

GUIDE FOR YOUTH

Using the Protective and Promotive Factors to Support Youth Well-Being (Guide) is an interactive guide designed to provide those working with young people with questions that stimulate and enrich conversations about the presence of the Youth Thrive™ Protective and Promotive Factors—informed by research on resilience, positive youth development, and neuroscience—that address youth’s well-being. Keyed to the Protective and Promotive Factors, this Guide offers young people topics to explore that help youth take advantage of opportunities and experiences, pursue their interests, find support when challenges arise, and identify key building blocks for their evolving well-being.

For more information about the Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Factors go to: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/youth-thrive/#framework>. To learn more about adolescent brain development, refer to Appendix A. For more information on youth well-being, refer to Appendix B.

What's the point of this?

You are the expert of your experiences, and your voice and participation in planning for your future is important. Below are suggested questions that can be used in planning for family court proceedings and in case planning. You can ask these questions to your lawyer, parent(s), guardian(s), caseworker, and even yourself to make sure that you have all of the resources you need to thrive.

PROTECTIVE AND PROMOTIVE FACTORS

YOUTH RESILIENCE

What is it?

The ability, tools, and skills to help me manage stress and live a productive life even after experiencing trauma and difficult times.

How

- Have the chances to speak my mind and make my own choices
- Have a relationship with at least one safe, reliable, and caring adult
- Be involved in activities with family, school, and community
- Be a part of making important decisions that involve me

Guiding Questions

- Do I have people in my life who help me make big decisions? If not, who can I ask to help me find people to fill that role?
- Do I know how to effectively deal with challenges or frustrations (a poor grade at school, a fight with a friend or relative)? If not, how do I get help and from whom?
- Do I get to weigh in on things that impact my life (a) where I live, (b) at work/school, (c) with friends and family, and (d) in court? If not, what efforts can I make to get my voice heard? Who can help me with this?
- How do I identify and support a long-term relationship for myself with a permanent adult connection? Who can help me with this?
- Do I have anyone in my life who provides me with help/support in difficult times?
- Do I feel like my racial, ethnic, and gender identities are affirmed?

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

What is it?

A close relationship with at least one consistent and caring adult and friends can help me feel like I belong, find meaning in life, and develop skills; these relationships can help me from becoming depressed, starting sexual activity before I'm ready, abusing drugs and alcohol, and taking part in violent activities.

How?

- Find spaces and people that I am comfortable being myself around
- Discuss my goals with others
- Make decisions on my own and show that I am responsible

Guiding Questions

- Do I have a lifelong caring adult in my life? Do I have siblings, peers, or adults I can rely on? If not, how can I find these connections? Who can help me with this?
- Was I placed with siblings, relatives, or family friends? If not, do I have regular visits with my siblings and parents? If not, was I placed with a supportive caretaker? What steps can I take to advocate for this? Who can help me with this?
- What family events do I have the opportunity to participate in? If needed, how can I make sure I'm included in these events?
- Who can I talk with about healthy relationships, my sexual orientation, and gender identity, and about sex? Who can help me identify someone to talk with?
- What extracurricular activities do I participate in? How can I find extracurricular activities that fit my interests? Who can help me with this?
- Would I like to volunteer in my community or school? How can I go about this? Who can help me with this?
- Do I have the same opportunities for connecting with friends as other people my age who are not in placement? If not, what opportunities would I like to be made available to me, and who can I talk to about making those arrangements?
- Do I have regular communication with friends or family who affirm my racial, ethnic, sexual, or gender identities?

KNOWLEDGE OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPEMENT

What is it?

Knowledge that my brain is not done developing, and that positive and negative things that happen to me can change the way my brain develops. An understanding that because my brain is developing, I sometimes rely on my emotions rather than reason to make decisions, which could lead to situations that aren't safe for me.

How?

- Learn about my family history, if possible
- Learn about brain science and adolescent development
- Get help to understand that my actions are sometimes a result of the natural way my brain is developing

Guiding Questions

- Do I have information about my personal history? Who can help me obtain this information?
- Do I, and does my family team and professional staff, know what happens developmentally during adolescence? What steps do I need to take to get this information? Who can help me with this?
- Do I, and does my family team and professional staff, understand the link between risk-taking behaviors and adolescent development? If not, who can explain this to me?

CONCRETE SUPPORTS IN TIMES OF NEED

What is it?

A connection to people, services, and help to make sure I am less stressed and that I have my basic necessities met. The ability to be comfortable asking for help when I need something.

How?

- Get help from someone to find services and programs that can help me
- Services should be:
 - Easy for me to find and get to
 - Coordinated and work together to help me
 - Culturally responsive
 - Affirming of my intersecting identities and respectful of who I am
 - Focused on my strengths
 - Staffed by people who understand my past and engage in healing centered activities
 - Right for and relevant to my age
- Make sure I am enrolled in Medicaid until I am 26

Guiding Questions

- What supports and services are being provided to help me continue in my (a) placement, (b) education, and (c) extracurricular activities? What additional help do I need in each of these things?
- Do I have someone to ask when I have important questions? If not, what steps can I take to identify someone? Who can help me identify someone?
- Am I about to make any important changes in my life? If so, do I have a caring person to help with those changes? If not, how do I identify someone (or a number of people) to help me with this?
- Have I reviewed transition/independent living resources (e.g., [The FosterClub Transition Toolkit](#))? Is there anyone that I want to review the resources with me?
- Am I comfortable asking for help and advocating for myself? If not, who can I ask to help advocate for/with me?
- Are my experiences, pain, and feelings about the past being appropriately addressed? If not, who do I feel comfortable talking to about them?
- Are my medical, dental, and mental health needs being appropriately addressed? How can I advocate to ensure that my needs are addressed? Who can help me with this?
- Are my experiences, pain, and feelings about the past being appropriately addressed? If not, who do I feel comfortable talking to about them?
- Do I feel comfortable advocating for treatment and about issues with medication and therapy? If not, who can advocate for/with me?
- Do I have access to food and shelter? if not, who can help me obtain them?



COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

What is it?

The skills I need to address the challenges of becoming an adult. Experiences that give me a chance to explore my interests and identity, to practice independence, and to take on more responsibility to maximize my well-being.

How?

- Discuss my goals with others
- Make decisions on my own and show that I am responsible



Guiding Questions

- Is my voice being heard in court proceedings and in the case planning process?
- What are my personal goals? How can I identify and attain those goals? Who can help me with this?
- Am I functioning well at (a) home and (b) work/school, in terms of maintaining functional relationships, fulfilling responsibilities, and making positive contributions to my family and work/school community? If there are problems with these relationships, what efforts are being made to help them be more healthy?
- How am I doing in school? Have I been able to stay in my same school? Is my school meeting my academic needs? What are my educational/employment goals? Do I need help determining what they are? Do I need help reaching my educational/employment goals? Where can I find help with this?
- Who in my life supports all parts of who I am? Do they know and understand issues related to my sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) and how they relate to my development?
- Have my multiple identities, or the ways that my identities overlap (race, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc.), been explored and considered in all assessments and/or services that I have received? Who will help me make sure I receive appropriate support services, with respect to my multiple identities (the way that my identities overlap)?

