

Checklist for Professionals

To help youth prepare for their successful transition to adulthood



Youth Centered

I involve youth in decisions and planning meetings

- I honor youth's input and provide opportunities for them to make decisions
- When their requests are not possible, I am honest with youth about why and help them process their feelings

I help youth build self-determination

- I provide opportunities for developmentally appropriate risk-taking
- I provide opportunities for youth to try new things and make mistakes (while they have support to overcome them)
- I create opportunities for youth to build relationships with peers
- I create opportunities for youth to experience success

Teach

I teach youth the skills they need to succeed

- I teach youth what their disability/mental health diagnosis means & how it may impact them as adults (or ask the appropriate professional to do so)
- I teach youth to self-advocate so they can obtain necessary accommodations/modifications for post-secondary or employment success
- I teach youth how to access adult mental health and/or disability services

Advocate

I advocate for youth

- I facilitate contact with their biological family (when safe to do so)
 - I help them prepare for challenges they may experience, as an adult, with these relationships
 - I teach them about healthy relationships, boundaries, and where to find support
- I advocate to prevent school and home placement changes
 - I facilitate appropriate training and coaching for teachers and/or caregivers
 - I facilitate respite for caregivers - to allow time for "self-care"
 - I ask youth for their input about changes in school or home placements
 - I help youth continue valued relationships when changes are necessary

Advocate

I advocate for caregivers

- I help caregivers acquire knowledge about how disabilities impact youth in their care
- I help caregivers access available school and social services

Support

I help youth develop a support system before they leave foster care
I determine if youth will need access to:

- Mental health care
- Physical health care
- Housing assistance
- Ongoing case management
- Additional support to succeed in post-secondary education (e.g., disability services or specialized programs for alumni of foster care)

Collaborate

I collaborate with all members of the youth's service team

- I communicate regularly with other professionals and agencies that serve the same youth
- I explain to youth how other professionals/agencies serving them can be helpful
- I help youth communicate their goals and embolden other professionals to align our work so we can best support those goals
- I am careful to not duplicate efforts of other agencies

Additional resources

Child Welfare Information Gateway <https://www.childwelfare.gov>

Family Engagement: A Web-Based Practice Toolkit
<http://www.nccwe.org/toolkits/family-engagement/introduction.htm>

Harwick, R., Lindstrom, L., & Unruh, D. (2017). In their own words: Overcoming barriers during the transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities who experienced foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 73, 338-346.

Harwick, R., Tyre, A., Beisse, K. & Thomas, C. (2015). Intervention targets for youth with disabilities in foster care. *School Psychology Forum*, (9)1, 5-20.