporting youth-caregiver partnerships; preparing youth for participation in planning and decision-making processes; achieving permanency for all youth; integrating education and career development work with permanency; and facilitating teaming processes.

Reflective Supervision and Coaching

Supervisors have various roles including administrative, managerial, educational and supportive roles with staff. Many child welfare systems, in an effort to standardize decision-making processes, have developed a culture of compliance. This compliance culture, focused on conforming to rules of policy and procedure, often does not incorporate the unique characteristics of youths and families. The compliance culture lacks probing or questioning of inconsistencies, which frequently leads to decisions that are not well thought out.

Shifting from this compliance culture to one that digs deeper and encourages staff to ask "furthering questions" (an approach used in appreciative inquiry) can lead to a better understanding of youth and families. Making this shift requires a different skill set in supervision, one that is interactional and reflective. Shifting to a "reflective supervision" practice is critical for systems supporting ILP transformation since staff are encouraged to learn and engage in:

- critical thinking;
- analyzing the complexity of situations faced;
- applying new knowledge to practice in case specific situations;
- monitoring the application in practice; and
- finding opportunities to explore, examine and debate complex issues in practice in interactional processes.

In the reflective supervision model, supervisors are teachers and coaches, providing new information and models as to how things might work. Supervisors in this model are called to:

- attend trainings and apply the learnings in their practices;
- focus their learning through reflective processes of applying training to case-specific situations; and
- focus on individual and dialog-driven reflections.

These supervisory practices not only are necessary to support transformation, but also help agencies shift from compliance-based organizations to learning organizations that are informed by staff, partners families and youth.

Caregiver Training and Support

The partnership between caregivers and the youth in their care, and the familial setting in which they reside, provides many opportunities for youth to learn and practice daily life skills. Caregiver training must be focused on developing caregiver skills to teach and coach youth about everyday aspects of

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life such as communication, relationships, coping skills, problem solving, self-advocacy and money management. Training and coaching should also be developed for caregivers in key areas (see Building Blocks and Promising Practice Strategies), such as:

- The skills of appreciative inquiry
- How to be in a youth-adult partnership
- How to support youth leadership and self-advocacy skills
- How to support youth in planning and decision-making processes
- How to partner with youth to identify, pursue and achieve their permanency, education, employment and career goals

These skill-building, training and support activities should be explicit in contracts. Often others assume that caregivers are doing certain things to assist youth in their care; caregivers similarly assume that these things are being taken care of in life skills classes. So building greater clarity about who is doing what in various contracts, agreements and daily practice is important.

Strategies from the Collaborative

- Use guidelines and tools (Career Development Guidebook, College Pathways Educational Planning Guide, Caregiver Resources Guide, Self-Advocacy Curriculum) to support youth skill development.
- Integrate caregiver training resources by surveying caregivers as to their training needs and coordinating caregiver trainings with foster youth activities.
- Integrate caregivers as system partners in transformation using their skills to outreach, connect with, team and support other caregivers.
- Engage youth as partners in the process of developing and delivering caregiver training.
- Contract with individual caregivers, rather than organizations, as the ILP providers in the county.

Finance and Budgets

To achieve transformation, it is important to consider shifting Investments and funds away from ILP classroom-based activities. These funds can instead support efficiencies and practices that center the work on individual youth and coordinate the efforts of the many individuals, organizations, family and community members who are working with the youth to achieve their goals. Using funds to develop, nurture and coordinate youth-adult partnerships will move an individualized approach forward and more effectively support positive outcomes for every youth in care. Caregivers are key partners to invest in as they are able to build and strengthen natural connections between the youth and their family, school and community. In reallocating funds, it is equally important to ensure that funding is not creating unintentional and/or undesirable incentives that prevent work with youth from being integrated.

Organizational Culture

Because ILP work has traditionally been structured and done in certain ways, organizational cultures have grown to accept these ways as the norm. In moving toward and supporting a transformation of these practices, it is necessary to promote and support a culture of innovation. This culture must encourage staff, caregivers and community partners to try new ways of collaborating with each other, as well as listening to and supporting youth, in order to achieve improved outcomes.

Agencies should consider providing incentives for transforming ILP, both practices and the system, and ensure that challenges, barriers and disincentives to transformation are removed. Internal and

external champions must be developed, including youth, caregivers, community partners and staff at multiple levels and from various perspectives – champions who have embraced and who can describe, demonstrate and validate transformational changes. Agencies should partner with these champions to share successes with peers and colleagues, in school and agency meetings, at caregiver events, at other convenings and gatherings, and in the community with partners, networks and professional associations. Whenever possible, concrete examples along with process and outcome-related data should be used to illustrate the positive outcomes and impacts of ILP transformation on youth.

Measurement for Improvement

Accurate, regular and meaningful measurement allows us to know when systems are moving toward transformation and improved outcomes for youth. In order to tell a complete story, the measures used for improvement should include process measures as well as outcome measures to ensure the quality of experiences and outcomes for youth.

Quantifying engagement may involve existing data systems and special project codes that can separate out and count the number of individuals participating in team meetings with youth (such as in Team Decision Meetings, Permanency Team Meetings and other planning and decision-making meetings). This quantification could include defining the roles of the participants (e.g., teacher, coach, family member, friend, friend's family, church member, tribal member, business community, community member). The more these teams reflect the connections youth have with family and community, the more the system is shifting toward transformation. This is an example of the type of process measure that gives significant insight into progress of the system.

Another way to measure improvement would be to partner with youth to design a survey that inquires about their individualized process and outcomes and allows them to respond directly to questions. While the measurement categories suggested below are not regulatory in nature, their focus promotes movement toward transformation, particularly through the eyes of youth, and provides information about whether youth in care are experiencing improvements in outcomes.

- YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP PROCESS: Ask questions related to who youth identify as important in their lives; how those they consider important are invited and/or included in planning and decision making; how they are treated as partners with adults, including caregivers, social workers, service/support providers, and others

- LOVE AND BELONGING – PERMANENCY FOR A LIFETIME: Ask questions related to how youth were engaged in conversations about permanency and finding family; how they were included in processes related to finding and supporting permanent connections; how connections and relationships have been identified and supported

- TAKING CHARGE OF THEIR LIVES AND FUTURES: Ask questions related to how well youth feel they have been allowed to take charge of their own futures; how they have been prepared and supported in taking charge of planning and decision making; what things were done to make them feel like part of the team; what things were done to help them be leaders of the team

- YOUTH GETTING WHAT THEY NEED TO LIVE, LOVE, LEARN, WORK AND THRIVE: Ask questions related to who youth plan to live with and how they are connected; what type of education they have completed and how it compares to their hopes and dreams; how they are going to accomplish their goals and plans in life; where they plan to turn when they need things in life – emotional, social, or financial support

These types of questions should be developed in partnership with youth. Make this a simple process by

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starting with one area of focus – something the organization has prioritized – and, in partnership with youth, design a survey and process. Test the survey and process for a period of time, adjust based on what is learned, and then add on another focus area. As you review and analyze the data collected and eventually share the results with staff, caregivers, and other adult partners in the community, again ensure that youth are partners in the process.

Conclusion

As new practices emerge to support youth in all aspects of their lives and in planning for their futures, corresponding changes in policies, partnerships and services need to be made within the organizations and systems working with those youth. To move toward the new vision for youth in care, it is essential to consider system changes that (1) align with the six characteristics of transformation, (2) support youth-adult partnerships, and (3) embed within practice a focus on the following three fundamental outcomes:

YOUTH have love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime.

YOUTH take charge of their lives and futures.

YOUTH get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.

Youth are an essential voice in this process of system change. Some Collaborative teams found that through youth engagement, youth-adult partnerships and youth leadership/self-advocacy, the voices of youth were lifted up and their needs became more visible within the agency and community. This often served as a catalyst for local system changes, resulting in contracts, staffing, training and partnerships that better supported new and emerging practices identified by youth as critical to their well-being and success in life.

1D TRANSFORMATION STARTS HERE

Collaborative Teams-at-a-Glance

The following is a quick reference of practice highlights and key focus areas for the nine county teams in the Collaborative. More details on the practices and strategies that emerged from their transformational efforts can be found in

Fresno County Team: "Collaborators, Inc."

The Fresno team focused on coordinating their Collaborative work with their California Connected by 25 (CC25I) and Ready to Succeed initiatives. They focused specifically on partnerships with educational institutions and child welfare worker co-location in area high schools.

Fresno's Key Areas of Focus in the Collaborative

- Enhancing relationships with education partners, inviting them to participate in discussions outside of the educational realm (e.g. permanency) and physically locating social workers in high schools
- Providing youth access to a dedicated job specialist
- Focusing on youths' rights, including educational rights and youth self-advocacy skills
- Increasing focus on permanency through permanency teaming
- Integrating ILP work with various initiatives including CC25I and Ready to Succeed.

Los Angeles County Team: "LA's Best"

The Los Angeles team began by primarily addressing transitional housing issues for youth, and broadened their focus over the course of the Collaborative.

Los Angeles's Key Areas of Focus in the Collaborative

- Integrating permanency, education, and employment for youth over 18 living in transitional housing programs
- Matching case management staff with supports and relational styles that worked for youth based on youth inquiry/interviews of staff
- Reviewing court and case records together with youth to explore youth history, relationships and connections
- Working with youth at earlier ages (beginning at age 14) using the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment prior to developing a Transitional Independent Living Plan, engaging youth as partners in planning, and integrating permanency, education and employment services
- Providing coaching to caregivers and focusing on caregiver support of skill development at home

Monterey County Team: "Young Adult Resource Collaborative (YARC)"

Monterey County has had a Young Adult Resource Collaborative (YARC) in place for several years. This team focused their Collaborative work on enhancing the role of caregivers in youth's lives and planning for the future.

Monterey's Key Areas of Focus in the Collaborative

- Hiring a caregiver to provide outreach, training, support and mentoring to other caregivers
- Preparing and including caregivers in team meetings
- Finding concrete ways for caregivers to teach and reinforce life skills learning at home
- Supporting caregivers as they help youth explore permanency connections and build relationships
- Developing and providing mentors to support youth before, during, and after team meetings
- Training staff, including trainings facilitated specifically by youth
- Replicating the Sacramento school-based model in one Monterey high school at the request of a youth team member
- Holding youth planning meetings at times and locations more accessible to youth

Napa County Team: "The Challengers"

The Napa team has had a strong partnership with a youth-led, youth-centered community organization, V.O.I.C.E.S., for several years. Their work in this Collaborative built upon their existing work with V.O.I.C.E.S.

Napa's Key Areas of Focus in the Collaborative

- Ensuring all youth ages 15.5 years and older are actively involved in "Life Conferences" throughout placement by preparing them, supporting them, and holding the meetings in places and ways that are inviting to youth
- Engaging in joint visits between probation officers and ILP staff with youth who have been placed in juvenile hall, group homes or out-of-county to engage them in planning and connections upon return to the community
- Integrating permanency into all other work done with youth by utilizing tools such as the "Youth Relationship Web'" that engage youth in conversations about their connections and focus their attention on permanency
- Testing non-traditional ways of having permanency conversations with youth, including "Fave 5, " and asking who is on their cell phones
- Providing information and support to caregivers as they teach, coach, support and nurture the youth in their care
- Holding up V.O.I.C.E.S. as a model of true youth-adult partnership that is transformational in approach, and holding bi-monthly meetings with V.O.I.C.E.S. related to youth served and system improvements

Orange County Team: "Orange County Transitions Transformation"

The Orange team focused on coordinating their Collaborative work with their California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) and Ready to Succeed initiatives. They focused primarily on educational institutions and mental health co-location with child welfare.

Orange's Key Areas of Focus in the Collaborative

- Finding ways to integrate permanency, education and employment into school planning conferences for younger children (6-7 graders)
- Aligning Transitional Independent Living Plans with mental health services treatment plans, needs survey plans, and other assessments
- Engaging peer mentors as support for youth and caregivers
- Preparing youth for permanency discussions and addressing mental health issues that could negatively impact their move toward permanency
- Beginning Transitional Planning Conferences earlier with a consistent team and a focus on family finding and permanency
- Finding new and different ways to engage caregivers in all activities and planning
- Integrating work with the CC25I and Ready to Succeed initiatives.

Sacramento County Team: "Sacramento Agents of Change (SAC)"

The Sacramento team, involved in the Ready to Succeed initiative, built on existing collaborative work with educational institutions by embedding their work on the Laguna Creek High School campus.

Sacramento's Key Areas of Focus in the Collaborative

- Developing a youth-centered model of service and support for foster youth called "Courageous Connections," specifically designed to integrate education, student support services (adult and peer mentorship, counseling, study skills and character building), curricula delivery, and foster youth services into a 9-12 grade configuration design on the high school campus
- Utilizing traditional, block schedule and small learning communities to make the program structure adaptable to the unique design of a high school
- Focusing on various aspects of the school-based program, including student mixers; caregiver mixers; after-school programs; trainings and awareness building events for staff; caregiver engagement and participation; bringing services and supports on campus; involving businesses and community in wrap-around type resourcing for youth; and normalizing youth experiences by paying for student body cards, game admission, dance and prom events, and other activities connected to the school
- Replicating efforts in at least two other high schools, including development of a tool kit for implementing the Courageous Connection model
- Integrating work with the Ready to Succeed initiative.

San Francisco City and County Team: "The Bricklayers"

The San Francisco team, building on their California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I), focused their work on various aspects of practice and system change.

San Francisco's Key Areas of Focus in the Collaborative

- Identifying supportive adults in youths' lives;
- Integrating GOALS meetings (used for transition planning) with permanency team meetings in order to keep the focus on permanency
- Developing a coordinated, single intake form for all employment services to ensure youth are referred to appropriate services during employment team meetings
- Engaging caregivers and enhancing their roles in teaching skills at home
- Moving beyond ILP-classroom teaching by supporting caregivers and other adults in coaching youth between classes
- Integrating work with the CC25I initiative

Santa Clara County Team: "Permanency Options, Work, Education & Resources in ILP (POWER in ILP)"

The Santa Clara team, involved in the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I), built upon their on-going work in this area.

Santa Clara's Key Areas of Focus in the Collaborative

- Formalizing changes to Emancipation Conferences/My Time Meetings with and for youth, including changes in preparation, support, name of the meeting, timing of conferences, meeting location, meeting facilitation, priority focus of meetings, and youth-led invitations to their Circles of Support
- Developing youth-identified adult support and ensuring youths' goals are integrated across permanency, education and employment
- Using creative ways to help youth focus on permanency and possible permanent connections in their lives, both past and current;
- Focusing attention on defining and demonstrating youth-adult partnerships by putting words and meaning to the concept of "holding on to youth"
- Developing a widely distributed Youth and Caregiver Resource Binder and beginning Teen Court work with their court;
- Shifting from multiple ILP providers to a single provider with a focus on ILP transformational system shifts in current and future contracting
- Integrating work with the CC25I initiative

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Solano County Team: "Transitional All Stars"

The Solano team, involved in the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I), utilized their CC25I Steering Committee structure and focused efforts on enhancing permanency work.

Solano's Key Areas of Focus in the Collaborative

- Combining separate planning processes (Team Decision Making, Life Conferences, Permanency Conferences) into one overall teaming process with permanency as the key goal
- Improving preparation of youth to participate in meetings and inviting additional members to their circles of support
- Focusing on maintaining relationships between siblings
- Enhancing the role of community partners, including caregivers, in providing and connecting youth to resources, in particular integrating employment activities through caregivers
- Enhancing youth leadership and development
- Including and supporting caregivers in planning and team meetings
- Developing caregiver partnerships with youth that explore career development through their community connections
- Integrating work with the CC25I

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PART TWO OUTLINE & DETAILS

ESSENTIAL PRACTICES: SIX BUILDING BLOCKS

PRACTICE STRATEGIES:
ACHIEVING THE THREE FUNDAMENTAL YOUTH OUTCOMES

REFLECTING ON RESULTS

OUTLINE & DETAILS

2A ENVISION the CHANGE & TEST IT!

Essential Practices: Six Building Blocks

To shift from a classroom-based ILP system to one where youth develop lifelong skills and relationships in natural home and community settings requires change on multiple levels simultaneously. Just as system-level partners must develop new ways to collaborate, contract and reshape their services and supports, individuals who are directly involved with youth (caregivers, social workers, ILP workers, educators, employment specialists and others) need to develop and integrate new practices into their everyday work.

Six Essential "Building Block" Practices

Collaborative sites repeatedly used or tested several practices that proved to be the foundation for all other ILP practice changes and strategies. These practices focused on building relationships, engaging and supporting youth and the people involved in their lives, and working with others in true partnership. Six practices emerged that the Collaborative identified as the essential "building blocks" of ILP transformation. Although they are presented as six distinct building blocks, these practices are all connected, interrelated and dependent on one another. Together, these six building blocks establish a solid foundation for transforming ILP practice:

BB #1 – Finding Family for Youth in Creative and Constant Ways: "Don't stop asking…"

BB #2 – Preparing Youth for Planning Processes and Meetings: "Are you ready?"

BB #3 – Using Appreciative Inquiry with Youth and Others: "Appreciate who we are!"

BB #4 – Reaching Out, Speaking Up, and Advocating for Yourself: "Listen to me!"

BB #5 – Preparing Adults to be True Partners with Youth: "Move over, partner"

BB #6 – Supporting Caregivers in Working with Youth: "There for me"

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B1. Don't stop asking…

B6. There for me

B2. Are you ready?

BUILDING BLOCKS
Building relationships, engaging and supporting people, and working with others in true partnership

B5. Move over, partner

B3. Appreciate who we are!

B4. Listen to me!
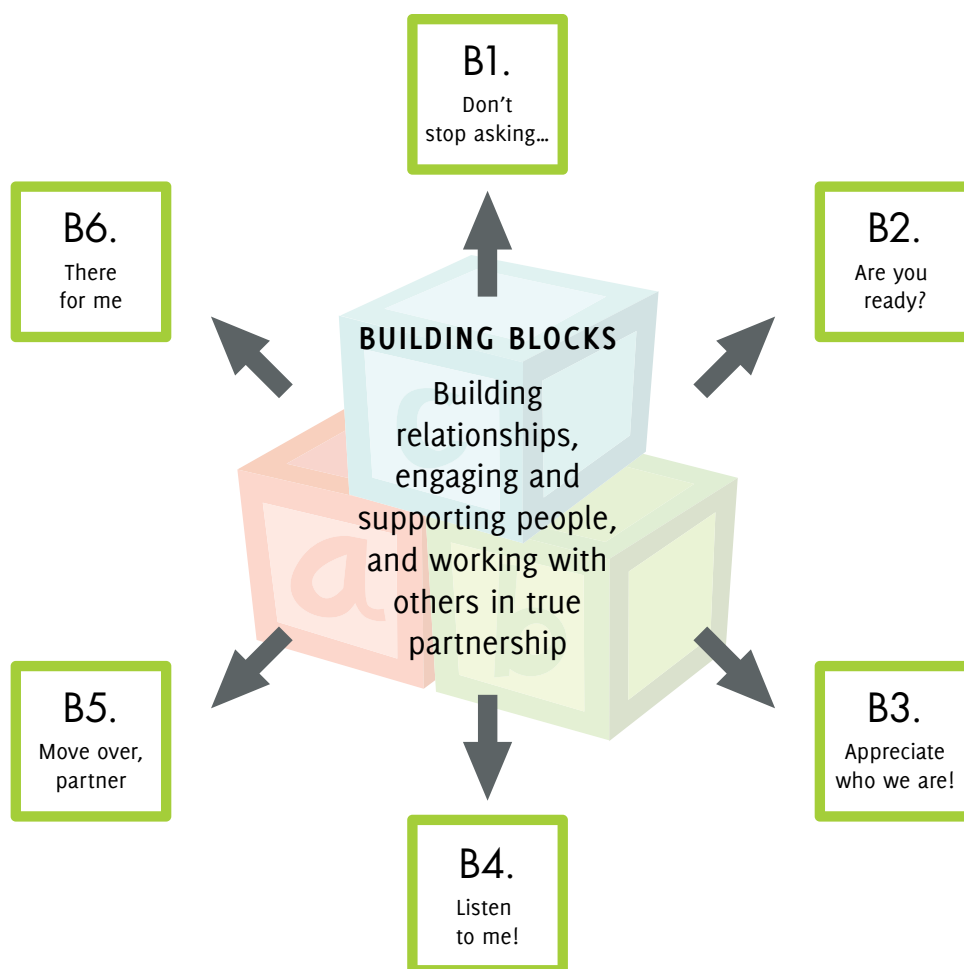
About the Essential Practice "Building Block" Cards

On the pages that follow, each of the six essential "building block" practices is individually described on a printable resource card. These cards are intended for "hands on" use by individuals, organizations and communities that are engaged in helping youth achieve positive outcomes in life, and to deepen understanding and appreciation of practices "that work." Each card provides detailed strategies and activities that anyone can do immediately to build relationships, actively engage with youth, and support youth in partnership. None of these practices are reliant on specific training programs or policy changes – they are ready to be put into action right away. Try them out! Be part of the change!

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BUILDING BLOCK #1: "DON'T STOP ASKING…"

This card invites you to test an essential practice and explore What Works! Try any of the ideas in the "Where Do We Begin?" box with one youth, one caregiver or one adult by tomorrow or next week. Be part of the change!

BUILDING BLOCK NO.1

ESSENTIAL PRACTICE	Finding Family For Youth In Creative & Constant Ways
WHY DO THIS?	*Supporting youth in having "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime" is fundamental to their achievement of success in life. Everyone has family somewhere and finding these family members in partnership with youth is a key factor in supporting their sense of belonging in life.*
WHERE DO WE BEGIN?	• Introduce and fully explore the concept of "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime" with a youth. • Explain why he or she is being asked about friends and close contacts. Being asked these questions could feel threatening unless he or she understands how the information will be used. • Make sure the youth is prepared and supported throughout these discussions and processes. • In the context of conversations about permanency, use questions that facilitate conversations, such as: – Who are your "favorite five" numbers in your cell phone? – Who have you texted in the last week? – Who have you '"friended'" on Facebook or MySpace in the last week? • Work with youth to develop a "Youth Relationship Web" either at a team meeting or one-on-one with a partner. • Ask caregivers about the youth's friends and family – who visits, who calls, who invites them to be part of family activities? • Have the caregiver talk to the youth about family members – who visits you, what friend's family includes you, who do you think about during holidays? • Use a guide or tool to explore concepts of "family" and important relationships with youth, such as Youth Relationship Web, Permanency Pact or CPYP tools. • Work with a youth to review his or her own case record. • When engaged with a youth in employment or career work, ask about relationships the youth has with friends and family. • When engaged with a youth in education work, ask about relationships youth has with friends and family. • Expect, respect and respond to grief and loss reactions that may result from these searches and conversations.
RESOURCES & TOOLS TO USE	• Youth Relationship Web • Tools developed by the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) • Permanency Pact • Career Development Guidebook

BUILDING BLOCK #2: "ARE YOU READY?"

This card invites you to test an essential practice and explore What Works! Try any of the ideas in the "Where Do We Begin?" box with one youth, one caregiver or one adult by tomorrow or next week. Be part of the change!

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BUILDING BLOCK NO.2

ESSENTIAL PRACTICE	Preparing Youth for Planning Processes & Meetings
WHY DO THIS?	*Preparing youth for planning, decision-making processes and team meetings increases youth participation in the following ways: attendance at meetings; active participation in meetings; capacity to take charge and lead the meetings; guiding decisions that are made at the meetings; and following through on the decisions that are made.*
WHERE DO WE BEGIN?	• Meet with youth individually to talk about planning and decision-making processes, explaining the purpose, expectations, roles and goals. The organization, agency or partner may have written materials that can assist. • Early on and ongoing, have a joint meeting with the youth and caregiver to talk about planning and decision-making processes, explaining the purpose, expectations, roles and goals. The organization, agency or partner may have written materials that can assist. • During individual conversations and meetings use appreciative inquiry, asking questions such as: – What works? What are your hopes, dreams and aspirations for your future? What do you see as your challenges or worries now and in the future? Who is important to you? How can you get to the dreams of your future? • Partner with youth to identify their "circle of support" – important family members and adults that they want to include in planning and decision-making processes and meetings. • After these individuals are identified, find out how the youth would like to invite these folks to participate. Coach and support youth in the invitation process. Respond to any processing, negotiation or emotional issues that may come up as these individuals are identified or invited. Ensure that the individuals who are invited are also prepared for the meeting. • In partnership with youth, explore ways of connecting with adult allies and peer mentors. • Engage peer mentors and adult allies in the process of checking in with youth prior to meetings to help them identify their own goals and priorities for the meeting and to prepare opening statements and agendas. • Craft meeting agendas jointly with the youth to ensure that both the youth's priorities and the agency's priorities can be met. Be clear about any meeting priorities of the agency ahead of time so there are no surprises.
RESOURCES & TOOLS TO USE	• Youth Relationship Web • Tools developed by the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) • Permanency Pact

BUILDING BLOCK #3: "APPRECIATE WHO WE ARE!"

This card invites you to test an essential practice and explore What Works! Try any of the ideas in the "Where Do We Begin?" box with one youth, one caregiver or one adult by tomorrow or next week. Be part of the change!

ESSENTIAL PRACTICE	Using Appreciative Inquiry in Working with Youth & Others
WHY DO THIS?	*Youth hold the key to their lives and futures. Engaging youth, and the adults in their lives that they trust, in the process of appreciative inquiry helps everyone better understand what youth know and experience so that youth can get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?	• Develop questions that appreciate what youth know about what works well for them, what "dreams" they have for their futures, and what challenges or worries they have now and about their futures.
	  – Encourage and support caregivers and partners to use these questions in everyday conversations with youth, during assessments, and as part of ongoing work.
	  – Train and support facilitators to use these questions during meetings and other facilitated processes.
	• Based on how youth respond to these questions, caregivers, partners and facilitators will better understand who is important in their lives and how to connect with them, as well as how to better assist youth in getting what they need for today and tomorrow (dreams and aspirations).

RESOURCES & TOOLS TO USE	• Solution focused interviewing • Solution focused casework

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BUILDING BLOCK #4: "LISTEN to ME!"

This card invites you to test an essential practice and explore What Works! Try any of the ideas in the "Where Do We Begin?" box with one youth, one caregiver or one adult by tomorrow or next week. Be part of the change!

ESSENTIAL PRACTICE	Reaching Out, Speaking Up, & Advocating for Yourself
WHY DO THIS?	*Youth evolving into the leaders of their lives requires that they develop self-advocacy skills. Adults supporting this development will help youth strengthen their abilities to take charge of their futures so that they can get what they need and want in their lives. This process of supporting self-advocacy skills will also strengthen the youth-adult partnership.*
WHERE DO WE BEGIN?	• Using the Self-Advocacy Curriculum, meet individually with youth and apply some of the ideas and strategies from that curriculum in individual conversations. • Have peer mentors and youth leaders facilitate the self-advocacy curriculum with youth in groups. • Provide safe, non-threatening opportunities for youth to practice their self-advocacy skills. • When youth do advocate for themselves, respond to them in positive ways that recognize their efforts and work with them in getting their needs met. • Have peer mentors and youth leaders facilitate the self-advocacy curriculum with other adult partners in trainings, staff meetings and other meetings.
RESOURCES & TOOLS TO USE	• Self-Advocacy Curriculum

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BUILDING BLOCK #5: "MOVE OVER, PARTNER"

This card invites you to test an essential practice and explore What Works! Try any of the ideas in the "Where Do We Begin?" box with one youth, one caregiver or one adult by tomorrow or next week. Be part of the change!

ESSENTIAL PRACTICE	Preparing Adults to Be True Partners with Youth
WHY DO THIS?	*A key to transformation is shifting away from adult-led planning and decision-making to youth-centered planning and decision-making in the youth-adult partnership. This youth-centered partnership requires adults to step aside and make room for youth as partners.*
WHERE DO WE BEGIN?	• Talk with adult partners individually (or in partnership with youth) about planning and decision-making processes, explaining the purpose, expectations, roles and goals in the youth-adult partnership. The community may have written materials that can assist in this conversation. • Include caregivers as partners early and provide ongoing support for the partnership. • During individual conversations and meetings with adults, model appreciative inquiry processes. • Engage adult partners in helping youth identify their "circle of support" – important family members and adults that they want to participate in planning and decision-making processes and meetings. • Prepare adult partners who lead or support processes and meetings to ensure youth priorities are addressed. When agency priorities also need to be addressed, ensure adult partners have clarified this in their work with youth ahead of time, so there are no surprises. • Prepare adult partners for meeting structure, agenda setting and processes that support youth-adult partnerships. • Prepare adult partners that youth or people in his or her circle of support may ask clarifying questions if information they share during meetings is not understood. • Prepare adult partners that processes and meetings will focus on the youth's strengths and what the youth identifies as helpful to achieving his or her own goals, dreams and aspirations. • Support adult partners in being knowledgeable about self-advocacy processes and resources and prepare them to advocate for themselves, and facilitate/coach youth in self-advocacy.
RESOURCES & TOOLS TO USE	• Self-Advocacy Curriculum • What Makes a Good Adult Ally? • Caregiver Resource Guide • Youth Relationship Web • Tools developed by the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) • Permanency Pact

BUILDING BLOCK #6: "THERE for ME"

This card invites you to test an essential practice and explore What Works! Try any of the ideas in the "Where Do We Begin?" box with one youth, one caregiver or one adult by tomorrow or next week. Be part of the change!

ESSENTIAL PRACTICE	Supporting Caregivers in Working with Youth
WHY DO THIS?	*Caregivers are asked to do a lot – provide youth with physical care; nurture and support youth; teach life skills at home and in the community; advocate for the youth's needs related to permanency, education and employment; transport and support youth in plans and decision-making about his or her future; and form familial type relationships with youth. These roles are complex and the relationships can be both loving and conflictual at the same time. Caregivers need supports and resources just like youth do.*
WHERE DO WE BEGIN?	• Have early and ongoing joint meetings with the youth and caregiver to talk about planning and decision-making processes. Explain the purpose, expectations, roles and goals. The community may have written materials that can assist in this conversation. • In partnership with youth, include caregivers in planning and decision-making processes. • Share everyday ways at home and in the community that caregivers can help youth in developing life skills and attaining their goals. • During conversations and meetings with individual caregivers: – Clarify youths' rights to education, sibling visitations, contacts with their legal advocates, and their right to address the court. – Coach them in developing appreciative inquiry skills with youth in their care. – Share the resources of the Self-Advocacy Curriculum to support caregivers in advocating for themselves and youth in their care. – Coach caregivers in facilitating life-skill development with youth in their care. – Support caregivers in connecting youth with family so they have a sense of "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime." Connect caregivers to permanency experts in the community to help guide them. – Support caregivers in accessing all resources available to youth related to education and post-secondary education. – Provide support to youth to ensure they can access all resources available to help them get jobs and develop career paths. • When conflicts arise between caregivers and the youth in care (a natural and expected part of adolescent development), talk with youth and caregivers either individually or together about the situation; utilize appreciative inquiry approaches in these conversations; create opportunities for caregivers and youth to work through these conflicts either with another supportive partner or in a therapeutic environment; and consider referring caregivers to resources in the community including caregiver mentors and support groups, counseling for themselves, and inclusion in counseling with youth as appropriate.
RESOURCES & TOOLS TO USE	• Caregiver Resource Guide • Self-Advocacy Curriculum • Career Development Guidebook • College Educational Planning Guide

2B ENVISION the CHANGE & TEST IT!

Practice Strategies:
Achieving the Three Fundamental Youth Outcomes

In the journey toward a transformed system for older youth in care, the "building block" practices described in the previous section are essential. These practices anchor transformation in youth-adult partnerships. Once the six essential "building block" practices are firmly established, it is time to test and implement practice strategies that further support youth in achieving the three fundamental outcomes:

1. *Youth have love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime.*

2. *Youth take charge of their lives and futures.*

3. *Youth get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*

The promising practice strategies presented in this section are organized by the youth outcomes listed above. These strategies were tested by local teams and emerged as practice improvements in the Collaborative. Each practice strategy is presented on a one-page printable Strategy Card with a "Strategies" box that provides a list of actions that anyone can take to achieve the purpose described on the card. The "Starting Points" box provides more specific examples of discreet things that can be done quickly to begin taking action.

Though some of the strategies appear similar, each is outlined separately as it reflects variations that were important to Collaborative teams in applying and adapting the strategy in their local communities. Like the essential "building block" practices, these strategies can be tested in everyday life or practice with youth and implemented without additional training or policy change. These cards are "hands on" tools that are intended to reflect, appreciate and further deepen the work that many individuals, organizations and communities across the country are engaged in to help youth achieve positive outcomes in life.

PRACTICE STRATEGIES

OUTCOME #1: Youth have love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime.

