

YAP Theory of Change  
& Logic Model

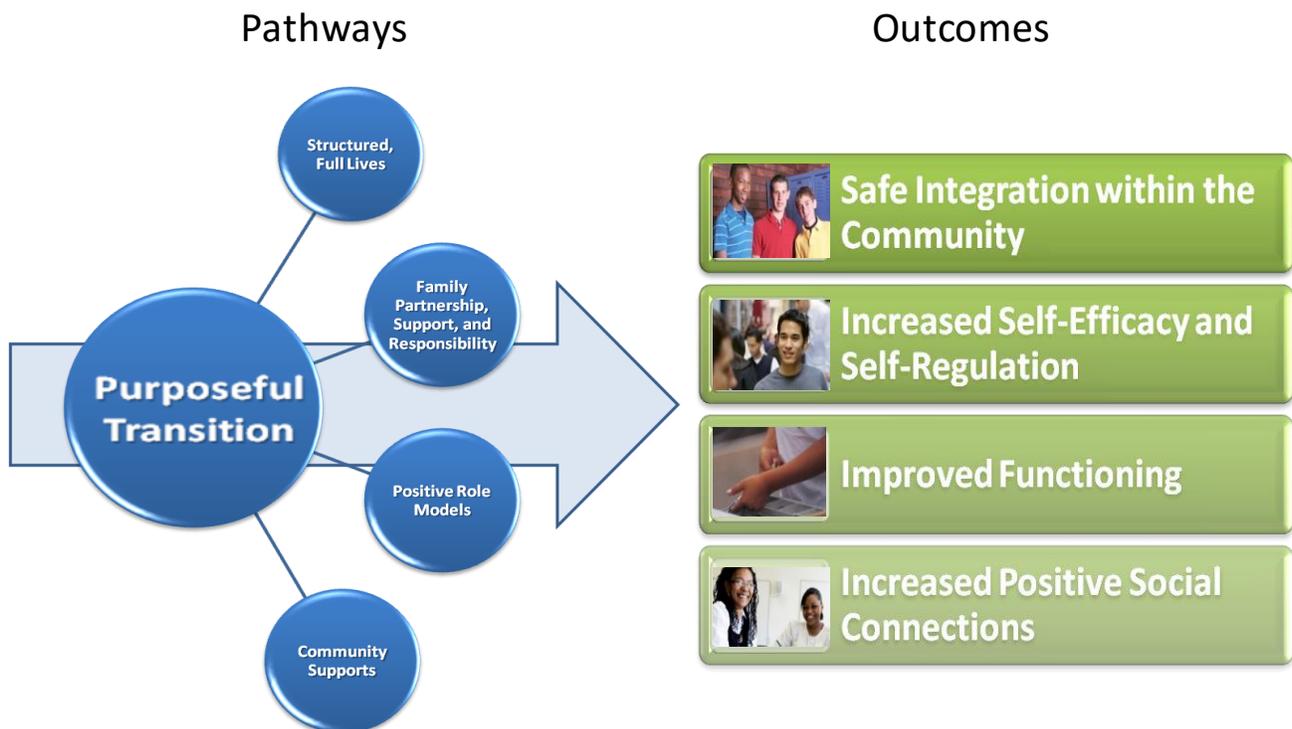
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# YAP Theory of Change and Approach to Service Delivery

The Theory of Change for YAP Advocate Programs follows five Pathways to positive outcomes for youth and families. These Pathways combine research from a number of fields to create a unique model that describes what YAP does, how it is unique and how it results in positive outcomes for youth in juvenile justice and child welfare programs and their families.

Advocacy is a complex process that must be individualized for each youth and family. Logic models and program descriptions graphically illustrate program components and help stakeholders identify outcomes, inputs and activities. They generally start with a program and identify program components so at a glance you can see if outcomes and activities are occurring. On the other hand, a theory of change links outcomes and activities to explain how and why the outcomes are expected to occur. The YAP theory of change articulates a hypothesis about why the advocacy process will cause sustainable outcomes- why it works, and why it is different from other services and processes. It also sets expectations for what we want to accomplish with and for youth and families. A theory of change defines both what we are trying to accomplish through advocacy and helps the YAP staff make decisions about how to individualize the process with each youth and family. Simply put the YAP Theory of Change says:

*If juvenile justice and child welfare system involved youth have a full life of structured activities driven by their needs, strengths and culture; families who are empowered and take responsibility to support the youth; role models who provide them with support, encouragement and limits; and a strong, engaged and sustainable positive social support system, then they will have good and sustainable outcomes.*



There are two basic premises that underlie the five pathways for YAP work with juvenile justice and child welfare involved youth:

- first, that all youth and families possess strengths, potential, interests and talents that make them unique and that can be built upon and shared; and
- second, that youth and families need access to positive people, places and activities to develop their natural potential and live full, productive lives.

