

The National CASA Association
Volunteer Training Curriculum

***Fostering Futures:
Supporting Youth Transitions
Into Adulthood
Volunteer Manual***



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

**THE NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED
SPECIAL ADVOCATE ASSOCIATION**

Generously underwritten by
the Walmart Foundation



OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice
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Blended Learning and How to Use the *Fostering Futures Volunteer Manual*

The National CASA Association *Fostering Futures* Initiative is a “blended,” two-part curriculum that includes e-learning and in-person training. It is designed to give you a solid base of knowledge and skills to advocate on behalf of youth between the ages of 14 and 21. These are young people who may be required to emancipate (or “age out”) of the foster care system. The *Fostering Futures Volunteer Manual* will serve as your guide during the in-person component of the program. The information in the manual builds on what was presented in the e-learning component as well as the information in the associated *Fostering Futures Resource Guide* (available for download from the e-learning site).

During the in-person workshop, you will be asked to do a more in-depth exploration of topics covered in the e-learning, such as relationship-building with older youth, the *possible selves* concept and working with youth as partners in transition and independent living planning. Each chapter in the manual provides a series of activities to help you do this. These activities are designed with the understanding that different people learn differently. For instance, some people are highly visual learners, while others learn best when hearing material read aloud or when connecting movement and action to the learning process. Each chapter includes activities that appeal to various learning styles.

The activities in this manual are designed to help you learn new material, relate it to what you already know, apply what you’ve learned and consider how you will use it in the future. Activity instructions appear in boxes and are frequently followed by text or worksheets. The curriculum’s case studies allow you to apply what you are learning to a case. You will revisit the cases of Javier and Nita, first introduced to you in the e-learning component, to practice your skills in advocating for and alongside an older youth. Clean copies of all worksheets and forms are available in Appendix 3 of this manual.

History and Evaluation Findings of the *Fostering Futures* Initiative

History of the Initiative

In 2009, the Walmart Foundation awarded the National CASA Association a grant of over \$1.6 million to develop a program to assist its volunteer advocates in working more effectively with and improving overall outcomes for older youth. In its initial proposal to the Walmart Foundation, National CASA reported the following:

Each year, about 25,000 young people ages 18 to 21 must leave foster care. These young people have experienced maltreatment and lived with instability, so it is not surprising they are often ill prepared to suddenly live independently and figure out—on their own—how to do what the foster care system did for them—feed, clothe and house them. Aging out of foster care without a permanent home is the highest-risk outcome for a foster youth:

- *Only 58% had a high school degree at age 19, compared to 87% of a national comparison group of non-foster youth.*
- *Of youth who aged out of foster care and are over the age of 25, fewer than 3% earned their college degrees, compared with 28 % of the general population.*
- *About one in five alumni were homeless for one or more nights within a year after leaving foster care.*
- *One in four of these youth will be incarcerated within the first two years after they leave the system.*
- *The rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among alumni was nearly five times that of the general population and, at 21.5%, exceeded the rates for American war veterans.*

The *Fostering Futures* project included the following components in its pilot phase:

1. An analysis of existing programs and examination of current research and data on youth who are transitioning out of the foster care system
2. Input from an advisory group comprising advocates, foster youth alumni and other stakeholders to identify components necessary in a curriculum
3. Identification of pilot sites throughout the country to implement a draft curriculum, including a continuum of organizations (state, local, rural, urban, those with existing older youth programs and those that have not focused on older youth)

4. Development of an e-learning curriculum and the technological infrastructure to support it
5. Development of an in-person workshop curriculum to include reinforcement of the e-learning topics and opportunities for skills practice
6. Development and delivery of a training for trainers and facilitators
7. Development of an evaluation process to measure participant satisfaction and learning retention
8. Implementation of e-learning and in-person workshops for 16 pilot sites throughout the country using a variety of methods for integration into their respective programs
9. Integration of successful implementation strategies from each of the pilot sites to create a revised curriculum
10. Identification of ongoing infrastructure needs of pilot sites as well as curriculum development and plans to implement the *Fostering Futures* curriculum more fully in our network.

It is the goal of the National CASA Association to continually improve the curricula we offer. We can do this best by hearing back from programs that implement our training. We invite you to provide us input as to what works well with the *Fostering Futures* program and to suggest any additions or improvements. Suggestions and comments may be sent to staff@nationalcasa.org.

Evaluation Findings Supporting the Efficacy of the Initiative

During the year timeframe in which pilot programs were active, 1,262 volunteers were trained in the *Fostering Futures* curriculum, reaching 1,193 youth across 16 CASA programs. The volunteers on average participated in 11 hours of *Fostering Futures* training, which represents a total 13,882 hours of education on volunteer advocacy for older youth.

According to one site: “We’ve been forced (in a good way) to address the needs of older youth: something that was on the radar screen but that wasn’t implemented on the local level.” Ninety-four percent of sites reported that their volunteers’ confidence to serve older youth increased as a result of this project. Confidence building is especially important for volunteers working with older youth because in the past many volunteers reported feeling intimidated by older youth. Volunteers participating in the wrap-up focus group unanimously agreed that the program did have a positive impact on youth. Their main reason was that the program enabled a stronger understanding of the link between short- and long-term goals and knowledge of issues and resources. All agreed that *Fostering Futures* showed the youth that someone cared about empowering them to achieve their goals.

To assess the direct impact on volunteers, National CASA evaluated perception and satisfaction of the training’s value and used pre- and post-training questionnaires to measure learning. To measure the learning that took place as a result of the curriculum, we conducted

an evaluation in two parts. Phase one included preparing measures to assess the efficacy of the curriculum implementation, presenting the evaluation plan to pilot programs at the 2010 National CASA Annual Conference and conducting interviews with key stakeholders. The second phase of evaluation activities included online surveys, focus groups and the analysis of data from volunteers, youth and programs. The overwhelming majority of participants had positive experiences during the training. Highlights of volunteers' overall evaluation of the training include:

- The percentage of participants who responded on the high end of the reporting scale consistently ranged between 78% and 97% for every training evaluation measure.
- 84% of participants gave the sequence and flow of the e-learning a positive rating.
- 95% of the participants agreed with the statement, "I can explain many different challenges faced by older youth."

Volunteers demonstrated strong increases in their knowledge of the curriculum from pre- and post-training results. The average percentage of improvement ranged from 9% to 40%, with an overall percentage increase of 27%. This is particularly impressive when you factor in the fact that 50% of the programs already had some kind of initiative working with older youth and still volunteers experienced substantial increases in their knowledge base. This curriculum fills a knowledge void for volunteers who desire to work with this population.

The length of involvement for the youth was, on the high end, nine months. While we collected data at the end of the pilot, it is not the end of the CASA volunteer's involvement with the youth. For context, a CASA volunteer typically has involvement in a case for 18–24 months. Of more than 250 youth for whom we were able to track both pre- and post-intervention data points, there were improvements on 75% of the 44 key measures used in the evaluation.

The key measures included a number of components in the areas of education, employment, housing, life skills, supportive relationships/community resources and physical/behavioral health.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Goal

In this chapter, you will get to know some of your fellow volunteers and explore the scope and structure of this workshop.

Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- √ Explain the overarching goals of this curriculum.
- √ Review some of the concepts from the e-learning experience.
- √ Describe the outcomes typical of youth emancipating from care.

Overview

Welcome to the *Fostering Futures* program. This training has been informed by the 2008 *Fostering Connections to Success Act* and is inspired by a model of youth advocacy and development called *possible selves*.

The focus of National CASA's *Fostering Futures* program is to improve outcomes for older and emancipating youth (14-21 years of age) served by CASA/GAL volunteers. There is a lot of ground to cover when it comes to working with adolescent youth and to maximize the learning opportunity, this program is "blended." That is, it features an online component (the e-learning you completed) and an in-person component.

The desired outcomes from the *Fostering Futures* program are:

1. Older youth served by CASA/GAL volunteers trained with this curriculum will be more likely to set goals for their future and have clear ideas about how to achieve them.
2. These youth will be empowered with practical knowledge such as how to set up a doctor's appointment, find housing and engage in healthy relationships with family and friends.
3. Older youth served by CASA/GAL volunteers trained with this curriculum will develop knowledge and skills to successfully transition to adulthood.
4. CASA/GAL volunteers will be aware of the needs that older youth typically have and the resources within the local community to assist these youth.
5. CASA/GAL volunteers who complete this curriculum will be better equipped to work alongside older youth in order to help them realize better outcomes than the unnerving statistics typical of youth who age out of the system.

Activity 1A: Introductions

Take a few moments to read through the items listed on the Treasure Hunt worksheet that follows. Place an X by the statements that are true for you. The facilitator will give you more instructions once you have finished reviewing this sheet and marking the statements applicable to you.

Treasure Hunt

Instructions: Please review the following list of descriptors, **putting an “X” by the sentences** that accurately describe **you**.

- _____ I completed the e-learning within the past two weeks.
- _____ I can name four things that I learned in the e-learning.
- _____ I can give an idea of a “cultural transition.”
- _____ I have a funny story about working with a youth on their future plans.
- _____ I like to use metaphors to remember complex concepts or ideas.
- _____ I can recall being 17 years old and some of the things that were important to me then.
- _____ I remember Javier and Nita in the e-learning.
- _____ I can name three adults in *my life* who have been life-long connections.
- _____ I can give three reasons why life-long connections are important for youth leaving care.
- _____ I am convinced that social networking can really assist some youth.
- _____ I can define the term *advocate* in fewer than 15 words.
- _____ I can think of at least two strengths about my cultural identity which support me in being an effective volunteer.
- _____ I know how to identify specific resources that a youth might need while transitioning to emancipation (e.g., housing, insurance, mental health, vocational/educational).

Overall Learning Objectives for the Fostering Futures Program

By the end of the *Fostering Futures* training program, you will be able to:

- √ Establish rapport and engage with older youth in an effective way.
- √ Explain and walk a youth through the various components of *possible selves* as a framework for establishing their goals and achieving their hopes.
- √ Identify various legislation that supports and focuses on older youth in care and the impacts on case planning.
- √ Identify resources that can assist an older youth moving toward independent living.
- √ Explain the importance of youth attending court hearings and advocating for themselves.
- √ Identify resources to prepare youth for and support them in court.
- √ Describe issues facing older youth as they move toward permanence or emancipation.
- √ Explain and value the importance for a youth to have a permanent connection with at least one adult.
- √ Value the way in which various identities (racial/ethnic, LGBTQ, foster care, etc.) can be regarded as a source of strength.
- √ Advocate for and support an older youth in advocating for themselves with the court, social service system, school and in other forums as needed.

Why the Need for Fostering Futures?

According to Casey Family Programs, about 25,000 young people between the ages of 18 and 21 must leave foster care each year. These young people have experienced maltreatment and lived with instability. So it will probably come as no surprise that they are often ill prepared to suddenly live independently and figure out on their own how to do what the foster care system was set up to do for them—feed, clothe and house them. Aging out of foster care without a permanent home is the highest-risk outcome for a foster youth.