Nine strategies tested by Collaborative teams emerged as promising practices that support youth in attaining the outcome "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime." Each of these practice strategies is described in the following series of printable "Love and Belonging" Strategy Cards:

#1A. Having Conversations with Youth about Their Relationships: Let's Talk

#1B. Reviewing Case Files to Identify Meaningful Relationships: Discovery

#1C. Using Creative Ways to Identify Relationships: Everyday People

#1D. Sustaining Sibling Connections: Brothers–Sisters

#1E. Caregivers Supporting Youth Connections: Caregiver Connectors

#1F. Making Love and Belonging Central: The Heart of the Matter

#1G. Using Permanency Tools and Resources: Pursuing Permanency

#1H. Preparing Youth for Permanency: I Belong

#1I. Engaging Meaningful Adults in Youths' Lives: Become Part of My Life

1a: Let's Talk
1b: Discovery
1c: Everyday People
1d: Brothers-Sisters
1e: Caregiver Connectors
1f: The Heart of the Matter
1g: Pursuing Permanency
1h: I Belong
1i: Become Part of My Life

YOUTH OUTCOME 1: Love & Belonging – Permanency for a Lifetime

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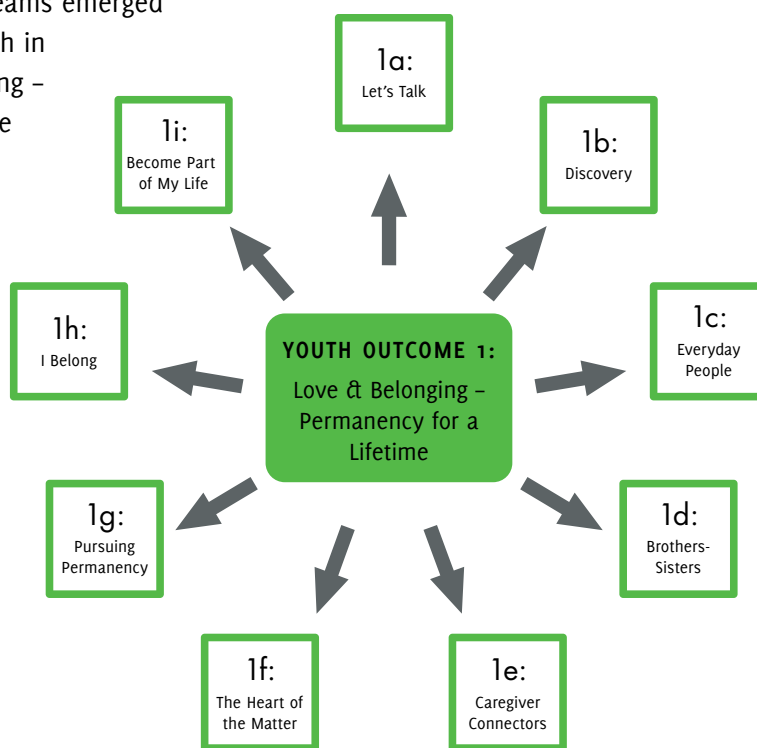
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LOVE & BELONGING STRATEGY #1A: LET'S TALK

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth in real ways to all the things they need in life – through the people they have relationships with. Be part of the change!

PROMISING PRACTICE	Having Conversations with Youth about Their Relationships
OVERVIEW	*Youth are the experts when it comes to lifelong connections. Developing interesting, comfortable, and informal ways to discuss loving relationships with youth often results in youth identifying important people in their lives. Conversations about these relationships can lead to youth getting the support they need to strengthen and develop committed relationships in their lives, ensuring that youth have "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime."*
STRATEGIES	• Prepare and support youth to ready themselves for these conversations. • Have conversations with youth in informal and comfortable environments – have them choose the location. • Identify people who are good at having these conversations with youth and ask them to support your work as you develop the skills to have these conversations with youth. • Find tools that you can use to guide your conversations. These tools may come from family finding work in your agency, CPYP work, appreciative inquiry, Permanency Pacts, Youth Relationship Webs, and other sources.
STARTING POINTS	• Utilize open-ended questions (who, what, when, how) and come from a place of appreciative inquiry with youth. • Encourage youth to think broadly about relationships, both past and present. Use prompts such as family members, people you think of as family members (brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles), good friends, 'teacher, coaches, mentors, church members, etc. • During individual conversations with youth, use tools (Youth Relationship Webs, CPYP Tools, Permanency Pacts) to help you start or guide conversations (these are not checklists) with youth. These tools can help you think about facilitating these discussions with youth and providing accessible language and prompts to support you in having conversations with youth about what "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime" means – however it is defined by the youth. • Be creative and think broadly, such as "who's in your cell phone" or "who are your friends on Facebook?"

LOVE & BELONGING STRATEGY #1B: DISCOVERY

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth in real ways to all the things they need in life – through the people they have relationships with. Be part of the change!

STRATEGY NO.1B

PROMISING PRACTICE	Reviewing Case Files to Identify Meaningful Relationships
OVERVIEW	*Providing youth the opportunity to review their court reports and/or case files in a supported environment allows youth to gain a better sense of themselves, their histories, relationships and connections. The process may open a conversation about connections and relationships that can give youth a sense of love and belonging, and may lead to permanency for a lifetime.*
STRATEGIES	• Prepare the youth for what he or she may read in the court reports or case files. What is written may be difficult for the youth, as it may support (or contradict) other stories he or she has been told about his or her past. • Support the youth while reviewing the reports and files, and afterwards. Have the youth identify someone he or she can call later. The emotions these reports and files may bring up can be intense. • Discuss the youth's findings, reflections and reactions following the review. • Follow up with individuals identified by youth as possible relationships, including families of origin who may have been previously dismissed or had rights legally terminated. • Prepare youth for feelings of loss and grief and help youth identify plans to address these feelings. • Plan for ongoing and continuous follow up and support for the youth, as both will be needed.
STARTING POINTS	• Prepare youth by having discussions about the youth's expectations, knowledge of his or her history, and assumptions about the past. • Allow the youth to decide whether he or she would like to review the records alone or with someone of their choosing. • Provide informal, comfortable and private space for the youth to review the records. • Provide immediate support for the youth to discuss what was learned and explore potential relationships. • Use appreciative inquiry questions to help the youth see his or her strengths and the positive aspects of his or her past.

LOVE & BELONGING STRATEGY #1C: EVERYDAY PEOPLE

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth in real ways to all the things they need in life – through the people they have relationships with. Be part of the change!

STRATEGY NO.1C

PROMISING PRACTICE	Using Creative Ways to Identify Relationships
OVERVIEW	*Youth are the experts when it comes to comes to identifying important current and past relationships in their lives. Finding creative ways, such as asking who is on your cell phone, can help youth think differently about their relationships and often results in better outcomes. Helping youth consider people they are in touch with through social media, texting or cell phone contact may help youth identify their connections and communicate them to others. Some of these connections might be further developed to ensure youth have "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime."*
STRATEGIES	• Explain to the youth why he or she is being asked about friends and close contacts. Being asked these questions could feel threatening to the youth unless he or she understands how the information will be used. • Think broadly and creatively – and encourage the youth to think broadly – about opportunities for support. Love and belonging for a lifetime does not mean solely adoption or guardianship. Be clear with youth that there are many ways to have meaningful, lasting (and permanent) connections. • Provide follow-up support for youth to process the responses from individuals once the outreach has been done. He or she may need support in developing new or different relationships.
STARTING POINTS	• Ask the youth (or have a partner, mentor or ally ask) to identify his or her top five or favorite phone and text contacts. • Ask the youth similar questions about friends on his or her Facebook or MySpace page. • With the youth's consent, and after significant conversations with the youth about the role these people might play and their possible reactions, contact these individuals and identify how they might be involved in the youth's life, what supports they might need in order to be involved, and who else they know who is connected with the youth. • Ask appreciative inquiry questions to identify the strengths and opportunities these individuals offer and how they might support the youth. • Permanency guides (e.g., CPYP tools, Youth Relationship Web, Permanency Pact) can be used to guide discussions (but not as checklists) with youth about opportunities for developing meaningful relationships and connections.

LOVE & BELONGING STRATEGY #1D: BROTHERS-SISTERS

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth in real ways to all the things they need in life – through the people they have relationships with. Be part of the change!

STRATEGY NO.1C

PROMISING PRACTICE	Sustaining Sibling Connections
OVERVIEW	*Sibling relationships are key lifelong connections to be supported. When youth in foster care are separated from their brothers and/or sisters, maintaining sibling relationships throughout their lives, whether their siblings are in care or not, is a critical part of ensuring they have "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime."*
STRATEGIES	• Provide information about sibling rights (from the foster care bill of rights) at the time of any placement, explaining the rights around visitation between siblings. This right should be reviewed verbally with youth, caregivers, social workers and probation officers. Facilitate, schedule and support visits between siblings immediately following placement and on an ongoing basis. Youth are entitled to these relationships and need ongoing support and assistance to maintain them. • Partner with youth to determine where and how often visits with siblings will occur to most effectively support these relationships. Consider natural locations – in the home or community where youth can play, be physically active, or explore art and culture. Plan the visits in advance and on a regular basis to make the coordination as easy as possible for caregivers and youth. Youth may need help figuring out transportation and other logistics. • Prepare and provide support for these visits, depending on the sibling relationships and the circumstances of each youth and family. Support following the visits is also essential. Issues of grief and loss may emerge and need addressing.
STARTING POINTS	• Ask youth in placement about their relationships with siblings, what they like to do together, how they communicate and how often, traditions that encourage and build their good feelings for each other, memories of others who might support their relationships with siblings, and what they need from workers, caregivers and others to support these relationships. • Ask youth if they would like to have any siblings attend team meetings, especially those that are focused on permanency or transition events, planning or decisions. • Prepare youth for visits, what to expect, how they might feel, and what kind of support they might need during or following the visit.• Plan and arrange the next visit prior to ending the visit so that all participants know when they will see each other again. • Support youth, caregivers, family and partners in sharing the experience and in planning and maintaining sibling visitations in the future.

LOVE & BELONGING STRATEGY #1E: CAREGIVER CONNECTORS

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth in real ways to all the things they need in life – through the people they have relationships with. Be part of the change!

STRATEGY NO.1E

PROMISING PRACTICE	Caregivers Supporting Youth Connections
OVERVIEW	*Caregivers are uniquely positioned to help youth identify and connect with other important people in their lives. Caregivers identifying these connections with youth, and supporting youth to reach out and make or re-make connections, provides youth a path toward "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime."*
STRATEGIES	*Caregivers can support youth in making connections in the following ways:* • Talk with the youth about questions and concerns before making initial contact with a person the youth has identified. • Prepare the youth not only for the initial conversation, but also for the follow up. This may include preparation for additional phone conversations, a face-to-face meeting, or virtual (computer-based) discussions. • Prepare the youth for all potential outcomes of the outreach and what he or she might experience. • Process the purpose of the outreach with the youth as well as the role of the caregiver as a connector, supporter and liaison. • Step out of the relationship if the youth desires and if it is appropriate to do so. • Discuss the identified connections with the youth's social worker or probation officer to make sure there are not concerns about contacting this person. If there are concerns, the caregiver works through these concerns and is prepared to help the youth understand the issues and concerns. • Support the youth in communicating with the social worker and probation officer about what occurred during the outreach and any developments and next steps.
STARTING POINTS	• Develop a list of possible connections with the youth, and then support the youth in sharing these possible connections with social workers, probations partners or other partners. • Talk with the youth about which persons, if any, the youth might like to try to connect or reconnect with. This should include parents, siblings, maternal and paternal grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, teachers, former caregivers, etc. • Prepare the youth for what the initial contact might feel like, what he or she hopes for, has concerns about, and how he or she might deal with various situations. • Support the youth in making the initial call by placing the call together. • Debrief the outreach and conversation with the youth following the contact. • Develop a plan of next steps with the youth and together they communicate all information to the youth's social worker or probation officer.

LOVE & BELONGING STRATEGY #1F:
THE HEART of the MATTER

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth in real ways to all the things they need in life – through the people they have relationships with. Be part of the change!

PROMISING PRACTICE	Making Love & Belonging Central
OVERVIEW	*Individual planning with youth and team meetings – Life Conferences, Emancipation Conferences, Transition Planning Meetings, My Time Meetings – typically focus on specific skills youth need after they leave the foster care system (e.g., education, employment, general life skills). Having a sense of "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime" is foundational to addressing these skills. The concept of "permanency" needs to be infused in all individual planning and team meetings that focus on youths' lives and futures to assure better achievement of success in all areas.*
STRATEGIES	• Identify when individual planning and meetings occur focused on "transition" or ILP-type planning with youth. Ensure the concept of "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime" is discussed during these meetings and individual time with youth. • Make sure youth are involved in, prepared for, guide the agenda development of, and are leaders in individual planning and meetings focused on their lives and futures. • Schedule meetings at times and in locations that are accessible to and welcoming for youth. • Talk with youth individually about what "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime" means to him or her and who comes to mind when having that conversation. • Meet with caregivers to support their permanency work with the youth placed in their care and to coordinate permanency efforts. • Use tools, appreciative inquiry and guides (CPYP tools, Youth Relationship Web, Permanency Pact) to help you ask questions and guide conversations with youth, not as reading, forms or checklists to be provided to youth.
STARTING POINTS	• During individual conversations with youth, discuss the concept of "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime." Use inquiring questions to further conversations. • Begin processes and meetings with the concept of "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime" and what this means to the youth in their own words to ensure this concept is individualized and central in all planning. • Ensure youth have needed support around issues of grief and loss that may be associated with permanency discussions and planning. Partner with mental health professionals to ensure that youth get the support needed to move forward in attaining "love and belonging - permanency for a lifetime." Include goals of permanency in all plans of action. Find the right language that works for the youth when discussing permanency — not all youth will respond to "love and belonging" or "permanency for a lifetime."

LOVE & BELONGING STRATEGY #1G: PURSUING PERMANENCY

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth in real ways to all the things they need in life – through the people they have relationships with. Be part of the change!

PROMISING PRACTICE	Using Permanency Tools and Resources
OVERVIEW	*Focusing all planning and meetings (Life Conferences, Emancipation Conferences, Transition Planning Meetings, My Time Meetings) on "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime" as the foundation on which to integrate education, employment and life skill development allows youth to get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*
STRATEGIES	• Articulate and demonstrate that all partners are committed to ensuring that youth have love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime. • Make "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime" the foundation for all planning and meetings with youth – use this as the central concept around which all other planning and activities are built. • Prepare and support youth to have permanency. • Prepare and support caregivers to build and sustain permanency relationships for youth. • Train and support partners to build and sustain permanency relationships for youth. • Identify existing permanency experts in other agencies and organizations who may be resources. • Use tools, questions, and guides to appreciate and inquire about youth's relationships and connections. Engage all staff in using these resources as part of awareness building and training activities. This may include youth-led discussions about impacts and outcomes, observing the use of these tools in actual meetings, role playing with other staff and youth, and other practices.
STARTING POINTS	• Inquire about and explore current and past relationships in which the youth experienced a sense of love and belonging. Try to understand and help the youth articulate what about that relationship led to this sense. Prepare to support youth with emotions triggered by these conversations. These conversations cannot be rushed – build in sufficient time for these conversations and the emotions likely to emerge. • Identify a tool that helps you appreciate and inquire about a youth's relationships and connections (e.g., Youth Relationship Web) as a way of identifying people involved in the youth's life who provide significant support and may provide the youth with a sense of love and belonging. Find ways to use this tool in individualized planning and meetings with youth. • Review tools, questions or guides with individual youth prior to use and ask for their input to make them more useful to them personally. Adjust the tools, questions or guides based on this feedback.

LOVE & BELONGING STRATEGY #1H: I BELONG

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth in real ways to all the things they need in life – through the people they have relationships with. Be part of the change!

STRATEGY NO.1H

PROMISING PRACTICE	Preparing Youth for Permanency
OVERVIEW	*"Love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime" is fundamental in ensuring foster youth thrive today and tomorrow. This concept of permanency refers to youth feeling a part of a family system that provides unconditional love as well as continuous, secure, consistent, fulfilling and permanent relationships. Maintaining, reconnecting, or forming new loving relationships can lead to emotional times for youth as they revisit loss and grief experiences. Preparation for permanency must be driven by and responsive to youths' needs and includes birth family, extended family, non-related family and other important relationships as identified by youth, caregivers and community.*
STRATEGIES	• Collaborate with mental health providers to train adult partners, develop expertise and work with youth on issues of loss and grief. • When talking with youth in preparation for permanency, explore issues related to loss and grief and inquire about how to best support them. • If counseling is identified as a support by youth, connect him or her with a mental health provider who has expertise in loss and grief and preparing youth for permanency. • Use the 3-5-7 Model – "engage, listen, be truthful, validate, create safety and recognize how past trauma, loss and grief impacts youth" – with youth, caregivers, families, and permanency connections (important people in the youth's life).
STARTING POINTS	• In partnership with youth, establish a team of caring people to focus on planning for permanency. • Include the youth in the family finding process. Strategies can include youth reviewing case/court files, reviewing searches that have been conducted, and communications that have been received by the agency about the youth. This needs to occur through partnership (include mental health partners as providers) and in an environment that the youth feels is supportive. • In partnership with youth, develop a plan for outreach and (re) connection to important persons who have been identified and/or located. Include partners such as mental health providers, caregivers and others who are part of the youth's team. • Use the 3-5-7 Model to "prepare children and youth, prepare families and caregivers, and prepare adult partners to work collaboratively to support grief and attachment work."

LOVE & BELONGING STRATEGY #1I: BECOME PART of MY LIFE

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth in real ways to all the things they need in life – through the people they have relationships with. Be part of the change!

STRATEGY NO.1I

PROMISING PRACTICE:	Engaging Meaningful Adults in Youths' Lives
OVERVIEW	*Helping all youth attain "love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime" goes beyond simply identifying possible lifelong connections. Once these connections have been identified by youth and the youth have been prepared for these potential relationships, the adults being reached out to may also need preparation and support. This preparation and support is key in developing long-term healthy relationships that provide youth with love and belonging for a lifetime.*
STRATEGIES	• Talk with youth about the people he or she has identified. Gain an understanding of the roles played in his or her life as well as the relationships. • Provide staff and caregivers with training about how to have these conversations with youth. Support youth throughout the outreach process — he or she may experience a sense of grief and loss as old relationships are renewed and/or new relationships are developed. • Be prepared to provide ongoing support to youth as the relationships develop. Anticipate bumps in the road and remind youth that all relationships take work. • Share information with these adults in ways that are honest, open and support the developing relationship. Involve youth in sharing personal information and ensure that the information is shared in ways that are respectful of the youth.
STARTING POINTS	• Ask youth about his or her perception, memories and past relationship with this person. Use this to help frame the outreach and initial conversation. Specifically draw upon the positives and emphasize strengths to share with the adult. • Begin conversations with adults identified by the youth by asking about their perceptions, memories and past interactions with the youth. Ask who else was involved in the relationship; what he or she may have wondered about the youth; and what he or she most enjoyed about their past with the youth. • Come from a place of strengths and hope, asking the adult what he or she sees as the youth's strengths and potentials; what he or she thinks the youth does best; and how he or she might best support the youth in reaching his or her potential. • Ask youth and adult separately, as well as together over time, what their vision is for their relationship as it goes forward. Ask for short-term visions as well as long-term visions. Ask each what he or she brings to the table to share in a relationship. Ask each what he or she thinks connects them now.

PRACTICE STRATEGIES

OUTCOME #2: Youth take charge of their lives and futures.

Youth in the Collaborative talked consistently about the need for processes and meetings to shift away from professionals making decisions for youth to a youth-adult partnership where youth and the adults who care about them work together as youth plan for their future. Five strategies emerged as promising practices supporting this outcome. Each of these strategies is described in the following series of printable "Youth Taking Charge" Strategy Cards:

#2A. Promoting Youths' Rights: You've Got Rights!

#2B. Youth-Engaged and Youth-Centered Planning and Meetings: Partnering with Youth

#2C. Empowering Youth to Express Hopes, Dreams and Needs: Youth Voice

#2D. Youth Interviewing and Selecting Caseworkers: Youth Make the Call

#2E. Youth Taking Charge of Planning and Meetings: Youth Lead the Way
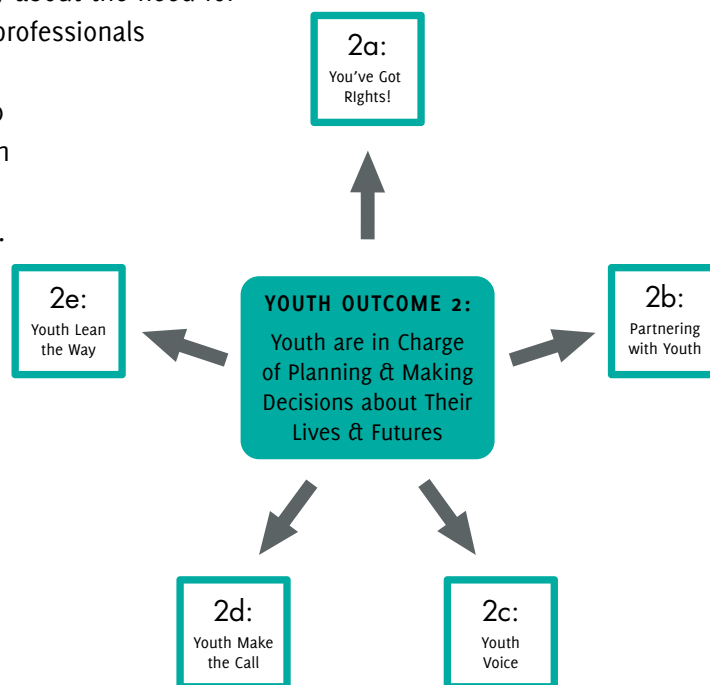
2a: You've Got Rights!

2e: Youth Lean the Way

YOUTH OUTCOME 2: Youth are in Charge of Planning & Making Decisions about Their Lives & Futures

2b: Partnering with Youth

2d: Youth Make the Call

2c: Youth Voice

YOUTH TAKING CHARGE STRATEGY #2A:
YOU'VE GOT RIGHTS!

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Support youth in taking charge of their lives and futures. Be part of the change!

PROMISING PRACTICE	Promoting Youths' Rights
OVERVIEW	*Providing youth with information about their rights is critical to ensuring that they are able to advocate for themselves. Youth need to know how to exercise these rights so that they feel in charge of planning and making decisions about their own lives and futures.*
STRATEGIES	• Provide materials about the rights of youth in foster care and explain these rights immediately upon placement (both providing and discussing these materials with youth are essential). • Provide materials about foster youth rights to caregivers and discuss them together with the youth. This helps ensure that everyone has the same understanding of the rights and creates an opportunity to identify associated responsibilities and roles, (e.g., who holds a youth's educational or medical rights). • Encourage and support youth by providing them with the skill development needed to advocate for their rights. This encouragement should come from social workers, probation officers, staff, caregivers, peers, mentors, allies, family and others. • Have youth teach others (both adults and youth) about youth's rights while in care. • Present and provide rights in multiple formats (written and verbal) and in language that is meaningful to youth. • Provide teaching and support for youth in a variety of forums to help them learn how to effectively advocate for themselves.
STARTING POINTS	• Use materials (cards, bills of rights) developed by youth that explain their rights in ways that are clear, understandable and accessible to youth, particularly regarding issues related to siblings, education, visitation, housing, services, LGBTQ and other non-discrimination. • Create peer opportunities to allow youth the opportunity to practice self-advocacy skills in safe and non-judgmental ways — without adults present. • Create ways for youth to give the agency feedback about new and existing policies and practices that impact them. The agency may give youth a survey to complete, hold a focus group, invite youth to share their perspectives in formal ways, or hire youth as peer advocates and staff. • Meetings that are held about youths' own lives can build upon the self-advocacy skills youth are learning by inviting them to speak first, using strength-focused questions, and providing repeated opportunities to participate in the conversation.

YOUTH TAKING CHARGE STRATEGY #2B: PARTNERING with YOUTH

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Support youth to take charge of their lives and futures. Be part of the change!

PROMISING PRACTICE	Youth-Engaged & Youth-Centered Planning & Meetings
OVERVIEW	*There are many meetings and planning activities focused on youths' lives and futures. Partnering with youth to make meetings and planning activities more youth-engaged and youth-centered helps youth develop important self-advocacy and leadership skills. It also develops partnerships with adults who can support them as they take charge of planning and making decisions for their futures.*
STRATEGIES	• Partner with youth to rename planning processes and meetings to reflect the meaning they have for the youth (e.g., "My Time" meeting instead of "Emancipation Conference"). • Meet with youth and hold team meetings at times and locations that are accessible to and comfortable for youth, including after school and weekends, at home or school. Be flexible and creative, and ask the youth what locations work best for them. • Partner with youth in making decisions about the meeting's participants and agenda. Ask who is supportive of him or her and if he or she would like those people to participate regardless of who they are (friend, cousin, aunt, teacher). • Work with the youth to identify the goals and priorities of the meeting or planning session. Make sure meeting facilitators are prepared to support the youth's priorities and goals. • Ensure conversations during meetings and planning are with youth rather than about youth. Partner with youth during meetings and other forums to maintain a focus on goal-setting, planned activities and important decisions related to the youths' future, rather than talking about current problems such as behavioral issues. • Empower youth to question adults, invite discussion, and keep meetings and planning focused on their needs.
STARTING POINTS	• Talk to youth prior to each meeting to make sure he or she understands what the purpose of the meeting is, who will be there, what the roles of each person are (including the youth), and what the meeting flow will be like. Invite him or her to share requests or recommendations with you about the meeting before it happens. • During meetings and planning activities, keep the focus on the youth's strengths and opportunities, using appreciative inquiry questions and other tools that bring out what the youth does well, to set the tone of success. • Validate youth's input and feedback by responding directly to requests, suggestions and critiques.

YOUTH TAKING CHARGE STRATEGY #2C: YOUTH VOICE

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Support youth to take charge of their lives and futures. Be part of the change!

PROMISING PRACTICE	Empowering Youth to Express Hopes, Dreams & Needs
OVERVIEW	Youth know best what they want and need in life, but they are not always asked or given opportunities to express those wants and needs. Creating and providing opportunities for youth to express their strengths, goals, hopes, dreams, and challenges helps them get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive. Empowering youth to give voice to their wants and needs can also result in improvements in the system for other youth.
STRATEGIES	• Use a variety of tools (e.g., Youth Relationship Web, Permanency Pacts, educational planning guides, career development tools) at various points in working with youth. The conversations they inspire will build partnership with the youth and become part of an ongoing process of development and support. • Ensure prompts, guides and tools are youth-friendly and inviting to youth. Use them to stimulate deeper and richer conversations rather than as checklists or tasks to be completed. • Provide feedback to youth so they know their voice is being heard and acted upon. • Hold periodic events with youth that provide opportunities for them to express their needs in group formats. Share how past input has been used to improve practices and programs.
STARTING POINTS	• Ask youth to review existing prompts, guides and tools and revise them to ensure they are youth-friendly and inviting. • Identify a tool to use in partnership with a youth and individualize it for that youth. Use it to help the youth express his or her strengths, goals, hopes, dreams and challenges. • Create a list or library of existing prompts, guides, and tools (e.g., Ansell Casey Life Skills Educational Assessment, Career Zone, College Educational Planning Guide, Career Development Guidebook) for youth to look at and think about. • Use open-ended, appreciative questions to help youth identify their strengths and opportunities.

YOUTH TAKING CHARGE STRATEGY #2D: YOUTH MAKE the CALL

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Support youth to take charge of their lives and futures. Be part of the change!

PROMISING PRACTICE	Youth Interviewing & Selecting Caseworkers
OVERVIEW	*Youth know best their own strengths, needs, hopes and dreams. Providing opportunities for youth in foster care to have a say about relationships and the ultimate decisions that impact their lives empowers youth to take charge of their lives and futures. Asking youth to select the staff who will work with them is one way for youth to take charge of their lives and futures.*
STRATEGIES	• In partnership with youth, develop sample questions that a youth may want to ask when "interviewing" a caseworker. • Ensure that clear protocols, expectations and accountability exist for organizations and agencies that invite youth to make decisions about staff assignments. Also share these protocols, expectations and accountability with youth prior to inviting youth to make these decisions. • Provide information and support to help youth make decisions about caseworkers and understand the consequences of those decisions. • Throughout the interview/selection process, share information and provide support to youth in a variety of ways. Allow youth to prepare and share their decisions in ways that are comfortable nd meaningful for them. • Provide training to the organization as well as to youth prior to implementing this practice and continue training to support its on-going use.
STARTING POINTS	• Basic prompts that can be used to "interview" staff are developed by youth. The purpose of these prompts is to generate some brief, yet important insights into staff members' styles, personalities and ways of connecting with youth. • When becoming involved with the agency, provide youth with interview prompts and give them an opportunity to interview a few staff before deciding who will be their assigned worker. • Share timeframes, protocols and expectations with youth before he or she begins the interviewing and selection process. • Teach youth about appreciative inquiry and strength-focused questioning as part of the interviewing process. • Consider the benefits of having an adult ally working with the youth during the interview process.

YOUTH TAKING CHARGE STRATEGY #2E: YOUTH LEAD the WAY

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Support youth to take charge of their lives and futures. Be part of the change!

PROMISING PRACTICE	Youth Taking Charge of Planning & Meetings
OVERVIEW	*Creating opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills and take on leadership roles in planning and decision-making processes helps them learn how to take charge of their lives and futures.*
STRATEGIES	• Individualize information about planning and decision-making meetings based on the youth's needs. Use multiple means of providing information, including in writing, in-person, e-mail and texting. • Expect differences between who a youth would like to have present for a meeting and who others deem are important participants (e.g., caregivers, attorneys, social workers). Address these situations individually, including processing them one-on-one with the youth, and negotiating or working through relationship issues between the youth and caregivers, family members and other important people. • If the meeting needs to address topics beyond those identified as priorities by the youth, make this clear to the youth prior to the meeting. • Review priorities, meeting goals and the list of invited participants with youth shortly before the meeting (within one week) in case anything has changed. • Ensure that meeting facilitation honors the voices of all participants, while keeping the youth's perspective central to the discussion and decisions.
STARTING POINTS	• Prepare youth prior to planning meetings and decision-making processes so that the youth will understand who will be present, what will happen, how it will happen, who will provide support, what will be the next steps, and how the youth will partner in leadership. • Talk with youth to identify and invite others he or she would like to attend the meeting. • Invite youth to begin meetings with his or her own statement and a description of the agenda he or she would like the meeting to follow. • Facilitate the meeting in partnership with the youth.

PRACTICE STRATEGIES

OUTCOME #3: Youth get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.

Youth learn skills in their families and communities, through their everyday relationships, experiences and connections. The work done by Collaborative teams in this area reflects the move from classroom-based teaching to a more fluid, dynamic, individualized approach to the whole youth and the youth's whole life. This 360° approach includes caregivers, family, peers, community members and others. Ten strategies emerged as creative ways of making sure that youth learn – and get – what they need in order to be successful in life. Each of these strategies is described in the following series of printable "Live Love Learn Work Thrive" Strategy Cards:

3a: Ordinary Places

3j: Opportunity Knocks

3b: Being There

3i: What Youth Want

YOUTH OUTCOME 3: You Get What They Need to Live, Love, Learn, Work & Thrive

3c: No Matter Where You

3h: Making Sense of It

3d: Someone to Count On

3g: Putting It All Together

3f: Friend to Friend

3e: What Happens Next?
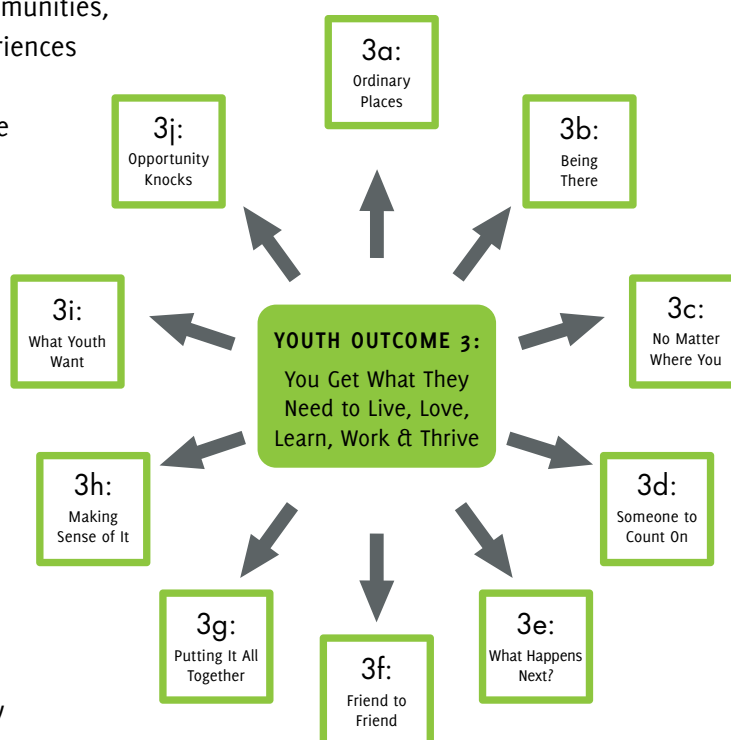
#3A. Meeting Youth Where They Physically Are: Ordinary Places

#3B. Caregivers as Teachers and Guides: Being There Every Day

#3C. Planning Meetings for Youth Who Don't Normally Get Them: No Matter Where You Live

#3D. Having an Adult Ally to Provide Support: Someone to Count On

#3E. Following up After Planning and Team Meetings: What Happens Next?

#3F. Providing Peer Support for Youth in Foster Care: Friend to Friend

#3G. Integrating Life Skills into Permanency Teaming: Putting It All Together

#3H. Giving Youth the Information They Need In a Way That Makes Sense: Making Sense of It All

#3I. Using Technology to Engage Youth: What Youth Want

#3J. Caregivers Support Youth in Career Exploration: Opportunity Knocks

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LIVE–LOVE–LEARN–WORK–THRIVE
STRATEGY #3A: ORDINARY PLACES

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth to the 360° relationships, opportunities and supports they need to live, love, learn, work and ultimately thrive. Be part of the change!

