

YOUTH THRIVE™

PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive

BUILDING THE YOUTH THRIVE™ FRAMEWORK IN JURISDICTIONS



YOUTH THRIVE™ IS AN INITIATIVE OF THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL POLICY.



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ABOUT YOUTH THRIVE™

Youth Thrive is an approach developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) that uses the latest science to advance work based on five protective and promotive factors for youth's well-being and success. It is not a specific program or intervention, rather Youth Thrive is a lens for assessing current efforts and making changes to policies, programs, training, services, partnerships and systems that impact young people's lives. CSSP reviewed and synthesized extensive research on positive youth development, resilience, brain development, the biology of stress and the impact of trauma to identify and define these five factors:

- 1 Youth Resilience
- 2 Social Connections
- 3 Knowledge of Adolescent Development
- 4 Concrete Support in Times of Need
- 5 Cognitive & Social-Emotional Competence

CSSP considers Youth Thrive to be a holistic framework and emphasizes the interrelationship among the five protective and promotive factors. Youth benefit from increasing their **knowledge of adolescent development** because this helps to "normalize" their individual experiences as developmentally typical, and even healthy, as they prepare for adulthood. Strong, positive social connections—people and institutions—provide support for the development of **cognitive and social and emotional competence**. Strong, positive **social connections** also serve as buffers against many types of problem behaviors and help youth to learn how to effectively manage stressors—both of which are aspects of **youth resilience**. Youth resilience helps adolescents to have a greater sense of self-efficacy, which enables them to make productive decisions, including when and how to seek **concrete support in times of need**. Together, reducing risk factors and advancing protective and promotive factors, are regarded as a pathway for decreasing the likelihood of negative outcomes and increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes.



WORKING IN JURISDICTIONS

The purpose of launching and sustaining the Youth Thrive approach, working with public agencies and in jurisdictions is to proactively build vulnerable youths' well-being (cognitive, emotional, physical, social and spiritual) in the communities with which we partner. The Youth Thrive framework can be applied to all adolescents and young adults ages 9–26. Currently Youth Thrive is focusing on youth involved in the child welfare system, and going forward, may also work with juvenile justice, mental health and other youth- and family-serving systems.

The expectation is that jurisdictions adopting the Youth Thrive approach will create a climate that is conducive to making change and taking actions that build protective and promotive factors and expand opportunities for youth and their families. Public agencies will use the Youth Thrive framework to align policies, practices and operations and will apply the latest evidence-informed research and innovative practice strategies to their work with young people, professionals, practitioners, parents, other caregivers, community leaders and other stakeholders.

CRITICAL LEVERS FOR SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT

Youth Thrive has identified the following levers that we believe are critical for creating systems improvement:

- ▶ Leadership & Governance
- ▶ Programs & Services Array
- ▶ Contracting & Licensing Procedures
- ▶ Training & Supervision
- ▶ Systems for Data Collection and Continuous Quality Improvement
- ▶ Policies & Practice
- ▶ Agency Culture & Approaches for Engaging Youth

THEORY OF CHANGE



Youth in general, as well as those at heightened risk for negative outcomes, have a greater likelihood of achieving healthy outcomes as a result of experiences that support the building of the Youth Thrive protective and promotive factors and the reduction of risk factors.

VISION STATEMENT

The Youth Thrive approach endeavors to ensure that the developmental needs of young people will be better attended to and that youth will receive the supports and experiences necessary to ensure enhanced opportunities for productive and secure lives.

The intended results of Youth Thrive are dynamic outcomes for healthy development and well-being of young people such that the young person is:

- ▶ Physically and emotionally healthy
- ▶ Hopeful, optimistic, compassionate and curious
- ▶ Able to form and sustain caring, committed relationships
- ▶ Successful in school and workplace
- ▶ Service-oriented towards his/her community or society



HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT & WELL-BEING OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH

Because of increases in promotive and protective factors and decreases in risk factors, youth are:

Physically and emotionally **healthy**

Hopeful, optimistic, compassionate, curious and have a **resilient** identity

Able to form and sustain caring, committed **relationships**

Successful in **school** and **workplace**

In **service** to community or society

INCREASES IN PPFs & DECREASES IN RISK FACTORS

Because of the systems, programs and policy improvements, youth should experience

INCREASES IN:

- Resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of adolescent development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Cognitive and social-emotional competence

AND DECREASES IN:

- Psychological stressors
- Inadequate or negative relationships with family members, adults outside youth's family and peers
- Insufficient or inadequate opportunities for positive growth and development
- Unsafe, unstable, inequitable environments



PPFs &
RISK
FACTORS



YOUTH
WELL-BEING



IMPROVEMENTS



YOUTH THRIVE STRATEGIES

Informed by the values, principles and knowledge in the Youth Thrive framework, Youth Thrive employs the following strategies to:

Partner with Jurisdictions

Support the integration of the YT framework into jurisdictions' approach to serving youth

