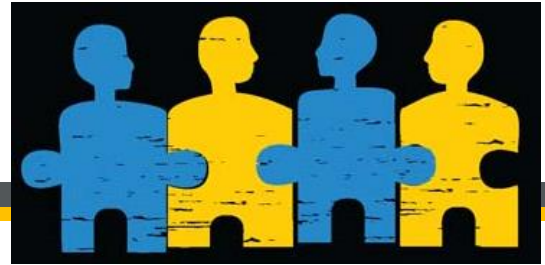


FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP) provides community-based alternatives to out-of-home placements that safely and effectively meet the needs of youth and their families in their home communities. Family engagement, or partnering with families, is a core principle of our work with youth in the juvenile justice, child welfare and behavioral health systems. In our experience, full family engagement is one of the most important factor in predicting youth engagement and success.

Family partnership means asking families what they need- instead of telling them what they need- and working with them based on what they identify as a priority; it means demonstrating acceptance of and respect for parents and families and valuing their goals, preferences and needs. This approach enables us to engage families that systems and other service providers label as disruptive, resistant or “noncompliant.”

Family-Driven Services

Family engagement is a dynamic, ongoing activity with a tangible impact on both the quality of the helping relationship and the young person’s ultimate success. YAP services are family driven, which means that our approach is purposefully designed to cultivate their investment in services.

Introductions: Developing Trusting Relationships: The foundation of any productive relationship is trust. YAP builds trust with families in several ways. First, we connect each family with caring staff who provide intensive support in the home, school and community as identified in the family’s plan. Second, our staff live in the same neighborhoods as the families we work with. They know the community’s assets and struggles as well as the cultural dynamic of the neighborhoods, enabling them to create a more empathic connection with the family. Staff are also available 24/7, and meet with the family at times and locations most convenient to the family. Finally, YAP’s firm commitment to unconditional care also helps build trust. This “no eject, no reject” practice means that no family is rejected or ejected from services, regardless of challenges that arise. Realizing that we will not abandon them during tough times helps families trust our staff enough to open up and give us a chance to support them.

Planning Process: Engaging Families as Partners: YAP uses the wraparound planning process to partner with families. Wraparound principles ensure that families have access, voice and ownership of what happens to them; build on their strengths and interests; empower them with choice in determining their family team members; and provide support for the immediate concrete needs of each family member. YAP’s assessment tools are family friendly and are guided by four questions:

- ✓ *What do you need?*
- ✓ *How can we help?*
- ✓ *How can we work together as equal partners?*
- ✓ *How can you help others in your community?*



PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Trauma-Informed Care

Providing Concrete Services

Strengths and Needs-Based Service Delivery

Family Team Meetings

Home-based Service Delivery

Individualized Service Planning

Organizing and Mobilizing Family Teams

Safety Planning that includes 24/7 crisis support

Individual and Family Counseling and Coaching

Connection or referral to other supports within the community

Transportation to appointments

General Case Management

An emphasis on family voice, access, and ownership through active listening and building plans that match family strengths, needs and culture contributes to the overall quality of the plan and engages the family in an equal partnership.

Service Delivery: Do For, Do With, Cheer On:

Research indicates that supportive adults play one of the most important roles in helping young people overcome challenges and succeed. In most cases, youth need to look no further than their own families to access

supportive adults. At the same time, parents may have their own unmet needs and traumas that need to be addressed before their supportive potential can be realized. Like youth, parents benefit from direct support, mentoring, role-modeling, coaching and advocacy. Staff provide encouragement, praise, emotional support, and concrete assistance to access resources that may help stabilize the family and enhance the parent’s skill set. Parents are consulted in developing their children’s plans each week, and are supported to increasingly advocate on behalf of their family to get their needs met.



Supporting Families to Give Back to their Communities

Service planning also integrates a way for youth and their families to give back to the community. Overwhelmingly we have found that youth and families want to be contributors to their communities. Building a “give-back” into our services increases a family’s feeling of confidence and competence, and also provides them with connection to the community, giving them natural access to more resources to support them in a time of need.

Life After YAP

YAP recognizes that our services are finite and that youth will continue to have needs after they leave the program. By supporting and strengthening parents and other family members and increasing their capacity to meet the needs of youth, youth are better positioned for positive, long-term outcomes. All of our service delivery includes planning for purposeful transition so families leave us better-equipped to handle crises than we they came to us.

For More Information

Shaena Fazal

National Policy Director
sfazal@yapinc.org



yapinc.org