



# Crosswalk:

## Youth Thrive & Teaming Meetings

November 2021

### What is the Crosswalk: Youth Thrive & Teaming Meetings?

This resource explores how teaming meetings build and strengthen young people’s protective and promotive factors and includes considerations for how to elevate young people’s voice and engagement in teaming meetings.

### Why is including young people in teaming meetings important?

When a family is involved with a family- or youth-serving system, such as foster care or juvenile justice, a teaming model, such as Team Decision Making or Child and Family Team Meetings, may be used to encourage collaboration between families and public systems/organizations for shared decision making. A teaming model typically involves regularly scheduled meetings between a neutral facilitator or coordinator, the young person and their family and supports, and agency worker(s) to: Some Everyday Actions may be better suited when a youth worker is beginning to build a relationship with a young person, while other Actions may be used throughout the relationship.

- Set goals, assess progress, and discuss updates in the case;
- Identify the family’s strengths and needs;
- Co-develop strategies for overcoming any barriers; and
- Partner in decision-making.

While teaming meetings seek to bring all voices into the decision-making process, often this approach does not consider young people’s voice. It can be a challenge to share power in a space that is primarily occupied by adults and agency professionals.

Youth voice in these meetings improves the team’s process and results—since young people’s input and feedback are included and they understand how and why decisions are made, there is **more**:

- Idea sharing;
- Inclusive decision-making;

- Effective planning that meets young people where they are; and
- Buy-in from young people for doing the agreed upon tasks.

When young people are part of the teaming meeting, efforts must be made to center them in the conversation and as active decision makers in the decision-making process. In doing so, young people will have the opportunity to practice and hone their critical thinking skills and are more likely to feel a sense of power in their own lives.

## Using team meetings to build and strengthen young people’s Protective & Promotive Factors

The table below illustrates how teaming meetings can identify, build, and strengthen a young person’s protective and promotive factors:

| Youth Thrive Protective & Promotive Factors       | Youth Thrive Definition  | How a teaming meeting builds and strengthens the Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Factors   |
|---|--|--|
| <a href="#">Youth Resilience</a>                  | Managing stress and functioning well when faced with stress, challenges, or adversity  | Acknowledges a young person’s strengths, including examples of how the young person did well and/or persevered through a stressful or challenging experience (regardless of how big or small)—this builds and strengthens a young person’s self-efficacy and evidence of their ability to make positive and productive decisions.    |
| <a href="#">Social Connections</a>                | Having healthy, sustained relationships with people, places, communities, and a force greater than oneself that promote a sense of trust, belonging, and that one matters.   | By inviting the young person to identify who they’d like to have at the meeting, it brings together a young person’s existing supportive relationships and identifies and strategizes on opportunities for expanding community and social networks that provide help to a young person, affirm their identity, and meet their needs. |
| <a href="#">Concrete Support in Times of Need</a> | Making sure young people receive quality, equitable, respectful, and culturally supportive services that meet their basic needs, and teaching young people to self-advocate and take the lead in identifying, seeking out and obtaining the help they need in their community and through social and cultural connections. | Asks young people about their needs and collaborates to identify concrete approaches and next steps for meeting them. Opportunity to practice self-advocacy and taking the lead in identifying what is necessary for their success.  |

| Youth Thrive Protective & Promotive Factors               | Youth Thrive Definition  | How a teaming meeting builds and strengthens the Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Factors   |
|---|--|--|
| <a href="#">Knowledge of Adolescent Development</a>       | Understanding the unique changes and assets of adolescence and implementing policies and practices that reflect a deep understanding of development. | Recognizes young people’s individual experiences, knowledge, and skills. Shares information about adolescent brain development and how it contributes to young people’s decision making. Ability to have a more holistic view of a young person and to co-identify their strengths and areas in need of growth and support. Participating in this type of activity is developmentally appropriate for most young people. |
| <a href="#">Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence</a> | Acquiring skills and attitudes that are essential for forming an independent, positive identity and having a productive and satisfying adulthood.    | Encourages young people to share their thoughts, concerns, and ideas and for adults to actively listen. Opportunity for young people to develop the skills necessary to think constructively about their needs and goals, problem solve, self-advocate, and form a positive, independent identity.   |

## Considerations for elevating young people’s engagement, voice, and leadership in a teaming meeting

Below are ideas and considerations for individuals and public agencies/organizations committed to teaming with young people.