Recall some of these statistics about older and aging-out youth from the e-learning:

- Approximately 25% of former foster youth nationwide reported that they had been homeless within 2–4 years of exiting foster care. (National Alliance to End Homelessness).
- Foster youth approach the transition to adulthood with significant educational deficits—

- They are 14 times more likely *not* to complete college than the general population (Chapin Hall Midwest Study).
- They are more than twice as likely *not* to have a high school diploma or GED as their peers (Chapin Hall Midwest Study).
- About 25% of foster care alumni experience post traumatic stress (vs. 4% of the general population) (Northwest Foster Care Alumni Survey).
- The unemployment rate among foster care alumni was 47% (Chapin Hall Midwest Study).
- Youth in the system receive healthcare through Medicaid and are at risk of losing this coverage once they age out of care; only half of young adults leaving care have medical insurance (Chapin Hall Midwest Study).
- Thirty percent of youth participating in the Midwest Study reported being arrested; 15% reported being convicted of a crime; and 29% reported being incarcerated (Chapin Hall Midwest Study at Age 21).

Based on CASA volunteers' more than 30 years of experience working with the highest-risk cases of maltreatment—and applying recent research findings on the concept of possible selves—we believe we have the opportunity to effect positive outcomes through the *Fostering Futures* volunteer training program.

Chapter 2: Youth Development and Possible Selves

Goal

In this chapter, you will review developmental changes that happen during adolescence and explore *possible selves*, a model of youth advocacy that has been proven to improve the chances for positive outcomes.

Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- √ Describe youth development during adolescence.
- √ Differentiate between *advocate* and *mentor*.
- √ Explain the *possible selves* model and how it can be used in volunteer advocacy.

Activity 2A: Review of Youth Development

Listen as the facilitator reviews some of the developmental changes that happen during adolescence.

Youth Development: Overview

In the e-learning and in the associated *Fostering Futures Resource Guide*, you learned about the many developmental changes that happen during adolescence. Adolescent development represents the period that bridges childhood to adulthood.

<i>Children</i>	<i>Adolescents</i>	<i>Healthy Adults</i>
Selfish, self-centered	Transition and Change	Unselfish, thoughtful
Dependent on adults		Able to care for self and others
Irresponsible		Dependable, responsible
Immature		Mature
Identify with family		Identify independent of family
Oblivious of world problems		Can cope with world problems
Not expected to make important decisions		Must be able to make important decisions
Playful (child's job is to learn)		Work (job is serious business)
Supported by others		Self-supporting, support others
Non-sexual in relationships		Sexually competent
Values dictated by family		Have own value system to guide life

An adolescent moves between the two columns in a fluid way, appearing to be more childlike one day and the next appearing more adult-like. They have one foot in adulthood and one foot in childhood and can decide arbitrarily which path to walk on any given day. Due to this constant state of flux, adolescents experience more cognitive dissonance than any other developmental group. For example, they frequently have conflicting thoughts and feelings at the same time.

Many Adolescents...	But...
Want to be grown up	Are afraid to grow up
Don't want anyone to treat them like a child	Often respond with immature reactions
Want to make their own decisions	Don't trust their own decisions
Know they need help	Are too proud to ask for/accept help
Are confident they are right	Are scared of being discovered a fraud
Are full of bravado	Are full of fear

Behaviorally, adolescents are trying out new skills, behaviors and habits. They are in an extended period of trial and error, determining what will work best for them. Many times, these determinations are made based on what feels most gratifying at the time. Therefore, adolescents experiment with beliefs, religions, sex, drugs and alcohol, education and employment.

Adolescents' decisions are often puzzling and illogical to the adult mind. Decisions can be impulsive, with poor judgment exercised on a regular basis. Many of their decisions are based on emotional reactions.

As older youth journey out of childhood, your work with them will begin to include elements that will help them navigate this transition into adulthood and independent living.

In "Brain Changes, Not Hormones, Explain Many Adolescent Behaviors" (December 31, 2000), Associated Press writer Matt Crenson provides this analysis:

Parents and experts have always blamed the same hormones that catapult young bodies into adulthood for the sleeping until noon, the reckless driving, the drug use and the other woes of adolescence. But recent research shows that what's going on above teen-agers' necks, not raging hormones, explains the changes.

Beginning around age 11, the brain undergoes major reorganization in an area associated with things like social behavior and impulse control. Neuroscientists figured this out only in the last few years, and the discovery has led them to see adolescence as a period when the developing brain is vulnerable to traumatic experiences, drug abuse and unhealthy influences.

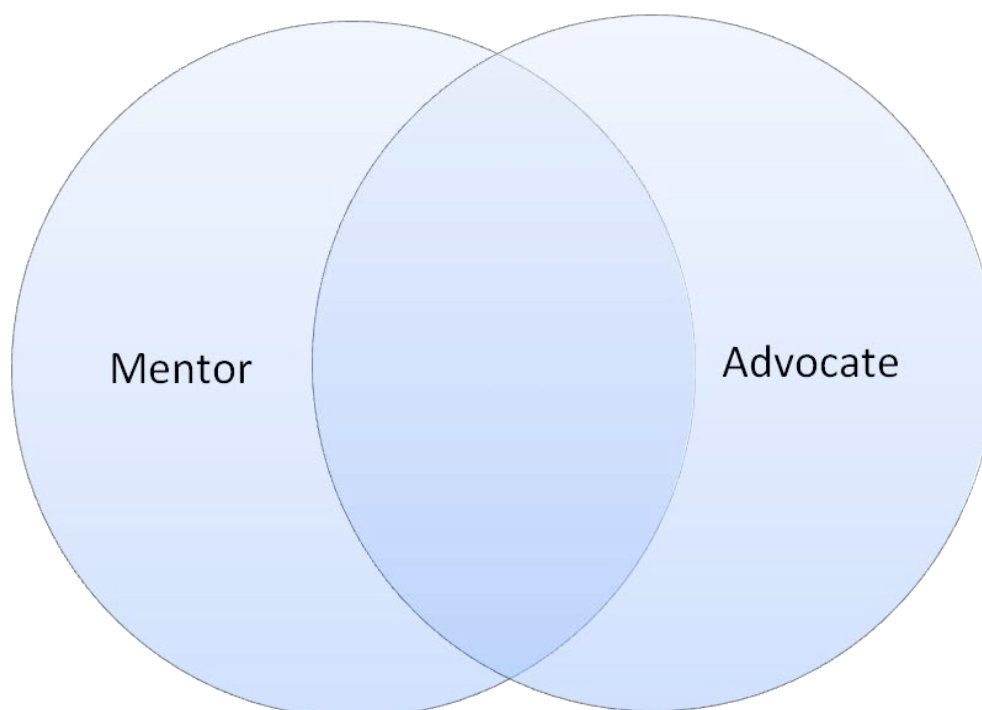
"Adolescence is a time of risk-taking," says Lynn Ponton, a psychiatrist at the University of California-San Francisco and author of The Romance of Risk: Why Teen-Agers Do the Things They Do.

“A big part of adolescence is learning how to assess the risk in an activity,” Ponton says. “Part of the reason teen-agers aren’t good at risk-taking is that the brain isn’t fully developed.”

Looked at that way, it is no big surprise that accidents are the leading cause of death among adolescents or that teens are more likely to become crime victims than any other age group. It’s no wonder that the vast majority of alcoholics and smokers get started during their teen years or that a quarter of all people with HIV contract it before age 21.

Activity 2B: Mentor vs. Advocate

As the youth for whom you advocate get older and your work increasingly encourages self-advocacy and independent living, the line between mentor and volunteer advocate may seem to change and become less clear. However, there are some significant differences between the roles of mentor and volunteer advocate. In small groups, decide what elements and characteristics are unique to the role of *mentor*, which elements and characteristics are unique to the role of *advocate* and where there might be overlap between the two roles. We’ll compare your group’s thoughts with the larger group in a few moments.



Mentoring involves developing a personal relationship with a youth, being a buddy and serving as a role model. Advocating involves learning about the youth’s needs and wishes and serving as a voice for the older child’s best interest within the child protection system and the courts. As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you will continue to serve in your role

following the same standards and practices you learned regarding advocating for the best interest of a child:

- **Investigation:** Volunteers carry out an objective, systematic examination of the situation, including relevant history, environment, relationships and needs of the adolescent youth.
- **Facilitation:** Volunteers identify resources and services for the adolescent youth and facilitate a collaborative relationship between all parties on the case, helping to create a situation in which the youth's needs are met.
- **Advocacy:** Volunteers speak up for and plead the case of the adolescent youth for whom they are appointed.
- **Monitoring:** Volunteers keep track of whether the orders of the court, as well as the plans of the treatment team, are carried out. They report back to the court and work with the treatment team when any of the parties do not follow those orders and plans.

However, as you saw in the e-learning, the volunteer advocate's role in working with an older youth shifts to ensuring that resources and services are in place to prepare the youth for successful independent living. Because services are so crucial to this vulnerable population, your role in advocating for the youth to obtain needed services is critical to the ultimate outcome.

Further, the youth's plan for permanence should include provisions for a long-term connection to at least one committed and caring adult. This is a youth-driven decision. Foster parents, teachers, community leaders, relatives, neighbors and service providers are just a few of the adults who might be capable of and willing to take on this role. In short, you are helping youth create webs of support and interdependency that will increase their success as they transition into adulthood.

Tips for Volunteers

- Move planning discussions away from concern with temporary placement issues and behavior management of teens toward long-term planning for education and employment.
- Promote ways for foster parents, family members and service providers to support teens.
- Connect teens with a network of adults to help them with education and employment.
- Give family members and teens opportunities to build relationships by focusing together on the future.
- Integrate foster youth into the larger community.

Overview of Possible Selves

In the e-learning component, you learned about possible selves, or positive youth development. In this approach, youth are viewed as a *resource*. Youth become involved in every aspect of their care and in all phases of their transition to independent living.

Possible selves, as mentioned in the e-learning, is a way of getting youth to engage in their own lives by having them visualize a positive self-identity to work toward. Using this future self view as a guidepost, youth can begin to map out the connections between the present and the future. That is, they can connect their current activities and behaviors with their hopes and fears for the future. Having this roadmap can help guide behaviors and actions and serve as a powerful motivator to reach goals. According to Daphna Oyserman of the University of Michigan:

The term possible self has been coined to describe incorporation of future goals into self-concept; possible selves are positive and negative images of the self already in a future state—the “clever” self who passed the algebra test, the “fat” self who failed to lose weight, the “fast” self who fell in with the “wrong” crowd. Failure to attain possible selves may increase risk of depression and there is some evidence that well-being and performance improve when possible selves are brought to mind. But clearly we do not always function in an ‘imagine it and you will be it’ kind of world; possible selves do not always sustain self-regulatory action. In spite of possible selves, youth sometime fail algebra, gain undesired weight and engage in behaviors they themselves would prefer to avoid.

Source: Oyserman, D. “Possible Selves: Identity-Based Motivation and School Success,” *Self-Processes, Learning and Enabling Human Potential* (pp. 269-288). (2008) Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Inc. and the Montana Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

The possible selves model consists of six steps:

1. **Discovering:** Helps the youth answer the question, “What are my strengths and interests?” The goal is to find an area in which each young person has had positive experiences and about which he or she is willing to share.
2. **Thinking:** Is designed to help answer the question, “Who am I?” Youth are asked to think about their hopes for the future.
3. **Sketching:** Helps answer the question, “What am I like and what are my possible selves?” Youth are asked to describe themselves as well as their hopes and fears for the future.
4. **Reflecting:** Helps answer the question, “What can I be?” It provides an opportunity to evaluate conditions of the youth’s current circumstance and to set goals for the future.