STRATEGY NO.3A

PROMISING PRACTICE	Meeting Youth Where They (Physically) Are
OVERVIEW	*Families, caregivers, neighborhoods and communities provide the natural context in which young people learn about behavioral norms, acquire new skills and capacities, and benefit from different kinds of people modeling what is possible in life. Meeting youth in home and community locations (e.g., schools, youth centers, churches and other community locations) brings useful resources, supports and opportunities into youths' everyday lives. This accessibility builds partnership with youth and connects them in natural ways with what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*
STRATEGIES	• Talk with youth, caregivers, community members, schools, and other partners to identify times and spaces to meet with youth that respect the youth's everyday schedule of activities, avoid embarrassment and maintain their privacy (e.g., arrange a time to talk with youth at school during a block scheduled homeroom or advisory class rather than during an academic class; coordinate processes with the school to create a smooth notification for the youth during the school day and transition to the meeting room). • Partner with community agencies and organizations to identify and develop multiple locations that offer open, flexible, accessible and youth-friendly environments. • Hold Life Conferences, Emancipation Conferences, permanency meetings, and other planning meetings in these settings as determined by the youth. • Provide "real world" opportunities in youths' everyday lives and locations for youth to connect with family, caregivers, businesses, cultural groups and community members to learn and practice social and relationship skills, explore career and employment opportunities, explore higher education opportunities, meet folks in particular careers, and develop relationships that can support permanency. • Hold meetings and events at times that youth say will work for them. • Ensure that coordination and communication occur at various organizational levels (administrative, managerial, supervisory and front-line staff level) as well as with caregivers and youth.
STARTING POINTS	• Talk with youth individually to inquire about locations in the community that he or she considers youth-friendly and accessible. Encourage youth to advocate for meeting places that feel most comfortable to them. Listen to what youth say. • Encourage staff to build their relationships with youth in youth-friendly places and in creative ways, e.g., doing activities or exercising together. • Talk with youth about where they spend their time during the day, including on weekends. • Engage youth in exploring opportunities and resources in their home, family, neighborhood, school and community.

LIVE–LOVE–LEARN–WORK–THRIVE STRATEGY #3B: BEING THERE EVERY DAY

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth to the 360° relationships, opportunities and supports they need to grow, develop and thrive. Be part of the change!

PROMISING PRACTICE	Caregivers as Teachers & Guides
OVERVIEW	*Caregivers are key to providing youth the opportunity and support to learn and practice skills in their daily lives, at home and in the community. Even when skills are introduced in a classroom setting, caregivers remain the best teachers, supporters, coaches and guides for youth to learn and practice skills in their daily lives. Caregivers are critical partners in helping youth get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*
STRATEGIES	• Provide supports to caregivers to ensure they have what they need to provide skill development and supports to the youth in their care. (Remember that they are in a dual role as both a service provider and receiver of supports to provide care.) • Develop "resource kits" for caregivers to use to support the youth's experiential learning and skill development (e.g., recipe cards and ingredients for cooking together with youth; laundry soap and baskets for working with youth on doing their own laundry; bus tickets with a bus schedule which caregiver can use to help youth navigate the bus system to get to work). Identify and use additional resources that may be available from local business partners, community members, churches and tribal organizations. • Provide opportunities for caregivers to benefit from peer support (caregiver-to-caregiver support). • Consider the youth's family, cultural, religious and spiritual values, traditions and resources when helping youth develop life skills such as self-care, cooking, interpersonal communication and how to interact socially. • Partner with businesses and the youth's community and cultural connections to provide "real world" opportunities that caregivers and youth can explore together.
STARTING POINTS	• Talk with youth and caregivers together (both at the time of placement and regularly thereafter) about building life skills at home. • Provide caregivers and youth with resource kits for learning and practicing life skills (e.g., recipes and meal ingredients, shopping lists, laundry supplies, bills to pay). • In partnership with caregivers, inquire about supports needed to help youth develop skills in the home and explore other activities that can help facilitate ongoing skill development. • Invite and encourage caregivers to provide youth in their care with "real world" opportunities, such as managing a bank account, helping with household budgeting and processes for paying bills, touring job sites, visiting schools, meeting folks in particular careers, and connecting with community or cultural groups.

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STRATEGY #3C: NO MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth to the 360° relationships, opportunities and supports they need to grow, develop and thrive. Be part of the change!

PROMISING PRACTICE	Planning Meetings for Youth Who Don't Normally Get Them
OVERVIEW	*Conducting regular planning meetings (e.g., Emancipation Conference, Life Conference) for all youth in both child welfare and probation systems, regardless of where they are placed, is key to successfully supporting youth in the counties in which they are living. The inclusion of existing supports, and the effort to build new support systems in the communities in which youth live, helps youth get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*
STRATEGIES	• Partner with youth who are either (1) placed out-of-county; (2) not from the county, but are placed in the county; or (3) involved with probation. Prepare the youth for conferences, including the purpose, roles, goals and expectations. Communicate with the probation officer and/or social worker in the youth's county of origin to ensure coordination and consistency for the youth, and to identify family resources. Encourage the social worker or probation officer from the youth's county of origin to attend the conferences, along with other individuals involved with the youth and identified by the youth as important. To address coordination and scheduling challenges, think of creative ways to include people who are far away (e.g., conference calls, Skype). • Ensure that conferences and planning meetings are youth-centered. Prioritize the youth's self-identified goals, focus on helping the youth achieve love and belonging, and identify how the team will support the youth to get what he or she needs to live, love, learn, work and thrive. • Conduct ongoing follow-up within six months. Invite the youth to request formal follow-up conferences more frequently.
STARTING POINTS	• Have the social worker or probation officer meet with the youth in advance to talk about the purpose, roles and goals of the up-coming meeting. • Ask the youth where he or she would like to hold the meeting, who he or she would like to have attend and what the focus of the meeting should be. • Ask the youth whom he or she would like to have involved in the different tasks decided upon at the meeting, when the follow-up should happen, and what he or she needs to accomplish the goals identified at the meeting. • Assign someone specific to follow up with the youth on an assigned schedule about progress and changes. Have the youth select (or at a minimum agree with) who this person will be and have the youth and this person work together to create a concrete plan for staying connected after the meeting.

LIVE–LOVE–LEARN–WORK–THRIVE
STRATEGY #3D: SOMEONE to COUNT ON

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth to the 360° relationships, opportunities and supports they need to grow, develop and thrive. Be part of the change!

	STRATEGY NO.3D
PROMISING PRACTICE	Having an Adult Ally to Provide Support
OVERVIEW	*Assisting youth to connect with an ally who can support them and advocate for their best interests during planning and decision-making processes helps youth create trusting relationships with adults. Adult allies support youth in comfortable, engaged and empowering ways to ensure they get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*
STRATEGIES	• Provide youth with guidance on <u>how to choose and what to expect from an adult ally</u>. • Provide adult allies with guidance on how to work with and support youth who have selected them. • Ensure the adult ally and youth talk, meet, and work together prior to all meetings to discuss the youth's goals, hopes, dreams, priorities, expectations and challenges. • Ensure the adult ally and youth attend all meetings to support the youth's goals and priorities and ensure that the youth's hopes, dreams, expectations and challenges are addressed. • Support the adult ally in developing a plan in partnership with the youth to follow up after meetings to ensure the youth understands the process and plan and to discuss the youth's expectations, needs and responsibilities. • Identify ways that the adult ally will support the youth beyond team meetings.
STARTING POINTS	• Meet with youth to identify a potential ally to approach. Talk with the youth about how to approach the potential ally. An adult ally can be anyone identified by the youth, including a family member, friend, community connection, employer, teacher, church member, tribal member, or other person. • Once the ally and youth have connected, provide them with guidance and clarity about expectations, roles and responsibilities they each have to and for one another. • Make sure the youth and adult ally have time outside of the meeting process to connect and develop a relationship with each other. • Provide the adult ally with skills to help him or her "hold onto the youth" when the youth is in new or difficult situations, and to gradually "let go of control" as the youth gains confidence and competence.

LIVE–LOVE–LEARN–WORK–THRIVE STRATEGY #3E: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth to the 360° relationships, opportunities and supports they need to grow, develop and thrive. Be part of the change!

STRATEGY NO.3D

PROMISING PRACTICE	Following Up After Planning & Team Meetings
OVERVIEW	*Meetings increasingly include youth and their adult supporters in planning for the youth's success. Support and follow up are critical to keeping plans on track. Additionally, having someone follow up with the youth and the multiple people involved helps keep everyone on track with their responsibilities and holds them accountable. Following up with the goals set at the meeting, ensuring youth have the supports needed to achieve these goals, and tracking progress on the tasks set during meetings are important ways to making sure youth have what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*
STRATEGIES	• Identify a supporter, someone of the youth's choosing who has an established relationship with the youth (e.g., adult ally, peer mentor), to meet with the youth prior to the meeting to prepare him or her for the meeting. Immediately after the meeting, this individual meets with the youth to discuss reactions to the meeting, recommendations and decisions. • Ensure that the youth's supporter meets with the youth roughly two weeks (or more often) after the meeting to follow up with the youth on progress, successes and challenges. • Ensure that the youth's supporter connects within a few weeks of the meeting with the team member who is responsible for following up with adults who were assigned activities, actions and tasks. • Ensure a designated individual continues to follow up with the adults assigned activities, actions and tasks at regular intervals and reports progress to the social worker or probation officer.
STARTING POINTS	• Ask youth who he or she would like to have as an adult supporter for support and follow up. • Create opportunities and provide time for the youth to develop a trusting relationship with the identified supporter. • Provide the identified supporter with available time, resources and access to accomplish the proper follow up with the youth and other individuals involved. • Develop future meetings based on the activities, assignments and goals of prior meetings, beginning with updates on progress, successes and challenges from the youth's perspective.

LIVE–LOVE–LEARN–WORK–THRIVE
STRATEGY #3F: FRIEND to FRIEND

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth to the 360° relationships, opportunities and supports they need to grow, develop and thrive. Be part of the change!

STRATEGY NO.3F

PROMISING PRACTICE	Providing Peer Support for Youth in Foster Care
OVERVIEW	*Youth in foster care find significant support through their relationships with other youth in care. Providing peer-to-peer support in a variety of ways – including one-on-one in the form of mentors, in group settings through support groups, or more open-ended group mixers – helps youth build new support systems to get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*
STRATEGIES	• Listen for and observe areas in which youth in care need support, guidance or information and that can be addressed by peer support/mentors. • Recruit and train youth who are currently in care or recently emancipated to provide support to other youth. The support may be general, age-appropriate support or specific to education, employment or life skills development. • Identify appropriate youth-friendly locations and times for youth supporters/mentors to meet. • Create opportunities for youth supporters/mentors to provide support in a variety of ways, depending on the requests and needs of the youth in care (e.g., group settings, one-on-one, classroom-based, activity-focused).
STARTING POINTS	• Meet with youth individually to ask what he or she wants and needs. • Develop training and ongoing support for youth who are serving as peer mentors. As "professional mentors," youth should receive payment for their services. • Create a variety of opportunities for peer support, including meetings, social events, meals, physical activities (e.g., running clubs), and other venues. Allow youth to determine what settings will work best, depending on the types of support or mentorship being offered. • Help professionals take a step back from these peer-to-peer activities and relationships. Professionals can provide support behind the scenes as directed by youth (e.g., providing food or other financial support).

LIVE–LOVE–LEARN–WORK–THRIVE
STRATEGY #3G: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth to the 360° relationships, opportunities and supports they need to grow, develop and thrive. Be part of the change!

STRATEGY NO.3G

PROMISING PRACTICE	Integrating Life Skills into Permanency Teaming
OVERVIEW	*Providing youth the opportunity for a concentrated focus on the attainment of love and belonging - permanency for a lifetime, is critical for all youth in foster care. Permanency teaming presents an opportunity for a concentrated focus on attaining permanency, while integrating activities to achieve educational and employment goals and the attainment of life skills needed to succeed and thrive. By bringing a discussion of these life skills into existing permanency meetings, youth can truly focus on getting all that they need in every aspect of their lives and in planning for their future.*
STRATEGIES	• Identify supports needed for youth's educational, employment, and other life skills goals based on a review of the Transition to Independent Living Plan and other documents and plans such as the 90 day Transition Plan. • While working on developing permanent connections, incorporate the development of life skills and the youths' education and employment goals into the permanency planning process. • In partnership with youth, include caregivers in planning and decision-making processes. If youth are concerned about including caregivers, spend time working on the issues that create barriers between the youth and caregiver. • Consider community resource,, including businesses, faith-based, tribal, cultural and community connections, in the permanency teaming process.
STARTING POINTS	• Together with the youth, make a list of all the different meetings that are held about his or her life and what happens at each one. Find ways to make sure that each meeting that is focused on permanency also addresses the youth's education and employment goals as part of the discussion, and vice versa. • Utilize open-ended questions (who, what, when, how) and work with the youth to help him or her identify his or her own strengths and opportunities in life. • Partner with youth in identifying and inviting family, friends and other people who are important to them to participate in permanency teaming. Prepare the participants for the goals and priorities of the meeting.

LIVE–LOVE–LEARN–WORK–THRIVE
STRATEGY #3H: MAKING SENSE of IT ALL

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth to the 360° relationships, opportunities and supports they need to grow, develop and thrive. Be part of the change!

STRATEGY NO.3H

PROMISING PRACTICE	Giving Youth the Information They Need In a Way That Makes Sense
OVERVIEW	*Providing information in ways that are accessible and meaningful to youth empowers their participation in planning processes and meetings, and gives them better access to programs, services and supports. Accessible information is critical to ensuring that youth get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*
STRATEGIES	• Talk to youth about what information they want or need to identify and reach their goals. • Engage youth in identifying non-traditional resources that are accessible and preferred by youth in providing the programs, services and supports they want and need. • Work with youth to develop information and resource materials in varying formats to meet youths' needs. • Identify various opportunities and venues to share materials with youth, including one-on-one visits, at meetings, and in groups. • Provide opportunities and venues to review materials verbally with youth, discuss what is available, and allow youth to ask questions and receive additional information. • Develop plans to update materials, together with youth, on a periodic and continuous basis.
STARTING POINTS	• Treat youth as individuals by asking each one to identify his or her own wants and needs. • Identify youth-friendly materials that will be helpful in guiding discussions and conversations and use those with youth. • Work with youth to create guides to programs, services, supports and resources. Make sure there is a process for updating them regularly to ensure they are useful and reflect current availability. • Provide information (written and verbal) to caregivers.

LIVE–LOVE–LEARN–WORK–THRIVE STRATEGY #31: WHAT YOUTH WANT

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth to the 360° relationships, opportunities and supports they need to grow, develop and thrive. Be part of the change!

PROMISING PRACTICE	Using Technology to Engage Youth
OVERVIEW	*Youth must be included as partners in all discussions, planning and decisions about their lives. They can only be partners if the communication happens in ways that are comfortable, continuous and accessible to them. Multiple communications, using a variety of technology (e.g., texting, Facebook) invites youth into conversations in ways that feel right to them and enables the conversation to continue so youth can get what they need to love, love, learn, work and thrive.*
STRATEGIES	• Treat youth as individuals. Ask each youth how he or she likes to communicate with friends, peers and others, and how it is best for you to communicate with him or her. There may be multiple communication strategies depending on the needs and preferences of each youth. • Make an agreement about how you will communicate with each other. • Establish boundaries about various communication methods, especially social media, to ensure that communication is appropriate and that confidentiality is maintained. • Develop guides for staff and partners on how technology can be used to reach out to and connect with youth, both for relationship building and ongoing communication. • Use the technology desired by youth to develop relationships, share meeting reminders, follow up on tasks, identify goals, assess strengths, and maintain a connection. • Identify technology resources such as Career Zone to assist youth in career exploration.
STARTING POINTS	• Together with youth, make a list of all the different opportunities there are for using technology to stay in touch. • Share with youth the potential for using technology to stay connected. Be clear about expectations (e.g., immediacy of responses, times of use) as well as boundaries. • Plan to use youth's desired technology to remind him or her of meeting times to help increase the likelihood that he or she will attend. • Tell youth about technology-based tools to assess strengths and opportunities (e.g., Career Zone). Use these tools together with youth and caregivers.

LIVE–LOVE–LEARN–WORK–THRIVE STRATEGY #3J: OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

After implementing the six essential "building block" practices, try this promising practice strategy. Connect youth to the 360° relationships, opportunities and supports they need to grow, develop and thrive. Be part of the change!

PROMISING PRACTICE	Caregivers Support Youth in Career Exploration
OVERVIEW	*Caregivers provide youth the opportunity, connections and support to explore career opportunities through relationships in their daily lives, at home and in the community. Starting in elementary school, and ongoing, caregivers connect youth to friends, family, colleagues and others who can help youth become aware of career pathways and explore and pursue areas of career interest. Caregivers are critical partners in helping youth get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*
STRATEGIES	• In conversations with caregivers, help them think broadly about their connections with others in the community and how they might connect youth in their care to people and opportunities that will help them explore careers. • Explore with caregivers how they might contact someone they know and create an opportunity for a youth to meet and visit their work site. • Explore with caregivers how they will prepare the youth for meeting the person and visiting the work place. • Explore with caregivers how they will prepare the person for the youth's visit. • Explore with caregivers whether there are other youth who might like to participate in the opportunity and work with the caregivers to include these youth. • Provide supports to caregivers to ensure they have what they need to be successful in career exploration activities in the community (coaching, bus tickets). • Collaborate with caregiver trainers to help spread and sustain caregiver participation in career exploration activities. • Provide opportunities for caregivers to share their experiences with each other and provide peer support. • Look to cultural connections as rich resources for career exploration activities. • Partner with businesses, cultural and community resources to provide "real world" opportunities that caregivers and youth can explore together.
STARTING POINTS	• Meet with youth and caregivers (at the same time) to talk about ways they can explore careers together. • Encourage caregivers to support youth in exploring careers through Career Zone. • In partnership with caregivers, inquire about supports caregivers need to help youth in career exploration. • Invite and encourage caregivers to provide youth in their care with "real world" opportunities for career exploration by connecting youth to the caregiver's neighborhood and community networks.

2C ENVISION the CHANGE & TEST IT!

Reflecting on Results

Measurement for the purpose of assessing improvements and progress toward transformation was both a learning opportunity and a challenge for the nine teams participating in California's Collaborative to Transform ILP. A set of measures was developed at the beginning of the Collaborative that aligned with the Initial Collaborative Framework for Change. This body of measures focused on youth participation and engagement, caregiver participation and engagement, permanency, education, and employment. While the overall body of measures was designed to provide a way to assess progress for individual county teams, each team had different resources available to gather and manage the data. As a result, county teams were given great flexibility in defining and tracking these measures. Most importantly, as the Collaborative shifted to its Final Transformational Framework, the original measures no longer supported the framework that was guiding the work of the teams. By the end of the Collaborative, new recommended measures were identified for future use to more effectively assess progress toward transformation.

Overview of Collaborative Measures

A sound measurement plan is essential to move counties and their partners toward transformation. Without data to review and hold agencies, systems and individuals accountable, change will be made simply for the sake of change without any way to assess whether or not improvements or progress are being made. The six broad categories for measures developed initially included:

- MEASURE 1 – ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH AS TRUE PARTNERS: Foster youth and youth transitioning from foster care report being connected to, respected and valued by the adults with whom they are working/have worked to achieve their goals.

- MEASURE 2 – INCREASE INTEGRATED PREPARATION: Foster youth report receiving community-based and experiential services/activities in preparation for their transition from foster care.

- MEASURE 3A – INCREASED SATISFACTION – YOUTH: Foster youth and youth transitioning from foster care report satisfaction with the services, supports, and preparation they received when working with the agency on their transition.

- MEASURE 3B – INCREASED SATISFACTION – CAREGIVERS: Caregivers report satisfaction with the services, supports and preparation provided to the foster youth in their care (within the age ranges being tracked) when working with the agency.

- MEASURE 4 – PERMANENCE/LIFELONG CONNECTIONS: Youth transitioning from foster care have at least one family member or supportive adult with whom they feel they have a lifelong connection (as defined by youth).

- MEASURE 5 – EDUCATION: Foster youth and youth transitioning from foster care make progress towards graduation and post secondary readiness.

- MEASURE 6 – EMPLOYMENT: Foster youth have a range of career development opportunities that culminate in work experience, consistent with their self-identified career goals, prior to leaving care.

While the Collaborative expected data to be tracked in each category listed above, it allowed flexibility in the specific data indicators used to track each measure; thus, there were significant variations between county teams in what data they actually chose to collect. Each team developed its own individual "Data

and Measurement Plan," the purpose of which was to give each team an opportunity to reflect upon the overall intent of the measurement category (as described in the "Key Question Being Asked" below) and identify a data indicator that made sense for the team in terms of ease of data collection/reporting as well as usefulness in assessing the team's progress on a regular basis.

Reflection on Specific Data for Collaborative Teams

For several important reasons, the Collaborative teams were not able to see significant changes in the monthly data that was collected during this project :

- Reliance on surveys, rather than existing data systems, caused increased workload and made data collection efforts difficult and sample sizes small; even when surveys for specific measures were conducted, so few youth and/or caregivers were surveyed that the results did not provide meaningful information.

- The economic downturn and resulting budget cuts, staffing cuts and changes in staff created resource and capacity challenges for data collection and reporting; many teams were unable to do surveys to obtain data for their measures with any sort of regularity.

- The existing statewide California data system does not capture relevant information regarding child and youth satisfaction and well being; even where there was some information that might be relevant, there were challenges separating the county team's target population from the universe of the county's children and youth included in the statewide system.

- Counties that were already utilizing the Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) database for the California Connected by 25 Initiative had a more flexible data system that made use of survey/assessment data; the remaining counties only had access to standard yes/no data or quantitative responses, rather than the scaled qualitative responses needed to guide transformation.

Virtually all outcome measures in each of the nine county teams fluctuated over the course of the Collaborative with no specific trends or directions noted. The number of youth surveyed each month was small (5-28 youth), and different youth were surveyed each month. This may have contributed to the variability and lack of discernable trends, as monthly results would have been reflective of the individual outcomes and experiences for the particular youth surveyed that month.

The purpose of the data collected was to inform practice and assess progress toward system improvement. In hindsight, the scope of this Collaborative – transformation rather than practice improvement – and the fact that the initial framework for change did not serve to guide teams toward transformation, calls into question the value of these collaborative data measures that were developed as a part of that initial framework. In addition, transformation is a long-term process that was just beginning to gain momentum at the end of the 22-month Collaborative. The small rapid tests of change and short-term monthly indicators usually used in the typical Collaborative methodology will not reflect transformational changes as quickly.

Recommendations for Measures to Assess Progress toward Transformation

Youth have a critical role in all aspects of planning for their lives and shaping system improvements. In considering future measurements for transformative Collaborative work, data measures are needed to assess how well systems support youth to find love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime; take charge of their lives and futures; and get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive. Further, measures are needed to assess improvements in youth engagement, youth-adult partnerships and youth leadership development. Future efforts should also establish measures that assess progress in implementing transformational system changes.

In reflecting on Collaborative successes, challenges and lessons learned in this area, a survey process developed in partnership with youth is recommended to determine data measures that can more effectively help teams assess their progress toward transformation. This can be a simple process starting with one area of focus -- something the organization or community has prioritized. Once a simple survey and process is developed and tested for a period of time, it can be adjusted based on what has been learned. Then survey questions can be developed and added in for the next focus area. This youth-adult partnership approach from initial survey design through implementation mirrors key aspects of the ILP transformation conceptual framework, and offers a further opportunity for youth and adults to analyze the data together. This includes partnering with youth to share results with staff, caregivers and other adult partners in the community. Some important areas of focus and possible survey questions in each area include:

1. YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP: This is at the core of transformation and there are many questions that can be asked of youth to assess the youth's experiences. Some examples include:

- Of the people you find important in your life, who has been a part of planning and decision-making with you? How were decisions made to invite their participation? How were you involved in the process?
- How have you been encouraged and supported to take charge of your future? Who was important in the process and what did they do to support you in taking charge of your future?

2. YOUTH HAVE LOVE AND BELONGING – PERMANENCY FOR A LIFETIME: This is the first of the three foundational outcomes for transformation. Some examples of questions that can be asked of youth to assess progress include:

- How were you engaged in conversations about permanency and finding family members and other loved ones?
- Who was important to you in your life and were they included in the process of exploring permanency? How were they included?
- How were you reconnected to those you had prior relationships with or connected to new, important permanent relationships?
- Where do you feel love, a sense of belonging and have important relationships that you can depend on? How will they support you and stay connected with you in the future? How do you know whether they are permanent "lifetime" connections?

3. YOUTH TAKE CHARGE OF THEIR LIVES AND FUTURES: This is the second of the three foundational outcomes for transformation. Some examples of questions that can be asked of youth to assess progress include:

- How were you engaged in planning and decision-making processes about your own life?
- Who reached out to you to make sure you participated and how did they do that outreach?
- Who else was involved as part of your planning, support and decision-making team (family members, community members, teachers, coaches, church member, tribal members, business members, etc.)?
- How were these team members identified and invited to participate? What things made you part of the team? What helped you become a leader of your team?

4. YOUTH GET WHAT THEY NEED TO LIVE, LOVE, LEARN, WORK AND THRIVE: This is the third of the three foundational outcomes for transformation. Some examples of questions that can be asked of youth to assess progress include:

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- Who will you be living with, and how are they connected with you?

- Where do you see yourself living in 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, and 5 years?

- Where is your "home base" – the place that you know you can return to and where there are loved ones you will spend holidays with when you can?

- What type of education have you accomplished during high school? Is this the education you dreamed of?

- What are your plans for higher education or career pathways? How are you going to accomplish these plans?

- What things are in place right now to help get you to this plan?

- Do you have prior work experience before leaving care? What does that look like? Are you currently employed?

- Where do you see yourself employed in 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, and 5 years?

- When you are struggling with housing, education, employment, finances or making a difficult decision, who will you call on – who will always be there to help you manage the ups and downs of life?

- What are your dreams for the future? Will the path you are on now get you to those dreams?

- Who knows your dreams, shares them with you, and is cheering you on?

Another way for teams to track progress toward transformation over time is to identify existing processes that are recorded and quantified, such as team meeting participation. Many counties conduct Team Decisionmaking Meetings (TDMs) or other meetings that include youth and caregivers. Data that is or could be tracked from these meetings might be used as proxy measures to assess youth participation, engagement, and decisions reached.

Similarly, teams may also want to consider tying measures used to evaluate transformation to other county priorities, such as System Improvement Plans (SIPs), that are likely be sustained over time. In doing this, though, it is essential to keep focused on the quality of youth experiences and not move back to a focus on compliance data.

Conclusion

In reflecting on the evolution of the Collaborative and the evolving Transformational Framework, the measures designed for this Collaborative, although not based on the final framework that supported transformation, provided some guidance for assessing improvements. As teams continue to transform ILP, they will need to develop more meaningful measures to track progress toward achieving the three fundamental youth outcomes for transformation.

Teams must define data that is easy to capture and meaningful to them, while also ensuring that youth are involved in every aspect of the process – from developing specific measures to being asked for their input about processes and outcomes. Just as with all else related to transformation, youth must be in leadership roles and the youth-adult partnership must guide the work as well as be a constant source for review and assessment.

PART THREE

PART THREE OUTLINE & DETAILS

THE COUNTY TEAM EXPERIENCE:
PARTNER PERSPECTIVES IN TRANSFORMATION

THE FACULTY EXPERIENCE

THE STATE TEAM EXPERIENCE

THROUGH THE EYES OF THE DIRECTOR

OUTLINE & DETAILS

3A THROUGH the COLLABORATIVE LOOKING GLASS

The County Team Experience: Partner Perspectives in Transformation

California's Collaborative to Transform ILP combined the energy, leadership and expertise of youth and their adult partners. The nine county teams included youth representatives, caregiver representatives, ILP providers, child welfare staff and leadership, and community partners such as representatives from education, workforce development, probation, mental health and permanency. This section focuses on the perspectives and experiences of these partners as they worked together during the Collaborative to develop everyday "real life" ways to partner with and support youth in all aspects of their lives and futures.

Partner Expectations and Inspiration

At all levels, the Collaborative worked to engage partners who offered important perspectives and resources for supporting and preparing youth to achieve their goals. These individuals often had existing roles or relationships with the child welfare agencies in their communities, and were invited by their local child welfare leadership to join their teams to transform ILP. The Collaborative helped to integrate separate work that was occurring in the county with youth, caregivers, and other partners by bringing these partners together in teams to transform ILP.

YOUTH. At the center of the Collaborative, youth were vital to the transformation of ILP. Each team that participated in the Collaborative was required to include at least one youth. (This mirrored the Collaborative Faculty, which included four youth members.) Youth who had an existing role or relationship locally were often invited to participate: some were already employed or in internships as foster youth advocates; some were advisory committee members; and some were individually involved with the ILP service delivery system in their community. Youth who participated as team members indicated they came into the Collaborative expecting to share or give their personal experiences in foster care and be the "youth voice" on the team.

CAREGIVERS. As the "everyday adults" in the lives of foster youth, caregivers play a key role in partnering with youth in decision-making, planning for their future and connecting to the resources and supports they need to achieve their permanency, educational and employment goals. Each participating county team was required to have caregiver partners as part of their Collaborative work. (This mirrored the Collaborative Faculty, which included two caregivers - a foster parent and kin caregiver.) Caregivers who participated as team members indicated they came into the Collaborative expecting to share or give their personal experiences of caring for youth.

ALL PARTNERS. The Collaborative engaged participating county teams in a process of clarifying team members' roles, exploring expectations and defining responsibilities. Youth and caregivers were clear that just sitting at the table (viewed as token involvement) was not enough; youth and caregivers wanted specific tasks, activities, expectations and responsibilities for themselves and others on their teams. They also wanted accountability for meaningful involvement, implementation and follow-through for themselves as well as for the others on their teams and in their communities.

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Inspiration for Participating on Teams

Regardless of team member roles, youth, caregivers and other partners said they were inspired to participate in the Collaborative based on the opportunities they perceived for:

- HANDS ON CONTRIBUTION: Using their experiences to advocate for and contribute to improved outcomes for youth in care.
- EXPLORATION OF PRACTICES IN OTHER COMMUNITIES: Learning about how things are done in other communities, discovering what practices worked well and what made sense.
- OPPORTUNITIES TO BRING NEW IDEAS TO THEIR COUNTIES: Bringing creative practices and ideas that they learned about back to their communities to implement.
- TRYING SMALL TESTS OF CHANGE: Trying things they thought might work to improve outcomes for youth, and appreciated their organizations for supporting these activities.
- ENHANCED ROLES IN CASE-LEVEL DECISION-MAKING: Exploring the concepts and practices of youth engagement, leadership and youth-adult partnerships in case-level decision-making and system-level improvements.

The Collaborative Experience

Partners met many people and formed new relationships and partnerships during the course of the Collaborative. These partnerships and relationships developed across the Collaborative, as well as within county teams, through multiple forums such as All-Collaborative Calls, Learning Sessions, affinity group calls or meetings, county team time, and at the statewide ILP Institute[1] that followed the final Learning Session.

Youth and adult partners, working together within their counties and with the Collaborative as a whole, began to realize how committed everyone was to transforming ILP and working in youth-adult partnerships to improve outcomes for youth. Several core experiences that are inherent to the Collaborative process contributed to this important realization:

- TEAM BONDING: Team meetings and Learning Sessions created opportunities for teams to bond as a group, "keep it real," and hold each other accountable in their work together. Structured team time and training activities on All-Collaborative Calls and at Learning Sessions challenged teams to connect with each other outside their "traditional" roles and understand each other's experience and perspective.
- SKILL BUILDING: The Collaborative created opportunities for all partners to generate and test ideas, change practice, develop leadership and public speaking skills, jointly develop tools with youth, and facilitate trainings with youth.
- COLLABORATION AND SHARED LEARNING: Learning Sessions created additional opportunities for partners to meet new people, see the successes and promising practices in other counties, and apply these practices in their communities. Activities that were structured to share promising practices and facilitate youth voice and advocacy were especially helpful in promoting shared learning.
- TESTING CHANGES: The "small tests of change" that teams worked on between Learning Sessions were perhaps the most important part of the Collaborative in the eyes of the partners. These tests enabled them to feel – and actually be – a true part of the ILP transformation process by providing a supportive environment and allowing them the space to experiment with their ideas for improvement, particularly as these ideas impacted their interactions and practice with youth, caregivers and other partners.

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1 The statewide ILP Institute, hosted as an annual event for many years by the California Department of Social Services, brought together individuals from across the state focused on ILP, including youth, caregivers, agency staff and partners, to share ILP programs, practices, strategies and challenges. In 2010, the Institute was planned primarily by Collaborative staff and began on the final day of the Collaborative's fourth Learning Session. This allowed the work done by teams in the Collaborative to be highlighted. Nearly all Collaborative participants and faculty helped to lead and facilitate sessions.

Partner Contributions to Practice Improvements

Having the support of their respective agencies or organizations, partners on Collaborative teams were empowered to test new practices and incorporate those changes that seemed to work well in their practice. Practice improvements are illuminated by team member role below, highlighting their many significant contributions to change.

YOUTH. The experience of being called upon to provide input and being asked to share their experiences and expertise, both on their individual teams and in the overall Collaborative, led youth to feel more included. Once they felt accepted and valued as team members, youth began to actively partner with adults on their teams, developing leadership skills, co-facilitating shared learning, and often directing (or "informing") their own tests of change and helping practice to evolve within their communities.

Practices Emerging from Youth on Collaborative Teams
- Sustaining sibling relationships by advocating for and assuring sibling visitation.
- Youth on teams attending Life Conferences for other youth to support "youth voice" and advocate for youth.
- Youth reviewing their case files to find out more about why they are in care and explore their own histories.
- Youth teaching others (adults and youth) about youth rights while in foster care.
- Youth informing the language used and the process for using the state's revised 90 Day Transition Plan.
- Youth teaching ILP classes, and engaging and training other youth to teach these classes.
- Youth conducting "speed interviews" with transitional housing staff as a way to identify caseworkers who would be good matches for them while they are in the program.
- Youth advocating within their communities to replicate work done in another community.

