



**Youth Thrive**  
An initiative of CSSP

## **Information on Youth Thrive Training of Trainers**

### **What is Youth Thrive?**

Developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), **Youth Thrive™** is an approach that uses the latest science to identify protective and promotive factors that increase the likelihood that adolescents can develop into healthy, thriving adults. Youth Thrive is a framework that functions as a ‘lens’ for assessing current efforts and for making changes to the policies, programs, training, services, partnerships, and systems that impact young people. CSSP reviewed and synthesized extensive research on positive youth development, resilience, neuroscience and brain development, stress and the impact of trauma to identify and define these five protective and promotive factors:

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

The overarching goal of the Youth Thrive framework is to achieve positive outcomes by mitigating risk and enhancing healthy development and well-being of youth (ages 11-26). Youth Thrive is **not** a specific program or intervention, rather it is an approach that is relevant to everyone who works with young people including: public system administrators, supervisors and caseworkers in child welfare, juvenile justice, homeless or mental health agencies, judges and legal advocates, staff at private agencies and nonprofits youth-serving organizations, educators, parents, caregivers, law enforcement and others who are concerned about teenagers and young adults.

To date, Youth Thrive has primarily focused on jurisdictions and programs working with youth involved in the child welfare (i.e., foster care) and juvenile justice systems but the framework is applicable to all young people and can be applied to other systems (e.g., health and mental health) and services (e.g., education, recreation, afterschool). To learn more about Youth Thrive, please go to: [Youth Thrive Information](#)

### **What is Youth Thrive's Training of Trainers?**

To advance its goals, Youth Thrive supported the development of a training of trainers (TOT) curriculum by the University of Oklahoma OUTREACH National Resource Center for Youth Services (NRCYS) (click here for [NRCYS information](#)) and Youth In Focus (YIF) (click here for [Youth In Focus information](#)). The curriculum presents the Youth Thrive protective/promotive factors framework and the research on which it is based in an understandable and useable format.

TOT participants become trainers who, in turn, will use the Youth Thrive training material to train direct service staff and other practitioners, supervisors, program operators, and managers.

The Youth Thrive training is organized into seven modules and includes:

- Context and information on current ideas, best practices and trends in adolescent development.
- Activities that allow participants to experience and explore the use of new concepts.
- Reflective exercises to think through how to integrate new ideas into existing programs and practices.

### **What do participants get from the training of trainers (TOT)?**

Trainers who enroll in the Youth Thrive TOT receive the following:

- ***Trainer's Guide*** – Detailed, step-by-step curriculum guide for each of the seven modules that includes: learning goals, information on content, sequencing, timing, activities, materials needed and general facilitation instructions (183 pages).
- ***Participant Manual*** – Description of key concepts, activity worksheets and resources for participants in future trainings (79 pages).
- ***PowerPoint slides*** for each module (over 200 slides).
- ***Bibliography and Resource list*** – A wealth of additional information for those who want to explore Youth Thrive concepts and research in greater depth.
- ***Feedback from Youth Thrive trainers*** – Opportunity to present parts of the curriculum and receive feedback from experienced Youth Thrive trainers during the TOT; membership in a community of practice to access additional feedback, virtual coaching and resources via phone contact and/or webinars to share ideas and information and to troubleshoot problems with other Youth Thrive trainers.

### **Who should participate in the training of trainers?**

The training of trainers is designed for experienced trainers. We recommend participation by individuals who meet the following criteria:

- Major responsibility for leading and delivering training as part of their work assignment for at least 2 years.
- Proficient in more than one training curriculum or major content area.
- Values and perspective that are compatible with the Youth Thrive framework. If you are not familiar with this approach, please read more about it here: [Youth Thrive Information](#)

Because the Youth Thrive training curriculum contains a lot of demanding content, we see it as a resource for experienced trainers who have the skills, competencies, commitment and opportunity to provide the training themselves to a significant number of workers/staff. This is not the right opportunity for novice trainers or individuals who are interested in an initial orientation to the Youth Thrive framework. An introductory experience is better obtained by reading our materials or watching our video available online at: [Youth Thrive Video](#), or by participating in Youth Thrive conference presentations or workshops. To get regular updates from CSSP, please like CSSP [on Facebook](#) or follow us [on Twitter](#).

## Should youth participate in the Training of Trainers?

We strongly encourage and support the participation of young adults in the Youth Thrive TOT, especially those who have had experience in the child welfare or other service systems. Youth voices and perspectives are enormously beneficial to all aspects of Youth Thrive's work. Ideally, youth who participate should have already engaged in other training, leadership development or advocacy activities (e.g., Youth Advisory Boards, student government, community service) and could partner with a staff trainer to conduct training sessions. Depending on the specific situation, it may also be appropriate for youth, especially young leaders and advocates to participate in the Youth Thrive direct service training.

## What are the expectations of Youth Thrive trained trainers?

We ask that trainers who participate in the Youth Thrive Training of Trainers agree to the following:

- Provide Youth Thrive training by conducting at least two direct service trainings and reaching approximately 50 individuals who have direct contact with youth over the next two years.
- Submit basic information and periodic updates to a database on Youth Thrive training activities that will be maintained and updated by NRCYS.
- Participate in occasional conference calls or webinars to share information, strategies and plans and receive virtual coaching for future training with other trainers.