YAP employs staff called “Advocates” to work with youth and families in achieving both of the above, recognizing that these individuals themselves can become positive role models in the lives of their youth while working with them. YAP purposefully seeks to connect young people with individuals with whom they can easily trust and identify through techniques such as zip code recruitment (where staff are hired from the local communities where youth live), matching based on commonalities (such as interests, culture, etc), and, most importantly, by demonstrating true interest in and respect for the young person. YAP believes developing a genuine trust-based relationship with youth is the foundation from which growth and change can occur.

That being said, YAP is conscious that we are a service provider, and that the relationship we develop is professional and not naturally occurring or sustainable. Therefore, preparing youth and families for transition is the first pathway, and reflected and reinforced in the work we do in the other four pathways in our efforts and activities with youth, families and community supports.

YAP conceptualizes readiness for transition quite simply as the demonstrated ability to better manage their lives. YAP youth and families will most likely continue to have needs beyond our involvement, and these needs may increase over time. Furthermore, the youth’s transition may not be determined by progress but by contractual mandates or other external factors. For these reasons, there is a strong emphasis on working with youth and families to build skills and supports throughout services to help predict, plan and prepare for future situations.

The advocate’s role then evolves to serve two primary functions: Catalysts of change and Connectors with community: people, activities/associations, and services. As catalysts, YAP helps youth and families to accelerate the pace of growth and change with better results and more positive outcomes than if they had to manage or negotiate them on our own. These activities are reflected in our second and third pathways, helping youth to develop structured, full lives, and family partnership, support and responsibility.

Advocates engage with the youth to develop a structured and full schedule of activities that meet the mandates or requirements of referring authority; result in meaningful educational/vocational and, when appropriate, employment outcomes; and opportunities for youth to engage in positive community activities based on his/her own strengths and interests. Thinking always of preparing youth for transition, this pathway begins with direct support and monitoring from the Advocate and shifts to youth and family control by the end of advocacy services. Through this role the youth develop the life skills, empowerment and self efficacy to move forward as a productive adult integrated within the community. Knowing that much of a youth’s long-term success is predictive of their family functioning, the third pathway engages the youth’s parent(s) or caregivers as partners: offers

emotional and concrete support and encourages responsibility and empowerment of family in supporting their youth and setting appropriate limits.

As Connectors, YAP seeks to identify and develop a youth and family's positive supports and opportunities to contribute. Many YAP youth and families are marginalized and isolated in literal and figurative ways. YAP seeks to identify each youth's strengths, gifts, and interests, and (re-)connect them with community supports and opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways. YAP believes that this is critical to long-term success, as these supports are more sustainable than our relationship with them and more naturally occurring than the services often assigned to them.

YAP's last two pathways focus on this critical task. The fourth pathway is connecting youth with positive role models. Positive role models are caring, competent adults who the young person looks up to and goes to for advice, guidance and encouragement. Though the Advocate can function in this capacity during our work with youth, purposeful effort goes into connecting the youth with positive adults and strengthening relationships with family and others within the community. The fifth pathway is building and strengthening the youth and family's broader community of support and their ability to further develop and engage these relationships post-YAP involvement so that their sense of connectedness and support are sustained.

### **Pathway One – Purposeful Transition**

#### **Pathway Statement**

A primary goal of Youth Advocate Programs is to prepare the youth and family to carry on successfully after the Advocate is no longer working with them. From the first meeting with the family, Advocates work purposefully on preparing for discharge by developing the family's skills across 8 transition assets:

1. Their ability to self-advocate for their needs, interests, etc.;
2. Their ability to navigate the system(s) that they are involved in or may need or want to access to help meet their needs;
3. Their ability to follow through on their commitments, tasks and responsibilities and to effectively problem-solve through obstacles or challenges;
4. Their ability to use current resources and access new ones as they need or want them;
5. Their ability to prevent and safely and effectively manage crises;
6. Their ability to develop and maintain positive supports and relationships; and
7. Their ability to manage their own needs and plan.