### What agencies/organizations can do:

- **The right facilitator is key.** The role of a teaming meeting facilitator is valuable as they set the tone for the teaming approach and must be aware of and respond to all of the moving parts that can impact the success of the teaming meeting. Simultaneously, facilitators need to value and actively seek out young people’s voice and leadership in the teaming meeting. Considerations for hiring teaming meeting facilitators include, but are not limited to:
  - » What skills have been identified by young people for facilitators to be successful in this role? How are these included in the job description, interview/hiring process, and agency/organization accountability structures?
  - » Do facilitators understand adolescent development, the impact of toxic stress and trauma, healing centered engagement, and the protective and promotive factors? Are they reflective of the communities they will be serving? Are they aware of their own implicit bias and how to mitigate it in their interactions with young people and families? Have they done their own work in racial equity?
  - » Do the facilitators have lived experience in a youth serving system?
  - » Are facilitators adequately compensated for their work and is the salary competitive compared to other youth-serving roles within the agency/organization?

- **Facilitators need training too.** In addition to seeking a facilitator with values that support, honor, and respect young people, they need to understand adolescent development and its role in decision making, the values of the agency/organization, their job responsibilities, and how their role fits within the agency/organization. Considerations for facilitator training include:
  - » When and how often are facilitators trained in the Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Factors, adolescent development and well-being, positive youth development, and healing centered engagement? How are they kept up to date on the latest research and evidence-informed practices that help young people to thrive?
  - » Have facilitators been trained in implicit bias and the impact of racism on young people’s well-being?
  - » How is the training information explored and reinforced during supervision?
  - » How much time and space are facilitators given to build and strengthen their teaming skills for working with young people? Are there expectations that trainers must complete a certain number of training hours per year?
  - » What is the role of young people in the facilitator training (e.g., co-facilitators, co-design the facilitator training)?
  - » How does the agency/organization express that it values the voice and leadership of young people? How is this integrated into the facilitator training and in day-to-day responsibilities and expectations?
  
- **Advocates for young people.** In addition to a support for the entire family, young people may want to have their own ally or advocate as part of the team—this is a trusted adult who the young person identifies and is charged with promoting, supporting, and speaking up for the young person (e.g., peer mentor, teacher, coach). The advocate the young person identifies may be different than their court-appointed legal advocate—such as a Court Appointed Special Advocate, Guardian Ad Litem or attorney. Considerations for including the young person’s advocate include, but are not limited to:
  - » How are young people encouraged to include an advocate in the teaming meetings? Are they asked before the first meeting and throughout the teaming process? How are young people helped to identify an advocate?
  - » Does the agency/organization have guidance for who can serve as a young person’s advocate (e.g., must be age 18 or older)? If yes, how has this been shared with the young person? If no, how are young people included to help develop it?
  - » How is the young person’s advocate made aware of the teaming meetings (e.g., calendar shared, email invite, phone call, text)?

### What individuals can do:

- **Be prepared.** Prior to any meeting/interaction with the young person, gauge what are and/or have been barriers to their authentic engagement and work with meeting participants and the young person to find ways to address them. Considerations include, but are not limited to:
  - » How does the young person provide their thoughts on the meeting structure and agenda prior to the meeting? Does the young person help co-design the meeting agenda? What has the young person identified as the best approaches for making sure their voice is heard during the meetings (e.g., they want dedicated time on the agenda to speak during each meeting)?
  - » Beyond the case file and teaming meetings, how are the teaming meeting participants learning about the young person’s strengths, interests, and opportunities for growth? How do the team members interact with the young person (e.g., phone calls, texts, in-person events) and how often?

