



## Memorandum

To: Renee Ensor-Pope, Stephen Liggett-Creel, Jaqueline Duval-Harvey, Eugenia Greenhood  
From: PATH Team at CLASP  
Date: August 20, 2019  
Re: Core Competencies for Supporting Youth in Transition

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### SUMMARY

Prince George's County's PATH goals include delivering training and technical assistance to local behavioral health, education, and social service providers to enhance county-wide capacity to address TAY needs in a culturally/linguistically competent, and developmentally appropriate manner. During the initial site visit in June, the county team requested that CLASP provide support with identifying a set of core competencies for consideration that will ultimately guide training and assessment. This memo provides an overview of 10 competency areas for consideration by the team: youth friendly services, positive youth development framework, authentic youth engagement, trauma-informed practice, culturally responsive practice, disability awareness, prevention focus, wellness focus, behavioral/physical health integration, and addressing the social determinants of health.

### **Competency Area 1: Youth Friendly Services**

Core Competency: An organizational culture that acknowledges the following: the overall culture of adolescence; the effect of the diverse cultural backgrounds of young people on their health and their health behaviors; the importance of having each adolescent or young adult feel supported and validated as a person with a unique sense of identity to enhance a positive youth-provider dynamic, dissipate fears, establish trust, and facilitate engagement; the importance of helping every young person develop competence and a sense of agency in the world

Supporting Competencies:<sup>1</sup>

- *Accessible:* Available services can be used by young people.
- *Acceptable:* Young people are willing to use available services.
- *Equitable:* All young people are able to obtain available services.
- *Appropriate:* Young people need the available services.
- *Effective:* Available services are provided in a way that makes a contribution to young people's well-being.
- Service providers engage the entire staff in creating a climate and culture that radiates warmth and welcome to all young people, their families, and companions as soon as they walk through the door.
- Every young person has one on-one interactions with staff so that each can feel familiar and establish relationships with providers.
- What the young people share is kept confidential; exceptions to the rule are explained.
- Young people feel safe in asking questions about behaviors or issues that they face honestly and directly.

- The physical environment is warm and that signals that all types of young people are welcome and no subject is taboo.

### **Competency Area 2: Positive Youth Development (PYD) Framework**

Core Competency: An intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people’s strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.<sup>2</sup>

Supporting Competencies:<sup>3</sup>

- PYD
  - is an intentional process. It is about being proactive to promote protective factors in young people.
  - complements efforts to prevent risky behaviors and attitudes in youth and supports efforts that work to address negative behaviors.
  - acknowledges and further develops (or strengthens) youth assets. All youth have the capacity for positive growth and development.
  - enables youth to thrive and flourish and prepares them for a healthy, happy, and safe adulthood.
  - involves youth as active agents. Youth are valued and encouraged to participate in design, delivery, and evaluation of the services. Adults and youth work in partnership.
  - instills leadership qualities in youth, but youth are not required to lead. Youth can attend, actively participate, contribute, and/or lead through PYD activities.
  - involves civic involvement and civic engagement; youth contribute to their schools and broader communities through service.
  - involves and engages every element of the community — schools, homes, community members, and others. Young people, family members, and community partners are valued through this process. PYD is an investment that the community makes in young people. Youth and adults work together to frame the solutions.

### **Competency Area 3: Authentic Youth Engagement**

Core Competency: Young people are active participants in directing their own lives, shaping youth serving systems, and their communities in partnership with adults.<sup>4</sup>

Supporting Competencies:<sup>5</sup>

- Young people are equal partners in all aspects of their own individual case planning and decision-making.
- Young people are equal partners in making decisions and determining the direction of programs and activities, agency policy development, service design, evaluation, training design and delivery.
- Young people expect to, and receive, consistent opportunities to set goals, devise strategies, and act.
- Young people are respected for their ideas and opinions and are free to state them.
- Young people participate in challenging experiences, with the necessary support to help them succeed.
- Young people can expect adults to listen to them, respect them, and engage them in meaningful programs and activities.