Provide consultation, technical assistance, training and capacity building

Develop specialized tools

Recommend strategies for monitoring and tracking implementation and results

Help build cross systems and community partnerships

Promote Innovation in Policy and Practice

Identify & disseminate effective practice and policy

Create & support a learning network

Advocate for policy & practice improvements

Support and Build Champions

Identify, support and convene change agents

Develop national partners

Elevate young people as leaders and advocates

Mobilize collective action

Advance the Knowledge Base

Influence the youth serving field

Disseminate evidence for YT framework

Identify tools for tracking implementation and results

Capture the change process and results in jurisdictions

STRATEGIES



SYSTEMS, PROGRAM & POLICY IMPROVEMENTS

The Youth Thrive approach advances:

Federal, state and local **legislative and administrative policy improvements** that reflect the YT framework

Changes in jurisdictions' **leadership and governance, programs and services, contracting and licensing, training and supervision, policy and practice, youth engagement and accountability** that reflect the YT framework

Specific **opportunities** being created to reduce risk factors and increase protective and promotive factors

YOUTH THRIVE IN ACTION

YOUTH THRIVE™

WHAT CSSP OFFERS

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) developed Youth Thrive as a research-informed framework to assist public child welfare agencies in meeting the federal requirement of well-being for system-involved children and youth. This multi-year initiative examines how all youth, with a particular focus on foster youth, can be supported in ways that advance healthy development and well-being and reduce the impact of negative life experiences. Youth Thrive™ uses the Protective and Promotive Factors Framework aimed at youth and young adults ages 9–26.

A partnership between CSSP and public agencies is designed to integrate the values, principles and knowledge of Youth Thrive throughout the jurisdiction in seven critical areas: **1) Leadership and Governance** **2) Programs and Services Array** **3) Contracting and Licensing Procedures** **4) Training and Supervision** **5) Policy and Practice** **6) Systems for Data Collection and Continuous Quality Improvement** **7) Agency Culture and Approaches for Youth Engagement.** The Youth Thrive approach leads to improvements in systems, programs and policies, which ultimately lead to healthy development and well-being.

Youth Thrive provides:

- Consultation, strategic technical assistance and capacity-building advice related to site use of the Youth Thrive Framework.
- A train-the-trainer curriculum that provides a solid understanding of the protective and promotive factors.
- Access to a Peer Learning Community of Practice, which include convenings, symposia, issue-based focus groups, peer-to-peer exchanges and webinars.
- Specialized tools tailored for a specific jurisdictions that may be replicable and adaptable in other jurisdictions.
- Support in capturing the change process and the impact on youth in care.
- Support for key leaders and change agents.
- Opportunities to test emerging and evidence based practices.

STAGES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

CSSP has defined three stages of implementation—*Establishing, Growing, Sustaining*—to help jurisdictions plan, execute and assess their progress over time as they address each of the “levers” that create change within child welfare and other youth-serving systems (see planning grid). Throughout all phases, youth voice must be a common thread as a site tracks performance for each lever.

ESTABLISHING

In the establishing stage, a Youth Thrive site mobilizes youth and adults together in a partnership to improve every day practices and jurisdiction-wide policies to reduce risks and increase protective and promotive factors. A Youth Thrive site conducts a scan of the environment and a situational analysis to identify practices that are supportive and healthy for youth and makes the assessment of the gaps in activities. Youth Thrive utilizes its guiding principles and strategies, grounded in strength-based approaches, to develop a comprehensive set of solutions rather than responding to one shot problems.

GROWING

At this stage, the Youth Thrive site convenes youth and adult stakeholders on a regular basis to develop opportunities for operational changes. Mechanisms for consistent communication, system change and shared accountability to ensure follow-through are fully in place. The goal is to infuse an understanding of trauma-informed care and adolescent development into all aspects of the work. The site translates ideas into action by providing training that changes the role of the individual into one of collective action within the jurisdiction. The site moves beyond regularly training a core group to take action and goes to scale by incorporating an expanded and increasingly well-informed network of champions.

SUSTAINING

A Youth Thrive site is powerfully and productively sustained when legislation, regulations and policies reinforce and mandate practices and programs that promote positive youth development and healthy well-being. At this stage, a toolbox of procedures, techniques and strategies has been put in place and is available to all to mobilize practice champions, identify and incorporate critical partners and generate new knowledge with replicable practices and programs that are codified, monitored and evaluated. At this stage the site has the infrastructure in place to see, support and serve change in its ongoing operations.

Partner Agencies: Stages of Implementation

This tool is used in planning in concert with the Stages of Implementation rubric to establish a baseline and develop a plan of action.