5. **Planning:** Helps answer the question, “How can I reach my goals?” It is utilized to start thinking about specific ways to attain identified goals. A well developed action plan should be created. The action plan will list a specific hope, a short-term goal underpinning the hope, the specific tasks that must be completed to reach the goal and a timeline for completing all of the tasks. The action plan provides a pathway to support the attainment of long-term goals and hopes for the future.
6. **Performing:** Helps answer the question, “How am I doing?” During this phase, the goals and action plans are revisited regularly. Task completion is reviewed, goals and action plans are modified, goal attainment is celebrated, new goals are added, and hopes, expectations and fears are continually examined.

Source: Hock, M., Schumaker, J. & Deshler, D. *Possible Selves*. (2003) Lawrence, KS: Edge Enterprises, Inc.

Activity 2C: Possible Selves Steps 1 and 2—Discovering and Thinking

To gain a better understanding of the possible selves concept and to get an idea of what you’ll be asking youth to do, complete the first part of the *Fostering Futures* Goal-Setting Worksheet for yourself. Do not role play or try to fill this out as if you were a youth; rather, complete the form using your own life, hopes, expectations and fears as the context.

Fostering Futures Goal-Setting Worksheet: Part 1—Who Am I?

For a clean copy of this worksheet, as well as all of the forms and worksheets in this manual, see Appendix 3.

What am I **good** at?

What would others (my **friends, teachers, colleagues**) say I'm good at?

What do I **like** to do?

What do I want to be doing **a year** from now?

What do I want to be doing **five years** from now?

Activity 2D: Possible Selves Step 3—Sketching

Most of us think of sketching as drawing a simple picture; however, sketching also can refer to giving a brief description of a person. Continuing to work from the perspective of your own life, sketch yourself by completing the second part of the *Fostering Futures* Goal-Setting Worksheet.

Fostering Futures Goal-Setting Worksheet: Part 2—A “Sketch” of My Life

As a person...	As a learner or “student”...	As a _____... (select something that you have strengths in)
...describe yourself	...describe yourself	...describe yourself
...what are your hopes?	...what are your hopes?	...what are your hopes?
...what are your fears?	...what are your fears?	...what are your fears?
...what are your expectations?	...what are your expectations?	...what are your expectations?

At this point, your facilitator may include the optional “Possible Selves Tree” exercise found in Appendix 2.

Activity 2E: Possible Selves Step 4—Reflecting

Reflecting on your Possible Selves Sketch, answer the following four questions and then complete the third part of the goal-setting worksheet.

Possible Selves Reflection—What Can I Be?

1. What stands out for you in your sketch?
2. Which column lists the most hopes?
3. Which column needs to be strengthened the most?
4. What are the main hopes you have for your life based on your sketch?

Fostering Futures Goal-Setting Worksheet: Part 3—Aiming for the Future

Instructions: Based on Activity 2D above, choose three hopes to list on the charts that follow. Then for each hope, list three goals that will help you attain that hope. Choose goals that you can focus on in the next 12 months.

Hope 1:	
Goal 1:	
Goal 2:	
Goal 3:	

Hope 2:	
Goal 1:	
Goal 2:	
Goal 3:	

Hope 3:	
Goal 1:	
Goal 2:	
Goal 3:	

Activity 2F: Possible Selves Steps 5 and 6—Planning and Performing

From your list above, choose one of your identified hopes and one of the goals that will help you attain that hope. Plan out how you can reach this goal by identifying specific action steps to take. The setting of deadlines and revisiting your plan often will help you see how you are doing.

Fostering Futures Action Plan—Achieving My Goals

One of my hopes is to: _____

A goal to help me attain this hope is: _____

Planning Action Steps to achieve this goal (refer to driving/restraining forces)	Deadline	Performing Summary of progress toward completing action steps

Based on: Hock, M., Schumaker, J. & Deshler, D. *Possible Selves*. (2003) Lawrence, KS: Edge Enterprises, Inc.

Activity 2G: Potential for Possible Selves

In small groups, discuss the following questions:

1. What were some of your thoughts as you were going through the possible selves process yourself?
2. Based on some of the information you've now read and heard about the possible selves model, what potential impact might it have on your work with older youth?

In an op-ed in the *New York Times* on February 8, 2009, Richard Nisbett wrote of the power contained in some of the elements of the activities that you just completed. He wrote in part:

Consider, for example, what the social psychologists Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson have described as “stereotype threat,” which hampers the performance of African-American students. Simply reminding blacks of their race before they take an exam leads them to perform worse, their research shows.

Fortunately, stereotype threat for blacks and other minorities can be reduced in many ways. Just telling students that their intelligence is under their own control improves their effort on school work and performance. In two separate studies, Mr. Aronson and others taught black and Hispanic junior high school students how the brain works, explaining that the students possessed the ability, if they worked hard, to make themselves smarter. This erased up to half of the difference between minority and white achievement levels.

Black students also perform better on an exam when it is presented as a puzzle rather than as a test of academic achievement or ability, another study has shown. These are small interventions that have big effects.

Here's another example: Daphna Oyserman, a social psychologist at the University of Michigan, asked inner-city junior-high children in Detroit what kind of future they would like to have, what difficulties they anticipated along the way, how they might deal with them and which of their friends would be most helpful in coping. After only a few such exercises in life planning, the children improved their performance on standardized academic tests, and the number who were required to repeat a grade dropped by more than half.

Source: Nisbett, R. “Education Is All in Your Mind,” *New York Times*. February 8, 2009.

In studies following up possible selves work for two years, this future-focused planning was linked to:

- Increased time spent doing homework
- Fewer class disruptions
- Improved grades
- Increase in in-class initiative-taking
- Reduced rates of depression

Source: Oyserman, D. "Possible Selves: Identity-Based Motivation and School Success," *Self-Processes, Learning and Enabling Human Potential* (pp. 269-288). (2008) Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Inc. and the Montana Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Chapter 3: Engaging Older Youth

Goal

In this chapter, you will expand upon elements introduced in the e-learning around establishing a relationship with an older youth and advocating in partnership with the youth. This continues to develop the discussion about mentor vs. advocate in Chapter 2. You will also explore the impact that culture (of the advocate as well as of other stakeholders earlier identified in the e-learning) may play in the relationships you establish over the course of a case.

Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- √ Explain the impact that culture may have when advocating for aging-out youth.
- √ Describe strategies for shared decision making, self advocacy and planning with older youth.
- √ Experiment with various appropriate technologies and media that may assist in improving outcomes for cases involving older youth.

Activity 3A: Memory Lane

Take a few moments to remember a time when you were somewhere between the ages of 14 and 21, and answer the following questions:

1. Who were three adults with whom you had meaningful relationships? What factors made those relationships meaningful?
2. How did those adults develop a rapport with you?
3. Looking back on the e-learning, how was rapport built with Javier and Nita? Do you see any similarities between that rapport building and your own personal experience?
4. How might culture have an impact on your ability to build a rapport with an older youth?
5. Which principles of engagement for adolescents (shown on the following two pages) were used to build rapport in your experience or in that of Javier or Nita?

After five minutes, please turn to the person next to you to compare experiences and thoughts. Are there similarities? Why or why not? What significance might culture play in the similarities or differences?

Principles of Engagement for Adolescents

Principle	Ideas to Keep in Mind
<i>Meeting the youth where the youth is</i>	Be aware of the world in which the adolescent lives: what are the pressures, expectations, supports? Visit them in their own space when appropriate.
<i>Building on strengths</i>	First and foremost, identify a list of strengths with the youth. This is critical with adolescents who lack confidence and expect you to think of them as “less than” and incompetent.
<i>Empowering youth</i>	Be forthright with your recognition of them as operating in the adult world with the power to make decisions and to act for themselves. Be direct in placing responsibility on them as their own agent of change. Adolescents expect you to tell them what to do and how to do it. You will have to work hard to get them to make their own decisions and self-advocate based on the information you provide. Involvement in court hearings is an excellent way for youth to feel empowered and to learn self-advocacy skills.
<i>Involving youth in assessment, planning and decision making</i>	Ask them what would feel helpful. Because this is a transitional and confusing time in development, they may need different things from you at different times. Check in frequently because what they need can change from visit to visit. Make sure the adolescent is choosing and developing goals in order to hold him or her accountable to outcomes and progress. If the adolescent doesn’t develop the goals, it is easier for them to say this was never their plan. Make sure adolescents participate in all planning meetings and court hearings that discuss their future.
<i>Recognizing steps to success</i>	Recognize progress and movement toward improved decision making. Immature brain development in adolescents contributes to the tendency to over-generalize and over-dramatize. Help them keep perspective by recognizing small steps and change. Inform decision-makers, including judges, of positive change and successes the youth achieves. Keep the historical perspective for youth in order to help them recognize where they started and where they are now.

Principle	Ideas to Keep in Mind
<i>Building hope, expectancy</i>	Convey your hope and belief that they will be successful and can accomplish their goals. Adolescents regularly fluctuate between grand ideas that can be unrealistic and despairing perspectives, which can also be unrealistic. You may have to act as the constant to their changing perspectives. Maintain realistic hope and expectancy. Involving youth in planning their future helps maintain realistic goals.
<i>Honoring and connecting with cultural resources</i>	Many times, an adolescent may have rejected a supportive cultural resource in their own attempts to separate and individuate. It may be critical to help them recognize support and how to tap into available resources as an adult versus the old relationship they may have had with the resource as a dependent child. Conversely, it may be necessary to help an adolescent recognize a culture which is detrimental to progress and the need to separate from this identity while forging a new identity. For instance, the culture of drug abuse.
<i>Linking to concrete services</i>	There is a fine balance between telling adolescents what to do and providing the concrete services they need when they feel overwhelmed. Adolescents may not admit that they need a particular service because they are not sure what will be required of them. It is important to find out what concrete services they need, what they don't know they need and what they absolutely do not want. These may change frequently, so it is important to stay in frequent contact. Assist the adolescent in advocating to obtain these services either from the social worker or directly from the service provider.
<i>Facilitating skill-based practice</i>	Adolescents require more skills practice than adults. A positive aspect of this state is that you may not be trying to undo entrenched patterns but simply shaping positive patterns for the first time. Think of it as a blank slate. For this reason, adolescents must perform the functions and tasks themselves, especially when their histories have not demanded these behaviors in the past. Avoid "classroom-style" skills development and focus instead on real-life activities.
<i>Knowing thyself</i>	Recognizing your own biases in working with adolescents is critical to being successful. Your experiences might be very similar or very different from the youth with whom you are working. Separate out what you believe from what the youth believes. Support and validate the youth's own beliefs and experiences.

Principle	Ideas to Keep in Mind
<i>Modeling interaction</i>	Your interactions with the adolescent will represent the model with which they interact with others in their lives. This includes the adolescent as a parent, student, consumer, client, advocate, etc.