### **Competency Area 4: Trauma-informed Practice**

Core Competency: An organizational structure that acknowledges the deep impact of trauma<sup>6</sup> on everyone involved in a system and responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices while actively resisting re-traumatization.<sup>7</sup>

Supporting Competencies:

- *Empowerment:* Using young people's strengths to empower them in the development of their treatment.
- *Choice:* Informing young people about treatment options so they can choose the options they prefer.
- *Collaboration:* Maximizing collaboration among staff, young people, and their families in organizational and treatment planning.
- *Safety:* Developing health care settings and activities that ensure young people's physical and emotional safety.
- *Trustworthiness:* Creating clear expectations with young people about what proposed treatments entail, who will provide service, and how care will be provided.<sup>8</sup>
- *Peer Support:* Trauma survivors are key partners to establish safety and hope, building trust, enhancing collaboration, and utilizing their stories and lived experience to promote recovery and healing.
- *Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues:* The organization offers access to gender responsive services, leverages the healing value of traditional cultural connections, and recognizes and addresses historical trauma.<sup>9</sup>

### **Competency Area 5: Culturally Responsive Practice**

Core Competency: Provide effective, equitable, understandable, and respectful quality care and services that are responsive to diverse cultural beliefs and practices, preferred languages, health literacy and other communication needs.<sup>10</sup>

Supporting Competencies:<sup>11</sup>

- A fully committed leadership and governance body ensures workforce diversity is a guiding philosophy within the organization.
- Strategies to support workforce diversity are integrated throughout all levels of the organization and are infused in needs assessments, planning, policy development, decision making, and program implementation.
- Finding and hiring diverse qualified candidates in an inclusive, culturally appropriate manner is a specific goal for the organization.
- Hiring includes analyzing the real requirements of a job, attracting diverse potential employees to the job through innovative means, and screening and selecting applicants in culturally sensitive ways.
- Provides culturally responsive onboarding, orientation, and training that ensures that new staff are acclimatized to the organizational culture and climate.
- Training is designed to increase staff members' ability to translate awareness of equity and diversity into practice.
- Professional development opportunities ensure that staff see pathways for growth, promotion, and enhanced job satisfaction leading to retention of qualified and diverse staff.
- Ongoing, accessible communication of the organization's mission and values, policies, and procedures.
- An overall commitment to diversity, equity, and cultural and linguistic competence.
- Relationships with partners, vendors, and the community that support and promote equity, diversity, and inclusion to strengthen the organization's capacity and commitment to diversity, attract a more diverse workforce and youth population, ensure culturally and linguistically competent services, and help everyone feel supported and valued.

## **Competency Area 6: Disability Awareness**

Core Competency: Youth with disabilities, including invisible disabilities, have equal access to high quality services and supports.

Supporting Competencies:<sup>12</sup>

- Physically and programmatically accessible by ADA standards.
- Staff are aware, willing, prepared, and supported to make accommodations.
- Knowledge of resources (national and community-specific) for youth with disabilities.
- Partnerships and collaboration with other agencies serving or assisting youth with disabilities.
- Peer and adult role models and mentors include people with disabilities.
- Service providers integrate self-advocacy skills building.
- Service providers offer independent living information and assessment (career, employment, training, education, transportation, recreation, community resources, life skills, financial, benefits planning).
- Service providers are educated about disability history, law, culture, policies, and practices.

## **Competency Area 7: Prevention Focus**

Core Competency: Young people have access to preventive interventions at varying levels of risk without having to be identified on the basis of having a disorder. <sup>13</sup>

Supporting Competencies:<sup>14</sup>

- Preventive interventions are made available based on systematic assessments of public mental health needs.
- Available preventive interventions address evidence-based biological, psychological, and social risk and protective factors and their interactions over the lifespan.
- Available preventive interventions have the capacity to have a large reach in the population.
- Preventive interventions include information dissemination (information about the nature of risky behaviors and the effects on individuals, families and communities), prevention education (to affect critical life and social skills, including decision-making, refusal skills and critical analysis), and alternative activities (constructive, healthy activities) to address prevention at the individual level.

## **Competency Area 8: Wellness Focus**

Core Competency: Young people have access to wellness supports that build strengths, assets, and safety.

Supporting Competencies:<sup>15</sup>

- Service providers
  - enhance the ability of transition age youth to achieve developmentally appropriate tasks.
  - addresses a range of relevant life domains, including education, employment, housing, and community relationships.
  - build resilience by recognizing the challenges that young people have faced, how they have coped, and how they can use past experiences to manage current challenges.
  - recognize and normalize the importance of safe experimentation, opportunities to learn, and the growing need for autonomy in decision making.
  - foster a sense of safety by ensuring privacy and confidentiality, communicating with trust and honesty, and establishing meaningful connections.