Advocates provide the level of support that is needed for each asset while actively seeking to move the family from dependency toward self-sufficiency. This progression is summarized by the mantra "Do for; do with; cheer on!"

In terms of the Pathways, advocates seek to transfer control for developing and following through on the weekly schedule to the youth and family. A second process of purposeful transition occurs as the role of mentor is transferred from the Advocate to someone in the community who cares for the youth and will be there for the foreseeable future. A third process is empowering the family and improving family functioning and providing them the skills and confidence to empower them to assume

responsibility for the youth. A fourth focus of YAP is identifying and mobilization of a community of support to support youth and families in this process. Traditional service systems' near exclusive emphasis on professional service providers may support dependence at worst and certainly does not provide for ongoing mechanisms of support after the professionals close their cases and are gone. YAP works to help youth and families connect or reconnect with their community of support.

### Research Base

Social Support/Social Capital research demonstrates that sustainable change is the result of planning and social supports. Self efficacy research shows us that sustaining change results when youth and families have the skills, confidence and practice at managing their own needs.

### Strategies

The pathways that a youth and family follow in the Youth Advocate Program begin with development of the plan and services by the referring entity. This often precedes referral to YAP. The Advocate concurrently works with the youth and family to implement the terms of these plans and services and begin the mentoring process.

During engagement the Advocate begins to consider the culture of the youth and family and asks what their vision is for how they want their life to be different at the end of YAP services. Different youth and families prefer and need different types of support. By assessing where each family is on the continuum of support for each YAP transition asset, we can begin to identify strategies to support them from where they are currently and how to help move them to be where they want to be.

Throughout their time working with the family, the Advocate continually works to build the family's transition assets. When the Advocate gets families to brainstorm options to crisis, behavior, or urgent needs in the very first meeting, they are setting a precedent for partnership.

The youth and family take the lead in how decisions are made by the team. In the previous sections we have discussed the strategy of "do for, do with and cheer on" to support the youth and family through the process of taking over management of the process for themselves.

High risk youth and their families are going to have ongoing needs, and a primary role is not meeting all of these needs, but preparing the youth and family to manage their own process to meet these needs. Planning is a process of ongoing needs identification, prioritization, and planning. Teaching youth and families this ongoing planning process is a key to sustaining progress and outcomes.

## **Pathway Two – Full, Structured Lives**

### Pathway Statement

High-risk youth who are provided with intensive structure, supervision and support are more likely to avoid further juvenile justice involvement and out-of-home placement. When the activities of the schedule are developed in partnership with the youth to meet their legal obligations and based on their own unique strengths, culture and interests, the youth are more likely to follow through with the schedule. The activities include the life skills, confidence and empowerment that help the youth stay on their own course. Youth who learn to develop and engage in a full structured schedule of pro-social

activities without supervision are more likely to sustain progress and live a productive and crime free life.

### Research Base

Research by the National Institute of Corrections finds that when youth at high risk for criminal activity have 40 to 70% of their time in structured activities they are less likely to engage in criminal behavior. Educational and vocational research shows that structured time and focus on school and careers improves performance in both of these areas. Evolving needs theory shows that addressing the needs that are identified as most important by the youth and family will improve their engagement, retention and success. Research on engagement shows that youth are more likely to engage in activities they choose and that match their strengths, culture and preferences. Research on self efficacy shows that youth who have the skills and confidence to accomplish the tasks of their schedule successfully are much more likely to follow through on the schedule, continue to persevere in the face of failure and try more difficult activities. Research on recidivism and long term sustainability shows that youth who learn to develop and follow through on their schedules without constant direct supervision have significantly better long term outcomes.

### Strategies

To maintain high risk youth in the community it is necessary to take immediate steps to keep them safe and/or from committing further crimes. One of the primary strategies for this is to develop an appropriate schedule of activities that safely engages their time and then monitoring them to ensure that it is followed and working well.