Activity 3B: The Great Debate

The facilitator will divide trainees into two groups. Some of you will be assigned to a group. Others will be given a choice. Once you are in a group, you will be asked to take one side of a typically binary (two clear-cut sides) issue. In your group, you will have five minutes to plan your most persuasive argument on behalf of the side of the issue you have been given. Once your five-minute planning period is over, your group will have 90 seconds to present your argument.

Activity 3C: Part 1—Assigned Choices vs. Having Options

Within your “debate team,” take a few minutes to discuss the following debrief questions:

1. For those who were *assigned* to your team, what was it like being told what side of the debate you must defend?
2. For those who were able to *choose* your team, what was it like being able to decide which side of the debate you could defend?

An Important Note About Shared Decision Making and the Law

Two federal laws place a major focus on youth empowerment, especially for older youth in foster care. Since 2006, under the *Child and Family Services Improvement Act*, all states must have procedural safeguards in place to ensure that in all dependency court hearings, including “any hearing regarding the transition of the child from foster care to independent living,” the court consults “in an age-appropriate manner, with the child regarding the proposed permanency or transition plan for the child.” 42 U.S.C. § 675(5). Therefore, it is essential that you advocate for youth to attend court hearings.

You learned about the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act* when you completed the e-learning. Remember that according to this law the development of a new, specific Transition Plan is required. It must be developed at least 90 days prior to the youth’s transition out of foster care (at age 18 or older). This is over

and above the independent living plan that should begin at age 16 or sooner. The new plan should be personalized, detailed and developed with the caseworker and *other appropriate representatives*. The plan should be as detailed as the youth directs and include specifics on housing, health insurance, education, opportunities for mentors and continuing support services, workforce supports and employment services. As these transition plans are developed, be sure to ask yourself whether the youth has been sufficiently involved in his or her own advocacy and whether the youth has been the driving force behind the plan. What steps will you take to ensure that older youth are meaningfully involved in transition planning and court hearings?

Activity 3C: Part 2—Shared Decision Making/Planning

In Chapter 2, you were introduced to a goal-setting model and went through the process involving six elements of the possible selves concept. In small groups, take some time to look over your program's court report or any other documents or forms you'll be asked to complete when it comes to your work with older youth.

Discuss how you could envision the possible selves concept integrating into your work with an older youth when it comes to transition and independent living planning.

Are there certain situations in which the young person may encounter choices that have already been assigned to him or her?

What is the role of the CASA/GAL volunteer in such instances?

It's Not Just About You and the Youth—Don't Forget the Birth Family

As you discovered in the e-learning, the *Fostering Connections Act* now provides additional protections to support older youth in staying connected with relatives. According to the [Fostering Connections Resource Center](#), Section 103 of the Act (P.L. 110-351)—

[R]equires states “within 30 days after the removal of a child from the custody of the parent” to “exercise due diligence to identify and provide notice to all adult grandparents and other adult relatives of the child.” Moreover, the state must inform relatives of their options “to participate in the care and placement of the child” including the requirements “to become a foster family home and the additional services and supports that are available for children placed in such a home.” The act also allows child welfare agencies to obtain state and federal child support data to help locate children's parents and other relatives.

As Kevin Campbell, founder of the Center for Family Finding and Youth Connectedness, has stated, the connection between child and birth family is both crucial and urgent because a child in out-of-home foster care “is alone and should not be subjected to

further preventable relationship losses.” Obviously, he continues, the youth’s safety and well-being are of paramount importance, and “prospective relative connections and non-relative supports must be assessed for background information and suitability prior to initiating the hope of connections for the child or young person.

In addition, Section 203 of the same law “requires states to make “reasonable efforts...to place siblings removed from their home in the same foster care, kinship guardianship or adoptive placement...and in the case of siblings removed from their home who are not jointly placed, to provide frequent visitation or other ongoing interaction between the siblings.”

Note that while the act states that all of these activities should take place “within 30 days after the removal of a child from the custody of the parent,” it is a good idea to continue to reevaluate connections with relatives for all older youth.

The Great Debate activity was not just about having choices thrust upon you vs. being able to choose your own destiny. There is also an element of cultural implications built into that activity.

Culture impacts everything we do because it is one lens through which we view the world. As you saw in the e-learning, culture goes beyond race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and nationality. Other cultures may include the culture of foster care, the culture of poverty, modern youth culture or a school-based culture (as opposed to an office-based culture).

Activity 3D: Impact of Culture

Part 1—On your own, take a few moments to jot down your thoughts about the issue debated earlier. Did you wish you were on the other side of the issue? Did you feel any connection to the issue regardless of which side you debated for? Do you think other people may have felt more passionate than you about the issue? Do you think others may have felt less passionate about the issue? Why do you think that may be?

Part 2—In small groups, discuss your answers to Part 1. Then revisit your conversations around possible selves and independent living/transition plans:

1. How might your own cultures impact your work with older youth?
2. How might the youth’s culture have an impact on your work with him or her?

Positive Peer Relationships

University of Michigan researcher Daphna Oyserman wrote that “in under-resourced contexts, [positive] possible selves and strategies to attain them are unlikely to be automatically cued; these contexts are less likely to present easily accessible models to

guide success. Youth are more likely to encounter adults who are unemployed, have low academic attainment and hold non-professional jobs.”

In short, many of the situations and contexts from which youth in foster care come do not easily lend themselves to positive role modeling. In his op-ed article to the *New York Times*, Richard Nisbett wrote about one effort to address concerns about the lack of role models and worried about social acceptance. He cited the power of positive peer influence at Northeastern University. In this example, black underclassmen on a majority white campus were given a detailed report of a survey showing that upperclassman who were once worried about feeling accepted on campus eventually came to realize they were indeed able to feel at home on campus. The underclassmen given this report about the experiences of their peers were found to work harder on their schoolwork, to contact professors more and to demonstrate stronger academic performance in grade point average.

Let us now turn to the power of peer-to-peer networking in improving outcomes and creating a healthy social safety net for aging-out youth.

Activity 3E: Peer-to-Peer Connections

Part 1—Turn to the person next to you and share some of the things (or topics) you talk with your friends about. What do you learn when you talk with your friends? How do you keep in touch with your friends and family?

Part 2—Read through the following dialogue, which is an actual exchange taken from the [FosterClub youth message board](#). While this is just one example of many such exchanges on the website, what role can peer-to-peer online social networking opportunities play in the work you do as a CASA/GAL volunteer?

Excerpted Exchange on the FosterClub Youth Message Board:

12-year-old in Ohio:

How do I stop being stressed out? Help please. school. friends. etc. I can't just relax I want it to be that way real bad. but it never seems to happen.

18-year-old in Maine:

Find something you love that soothes you like writeing, watching tv, danceing, youga is best it least i think so, or try something new u may find something that works, try reading a really gd book hope some of these help

22-year-old in New York:

I agree with [the previous post]. If you find something you love, it may become your coping mechanism. Your young and these days things can be way more stressful at your age especially if your a foster care child. My sister is your age and I see a big difference in her then me being her age. Don't say you can't, because you can. Take the can't out of your vocabulary and replace it with yes I can relax. Yes I can have good friends, good grades, attend a good school with great teachers and make stress dissolve itself. I wish you the best on your journey into life with coping with stress because its something that you will need to learn. As you age, you'll realize its a great skill to have.

Part 3—Again turning to the person next to you, take a few moments to answer the following:

1. As an advocate, how might you take advantage of the social networking feature of the FosterClub site?
2. How might introducing the social networking feature of the FosterClub site impact the potential for your youth to realize his or her positive possible self?

Many young people rely on technology today in order to stay connected. Through media such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Blogspot and BlackPlanet, the internet is increasingly used as a primary form of communication by young people to share information and connect with other youth with similar interests.

A Note About Security

Safety and security in an online environment should always be taken into consideration when engaging in online communication and social networking. The FosterClub message boards prohibit the sharing of any personal information (including home addresses, email addresses, pictures or links to other sites). The website has the following note posted specifically for “supportive adults”:

The team at FosterClub strives to maintain the safest site possible while allowing young people enough freedom and flexibility to reap the benefits of sharing in a peer support network online.

In order to allow users the immediacy that they have come to expect from online social networks, the FosterClub team uses a monitoring approach that allows users to post messages without being screened first. Our team does monitor the site consistently and also relies on our users to report inappropriate posts. Our years of experience with FosterClub.com has demonstrated that our young users tend to be protective of this site, understand Internet safety and demonstrate excellent role modeling by disparaging those who post inappropriately.

Source: fosterclub.com/article/fosterclub-safety-rules (Accessed October 31, 2011)

National CASA’s Guidelines for Online Communication and Social Media for Staff and Volunteers

Volunteers and staff should not link to personal pages (or become online “friends”) of families or children they may encounter in their capacity with the CASA/GAL program. This includes instant messenger names, blogs, photo-sharing sites and social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and YouTube. In addition, many programs prohibit volunteers from giving their email address or cell phone number to the child(ren) or family members on any case to which they are assigned.

Face-to-Face Peer Relationships

FosterClub offers a powerful tool for youth to connect with other young people in care from all across the country, and you are strongly encouraged to introduce your youth to this tool. You may also wish to use it yourself as there is a forum for adults working with youth in foster care. However, we’d be remiss if we didn’t touch on face-to-face peer-to-peer social networking. As a foster youth alumna recently stated to the designers of this curriculum:

I have seen first-hand the power of a room full of foster youth. [CASA volunteers should be] aware of local foster youth boards or groups [which can] open up a new world of peer-to-peer support. Many youth don't want to have anything to do with the system or independent living program, so introducing them to foster youth programs outside of the system would give them a different way to connect.

Chapter 4: Assessment and Planning

Goal

In this chapter, you will become familiar with tools for planning your work with an older youth. You will gain a better understanding of how to conduct an individual needs assessment for the youth with whom you are working.

Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- √ Complete the Needs Assessment instrument of the *Fostering Futures* curriculum with a youth to determine their needs and resources.
- √ Develop a plan for your advocacy and efforts on behalf of an older youth.

Activity 4A: Exploring Needs Assessment and Planning Tools

The rest of this chapter consists of two forms you can adapt for your work with older youth. The *Older Youth Needs and Resources Assessment*, beginning on the following page, is designed to help CASA/GAL volunteers organize their thoughts around the possible needs of an older youth as he or she prepares to emancipate from foster care. While this tool is not an exhaustive list of a youth's potential needs (it should be customized if applicable to align with local programs, services, mandates and laws), it is a fairly lengthy assessment. This instrument is not designed to be administered with a youth present, but rather filled out by volunteers after they have taken some time to get to know the young person on whose behalf they are advocating. It should be filled out within 60 days of assignment, updated throughout your work with the youth and completed at end of your assignment.

Following the *Older Youth Needs and Resources Assessment* is a sample of an action plan form, courtesy of the Capital Area CASA Program in Baton Rouge, LA. A form like this links well with the assessment worksheet and is an excellent tool for action planning with youth. Again, you will want to adapt this form to fit local needs or replace it with a localized plan from court reports or an independent living skills program.

On your own, take some time to read over both of these tools. In small groups, discuss what questions you may have about these tools and come up with ways you may find them useful in your work with older youth.

Older Youth Needs and Resources Assessment

Assessment tool based on Benchmarks/Criteria resource developed in New Mexico by CASA 1st Judicial District's Power Up program, Court Improvement Project and CYFD Youth Transition Task Force's Transition Blueprint Committee.