CAREGIVERS. Initially, caregivers thought that the other adults (the "professionals") in the room knew what needed to change and had already set to work on changing these things when they began the Collaborative. Caregivers, like all Collaborative participants, began to see that the change was going to come from youth themselves. For many caregivers, this created a shift in their thinking and ways of seeing the contribution of youth to system change.

A key frustration for caregivers prior to the Collaborative was not being included in planning activities with youth, such as team meetings (e.g., Emancipation Conferences, Life Conferences, Permanency Conferences), because youth did not want them involved. While caregivers often understood the reasons (e.g., lack of connection, having to address behavioral concerns, normal adolescent/parental type relationship conflict), they felt one of the key areas of growth for themselves and youth was figuring out how to work through these issues.

Caregivers also expressed concern that there was little connection between ILP classes/services and programs or supports for caregivers. They suggested exploring ways to connect caregivers to ILP classes, such as having them help prepare and support youth prior to and following the ILP class. They also advocated for caregiver supports and ILP services becoming more integrated.

As with youth, when they were called upon to provide input and asked to share their experiences and expertise, both on their individual teams and in the overall Collaborative, caregivers began to feel more included. Once they felt accepted and valued as team members, caregivers began to actively partner

with youth and other adults on their teams, co-facilitating shared learning activities and in conducting their own tests of change to improve practices within their communities.

Practices Emerging from Caregivers on Collaborative Teams

- **Survey and inquiry of caregivers:** One of the most critical needs identified by caregivers included opportunities to meet with social workers to talk about what was going on with the youth placed in their homes and the worker asking what would assist the caregiver. Learning more about what caregivers are experiencing helps partners understand how to better meet their needs.

- Supporting job shadowing for younger youth**:** Caregivers believed that younger youth needed to have the opportunity to develop awareness about employment and explore areas of career interest. A caregiver initiated this practice and took several youth to the police department. The person showing the youth around worked in human resources for the city and shared all the employment opportunities available, how one goes about applying, what one needs to do to get ready to work for the city, and took a real interest in the youth involved. This successful test by the caregiver was developed into a larger job shadowing practice by the team.

- **Shaping and participating in youth team meetings:** Caregivers advocated for counties to hold meetings where youth physically are (e.g., in schools); to shift from the terms "Emancipation Conferences" and "Life Conferences" to "Permanency Team Meetings"; to involve youth differently in permanency conferences; and to have caregivers included in all of these processes.

- Shifting ILP resources**:** Caregivers supported counties in shifting ILP resources from agency settings to high school settings, including events such as "mixers" for foster youth in high schools and holding ILP classes and events in the high schools.

- Connecting youth with family**:** Caregivers have a unique opportunity to connect and re-connect youth with others in their lives. One caregiver tested connecting a youth to a grandmother by making a phone call and supporting the youth during the call by using a speaker phone. Initial contact was scary; roles were not clear. Subsequent contacts were breakthroughs for the youth. This resulted in a permanency connection with the grandmother. The caregiver prepared the youth and provided support to the youth and grandmother as the relationship developed, and then supported the transition into the grandmother's care.

- Articulating caregiver activities in youth development at home**:** Caregivers identified skill development activities they can do in their homes together with youth. These joint caregiver/youth activities ensure youth get what they need in natural everyday home settings father than in classrooms.

CHILD WELFARE, PROBATION AND ILP PARTNERS. AGENCY PARTNERS – often pressured and isolated in making decisions – found shared responsibility and support in teaming and partnering with youth, caregivers and others. Teaming broadened the resources, expertise and opportunities available to them during planning and decision-making with youth. Agency partners valued the focus of Collaborative work on securing permanency for youth rather than allowing them to emancipate from foster care. Hearing what youth had to say during the Collaborative clarified for many teams that youth did not feel they were listened to during planning meetings and other decision-making processes. This further inspired child welfare, probation and ILP partners to change the structure of these processes to engage and empower youth, making "youth voice" central in all planning and decision-making forums.

Practices Emerging from Child Welfare, Probation and ILP Partners on Teams

- Involving youth in re-naming meeting processes: In the course of developing youth-adult partnerships, one team focused on making Emancipation Meetings more meaningful for youth, including engaging youth in the process of re-naming the meeting. The name the youth developed, and the team shifted to, was "My Time Meetings." This re-naming was important in setting the stage for youth-adult partnerships to be developed and strengthened locally.

- Involving youth in setting priorities: Many teams utilized various teaming meetings (Emancipation Conferences, Life Conferences, etc.) to bring folks together to plan with youth. In these meetings there were many priorities that adults had for youth. Allowing youth to set their own priorities, and narrow the focus of the meeting, helped youth engage in planning and decision-making processes about their futures.

- Including permanency in planning processes and meetings: All teams shifted planning processes and meetings to include a focus on permanency. Some started having these meetings at younger ages; many now have ongoing permanency conversations and hold formal meetings every six months.

- Utilizing creative methods/tools in conversations with youth: Teams used various creative means to have ongoing conversations with youth about relationships, using prompts such as asking them who is on their cell phone or on their facebook/myspace page and using 'youth relationship webs' to explore connections.

- Contracting with a single community-based provider: Several counties had either shifted to a single community-based ILP provider, or were in the process of developing new contracts with a single community-based ILP partner. All considered incorporating transformational learnings from the Collaborative in their contracts with community-based providers.

- Holding meetings with youth in neutral locations: Teams explored and developed new meeting locations other than county offices, including having meetings at youth centers, in schools, at churches and other community locations. When asked, youth often had creative ideas of locations where they would be most comfortable meeting with others.

- Holding meetings at times when youth are available to participate: Teams found that when they held meetings at times when youth were available (after school, evenings, weekends) that they were more likely to participate and become active partners in the process.

- Coordinating employment partners to utilize a universal intake form: One team in a larger county coordinated all the employment partners and developed a universal employment provider intake form. This helped partners get youth connected with and accessing employment resources.

- Including caregivers in meetings: Several teams began including caregivers in planning processes and meetings and found they brought significant resources and support.

- Creating policies and procedures for planning meetings: Teams developed standardized youth-centered policies and procedures for conducting planning meetings with youth so that they were consistent regardless of who would be conducting the conference.

EDUCATION PARTNERS. Many school administrators, teachers, and county or district educational liaisons already were participating in existing collaboratives with child welfare agencies to improve outcomes for youth in foster care. Listening to youth in the Collaborative, education partners realized that youth wanted more voice in planning for their futures. They also better understood the need to integrate educational goals with permanency and employment goals during planning processes. Many education partners were inspired to be part of ongoing teams that work with youth to plan and make decisions about their futures.

Practices Emerging from Education Partners on Collaborative Teams

- Coordination of educational progress reports and court reports: Coordinating information contained in educational progress reports with court reports made the process of sharing information with partners easier and more effective for youth and staff.
- Integrating case planning and treatment planning processes with youth: Youth and teams found that it worked well for child welfare staff, caregivers, mental health, education and others to partner with youth and their families to develop one coordinated plan that integrated all the youths' plans, goals and activities, rather than each partner having a separate plan.
- Single point of service at the high school site: One of the teams created Courageous Connection, a comprehensive on-site high school campus support program for youth in foster care. The program builds coordinated supports into weekly home room/advisory classes through block scheduling. This program provides many social, emotional and educational supports includingteaching and empowering youth in foster care to self-advocate, assess and take charge of their academic achievement; providing foster youth with an "activities card" that allows them to participate in school-sponsored dances, games and other extra-curricular activities without entry fees; and holds monthly caregiver support meetings on campus.

EMPLOYMENT PARTNERS. Some Workforce Investment Act partners and others working with youth on employment and career development goals were already participating with child welfare partners on improving outcomes for youth in foster care. As employment partners listened to youth during the Collaborative, they learned that youth wanted more voice in planning for their futures. They also better understood the need to integrate planning for the youth's employment or career goals with their permanency and education goals.

Practices Emerging from Employment Partners on Collaborative Teams

- Coordinating employment partners to utilize a universal intake form**:** One team in a larger county coordinated all the employment and workforce development partners and created a universal employment provider intake form. This helped partners to connect youth with employment resources.
- Including caregivers in meetings**:** Several teams began including caregivers in planning processes and meetings and found they brought significant resources and support to the process of getting youth jobs and exploring career development.
- Engaging caregivers in job shadowing**:** On one team a caregiver worked with a connection in the city human resource department and took a youth placed with her, along with several other foster youth, to explore the city's employment and career opportunities. This person talked about the education needed for different jobs, what experience is needed, and how to get "their foot in the door and begin working toward a career goal." This opportunity for younger youth to explore career and employment opportunities proved very exciting and rewarding for both the youth involved and the caregiver. The county team began to incorporate job shadowing into career exploration practices with older youth as well.
- **Emphasizing career exploration and development:** Several teams found thinking about career development as a process that starts early on at home and in school as an opportunity to integrate careers, education and permanency in a more concrete ways. Several teams explored using Career Zone and the Career Development Guide earlier (as early as elementary school) and ongoing (at home with caregivers, at school and in the community). Caregivers began by creating space for youth to explore the Career Zone, talked with youth about what they found,

and in several instances went with the youth to share their findings with the school guidance counselor to begin planning around the youth's areas of career interest. Staff at school sites, in ILP classrooms, and those providing caregiver training began to incorporate these tools in their work.

CHILD WELFARE LEADERS. Child welfare leaders in the Collaborative were in positions to advocate for and influence transformational practice changes with colleagues, within their organizations, communities, social work networks, associations, funding allocations and training resources. Through the work of staff and other local partners, child welfare leaders, directors and managers contributed to the development and implementation of numerous practice changes.

Practices Emerging from Child Welfare Leaders on Collaborative Teams

- **Prioritizing permanency:** Child welfare leaders have a key role in communicating permanency as a priority for youth. They are in a position to prioritize resources, collaborate, communicate and manage permanency partnerships. An example of child welfare leaders focusing on this priority include bringing permanency experts from other parts of their organization in to work with staff and youth on permanency goals, and child welfare managers or supervisors holding case conferences with line staff regarding older youth in care to prioritize permanency.

- **Prioritizing the partnership with youth and other adults in permanency planning and decision-making:** Child welfare leaders provide important leadership in building partnerships with youth and ensuring processes that involve youth and other adult partners in planning and decision-making.

- **Prioritizing the integration of permanency, education and employment goals:** Permanency, education and employment goals and activities need to be integrated, or worked on at the same time, as part of the youth's everyday home and community life. Child welfare leaders are in a position to prioritize, resource, collaborate, communicate and manage integrated work and partnerships focused on permanency, education and employment. Examples of this leadership include consolidating planning meetings and decision-making processes (e.g., Life Conferences, Emancipation Conferences, permanency teaming) to prioritize permanency, while integrating educational and employment goals. Child welfare leaders helped their teams shift these meetings to start earlier for youth in care, at the age of 14 years or shortly thereafter. Child welfare leaders found this practice promoted teaming and decision-making that integrated partners' efforts and helped to achieve permanency, education and employment goals before youth emancipate from care.

- **Measurement and assessment of progress:** Child welfare leaders understand change processes within their organizations and systems, and can manage data and measures to understand progress, identify areas of need and growth, and allocate resources.

- **Creative solutions:** Child welfare leaders in the Collaborative, faced with serious budget difficulties and operating in environments that were constantly changing with new system improvement strategies being implemented, found ways of integrating and leveraging their system improvement work to maximize resources and expertise of partners. This included incorporating the ILP Transformation work of their local team within an established collaborative workgroup or administrative structure.

Continuing Toward Transformation

Many partners began the Collaborative not knowing what they would be doing and not understanding what impact they could make. As the Collaborative unfolded and ILP transformation began to take form and shape, many partners were hopeful that these new improvements would continue and be sustained:

- **MAINTAINING A FOCUS ON YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP:** Youth were the foundation of the Collaborative. With their presence and their words, youth reminded participants that they are not working with cases – they are working with youth. Holding on to this core value is critical to partners. Continuing to develop youth-adult partnerships, supporting "youth voice" and empowering youth to "take charge of their lives and future" are at the core of the work that remains to be done.

- **TRANSFORMING THE PARTNERSHIP WITH CAREGIVERS:** Continuing to focus on transforming caregiver roles, skill-building at home, and developing the quality of the caregiving relationship and partnership with youth is important. Caregivers have strong influence in youths' lives. Their commitment to be a significant part of youths' lives, their willingness to honor the importance of permanency and support family relationships for youth, and their understanding of the how the complex dynamics in their relationships with youth play out in their home are key areas for understanding and further strengthening youth-caregiver partnerships.

- **LOVE AND BELONGING – PERMANENCY FOR A LIFETIME:** Achieving permanency for all youth, regardless of whether they are just entering foster care or have been in foster care for some time, is an important foundation for life and success. Youth need family and loved ones to support and guide them as they finish high school, go to college, work, pursue careers and begin to take charge of their lives and futures. Partners have many opportunities to inquire, support and connect youth with family and lifelong loving relationships to achieve permanency.

- **INTEGRATING THE WORK OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT/CAREER DEVELOPMENT:** Linking and integrating permanency, educational and career/employment goals with youths' hopes and dreams for their futures is the work of all partners. Integrating this work together is key to supporting the whole youth and the youth's whole life, enabling youth to get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.

- **ENSURING RESOURCES, TRAINING, TOOLS, AND SUPPORTS ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL CAREGIVERS:** Resources and supports vary among caregivers. Foster parents receive many supports in the form of training, mentoring and advocacy. While kinship caregivers have access to similar supports, they are not as well coordinated and the information is not as available or the same in each county. Kinship caregivers and foster caregivers came to realize that they have many common needs – that the tools or practices used by one can easily be transferred for use by the other, and that all caregivers need tools to make sure they can successfully meet the individual needs of the youth in their care.

- **HELPING CAREGIVERS DEVELOP RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS FOR YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY:** Caregivers appreciated the Collaborative's focus on meeting youths' educational needs, including supporting high school graduation, completion of college entrance requirements, and application to college or vocational training. Focusing on employment and career development was another key interest of caregivers. More work is needed to connect youth who have left care with resources that can help them further their education and gain employment skills and careers. Caregivers continue to have contact with and be faced daily with the heartache of youth they have provided care for and who have emancipated from the child welfare system without the most basic skills to survive or family to support them. There is a sense of urgency among caregivers to collaborate with other caring adults in their communities to support these youth.

- **BEGINNING TO SPREAD TRANSFORMATION:** The final Learning Session of the Collaborative was combined with the annual ILP Institute sponsored by the California Department of Social Services. The nine county teams along with the Collaborative faculty, staff and state team participated in developing curricula, and in facilitating and leading sessions at this conference. The counties attending the ILP

Institute (48 counties, totaling 450 participants) brought teams of youth, caregivers, child welfare staff and other partners with them. During the ILP Institute, the Collaborative presented the transformation framework and engaged county teams in shared learning activities that included a focus on permanency, youth-adult partnerships and integration of permanency, education and employment.

Conclusion

Through its shared learning process, the Collaborative inspired teams to come together to support youth in all aspects of their lives as they move toward defining their futures. In response to a survey question about the most significant part of the Collaborative, partners captured the impact from their perspectives:

> *"The shift away from staff and the ILP center being their home base and the move to connecting these kids with a real family and not paid staff is essential."*
>
> *— CHILD WELFARE LEADER*

"[The most significant part was] the transformation of youth, coming into their own, taking a leadership role, taking a more powerful place on their teams…..." – Youth Faculty Member

*"…I went in with the idea that adults knew what needed to change and they were going to change it…it became clear that the change was going to come from the youth themselves"
– Caregiver Faculty Member*

"… [T]he BSC process allowed me as a [social] worker to test things outside the box. Coming into the BSC, we had an opportunity to make a suggestion and try it out. Having an opportunity to test something and having the support from the department to push it forward was inspiring. Workers can demonstrate what they do that works." – Child Welfare Worker

"…rethinking the quick implementation of new ideas was a significant 'aha',…and getting youth more involved, listening to what they have to say, and doing as much as possible to implement the changes they suggest….Making sure youth feel included makes them want to participate more…" – County Team Probation Partner

"… I have learned to put more trust and leadership in youth. They step up, given the opportunity. Youth leaders are inspirational…" – County Team ILP Partner

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3B THROUGH the COLLABORATIVE LOOKING GLASS

The Faculty Experience

Throughout the Collaborative, "faculty trainers" (also called "content trainers") provided technical assistance to the participating teams and their individual members. Faculty team members included youth and caregiver representatives, child welfare staff and leadership, and permanency, education and workforce development representatives. Faculty worked together to create curriculum and training tools, provide facilitation and assist in other ways to meet the needs of each of the teams and the Collaborative as a whole. This section focuses on the perspectives and experiences of faculty content trainers during the Collaborative as they worked with team members to develop everyday "real life" ways to partner with and support youth in all aspects of their lives and in planning for the future.

Faculty Trainer Expectations and Inspiration

Each faculty team member came into the Collaborative with a belief that partnering with youth is at the core of transforming ILP. In addition to providing teams with training and technical assistance, they expected to promote creative solutions and foster a shared learning community around innovative practice and systems changes. Faculty trainers were excited to be a part of the energy and change occurring within teams and they saw opportunities to support organizational development and help agencies integrate and leverage their probation work, social work and ILP work to maximize resources, results and the expertise of partners. Their inspiration for participating in the Collaborative was based on the opportunities they perceived for facilitating youth-adult partnership and exploring outcomes and transformation in partnership with others.

The Collaborative Experience of Faculty Trainers

Through faculty training calls, Learning Sessions and working with teams in between Learning Sessions, faculty trainers bonded as a group, held each other accountable and "kept it real." Many of the faculty experienced personal and professional growth through their experiences in the Collaborative. This came as a result of new relationships, a supportive environment that increased confidence, and team members relating to each other as experts who had something valuable to contribute. The importance of the work had an impact on faculty, providing unique and special opportunities to engage with partners in creating innovative systems and practices changes.

Learning Sessions created opportunities for faculty to facilitate the development of youth voice, advocacy and leadership; ensure that successes and promising practices in other counties were shared across participating teams; and explore with teams how they could test and apply new practices. In their role as content trainers, faculty gained skills and shared learnings in the areas of leadership development and public speaking, partnering with youth to create training materials and tools, and collaborating with others from diverse perspectives to co-plan and co-facilitate calls and training sessions.

Providing technical assistance to teams between the Learning Sessions in order to support effective use of "small tests of change" was perhaps the most exciting work from the perspective of the faculty.

Through these tests, faculty enabled teams to be a true part of the ILP transformation process by allowing them supportive space to experiment with their ideas for improvement, particularly as these ideas impacted their direct practice with youth, caregivers, and partners.

Faculty Contributions to Practice Improvements

As faculty developed a strong working relationship and shared understanding of transformation, youth-adult partnerships and youth leadership became strong organizational forces guiding the faculty team. Key training and practices that emerged during the Collaborative as a result of significant faculty team contributions included:

- DEVELOPING YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP: Faculty helped create the environment for teams to listen to "youth voice," bring youth into the center of everything, and ultimately change the structure of planning meetings and decision-making processes to more fully engage and empower youth. Training and curriculum developed by faculty includes the 'Adult Ally Document', 'Self Advocacy Training', training for All Collaborative Calls, and the training curriculum for Learning Sessions.

- TESTING THINGS OUTSIDE THE BOX: Faculty provided training and technical assistance to teams to try different approaches and incorporate "what works" into their practices.

- Renewed focus on youth permanency: Faculty provided training and technical assistance to teams to help them shift from allowing youth to emancipate from foster care to focusing on the steps needed to secure permanency for youth.

- INTEGRATING PRACTICES: Faculty provided training and technical assistance to teams to facilitate the integration of permanency, education and employment work. For example, faculty trainers with expertise in permanency helped teams integrate the education and employment goals of youth. Faculty also worked with caregivers to use tools available online, such as the Career Zone, as a means of exploring and engaging youth in career options. That was then followed up by talking with education partners about the educational goals and pathways that would support the youth to reach their career goals.

- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN TEAMS: Faculty provided training and technical assistance to teams to support them in developing partnerships with agencies, community organizations and businesses and working together to coordinate and leverage their resources.

Faculty Contributions to Understanding and Moving Toward Transformation

Faculty trainers in the Collaborative were in positions to provide training and technical assistance to influence transformational practice changes with teams and partners across the state. Their work to ensure teams understood transformation and its relationship to permanency, youth-adult partnerships and integrated practice were key in helping teams in the Collaborative move toward transformational change.

- FACILITATING RELATIONSHIPS AND PERMANENCY: Faculty trainers guided teams in testing practices that find and connect youth to family relationships and support permanency. They helped teams to identify and test informal, youth-centered and relationship-based inquiry skills that highlighted significant relationships in the youth's life and helped youth explore the value of family relationships and permanency connections that will endure over time. Faculty helped teams and organizations understand the key role they play in creating and communicating permanency as a priority for youth. Using the Five Youth Challenge, faculty provided teams with a concrete strategy for exploring new ways of focusing and integrating local resources and family finding, teaming and other processes.

- **FACILITATING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN YOUTH AND OTHER ADULTS:** Faculty trainers kept a consistent focus on youth-adult partnerships in their technical assistance. Adults in youths' lives are in a position to facilitate family members and other partners coming together in planning, decision-making processes and team meetings with the youth. Faculty helped teams to understand the value of having the adults in a youth's life encourage, facilitate and support youth-adult partnerships and youth participation in decision-making and activities. Youth faculty trainers were very active in developing agendas and Learning Session curriculum to facilitate team learning about youth-adult partnerships.

- **INTEGRATING PERMANENCY, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT GOALS:** Faculty trainers provided technical assistance to teams in identifying and testing integrative practices in the areas of permanency, education and employment. This included strategies for working with caregivers to provide the setting, opportunity, coaching and support of children and youth in their care to learn and integrate specific developmental skills at home and in the community. They also helped teams to realize the potential benefits of beginning learning and skill-building activities much earlier than is currently the norm for children and youth in foster care. Faculty encouraged teams to consolidate planning meetings and processes (Life Conferences, Emancipation Conferences, Permanency Teaming, My Time Meetings). Consolidating these processes enabled teams to prioritize permanency while actively integrating work on education and employment goals.

Sustaining Transformation

Many on the faculty team began the Collaborative not fully understanding their role and what impact they could make. As the Collaborative unfolded and ILP transformation began to take form and shape, faculty were hopeful that these new improvements would continue and be sustained:

- **MAINTAINING A FOCUS ON YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP:** Youth were the foundation of the Collaborative. Faculty communicated that this value is critical. Youth in care need adult partners who listen to, support and empower them to take charge of their lives and futures. This is at the core of the work that needs to be strengthened, spread and sustained.

- **TRANSFORMING THE PARTNERSHIP WITH CAREGIVERS AND QUALITY OF CARE:** Faculty trainers recognize the need to focus on the quality of the caregiving relationship and partnership with youth. Transforming the caregiver role to include skill-building in the home and connecting youth to real world relationships in the community offers great potential for changing the overall experience, opportunities and outcomes for youth in care. Youth need skilled and quality caregivers who understand the importance of supporting permanency and family relationships, who will commit to youth, and who understand how the dynamics in their home impact the youth.

- **LOVE AND BELONGING – PERMANENCY FOR A LIFETIME:** Faculty trainers recognize the need to achieve permanency for all youth, regardless of whether they are just entering foster care or have been in foster care for some time. Permanency relationships create the foundation for youth to finish high school, go to college, work and pursue careers. Caregivers and other community partners are with youth daily and have many opportunities to inquire, support and connect youth with family and lifelong loving connections to achieve permanency. This is another piece of the core work that remains to be done.

- **INTEGRATING THE WORK OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OR CAREER DEVELOPMENT:** Faculty recognize that as caregivers and community partners engage family and other important adults in the lives of youth, they are also in a critical position to help ensure that everyone works together with the youth to achieve education and career/employment goals, and other hopes, dreams and aspirations. This integrated approach is key for youth to succeed in school, work and life.

Conclusion

The faculty team was instrumental in creating the road map for transformational change that emerged during the Collaborative. The faculty experience in the Collaborative is best summarized by one faculty trainer's comment that "…everyone has the power to make change in their work…it is the simple questions we ask youth that get at the deeper work…" Faculty members provided the inspiration for a 360° approach to the whole youth and the youth's whole life.

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3C THROUGH the COLLABORATIVE LOOKING GLASS

The State Team Experience

Creating a state team to work alongside counties in exploring system transformation in ILP was considered an important and very challenging strategy in California's Collaborative to Transform ILP. California's child welfare system, along with other partner systems such as education and workforce development, are administered locally or regionally. The state context and the large number of jurisdictions in California meant that it was not possible to design a team that could have statewide impact in the way that a local team could have local impact. Despite this and other challenges, there was great enthusiasm and much optimism by state team members as they were identified and came together to see what they could do individually and collectively to support ILP transformation.

Assembling a State Team

Three co-chairs for the state team were selected to represent statewide perspectives on the three practice areas to be integrated in the Collaborative: permanency, education and employment. As the leads of three statewide initiatives to improve outcomes for foster youth (California Permanency for Youth Project, the Ready to Succeed Initiative, and Youth Transition Action Teams), the co-chairs had engaged multiple California counties in child welfare system improvements. Through their efforts, membership on the state team grew to include representation from former foster youth, caregivers, community colleges, universities, UC Berkeley's Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC), the California College Pathways Initiative, the Career Ladders Project, the California Workforce Investment Board, the California Department of Social Services, the California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership, the California Connected by 25 Initiative, and others.

As the group came together (shortly before and during the first Learning Session), they grappled with how a state team should function, given that team members did not have the time or travel funds for in-person meetings between Learning Sessions. State team members found their role and scope of activities confusing as well, as most were not involved in local level practice. This meant they could not operate as a typical Collaborative team using small tests of change and "plan-do-study-act" cycles. Strategies used to logistically attend to these challenges included regular conference calls, two in-person meetings in Sacramento attended voluntarily by team members who had the time and resources, state team time at Learning Sessions, and individual calls between certain state team members as they worked on activities related to the state team. Concurrently, the Collaborative director and staff worked with the state team co-chairs to identify and test adaptations to the Collaborative methodology that would better fit the function of the state team.

It was helpful that a number of state team members, including the three co-chairs and a former foster youth technical assistant for Connected by 25, also served as faculty trainers for the Collaborative. In this capacity, they participated in curriculum development and All-Collaborative Calls and served as trainers and facilitators at Learning Sessions. They made important contributions in developing the characteristics of transformation that helped guide county teams. In addition, their work on the state team created a forum to explore state level cross-system integration of policy and practice to support the three

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fundamental youth outcomes: 1) youth having love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime; 2) youth taking charge of their lives and futures; and 3) youth getting what they need to live, love, learn, work, and thrive. Through the persistence of the co-chairs and the creativity of all involved, the team was successful at engaging important state system improvement partners in the Collaborative and thinking differently about ILP practices and programs – they began considering how they could coordinate their efforts and strengthen youth voice and leadership in their organizations and initiatives.

State Team Learnings and Contributions

Developing a Collaborative state team for such a large, county-administered state was new and uncharted territory. The purpose, scope and even logistics of state team meetings and calls, interaction with county teams, and participation in Learning Sessions evolved considerably over the 22 months of the Collaborative. As challenges arose, opportunities presented themselves, and feedback inspired change, a core group of twelve participants – most of who had not participated in a Breakthrough Series Collaborative previously – focused, guided and sustained the work of the state team. A total of approximately 28 statewide participants joined the team and contributed at various points. The flexible team composition enabled guests and visitors to join the team and contribute expertise in key areas, while the core group continued to work through the challenging and confusing state team logistics and meeting processes.

Team members took responsibility to follow through on activities individually and in pairs. These were tasks that the group identified together but which did not require group effort, thinking, study, revision or approval. The team pulled together with the motto "just do it." This strategy was helpful in getting the team focused and working. It embodied at the state team level a process that was similar at the county team level – team membera test their own practice or system changes and no team effort, thinking, study, revision or approval is needed.

State team members focused work on creating opportunities for shared learning by networking and enhancing communication and collaboration between a number of state agencies, departments and statewide programs working to improve outcomes for foster youth. State team members also worked to make cross-initiative connections and found ways of integrating and leveraging work across systems to maximize resources and expertise. Collaborative Learning Sessions provided additional opportunities for state team members to meet county teams and hear first-hand about local innovations and practice tests. Through these experiences, state team members began to share ideas and develop an understanding of how practices and systems could improve to transform ILP, including what state team members could do within their respective organizations, programs and agencies. Some examples of the team's work and accomplishments:

- State team collaboration created a platform for sharing one county team's innovative school-based practice at a statewide Ready to Succeed Convening, resulting in further efforts to replicate the model in other school sites both locally and in other jurisdictions in the state.
- State team collaboration promoted cross-initiative planning of two regional Youth Empowerment convenings for 25 county teams in northern and southern California.
- Cross-county sharing was supported among several Ready to Succeed and Connected by 25 counties regarding integrated education and mental health practices and case planning.
- Integration of permanency concepts in resources and programs was developed by New Ways to Work, including updating a Career Development Guidebook to integrate a focus on permanency into the existing focus on education and employment.

- Inclusion of career information in a College Pathways education checklist was developed for foster youth interested in college and disseminated to a broad postsecondary audience across the state.
- State team members built on one county team's collaboration with a local community college improving supports for foster youth and caregivers by presenting the county's work to a larger group of community colleges and demonstrating ways that community colleges can support foster youth and caregiver programs and practices in their own communities.
- State team members integrated the work of one county team's permanency project with a developing summer employment project and coordinated statewide dissemination of information about summer job opportunities for foster youth to county child welfare agencies and community organizations.

As the work of the Collaborative deepened and focused more strongly on concepts of youth engagement, youth leadership and youth-adult partnerships, many on the state team were inspired and found ways to increase youth voice and leadership in their work and organizations, including:

- Youth Voice was increased in the Ready to Succeed Initiative leadership level by inclusion of a former foster youth Technical Assistant and in county-level initiative team work.
- The California Department of Social Services sought the input of current and former foster youth in the form and content of a new 90-day Transition Plan and revised Transition Independent Living Plan that was about to be implemented statewide.
- The California Department of Education included former foster youth in a group of stakeholders requested to review and provide input in a new 3-year Foster Youth Services Request for Application (RFA).

While some state team members had never met prior to the Collaborative, others had preexisting collegial relationships. Most were experts in one of the pillars of ILP (permanency, education, employment) but had limited knowledge or understanding of the work of their partners. Over the course of the Collaborative, state team members gained tremendous knowledge about each other's work, developed approaches to integrate their work, deepened their awareness of what youth need, and began to visualize how state leaders could contribute to transforming the ILP service delivery system.

Beyond the Collaborative

As the Collaborative unfolded and ILP transformation began to take form and shape, state team members were hopeful that these new improvements would continue and be sustained:

- MAINTAINING A FOCUS ON YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP: Youth were the foundation of the Collaborative. The state team conveyed the importance of holding on to this value. The voice of youth and their leadership is essential at all levels of the system.
- CAREGIVERS AS PARTNERS IN SKILL BUILDING AT HOME: State team members recognize the need to focus on transforming caregiver partnerships and, in their roles as parents to youth in care, developing caregivers ability to teach, coach and support youth in skill building at the home and in the community.
- LOVE AND BELONGING – PERMANENCY FOR A LIFETIME: State team members recognize the need to achieve permanency for all youth, regardless of whether they are just entering foster care or have been in foster care for some time. Permanency relationships create the foundation for youth to finish high school, go to college, work and pursue careers. State team members consider permanency as the work of all involved in the system and see this as a core focus in transformation.

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- INTEGRATING THE WORK OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT/CAREER DEVELOPMENT: State team members recognize the need to continue developing strategies that support caregivers and community partners to integrate education and career/employment goals and activities of youth. While permanency creates a foundation, integrating on focus on youths' education and employment/career in planning and decision-making is also critically important in supporting youth to get what they need to thrive.
- CONTINUING THE WORK OF TRANSFORMATION: Building on the work of the Collaborative, state team members believe collaborative sharing needs to continue among those working to transform their ILP practices and programs.

Conclusion

Youth voice, youth leadership and youth-adult partnerships that developed within the state team built cohesiveness across a diverse group of system stakeholders and gave purpose to their work together. Working individually and collectively, small but important steps were taken to understand how system supports for transformation could begin to be developed within individual organizations and in the system improvement forums in which state team members were involved. Coordinated system work to support ILP transformation is challenging given the many individuals, organizations and local, state and regional systems involved. However the voices of youth are clear and by partnering with youth they can guide us toward the system changes that will support and empower them to grow, develop and thrive.

3D THROUGH the COLLABORATIVE LOOKING GLASS

Through the Eyes of the Project Director

California's Collaborative to Transform ILP was funded and supported by the California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership. The Project Director worked in partnership with the Collaborative's Project Manager and the Project Coordinator and had ongoing technical assistance and support from a consultant with expertise in the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology. The work of the Project Director and staff in the Collaborative was varied and complex, with much of the work occurring behind the scenes. It was a challenging process of learning about and adapting the BSC methodology while simultaneously using it to facilitate the learning of others. Hallmarks of the Project Director's experience were relationship building, moving with speed and flexibility, translating vision into action, and learning while teaching and leading.

Appreciating and Nurturing Relationships

Planning and Start-Up

The National Governors Association's Policy Academy on Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care developed the Collaborative's vision and start-up plan in early 2008. Although the Collaborative Project Director was not involved in the Policy Academy, many of those involved in the early visioning and planning were engaged in helping the Project Director to move ILP transformation forward. Their roles included acting as co-chairs for the state team, providing supervision and support to the Project Director, and participating in the leadership team, faculty team, state team or a county team. By nurturing and supporting these relationships connected with the early work and vision for ILP, the Project Director had many "hands on deck" to keep the Collaborative on track and to challenge, encourage and guide course corrections when needed.