The Advocate works with the youth and referring authorities to determine the non-negotiable parts of the schedule which may include such things as regular meetings with their juvenile justice/child welfare worker, attending school, participating in individual and group therapeutic activities and maintaining curfews. Then the Advocate works with the youth and family to identify and prioritize their needs, strengths, culture and interests. The Advocate works with the youth and educational and/or vocational supports to determine the activities and amount of structured time that needs to be spent to do well in educational and vocational pursuits.

From these sources of information, the Advocate works with the family to develop a weekly schedule. The schedule includes a blend of the “non-negotiables” and other activities that the youth chooses based on their strengths and interests. By doing so, Advocates ensure that families have voice, access and ownership of their plan. Advocates plan their time with the youth and family by jointly identifying gaps in the schedule or times of high need/risk.

Beyond the weekly schedule, YAP Staff use the information from the family and other stakeholders to convene a child-family team. This team of both formal (professional) and informal (natural) supports work together in support of the family as they identify their needs. The team contributes to the process by sharing the strengths of the family and the supports that they can offer to help meet the family’s needs. This meeting results in an individualized service plan (ISP) that articulates specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timelined goals that become the basis of all work done with the

family. The Advocate uses the ISP to engage the youth in purposeful activities to build their skills and connections.

The Advocate also works with the youth and family to develop crisis/safety plans to help stabilize unsafe situations and behavior challenges. To manage risk, factors (trigger) that help predict crisis are identified and strategies developed to prevent these triggers from resulting in the crisis or behavior. Signs that the crisis or behavior is beginning and methods to deescalate it are identified to reduce the chances of the crisis or behavior becoming severe. A plan to respond to the crisis or behavior is planned in advance when heads are cool so that everyone involved will know what to do.

For long term success the youth must assume the development and implementation of the schedule and activities. The Advocate transfers these functions to the youth gradually as the youth takes on the responsibility to develop and the management of their own schedule.

### **Pathway Three – Family Support, Empowerment and Responsibility**

#### PathwayStatement

The primary determinant of long term success for youth is the engagement and support of their parents/caregivers (hereafter referred to as parents) and family. Youth with support and consistent rules and feedback from their families and extended families have a much greater chance for long term success. Working with parents and other family members to help them meet their own needs, support strengthening their parental role and support for the youth, and connecting them with a positive social system will improve their ability to parent effectively. Advocacy is provided in partnership with the parents and other family members to build their empowerment, self-efficacy and sense of responsibility.

#### Research Base

Consistent and supportive parenting has been shown through research to be one of if not the most important protective factor for high risk youth. Research on retention, follow through and sustainability of treatment demonstrates that full family engagement is the most important factor in predicting success for the youth. Engagement research shows that actively listening to the family and developing plans that match their strengths, needs and culture will improve and sustain engagement. Family empowerment research shows that families given choice and control over important family decision and held accountable for their actions take significantly more responsibility for providing consistent and effective parenting. When parents have networks of family members and friends who share a commitment to the youth, parents' efforts to care for the child are enhanced. One of the central aspects of the theory is that the impact of the youth-parent relationship on outcomes for the youth is directly related to the relationships the parent has had with others. Other supportive relationships for the parent that are supportive for the youth-parent relationship strengthen the impact on the child. In the long run natural supports have much more influence on sustainable outcomes for youth and families than do service providers.

#### Strategies

The Advocate engages both the youth and parents in the planning process from the beginning. Initially, many family members report that they feel hopeless, helpless and overwhelmed. Advocates ask each youth/family member four questions early in the service delivery process: What do you

need? How can we help? How do we work together as equal partners to better your circumstances? How can we support you to move forward when we are gone?

The Advocate actively listens to all family members and comes to understand each family member's concerns, needs, strengths and culture across life domains. The Advocate works with the parents and family members to come to a consensus on their needs related to parenting their child(ren) and works to teach them the skills and/or find them supports and services to address these needs.

The advocate builds on the engagement with the youth and their family to identify "non-negotiable" (e.g., court orders) needs, strengths culture and other youth and family prioritized needs. These are summarized into a vision and needs are addressed in a sequential order to not overwhelm the youth and family but to implement in a progressive fashion that builds their skills, commitment and confidence in achieving their vision.

The Advocate helps the family to mobilize the members of their support system (their team) to help plan and then implement a plan to improve parenting and outcomes for the youth. This team is described more in the following pathway.