Instructions

- This assessment is designed to provide information on the areas of need for the older youth on whose behalf you're advocating.
- This form should be completed by you (the CASA/GAL volunteer) after you have had a chance to speak with a youth about his or her situation and expressed wishes (some of the questions on this form may help guide conversations you have with your youth).
- Keep in mind that this is an instrument to help you in your advocacy for older youth; this is *not* to be used as a replacement of the normal assessment performed by your program's staff upon a case being assigned, nor is this a substitute for an independent living or transition plan.
- For youth with special needs, there might be additional activities or benchmarks to consider. Use the blank space to add these.

<p>Basic Information:</p> <p>Volunteer Name: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Youth's Name: _____</p> <p>Youth's Age/DOB: _____</p> <p>CASA/GAL Program Name: _____</p>

Education			
	Yes	No	N/A
Youth is enrolled in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a person to help him or her make decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has an academic plan with academic-related goals for the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth is literate and has the ability to read and write.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth plans to attend college or a vocational school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has copies/access to educational records.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth needs tutoring services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If needed, youth is receiving tutoring services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has knowledge of financial assistance she or he may have access to in order to pursue post-secondary education/training.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has an individual identified to assist with post-secondary education planning, applications and financial aid assistance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has documents needed to apply for financial aid and scholarships, including birth certificate and proof of child welfare involvement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education will be one focus of my work, advocacy and action planning with this youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments regarding the educational needs of the youth:			

Employment			
	Yes	No	N/A
Youth has participated in a vocational assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has expressed wanting a job and has established employment goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has developed a resume.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has at least two people from whom he or she may obtain references for employment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has filled out a job application.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has adequate interviewing skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has appropriate clothing for a job interview.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has been involved in volunteer service or an internship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a telephone number, email address, library card and personal calendar for appointments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a social security card, birth certificate and other important documentation for employment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment will be one focus of my work, advocacy and action planning with this youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments regarding the employment needs of the youth:			

Housing			
	Yes	No	N/A
Youth has been exposed to life skills topics including housing issues, budgeting and independent living.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth understands the concept of independent living.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has been exposed to information on legal rights and responsibilities regarding housing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth is able to create and maintain a budget.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a plan for permanent housing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth is connected to a person who can help conduct a housing search.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has knowledge of financial assistance she or he may have access to in order to pursue housing/independent living.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing will be one focus of my work, advocacy and action planning with this youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments regarding the housing needs of the youth:			

Life Skills			
	Yes	No	N/A
Youth knows how to make healthy decisions and advocate on her or his own behalf.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth knows the physical, social, emotional and legal risks associated with alcohol, drug and tobacco use and understands the impact of peer pressure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth can make well thought-out decisions and can problem solve.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth knows how to appropriately respond to prejudice and discrimination.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth understands the importance of good hygiene.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth knows how to stay healthy and care for minor illnesses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth understands the basic concepts of nutrition and knows how to prepare basic meals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth understands services provided by a bank such as checking and savings accounts and how to make a basic budget.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a checking or savings account.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a driver's license.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life skills will be one focus of my work, advocacy and action planning with this youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments regarding the life skills needs of the youth:			

Supportive Relationships/Community Resources			
	Yes	No	N/A
Youth has at least one meaningful connection with an adult in whom he or she can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth is connected to at least one adult mentor, not including the youth's attorney, social worker or independent living coordinator.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a healthy connection to at least one peer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has contact information of community legal resources, attorneys, case workers and mentors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has the ability/opportunity to create, maintain and strengthen supportive and sustaining relationships with foster families and significant others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has the ability/opportunity to create, maintain and strengthen supportive and sustaining relationships with members of his or her birth and kinship families, including parents and siblings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a healthy sense of ethnicity, cultural identity and personal identity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth understands civic responsibility and is registered to vote.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationships and resources will be one focus of my work, advocacy and action planning with this youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments regarding the relationship/resource needs of the youth:			

Physical/Behavioral Health			
	Yes	No	N/A
Youth has had a comprehensive screening to assess physical health, developmental needs, mental health and substance abuse.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has been exposed to information about healthy social relationships, home safety and preventing accidents/violence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has an understanding of issues related to STIs and HIV.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has the skills to maintain good emotional and physical health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a copy of all medical, dental and mental health records.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has information and appropriate understanding of any ongoing medical, dental or mental health conditions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth knows what medications (if any) she or he is currently taking.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth is covered by Medicaid or another insurance plan (currently).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth will be covered by Medicaid or another insurance plan (once he or she emancipates from the system).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth understand what (if any) SSI benefits she or he is eligible for.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth knows and understands when and how to seek medical attention.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth is connected to a “clinical home” as appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health will be one focus of my work, advocacy and action planning with this youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments regarding the health needs of the youth			

<h1 style="margin: 0;">CASA ACTION PLAN</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">(FOR AGING-OUT TEENS 15+)</p>
--

Note: This is an example from Capital Area CASA, Baton Rouge, Louisiana and should be adapted to or replaced with a localized plan from court reports or an independent living skills program.

Case Name: _____ Date _____

CASA/GAL Volunteer Name: _____

Identification#: _____

Youth's Date of Birth ___/___/___

Youth's court-approved permanent plan:

Reunification Alternative Permanent Living Arrangement

Transfer of Custody to Relative Adoption

Is the youth at risk for aging out at age 18? Yes No

If yes, explain why. _____

Independent Living Skills

(Attach Ansell Casey Report if used locally)

Complete this section at age 15 and annually thereafter.

Desired Outcome: Teens leave foster care with the skills needed to live independently.

The teen

has completed the Ansell Casey Living Skills Assessment ___/___/___

will complete ACLSA by ___/___/___

Strengths identified in ACLSA: _____

Areas for improvement identified in ACLSA: _____

Services needed to improve independent living skills: _____

CASA goals to address this issue: _____

Teens who are unlikely to be able to live independently after reaching 18 due to physical or mental disabilities should be referred for an ISC meeting at the age of 16.

If appropriate, has the teen’s ISC meeting occurred?

Yes, on ___/___/___

No, but referral will be made by ___/___/___

Support System

Complete this section at age 15 and older.

Desired Outcome: Teens will have a support network of caring adults when they leave foster care at 18.

List individuals who currently provide a positive support system for teen: _____

Identify at least one caring adult who is committed to the teen (ask the teen!): _____

Does the teen have siblings? Is he or she in contact with them? _____

Is the teen still in contact with family? If so, is this positive? _____

The major issues with teen's current and future support network are: _____

CASA goals to address these issues: _____

Education

Complete this section at age 15 and older.

Desired Outcome: Teens leave foster care with a realistic plan for receiving a high school diploma or equivalency and a realistic and achievable plan for post-secondary training or education.

Teen is on track to receive Diploma GED Certificate by: ___/___/___

If not, why? _____

The teen's current plan for post secondary training/education is: _____

If the teen does not have a plan for post secondary training/education, why not? _____

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) is an annual federal grant provided to states to fund youth who have aged out of the foster care system and who are enrolled in college, university and vocational training programs. Students may receive up to \$5,000 a year based on their cost of attendance.

Does teen qualify for an ETV (Education and Training Voucher) Yes No

Teens pursuing educational goals may qualify for services beyond age 18 through the Young Adult Program (YAP) administered by OCS.

Teen is familiar with YAP? Yes No

Teen has contracted with YAP? Yes No Will contract by ___/___/___

The major issues regarding future participation in YAP are: _____

CASA goals to address these issues: _____

Vocational/Employment Skills

Complete this section at age 16 and older.

Desired Outcome: Teens leave foster care with a realistic and achievable career plan.

Has the teen expressed an interest in a job/career? Yes No

If yes, describe briefly: _____

- Teen referred to Vocational Rehab? Yes No Not appropriate
- Teen referred to OCDD? Yes No Not appropriate
- Did teen have a career assessment? Yes No Not appropriate
- Teen referred to LA Works? Yes No Not appropriate
- Does teen have real-life work experience? Yes No Not appropriate

If yes, describe briefly: _____

The major issues regarding the teen’s vocational and employment skills: _____

CASA goals to address these issues are: _____

Housing

Complete this section at age 16 and older.

Desired Outcome: Teens will have a place to live when they leave foster care at 18.

Where does the teen want to live at age 18? _____

Is this feasible? _____

Other housing options at 18: _____

The major issues with housing after age 18: _____

CASA goals to address these issues: _____

Additional Items

According to OCS policy, teens aging out shall have copies of the following documents.
Has the teen received:

- Copy of her or his health and education records
- Birth certificate
- Life Book
- High school diploma or equivalency certificate
- Social Security card

If not, CASA will contact OCS case manager.

I have developed the above guidelines for my CASA case in collaboration with my CASA Advocate Supervisor. I agree to meet the set goal dates, and I have received the information necessary to begin my Action Plan.

Advocate Signature _____ Date _____

Advocate Supervisor Signature _____ Date _____

Our next meeting is scheduled for: __/__/__

Performance Evaluation completed and signed __/__/__

3 month CAP update due: __/__/__

6 month CAP update due: __/__/__

Document created and used by Capital Area CASA Program (Baton Rouge, LA)

Chapter 5: Youth in Court

Goal

In this chapter, you will learn why it is important for young people to be involved in their court hearings and to advocate for themselves. This information will expand upon issues around engaging and involving youth in planning for their futures.

Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- √ Explain why it is important for young people to be involved in planning for their futures and in court hearings.
- √ Determine whether a youth will attend the annual permanency planning hearings, case review hearings and case planning/transition planning meetings.
- √ Support positive youth engagement in court hearings by
 - Preparing ahead of time.
 - Supporting the youth during the court hearing.
 - Debriefing with the youth following the hearing.

Activity 5A: Youth Attending Court

In the large group, brainstorm reasons why it is good for children and youth to attend court hearings. The facilitator will list all responses on a flipchart page.

Next, brainstorm concerns about children attending court hearings. Again, the facilitator will list all responses on a flipchart page.

We will revisit your responses during the next activity.

Benefits When Youth Participate

Attending court benefits both youth and the court. Youth have the opportunity to understand the process by seeing the court proceeding in person. They also develop a sense of control over the process when they actively participate. The court learns more about children than simply what is presented in reports.

Sense of Control

When youth are removed from their homes, they generally have little control over why or when that occurs, where they go and what happens to their parents. Important things in their lives are taken away, including the ability to make decisions. They are generally

placed in a new home with new caregivers and siblings, go to a new school and have to develop new friends. All of these events are beyond their control. Youth are told there will be a court hearing at which a judge, whom they may never have met, will decide whether they will return home. Sometimes a child advocate identifies a youth's needs and conveys his or her best interests to the court. But when youth are not in court, they may simply be told the outcome and then either continue in the foster home or return to the birth family.

If the goal of the child welfare system is to do what is in the best interests of the child, the child should have input. When youth have adequate representation, they are informed of the process and their role. When youth attend a court hearing, they sense that the judge who is deciding their best interests has listened to them. Regardless of the outcome, youth have reported that simply being heard by the decision maker empowers them and gives them a sense of control over what is happening to them. They feel they have a part to play and can influence the outcome.