Collaborative faculty trainers were selected shortly after the Experts Meeting in early August 2008. By design, the faculty team was a diverse group including four former foster youth representatives and one California Youth Connections representative, two caregiver representatives (kin and foster parent), two county child welfare leaders, one CWS caseworker (also a former foster youth), one CWS employment specialist, one child welfare manager, one representative from each of the partner fields of education and employment, and two representatives from the permanency field. Faculty were brought together as a team before the first Learning Session, along with staff and leadership for the Collaborative, to learn the BSC methodology, develop an understanding of roles and expertise as content trainers, get familiar with the Initial Collaborative Framework for Change, and begin building relationships . This start-up meeting really helped cement the Collaborative focus on relationship and teamwork. The Project Director began communicating with faculty trainers individually and on Collaborative calls, preparing them for their roles, supporting them in recognizing their own expertise, and providing them with logistical guidance (e.g., getting contracts, keeping clear and concise records). The faculty's strong youth voice and its diversity were important in assisting the Project Director to engage teams and develop creative strategies and clear pathways toward transformation.

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Applications to participate in the Collaborate were distributed to counties in August 2008. Staff conducted informational conference calls to support counties in determining if the Collaborative was a good fit for them and addressing application questions or concerns. Unfortunately, many counties were hit hard by budget issues during this time and were losing important leaders and staff. As a result, despite great interest in the Collaborative and agreement with its goals, a number of interested counties decided not to apply. A further complication was that several counties had engaged in multiple change initiatives and were experiencing "initiative fatigue." This was not always a deterrent however. Six of the ten counties who joined the Collaborative were involved either in the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) or the Ready to Succeed Initiative, or both. Leadership from these counties recognized strong alignment between these initiatives and the Collaborative to Transform ILP. The Collaborative provided an opportunity to build on their current efforts and strengthen the impact, influence and integration of their local system improvements. Early outreach and behind the scenes work by the Project Director and staff focused on assisting teams to refine their target populations, goals and priorities, as well as focus on integration with other system improvement efforts.

Expanded Project Director and Staff Roles

Staff roles during a Breakthrough Series Collaborative are often peripheral to the actual work of the participating teams. Staff primarily provide coaching and support in using the BSC methodology, which involves very limited hands-on time with teams outside of Learning Sessions. However, early in this Collaborative, staff began to discover that increasing the frequency of conference calls with teams and arranging to have staff visit teams accelerated the team's progress. By the second Learning Session, approximately six months after start-up, teams were requesting this hands-on time with staff. Because of the large geographic area of California, and with county teams located throughout the state, staff spent a great deal of time travelling to meetings. The willingness to provide in-person assistance drew Collaborative staff into the work of the teams in unique ways, frequently stepping in as technical assistants, consultants, strategists, consensus-builders and active facilitators of the work of practice and system transformation conducted by the county teams.

Initially, the meetings the Project Director and Project Manager had with participating counties focused on assisting them with identifying and engaging local team members. Some county teams were struggling with including youth and caregivers and others were experiencing budget issues that had potential impacts for partners' participation. Staff strategized with county teams about ways to recruit and retain youth and caregivers, how to address challenges to their participation, and how to make sure each team member was fully engaged and empowered in youth-adult partnerships.

As the Collaborative unfolded, staff provided extensive guidance around creating and testing very small practice changes through successive Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles. County teams sought help in thinking small enough, who to involve, how to study the results, and how to revise and expand their tests of change. At the same time, the Project Manager provided technical assistance to each team in developing plans and capacity for data collection so that teams could assess whether practice changes were having the desired effect.

Over time, as teams began to spread new practices and system changes, staff traveled statewide to provide consultation and technical assistance. The focus of these meetings included how a team could bundle a number of small practice changes that had been tested into a larger practice strategy, what system changes would support and spread that practice strategy within the agency, and how their work and direction aligned with the Framework for Change. At this point, the Framework had evolved to

include six transformational characteristics that supported the system and practice changes needed to achieve three fundamental youth outcomes:

1. *Youth have love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime.*

2. *Youth take charge of their lives and futures.*

3. *Youth get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*

Barriers and Challenges

At several points during the Collaborative every county involved had either one or a series of budget crises that involved both program and staffing cuts. The Project Director worked to "hold on" to these teams. This required creative outreach, trusting relationships, and very intentional exploration of ways to further integrate their existing work and initiatives with Collaborative work. This outreach involved helping the counties see how they could roll the Collaborative work up into existing structures. One team was able to hang in and maintain participation in the Collaborative, largely due to their child welfare director's adaptive leadership, willingness to support integration, and commitment to change. Unfortunately one team withdrew from participation early in the Collaborative due to budget constraints.

Creating a state team to focus on statewide system change was another challenge for Collaborative leadership and staff. In California's county-administered child welfare system, each of the state's 58 counties is granted significant authority and flexibility in how it meets local needs. This provides a rich learning laboratory for local innovations and is a wonderful context for local teams to test new practices and, through local leadership, move promising practices to scale. At the state level, however, coordination across these local level efforts in order to impact practice statewide is challenging. This is not only true of the child welfare system; California's education, workforce development and mental health systems are also administered locally or regionally. Given the broad spread of authority across multiple local systems in California, it was not realistic for a state team to have a statewide impact in the same way that a local team could have local impact.

This context created many challenges in identifying the state team's role, scope and activities, and ensuring that the state team was supportive of and complimentary to the Collaborative methodology and the work of the county teams (rather than playing an oversight role). In response to these challenges, the Collaborative brought together a state team that consisted of state agency leaders and managers, along with many individuals overseeing statewide initiatives and system improvement forums. Three strong co-chairs were identified for the team, one to represent each of the key focus areas of the ILP Collaborative (permanency, education and employment). Through their persistence and creativity, and with the support of the Project Director, this team engaged important state system improvement partners in thinking differently about ILP practices and programs and deepened their understanding of how they could coordinate their efforts to strengthen youth voice and leadership in their organizations and initiatives.

Taking It Slow While Moving Fast

The Details vs. The Big Picture

The BSC methodology is known for rapid action and improvement, yet attention to detail is critically important as well. There was a great deal of big picture and detail work that needed to occur simultaneously to facilitate learning and momentum during the Collaborative. As described above, consultation with sites was hands-on and proactive. At the same, there was Collaborative leadership and administrative work that included identifying measures of success, creating the Extranet site to track progress, recruiting the faculty to support training and technical assistance, securing locations and facilities for Learning Sessions, and developing agendas, pre-work packages, training materials, curricula, guides and tools. The sequencing and coordination of these many activities and details were important aspects of the leadership and guidance that were needed to ensure the Collaborative achieved its goals.

While the Project Director and staff developed the big picture and helped teams prepare for their participation, the first Learning Session needed to be planned. This Learning Session would introduce teams to each other, the faculty, the BSC methodology, and several key concepts of focus for the Collaborative. The small but critical details of conference planning had to be attended to simultaneously with the planning of session content, objectives and flow. Site selection, menus, travel logistics, supplies, stipend checks, and print materials were arranged while staff also strategized about the best way to introduce the BSC methodology and key concepts (such as permanency, education and employment) to 130 participants with diverse backgrounds and learning styles.

There was much to teach, learn and discover in two short days. Challenges encountered during each of the Learning Sessions were resolved by applying the core principles of the BSC methodology to the planning and execution of the Collaborative – agendas were adapted on the fly, later Learning Session agendas were shaped based on participant feedback on earlier ones, ideas that didn't work were discarded, and those that did were enhanced. Staff had to think three steps ahead of faculty trainers and teams to ensure they would be ready for the next round of work as it arose.

Rapid Response vs. Deliberate Attention

For most team members, participating in this type of Collaborative was a brand new experience and many participants were uncomfortable with the confusion they felt as they encountered a new way of working. Staff responded to participant requests as quickly as possible in all situations – instant response was the goal – to model the BSC methodology and contrast it with the slow moving bureaucratic style to which most participants were accustomed. At the same time, the Project Director and staff also carefully balanced this rapid response with deliberate attention that they gave each participant.

This fast-meets-slow dynamic was reinforced at the conclusion of each Learning Session, when there was immediate planning for the next Learning Session, which was approximately six months away. Staff did a detailed review of the evaluations, had an intensive debrief with the faculty and leadership team, and reviewed teams' Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles and assessed what would help their work progress to the next level. The combination of all of this information led to the design, focus and content for the next Learning Session. The Project Director and staff strategized with faculty trainers to craft agendas that allowed for a deeper understanding and exploration of youth leadership and youth-adult partnership, the six characteristics of ILP transformation, and integration of permanency, education and employment work. The planning for Learning Sessions was a slow, deliberate and consensus-building process while

execution of the Learning Sessions occurred at lightning speed. The cornerstone experiences of Learning Sessions were:

LEARNING SESSION 1 (JANUARY 7/8, 2009): Introduced and trained teams on the Initial Collaborative Framework for Change and oriented them to the methodology that would enable them to implement that framework; learned about successful strategies to engage youth and caregivers as partners; and learned ways to improve outcomes for youth in foster care related to permanency, education and employment.

LEARNING SESSION 2 (JUNE 16/17, 2009): Focused on learning ways to provide transition services that are integrated into day-to-day case management, school and other community-based activities, that are ongoing and part of the daily lives of all foster youth, and where the caregiver has an integral role in helping the foster youth engage in and coordinate their activities and achieve their case plan goals.

LEARNING SESSION 3 (NOVEMBER 17/18, 2009): Deepened experiential training with teams around youth engagement and empowerment; supported Collaborative participants to apply the transformational characteristics to practice and move from compartmentalized classroom-based planning and preparation to a complete integration of resources, skills, capacities and connections.

LEARNING SESSION 4 (MAY 4/5, 2010): Supported teams in developing plans to sustain their transformational efforts and continue their focus on giving all youth in care permanency; developing programs and services that are home, school and community-based; and supporting youth to gain the knowledge, skills and networks they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.

Moving from Vision to Transformative Action

Collaborative Learning and Sequencing

After Learning Session 1, staff developed a monthly newsletter to help capture and spread the work being done by the teams, and to focus in depth on a key issue or principle in the Collaborative. Staff reviewed the teams' work on the Extranet, where teams posted their monthly Plan-Do-Study-Act data along with contact information for staff follow-up. After thoroughly reviewing each team's Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles and progress reports, the staff and faculty were able to carefully plan, prepare and facilitate Collaborative conference calls based on the emergent needs of the county teams.

Each Learning Session and subsequent action period built on prior work and learnings. For example, after Learning Session 1, faculty and staff determined that it was important to create a foundation for youth leadership and facilitation in the next Learning Session. Using a framework that has had great success in the V.O.I.C.E.S. program in Napa County, youth faculty in the Collaborative facilitated an interactive session focused on understanding youth-centered practice, and thus began a journey of youth engagement, youth leadership and youth-adult partnership in the Collaborative.

Supporting Rather Than Directing the Work

During the action period following Learning Session 2, the youth leadership on the faculty and emerging youth leaders on county teams shared their needs, engagement and empowerment strategies, and started to frame the focus of Learning Session 3. During the course of this action period, youth leaders developed a guide for participants called "[What Makes a Good Adult Ally?](#)" This document became a focus of training development within the Collaborative and has been widely shared outside of the

Collaborative. In addition, youth faculty, with the support of California Youth Connection, developed a Self-Advocacy Curriculum that was presented in a pre-session workshop at Learning Session 3, and has also been widely shared both within Collaborative teams and outside the Collaborative. It was important to allow the leadership of youth faculty to emerge with staff support rather than with staff direction. The Project Director, staff and other faculty stepped back from being in-charge or guiding the work and supported the youths' emerging leadership, valuing the tone, direction and expectations they set for the Collaborative and for the participating teams. On self reflection, staff found that the required behaviors for supporting youth taking charge were counter to what was traditional in managing or guiding organizations, projects and teams.

Developing a Roadmap for Transformation

During the action period between Learning Session 2 and Learning Session 3, staff, faculty and leadership were challenged again to take a look at what was meant by ILP Transformation. While a new vision for ILP had been developed, how to transform current practices and systems was not clearly articulated and broken down into components for teams. During this time period, the Project Director facilitated a brainstorming process with faculty and leadership to begin defining and articulating the meaning of ILP transformation. While this was a painstaking, time consuming and at times conflicting process, out of this consensus process came a rich evolution of transformational characteristics:

1. *Individualized Attention*

2. *Integration of Three Critical Practice Areas (permanency, education and employment)*

3. *Real World Connections*

4. *Normalizing Experiences*

5. *Connection to Resources*

6. *Service Provision*

Putting these six key characteristics into action as the path to transforming ILP became the critical work to be done at Learning Session 3 and beyond.

Identifying Permanency as a Foundation

During an All-Collaborative Call focused on permanency, a faculty member and a state team co-chair urgently challenged teams to refocus their efforts related to permanency. While teams shared permanency work in their organizations, most of these efforts were not focused on older youth in care. The Project Director challenged each team to focus on five youth that most needed permanency within the older youth population they were serving – this was later coined the "Five Youth Challenge." During the course of the next several weeks, staff and faculty worked intensively with teams via conference calls and in-person meetings to help them take up the "Five Youth Challenge". Teams were guided to identify five youth that needed immediate attention related to permanency, identify permanency resources within their organizations, and begin to apply their resources and knowledge to set a path that could ultimately lead to permanency for each youth. Interestingly, most of these counties had made significant progress in implementing promising permanency practices for children in care and had improved overall permanency outcomes for children in care, though not for the older youth in care. Older

youth in care have been segregated systematically from permanency work, and the Five Youth Challenge focused a spotlight on this issue and ensured teams began to address and resolve these systemic issues. Emerging from this work was a realization that permanency is foundational for all practice.

Building a Framework for Transformation

The intensive work by youth faculty prior to Learning Session 3 resulted in a powerful youth-led session during Learning Session 3. While challenging in many ways, it was ultimately successful in accelerating participants' understanding of and progress toward true youth-adult partnerships. The Learning Session was developed to ensure that youth were fully engaged in presentations, activities and in their county's "team time" as they gave voice to their perspectives, strengthened their self-advocacy and developed adult allies. Adult partners explored their own beliefs, behaviors and began their own journey of growth towards authentic engagement with and empowerment of youth through youth-adult partnerships. Learning Session content also focused on the Six Key Transformation Characteristics and further work on strategies to Integrate permanency, education and employment. Near the end, the collective realization of the Collaborative staff, faculty and leadership was that while county teams had focused on permanency, education and employment, little integration was actually occurring and that permanency efforts for older youth were either missing completely or were separated from other ILP programs and practices. With permanency efforts reaching few of the youth who were likely to exit care when they turned 18 or shortly thereafter, a targeted focus on permanency emerged as a foundation of the work to be done in the next action period. Interestingly, during the debrief of Learning Session 3, while the adult staff and faculty were feeling particularly successful about the youth engagement aspects of Learning Session 2, youth faculty again challenged staff and other faculty to go further with youth empowerment, youth leadership and youth-adult partnership. This type of leadership emerging from youth faculty was a significant force in the Collaborative's success and the development of a conceptual model for ILP Transformation.

Documenting Progress and Pointing the Way

In response to Learning Session 3 and to support the work of each county team in consolidating their new practices and spreading them more broadly within their organizations and systems, the Project Director and staff created interim reports for each team that outlined their approach, progress and direction in moving ILP transformation forward. These documents focused on how each team's work was translating vision into action and how team members could be thoughtful and intentional about ILP transformation as they worked to maintain practice and system changes going forward. These interim reports provided each team with clear information about the strengths of their approach, areas to continue strengthening, and areas to focus their spread and sustainability planning at Learning Session 4.

The Collaborative worked together to share its learnings related to transformation of ILP, along with learning from other communities not participating in the Collaborative, at an ILP Institute that was held during the final day of Learning Session 4 and the following day. The purpose of the ILP Institute was to share the vision of transformation, and highlight the emerging youth leadership, youth-adult partnership, the six key transformation characteristics, and the three fundamental youth outcomes. The Collaborative also was aware of some (but not all) of the pockets of excellence and promising practices related to transformation that are occurring in communities not participating in the Collaborative. Through the ILP Institute, 48 counties (and a total of 450 individuals) across California, joined together for 1.5 days of intense learning and sharing together. All counties came with teams very reflective of the makeup of the Collaborative teams, comprised of youth, caregivers, child welfare staff and community partners.

While it was incredibly challenging to plan both a Learning Session and the ILP Institute at the same time, it was necessary to leverage resources, reducing travel and faculty costs as well as staff time for participating counties. The combined learning venues created an opportunity for the Collaborative teams to begin sharing the transformational framework and promising practices developed by Collaborative teams, and to learn from other counties who are also doing transformative work. The shared learning resulted in all participants developing a new appreciation for permanency as foundational to ILP transformation and to experience the inspiration of emerging youth leadership and youth-adult partnerships. Youth leadership was key in facilitating the shared learning. Activities such as affinity group meetings, open space and paired interviews were just some of the activities used to facilitate this learning.

Learning While Leading and Promoting Shared Learning

The Project Director and staff had no formal training in Breakthrough Series Collaborative methodology. As the Collaborative unfolded over the course of 22 months, the staff received concurrent on-the-job training. While this prepared staff for using the methodology to accelerate practice improvements, it did not provide guidance on how to adapt the methodology to support transformational practice and system changes. From the beginning through the end of the Collaborative, staff were simultaneously learning about the nuances of the methodology and making creative adjustments to the methodology. While staff learned along the way, a key part of the work was leading and facilitating in a shared learning environment.

While it is typical to have monthly All-Collaborative Calls for teams so they can share their work, ask questions and learn from each other, early in this Collaborative an important decision was made to add two new calls to the already-packed schedule of staff and team participants. These included monthly All-Youth Collaborative Calls and All-Caregiver Collaborative Calls, with the respective youth and caregiver faculty members facilitating these calls. The schedule also included alternating monthly calls for Senior Leaders and Day to Day Managers as forums for shared learning.

For the Project Director and staff, these calls became yet another mirror of how leading was an ongoing opportunity for learning. All-Collaborative Calls became a series of Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles for staff, first on logistics – trying to find and use a call system that allowed several hundred people to get on a call swiftly and efficiently – and second on content - how to develop a format and agenda that best met the needs of the teams in a participatory and engaging way. These calls required the Project Director to work behind the scenes with faculty and others to support adaptations to this process to keep shared learning focused on transformation rather than improvement.

Structured activities were used primarily during Learning Sessions as a forum for all Collaborative participants to learn from each other. These activities are focused on youth-adult partnerships, youth leadership and team building, and can be used in trainings, agency and community meetings (such as unit meetings) and other Collaborative forums to promote teamwork and shared learning. Each of the following shared learning activities is outlined in detail on printable cards at the end of this section:

1. *Walk in My Shoes: Unlocking the lock – experience what youth experience*

2. *River Crossing: Team crossing a fast moving river*

3. *Speed Sharing: Quick highlights of lots of practices and innovations*

4. *Connection Café: Café-style conversations lead to creative solutions*

5. _Open Space:_ _Creating open space for learning and exploring with others_

6. _Paired Interviews:_ _"Pairing up" for inquiry and inspiration_

7. _Lightning Rounds!:_ _Rapid-fire sharing of ideas_

8. _Affinity Group Caucus:_ _Sharing with those in similar roles_

9. _Affinity Fish Bowl:_ _"Keeping it real"_

10. _Caregiver Coffee House:_ _Caregiver contributions – sharing poetry and stories_

11. _Dramatic Sharing:_ _Singing, dancing, skits, murals, human sculptures_

12. _Yes, But... Yes, And…:_ _The power of being positive_

Conclusion

From the perspective of the Project Director, the staff and teams participating in this Collaborative had similar experiences. We were all leaders and learners, teachers and facilitators. We were excited by the fast pace and desperately wishing it would slow down. We were inspired by the flexibility yet craving consistency. We struggled to translate vision into action and improvement into transformation. Our tensions played out on many levels, yet we were rewarded by collaborative relationships, shared learning and a clear direction for the future. Our accomplishments include nine county teams who have tested, implemented and are spreading transformational changes locally as well as a new framework and tools that can support others – both in California and nationally – in transforming their ILP programs and practices to improve the lives and outcomes for children and youth in care.

SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY #1:
WALK in MY SHOES

This card describes how to facilitate an activity that promotes shared learning in the youth-adult partnership. This activity is best co-facilitated with current or former foster youth and supports others in understanding the experience of youth in foster care.

SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY NO.1

ACTIVITY	Unlocking the Lock – experiencing what youth experience
OVERVIEW	*In this activity, adults engaged in youth-adult partnerships and experience what it might be like to be a youth in care who is trying to develop plans and access services.*
OBJECTIVE	*This activity is intended to sensitize adult partners to the experience of youth, create opportunities for adults to think about their own behaviors, and then shift behaviors to meet the needs of youth in care.*
USE	*Use this activity as a learning opportunity in a business meeting, unit meeting, training, organizational meeting or community meeting.*
MATERIALS	*Stopwatch to monitor seconds; blindfolds, 1 per triad; combination locks, 1 per triad; flip chart and pens.*
HOW TO	*Facilitators: Two youth leaders to co-facilitate and provide instructions during activity and debrief activity; adults provide support with timing, charting, etc.* *Instructions:* 1. Break group into groups of 3 persons each. 2. Round 1: Person 1 is blindfolded and receives no direction other than the combination for the lock. The same person is then handed the lock and, without any guidance, told to unlock it. The other two individuals just watch; they are not to communicate in anyway. 3. Round 2: Person 2 receives some guidance. Person 2 is blindfolded and provided the lock and combination. Two other persons, one on each side of the blindfolded person, whisper directions into the ear of the blindfolded person. The two people whispering directions are not allowed to talk to each other; they give directions as if they were the only person speaking. 4. Round 3: Person 3 is instructed to take 30 seconds or a minute (staff will time it) to strategize how best to open the lock. Person 3 is blindfolded and provided the lock and combination. Person 3, who will unlock the lock, is a part of the strategizing about how to best open it. The other two persons proceed to give guidance to the blindfolded individual. 5. Participants move into small discussion groups (no more than 10) – hopefully with a youth in each group. Best if the youth facilitates each small group discussion (described below) with adults providing support like charting, whatever the youth needs to facilitate.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	• Youth facilitators will need opportunities to prepare for the activity. They may modify activity to be comfortable facilitating activity. • Adults need to step back from leading or facilitating, providing only support as directed by youth. Debriefing activity is key. Activity takes about 1 hour to complete.
DEBRIEF SHARED LEARNINGS	*In small groups, youth facilitate the following discussion.* *Youth facilitator: Okay, now let's talk about your experience unlocking the lock:* • Think about your specific experience decoding the lock, how did it make you feel? • What was the most challenging part of decoding the lock? • How did it feel being the sideline person? • What method worked the best? • How can we apply that method with our everyday practice? *Following the small group discussion, all groups offer their discussion ideas in a popcorn-like process. Adults chart the larger group discussion, while youth facilitate.* *Youth facilitator: So, lets talk about how we move forward and apply what we've learned to our everyday practice:* • What actions can lead us to empower youth? What actions can we take that lead to youth-adult partnership? • What can I do as a youth to ensure that I am a vital team member? • What does an empowered youth look like on our county team? What actions are being taken to aid us in becoming empowered? • How can we all help youth make that transition from being empowered in one situation to another? • What tools can youth bring from one situation to another in order to succeed? • What do we need to do as a team and as individuals to ensure that youth voice and leadership is a vital part of individual youth's teams and larger system teams?
CONTACT	*info@co-invest.org (Please put "ILP Transformation" in the subject line).*

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SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY #2: RIVER CROSSING

This card describes how to facilitate an activity that promotes shared learning, team building and collaboration. This activity can be facilitated by anyone, although best done in a youth-adult co-facilitation pair, and used in a business meeting, unit meeting, training or community meeting.

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SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY NO.2

ACTIVITY	Team crossing a fast moving river
OVERVIEW	*In this activity, individual youth teams and system-level practice improvement teams develop team culture, ways of being together, openness to new ideas, and coming together in collaboration and partnership. This activity can be used to "jump start" team building, bring new life to an existing team, and promote hope to "be all you can be."*
OBJECTIVE	*The activity facilitates team building, helps teams learn more about how they function as a team, gives individuals an opportunity to have fun with their team and with others in the Collaborative, and simulates the learning process of the BSC methodology.*
USE	*Use with teams involved in a collaborative.*
MATERIALS	• Large (22"x22") bandanas in multiple colors – one for each participant • Two (2) 40' lengths of ribbon to measure the river crossing • Two (2) 14' lengths of ribbon to measure the width of the safe area • Masking tape • Stopwatch • Magic markers • Plain easel paper • One-page sheet with instructions (below) for each team

HOW TO	*Activity Set Up:* Measure and mark off an area 40'x14' with the ribbons
	1. Each team is given one bandana for each person (generally 8 bandanas for 8 team members).
	2. Teams are given the following instructions:
	  a. Your team needs to cross a swiftly flowing river that is 40' across. The only safe place to cross is a section that is 14' wide. Beyond that, on either side, the river flows too swiftly to cross.
	  b. You must use the bandanas as your means of floating across the river using the following rules:
	    • No bandana may have more than two feet on it at any one time or it will sink.
	    • No bandana may have less than one foot on it at any one time or it will float away.
	    • Each member of the team must be in contact with at least one other member of the team at all times.

HOW TO CONTINUED	3. When a team signals that it is ready to begin, the data collector will observe their crossing as follows:
	   a. Time starts when the first bandana touches the river inside the crossing area.
	   b. Teams will be observed throughout the crossing for RISK and SAFETY violations. The following ASSESSMENTS of RISKS and SAFETY will be tracked:
	     A. Risk Assessment
	       • A bandana on the river that has more than two feet on it (risk of the bandana sinking
	       • A bandana on the river that has no feet on it (risk of the bandana floating away
	     B. Safety Assessment
	       • A team member is not in contact with at least one other team member
	       • A foot touches the river (not on a bandana)
	       • A team member goes outside the 14' wide boundaries of the crossing space
	   c. Time ends when all team members have crossed the finish line to the opposite bank.
	4. Teams will track and record the following measures:
	   a. Length of time to cross the river
	   b. Number of Risks
	   c. Number of Safety Concerns
	5. The goals for each team are:
	   a. Cross the river in less than 60 seconds; then 40 seconds; then 20 seconds
	   b. Zero Risks
	   c. Zero Safety Concerns

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	*Space must accommodate the size of each team for the "River Crossing" as well as space for teams to meet together and practice their river-crossing techniques or tests.*
DEBRIEF SHARED LEARNINGS	*Allow enough time for teams to volunteer "popcorn style" around the room when all participants get back together. Focus on shared learnings from the experience.*
CONTACT	*info@co-invest.org (Please include "ILP Transformation" in the subject line).*

SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY #3: SPEED SHARING

This card describes how to quickly share best practices, good ideas and innovations of teams. It promotes shared learning in the youth-adult partnership and can lead to improved outcomes for youth in permanency, education and employment. Presentations are best co-led by team members familiar with the ground-level implementation, including youth and caregivers.

ACTIVITY	Quick highlights of lots of practices & innovations
OVERVIEW	*In this activity, participants share team innovation, practices, approaches, opportunities, improvements, tools and resources in small conversations following short presentations about ground level implementation and provide opportunities to rapidly spread innovation to other communities.*
OBJECTIVE	*This activity is intended to create the opportunity for participants to share learnings about practice quickly, taking these shared learnings back to their own teams to spread.*
USE	*Use this activity as a learning opportunity in a business meeting, unit meeting, training, organizational meeting or community meeting.*
MATERIALS	*Stopwatch to monitor time; bell or noise maker; small tables with about 8-10 chairs set in stations around the outer edges of the room; list of presentations numbered to match the stations around the room; participant note-sheet for presentations*
HOW TO	*Facilitators: Two facilitators to co-facilitate and provide instructions during activity and debrief activity.* • Activity will have multiple (7-12) presentations from different groups or teams running concurrently (at the same time) in a large meeting room. There will be 3 rounds of 20 minutes each with the same presentations. Team members will have the opportunity to hear 3 presentations that they take back to their teams and share afterwards. Teams are encouraged to split team members up so that all presentations are covered. • Presentations may be clinical innovation; community-wide; ways of engaging partners; organization/administrative changes; tools to enhance practice; etc. • Presenters have no more than 10 minutes to share with those who are at their presentation site, then 7-8 minutes to answer questions and have a conversation with participants. When the chimes ring, everyone moves on to another session and presenters have a new group at their site. Presenters will repeat the same session 3 times. Presentation materials are not necessary, unless presenters have developed a tool, pocket guide or some product that is part of the presentation or practice sharing. If there are materials, presenters will need enough copies for all potential participants. • Participants are encouraged to write down ideas generated during presentations to take back and share with their teams for potential implementation or replication.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	• Presenters should be the people most familiar with implementation; thus, they will not need extensive preparation for their presentation. • Activity takes approximately 1.5 hours to complete. • Debriefing is as important as the presentations themselves.
DEBRIEF SHARED LEARNINGS	*Participants return to their team and share what they have learned:* • How can we apply these ideas in our community? • How does this practice engage the youth-adult partnership? • How is this practice transformational? • How does this practice move towards achieving permanency, educational and employment goals with youth? • What do we need to do as a team and as individuals to ensure that youth voice and leadership is part of implementation?
CONTACT	*info@co-invest.org (Please include "ILP Transformation" in the subject line).*

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SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY #4: CONNECTION CAFÉ

This card describes the World Café process, a global movement being used by corporations, organizations and communities for project development and planning, strategic planning and organizational development. World Café conversations lead to creativity, innovation, and transformation. In the Collaborative, "Connection Café" conversations were used to focus on the youth-adult partnership, inspiring partners to join in the work together to improve outcomes with youth in the areas of permanency, education and employment.

ACTIVITY	Café-style conversations lead to creative solutions
OVERVIEW	*Through the Connection Café, participants engage in open and creative conversations about youth-adult partnerships, sharing "good ideas," what it "looks like" when the ideas are implemented well, and "how to get there." This is a small group and active conversation designed to create hope, opportunity and thoughtful action for the future.*
OBJECTIVE	*This activity is intended to explore youth-adult partnerships through participant conversations, ideas and perspectives. By creating space to open up to possibilities, participants begin to see how they can contribute to opportunities for improvement.*
USE	*Use this activity as a shared learning opportunity in a business meeting, unit meeting, training, organizational meeting or community meeting.*
MATERIALS	*Activity Set Up: Small round tables with chairs for 5-6 people around each table; tables have butcher paper to write, draw, doodle; coffee, tea, goodies are near tables; café music to create coffee shop ambience where friends come together to "share good will and opportunity" with each other. Set the stage with Café posters around the room encouraging creativity and describing with the principles of World Café.* • Stopwatch to monitor time; bell, chime or noise maker • Tape to post creative work from tables around the room. • Camera to take pictures of wall postings and charts of the larger group conversations at end of process (for later transcription purposes).
HOW TO	*Facilitators: Two facilitators are needed to co-facilitate and provide instructions during activity. Facilitators will determine focus of the World Café discussion and develop 3 questions to facilitate the conversation (refer to the Art of Powerful Questions). For example, when youth-adult partnership was the focus the questions were: Round 1 Question—In our work together with youth, why is it so important for you to build and nurture a relationship with caregivers? Round 2 Question—When this is done well, what might it look like to youth and caregivers? Round 3 Question—How do we get there?*

HOW TO CONTINUED	*Process: (Refer to Café Connection Guide)* 1. This is a relaxed, somewhat informal conversation among Café visitors. The Café has 3 questions for conversation with 3 rounds of 20 minutes each, one question per round. Participants move to new tables for each round. 2. At the completion of the rounds, have staff post creative work from tables to walls around the room; take photos of the art work sequentially around the room; have someone transcribe the work depicted from the tables and any debriefing notes. Communicate messages and creative work back to participants following activity, as organized by facilitators.
THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	• Activity requires a larger group, 30-150 participants. • Facilitators provide instructions and keep things moving; they do very little presentation and do not participate in conversations. • Activity requires a festive café setting – flowers, coffee and snacks, and music are needed. • Activity takes approximately 1.5 hours to complete. • Debriefing supports participants in circling back to important ideas and perspectives. • More ideas and resources can be found at *World Café*.
DEBRIEF SHARED LEARNINGS	*After participants return to their original table, facilitators debrief with a large group reflection process around the room, inviting comments and reflections about content and process: What did you experience or learn that you can share? Staff chart the reflections on a flip chart.*
CONTACT	*info@co-invest.org (Please include "ILP Transformation" in the subject line).*

SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY #5: OPEN SPACE

This card describes the process of "Open Space" that the Collaborative used to encourage passionate, open and complex ideas and solutions to surface among participants. "Open Space is a simple process to explore everyday practice and extraordinary change."