- promote health enhancing attitudes and behaviors.

### **Competency Area 9: Behavioral/Physical Health Integration**

Core Competency: The management and delivery of health services so that clients receive a continuum of preventive and curative services, according to their needs over time and across different levels of the health system.<sup>16</sup>

Supporting Competencies:<sup>17</sup>

- Maintain the availability of sexual and reproductive health and mental health services within primary care visits.
- Include wellness assessments, health promotion, prevention, and risk reduction during each encounter with a young person.
- Use assessment interviews and tools that identify a variety of health and intervention needs, no matter the purpose of the visit.
- Provide care to young parents and their children at the same visit.

### **Competency Area 10: Addressing Social Determinants of Health**

Core Competency: Youth serving providers work upstream of clinical problems by addressing individual social needs to improve community outcomes.

Supporting Competencies:<sup>18</sup>

- Screening for necessary social, economic and safety issues in clinical and other settings.
- In-house social services assistance (at site where screening is performed).
- Anchor institutions promoting equity via hiring, investments, community benefits.
- Community-based social and related services: single or multiple programs or services.
- Changes to laws, regulations, or community-wide conditions; working across sectors.

### **Key Takeaways and Considerations**

- We presented 10 core competencies for consideration by the team in an effort to be comprehensive; it is likely that the team will need to prioritize and perhaps narrow the competencies list before moving forward.
- There are some common threads and overlap across competencies; one strategy might be to focus on the supporting competencies that appear in multiple areas.
- We included priorities 7-10 because they align with CLASP's guiding framework; another possible way to narrow the list is to focus on competencies 1-6 and number 10 because of the explicit focus on social determinants of health in one of the team's goals.
- We strongly recommend that the team solicit feedback from the youth board as part of the process of selecting a final set of competencies.
- Once the team agrees on a final set of competencies, the next step will be to identify aligned assessment tools.

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- <sup>1</sup> Blueprint for Adolescent and Young Adult Healthcare: <https://nyshealthfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/blueprint-for-adolescent-and-young-adult-health-care.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> Youth.Gov: <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>
- <sup>3</sup> Youth.Gov: <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development/key-principles-positive-youth-development>
- <sup>4</sup> Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, <https://www.aecf.org/resources/achieving-authentic-youth-engagement-core-values-guiding-principles-2/>
- <sup>5</sup> Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, <https://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/jcyoi-RealizingPowerYouthLeadershipBoards-2014.pdf#page=3>
- <sup>6</sup> Key Ingredients for Successful Trauma-Informed Care Implementation: [https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs\\_campaigns/childrens\\_mental\\_health/atc-whitepaper-040616.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/childrens_mental_health/atc-whitepaper-040616.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach: <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4884.pdf>
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> National CLAS Standards, <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlid=53>
- <sup>11</sup> Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network, <http://www.cars-rp.org/MHTTC/docs/Assessing-Workforce-Diversity-Tool.pdf>
- <sup>12</sup> National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability, [http://www.ncwd-youth.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/infobrief\\_issue11.pdf](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/infobrief_issue11.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> The National Research Council/Institute of Medicine, Preventing Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders among Young People: Progress and Possibilities, 2009.
- <sup>14</sup> World Health Organization: [https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/evidence/en/prevention\\_of\\_mental\\_disorders\\_sr.pdf](https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/en/prevention_of_mental_disorders_sr.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> Blueprint for Adolescent and Young Adult Healthcare: <https://nyshealthfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/blueprint-for-adolescent-and-young-adult-health-care.pdf>
- <sup>16</sup> Blueprint for Adolescent and Young Adult Healthcare: <https://nyshealthfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/blueprint-for-adolescent-and-young-adult-health-care.pdf>
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> Trust for America's Health: <file:///C:/Users/wbunts/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/08-2019%20SDOH%20Advocacy%20Presentation.pdf>  
[20Understanding%20to%20Action%20on%20Health%20Equity%20%20Social%20Determinants%20of%20Health%20Frameworks%20and%20THRIVE.pdf](https://www.trustforamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Understanding-to-Action-on-Health-Equity%20Social-Determinants-of-Health-Frameworks-and-THRIVE.pdf)