Levers	Establishing	Growing	Sustaining
Leadership & Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A core team of key stakeholders, including young people, are identified and engaged in the development of the local YT approach. A point person is identified. Young people and adults are trained and supported to partner with one another as members of the core team. The core team, including young people, develops a shared vision and a strategic plan; the strategic plan identifies priorities across all the levers. In addition to the core team, key change agents are identified to help in the effort. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders are engaged in the ongoing review of the strategic plan and are kept informed through periodic reports. Young people continue to help set priorities and are engaged in decision-making. Stakeholders consistently communicate with multiple audiences about the protective and promotive factors and advocate for improvements. Additional change agents are identified and supported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategic plan is fully operationalized, is leading to programs and policies that build all five PPFs and is decreasing risk factors across the jurisdiction. Young people are full partners in priority setting and decision-making. Governance of the local YT approach is formalized. Communications among stakeholders, community partners and key agencies is well established.
Programs & Services Array	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing programs and services are inventoried and examined to see how/if they are working to increase PPFs and decrease risk factors. Priorities are set for improvements in programs and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs and services that support the framework are bolstered; programs and services that do not support the framework are aligned or phased out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All programs and services in the jurisdiction are working consciously towards supporting all five PPFs.
Contracting & Licensing Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing contracts and licensing are reviewed to determine where there are opportunities to accountability for increasing protective and promotive factors and decreasing risk factors Priorities are set for improvements to contracts and licensing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language in contracts and licensing are improved to support all five PPFs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All contracts and licensing have language incorporated that build consciously towards supporting all five PPFs.
Training & Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing trainings are assessed to determine if/how they support integrating the YT framework into supervision and direct service work. Priorities are set for revising training and/or incorporating new training into the jurisdiction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainers are trained on new/revised curricula and are prepared to train others. New and existing staff are trained in the YT framework and how it applies to their work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All direct service workers, supervisors and other staff are trained in how to support all five PPFs with youth and apply this training to their everyday practice.
Policy & Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing policies and supporting practices, including funding mechanisms and court processes, are analyzed for their alignment with the YT framework. Policy priorities are set. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key policies and related practices are improved and funding begins to shift to support increases in PPFs and decreases in risk factors. Key stakeholders and champions, including young people, are engaged in advocating for the policy priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All policies and supporting practice are intentionally designed to support all five PPFs in young people's lives.
Systems for Data Collection and Continuous Quality Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The desired system and youth outcomes are identified. Local sources of data are identified, state and national databases are reviewed, and a plan is put in place to track progress in implementation and results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms for ongoing qualitative and quantitative data collection to support tracking progress in implementation and results are in place. Progress on implementation and results is documented and shared with leadership team and stakeholders at regular intervals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across the jurisdiction, there are measurable increases in youths' protective and promotive factors and decreases in their risk factors. Across the jurisdiction, there are measurable increases in youth well-being.
Agency Culture & Approaches for Youth Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current agency culture is assessed, including existing methods for engaging youth, to determine ways in which the culture supports or detracts from creating the PPFs. Priorities are set for improving the agencies' culture and their engagement of young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts are in place to improve the culture and fully engage young people, such as youth adult partnership training. Specific opportunities are created for young people to be authentically engaged in the agency, working as partners with staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff work in an environment in which they feel valued, supported and committed to ensuring every young person has an opportunity to achieve healthy development and well-being. In youth's contact with the agency, they feel valued, supported and authentically engaged.

Levers	Guiding Questions	
Leadership & Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who in leadership will champion the launch of the Youth Thrive approach? • Why is the agency undertaking Youth Thrive? • What are you hoping to accomplish? • Who are the key stakeholders (individuals and organizations) that will be targeted for involvement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will young people be involved in the process? • Who will be the lead contact person for the Youth Thrive initiative? • How will resources be assigned to the coordinating group?
Programs & Services Array	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is “youth well-being” defined by your agency? • What programs and services are already in place that target youths’ well-being? • What priorities should be set to better align programs with the Youth Thrive approach? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the programs and services that can be targeted to achieve well-being operated by public agency staff or another entity? • How can the programs and services be enhanced?
Contracting & Licensing Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are contracts monitored for strengths-based practices and protective and promotive factors from the point of request for proposal through service delivery to contract renewal? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do contracts provide for a “normalizing” experiences that allow for engagement with peers? • How are foster parents, caregivers and other service providers involved in providing healthy parenting?
Training & Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do training requirements for contract providers, resource parents and public agency staff promote the PPFs and well-being? • What knowledge does the jurisdiction use that encompasses brain development, neuroscience, trauma-informed care and strength based strategies for human development and well-being? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What training is in place for resource parents (foster, adoptive, kinship) and the professionals who work with them? • How is training for agency staff, youth, providers and resource parents delivered? • To what extent is the training transferred with fidelity to ensure impact?
Policy & Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which existing legislative and administrative policies are in alignment; and which are in conflict with the Youth Thrive framework? • Which policies do you want to change to be more aligned with the Youth Thrive protective and promotive factors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you identify new policies the agency would like to adopt? If so, please describe. • How would you describe the case practice-model currently in place that support well-being throughout the jurisdiction?
Systems for Data Collection & Continuous Quality Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will implementation progress and results be tracked? • Describe any voluntary or mandated arrangements the jurisdiction has regarding improving youth well-being e.g., waivers, settlement agreements, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data systems are in place? • What processes does the jurisdiction use to ensure its goals are assessed, reviewed and shared with leadership?
Agency Culture & Approaches for Youth Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are youth viewed? • How does the agency want youth viewed? • If you asked a young person to describe their experience in your system what would they say? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways are young people involved in helping the agency adequately meet their individualized and collective needs?