

Adults on the autism spectrum and with other developmental differences Meaningful Adult Lives

Value Statement

Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP) believes that adults on the autism spectrum and with other developmental differences can thrive and realize their full potential when supported to access and participate meaningfully in all aspects of typical community life.

Desired Outcomes

In providing adult services, YAP will foster:

- **Self-determination** and respect for personal choices, including the right to explore new possibilities, take reasonable risks, and change one's mind.
- **Age-appropriate relationships** with peers.
- **A full range of daily activities** that respond to evolving interests and needs.
- **The expectation of a working lifestyle** as a contributing community member.
- **A sense of security, dignity, and belonging** that flows from visibility and recognition within one's community.

Services Promoting Desired Outcomes

YAP aims to discover and build the lives our individuals want to live by creating individualized combinations of services. These may involve:

- Direct support in settings of home, education, job, and community
- Education and training for community stakeholders.
- Individualized consultation
- Explorations of strengths, interests, and needs.
- Futures planning.
- Networking and resource location.
- Relationship building.
- Support and mentoring for individuals and families navigating transitions.

Best Practices in Service Delivery

YAP has identified 10 Best Practices that guide our work and on which our staff are trained. These practices are our best assurance of maintaining program quality; our best assurance of staying true to the evidence base about how people learn, develop, and sustain mental health and resilience; and our best assurance of keeping faith with the promise we make to respect the integrity and strengths of our clients and their families:

1. Focus on the person, not the label.
2. Support development through reciprocal relationships.
3. Presume capacity.
4. Honor and unconditionally support preferred interests.
5. Respond to behavior as communication.
6. Learn from the experts: people with autism/developmental disabilities and their families.
7. Adopt strategies that are proactive, not reactive.
8. Respect and accommodate emotional and sensory needs.
9. Interact age-appropriately.
10. Be open to lifetime opportunities for growth and development.

Standards for Achieving Meaningful Adult Lives

YAP will assure that the following standards of service planning and delivery are met for each adult client and family:

1. The person with autism/developmental disability and their family lead the service planning, while YAP staff helps to facilitate and strengthen relationships. All interactions are person-centered, age-appropriate, promote the dignity of and respect for client and family, and value the voices of all planning team members.
2. Planning begins at intake and is based on identifying, exploring and honoring the individual strengths and dreams of each person, rather

than on diagnostic label. Planning materials are customized and presented in ways that meet the learning and communication needs of the individual.

3. YAP staff identifies or help develop sustainable resources that will be available for the adult and augment resources provided by the family (i.e. transportation, support for daily living activities such as budgeting and housekeeping, venues for recreation and socialization with peers, age-appropriate community resources to address sexuality issues, housing, employment, post-secondary education, and community service/volunteerism.)
4. YAP staff work with the individual's team to plan for the health, safety, and welfare of the person, and to clarify how issues of privacy and confidentiality are respected and addressed for persons and their family members.
5. Regular communication is maintained among team members, and with those community venues, resources, programs, and services used by the individual.

YAP staff will thoroughly review and discuss the above information with each client and his or her parents, and will answer any questions that may arise. YAP believes that mutual understanding of and agreement with this information is vital to success. Clients and their parents will be asked to evaluate, by means of Satisfaction Surveys, how well YAP is implementing its standards of service planning and delivery.

