

Executive Summary

Course Title: Working with Youth Who Challenge You Most

Course Description: When youth in the child welfare system are deemed “challenging,” “difficult,” or “resistant,” they are often the ones headed for group homes, probation, or CYA. The child welfare community must have the skills necessary to prevent the circumstances that produce these youth and to helpfully intervene once they are struggling. With the proper skills, resources, and understanding, dedicated and hopeful professionals can help prevent a life of repeating negative patterns, or worse, institutional living, foster care for future generations, and/or poverty.

To learn more about why these foster youth challenge you most, join the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project in this flexible training developed & facilitated by current and former foster youth from group home and probation supervised foster care. Participants will be encouraged, inspired, and motivated to making improvements to their professional practice and change the way youth are treated when they are perceived as “difficult” or “challenging.”

The training information will be delivered via interactive activities, small and large group discussion, role play/skills practice, case studies, lecture, digital stories developed by youth and materials to bring back to the office for future reference & to share with colleagues.

Target Audience: This training is designed for child welfare, group home and probation workers that work with adolescents (age 13-21). Line social workers, supervisors, managers, nurses, support staff and caregivers are likely to benefit from this training.

Course Objectives (Varies with which training modules are scheduled. Please consult the training “menu” on Pg. 2):

1. Participants will be empowered to understand youth beyond their diagnosis (and troubling behavior) and gain skills to effectively interpret and respond to needs and issues behind a youth’s “challenging” behavior.
2. Participants will be able to identify how grief and loss and attachment wounds can affect a foster youth’s behavior and attitude.
3. Participants will practice developing innovative practices to better serve group home and probation youth.
4. Participants will be introduced to the restorative justice system and have the ability to utilize the skills and knowledge of this alternative to criminal justice.
5. Participants will gain knowledge and empathy for the experiences (obstacles and frustrations) that youth go through that often results in behaviors that stigmatize or criminalize youth and bewilder adults.
6. Participants will have the opportunity to strengthen their communication skills to work with youth in a multitude of difficult situations.
7. Participants will understand the value of including youth in their case planning.

Ways Supervisors can support Transfer of Learning from the classroom to the job:

Before Training:

1. Review the executive summary with staff members.
2. Assess the level of familiarity with this population
3. Work on identifying the challenges trainee has working with transition aged foster youth.

After Training:

1. Review trainee’s “Anything Amazing” poster from the training.
2. Ask trainee how they can apply what they learned to the youth they work with.

3. Discuss any information that the trainee thinks would be helpful to share with their colleagues and have them present on it in a scheduled staff meeting.

CURRICULUM “MENU”

Working with Foster Youth that Challenge You Most

- * In a 3 hour training you may choose 2 pieces of curriculum (2 trainings can be delivered in a day).
- * In a 4 hour training you may choose 3 pieces of curriculum.
- * In a 5 hour training we can train all 4 pieces of curriculum.

1. **“1 Step Forward, 10 Steps Back”** (*board game, case planning, decision making, digital story*)

In this activity:

- Participants will gain knowledge and empathy for the experiences (obstacles and frustrations) that youth go through that often results in behaviors that stigmatize or criminalize youth and bewilder adults.
- Participants will have the opportunity to strengthen their skills to work with youth in a multitude of difficult situations.
- Participants will understand the value of including youth in their case planning.
- Participants will have a greater understanding for how to serve youth involved in group home care and the juvenile justice system.

2. **“Restorative Circles”** (*some lecture, handouts, digital story, group exercise*)

In this activity:

- Participants will be introduced to restorative justice processes and have the ability to utilize the skills and knowledge of this alternative to criminal justice.
- Participants will understand the difference between using the criminal justice system and the restorative justice system in response to negative or criminal behavior of foster youth.

3. **“Understand Me Entirely”** (*some lecture, handouts, case examples, digital story*)

In this activity:

- Participants will be able to identify how grief and loss and attachment wounds can affect a foster youth’s behavior and attitude.
- Participants will be empowered to understand youth beyond their diagnosis (and troubling behavior) and gain skills to effectively interpret and respond to needs and issues behind a youth’s “challenging” behavior.
- Participants will have a greater understanding of successful adolescent development.

4. **“Innovative Practices”** (*kinesthetic group activity, digital story, case examples, skills practice*)

In this activity:

- Participants will be challenged to think outside the box and learn examples of how workers challenge the status quo.
- Participants will practice developing innovative practices to better serve group home and probation youth.