ACTIVITY	Creating open space for learning & exploring with others
OVERVIEW	*In this activity, participants partner with others to explore ideas, best practices, innovation, opportunities, and plan for the future.*
OBJECTIVE	*This activity is intended to facilitate active, interactive, and impassioned conversations among participants to move the transformation of ILP forward so that youth can have love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime; take charge of their lives and futures; and get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*
USE	*Use this activity as a shared learning opportunity in a business meeting, unit meeting, training, organizational meeting or community meeting; can be used in groups of 10-200 or more.*
MATERIALS	• Tables or stations around the room. • Flip charts and pens
HOW TO	*Facilitator:* One facilitator guides conversations and process. *Open Space Process:* 1. Facilitator states the objective, focus or purpose of gathering and then asks participants to brainstorm their ideas for potential conversations. Those providing ideas agree to be part of the conversation for at least a portion of the time allotted. 2. Facilitator lists all ideas from brainstorming, then "stations" each idea at tables or locations around the room. 3. Participants begin conversations by going to the conversation or conversations they want to participate in; participants can move freely from one conversation to another. 4. Ideas are documented in creative ways (through writing, poetry, art, etc. on flip charts, or in dramatic presentation) at the conversation station.
THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	*Activity can be done in any setting.*
DEBRIEF SHARED LEARNINGS	*At the conclusion, facilitators ask participants to share learnings and reflections around the room. Chart shared learnings in the larger group on flip charts.*
CONTACT	*info@co-invest.org (Please include "ILP Transformation" in the subject line).*

SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY #6: PAIRED INTERVIEWS

This card describes the activity that the Collaborative called "Paired Interviews," a structured interview process used by participants to explore best practices, innovations and improvements that lead to improved outcomes for youth in care.

ACTIVITY	"Pairing up" for inquiry & inspiration
OVERVIEW	*In this activity, participants practice engagement skills through structured questions, exploring the good work of practitioners, caregivers and youth in youth-adult partnerships. Participants trade off roles as interviewers.*
OBJECTIVE	*This activity is intended to provide information and inspiration about ILP transformation and other transformative innovations through a paired interview process.*
USE	*Use this activity as a shared learning opportunity in a business meeting, unit meeting, training, organizational meeting or community meeting.*
MATERIALS	• Set of 6 questions, each numbered and on different colored paper – have a set of the 6 questions on the table. If more than 6 participants at each table, add a different question for each additional person at the table (on a different colored paper). • Flip charts and pens
HOW TO	*Facilitator: Three facilitators: one provides instructions and guides activity; the other two provide support during activity; all develop questions and logistics of process* *Paired Interview Process:* 1. Each participant picks a question/color and then partners with another person who has a different question/colored sheet of paper – someone they do not know well - to interview. 2. Round 1: One partner interviews the other for 5 minutes and then each pair switches roles and the other partner asks their question for 5 minutes. 3. Round 2: Participants shift to new partners to interview (always someone with a different colored paper than their own), ask their interview question for 5 minutes, and then shift roles for 5 minutes. 4. Round 3: Participants shift again to new partners, ask their interview questions for 5 minutes, and then shift roles for 5 minutes. 5. Facilitators then group people together in clusters based on their color/question number: "All participants with question 1/blue paper gather in the far corner…All participants with question 2/pink paper gather in the front…"etc.' 6. Clusters share the interview responses and themes related to their question, charting them.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	*Activity can be done in most settings.*
DEBRIEF SHARED LEARNINGS	*Facilitators bring participants back together in the large group to share reflections and learning around the room. Listen and begin to call out themes heard and chart them on the large group flip chart.*
CONTACT	*info@co-invest.org (Please include "ILP Transformation" in the subject line).*

SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY #7: LIGHTNING ROUNDS!

This card describes the activity that the Collaborative called "lightning rounds," which were used to brainstorm all possible ideas from participants about a particular area of focus.

ACTIVITY	Rapid-fire sharing of ideas
OVERVIEW	*In this activity, participants explore opportunities, state their ideas, visualize possibilities, and gather information from others. Participants learn about each other's work, role, resources and partnerships. This activity is very effective in exploring behavior shifts, transformation activities, and setting the stage for action planning.*
OBJECTIVE	*This activity is intended to open up ideas, possibilities, opportunities and hope in participants.*
USE	*Use this activity as a shared learning opportunity in a business meeting, unit meeting, training, organizational meeting or community meeting.*
MATERIALS	*Activity Set Up:* Participants are seated with their teams in table rounds of 8-10. Each table has: • Flip chart, post-it notes and pens • Questions to be answered or a scenario to work with
HOW TO	*Facilitator:* One facilitator to develop questions, provide instructions and guide the activity. *Lightning Round Process:* 1. As fast as you can in the next 10 minutes come up with ideas for PDSAs related to permanency, education and employment. As you are thinking of these ideas, write them on sticky notes (post-its) and post to the flip chart near your table. 2. Shout out your idea as you post it. 3. Now spend 5 minutes and pick 2 ideas your team will share with the larger group. 4. Facilitator spends 10-15 minutes going around the room asking teams to share their ideas.
THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	• Activity can be done in most settings • Facilitators provide instructions, questions and guide activity. • Reporting back to the larger group supports learning from each other.
DEBRIEF SHARED LEARNINGS	*At the conclusion of the Lightning Rounds, each team shares at least two of their ideas to the larger group. Ideally teams begin developing plans of action for testing their ideas from this process. The facilitator charts the ideas of the large group.*
CONTACT	*info@co-invest.org (Please include "ILP Transformation" in the subject line).*

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SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY #8: AFFINITY GROUP CAUCUS

This card describes the affinity group sessions and conference calls that the Collaborative supported to facilitate shared learnings among folks with similar roles.

ACTIVITY	Sharing with those in similar roles
OVERVIEW	*During in-person Learning Sessions, the Collaborative set aside time for youth, caregivers, caseworkers and supervisors (child welfare and probation, including agency-based ILP workers and coordinators), child welfare leaders, and community partners (including education, employment and mental health) to have conversations among themselves to intensify shared learning, leadership and partnership.*
OBJECTIVE	*This activity is intended to support and strengthen partnership among participants with similar roles through shared leadership, self-advocacy and skill development.*
USE	*Use this activity as a shared learning opportunity in a business meeting, unit meeting, training, organizational meeting or community meeting.*
MATERIALS	*Activity Set Up: Arrange for break-out rooms or private meeting space for each affinity group. Each room or private space will need:* • Enough table seating (table rounds of 8 work well) to accommodate all in the affinity group; • Flip charts, pens and post-it notes; • 3-4 questions prepared by the affinity groups' facilitators to focus their session
HOW TO	*Facilitators: Each affinity group needs 1-2 people from within the group to serve as facilitators. For example, the caregiver group had two caregivers who acted as facilitators for their session. Facilitators share facilitation and charting roles during the session.* *Affinity Group Process:* 1. Each session has a theme or focus with 3-4 prepared questions. For example (caregiver affinity group): What are some ways you use to teach life skills at home and how do you develop permanency with youth in your care? How do you integrate these in planning with youth? How do you share these with your team and others? For example (caregiver all-collaborative call): How would you want social workers to interact with you and youth placed in your home? When you think about planning with youth placed in your home, what comes to mind for youth ages 11-15? Youth ages 15-18? Youth older than 18? 2. Participants attend their respective affinity group; they do not visit each other's groups. 3. Each affinity group determines what will be shared in larger reporting out following the meeting. Often a creative reporting process is developed during the affinity group time that is fun and team building in nature. 4. Sessions are about 45 minutes to an hour in length.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	• Activity can be done in most settings and by conference call. • Facilitators provide instructions and create the environment of safety for the conversations. • Participants respect the separate time for each group to meet. • Reporting back to the larger group supports learning from each other.
DEBRIEF SHARED LEARNINGS	*At the conclusion of the affinity group sessions, participants return to the larger learning community to report or share information with each other. Affinity groups determine what and who will share their information to the larger group.*
CONTACT	*info@co-invest.org (Please include "ILP Transformation" in the subject line).*

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SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY #9: AFFINITY FISH BOWL

Reporting-out processes from group work can be challenging and dry. This card describes an activity that youth facilitated called the "Affinity Fish Bowl."

ACTIVITY	"Keeping it real"
OVERVIEW	*In this activity, youth facilitate the reporting-out process and practice leadership skills, while asking key questions of affinity groups in the "fish bowl."*
OBJECTIVE	*This activity empowers youth to ask adults to share key learnings, enabling youth to get information they need as take charge of their lives and futures.*
USE	*Use this activity as a shared learning opportunity in a business meeting, unit meeting, training, organizational meeting or community meeting.*
MATERIALS	*Activity Set Up: Place chairs in circle in center of room, facing each other. (For large groups consider having the group stand together in a circle or cluster facing each other.) Each affinity group comes to the center when it is time to share.*
HOW TO	*Facilitators: Youth facilitators ask questions.* *Fish Bowl Process:* 1. Each affinity group comes to the "fish bowl" in the middle of the room. The facilitators ask the group questions related to the affinity group discussion. The affinity group shares 3-4 ideas from its discussion. 2. Youth facilitators open and close the fish bowl, highlighting themes and learnings shared across affinity groups and offering any ideas or implications for youth-adult partnerships that have emerged as a result of the affinity group work.
THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	*Activity can be done in any setting.*
DEBRIEF SHARED LEARNINGS	*At the conclusion, youth facilitators ask all participants to share learnings and reflections around the room.*
CONTACT	*info@co-invest.org (Please include "ILP Transformation" in the subject line).*

SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY #10: CAREGIVER COFFEE HOUSE

This card describes the "Caregiver Coffee House" that the Collaborative used to share caregiver experiences with other partners in a supportive environment. Participants create opportunities to share learnings with each other for the purpose of strengthening caregiver inclusion.

ACTIVITY	Caregiver contributions – sharing poetry & stories
OVERVIEW	*Through the "Caregiver Coffee House," participants observe caregivers sharing their contributions and gifts with each other in a Fish Bowl setting. A facilitator asks the caregivers questions to prompt the conversation.*
OBJECTIVE	*This activity is intended to support caregivers to share their experiences, contributions and partnerships with each other, while participants observe the conversation. By creating space to hear others' experiences, participants can sit quietly in reflection, examining their own beliefs, behaviors and possibilities.*
USE	*Use this activity as a shared learning opportunity in a business meeting, unit meeting, training, organizational meeting or community meeting.*
MATERIALS	*Activity Set Up: Small round table(s), such as a stand-up bar table, placed in the middle of a large meeting room. This is the "fish bowl" observed by participants, who are seated across the room at meeting tables, or whatever the room configuration is. A microphone is at the small table. A flip chart is available for later debriefing.* • Caregivers in the Coffee House may have a poem or story they want to read to start off the conversation. • The facilitator of the caregiver conversation has 3-4 questions prepared to ask the caregivers.
HOW TO	*Facilitator: One facilitator asks questions to guide the conversation with 2-3 caregivers in the fish bowl. The facilitator prepares the caregivers prior to the activity and develops rapport, trust and comfort. Examples of questions include:* • What do you wish others knew about caregivers? • How do you think professionals perceive caregivers in general? • What do caregivers want to understand about the child welfare system? • What are the resources that caregivers bring? What do you want folks to take away today? *Caregiver Coffee House Process:* 1. Facilitator asks a question and caregivers have an open conversation related to the question. 2. Facilitator listens and supports the conversation. 3. Facilitator then moves on to subsequent questions. Do this for about 20 minutes.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	• Activity can be done in most settings. • Facilitators provide instructions and create the environment of safety for the conversation and debrief with the larger group. • Activity takes approximately 30-40 minutes to complete. • Debriefing supports participants in circling back to important ideas and perspectives.
DEBRIEF SHARED LEARNINGS	*At the conclusion of the caregiver conversation, the facilitator debriefs with all participants in the large group, inviting comments and reflections about the content and process: What did you experience or learn that you can share? Chart sharing on a flip chart. Look for common themes and summarize in a wrap up.*
CONTACT	*info@co-invest.org (Please include "ILP Transformation" in the subject line).*

SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY #11: DRAMATIC SHARING

This card describes Dramatic Sharing as an alternative way of reporting shared learnings to the large group.

ACTIVITY	Singing, dancing, skits, murals, human sculptures
OVERVIEW	*In this activity, groups or teams are asked to share transformational learnings through dramatic sharing, such as human sculptures, skit, song, dance, mural or other art.*
OBJECTIVE	*This activity is intended to encourage creative and transformational ways to share learnings that support youth in getting what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.*
USE	*Use this activity in a business meeting, unit meeting, training, organizational meeting or community meeting.*
MATERIALS	*Activity Set Up:* *Large open area in middle or front of meeting room for groups to share.*
HOW TO	*Facilitator:* *One facilitator to guide the process and ask further questions.* *Dramatic Sharing Process:* 1. Each group is asked to report out transformational learnings through dramatic sharing. All team members contribute to the dramatic depiction. 2. Dramatic depictions are developed during team times; each group is allowed to have two members present.
THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	*Activity can be done in any setting*
DEBRIEF SHARED LEARNINGS	*At the conclusion facilitators ask participants to share reflections around the room.*
CONTACT	*info@co-invest.org* *(Please include "ILP Transformation" in the subject line).*

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SHARED LEARNING ACTIVITY #12: YES, BUT... YES, AND

Experiencing the power of being positive reinforces the commitment of youth-adult partners to "be all you can be."

ACTIVITY	The power of being positive
OVERVIEW	*In this youth-facilitated activity, participants explore the skill of positive communication in supporting youth to "take charge of their lives and futures" to "get what they need to live, love learn, work and thrive."*
OBJECTIVE	*This activity is designed to help youth-adult partners experience the power of being positive and discover how actions and beliefs can influence youths' futures.*
USE	*Use this activity in a business meeting, unit meeting, training, organizational meeting or community meeting.*
MATERIALS	*None*
HOW TO	*Facilitators:* Two youth facilitators who model the conversations. *Process:* 1. Facilitators model a "yes, but" attitude. One says "I want to…[go to the movies tonight, etc] and the other facilitator says "yes, but… it costs too much." They continue going back and forth putting out ideas with the other one saying "yes, but" and why it can't work. 2. Round 1: Facilitators instruct participants to pair up to do a similar process with "yes, but…" for 5 minutes. Each member of the pair switches off, putting out ideas to each other, with the other responding "yes, but…" 3. Facilitators then model a "yes, and" attitude. One says "I want to…[go to the movies tonight, etc.] and the other says "yes, and I can drive…" They continue to go back and forth about "yes and…" 4. Round 2: Facilitators instruct participants to pair up to do a similar process with "yes, and…" for 5 minutes. Each member of the pair switch off, putting out ideas to each other, and responding with "yes, and…" 5. Reflections: Facilitators ask questions like: • What was it like to hear "yes, but…" to each of your ideas? • What was it like to hear "yes, and…" to each of your ideas"? • What was the result when you heard "yes, but…" to each idea? • What was the result when you heard "yes, and…" to each idea? • How will this change your conversations in the youth-adult partnership?
THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	*Activity can be done in any setting*
DEBRIEF SHARED LEARNINGS	*At the conclusion, facilitators ask participants to share learnings around the room.*
CONTACT	info@co-invest.org *(Please include "ILP Transformation" in the subject line).*

360°

PART FOUR

PART FOUR OUTLINE & DETAILS

INTRODUCTION TO THE BREAKTHROUGH SERIES
COLLABORATIVE METHODOLOGY

USING THE METHODOLOGY FOR
TRANSFORMATION: LESSONS LEARNED

OUTLINE & DETAILS

4A THE COLLABORATIVE METHODOLOGY

Introduction to the Breakthrough Series Collaborative Methodology

The original Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology was developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and Associates in Process Improvement in 1995. Their goal was to support health care organizations in closing the gap between medical science and health care delivery, dramatically improving patient outcomes while decreasing costs. They believed that by bringing together subject matter experts with clinical experts in a facilitated learning environment guided by quality improvement principles, health care organizations could realize dramatic improvements in fairly short periods of time.[1]

In 2001, Casey Family Programs (CFP), a national operating foundation focused on foster care, identified the methodology as a possible way to address challenges faced by public child welfare systems across the country. CFP contracted with IHI to learn the BSC method, co-locating a staff person at IHI to become fully immersed in their "learning organization" culture, the backbone of the methodology. CFP and IHI collaborated on a BSC in 2001 and CFP launched its first solo effort late that year. Since 2001, over 15 BSCs have been conducted in child welfare settings on a variety of topics.

Because child welfare practice differs fundamentally from medical practice, the BSC methodology was and continues to be adapted so child welfare organizations can achieve their goals, such as closing the gap between what is known about best practices and promising approaches and what is actually practiced in day-to-day work with families, children and communities.

Bridging the gap between what we know and what we do.

This section describes the BSC methodology as it has generally been used for child welfare practice improvement. The following section explains important lessons learned in adapting this methodology to support practice change and system transformation in moving forward the new vision for ILP programs and practices in California.

Key Elements of BSCs

There are five key elements of a Breakthrough Series Collaborative:

1. *Change Package/ Framework for Change*

2. *Model for Improvement*

3. *Collaborative Learning Environment*

4. *Inclusive Multi-Level Teams*

5. *Faculty and Staff Support*

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1 The Breakthrough Series: IHI's Collaborative Model for Achieving Breakthrough Improvement. IHI Innovation Series white paper. Boston: Institute for Healthcare Improvement; 2003. (Available at www.IHI.org)

Each of these elements plays a critical role and works with the other elements in dynamic and inter-related ways.

1. Change Package/Framework for Change

The Change Package/Framework for Change is intended to describe an ideal system and guide the work of the teams throughout the project. For this Collaborative, the Framework for Change or Change Package was written over the course of several months, with input not only from staff, co-chairs and leadership, but also from experts including young adults formerly in care, caregivers and child welfare staff at all levels from front-line workers to high level administrators, as well as education, employment, and permanency partners, researchers and policymakers. These experts came together for a 1.5-day meeting in which they identified the key areas that must receive attention for ILP transformation to occur.

2. Model for Improvement

The Model for Improvement is based on the logic that all improvement requires change, but not all change results in improvement. It emphasizes three key questions that teams are expected to use in testing changes:

All improvement requires change, but not all change results in improvement.

- **What are we trying to accomplish?** This question focuses on the overall goal of the change being tested.
- **How will we know that a change is an improvement?** This question helps ensure that changes are resulting in actual improvements in outcomes.
- **What changes can we make that will result in improvement?** This question provides a structured and systematic, yet rapid, method for testing possible strategies that might result in improved outcomes.

Three strategies are used to help teams implement the Model for Improvement:

- PLAN-DO-STUDY-ACT CYCLES (PDSAS): These cycles are used to test small changes rapidly, identifying an essential practice and working to adapt it to real situations.

  What can you do by next Tuesday?

  The PDSA method provides a structure for quickly planning changes, testing changes, studying the impacts of those changes, and then acting – or adjusting practices – based on what was learned. Over multiple cycles, the changes expand toward full practice implementation and are spread throughout a jurisdiction.

- MONTHLY MEASURES: These are used to ensure that as practice changes are tested, adapted and implemented, there are overall improvements in outcomes. Teams collect data monthly on these measures.

  Measurement for change.

- SPREAD AND SUSTAINABILITY: As teams observe and experience success with the small changes they are testing, they intentionally make them larger and more expansive in both

  Spread successes quickly.

  size and scope, moving from a test with one family to a test with five families and so on. Through this systematic growth, the changes are replicated and spread across the initial target area or population, and eventually across the entire jurisdiction.

The ultimate goal of the Model for Improvement is to use the components of the Change Package to answer the three key questions that teams are testing. For example, the change package clarifies for teams the question "What are we trying to accomplish?" The Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles are used by teams to test answers to the question "What changes can we make that will result in improvement?" Monthly Measures help the team determine "How will we know that a change is an improvement?" Spread and Sustainability work then ensures that successful changes become permanent standard practices across the jurisdiction in order to truly accomplish the goals that were initially articulated.

3. Collaborative Learning Environment

A collaborative learning environment is central to the success of the BSC methodology. In fact, one of the primary reasons that changes can be tested, implemented and spread so quickly is the collaboration within and across teams. Several vehicles help create and support this environment:

- LEARNING SESSIONS: Participation in four two-day Learning Sessions provide teams with an opportunity to receive in-person training in improvement methods, address practice issues, meet intensively within and across teams, report on progress and lessons learned, and problem solve with colleagues from other teams. These cross-site relationships and the learning generated at and between the Learning Sessions are part of what helps to sustain this work beyond the final Learning Session. Each Learning Session is more than a standard conference. The teachers and facilitators are varied, including youth, parents, caregivers and others with important perspectives about practices that are helpful and effective. Additionally, the majority of the teaching is done through active experiential exercises, rather than didactic learning.

- ALL-COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE CALLS: Monthly conference calls among all Collaborative participants (team members, faculty and staff) help maintain the momentum of the work between in-person Learning Sessions. Focusing on a variety of topics, All-Collaborative Calls provide an opportunity for teams to share successes and lessons learned from the changes they are testing.

- BI-MONTHLY SENIOR LEADER, DAY TO DAY MANAGER, AND AFFINITY GROUP CALLS: These conference calls are held specifically to meet the identified needs of participants. The focus of the calls is dictated largely by the participants themselves and can range from the challenges and strategies around implementing new practices to office morale to what authentic engagement looks like. The Project Director leads the Senior Leader and Day to Day Manager calls.

EXTRANET: The Extranet is an interactive, password-protected website to which all Collaborative participants have access. This website facilitates communication by permitting participants to share resources, have online discussions, and post their monthly measures and PDSAs. Additionally, the Extranet allows teams to view the progress and improvements being tested across the Collaborative, thereby serving as a vehicle to motivate teams to make progress toward their goals and to help them generate new ideas by learning from other teams' successes and challenges.

4. Inclusive Multi-Level Teams

The BSC method focuses on engaging a cross-section of representatives from the entire organization, from high-level administrators to youth, caregivers and community partners. This ensures that all perspectives being impacted by the changes are being used to inform the changes that are tested and ultimately implemented. This cross-section representation is important in developing changes in beliefs, culture and creating practice shifts and system transformation.

5. Faculty and Staff Support

While each team participating in the Collaborative has a great deal of knowledge, experience and expertise, the Collaborative staff and faculty trainers facilitate the change process by teaching quality improvement and content-related skills, keeping teams focused on their own priorities, maintaining their momentum, and pushing them to accelerate their progress. Faculty trainers are often selected from people participating at the initial Expert Meeting. These experts then participate in an in-person faculty training and team selection process to help orient them to the BSC methodology. The faculty and staff work closely with teams throughout the Collaborative and, through their relationships and intimate knowledge of where each team is, craft agendas for conference calls and Learning Sessions to meet teams' needs.

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The Mechanics: How the BSC Works

Immediately after selection, teams begin their work. Prior to the first in-person Collaborative meeting, teams meet separately, complete standard assignments that orient them to the Framework for Change and to one another, collect baseline data, and establish priorities based on a self-assessment. They also participate on All-Collaborative Calls and an orientation to the Extranet to introduce them to the experience of the shared learning environment. The ultimate goal of this orientation period is to ensure that they are prepared to begin rapidly testing changes as soon as they return from the first Learning Session.

Over the course of approximately the next 18 months, teams attend a total of four in-person Learning Sessions, participate on regular conference calls with other Collaborative participants, share their successes, learnings, tools and data on the Extranet site, and most importantly they test, implement, and spread improvements that are connected to their priorities:

Diagram adapted from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement

Expert Meeting

Finalize Teams

Development of Framework for Change

Select Faculty

PRE-WORK
Pre-Work Completed by Teams

WORK OF THE TEAMS

Learning Session 1

Action Period 1

Learning Session 2

Action Period 2

Learning Session 3

Action Period 3

Learning Session 4

- *Teams use Model for Improvement/PDSAs to test and implement changes*

- *Teams ground changes in Framework for Change & Transformation Characteristics*

- *Testing/Implementation support provided via collaborative learning:*
  – Conference calls
  – Faculty & staff support
  – Extranet

OUTCOMES

SPREADING & SUSTAINING CHANGE

Developmental Nature of BSC Work

Although familiarity with and previous work on the Collaborative "topic" (e.g., ILP) is a pre-requisite for team selection, each Learning Session challenges participants to go deeper. This often results in teams "peeling back the onion" to reveal practice improvements necessary at fundamental levels, such as engaging other systems and partnering with youth in new ways.

In a parallel process, each Learning Session also moves participants along a developmental pathway from thinking small and testing quick improvements all the way through to replicating and sustaining comprehensive and detailed practices they have successfully implemented.

Relationships and Collaboration

Over the course of the Collaborative, participants develop a camaraderie based on their shared experiences and common work. This camaraderie strengthens not only the bonds within teams, further accelerating the team's work, but also across teams, accelerating the progress of the entire Collaborative. Because titles are "checked at the door" in a BSC, participants form these bonds both with colleagues who have like roles as well as with those who are in very different roles.

These bonds hold particular significance in a BSC because teams are not typical agency-based teams. They not only include community partners who reside outside of the agency, but also engage "constituents" (those who have experienced the system first-hand – e.g., youth and caregivers) as equal team members. This often raises a sense of discomfort for many on the team, who are unaccustomed to working in this construct. But as the team gels, learns more about the methodology, and rolls up its sleeves to do the work together, these barriers often dissolve. The united team that emerges is one in which dramatic individual growth as well as team growth has occurred.

Much of this growth and development happens naturally, but the BSC provides many intentional activities and opportunities to facilitate and accelerate this. There are team-building activities that support innovative, creative, out-of-the-box thinking; there are sessions focused on the development of self-advocacy and strategic sharing to build skills for all participants as equal partners; there are constant reminders about the value of those closest to the front lines of the work – namely youth, caregivers, social workers, supervisors, and community partners; and there are opportunities for the "constituent voice" to shine throughout the Collaborative, allowing team members to see each other in different lights.

4B THE COLLABORATIVE METHODOLOGY

Using the Methodology for Transformation:
Lessons Learned

As mentioned in the previous section, the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology was developed and tested as an effective method for implementing evidence-based practices in health care and children's mental health. It has been used to address issues in child welfare since 2001. It has been used on roughly 15 different issues in a variety of child welfare settings; however, it has not previously been used for whole scale "transformation" efforts such as California's Collaborative to Transform ILP. Each time the methodology is applied, much is learned about the effectiveness and challenges of the methodology in unique settings and specific topic areas. This section describes aspects of the BSC methodology that accelerated teams' progress in transforming ILP systems, as well as those that challenged the process of transformation. There were lessons learned in seven areas:

1. *BSC Purpose*

2. *Scope of Topic*

3. *Focus on Framework Key Concepts*

4. *Flexible Nature of the Methodology*

5. *Shared Learning Environment*

6. *Project Staffing*

7. *Use of Data for Improvement*

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1. BSC Purpose

The BSC methodology is designed for practice implementation and improvement. It is intended to help participants bridge the gap between "what is known" (through evidence and best practice) and "what is done" (practice in the field). This theory makes two critical assumptions that were not present in California's Collaborative to Transform ILP: 1) that there is evidence or a single best practice informing what ILP transformation looks like; and 2) that the change process can be viewed as a fairly linear process moving teams from their current practice to implementation of the identified improvements.

California's Collaborative was focused on transformation rather than improvement. Its purpose was to move a new vision for youth in care forward, rather than to implement evidence-based practice. Despite this alternative "purpose" for California's Collaborative, new practices and a path toward system transformation did emerge, largely due to staff, faculty and leadership recognizing the limitations of the methodology to support transformation in the early to middle phases of the Collaborative. They worked intensively thereafter to adapt the methodology, the framework for change, and other aspects of the process to provide teams the guidance and support they needed to pursue transformational work. This worked well and overall the methodology was found to be very helpful in moving systems toward transformation, especially when the methodology is changed and adapted as described in this section.

2. Scope of Topic

The first stage in planning a Breakthrough Series Collaborative is narrowing the scope of the topic. The scope must be narrow enough that small tests of change are effective in creating improvements, but broad enough that many small changes can be combined in larger practices and strategies that result in system-wide improvements. Developers of the BSC methodology in the health care field maintained fairly narrow scopes for most of their BSCs (addressing a single hospital unit such as the Emergency Room or a single health care challenge such as high rates of caesarean section). One of the earliest adaptations of the methodology in child welfare was to broaden the scope of BSC topics to more effectively impact practices, values and outcomes across the child welfare practice continuum. An improvement methodology was needed that could spread improvements across organizational units or practice areas such as emergency response, family presentation, family reunification and permanency planning.

While previous child welfare collaboratives had expanded the normal scope of a BSC, California's Collaborative to Transform ILP expanded the scope even further by focusing on both practice improvement and system transformation. The impacts and lessons learned in expanding the scope to include system transformation are described below.

Team Size and Composition

Services for youth in ILP currently operate beyond the child welfare system and include caregivers, probation, education, employment, housing and other community partners working to meet the needs of youth. Addressing systemic issues involving this many systems requires a BSC team that is larger than the six to eight person teams used in many other child welfare BSCs. As a result, California's Collaborative required ten person teams, yet even this sized team was unable to allow for more than one or two people from each discipline or perspective (youth, caregiver, child welfare, Independent Living Program, education, employment, community partners).

Although the diversity of the teams offered many critical perspectives, the size and composition of the team meant that each individual from each perspective carried a significant burden for the changes that needed to be tested and implemented in their own area. While teams were encouraged to draw upon a larger "extended team" for additional support, the core team carried most of the weight. The diverse team composition allowed for great insight and promoted practice innovations across roles and youth-serving organizations. It also brought challenges at the implementation and spread levels because participation was sometimes too diffuse across organizations and functions and the teams could not include enough high-level leadership to support broad systemic change while simultaneously including enough on-the-ground staff and partners essential for testing new practices.

Role of Agency Leaders

An important lesson learned is to get clearer and be more intentional from the start of the BSC about each person's role on the team and how each will take ideas, progress and challenges back to their organization to garner greater involvement, leadership and support by that partner system. At the same time, it's also important not to expect each individual on the team to be alone in this responsibility to carry information and inspiration back to their organization. An expanded Senior Leader role is recommended – one that includes an expectation that Senior Leaders meet regularly with leaders from other local partner systems (individually and/or in ongoing meetings or existing collaboratives) to share the BSC work and facilitate coordination of cross-system leadership and resources. This will provide the needed leadership and support for team members from partner systems and provide opportunities to develop the systemic supports needed for practice and system changes emerging from BSC work.

Other aspects of an expanded Senior Leader role include actively partnering with and meeting with the team's Day to Day Manager (team leader) to facilitate partnerships with other organizations and strengthen the cross-system integration work that is so essential to transformation. Best practices need to be embedded in the practice continuum across systems so that there is coordination at both the practice level and the system level (e.g., infrastructure and resources). Without this support, teams experience significant challenges in their efforts to implement and spread practice improvements across agencies and with partners in their community.

One example of the type of cross-system leadership needed on an ongoing basis during a BSC relates to family finding and permanency work. Family finding resources and expertise may exist in the child welfare agency while the ILP provider may be the one who is actively working with the youth on permanency needs. In this situation, it is important for Senior Leaders and their system partners to work together to create system connectors to ensure that the resources and efforts of both agencies are coordinated and leveraged to effectively serve the youth. Suggested areas of coordination to be worked out through teamwork between the Senior Leader and the Day to Day Manager include:

- *Engagement with partner organizations in the Collaborative at the leadership level regarding multiple aspects of practice change and system transformation.*

- *Ensuring organizational support across systems for individual team members to try new practices and share them both within the organization and across organizations.*

- *Leveraging, sharing and streamlining resources so effective practices can be coordinated and implemented across all involved organizations and systems.*

- *Identifying how to organize resources and supports across systems to gather the data needed for measuring improvements.*

Applicability of PDSAs to Transformation

Small tests of change – the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles (PDSAs) – are central in BSC methodology. PDSAs can be planned and tested by anyone on the team and are usually first tried with one family, one youth or one partner "by next Tuesday." These small tests of change allow teams to identify what they hope to accomplish, test strategies to help them get there, and begin to understand when change is an improvement. In California's Collaborative to Transform ILP, PDSAs were incredibly effective in helping participating teams think small, test ideas and begin to shift their practice with youth. They were most effective in shifting the concrete interactions that occur between adults and youth on a daily basis, such as preparing youth for meetings, providing youth the opportunity to lead their own meetings, and finding ways to make meetings, activities, and classes more inviting to youth. These PDSAs were also invaluable in helping agencies begin to see transformational practices developing, to realize the potential for this transformation, and to recognize that transformation did not have to be completely overwhelming.

PDSAs are designed to promote practice change; they are not particularly applicable in addressing the aspects of transformation that require major systemic shifts, such as contracting and partnership agreements, making significant changes to staffing patterns or workload assignments, leveraging funding and resources, and the cross-system leadership required to support transformation across multiple agencies, organizations, roles and functions locally and statewide. All of these require a different level of work. It is important to build in a mechanism through which systemic shifts can be worked on simultaneously with the PDSA work. The expanded Senior Leader role discussed in "Team Size and Composition" above would be very helpful in addressing this issue.

Target Area Population

The target area for any BSC is necessarily small to ensure that as the practice changes are being tested, the improvement (or lack of improvement) is visible and can be assessed. It is helpful when the target area is a microcosm of the full system so that as practices are deemed successful, they can quickly be spread across the entire system. While "quick spread" is certainly not to be expected in a BSC focusing on transformation, small target populations are still important. However, there is a tendency for sites to create a larger target population when the BSC is focused on transformation or is trying to address practice change in very complex areas with multiple systems and partners. For instance, one medium-to-large county identified their whole ILP population as their target population. This was found to be workable, though, as long as sites were guided to create a much smaller group to focus their practice testing on (an example is the [Five Youth Challenge](#)). Sites can then take those lessons learned and begin to apply them to increasingly larger groups of youth as they work to impact practices to improve outcomes for their target population.

3. Focus on Framework Key Concepts

Every BSC begins with the development of a Change Package or Framework for Change. This framework helps break down the desired practice changes into manageable elements that can be tested by teams. Over the course of a BSC, teams are expected to use these framework elements as touchstones to guide

their changes and improvements and shape their "new" practices. The expanded scope of the ILP BSC resulted in fundamental framework changes as described below.