## When and where is Youth Thrive Training of Trainers held?

Through CSSP, there are several ways that Youth Thrive Training of Trainers is offered:

1. **Contact and contract directly** with either [Youth In Focus \(YIF\)](#) or the [NRCYS](#) (contact Jean Carpenter-Williams at [jcarpenter@ou.edu](mailto:jcarpenter@ou.edu) or 918-660-3700) if you are interested in having them provide a Youth Thrive training of trainers. Cost of training varies and should be discussed and determined directly with either the Youth In Focus or NRCYS.
2. **Occasional open training opportunities** supported by the Center for the Study of Social Policy or other organizations and conducted by NRCYS or Youth In Focus at various locations. Generally, these trainings will be held in conjunction with a local sponsor or at a relevant conference/event in order to help defray costs. These open trainings are scheduled periodically by CSSP or one of the lead trainers, based on need and opportunity, and are publicized through our Youth Thrive Connection newsletter. Sign up for the Youth Thrive newsletter for information on training opportunities by contacting Francie Zimmerman at: [francie.zimmerman@cssp.org](mailto:francie.zimmerman@cssp.org).
3. **Jurisdictional trainings** specifically for the sites that have been selected to work with CSSP to implement the Youth Thrive approach. These training sessions will generally be restricted to staff within those jurisdictions (e.g., city, county or state). If there are slots available, they will be publicized through our Youth Thrive Connection e-newsletter (Sign up by sending an email to: [francie.zimmerman@cssp.org](mailto:francie.zimmerman@cssp.org)).

### **How long are the Youth Thrive and Families Thrive Training of Trainers?**

The Training of Trainers (TOT) is an intensive training that typically takes 3 to 4, consecutive, full days. The TOT includes a full presentation of the Youth Thrive framework and guiding premises taught by experienced trainers. The final day of the training allows participants to: ‘teach back’ sections of modules; explore using the course materials (Trainer’s Guide, Participant’s Manual, presentation slides, handouts, and resource material); receive feedback from TOT course instructors and participants; and develop a plan for how they will implement the Youth Thrive training. The TOT can be increased to four days, if needed for a specific group, depending on their level of experience as trainers. For example, more time may be needed if participants are not already familiar with some key concepts (e.g., adolescent development, trauma, strength-based approaches, or principles of adult education).

### **How long is the Youth Thrive Training for Direct Service Workers/Others and how is it structured?**

The expectation is that the newly trained trainers will take the curriculum content back to their agencies, organizations and communities to train direct service staff (e.g., caseworkers, supervisors), young leaders and others who work directly with youth and their families. TOT participants are **not** prepared nor expected to train additional trainers; that is the role and responsibility of Youth Thrive and our training partners (NRCYS and Youth In Focus).

The Youth Thrive direct service training can be delivered in a variety of formats. Based on CSSP’s pilot testing, we recommend the following:

#### **2-Day Format**

This format lends itself to practitioners who are well-grounded in current trends in youth work and who have previous training in adolescent brain development and trauma-informed practices. Scheduling is typically two, 8-hour training days held back-to-back. This is the shortest recommended time frame. The experience is content rich and assumes that participants can integrate the five protective and promotive factors into work that already reflects ‘best practices’ relating to self-awareness, self-care, the impact of trauma on adolescent development, assets and strengths-based youth development approaches, relational youth work, and culturally responsive services. The training includes reflective activities that allow participants to think through and plan how they will implement the Youth Thrive concepts.

#### **3-Day Format**

This format allows participants increased time to explore the five protective and promotive factors, current ‘best practices’ relating to self-awareness, self-care, the impact of trauma on adolescent development, assets and strengths-based youth development approaches, relational youth work, and culturally responsive services. More time is allowed for discussion, thinking through implications, and reflecting on how to integrate the Youth Thrive concepts into current practices. Scheduling is typically three, 6-hour days held back-to-back. This format is recommended for participants who do not have extensive training in trauma informed practices, adolescent brain development or current trends in the youth work field.

### **Subdivided Modular Formats**

The Youth Thrive training is organized into seven modules. Each module can be presented as a stand-alone session or further subdivided into smaller time increments. These can be scheduled on successive days or over a period of weeks as part of on-going staff development. CSSP recommends that when the content is sub-divided, adequate time be included to review previously presented material to help participants inter-connect concepts and bridge content between sessions. This typically means that when the training is subdivided, total presentation time is increased.

### **Once I'm trained, can newly trained trainers organize and charge others for Youth Thrive training?**

Yes, we want and expect newly trained trainers to use the curriculum with direct service staff and others who work with and/or support young people. However, not training of other trainers which is the responsibility of Youth Thrive and our partners. We know that quality training is a valuable resource and can be a significant catalyst for change – the best trainers need to be compensated for their work. It is hard for us to set a standard price that applies to all situations as training costs vary depending on the number of trainers, number of participants, location and cost of facilities, whether food is provided, if travel is involved and so on. We ask that trainers using the Youth Thrive curriculum be fair and reasonable in setting prices, recognizing that CSSP invested the upfront costs for the curriculum and materials development.

### **What is Families Thrive?**

Families Thrive is a separate train the trainer curriculum that integrates information from CSSP's **Strengthening Families™** and **Youth Thrive™** frameworks into one comprehensive training experience. It presents the research on the developmental needs of children from early childhood through school age and into adolescence and highlights the protective and promotive factors shown to promote healthy development in both young children and youth. **Families Thrive** devotes a module to each of these factors – knowledge of child and youth development, social connections, cognitive & social/emotional competence, concrete supports in times of need, and resilience – and teaches practical techniques for applying the framework in programs, practices, and communities. Practitioners who complete the Families Thrive Training for Trainers are authorized to teach both Youth and Families Thrive curricula. This training is provided by *Youth in Focus*. For more information contact: [cwilson@yifocus.org](mailto:cwilson@yifocus.org)