Understanding the Process

In an ideal situation, the youth has good representation, the social worker regularly communicates with the youth, the birth parents are honest with the youth about the situation, and the foster parents are present in court and openly discuss the case with the youth. However, a youth may not fully understand what is happening without seeing it firsthand. The youth is told that critical decisions are made by a judge in court. Yet in many instances the youth is not involved in that component of the case. When youth attend court, they can ask the advocate questions about what is happening. They hear what the social worker says about their home, school, visitation with parents, etc. They hear what their parents say about their progress. When the judge makes a ruling and discusses why she or he orders something, the youth hears it firsthand and can ask questions.

Information for the Court

Many questions that the court will have about the case may be addressed in reports by the child welfare agency and child advocate, in parent testimony and in input from other service providers. However, if the court has a question about how often the youth has seen her mother or how the youth is doing in school, the youth can provide the answer.

As with every in-person interaction, having the youth in court makes the case more real for the judge. For example, the court may be deciding whether it is time to change the permanency plan to adoption because the parents haven't complied with the agency's family service plan. If the youth is in court, the court doesn't have to rely on the reports to see how long the child has been in care. The court can see that the child is getting older and needs permanency in his or her life. Indeed, the youth may say this directly to the judge. Even if the youth is not verbal, the court can observe how the youth appears and interacts with others.

If the youth is very young and cannot speak to the judge, being present in court will bring the case to life and help show the case is about a human being with wants, needs, desires and hopes that should be considered. When youth attend the hearing, the court is less

likely to focus excessively on the parents' circumstances as opposed to the youth's needs. When only the parents attend court, the focus is on what they have and have not accomplished. When the youth is present, there is equal attention on the youth and what the youth needs.

Activity 5B: Addressing Concerns

In small groups, strategize ways to address the concerns from the flip chart list generated in the last activity. What are some ways to ensure that youth get all of the benefits described while mitigating the drawbacks?

Considerations About Types of Involvement in Court

There is no single rule or process that governs a youth's presence and participation in court. However, for older youth in care preparing for adulthood, it is especially critical that they attend and actively participate in court hearings. If it is not feasible or preferable for the youth to participate in the entire hearing, consider the following options:

Have the Youth Present Throughout the Hearing.

In most hearings for older youth, it will be appropriate to have a youth present for the whole hearing, without restricting testimony and information that she or he may hear.

Present the Youth's Testimony in Chambers.

If the youth does not feel comfortable attending entire hearings, consider requesting that the youth meet with the judge in chambers. This opportunity provides the youth with a voice directly to the judge and protects him or her from any potential damage from seeing abusive parents or hearing negative information about parents. Most jurisdictions allow in-chambers meetings between the judge and the youth. All lawyers and a court reporter can be present, and all discussions can be on the record. Recording the interaction protects the parties who are not permitted in chambers (e.g., the parents) by informing them what information the youth has shared.

Allow the Youth to Leave the Courtroom if Desired.

In some instances, youth do not wish to see parents or hear some details about their case. They should be involved to the extent they are comfortable.

Use Skype or Other Technology to Allow Youth to Participate.

Many courtrooms are set up (or can easily be set up) to allow the youth to participate via computer technology. This allows the young person to actively participate but with the least disruption to the youth's daily schedule.

Determining Whether the Child Will Come to Court

The presumption should be that the youth will attend court to some extent for all of the reasons stated above. However, there are factors to consider when determining whether the youth will come and how to make the experience most meaningful.

What are the youth's wishes? This is the most important question. Most youth have definite feelings about whether they want to attend court. Youth should not be forced to attend the hearing. But if the youth wants to go, every effort must be made to ensure that happens.

What type of hearing is scheduled? Some hearings lend themselves to youth participation more than others. If there is a hearing dealing with a legal issue that has little impact on the youth, it may make more sense for the youth to not attend. However, if the hearing concerns visitation with parents or long-term permanency plans, the youth's attendance will be vital.

How old is the youth? Some states place age restrictions on youth attending hearings. However, many states *require or strongly presume* attendance for youth over age 12. An older youth can be an information resource for the judge, and it is essential to involve youth in planning for his or her adulthood.

What is the developmental level of the youth? Regardless of age, consideration should be given to whether or not the youth understand what is happening during the hearing.

Will attending court upset the youth? Abuse and neglect hearings can contain graphic details of abuse that may be troubling for the youth to hear. On the other hand, older youth especially may be very aware of what was happening that caused removal. It may be therapeutic for youth to be exposed to the realities of the situation and hear people being held accountable for their actions. Excluding youth from court can be equally (if not more) upsetting, by stripping youth of the opportunity to come to terms with their past and move on and by precluding youth from having a sense of involvement in and control over the charting of their future.

Will attending court disrupt the youth's routine? Generally court proceedings occur during regular school hours. Often multiple cases are scheduled for one day. Youth have to wait until their cases are called, sometimes for hours. School, sports and other extracurricular activities may be disrupted. Yet this concern is not insurmountable. If we value youth participation, scheduling issues and conflicts can be addressed the same way we juggle other important commitments in a youth's life, such as doctor or dentist appointments.

Will court be confusing or boring to the youth? Some courtrooms do not have child-friendly waiting areas, and the youth have to bring something to do while they wait. Also, there must be supervision for the youth while waiting. During the hearing, attorneys and judges use words and concepts that the youth may not understand. Youth have to remain quiet and attentive during hearings that can be long and boring to them if they do not understand what is happening. Ensure that the youth has been told what issues will be discussed. Also, allow the youth to bring a glossary of legal terms (see below) to help them understand the language used.

Who will transport the youth? Transportation should never be a reason to exclude a youth from participating. Most courts rely on the child welfare agency and foster parents or

relatives to transport the youth to and from court. In many cases, youth are placed far from the courthouse and transporting them can be time-consuming and inconvenient. Everyone involved in the youth's case, including the CASA volunteer, can be helpful in finding creative ways to transport. The youth's foster parents have the right to be present and can bring the youth.

Will the court need additional time for the hearings? When youth are actively involved in their hearing, the proceeding may take longer. The youth may want to update the court on their status and express any concerns. The judge may also want to spend extra time interacting with the youth who has taken the time to attend court.

Activity 5C: Supporting Youth Through Court Hearings

Part 1—In pairs, brainstorm ways that you would want to be prepared to participate in an unfamiliar meeting. How can these be applied to youth participating in court?

Part 2—Read the following section, “Supporting Youth Through Court Hearings.” In the large group, discuss any concerns, issues or tips you may have.

Supporting Youth Through Court Hearings

Before Court Hearings

Most of the concerns that professionals have about youth attending their court hearings can be addressed with proper preparation. The CASA volunteer should play a vital role in preparing the youth.

- Determine whether the youth wants to attend court. Explain that the youth can speak directly with the judge—or attend only a portion of the hearing if they would prefer.
- Decide whether the youth should attend the entire hearing or be excused for certain portions.
- Include in your report to court whether the youth will attend the hearing and any accommodations that should be made.
- Provide the youth with at least two weeks' notice of the hearing.
- Assist, or ask the case worker to assist, the youth with making arrangements with school: Will they miss a class? Can they speak to a particular teacher? Can you call the school to inform them of the absence and ask about school work? Remind youth that they may have to wait for a couple of hours and to bring school work or other things to occupy their time.
- Discuss who will be present at the hearing and what their roles are.
- Arrange an advanced visit to the courthouse. If possible, introduce the youth to the judge who makes the decisions in their case. Show the youth the courtroom and explain where everyone sits and what everyone does.

- Explain your role in the court hearing and that you have to advocate for the youth's best interests. Explain that you will also tell the judge what the youth wants.
- Explain the purpose and goals of the particular hearing and how it fits into the rest of the case. Explain what you expect to happen or what the possible outcomes could be.
- Let the youth know what you are communicating and recommending in your report to the court.
- Ask the case worker to go over the child welfare agency's report to the court (or let the youth read it) and find out whether the youth has any responses, disagreements or questions.
- Find out what the youth wants the judge to know.
- Help the youth prepare for court, including what to wear, how to act and what to say. Speak specifically about what they want the judge to know, and practice how to say those things. (See "Questions a Judge May Ask an Older Youth" below.)
- Determine whether the youth wants a supportive person present during the hearing.
- Ensure that arrangements are made to bring the youth to the hearing.

During Court Hearings

The youth may not know many people who are present and may look to you for support during the hearing.

- Ensure that the youth's lawyer (if applicable) knows that you are present and can be supportive.
- If the youth wants to be excused for portions of the hearing, tell the lawyer or the judge.
- If the youth wants to speak to the judge, tell the lawyer or judge.
- If the youth gets upset during the hearing and asks to leave, take the youth out and answer any questions he or she has.
- When the next hearing is being set, ask the youth whether she or he is available for that day and time. Youth who participate in scheduling are more likely to attend.

After Court Hearings

Court hearings can be confusing. The youth may not be sure what the judge ordered.

- After the hearing, ask the lawyer to speak with the youth to answer any questions.
- Even if the youth does not have questions right away, ensure that she or he knows what was ordered, what will happen next and when the next court hearing will take place.

- If available, review the court order with the youth. If not, you, the lawyer or case worker should make arrangements to contact the youth at a later time to review it and discuss any questions that come up after reflecting on the hearing.
- Encourage youth to contact you with questions.
- Ensure that the case worker contacts the caregiver after the hearing to inform them of anything that happened during the hearing that may have had an impact on the youth.
- Ensure that the case worker contacts the youth's therapist to provide information that might be relevant to the youth's treatment.

Questions a Judge May Ask Older Youth Preparing to Transition Out of Care

In addition to preparing the youth to answer questions from the judge, answers to these questions may be helpful to include in the summary of the CASA report for the judge.

Transition plan

1. Permanent connections
 - Where do you go for the holidays?
 - Who do you call for support, help, and advice in emergencies? Will those people be available after you exit care?
 - Do you keep in touch with family members? Do you know how to get in touch with them?
 - Who will you contact after you transition out of foster care if you have questions about health, school and housing?
2. Health
 - Who is your doctor? Do you know whether you can continue with this doctor after foster care terminates? If not, who will your doctor be?
 - Do you know the process for reapplying for Medicaid, if necessary?
 - Do you know how to get access to your medical records or health passport?
 - Do you have a dentist?
 - Do you have health insurance for after you transition?
3. Housing
 - Where do you live? Are you going to live there after the case closes? If not, where are you going to live?
 - Do you have information on landlord/tenant rights? Where should you go to get that information?
4. Employment
 - Do you have a job? Will that job continue after you transition out of foster care?
5. Education
 - Are you in school? What is your plan for future education? What is the plan for post-secondary education or training? What are the supports in place to assist you with continued educational success?

- What assistance have you received to prepare for and apply to post-secondary education or training, including assistance with financial aid applications?
 - Have you accessed Chafee services and Education and Training Vouchers (ETVs)?
 - Are you eligible for other scholarships or financial assistance programs targeted at youth in foster care, including available state tuition assistance programs?

Legal Terms Defined for Children

Below is a list of legal terms youth are likely to hear when they come to court. Consider sharing and reviewing this list with the youth you advocate for prior to attending court with him or her.

Abuse—When a child is being hit or touched in bad ways.