Evolving the Framework to Support Transformation

California's Collaborative to Transform ILP began with a well-developed [Framework for Change](). Elements of the initial Framework included a core focus on "youth-adult partnerships." Even as other aspects of the Framework evolved, this element remained a core focus throughout the Collaborative. It was clearly connected in a very direct way to strengthening relationships with youth as well as improving outcomes. Youth-adult partnerships required simultaneous work at practice and system levels and thus were transformational in nature. It was learned that a core element such as this, able to strengthen both partnership and outcomes simultaneously, can be an effective cornerstone for a Transformational Framework.

As staff and faculty recognized that many of the concepts in the initial Framework would not result in the magnitude of change needed for transformation, they worked to identify concepts that would guide teams toward transformation in more concrete and powerful ways. This moved teams into a more dynamic and insightful process that helped define the six key characteristics of transformation and the three youth outcomes. When these elements were combined with the concept of youth-adult partnership, [a framework emerged]() that effectively supported the transformational vision and changes being sought by the Collaborative. The clear lesson learned was that in using the BSC methodology for transformational change, the Framework for Change should have no more than five to ten essential elements that simultaneously guide and support both practice and system level changes. Working together, these elements should show how the transformation envisioned translates into action (e.g., 5-7 key characteristics of the transformation sought) and individual-level results (e.g. 2-3 "experiential" outcomes for the child, youth, family or individual).

4. Flexible Nature of the Methodology

The BSC methodology is powerful both in its collaborative nature and its ability to be changed or adapted. Several key areas of adaptation and their results are described below.

Flexibility with Roles

Many BSCs have fairly defined roles for staff, faculty and participants. Although the roles of participants naturally increases over time as the staff and faculty move into more facilitative positions, this BSC was unique in that a specific role – that of the youth leader – was elevated early in the process across the board and remained elevated until the Collaborative concluded.

In reflecting youth leadership as foundational for change and transformation, the staff had to take a step back while youth were invited to step into their leadership roles. As they did so, they naturally brought youth leaders who were on participating teams along with them. While this fundamentally changed the dynamic of Collaborative planning, content delivery and group facilitation, it was both logical and necessary for this particular BSC to take this approach. The design of the BSC methodology not only allowed for this shift, it made it feel seamless and natural in the process.

Strategies and Activities

Learning Sessions are necessarily a mix between the teaching of new content, the application of the quality improvement methodology, and the sharing of team successes and learnings. The BSC process allows for these goals to be accomplished in creative, experiential and active ways that model transformation.

As youth leaders assumed elevated roles in the project, they brought their own learning and teaching styles with them. These styles tended away from large group lectures and toward engaging activities and discussions. While not all participants embraced these approaches, the majority felt it moved them to action and helped bring the work to life in new and meaningful ways – once again emphasizing the role of youth in this work of transformation.

5. Collaborative Staffing

Each BSC has its own unique staffing pattern. While there are specific competencies that are critical to include, the titles and positions change with the BSC. Additionally, many BSCs on child welfare issues have focused on primarily using staff to plan the Learning Sessions and provide support to teams, rather than drawing on the experience and skills of the faculty as well. The evolving nature of BSC leadership required for transformation is described below.

Intensive Staff and Faculty Support and Feedback

The purpose of the shared learning environment created in a BSC is to enable teams to grow and rely on one another for support and feedback. Often this results in BSC staff and faculty pulling back over time so that "team-consultant" relationships do not develop at the expense of "team-team" relationships. Based on the transformational changes being sought in this Collaborative, staff and faculty provided intensive support to move teams toward transformation, including in-person and phone coaching; the development of Interim reports that focused on team progress and transformation; and facilitation of cross-team peer to peer consultation.

The intensive support provided dividends. The phone consultations, written interim site reports and periodic onsite visits enabled most teams to link and integrate their Collaborative work explicitly with contracting plans, broader county improvement plans, and similar initiatives (e.g., California Connected by 25 and Ready to Succeed). This level of engagement and support also helped to avert one team from dropping out of the project completely and resulted in the ability and desire of many teams and their partners to continue transformation work beyond the final Learning Session.

Unique Relationships with Faculty

The selection of faculty for this BSC was quite intentional. The faculty makeup was weighted with more youth leaders than any other roles (five of the 13) along with two caregivers and "experts" in permanency, education, employment and child welfare broadly. Because this Collaborative focused on transformation of ILP in California, the group was entirely California-based and had a clear knowledge and understanding of many of the participating counties along with the political and strategic dynamics that are unique to the state. The existing relationships between many of the faculty and participating counties increased access and strengthened understanding of each county's Collaborative goals, activities and resulting shifts toward transformation.

The large number of youth leaders on the faculty modeled for teams the roles that youth leaders could and should play in system transformation efforts. These youth faculty worked not only with the youth leaders on the participating teams, but also directly with the teams themselves to help them increase their skills, capacity and comfort in engaging youth at all levels, from case planning through system reforms.

6. Shared Learning Environment

The shared learning environment is central to the success of the BSC methodology. In this Collaborative, while the Framework for Change and other aspects of the methodology were adapted to support transformation, the essential structures supporting shared learning proved effective. These structures included:

- Convening the Collaborative in four 2-day learning sessions where teams gather together in an active, engaging and experiential environment to learn together.
- Monthly All-Collaborative Calls with teams, caregivers and youth to provide an opportunity to explore focus topics and share successes and lessons learned.
- Bi-monthly calls with Senior Leaders and Day to Day Managers to share challenges and successes in implementation.
- Use of the Extranet as a tool to share resources, online discussion and other data.

7. *Use of Data for Improvement*

A mantra of all BSCs is used to remind teams of the importance of data: "change for the sake of improvement, not just change for the sake of change." But improvements can only be observed if data are collected to assess progress toward the desired outcomes. Issues related to data are described below.

Definitions and Availability of Data

As part of the initial Framework for Change, a set of measures was defined as critical to assess progress towards transformation. This body of measures included data related to youth participation and engagement, caregiver participation and engagement, permanency, education, and employment. These data elements were identified early in the process and created workload issues to collect. Once the Collaborative framework evolved to better support transformation, the data measures did not adequately reflect the Transformational Framework. In addition, the already problematic workload issues were exacerbated by other state and local economic realities. While it is a great strength that the methodology could be adapted mid-stream to change or re-create the Framework for Change, new data measures and a longer period of time would have been needed for Collaborative teams to adequately reflect on their results. Even if this Collaborative had started with an effective Transformational Framework, a longer Collaborative time period would have been beneficial both to effect transformational changes and measure them.

Need for Youth Feedback

This Collaborative served as a reminder of the critical role of youth in all aspects of planning for their lives and in shaping system transformation. Data collected must help assess how well systems are helping the target population reach desired outcomes. In this Collaborative, data that was relevant to the three foundational youth outcomes would have been helpful: 1) youth

have love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime; (2) youth take charge of planning and decision-making in their lives and futures; and 3) youth get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive. In assessing movement toward system transformation, consumer/client surveys (in this case youth surveys) are recommended for assessing progress toward transformation.

Conclusion

When using the BSC methodology to facilitate transformational change, the Collaborative's vision must be front and center. California's Collaborative to Transform ILP found that a two-step approach helped in this regard – 1) establishing two to three key goals or outcomes that reflect the vision, and 2) identifying handful of characteristics that describe what transformed practice looks like to help operationalize the changes needed to achieve the key outcomes. Transformation requires people to hold on to the core – the vision – in order to create a profound, fundamental shift at both practice and system levels. When there are too many components to the Framework, participants cannot hold on to the core vision of transformation, leaving individuals and teams grasping at small pieces along the fringes. The typical BSC Framework for Change required a significant change in structure so that teams could hone in on the new concepts and the vision of transformation.

While lessons were learned in adapting the BSC methodology for system transformation, teams continued to use core BSC elements, including facilitating practice change through PDSAs and developing associated strategies to support and facilitate various aspects of transformation. The BSC methodology requirements around team composition also allowed for local and statewide partnerships, youth leadership, and shared learning to emerge and strengthen. The design elements of the BSC methodology supported faculty trainers being the experts based on their unique experience. When combined with staff expertise and flexibility, this created a rich shared learning environment that promoted transformational work. Perhaps the most important lesson learned in guiding teams toward fundamental shifts in their systems and practice was the inclusion of the target population (in this case, youth leaders) in defining and creating the Collaborative vision of transformation.

APPENDICES

A P P E N D I X   N U M B E R   1

California Independent Living Program Transformation
BEGINNING COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

California Child Welfare
Co-Investment Partnership

The ILP Breakthrough Series Collaborative Framework highlights a comprehensive set of changes that when packaged together will result in a system that achieves dramatically improved outcomes for the youth being served. In order for participating counties to ensure permanency, education and employment goals are achieved, there are ten key themes that must be addressed and serve as a framework for organizing and guiding the practices that will be tested as part of this BSC. Although these ten themes are presented as separate and distinct, they are intricately related and there is a synergistic effect when working across all of the themes. It is essential for participating teams to consider each theme in this framework independently, as well as to consider the framework as a whole and how each theme strengthens, is connected to, and supports the others.

There is no "one-size-fits-all" or "magic bullet" solution to this complex challenge, thus the framework is intentionally descriptive rather than prescriptive. This framework sets out merely to describe the quality and collaborative approach that is needed to achieve this transformation, while allowing participating teams to implement the approach using strategies that will meet the needs of local foster youth within the county context, partnerships and resources.

The first section, "Youth-Centered & Youth-Adult Partnerships", includes the fundamental shift that "youth voice" brings to the table that our services and interventions focus on youth and be driven by youth. It further highlights that youth have and need from others high expectations and aspirations, that they are allowed the opportunity to develop lifelong relationships, and are engaged as partners in planning, decision-making and leadership.

The second section, "Practice Priorities," includes the three fundamental themes for ILP transformation as identified by the NGA Policy Academy focused on specific practice priorities. Teams will test strategies specific to permanency, education and employment and implement new practices that encourage high goals and aspirations, provide experiential learning, community-based opportunities and an individualized, supported pathway to success.

In section three, "Partnership and Integrated Practice," includes two themes that cross-over all of the other sections and focus on the interplay, integration, and coordination between them. These themes intentionally focus on breaking down the silos that might otherwise exist. Teams will test strategies that focus on engaging and empowering those who are at the center of this work, coordinating planning, leveraging teamwork by child welfare and probation case-managers, caregivers, families, communities, agencies and youth themselves in order to offer a rich array of transition opportunities, experiences and supports to meet the individualized needs of children and youth in care and transitioning foster youth.

The final section, "Spread and Sustainability," includes four themes that will be addressed by each team, the county, and the county leadership throughout this BSC. Each team will identify creative ways to

ensure that local practice improvements developed through the practice changes tested in the first three sections ("Youth-Centered and Youth-Adult Partnerships" "Partnership and Integrated Practice" and "Practice Priorities") are fully implemented, spread throughout the county, and sustained over time.

A.I   YOUTH-CENTERED & YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

I.a   Nurturing self-confidence and affirming youths' identities with focus on youths' individual race, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity

I.b   Addressing physical and emotional health

I.c   Developing lifelong relationships and trust with youth including demonstrated respect and sensitivity (or responsiveness) to race, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity

I.d   Engaging youth to self-identify their goals and/or aspirations, then developing a plan to attain those goals

I.e   Partnering with youth for planning and shared decision-making

I.f   Identifying, recruiting, and supporting youth to play active leadership roles in staff training and system change efforts

B.   PRACTICE PRIORITIES

B.II   PERMANENCY: Developing & Supporting Permanent Connections with Family & Supportive Adults through Active Engagement with Youth

II.a   Continuously exploring a range of options for permanency from reunification through adoption in culturally sensitive and responsive ways

II.b   Finding and supporting culturally sensitive and responsive connections through active engagement of youth, caregivers and extended family or community

II.c   Preparing youth for connection/reconnection to family, supportive adults and life-long permanent connections

II.d   Engaging natural helping networks in order to form lasting connections to community and community supports

II.e   Respecting race, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity in the pursuit, development, and support of permanent connections

II.f   Using the court process to reinforce efforts to accomplish these sub-themes

B.III   EDUCATION: Pursuing & Supporting High-Quality Education, High School Diplomas, & Post-Secondary Education

III.a   Conducting early and ongoing high-quality and holistic assessments of strengths, challenges, needs, current level of achievement, and academic goals and dreams in culturally sensitive and responsive ways

III.b   Promoting school stability and eliminating barriers (e.g. school transfers, transcripts, transportation)

III.c.   Providing quality in-school and out-of school interventions for youth based on self-identified and assessed needs

III.d   Encouraging post-secondary plans, goals, aspirations, and preparedness from an early

age and providing sustained support to achieve educational goals with a focus on youths' individual race, ethnicity, and culture

III.e   Promoting access to, enrollment in, and retention/success in post-secondary education with a focus on youths' individual race, ethnicity, and culture

B.IV EMPLOYMENT: Preparing Youth for & Supporting the Transition to Living Wage Employment & Careers

IV.a   Conducting initial and ongoing assessments of skills, goals, career aspirations, strengths, challenges, needs, and employment goals and dreams in culturally sensitive and responsive ways

IV.b   Preparing and supporting youth in a developmental continuum of career awareness, exploration, and preparation activities within the community with a focus on youths' individual race, ethnicity, and culture

IV.c   Ensuring that youth participate in real world exposures and work experiences in areas of interest for all youth prior to leaving care, starting in the early teens and building a developmental sequence regardless of youths' individual race, ethnicity, and culture

IV.d   Promoting access to, enrollment in, retention/success in post-secondary education, occupational training, career technical education, internships, apprenticeships, and other career pathway education and employment opportunities leading to living wage employment and careers regardless of youths' individual race, ethnicity, and culture

C.   PARTNERSHIP & INTEGRATED PRACTICE

C.V Engaging Supportive Adults & the Community

V.a   Supporting all adults in holding high, accountable expectations with all youth and themselves

V.b   Developing sustainable relationships and trust among partners through continuous demonstrated respect and responsiveness to each others' race, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity

V.c   Supporting caregivers and adults to function as transition mentors and guides.

V.d   Providing opportunities, experiences, and supports for youth to engage in leadership/civic roles and volunteerism in the community

V.e   Supporting older youth in care and former foster youth in serving as mentors and guides for children and youth in care

C.VI Using an Integrated & Collaborative Approach to Transition Reflected in Every Aspect of Practice, Including Permanency, Education, & Employment

VI.a   Effectively aligning caregiving activities, case-management activities, and life skills preparation and connecting services, supports, and opportunities across all appropriate agencies and programs to support successful transitions

VI.b   Identifying, coordinating, and integrating early and ongoing aligned assessments of interests, strengths, and needs

VI.c   Synthesizing assessments, information, strengths, needs, goals, and dreams into a single, integrated, coordinated youth-led and youth-centered case plan and approach across agencies and programs.

VI.d   Integrating permanency, education and employment values, services and supports through day-to-day case-management activities, inter-agency coordination and court interventions.

D.VII Providing Shared Agency & Community Leadership in Integrated Transition

VII.a   Creating a common understanding and language of transition issues and establishing a shared vision for youth with all partners, including youth, caregivers, community, courts, agency, and media

VII.b   Building community awareness of and investment in improving outcomes for transitioning youth

VII.c   Recruiting champions and assuming responsibility for adopting and implementing quality approaches within all levels of the organization

VII.d   Coordinating policies across systems to embed new practices, including issues of confidentiality

VII.e   Promoting a culture of innovation to support small tests of change

D.   SPREAD & SUSTAINABILITY

D.VIII Using Data with Diverse Audiences to Ensure Improvement

VIII.a   Collecting and sharing timely results based on youth outcome data, including permanency, education, and employment

VIII.b   Actively soliciting, obtaining, and sharing data on youths' perceptions of being respected and valued by partners working together to assist in their transition

VIII.c   Partnering with youth in the collection and use of data

VIII.d   Sharing results with all involved partners and the community in ways that are meaningful and respect confidentiality

VIII.e   Involving all partners, especially youth, in interpreting results and designing continuous quality improvements that are data-driven

D.IX Ensuring Appropriate Services & Supports

IX.a   Providing access to relevant services readily available and accessible in the community, including housing.

IX.b   Ensuring equitable access to services and supports to eliminate disproportionality and disparate outcomes in services/supports and outcomes

IX.c   Leveraging partnerships and resources, eliminating duplication, and improving utilization of available resources

IX.e   Strengthening the role of the court in promoting collaboration, shared responsibility and accountability for transition planning, services and outcomes

IX.f   Establishing policies and formalized agreements across systems to ensure sustainability and access to all appropriate services and supports.

D.X Maintaining & Supporting a Qualified, Competent, & Well-Trained Workforce to Implement Practice & Culture Changes

X.a   Recruiting staff from communities from which children, youth, and families come

X.c Training, supporting and supervising all staff, including case management social worker and probation officers, to ensure culturally responsive skills and competencies

X.d Training, supporting and supervising all staff, including case management social worker and probation officers, to ensure priority of youth permanency, education, and employment practices, systems and resources.

X.e Training, supporting and supervising all staff, including case management social workers and probation officers, to ensure transparent, cross-system partnerships, protocols, and integrated permanency transition practice.

X.f Training, supporting and supervising all staff, including case management social worker and probation officers, to ensure collaboration skills

X.g Training, supporting and supervising all staff, including case management social worker and probation officers, to ensure understanding of core practices such as grief and loss

X.h Partnering with current and former foster youth in a variety of roles including trainers, advocates, mentors, and staff

Youth-Centered &
Youth-Adult Partnership

PRACTICE PRIORITES

Permanency ⟷ Education ⟷ Employment

COLLABORATION

Engagement of Supportive Adults & the Community

Collaborative Approach to Transition

Shared Leadership

SPREAD & SUSTAINABILITY
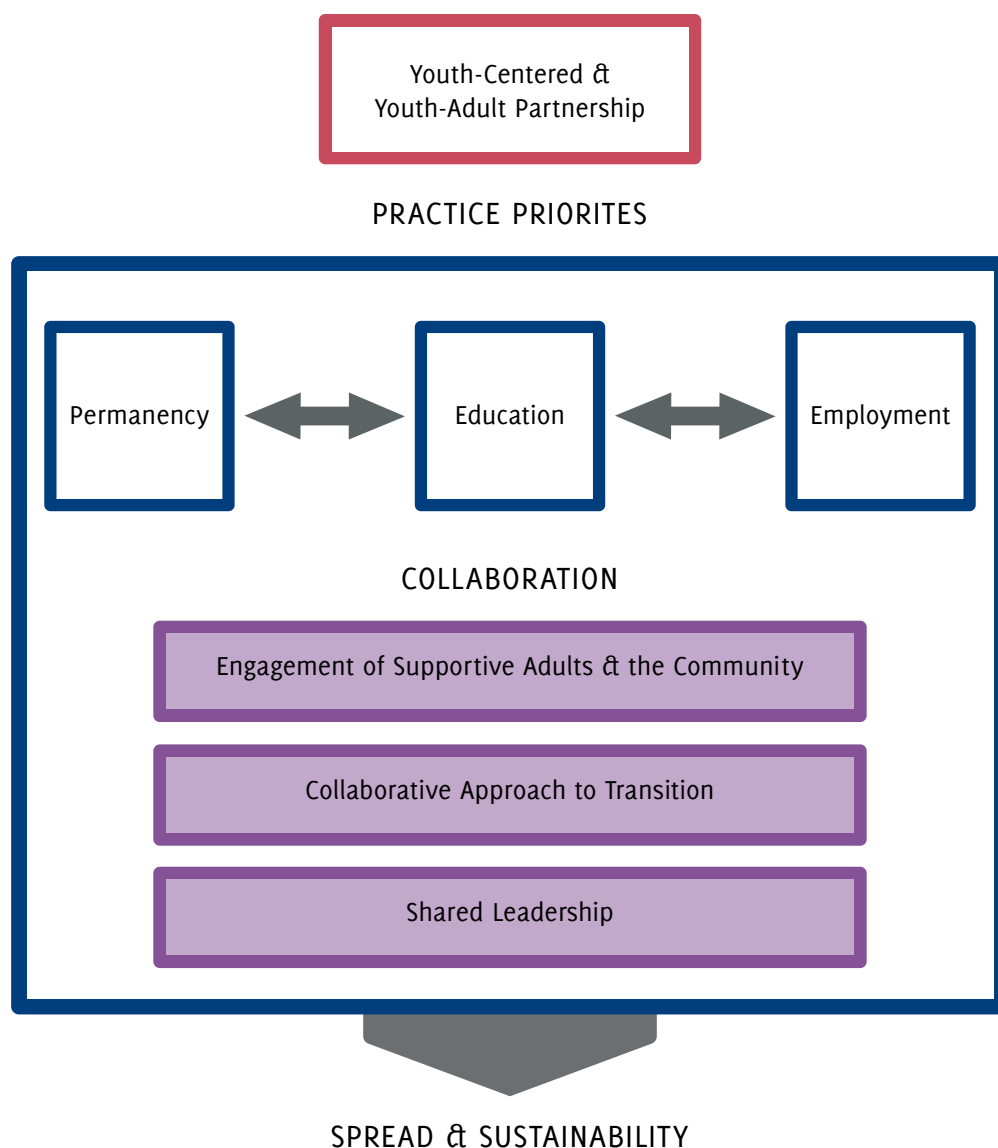
A P P E N D I X   N U M B E R   2

California Independent Living Program Transformation
FINAL COLLABORATIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Helping foster youth succeed in school, work and life is about the "whole" – a 360 degree approach to the whole youth and youth's whole life. It's about connecting youth in real ways to all the things they need in life through the people they have relationships with – not through books, guides, checklists or classes. Youth need family and loved ones to guide them. And they need adults in their home, school and community who listen to, support and value them every day. It's about engaging youth, their families, communities, caregivers, and other important adults identified by youth, in planning and activities that help build the lifelong relationships and skills youth need to navigate the world.

YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS ARE CENTRAL TO A 360° APPROACH.

Relationship-based exchanges between youth and the adults in their lives provide individualized attention and support and ensure youth have opportunities and experiences that develop the life and leadership skills they need to thrive. Actualizing youth-adult partnerships involves four components:

- Effective outreach
- Engaging young people in a meaningful way
- Pro-actively "holding on" to youth
- Adults letting go of control and youth taking charge

Through youth-adult partnerships, youth are supported in giving voice to their own insights, wishes and dreams, and adult partners come to learn the skills and expertise that youth have in regards to their futures. In addition, youth have the consistent understanding and support of committed adult partners who they can turn to for guidance. Self-advocacy and "voice" are important in this process and both youth and adult partners alike benefit from receiving training in, understanding and practicing self-advocacy skills.

SIX KEY TRANSFORMATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS GUIDE PRACTICE & SYSTEM CHANGES.

Six transformational characteristics must be infused in all programs and practices in order to support youth in foster care to live, love, learn, work and ultimately thrive. These transformational characteristics are relevant for Individuals who are directly involved with youth (caregivers, social workers, ILP workers, educators, employment specialists and others) to assist them in testing and integrating new practices, while also relevant for system-level partners who are developing new ways to collaborate, contract and reshape their programs and services to support youth-adults partnerships and other practice changes.

1. INDIVIDUALIZED ATTENTION

Youth need families, caregivers and professionals who understand them as individuals and support them in all aspects of their lives and planning for the future. This concept needs to be at the core of everyone's work with youth rather than at the discretion of individuals doing the preparation with and support of youth. As new practices are tested, consider whether the practice honors foster youth as individuals with unique strengths, needs, goals and aspirations, how the practice could be accomplished in an individualized way outside of ILP classroom or workshop setting, and how the practice identifies services, resources and supports to meet youth's individual needs.

2. INTEGRATION OF THE THREE PRACTICE AREAS OF PERMANENCY, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Families, caregivers, neighborhoods and communities provide the natural context in which young people learn about behavioral norms, acquire new skills and capacities, and benefit from modeling about what is possible in their lives. The ability for child welfare, ILP and other partners to help youth achieve their education and employment goals is greatly enhanced by coordinated permanency work and the involvement, support and encouragement of significant persons in the youth's life and community. In testing new practices, consider how the practice could simultaneously attend to and support permanency, education and employment, and how to maintain coordinated efforts in these three areas.

3. REAL WORLD CONNECTIONS

Foster youth need real world connections to help them explore the many opportunities and pathways that are available to them. Adults in the community are important role models and coaches as youth identify their areas of interest and pursue their goals. In testing new practices, consider how the practice connects youth with adults outside the ILP service delivery system who have skills and talents in particular areas of expertise; whether these adult connections provide youth with experiential opportunities and perspective in areas of interest, services, resources or supports; and how youth can be supported in developing and maintaining these connections within their own communities.

4. NORMALIZING EXPERIENCES

Youth in foster care need real world learning and experiences, just like every youth. Home, school and community settings allow youth to learn and grow through participation in the same everyday activities their peers do, in ways that are supportive and non-stigmatizing. As new practices are tested, consider whether the practice normalizes foster youths' experiences rather than setting them apart; if it creates and supports opportunities for youth to develop a sense of community with other foster youth, peers and adults; and whether it supports foster youth in exploring, maintaining, and developing their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities.

5. CONNECTION TO RESOURCES

Youth need to be connected to resources, supports and opportunities in the community that can help them be successful in all aspects of their lives and in planning for the future. Every aspect of a youth's life must be considered, including how to achieve educational goals, find meaningful work experiences, and have permanent loving relationships on which they can depend. As new practices are tested, consider how the practice ensures seamlessness and lack of duplication

among the case manager, caregiver, ILP and community partners (many of whom have developed plans and perform case management and/or counseling supports). Also considered how resources, supports and opportunities are monitored, assessed and adjusted over time to ensure they are continuing to meet youths' needs.

6. SERVICES PROVIDED AT HOME AND IN NATURAL COMMUNITY SETTINGS

Home, school and community-based services are accessible to youth and are natural environments for providing individualized services. As teams tested new practices, they considered whether the practice provides services to youth in their home, school or community, who provides the services and what their relationship is with the youth, and how the services are responsive to and respectful of youths' race, ethnicity, and culture.

THREE YOUTH-CENTERED OUTCOMES ARE FOUNDATIONAL.

Though youth-adult partnerships and the key characteristics of transformation help in transforming practice and moving systems toward transformation, both must stay focused on and consistently strive to achieve three foundational outcomes.

YOUTH have love and belonging – permanency for a lifetime.

This concept of permanency refers to feeling a part of a family system that provides unconditional love – it is continuous, secure, consistent, fulfilling and permanent. It is driven by and responsive to youths' needs and includes birth families and other family and significant relationships as identified by youth, caregivers and community.

YOUTH take charge of their lives and futures.

Youth guide the decisions about their lives, not agency and organizational rules and constraints. By engaging youth and supporting their leadership and voice in team meetings, case planning and decision-making, youth feel valued and more in charge of their lives. By ensuring opportunities to learn and practice life and leadership skills in everyday home, school and community settings, adult partners ensure youth develop the skills and confidence they need to take charge of their lives and futures.

YOUTH get what they need to live, love, learn, work and thrive.

A focus on the whole youth means considering all aspects of a young person's life - helping them achieve educational goals, find meaningful work and careers, and have permanent loving relationships on which they can depend. Through youth-adult partnerships, families, caregivers and professionals provide encouragement, opportunities and support to youth in coordinated ways based on the youth's individual goals, needs and aspirations. Youth actively partner and remain at the center of this process in order to get what they need to live, love, learn, work and ultimately thrive.

ILP Transformation Framework At-a-Glance

YOUTH ADULT PARTNERSHIP

Individualized
Attention

Real World
Connection

Connection to
Resources

YOUTH

Have love and belonging
permanency for a lifetime

Youth take charge of
their lives & futures

Youth get what they need
to live, love, learn,
work & thrive

Normalize
Experiences

Integration of
Permanency
Education &
Employment
Practice
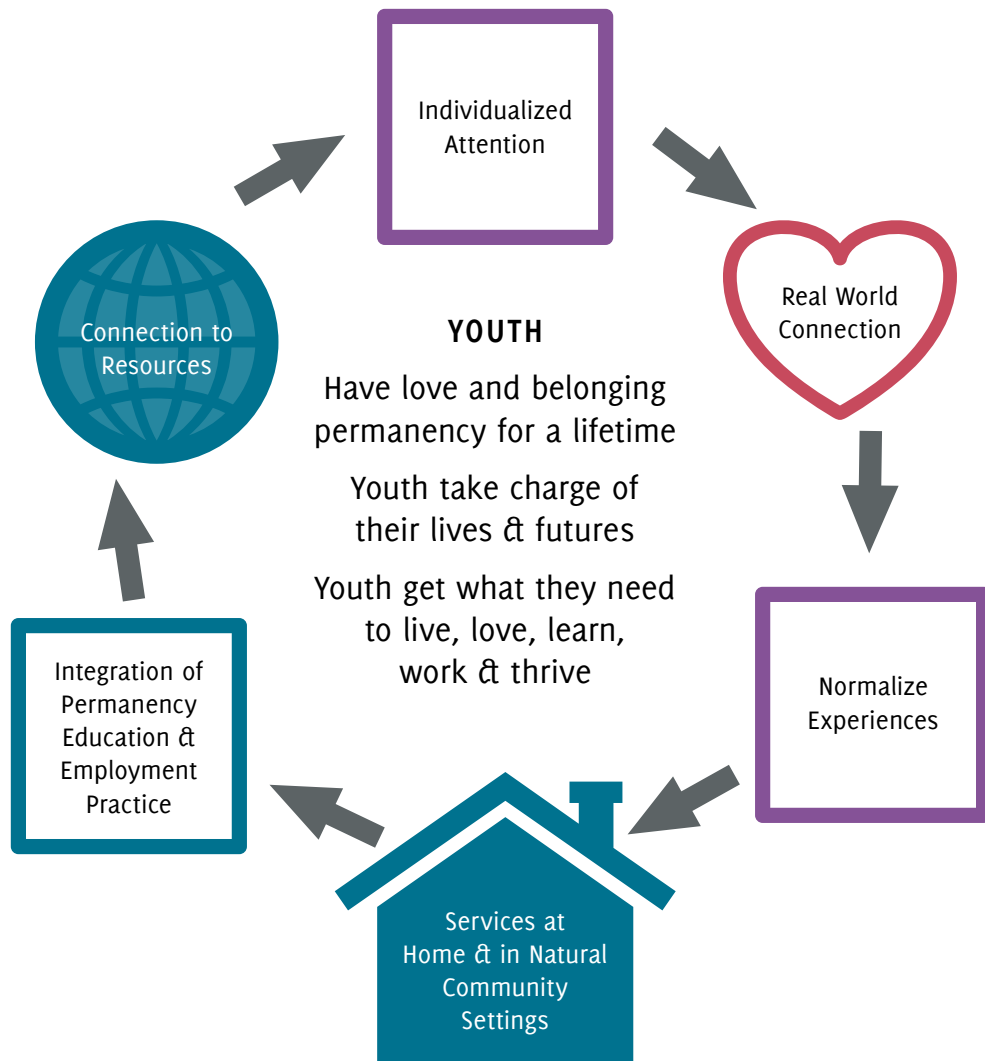
Services at
Home & in Natural
Community
Settings

A P P E N D I X   N U M B E R   3

CONNECTION CAFÉ

HOME

CONTENTS

PART ONE
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PART TWO
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PART THREE
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PART FOUR
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APPENDICES

GUIDE

This is a relaxed and somewhat informal discussion among Café visitors with a "Host" for each table question who initiates the table conversation and maintains a safe and inviting Café ambiance. Hosts and participants alike should relax and have fun with this activity – when people feel comfortable to be themselves, they do their most creative thinking, speaking and listening. The purpose of this Connection Café is to explore the Collaborative Framework focus areas related to Youth-Centered Youth-Adult Partnerships; and Using an Integrated and Collaborative Approach to Transition Reflected in Every Aspect of Practice, Including Permanency, Education, and Employment through participants' conversations, ideas and perspectives. For each focus area there will be questions to facilitate the conversation in 3 Café rounds, resulting in a rich content of information to guide us as we move forward. Go with the flow of the creativity and discussion. Since we are all facilitating this process, this guide is meant to support you!

The process:

- 1st participants will be asked to find a seat anywhere they would like—tables will only accommodate 5-6 people, so if one is full please find another table.
- The Connection Café will have a Café Facilitator who will keep things moving and tell us all what comes next—you will know your time is up when you hear the chime.
- At the 1st Café Round for Connection Café Part 1, your table will be asked to identify a "host" for your table—what that means is that when the 1st Round is over, the Host will remain at the table to greet the 2nd Round
- When the 1st Café Round ends, all but the Host will get up and move to a different table
- For the 3rd Café Round you will return to your original Café table
- Folks are encouraged to:
  - Be relaxed, thoughtful, and creative;
  - Facilitate yourself and others;
  - Focus on things that matter;
  - Contribute your thinking;
  - Speak with your mind and heart;
  - Reflect on ideas that have been shared and build on them;
  - Listen for patterns and insights that can help us deepen our understanding of this question and what's included within it
- Participants are encouraged to write, doodle, and draw as the discussion proceeds.
- The Host really does not have to do much to facilitate, although, in getting started may want to model asking questions like "tell me more. What does that look like? How do you do that?"—essentially questions that push the conversation deeper, or probe further. Ideally, each table evolves to all participants furthering the conversation in these ways.

- As the conversation wraps up for each round, ask participants to leave their work (writings, doodles, drawings, art). Staff will assist in posting these to this question's butcher paper poster located near the table.

- During the 2nd and 3rd cycle, Hosts may refer to the slide on the screen to remind folks of the question for this round. The question is designed to be open-ended allowing for creativity and sharing of diverse experiences and perspectives. Ask the participants to review the question and begin facilitating with each other the discussion. Support participants to write, doodle, and draw as the conversation proceeds. Encourage building upon and furthering prior discussions.