- » How are the meeting participants collaborating with the young person? How is the young person given space to openly share and participate in the meeting? What ideas do the meeting participants have for ensuring the young person actively participates in the meetings?
  - » Is there an awareness of how one's own experiences, biases, and traumas impact interactions with young people? What steps are being taken to address this?
- **Model coaching and engagement.** The facilitator has two primary tasks during the teaming meeting – 1) to engage everyone in decision making and 2) to model coaching and collaboration with young people and their families. Considerations for modeling a teaming approach include, but are not limited to:
    - » Are young people asked to serve as a co-facilitator in the teaming meetings? How are they helped to prepare for this role?
    - » Are young people given time on the agenda to discuss any highlights or concerns they would like to share?
    - » How is the young person coached and supported to take the lead in developing their goals? How are the young person's goal included in the team meeting agenda?
    - » How is the young person supported to prepare for the team meeting? This includes helping the young person to identify and/or clarify their needs and goals for the teaming meeting and to help them find ways to effectively share these with the larger team.
    - » Are strengths-based language and reflective coaching used when discussing the young person's strengths, areas of opportunity, needed supports and services, and goals?
    - » How is the importance of strength-based approaches shared with the team? How is the team coached to practice and use these approaches?
  - **Set the foundation.** Discuss the purpose of the teaming meeting, each person's role and responsibilities, define active listening, and center the meeting around the young person and their needs. Considerations include, but are not limited to:
    - » How is information about the protective and promotive factors, adolescent development, the impact of toxic stress and trauma on young people, positive youth development, and healing centered engagement shared with the entire team?
    - » Does the young person understand why they are involved in the public agency/organization, such as foster care, and what needs to be completed to exit the public agency/organization?
    - » How often are the young person and team asked if anyone else needs to be included in the team/as part of the meetings (e.g., family member, therapist)?
    - » How are people with disabilities accommodated during the teaming meeting?
    - » Are the young person and their family asked if they prefer an in-person or virtual teaming meeting?
      - If the preference is for a virtual meeting, how have the teaming meetings been adapted for a virtual space (e.g., does the young person and their family have internet access, who is responsible for sending out the virtual meeting link)?
      - If in person, where do the meetings take place? Is it a welcoming space and conducive to teaming (e.g., private, has a white board for posting the agenda and tracking next steps)? Is there another location where the young person would feel more comfortable (e.g., public library, local park)? Do the teaming members have ideas for where the meetings could take place?
    - » Are all of the young person's concerns addressed before moving on to another topic? How is the young person supported to voice their concerns and/or any barriers they are facing?
    - » How has a brave space been created for young people to share their experiences or concerns regarding racism, trauma, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE), and other issues that may result in discrimination or bullying?

- » If applicable, how are the Foster Care Bill of Rights shared with the young person and the full team? Does the young person know who to turn to if and/or when their rights are not being met?
- **Create a teaming meeting culture of accountability.** Just as important as co-decision is creating a culture of accountability. This means agreeing on goals and tasks, completing, and following up on next steps. Considerations for creating a culture of accountability include, but are not limited to.
  - » How are agreed-upon next steps and the person responsible for each shared with the team (e.g., written on a board then emailed to the team, each person receives a next steps form to write down all action steps and takes it home/back to the office)?
  - » Are due dates co-identified for each next step? Is a planner/calendar provided to young people to keep track of important tasks and dates?
  - » How are next steps reminders shared with the young person (e.g., email, text, phone call)?
  - » When a next step is not completed, how is it addressed during the teaming meeting (e.g., discuss and problem solve any challenges). If it is the young person who did not complete an action item—have a conversation about whether it is really something they want to do. If an adult or staff member doesn't follow through, be open to having candid conversation about whether and how best the person can serve as a support to the young person?

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