

Supporting TRANSITION AGE YOUTH

Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.
2007 North 3rd Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102
717.232.7580
yapinc.org



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

WHO ARE TRANSITION AGE YOUTH?

Transition Age Youth are young people, ages 16 to 24, who are at high risk of not successfully transitioning into independent adulthood due to the complexity of their needs, the many challenges they face, and the lack of a support system to assist them. This includes the millions of American youth and young adults who are annually aging out of the foster care system, leaving psychiatric hospitals or adult or juvenile correctional facilities, 'Opportunity Youth' disconnected from school and employment, homeless youth, and other vulnerable young people.

DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES: EMERGING ADULTHOOD

Emerging Adulthood is a developmental period between adolescence and adulthood that is notable for identity exploration, instability, self-focus, and feeling in-between. Key factors that impact successful progression through this phase include access to responsive, supportive adult relationships, a reduction in sources of stress, and support to strengthen core life skills.

For transition age youth, this developmental phase can be marked with particular challenges. Many have lived separated from family and had their days structured completely by the placements they were in for long periods of time. Other young people who remained in their homes and communities have struggled with environmental or internal stressors and limited access to responsive adults.

The chronic stress and/or trauma that transition age youth experience change the brain, causing automatic or "fight or flight" responses to situations that aren't actual threats. This type of reflexive and reactive response to situations can negatively impact young people's ability to enjoy success at work, in relationships or in community.

The hopeful news is that emerging adulthood is also a time of continued brain development in this area of the brain. Young people can learn to develop focus, planning, self-control, awareness and flexibility. Further, reducing stressors and increasing positive relationships help young people develop these core life capabilities.

FREQUENT TRANSITION AGE YOUTH CHALLENGES...

Lack of Diploma/GED

Lack of work history, job training, connections

Living in Poverty

Lack of Access to Affordable, Safe Housing

Mental/Physical Health or Substance Use Issues

Lack of Life Skills

... MAKE THEM VULNERABLE TO POOR OUTCOMES

Under/Un-Employment

Homelessness

Poor Health

Incarceration

Isolation



“AT PROMISE”: CULTIVATING WELL-BEING IN LIFE, WORK, AND RELATIONSHIPS

YAP views transition age youth as “at promise,” or full of potential that needs to be cultivated, supported and enabled through purposeful efforts that create opportunities, meet needs, and to develop meaningful, relevant skills and supports.

YAP’s Transition Age Youth model builds from our core YAPWrap model, which blends wraparound planning, case management, mentoring and positive youth development, with two approaches rooted in research to best position YAP to activate the “at-promise” potential of youth and young adults.

Harvard University’s Center on the Developing Child (CDC) identifies three principles to help young people successfully transition into adulthood: reduce sources of stress, support responsive relationships, and strengthen core life skills. Though every person can benefit from efforts that intentionally reduce stressors and support responsive relationships, transition age youth are particularly prime for developing their core life skills because the pre-frontal cortex of the brain develops well into our mid-twenties.

The Full Frame Initiative (FFI) recognizes that all of us share a set of human needs that are critical to our well-being. It further acknowledges that we all need assets in each of these areas; that these areas are interconnected; and that what we are (or are not) willing to give up in these domains to increase our well-being is deeply personal and influenced by many factors, such as our gender, race, culture, community, values and context. Approaching our work with transition age youth with this lens helps to ensure that we are minimizing “trade-offs,” or what young people have to give up to attain well-being, while also helping to build their assets in each domain.

THREE PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT

The Center on the Developing Child’s three principles of development.

REDUCE STRESSORS

Stressors include things like poverty, community violence, trauma, substance use and mental illness.

RELATIONSHIPS

Responsive relationships help to promote healthy brain development, provide practice assistance and buffer protection from toxic stress.

CORE LIFE SKILLS

The ability to focus, plan for and achieve goals, adapt to changing situations, and resist impulsive behaviors.

1

Safety

ability to be ourselves without significant harm

2

Stability

having things we can count on to be the same from day to day, and knowing that a small bump won’t set off a domino-effect of crises

3

Mastery

feeling that we can influence what happens to us, and having the skills to navigate and negotiate life

4

Social Connectedness

to people and communities, in ways that allow us to give as well as to receive

5

Meaningful Access to Relevant Resources

to meet our basic needs without shame, danger or great difficulty



PROGRAM COMPONENTS

YAP's Transition Age Youth Model seeks to equip young people with the skills and supports they need to be healthy, connected and productive adults from within their homes and communities. It does so by focusing on a few key indicators or domains of well-being: safe and stable housing, physical and mental health, educational/vocational support, employment opportunities and lasting positive relationships and support. The program averages over a 6 to 9 month period and for an average of 15 hours per week of face-to-face contact dependent on the complexity of their needs YAP enforces a no-reject, no-eject policy, therefore 100% of young people are accepted and none are ejected from services due to challenges that may arise during service delivery. YAP also follows up with young people at 3, 6 and 12 months after services end to ensure that young people continue to do well and offer additional support as needed.

→ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH A TRUSTWORTHY ADVOCATE

Young people are contacted within 48 hours of referral. Each person is matched with an Advocate with careful consideration of their gender, zip code, experiences, culture, language, and interests. Advocates work intensively yet flexibly with young people in their homes and communities at times and on days most needed.

→ THOROUGH, HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT

YAP's assessment process explores all life domains using 4 family friendly tools. These tools identify the young person's needs, strengths, and interests and help to build a team of professional and informal supports, including fictive or biological family as well as other positive people from the community that may be lasting resources.

→ COACHING TO DEVELOP CORE LIFE SKILLS

YAP assesses the level of support that each person needs in core life skill areas and works with them purposefully to build those skills through natural learning opportunities, intentional practice and structured interventions. Advocates provide scaffolding tools as well as offer feedback, modeling, and information sharing.

→ 24/7 SAFETY AND CRISIS SUPPORT

YAP staff are available 24/7 to every young person in the event of a crisis. More importantly, YAP works with young people to predict potential crises and create safety plans

designed to prevent them or mitigate negative impact if they occur.

→ INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICE PLAN

Each young person contributes to developing their own individualized plan that targets goals in different life domains. The plan drives YAP's work with the young person yet is dynamic and able to change with changing needs or aspirations. Young people are empowered to problem solve and identify how to meet their goals with help breaking them down into small, manageable steps.

→ MEANINGFUL ACCESS TO RELEVANT RESOURCES

YAP works to connect young people to needed materials or services based on their personal preferences, circumstances, community and culture. This is often a particular need for young people who have transitioned from services in the child system and need help accessing those services through adult systems. Importantly, YAP works with young people to learn how to identify, navigate, self-advocate and manage these resources in the future.

→ BUILDING SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

YAP works with young people to build their social connectedness to individuals and associations that are lasting and based on shared interests, values, needs, etc. Intentional work is also done preparing young people to identify how to cultivate healthy, mutually benefiting relationships.

36%

of YAP clients served annually are aged 16-25

4,212

Individuals discharged between 2016 and 2017

87%

living in the community at time of discharge

91%

connected to school or work at time of discharge



SPECIALIZED INTERVENTIONS

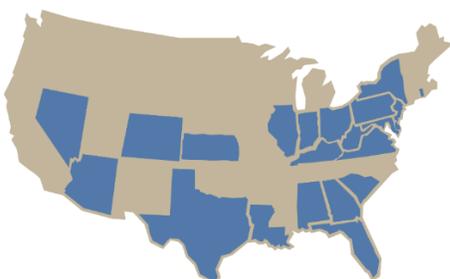
YAP frequently incorporates specific, targeted interventions that can significantly impact young person success in their goals. Interventions are chosen in collaboration with our partner agency based on the specific needs of their young people. Examples include Casey Life Skills, A-CRA or CRA, Seeking Safety, Strengthening Families, Nurturing Skills for Teen Parents, and YAP's own Supported Work and YAPWORX, an experiential service-learning method to learn labor market information while building social capital through connections to employed community-members.

PROGRAM TARGETS

- » **REMAIN IN COMMUNITY:** Young people will remain living within the community, either independently, with fictive or biological family, or others.
- » **HOUSING STABILITY:** Young people will have stable living arrangements.
- » **EDUCATION/EMPLOYMENT:** Young people will either be actively engaged in a vocational/educational program and/or with some form of employment.
- » **SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS:** Young people will identify quality, lasting relationships with at least two individuals.
- » **WELL-BEING:** Young people will report improvements in domains of well-being.

EXAMPLE: Arkansas Pay For Success For Adults 18-25 Re-Entering from Prison

YAP is engaging 150 young adults aged 18-25 annually who are returning home from state correction facilities as part of a Pay For Success project in Arkansas. The program goals are to reduce recidivism by 50% and to have 60% of participants with some form of employment.



AL • AZ • CO • DC • DE • FL • GA • IL • IN • KS • KY • LA
MD • NJ • NY • NV • OH • PA • RI • SC • TX • VA • WV

Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP) is nationally recognized nonprofit exclusively committed to the provision of community-based services as alternatives to out of home care through direct service, advocacy and policy change.

For more information on our Transition Age Youth Model, please contact **Gary Ivory, National Director of Program Development**, at givory@yapinc.org or at 214-417-7614.