#### **Pathway Four – Community of Support**

##### Pathway Statement

Youth and their families who are supported by a community of supports will have better outcomes in many areas of their lives. This community of supports includes the social supports and professionals who will be there for the youth and family now and for the foreseeable future. The community of support also includes the family's "go to" people. These individuals play a role in the youth's/family's life and support them in different ways. They are considered members of the family's "team" as they are working together to support the youth and family's needs and best interests, though each team member may only be involved with some parts of the plan and the life of the youth and family.

##### Research Base

The theory of Human Ecology emphasizes the importance of social influences on human development and functioning. Many research studies demonstrate that people with reliable and positive social support systems are healthier, happier, and have more positive outcomes than people with fewer natural supports. Youth are influenced by their parents and the people who play important roles in their lives. In turn, these people are influenced by the interrelations of their families, social networks, neighborhoods, communities and cultures.

##### Strategies

Advocates support social support system development in many ways. In the beginning they help youth and families identify their current supports and the reciprocal nature of these relationships.

Advocates encourage and support youth and families to involve positive social supports within their lives in a number of roles.

These supports and current service providers can be considered the “team” for the youth and family but any one service provider or support may only be involved in some parts of the youth and family’s lives.

The advocate implements a process to engage all of the agencies and service providers working with and for the youth and the family, extended family and other community supports who are important to the youth and family. These people are the “team” for the youth and this “team” will change overtime as services come and go and the youth’s support system grows and changes.

The advocate will support a process that develops an integrated and sequential plan that addresses the non-negotiable and family property needs.

Advocates often “work deep” with youth and families to understand the importance of this community of support and help youth and families to identify ways to involve them. For many families including a youth at high risk, former supports have become estranged.

Advocates may work with families to repair these relationships and learn strategies to maintain supports.

Advocates may also help youth and families identify the need for new natural supports and learn strategies to develop them.

## **Pathway Five – Positive Roles Models**

### Pathway Statement

Frequent and long-term contact with caring adults who are strong positive role models are instrumental to help youth overcome environments and histories that put them at high risk. Positive role models are one of the strongest protective factors to build a successful and crime free life. These people can provide encouragement, support and help related to all major life domains. The Advocate can fill this role for a short-term basis and helps the youth to establish and maintain more sustainable connections with other positive role models.

### Research Base

The research on risk and protective factors shows that one of the most significant protective factors for youth who have many risk factors is a close relationship with a caring adult who provides a positive role model. This research shows that youth with this support can overcome many obstacles to have a successful and crime free life. The research on mentoring and protective factors both show that a youth is more likely to engage with and trust someone who comes from their own neighborhood and situation. The research on mentoring shows that as this person also works with the youth to develop a trusting relationship the mentor is able to get an accurate picture of youth and family circumstances, needs, culture and strengths and that these can be used to create effective and unique plans.

### Strategies

Youth are matched with Advocates that are recruited and hired from their communities. These caring, competent adults are matched with youth based on shared interests and other factors deemed to predict both the ability to establish a trusting relationship with the youth and to help them achieve

their goals. Advocates spend 7 to 30 hours per week with the youth engaging them in purposeful activities to help them achieve the goals in their ISP and develop transition assets.

The Advocate becomes a positive role model to the youth and family. The Advocate actively listens to the youth and family to gain a thorough understanding of their circumstances, needs, strengths and culture. The Advocate supports the youth and family to ensure the plan is implemented and gradually turns responsibility for planning and implementation over to the youth and family. The Advocate employs a number of techniques in his/her capacity as a positive role model to help the youth, such as coaching, educating, modeling, rehearsing, exposing the youth/family to new experiences, opportunities and supports, and others.

The Advocate also seeks to strengthen relationships with existing positive role models, or to help develop relationships with new positive role models. The Advocate works with the youth and family to determine how to connect and interact with their supports to address the identified needs. Based on the youth and family's needs, strengths and interests, the Advocate connects the youth and family with other community supports and seeks to engage some supports into becoming positive role models.

The Advocate also works to teach the youth the skills in developing and maintaining these relationships; to be able to recognize the value that others bring to them; to be able to identify the value that they can or do bring to their relationships.

## Logic Model for YAP Advocate Programs