- Following the 3rd Cycle, the Connection Café Host will facilitate a larger group discussion regarding the questions for this round, highlighting the learnings from each other. These will be captured on a flip chart by Staff.

- This process will be repeated for Connection Café Part 2 on Day 2 of the Learning Session.

Sample café questions used by the Collaborative are included below.

- CONNECTION CAFÉ PART 1 FOCUS:

Youth-Centered & Youth-Adult Partnerships

1. *What do supports and partnership look like from the perspective of youth and caregivers?*

2. *What would make a difference to youth in engaging them to identify their goals and aspirations within the youth-caregiver relationship?*

3. *What is so important in nurturing this youth-caregiver partnership? What would it look like when done well?*

- CONNECTION CAFÉ PART 2 FOCUS:

    Using an Integrated and Collaborative Approach to Transition Reflected in Every Aspect of Practice, Including Permanency, Education, and Employment

1. *What does day to day practice integration and partnership look like?*

2. *How do we move daily practice from communication-->cooperation-->coordination-->partnership when done well?*

APPENDIX NUMBER 4

A Caregivers' Guide To Helping Youth Develop Independent Living Skills

Please see following inserted 10 pages for Appendix No.4.

A Caregivers' Guide To Helping Youth Develop Independent Living Skills

Traditionally services to prepare foster youth for adulthood have been relegated to Independent Living Programs. These programs, whether provided by a county social service department or by a private contractor have assumed that the youth will not have a committed parent to prepare them for successful adulthood, nor continue to provide the lifelong support available to children growing up in their families of origin. Likewise, programs focusing on providing care and shelter for foster children and youth may not have embraced the unique opportunities to prepare youth that come with the day-to-day living experience in foster, kin, and group homes. Additionally, even youth achieving permanency from foster care carry the same traumatic histories as those who do not achieve permanency. Adoptive, guardian and kin parents are often overlooked as a group that would benefit from access to resources used in Independent Living Programs.

California's Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) on Transforming Independent Living Services is bridging that gap by offering a platform on which to integrate the previously separate independent living service areas of permanency, education and employment.

The BSC on ILP has identified education and employment resources to which every caregiver and youth should have access. This document has been prepared for individuals, families and organizations. They are encouraged to explore these resources themselves, discover their power, then share them with their youth and families, and incorporate them into staff and caregiver training. [1]

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[1] This guide was compiled by Gail Johnson Vaughan, faculty for California Independent Living Transformation Breakthrough Series Collaborative. Copying permitted. For additional information: gail@missionfocused.org.

California College Pathways Educational Guide: School year-by-school year guide to what a youth and his/her caregiver should know and do to maximize the probability of continuing into higher education. Easy to read and follow. A must for every caregiver and permanent parent. (The California College Pathways is a partnership between the John Foundation and the CSU Office of the Chancellor. This initiative is funded by the Stuart Foundation and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation.)
http://www.cacollegepathways.org/pdfs/CCP%20Educational%20Planning%20Guide.pdf

A Guide to Career Development Opportunities in California's High Schools: The guide provides information about the range of career development opportunities that may exist at any given school site. The guide is aimed specifically at foster youth, caregivers, ILP Coordinators, Social Workers, and others who advocate on behalf of foster youth and their need to be more fully prepared for a positive transition to adulthood.
The guidebook offers suggestions about questions to ask and provides useful tools for mapping the career development program offerings in any school or district as well as a **Career Goal Worksheet** to be used with foster youth in developing a plan for achieving their goals.
Career Development Guidebook (PDF 6.16 MB)
http://www.newwaystowork.org/documents/ytatdocuments/CareerDevGuidebookJUNE2009%282%29.pdf

Ready, Set, Fly! A Parent's Guide to Teaching Life Skills
This resource was developed by foster parents for other parents to use when teaching life skills. The Activity Book is designed to be used in conjunction with the Casey Life Skills Guidebook (see page 7.) It contains a series of activities and suggestions that may be used in one-to-one instruction. For parents use with youth ages 8 and older. Click links below for as free pdf:
http://www.caseylifeskills.org
- Ready, Set, Fly! (English)
  http://www.caseylifeskills.org/pages/res/rsf%5CRSF.pdf
- Ready, Set, Fly! (Spanish)
  http://www.caseylifeskills.org/pages/res/rsf%5CRSF%28Espanol%29.pdf

Welcome to California CareerZone!
California CareerZone is a new way to explore exciting jobs and occupations that the Golden State has to offer and to learn about what career path interests you.

Please select a version:

<u>California Career Zone:</u> http://www.cacareerzone.com.   This site is a hit with teens and even pre-teens – great graphics, cool music, really useful information they can't seem to find anywhere else. Take the "Reality Check" feature for example. Youth get to see how much they will need to earn to live their preferred lifestyle by "buying stuff for a month." They get to make choices about the kind of housing, utilities, transportation, food, clothes, health care, entertainment, personal care items etc. that they want to have. After making their choices they find out how much they'll need to make a year. Then with one click they can find out what occupations match that annual salary. A serious motivator to make good grades!

Additional features help the youth hone in how they can get paid doing things they enjoy doing and the kinds of working conditions they want. From there they are led to occupations that meet their needs, what they pay, and the kind of education and skills they need to get the job.

<u>On Your Way:</u> http://www.onyourway.org

Welcome
Planning My Education
What I Like To Do?
What Are My Choices?
How Do I Pay For It?
Who Can Help Me?
Staying Healthy to Suceed
Where Will I Live?
Getting Connected

This site introduces Jamal, a former foster youth who is now a senior in college. Jamal takes youth through a series of videos that provide information foster youth need to know, as well as training and coaching on each of several key areas. Even more important, the site provides a secure place for youth to store all of their personal information. Really very easy and focused, facilitated by foster youth. Best we have seen so far of these types of sites.

3

Finding Forever Families (DVD) From Dave Thomas Foundation
http://www.davethomasfoundation.org/Adoption-Resources/Free-Materials/Educational-Videos How do you explain to a foster youth what it means to be part of a committed permanent family? How do you dispel the fears and myths? Consider ordering this beautifully-done, free DVD to demystify the process of permanency and understand best practices on how to recruit families for children based on the child's desires and needs. Length: 35 minutes.

Foster Care Ombudsman: http://www.fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov The foster care ombudsman office was established by statue to give foster children a place where their individual concerns could be met. Call the help line for specific and individual questions or visit the website, rich in accessible resources presented in an easy to understand format. A great site for foster youth and caregivers alike.

Casey Life Skills: http://www.caseylifeskills.org Here you will find free and easy to use tools to help young people prepare for adulthood. The life skills assessments provide instant feedback. Customized learning plans provide a clear outline of next steps, and the accompanying teaching resources are available for free or at a minimal cost.

Navigating the Casey Life Skills Website

Home	Assessments	Learning Plan	Resources	Group Data Reports	Training

At the top of the page you will find a menu. Click on each to see the rich array of resources. To ease the process we have listed below the contents of each menu item:

HOME: Brief introduction to the website

ASSESSMENTS: Links to take you to the on-line Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment tools (ACLSA) as follows
- In English, In Spanish, In French
- Assessment Supplements: designed to help youth and young adults who have specific life skills needs. (Note: All Assessment Supplements are available in printable form as well as on-line.)
    - American Indian
    - Pregnancy
    - Parenting Infants
    - Parenting Young Children
    - Homeless
    - Youth Values
    - Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender & Questioning

- Educational Supplements: The grade level labels are provided only as a guideline for selecting an Education Supplement level and are dependent upon the students' development level.
  - Education Level I - Upper Elementary
  - Education Level II - Middle or Junior High School
  - Education Level III - High School
  - Education Level IV - Post Secondary Education or Training

  To use on-line supplemental assessment tools click on the bullet of the assessment you choose and scroll down the page to the button that says:

  >> Begin Assessment

- Benchmark Data: *Benchmarks* are average scores in each domain area (Communication, Daily Living, etc.) and average Total Mastery and Total Raw scores, for groups defined by youth age, race/ethnicity, gender, and living situation. The benchmarks can help you interpret scores on ACLSA or supplemental assessments for youth you work with.

- Learning Plan: Here you will find free and easy to use tools to help young people prepare for adulthood. The life skills assessments provide instant feedback. Customized learning plans provide a clear outline of next steps, and the accompanying teaching resources are available for free or at a minimal cost. Users can use the drop down menu to chose from the following life domains
  - Career Planning
  - Communication
  - Daily Living
  - Home Life
  - Housing & Money Management
  - Self Care
  - Social Relationships
  - Work Life
  - Work & Study Skills

RESOURCES: The array of resources is amazing. The drop down menu covering:
- Resources for the ACLSA Guidebook
- Resources for American Indian Supplement
- Resources for Pregnancy Supplement
- Resources for Parenting Infants Supplement
- Resources for Parenting Young Children Supplement

TRAINING: Informs site visitors of the training programs offered to assist professionals to maximize the effectiveness of the Casey Life Skills tools and products.

Exploring the resources and other content on the web-site was great. It helped paint the entire picture.

Young Adult, 21, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Resource Addendum: From the Casey Life Skills Resource Page:

The following include both free and for-purchase materials. When ordering, consider the age of the youth/adults using these resources, their Casey Life Skills assessment scores, and program goals. Additional resources are available on the resource pages of caseylifeskills.org.

Core Resources

Vstreet - www.vstreet.com. Vstreet teaches life skills and offers additional resources. It is a password community, so it is private and can be individualized by school or agency groups to fit their needs. It includes Apartment Hunt and Car Dreams. Vstreet teaches teens valuable life skills and at the same time, gives them a place where they can feel at home. Kids with different backgrounds and abilities will find Vstreet a fun place, filled with animated stories, characters they can relate to, and plenty of interaction. They will connect with others, express themselves, and learn how to take the right steps towards being on their own. It is available for $24/year.

A Future Near Me/ The Path Before Me (FUTURE/PATH)
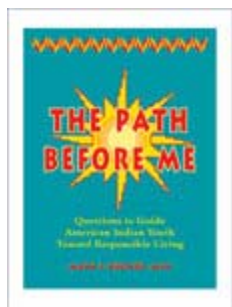
A Future Near Me contains questions to guide a young adult towards self-sufficiency. *The Path Before Me* is designed to help <u>American Indian Youth</u> learn tribal ways and skills that will enable them to move into their own place. It contains questions to guide American Indian Youth towards responsible living. Both pocket guide resources, designed by Mark Kroner, can be used by the learner on their own or with an adult. The books can be used with families, schools, youth groups, life skills classes, sharing circles and elders. Self-teaching tool.

From: National Resource Center for Youth Services , 1-800-274-2687 or order via the Web site:

http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/catalog/product.php?productid=44 $6.00 each plus shipping

Developing your Vision while Attending College

This four part series is designed to help <u>American Indians</u> develop vision for their lives and successfully complete college education. It covers decision-making, money management, financial aid, and planning for the future. For self-teaching or group teaching.
Available from: American Indian College Fund ; http://www.collegefund.org
Then click on Scholarships & Students >> Online Guides   FREE

I Can Do It! A Micropedia of Living on Your Own: This engaging, easy to use resource can be used by older youth to guide them through most topics pertaining to living on their own, including budgeting, housing, daily living and relationships. For self-teaching or group teaching. Click here to download document: **http://bit.ly/17lXcf**

Foster Youth Money Guides; order resources on this page for FREE from The Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) 410-223-2890 or order via the Web site: http://www.aecf.org/OrderPublications.aspx or download from websites listed below each one.

I Know Where I'm Going (But Will My Cash Keep Up?): Part One
Part one of this two-part guide is a workbook designed to stimulate conversations with foster children, ages 12 to 15, about money values, attitudes toward money, setting goals, planning spending, and using a bank. There is a focus on using mathematics to solve practical word problems related to budgeting. Part I of the Foster Youth Money Guide Series.
Click here to download document: http://bit.ly/3VuWhP

I Know Where I'm Going (But Will My Cash Keep Up?): Part Two
This workbook is designed to stimulate conversations with foster children, ages 12 to 15, about investing money, being a savvy shopper, and using a credit card. It deals with personal responsibility, planning a career, sharing with others--both financially and in other ways, and setting long-term aspirations.
Click here to download document: http://bit.ly/2E6t1O

I Know Where I'm Going (But Will My Cash Keep Up?) - A Caregiver's Handbook
This resource provides tips on how to use the "I Know Where I'm Going" workbook listed above. It includes supporting activities that may be completed with the youth as part of daily living.
Click here to download document: http://bit.ly/33N2KI

Money Pals: Being Cool with Cash, Part One
This workbook is designed to teach foster children, ages 8 to 11, practical skills about using money, like counting money, distinguishing between a need and a want, and earning extra money. It also teaches saving skills, like saving for later or saving for something special, using a bank, and understanding credit cards.
Click here to download document: http://bit.ly/1EI5Sc

Money Pals: Being Cool with Cash, Part Two

This workbook is designed to teach foster children, ages 8 to 11, practical skills about spending money, like keeping a spending diary, identifying where money goes, being a smart shopper, and understanding advertising. It also includes sections on sharing with others--both financially and in other ways-- and setting long-term aspirations.
Click here to download document: http://bit.ly/4wFj86

The Career Development Continuum

Career Development is most effective when youth are provided a sequenced continuum of activities and experiences that address career and college awareness, exploration, and preparation. This is accomplished through a series of classroom activities, workplace exposures, and community experiences over time. Classroom activities support and reflect what's learned in the workplace and community, and workplace experiences support classroom learning. In addition, youth are supported by and provided role models and guidance from families and adults in their communities and neighborhoods. Youth are provided with experiences commensurate with their knowledge, skills, and abilities. These experiences are also compatible with their age and stage of development. In a comprehensive career development system, youth are exposed to a full range of careers and employment opportunities, including those that may or may not be traditional for their ethnicity, race, sex, gender, or background.

Career Awareness Activities

Career Awareness activities are designed to make youth aware of the wide range of careers and/or occupations that will be available to them in the future. Career Awareness activities help youth become aware of the opportunities that are before them, begin to refine their career interests and goals, understand the skills required for specific occupations or industries, and learn about the expectations of the workplace.

Career Exploration Activities

Career Exploration activities provide youth with the opportunity to explore fields of interest related to their career goals and/or academic learning. In the workplace, youth work closely with an adult supervisor and participate in appropriate hands-on workplace experiences.

Career Preparation Activities

Career Preparation activities provide an in-depth discovery of a particular career, linking the skills utilized in the workplace with academic learning. These activities also allow for the development of career and occupationally specific skills.

KEY PRINCIPLES
The following key principles support a comprehensive career development system:
- Provide meaningful career development opportunities for all youth
- Design experiences that are youth-centered and developmentally appropriate
- Engage parents, guardians, and caregivers
- Provide real world work experiences for all youth
- Integrate career development across the curriculum
- Build a connected system
- Allow for flexibility & adaptability
- Measure success and solicit feedback

Preparing All Youth for Success in College, Career, and Life

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM

CAREER AWARENESS

Learn about a wide variety of jobs and careers

Classroom & School
- Web Research
- Guest Speakers
- Career Interest Assessments
- College & Career Fairs
- Career Contextual Instruction
- College Awareness

Workplace
- Workplace Tours & Field Trips
- Career & Job Fairs
- Informational Interviews

Families & Neighborhood
- Adult Interaction
- Role Model Observation
- Community Awareness

CAREER EXPLORATION

Explore, research, and plan for the future

Classroom & School
- Career Pathways, Courses, & Clubs
- Integrated Curriculum
- Classroom Simulations
- Career Plan Development
- Career-Focused Projects & Assignments
- College Exploration

Workplace
- Job Shadowing
- Career Mentoring
- Community Projects

Families & Neighborhood
- Risk Taking
- Role Playing
- Community Involvement

CAREER PREPARATION

Gain work experience, education, and training

Classroom & School
- Core Academic Preparation
- Career Technical Courses & Programs
- Work Skills Classes
- Career-Related Project-Based Learning
- Work Ready Certification
- Occupational Certifications
- College Preparation

Workplace
- Work Experience
- Internships
- Apprenticeships

Families & Neighborhood
- Skill Building
- Progression of Responsibility
- Civic Engagement

PRODUCTIVE FUTURE

EDUCATED

EXPERIENCED

ENGAGED

AWARE

SKILLED

CONNECTED

PREPARED

0-12   **13-24**

AWARENESS   EXPLORATION   PREPARATION

A P P E N D I X   N U M B E R   5

Self Advocacy

PURPOSE:	1. Welcome participants and introductions 2. "Yes, And?" 3. Self Advocacy 4. Self Advocacy Plan of Action 5. Framing 6. Role Play 7. Wrap up
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:	*Any*
TIME:	*90 Minutes*
MATERIALS:	*Materials: flip chart paper, markers, construction paper, tape, flipchart with "framing clichés" on it, "Why am I here?" questions on flipchart*
SUMMARY:	*This workshop will help participants learn how to effectively speak up in their behalf. They will also learn how to take those tools and make a plan of action.*

Intros and "Yes, and…" ice breaker (15 minutes)

Hello every one. Welcome to the Self Advocacy Workshop. This work shop is at the beginning of the learning session because we want to give you all a solid foundation for speaking up and using your voice throughout these next few days. Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. Please say your name, county and tell us about an interesting hobby you have.

Yes, and…

Before we get in to what self advocacy is, we want to play a game called "Yes, and". The point of this game is to get us thinking outside of the box. Often we come of with reasons why things won't work, which paralyzes our abilities to think creatively about solutions. Self advocacy is about finding solutions and making change, so this activity will help get us in that mindset.

So this is how it goes. First we're going to break into groups of 3 or 4. Please count off…

One person in your group is going to introduce an idea of something you guys can do this weekend, everyone will then start every sentence with "But…". For example, person 1 will say, "Let's go roller skating!" Person 2 will say, "But roller skating is expensive" Person 3 will say something like, "But how will we get there?" etc. Okay, 1 person throw out a PG-13 idea and everyone start responding, the person who throws out the idea should also contribute to the statements that start with "but".

Call time after 20 or 30 seconds.

Alright, now we're going to do the same activity. This time one person will throw out an idea for the weekend and everyone will respond with "Yes, and…".

Call time after 20 or 30 seconds.

Let's talk about the two different experiences. What did you notice?

Some ideas might be: that the "But" conversations didn't go very far, were negative, didn't sound fun, or that the person saying "But" thought their idea was better. People may also say that the "Yes, and" conversations were more interesting and exciting and you were able to build off each other to come up with a great idea.

Keep these ideas in mind as we talk about self advocacy. There are many times when we feel like there are no solutions or that we are powerless. However, with some of the tactics that we'll talk about today, and with our "Yes, and…" hats on, we can brainstorm creative ways to solve problems and advocate for ourselves.

Why am I here? (5 min)

**Directions to facilitators: Refer to the flipchart that has the questions written out

Now we are going to ask you to turn to your neighbor and answer the following questions:
- Why were you specifically asked to join the Collaborative team?
- What's your expertise?
- What's your personal motivation to participate in the Collaborative?

Self Advocacy (25 minutes)

Definition of self advocacy (10 min)

Okay now that we all know each other and have reminded ourselves why we are an important part of the Collaborative, we can get to why you all are here at this workshop, which is to get the foundations of self advocacy. We have this definition here of what we think self advocacy is:

Self advocacy is an individual using past experiences and current knowledge to speak on behalf of their own well being and their self.

Is there anything that is missing from this definition?

So why is it important to for someone to advocate for themselves? Chart write the answers

Common challenges: (15 min)

We know that some people experience challenges when they try to advocate for themselves. So we want to see what your experiences have been.

- What are the main reasons people don't advocate for themselves?
- What are some of the barriers you personally faced while trying to advocate for yourself? Chart write the answers

We are handing out construction paper and markers for you to write something you have self advocated for successfully and hang them around the room. It can be big or small, maybe you fought to get a better grade on a test, or maybe you have stood up for yourself when your rights were being violated.

- What have you successfully advocated for yourself?

  **Directions to facilitators: Give people a few minutes to hang up what they've successfully advocated for, then ask if anyone would like to share what they wrote.
- What made it successful? Chart write the answers

Self Advocacy Plan of Action (30 minutes)

If you want to make change it's important to plan what you're going to do and there are different steps to making a change. We have a worksheet to help you think through the steps, so let's review it together and define some of the words.

TARGET: The specific person/people with the power to help you make the change you'd like to see

Why is it important to know who your target is? Possible answers:

- You know what the target is capable of changing and know how to approach them

ALLIES: The people who support you and that you get along with on your Collaborative team

Why is it important to know who your allies are? Possible answers:

- To know how much support you can get, help setting up meetings with target, help getting to meetings, help approaching targets

What's the power of offering a solution? Possible answers:

- Possible way to resolve a problem
- Reduces excuses for not addressing a problem
- Not perpetuating problem, helping problem solve
- It's not longer a complaint, but a solution.

What do we mean when we saying "framing" what you're advocating for? Possible answers:

- How you'll say what you need, how you say something so that someone else will HEAR you, how you use professional language to get your point across

Why is it important to have a deadline? Possible answers:

- So you get it done, you know when it's due

Worksheet example:

What do you want to self advocate for in the Collaborative? _____

Who are your allies in the Collaborative?_____

　　　　1._____

　　　　2. _____

　　　　3. _____

Who is your target for what you want? _____

What's your solution? _____

How will you frame what you're advocating for? _____

What's your deadline?_____

Now that we've talked about all the things that go into your plan of action, we're going to give you 20 minutes to work on your own plans and to think about something that you'd like to self advocate for in the Collaborative. Feel free to brainstorm with someone else in the room. We encourage you to work with someone you don't know and preferably if you are a youth to partner up with an adult and vice versa. If you finish early then please share your action plan with your neighbor.

> **Directions to facilitators:** *Make sure to walk around the room and assist the group with their plans of action as it can be confusing for some and remind people to put their "Yes, and" hats on and work through the challenges they may have faced in the past when self-advocating.*

We also want to be careful not to put people or teams on blast. It's the first workshop of the Learning Session and we want it to be solution not problem oriented, that's the whole purpose of this workshop, right? So let's focus on solutions so we can feel positive for the whole Learning Session.

Framing (20 minutes)

> **Directions to facilitators:** *Refer to the flipchart with the clichés listed on it*

You have started your plan of action, but there's more to self-advocacy. Let's talk about how to frame what you're going to say to your target, based on your plan of action.

Here are a few tricks of the trade for framing your issue. We've used some clichés to help make the ideas easier to remember. Does everyone know what a cliché is? An good example of a cliché is "a closed mouth doesn't get fed". You can relate that to this self advocacy workshop because if you do not speak up and advocate for yourself, your circumstances are less likely to change. What are some other well known clichés?

Food for thought – state the problem and the solution

Cut a long story short – be strategic in what you share about your experience, say only what is relevant

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It's not what you say it's how you say it – practice what you're going to say, use an action plan

Charm the birds out of the trees – be thoughtful in how you approach your target, make sure you use language and tone of voice that will win over your target

Timing is everything – choose a good time and place to

DO AN EXAMPLE WITH THE GROUP: Mock worksheet – have group frame the message for the mock worksheet based on clichés of framing. Break into groups of 4 or 5 and have each group frame the mock message and report back.

Then they will work on framing their own message (10 min).

**Directions to facilitators: Give everyone a 2 minute warning.

Can we get a few people to share their self advocacy plans of action with the group?

Role Playing (15 minutes)

Alright, let's pull it all together and see how it flows. Can we have 3 people to come up to the front of the room and role play their plan of action? Can we have someone pretend to be their target and ask them questions about their problem and solution?

**Directions to facilitators: Get feed back from the role play participants and the group about the role play activity. Ask what the participants did well and what they can improve to make their case more powerful.

Wrap Up (15 minutes)

Thank you everyone. You did a great job and we hope that you take these tools for self advocacy and use them in your Collaborative work. We hope you will use them while you are here at the Learning Session when you have ideas that you would like to share with your Collaborative teams and others while you're here.

Self Advocacy Worksheet

What do you want to self advocate for in the Collaborative?

Who are your allies in the Collaborative?

1.

2.

3.

Who is your target for what you want?

What's your solution?

How will you frame what you're advocating for?

What's your deadline?

APPENDIX NUMBER 6

What Makes A Good Adult Ally?
Based on Ideas from Youth Team Members in the Collaborative to Transform ILP

What is an ally?

Simply put, an ally is someone who believes in youth empowerment, supports the work that the youth are doing and will take the steps needed to help the youth to be successful.

Why is it important to have an ally?

- Engagement is key to empowering youth—adults must take the extra steps needed to engage youth and keep them engaged
- Youth and adults look at things through different "lenses". Allies help bridge the gap, bringing together creative ideas from both sides making transformation richer and more sustainable
- Allies can act as a liaison for youth and the rest of the team, making sure that youth "voice" is heard and that youth are continuously engaged in a program or organization

What characteristics make a good ally?

Someone who…

- Holds on to youth rather than youth having to hang on to her/him
- Has the youth perspective, seeks it, and honors it
- Is realistic and knows what is doable
- Youth can ask questions to when s/he doesn't understand
- Is able to listen and make a youth feel heard
- Gives real, honest feedback
- Gives realistic feedback and helps youth think through pros/cons
- Youth can call anytime and s/he always call youth back
- Will always follow up with youth
- Makes youth feel connected
- Makes an effort to seek youth's input about what s/he thinks and gives youth room to make suggestions
- Has qualities youth can relate to when they interact
- Is flexible in her/his communications: Facebook, e-mail, phone, text
- When youth makes mistakes, takes time to look at strategies that will help next time and does not discourage youth if things are not done, instead s/he helps youth figure out how to overcome the potential barriers
- Is supportive
- Has authority to get things done, makes things happen, and will follow through – or knows who to contact
- Is able to work through things with youth
- Is focused and committed
- Is passionate about empowering youth
- Helps break things down into small steps

How do allies help engage youth?

- Allies help youth stay in the loop
- Allies make sure youth know when meetings and activities are scheduled
- Allies give youth reminders a few days before and the day of meetings/activities in whatever way works for the youth (text, email, etc.)
- Allies take the youth's schedule into consideration when scheduling meetings or calls that youth can and/or should be involved in
- Allies make sure youth understand acronyms and jargon used in meetings
- Allies keep youth up-to-date on events happening in the county and community
- Allies keep youth informed about everything going on within the program or organization that they want youth input on, even if the youth misses meetings
- Allies will take the time if youth miss a meeting to recap, explain, set goals and expectations, give assignments and follow up with the youth to see how they are doing
- Allies, when youth need to miss a meeting, will ask the youth if it is okay to share her/his thoughts and ideas with the group and report back to youth that ideas where shared and everyone's responses
- Allies act as a liaison for youth and their ideas in other meetings, relaying youth's thoughts and ideas to others beyond the program or organization
- Allies can help both youth and adults recognize that it takes stepping outside of their comfort zone to "meet the other half way"

What can youth do to reach out to an ally or potential ally?

Youth can…

- Identify someone that would make a good ally and ask her/him officially to be an ally
- Go to lunch or have a meeting to establish expectations of both the ally and youth – by making the more formal invitation, youth are communicating that they have expectations of an ally—that they may end up calling the ally more than other members of the team
- Begin to build a relationship, share information and thoughts about the program/organization and get to know each other

HOME

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V.O.I.C.E.S. Youth Relationship Web

Use this web to keep track of relationships and important connections for each individual youth member. Include names and phone numbers as appropriate for each individual connection.

- During the initial meetings with the youth, use a black pen or pencil to show previous connections the youth has on arriving.
- As the youth builds more connections through referrals and coaching, use a red pen or pencil to add later connections after initial visits.

Education

Housing

Employment

YOUTH

Wellness

Family

Transportation
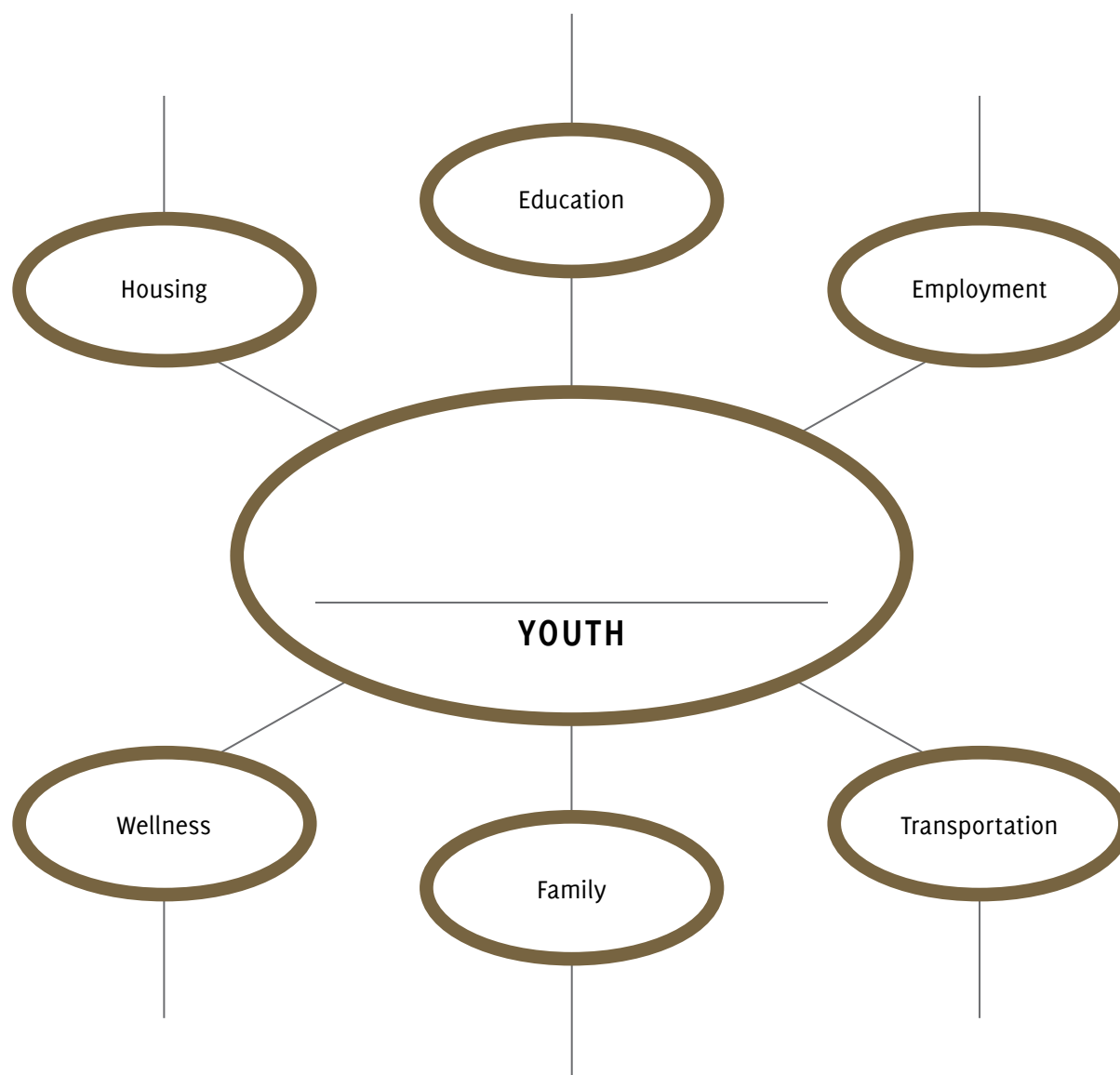
APPENDIX NUMBER 8

Five Youth Challenge Guide

Challenge teams to select 5 youth from their target population and work intensively with these 5 youth in helping them develop relationships -- "love & belonging for a lifetime." .

Begin by identifying 5 youth with whom you are currently working who are most lonely and who need a permanent, lifelong loving connection that will provide them with a constant, parental-like connection. Then, use the steps below to guide and reflect on the work you do with those youth to attain these goals over the next two months. The objective of this exercise is to unpack the practices and processes that result in helping youth attain 'love and belonging for a lifetime' so that these important practices can be infused in and integrated with all other work with youth system-wide.

Part I – Planning for the Conversations:

1. *Discuss whom each of the 5 youth are connected to in the various agencies, units, and/or organizations represented by your team members. Who is the lead contact for each individual youth? What can you, individually, contribute to this work either directly to the youth or through your colleagues/peers who are directly connected to the youth?*

2. *Identify who in your agency has done family finding work and has had some success engaging family as team members.   Ask the colleagues you identify to be a part of helping you with specific activities in your plan, perhaps to coach you through the process.*

3. *Identify and utilize the specific activities that are currently in place where you have regular and on-going discussions with these youth about their permanent adult connections. (For example: monthly contacts, life conferences, transition conferences, case management, etc.)*

4. *Identify who will help the youth with grief and loss issues and make a plan for how you will engage metal health and other partners to help the youth in understanding the connection/re-connection with their family or extended family.*

Part II – Putting it into Action

5. *Set a date for when you will start – or restart if the conversation has been had in the past -- the conversation with each of these 5 youth. Plan for how it will be done, by whom, and where, including the language you will use, the way these concepts will be presented, how the values in each will be conveyed to the youth, etc.*

6. *Identify additional partners for each of these youth. How will they support this work over the next 2 months? Does this youth have others in the community that you need to include in this process? How will they be intentionally engaged and included?*

7. *Identify how caregivers are – and will continue to be -- involved in the engagement and planning with youth to develop "love and belonging connections for a lifetime" or permanency connections while they are in care.*

8. As you work with each youth, describe your plans to define and achieve "love and belonging for a life time" for each youth. Make it as concrete as possible by documenting specific tasks, dates of activities, who the youth's allies are, how will they follow up with youth daily, etc.

9. How will you ask for specific help, coaching, planning assistance as you walk through this process from experts you have identified in your organization, BSC Staff & Faculty, other BSC teams?