Adoption—The way a child legally becomes part of a new family.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or Guardian ad litem (GAL)

volunteer—There may be a CASA or GAL volunteer in your dependency case. This adult will talk to you and your family and then tell the judge what they believe is best for you.

Court hearing or trial—A judge listens to the people and attorneys talk about what is happening with your family. After the hearing or trial, the judge decides what should happen to you and how to make sure you are safe. The judge also decides how to make sure your family gets the help they need. Tell your caseworker or attorney if you want to talk to the judge.

Court—The court is the building where the judges work, the hearings are held and all the papers are filed in your case. The court is where all the legal decisions are made that will affect what happens to you.

Dependency case—A family comes to court because a parent has hurt his or her child or the parent has not taken care of the child.

Foster family—A temporary family that a child lives with when his or her parents can't take care of the child. A foster family will make sure that you are safe. They will take care of you until you go home.

Guardian ad litem (GAL) lawyer—Helps the judge decide what is best for you. You can meet with your GAL. Your GAL will probably want to talk to you alone to learn more about you.

Guardianship—Another person who has the legal responsibility to acts as the parent for a child.

Judge—Works in the courthouse and is in charge of what happens in court. The judge decides what should happen to you. The judge makes sure everyone is doing what they are supposed to be doing.

Lawyers/Attorneys—A person who goes to college and law school. Lawyers/attorneys give advice and speak for people in court. The judge may give you a lawyer to speak for you. You should meet with your lawyer. Your parents and others involved in the case may also have a lawyer.

Neglect—When a child does not have proper food, clothing, a place to live or other things a child needs to live.

Reunification—A child goes home to his or her parents when the home is safe for the child.

Social worker—Someone who will help you and your family. You can talk to your social worker about how you are feeling and ask her any questions you might have.

Sources: New Mexico Supreme Court, Court Improvement Project Task Force. *What's Going On? A Booklet for Children in Foster Care*. New Mexico: Shaening and Associates, 2001; Judicial Council of California. *What's Happening in Court—An Activity Book for Children Who are Going to Court in California*, 2002 (courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/children.htm); North Carolina Court Improvement Services/Resources Subcommittee. *North Carolina Juvenile Court: Child Protection Hearings—A Handbook for Parents, Guardians, Custodians, and Children*, 2001.

Chapter 6: Challenges

Goal

In this chapter, you will explore the many challenges that accompany working with older youth preparing to age out of the foster care system and discover ways to integrate best practices in advocacy. This chapter's process involves integrating some of the foundational laws, concepts and processes introduced in the e-learning (as well as in prior chapters of this manual) to practice applying them with a youth.

Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- √ Describe how to work with an older youth to assist them in balancing current challenges with focusing toward positive future outcomes.
- √ Identify where and when to use tools and resources to improve advocacy on behalf of the youth.
- √ Consult with colleagues to brainstorm various options for responding to the identified needs of the youth, identifying specific local resources as appropriate.

Activity 6A: Brainstorming Challenges

After listening to a portion of the podcast featuring Jessica Hildebrand, take a few minutes at your table to answer the following questions. Base your answers on what you just heard, what you may have seen in your experiences as a volunteer and simply what you imagine our young people face on a daily basis:

1. What challenges did you hear the youth mention in the podcast?
2. What challenges do you think aging-out youth face in general?
3. What do adolescents need in preparation for emancipation from the system?
4. What challenges stand in the way of the realization of positive possible selves for aging-out youth?
5. What are some potential roots of negative possible selves?

There are a number of laws, resources and tools available to address many of these challenges. In the next activity, you'll be asked to focus on one particular domain (education, employment, health, housing, etc.) that a young person may need to address as she or he prepares to age out of the system. You may want to take a few moments to review the information from the e-learning regarding laws impacting advocacy for older

youth (handout is available). Also, spend a few moments reviewing the assessment and planning tools from Chapter 4. These may give you some ideas on how to structure your conversations and the types of information you may want to gather when speaking with older youth.

Activity 6B: Part 1—When Life Steps In

The facilitator will divide the large group into teams of two. One person on the team will play the part of a volunteer, and the other the part of a youth. The team will be given a game board, and the youth will be given a profile card. Also, each team will be assigned a particular domain to focus on (education, employment, housing and so on), and the youth will be provided with a set of challenge cards which he or she should *not* read until instructed to do so.

Once roles are assigned and all the pieces are in place, conversations should begin between the youth and the volunteer about independent living plans or any of the tools introduced earlier in the training. When the facilitator gives the instruction, the youth should do several things:

1. Rolls the die to determine the number of spaces to move on the game board.
2. Moves that number of spaces on the game board.
3. Reads a challenge card.
4. Discusses the challenge (which will be some type of emergency situation—either internal or external to the youth but certainly impacting the youth’s mental, physical or emotional state), and allow the volunteer to provide direction, referral, problem-solving or empathy to respond to the youth’s immediate situation.
5. If possible or appropriate, the volunteer should try to get their conversation to a place focused beyond the immediate challenge to that of goal-setting, ILP and possible selves.

Each time the facilitator gives the instruction, these steps should be repeated, and the youth comes several steps closer to aging out. It is the goal of the volunteer to ensure that the youth is prepared for independent living prior to aging out.

Activity 6B: Part 2—Domain-by-Domain Debriefing

As a large group, we will review, one domain at a time, some of the specific resources, challenges, unresolved questions, successes, mistakes and next steps uncovered by the teams assigned to the respective domain.

Infinite Possibilities and Infinite Challenges

The materials in this chapter and the next chapter are designed to prepare you as a CASA/GAL volunteer for *some* of the situations you may face as you work with an older youth. Two foster care alumni from Oregon who helped inform the design of this curriculum stated:

The list of potential challenges could be a novel, and it really depends on the specific case a CASA has.... While an overview of potential problems is great, the key is to teach CASAs where they go for more information and more resources when an obstacle presents itself in a case.

A list of suggested online resources to help begin a search of where to find more information when an obstacle presents itself in your case is provided in the back of this manual. Your facilitator, your colleagues and your CASA/GAL supervisor should be able to provide you with additional resources available in your community when it comes to issues of education, employment, housing, life skills, relationships and health needs of your youth.

Activity 6C: Reflection

Take five minutes to write down your take-aways from both the “When Life Steps In” and “Domain-by-Domain” activities. After your time journaling, we will share aloud some of your next steps.

Some questions to ponder as you write out your thoughts include:

1. What specific “ah-ha” moments did you have during this activity?
2. What are some of the tools you found useful and how do you think they can benefit your advocacy on behalf of and alongside an older youth?
3. Is there anything you said or did during this activity that you’d do differently when you’re working on an actual case?
4. What other tools or resources do you need/wish you had in order to help you in your role as a CASA/GAL volunteer working with an aging out youth?
5. Who can you go to for more information, support and help?

Chapter 7: Putting It All Together

Goal

In this chapter, you will put all of the skills and knowledge you've learned in the *Fostering Futures* program to the test by practicing your advocacy skills on behalf of a youth whom you've met before.

Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- √ Apply the skills and knowledge from the *Fostering Futures* program on a case study.
- √ Give and receive feedback to/from your peers regarding application of material within the context of a case.
- √ Decide which resources and tools are useful in a given case.

Introduction

Toward the end of the e-learning course, you were introduced to two teenagers: Javier and Nita. In this activity, you'll be reunited with one of these youth to bring new skills and knowledge gleaned from your in-person training to their cases.

You might notice that some elements of these cases have expanded or changed slightly since you met these youth in the e-learning. You'll also be asked to jump into the role of a volunteer or the role of the youth in order to discover more about this case and practice your skills in advocating for *and alongside* an older youth.

Activity 7A: Case Study Review

Decide as a group which *one* set of case notes to review, either Nita's or Javier's. Reacquaint yourself with the case study the group has chosen by reading over the notes in the review section. Then discuss the following questions within your group:

1. What resources might be important to cover in a conversation with the youth?
2. How will you identify resources and access/involve the youth?
3. What questions might you ask the youth at this point in the case?
4. What cultural identity/(ies) is/are at play in this case? What's the impact of the youth's cultural identity on this case? What's the impact of *your* cultural identity on a case? Are there potential strengths/challenges regarding the impact of cultural identity?
5. What components of possible selves might be helpful at this stage of your relationship?

Activity 7B: Engagement Skills Practice Rounds One, Two and Three

To practice engagement skills, we are now going to shift from a discussion *about* the youth to a discussion *with* a youth. Each group will choose one person to serve as a volunteer advocate, one person as the youth (Javier or Nita) and one person as an observer. The roles will be switched in subsequent rounds so that each person will have the chance to play each role.

The group should read the round one case notes. The volunteer then should engage the youth in a discussion about the new information learned from these case notes. Remember that the point of this activity is for the volunteer to practice skills. Although the youth should engage in the conversation in a realistic way, she or he should not make it unnecessarily hard on the volunteer. Since time is limited, the conversations are not meant to be completed at the end of the round but at least begun.

The observer is to record specific things that the volunteer did well (identified with a + at the end of the round) and those things that could be improved (represented by a Δ at the end of the round). Be sure to be specific so that everyone can learn how to improve. If observations are too general, it's not very helpful. After the facilitator announces that it is time to end the conversation, time will be given to debrief with the observer.

Rounds two and three will follow the same format, with roles switched and using new information found in the case notes for the respective rounds. After all the rounds are completed, each group will report out on their experiences to the large group.

Javier's Story—The Case Notes: Review

May 28

Javier (age 17) and his younger sister Lourdes (age 14) were met by police officers as they walked home from school two weeks ago and were removed from their home when their mother was arrested for killing her husband (Javier's and Lourdes' stepfather). Javier's father left the family three months after Lourdes was born; he has returned to his native country of El Salvador and he has not had contact with his family in 10 years. Javier's stepfather was physically abusive to both Javier and his mother. Javier's mother stated that she did what she did in order to end the cycle of abuse in her home and to protect her children. Lourdes was sent to live with an aunt, uncle and four cousins who live two hours away from where she and her brother grew up. The aunt and uncle did not feel they had the resources or ability to open their home to Javier. Javier just turned 17 last month and is living with the Martins, a foster family that took him in two weeks ago. Javier has not had to change school systems. Given the current availability of resources, the local CASA/GAL program has assigned a volunteer only to Javier, not Lourdes, as a result of his out-of-family placement. Based on the findings of the local child protective services agency, the Martins were unable to accommodate both siblings in their home.

June 27

Yesterday Javier mentioned that he'd like to visit with his mother in prison. I will do the research on the steps we need to take in order to get Javier in to see his mother.

August 15

Javier's social worker informed us that she would need to be involved in securing permission to add Javier's name to the visitors' list to visit his mother. Javier's first visit was last Tuesday. The Martins report that Javier's mood has been extremely pleasant since the visit.

September 18

This afternoon, Javier asked to borrow \$20 for a birthday gift for his sister.

Instead of lending Javier money, we discussed various ways he could earn money. After we explored several options, Javier mentioned that a friend of his works at a local bookstore and says he enjoys it. Javier plans to pick up an application to work in the bookstore. Before we ended the visit, Javier committed to having a teacher proofread his application.

