



Task Force on Helping Youth Thrive in Placement HYTIP

July 25, 2012
Allison Blake, Ph.D., L.S.W.
Commissioner



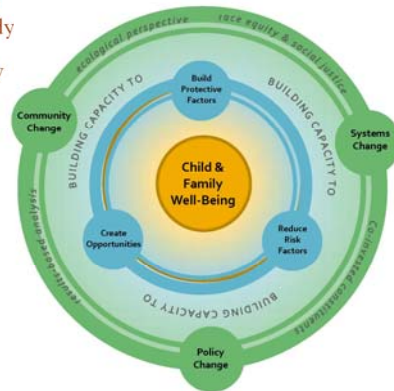
AGENDA

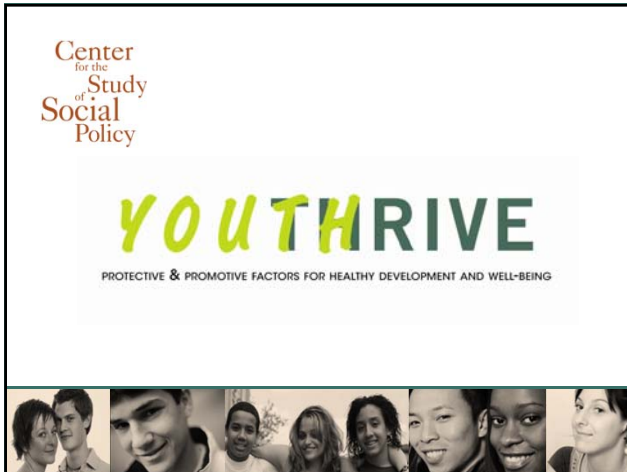
- Welcome & Introductions - Jessica Trombetta and Tony Conover
- Context Setting - DCF Commissioner Allison Blake
- Overview /Presentation of Youth Thrive™ - Charlyn Harper Browne, CSSP
- Brainstorming Sessions - Jessica Trombetta/ Tony Conover
- Homework and Next Steps
- Adjournment



Healthy Development and Well-Being for Youth

Task Force on Helping Youth Thrive in Placement
Trenton, NJ
July 24, 2012





The goal of **YOUTHRIVE** is

To examine how foster youth can be supported in ways that advance healthy development and well-being and reduce the impact of negative life experiences.

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The Task

Scan the lifespan development research:

- What does healthy development and well-being look like across the lifespan?
- How is healthy development and well-being achieved across the lifespan?

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Two Results

- Document
“Scan and Compilation of Research Addressing Developmental Issues across the Lifespan (0 - 25), with Special Attention to Adolescent Development”
- Evolving Protective and Promotive Factors Framework for Youth Development

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Document Outline

I. Background on "Development"

- A. Defining "Development" – 3 Perspectives
- B. Lifespan Development
- C. Critical Life Events
- D. Domains of Development
- E. Major Current Theories and Perspectives in Lifespan Development

II. Background on "Adolescence"

- A. Conceiving "Adolescence"
- B. Parent-Child/Adolescent Relationships
- C. Adolescent Risk-Taking & Risky Behavior
- D. Identity Development and Risk-Taking

III. Developmental Neuroscience

- A. Basic Principles and Constructs
- B. Adversity, Stress, and the Brain
- C. Changes in Brain Structure & Function
- D. Implications of the Nature of the Adolescent Brain

IV. Developmental Tasks (0-25)

V. What Does Healthy Development Look Like? How is Healthy Development Achieved?

- A. Developmental Tasks
- B. Constructs of Positive Youth Development
- C. Factors that Affect Healthy Development
- D. The Positive Psychology Perspective
- E. Positive Youth Development Approach
- F. Developmental Assets
- G. Successful Adult Development

VI. Risk and Protective Factors

VII. Resiliency

- A. Key Studies and Events
- B. Personal Resiliency Strengths
- C. Resiliency Correlates
- D. Resiliency and Adolescence

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Key Findings

- Understanding Development in Context
- Adolescent Brain Development
- Trauma and Toxic Stress
- Resiliency
- Positive Youth Development
- Risk, Protective, and Promotive Factors

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Development in Context

- "Contextual Models of Human Development"
- Development involves several processes: biological, psychological, cognitive, social
- Development influenced by total ecology/ life situation in multiple contexts:
 - * family
 - * school
 - * cultural
 - * gender
 - * neighborhood
 - * socioeconomic status
 - * sociopolitical
 - * cohort

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Development in Context (cont.)

- The person within the context; how person "makes meaning" out of their experiences
- The resources a person needs to develop successfully vary by age/stage
- Critical life events: turning points in lifespan
- The study of development must include data and theories from numerous academic fields

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Developmental Neuroscience

A field that examines:

- Neural substrates of development
- Impact of environmental factors (e.g., toxic stress/trauma) on neurodevelopmental processes, physical health, and mental health

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Key Understandings

- Much evidence points to the central importance of prenatal and early postnatal (birth-3) brain development
- Early experiences affect the quality of brain architecture
- Brain development is life-long
- Adolescence is a time of profound change in brain structure and function

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Adolescent Brain Development

- Increased **prefrontal cortex** maturation begins and continues into adulthood
- Functions of the prefrontal cortex:
 - impulse control
 - setting priorities, organizing, and planning
 - decision making
 - sensitivity to feedback
 - self-control, self-regulation
 - initiating appropriate behavior
 - inhibiting inappropriate behavior

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- Changes in limbic system, an area related to
 - emotionality and mood state
 - reward/pleasure seeking
 - processing social information
- Gap in timing of gradual prefrontal cortex maturation and more rapidly developing limbic system
- Positive experiences with and guidance from caring adults and institutions are essential in building complex adaptive brains

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JIM CASEY
YOUTH
OPPORTUNITIES
INITIATIVE

the Adolescent Brain

new research and its
implications for
young people
transitioning from
foster care

Trauma and Toxic Stress

- Strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity without adequate adult support
 - violence
 - abuse, neglect, abandonment
 - betrayal of a trusted person or institution
- Disrupts brain development
- May induce hypersensitivity to stressors
- Increase risk for psychopathology and physical illness

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Complex Trauma

“The dual problem of exposure to multiple traumatic events and the impact of this exposure on immediate and long-term development. For young adults in foster care, traumatic events might include poverty, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, separation from and loss of family, or multiple moves and relationship disruptions.”

