

# Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities

## Individualized Skill-Building

### *Person-Centered Thinking & Planning Tip Sheet for Foster Care in New York*

#### **What does it mean to be person-centered?**

Being person-centered is about how you look at the world. This perspective considers the young person as an active participant in their own life choices. It is seeing the person's strengths first, instead of their disabilities, deficits, or things that others may think need to be "cured."

#### **Building Skills for Adulthood**

Young people in foster care might be reunited with their families, be adopted, or end up "aging out" of foster care. Regardless of how and when they leave, they may hope to live independently when they reach adulthood. As such, it is recommended that those who work with youth begin to prepare them to live as independently as possible in adulthood, beginning at age 12. This early and ongoing practice is especially important for youth with disabilities, who might need more assistance and repetition than their peers in order to master skills.

Scan this with your smartphone for resources, examples, and more information on this topic!



*While this information has been developed with a focus on youth with disabilities in foster care, many of the resources can be used for youth with and without disabilities in any setting with minimal or no adaptation.*



#### **Use the Person-Centered Principles**

Using person-centered principles can lead toward greater independence by encouraging young people to explore their abilities and communities. Everyone has strengths to be shared and can make a difference. Professionals and foster parents need to learn about the young person by focusing on their interests and strengths. Professionals and young people should keep the following principles in mind:

- **Choices:** Making informed choices based on experiences and information from trusted adults about likely outcomes. Choices begin with everyday items (what to eat or what to wear) and progress to decisions where some risk is involved (where to work, how to spend money, etc.).
- **Community:** Promoting positive participation in community using their strengths and interests. One way to show success in community participation? People miss them when they are not there.
- **Flexibility:** Finding flexibility in when, where, how, and with whom the young person interacts. Accommodations are made for the internal clock (moving away from scheduling during traditional "business hours" as able if he/she is a "night person").
- **Goals:** Using the young person's strengths, preferences, desires, and needs to create goals. Make short-term, achievable goals in the beginning to build confidence and competence.
- **Changes:** Ensuring the young person's active participation in all planning around life and can make changes to plans. Plan grows and changes with the person as new likes and dislikes are discovered.

## Skill-Building

Visit our website using the QR code above for resources that can be used with youth to learn about themselves and what they want for their lives in the following important areas:

- Understanding Self Determination and Knowing Your Rights
- Finding Interests
- Setting Goals
- Overall Independent Living Skills Development

## Other Skill Areas to Explore

In addition to the skill areas above, there are many more topics to teach and explore with young people in foster care. The following skills were gathered from focus groups and literature and are divided into four categories: Health, Social Skills, Self-Development and Daily Life Skills. Below each skill area are domains. Note that while this information was gathered specifically for work with youth with disabilities, it can be useful for others.



## Health

- Healthy eating
- Coping
- Healthy sexuality
- Understanding health care access
- Medical awareness

## Social Skills

- Building and maintaining relationships and networks
- Understanding trust and appropriate interactions
- Accepting correction/being accountable
- Asking for help and knowing individual limits

## Self-Development

- Problem-solving and decision-making
- Identifying strengths/desires to express needs
- Goal-setting
- Self-advocacy

## Daily Life Skills

- Employment
- Money management
- Navigating transportation
- Finding housing
- Home maintenance
- Education
- System navigation
- Safety
- Transferability of Skills

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