Ambiguous Loss

“A loss in which there is no verification of death, no certainty that the person will come back, or no assurance that the person will return to the way she or he used to be. This form of loss lacks clear boundaries and has no clear ending. There are often no culturally or societally recognized rituals for grieving or even for acknowledging the loss.”

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. (2011). *The Adolescent Brain: New Research and Its Implications for Young People Transitioning from Foster Care*. St. Louis, Missouri.

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Impact of Trauma and Toxic Stress

- Problems with trust, autonomy, initiative
- Difficulty with independence, intimacy, self-care
- Patterns of intense, unstable relationships and interactions
- Interferes with cognitive development
- Difficulty interpreting and identifying emotional responses

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Resiliency

- The processes that enable youth to thrive even in the face of adversity
- Not an invulnerability to stress and adversity
- The promotion of resilience in youth related to
 - changing attitudes of adults in their lives
 - various internal characteristics
 - various external characteristics of families, schools, and communities
 - deliberate policies, practices, and interventions (e.g., trauma-informed care)

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Trauma-Informed Care

- Recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma has played in a person's life
- Paradigm shift from:
"What's wrong with you?"
to
"What has happened to you?"

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Positive Youth Development Approach

- Youth must be understood in their own terms
- All youth have strengths
- Although challenges and adversities exist, youth development is more than overcoming deficits and risk
- Youth can overcome adversity and thrive, but they must have protective factors embedded in social institutions

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Risk, Protective, and Promotive Factors

- **30+ Risk Factors** that threaten healthy youth development
- **100+ Protective and Promotive Factors** that buffer risk and aid in healthy youth development
- **75+ Dynamic Outcomes** that are considered to be characteristic of healthy youth development and well-being

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- ### Individual Dynamic Outcomes
- Hopeful, optimistic, compassionate, curious, resilient identity
 - Supportive family and social networks
 - Ability to form and sustain caring, committed relationships
 - Success in school and workplace
 - Service to community or society
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- ### Risk Factors
- Psychological stressors
 - Inadequate/negative relationships with family members, adults outside family, or peers
 - Insufficient or inadequate opportunities for positive growth and development
 - Unsafe, unstable, inequitable environments

YOUTH RIVE

PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

Major Premise

Healthy development and well-being cannot be explained simply as mitigating, coping with, or eliminating risk.

Protective + Promotive Factors:

Increase the probability of positive, adaptive, and resilient outcomes, even in the face of risk and adversity.

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PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

Protective & Promotive Factors

- Interdependent factors that both mitigate risk and contribute to healthy development and well-being for youth
- Some are internal resources; others are external
 - Personal resilience
 - Social connections
 - Knowledge of youth development
 - Concrete support in times of need
 - Social, emotional, behavioral, intellectual, and moral competence

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Protective/Promotive Factors

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- Positive identity
- Self-worth
- Autonomy
- Healthy coping
- Self-compassion
- Self-advocacy



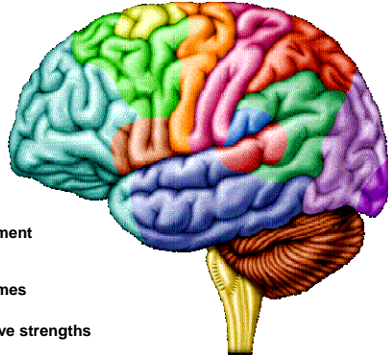
Protective/Promotive Factors



Protective/Promotive Factors

Knowledge of Youth Development

- Youth and adults have accurate information about:
 - > biopsychosocial development
 - > trauma
 - > preventing negative outcomes
- Recognize that all youth have strengths



Protective/Promotive Factors

Tutoring



Youth Programs



Counseling



Legal Services



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Protective/Promotive Factors

Social, Emotional, Behavioral, Intellectual, and Moral Competence in Youth

Exercise



Healthy relationships



Self-regulation



Positive emotions



Productive habits/goals

We believe the YOUTH THRIVE framework

will contribute to an understanding of how all youth, in general, and foster youth, in particular, can be supported in ways that advance healthy development and well-being and reduce the impact of negative life experiences.

General Conclusions

- Adolescence can be a difficult stage, particularly for youth who have experienced adversity.
- Much can be learned about helping at-risk youth by understanding what healthy development entails for all youth.
- When a state removes a child from the home, it has an obligation to meet the developmental needs of the youth.
- As adolescence is a unique developmental period, youth need developmentally appropriate service delivery approaches.

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General Conclusions (continued)

- Child welfare *alone* cannot address the social, emotional, cognitive and physical well being of youth.
- Advancing healthy development and well-being for youth must focus on increasing both protective and promotive factors and reducing risk factors.
- Such an approach must be adopted by multiple youth serving systems.
- Research in positive youth development, resiliency, neuroscience and the impact of trauma on brain development can inform policy and practice.

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PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

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Questions and Comments

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