September 28

Javier requested that we prepare for his interview at the bookstore with a "mock-interview" during our meeting this afternoon. He has an interview at the bookstore on September 30.

October 8

Javier reported having been offered (and accepted) a part-time job as a sales clerk in the bookstore. He will make \$7.25/hour.

He also reported meeting with his mother last week (he was driven to the prison by Ms. Martin).

October 30

Javier and the Martins seem to be in conflict over his attendance of his sister's 15th birthday party. Javier appeared extremely frustrated over not having transportation to his aunt and uncle's for the party.

March 15

The Martins have informed Javier that he will need to leave their home once he turns 18, but before he graduates high school.

I arranged a meeting with the Martins to discuss these developments; Javier was also present during this meeting. After explaining some of the laws that protect both them and Javier after his 18th birthday but before he finishes high school, they agreed to maintain Javier in their home through his graduation. Javier explained to the Martins that his life over the past year or so has been extremely hectic and he felt they often didn't recognize what he was going through. The Martins expressed surprise at Javier's thoughts but also appreciation for his being open with them.

March 17

Javier and I spoke today in more depth about his living situation. We began to talk about covering some of his needs (medical, dental, transportation, housing, etc.) in order to prepare for the independence that comes with emancipation.

March 19

We spoke again, and he said he was worried about having to do it all by himself and he didn't know why the "magic age of 18" all of a sudden said he had to do everything. He said he felt overwhelmed at figuring out everything. He said he liked his job at the bookstore but didn't think he made enough money to live on his own.

Do not move on to the next section until instructed to do so.

Javier’s Story—The Case Notes: Round One

March 31

Javier continues to enjoy working. He said he’s had a lot of “dizzy spells” when he doesn’t eat for a long time, especially on Saturdays when he’s at his job for a long time, and on Wednesdays when he goes to his job right after school. He said that once he got up real fast from unloading a box of books and almost passed out. He also shared that he’s been dating a girl who works with him at the bookstore and wants to be able to buy her things. Her name is Georgette. He said that she’s different from the other girls that he’s “been with.”

Observer may record specific things that the volunteer did well and those things that could be improved on the table below.

+ Strengths	Δ Areas to Improve

Do not move on to the next section until instructed to do so.

Javier’s Story—The Case Notes: Round Two

April 12

The Martins brought Javier into his pediatrician because of his dizzy spells. He said he was too old to go to a pediatrician and felt stupid and “like a little kid” waiting for the doctor. He didn’t think he was sick and that it was a stupid idea. The doctor then sent him to a different doctor and they ran tests. He’s been diagnosed with diabetes and needs to learn about different foods to avoid and insulin shots. Javier’s 18th birthday was this month.

May 15

When I met with Javier today, I asked him about his diabetes. He said it’s a pain, but he was not having the dizzy stuff happen. I asked him if he was able to ask his new doctor the questions he had to understand about it more. He said he really liked his doctor. It’s different having a “real doctor” and not a pediatrician. We could talk about more “real things for me.” When I asked what that meant, he said, “You wouldn’t understand—guy things.” Javier also talked about how he wanted to get Georgette something special for her birthday and said it was cool to hang around her with her family since she had a real family and they did things together like birthday parties.

Observer may record specific things that the volunteer did well and those things that could be improved on the table below.

+ Strengths	Δ Areas to Improve

Do not move on to the next section until instructed to do so.

Javier’s Story—The Case Notes: Round Three

June 1

When I asked Javier about his feelings about graduation, he said he wished people wouldn’t make such a big thing of it. He didn’t know what to do next or where to go next. He said he could probably stay with his aunt and uncle if he worked and paid them rent but didn’t want to move away from his girlfriend since she might be pregnant—but she wasn’t sure yet. If she was, he needed to be sure to be around because a kid needed to have his parents.

Observer may record specific things that the volunteer did well and those things that could be improved on the table below.

+ Strengths	Δ Areas to Improve

Nita's Story—The Case Notes: Review

September 10

Nita is a 17-year-old junior in high school. She is African American. Nita and her little sister were removed from their birth mother's home six years ago when Nita was 11 and her sister was 3 years old. While each girl has a different father, neither father was present at their birth nor has legal paternity ever been established for either child. It was determined that reasonable efforts to locate each father were made prior to placing the children in out-of-home care, however neither father was ever located.

Six years ago, Nita's teacher noticed that the only meal Nita was eating was the free school lunch, that the girl was frequently absent from school, and she eventually found out that Nita was the main caretaker of her younger sister. It was later discovered that there were occasions when their mother would be gone for up to three days at a time. The teacher made a referral to CPS, and when the authorities arrived they found both girls at home, alone, in a very disorderly house with little food. The two girls were put into separate foster homes because social services was unable to find a home that the two of them could live in together. Two days later the birth mother came home, and it was discovered that she had a methamphetamine addiction. The birth mother had a four-year history of checking into and prematurely checking out of rehabilitation centers.

The mother's parental rights were terminated two years ago. Since that time, the girls have had no contact with the mother. Nita and her sister have remained in close contact over the years, though never again living in the same home. Nita has reported that she continues to feel very responsible for her sister and visits her sister several times a month.

Like her sister, Nita's original case plan included permanency in the form of adoption. One attempt at adoption was disrupted, and no other opportunities for adoption ever arose. Over the past several years, Nita's case plan for permanency has evolved into an independent living plan. Prior to her current placement, Nita lived with two other foster families and spent approximately nine months (her freshman year of high school) in a group home. For the past year, she has been living with her current foster mother, Lewanne Skillings.

Nita's younger sister has been in the same home since being removed from her birth mother. Nita's younger sister was legally adopted by her African American foster family, Kim and Chester Robinson, a year ago.

Nita's younger sister was provided a CASA volunteer from the time she was removed from her birth mother until the adoption was finalized. Due to volunteer shortages, the court was unable to assign a CASA volunteer to Nita until now.

September 19

Met with Nita for the first time; we spoke for about 45 minutes. Discussed my role with her and her situation with Ms. Skillings. We spoke a little about school. Nita gave the

impression she's ambivalent about finishing school, but she also said some things that make me think she really does care but isn't sure where to get help. I advised Nita that I would stop by the school. She gave me the name of her guidance counselor, Ann Sherwood, and said that Ms. Sherwood could tell me a little more about Nita's academic progress. She also mentioned that she and Ms. Skillings don't always get along perfectly. When I asked if they fought a lot, she said she'd probably use the word *bicker*, she wouldn't classify their differences as *fights*.

October 1

I stopped by Chavez High School and spoke with Ann Sherwood about Nita. Ms. Sherwood explained that Nita has struggled since coming to Chavez High at the beginning of her sophomore year. She recommended Nita receive extra tutoring to pull her grades up but didn't give me many other insights into possible causes for Nita's struggles. She certainly didn't think Nita had substance abuse issues (I asked just to get some perspective on what is currently in Nita's ILP).

October 25

Nita and I spoke briefly at Ms. Skillings' home. It sounds like her grades are a little better, and any progress at this point is certainly a step in the right direction.

November 5

Nita and I spoke for about 90 minutes this afternoon. She said that while she is happy to be in someone's house as opposed to another group home, she and Ms. Skillings don't tend to see eye-to-eye on a lot of issues. I will need to keep my eye on this situation, because Ms. Skillings tends to mention her observation that Nita has a "chip on her shoulder."

December 21

Nita and I spoke for about an hour this afternoon at Ms. Skillings' home. We spoke of the progress she's made; while she isn't on the school honor roll quite yet, she said she hadn't received a failing grade on a test, quiz or paper since the tutoring began. She reported that she is now getting mostly Cs.

January 21

According to both the Robinsons and Nita, Christmas was a nice, family time. Nita continues to attend the tutoring sessions, and it seems that she is taking greater pride in her academic achievements.

February 13

Nita's grades continue to improve. During our visit yesterday, she also mentioned that she has an opportunity for a part-time job two days a week performing administrative tasks at the hospital. I hope that this helps with Nita's leadership skills and responsibility. We also discussed the idea of nursing school. Nita mentioned that she has a cousin who is currently working as a nurse.

April 5

I went to the Skillings house yesterday, and it seemed that the wheels had come off of the relationship between Nita and Ms. Skillings. Lewanne Skillings accused Nita of smoking marijuana in her bedroom with a friend, Josefina, though she admitted that she did not have any physical evidence. She claimed to have smelled marijuana coming from Nita's room. Nita claims she and her friend were simply burning incense in the room. Ms. Skillings is considering asking social services to remove Nita from her home.

May 2

Ms. Skillings asked Nita to be removed from her home. Social services is exploring the options, including a group home. Nita has been in one group home prior to this potential placement, but we have not talked much about that experience.

June 8

Yesterday I met with Nita for the first time since she was placed in St. Xavier House for Girls. She's moved in, but she's far from settled. She feels that the other girls at the home are "stuck up" and that the staff is "cold" toward her.

June 10

I talked to Nita on the phone after she texted me to say she "hated it at X." She said she doesn't feel comfortable around the other girls, and she misses seeing her friend Josefina as often as she used to. Nita says that Josefina is the only person in the world that understands or cares for her. She said that she still likes her job at the hospital and wants to work more, especially over the summer. She said it's weird that there are no black nurses or doctors in this hospital. She also said that she was happy that her sister was adopted and in a family, but in a lot of ways she felt bad that she didn't have the same thing.

Do not move on to the next section until instructed to do so.

Nita’s Story—The Case Notes: Round One

July 1

Nita told me that she feels like she doesn’t belong here. The staff have been “getting on her” about sleeping too much and isolating from the other girls in the house. She said she just stays at the house when she has to and then hangs out with Josefina or goes to work. There were a few times that when Nita was telling me about her activities or ideas, she started with, “Josefina says I’m real good with people” or “Josefina tells me that I should go to nursing school.”

Observer may record specific things that the volunteer did well and those things that could be improved on the table below.

+ Strengths	Δ Areas to Improve

Do not move on to the next section until instructed to do so.

Nita's Story—The Case Notes: Round Two

July 30

I met with Nita today, and she was crying the whole time. She was despondent that Josefina's family was moving out of the area and that she couldn't see her. I talked about her loss and grief and tried to acknowledge how this has happened to her in her life before and it's still hurtful. She told me this was "nothing like that" and that I would never be able to understand. When I asked what she meant by that, she said she "loved" Josefina, that they had been "in love." I think Nita may have interpreted my surprise at that statement as disapproval, and she refused to talk any more about it.

Observer may record specific things that the volunteer did well and those things that could be improved on the table below.

+ Strengths	Δ Areas to Improve

Do not move on to the next section until instructed to do so.

Nita's Story—The Case Notes: Round Three

August 27

Nita and I met at the mall today. She said she was depressed about Josefina leaving and she wondered if she'd be alone for her whole life. She only has one term left for high school and didn't know what to do next. She liked her job but said that the money she makes barely paid for her cell phone and getting her hair done once in awhile. She said she didn't even know if her sister would miss her if she wasn't around anymore. She said that I was the only person around that listens to her once in awhile, and I couldn't really understand that much because I was so different from her.

Observer may record specific things that the volunteer did well and those things that could be improved on the table below.

+ Strengths	Δ Areas to Improve

Appendix 1: Web and Print Resources

Links to Organizations and Websites

Alaska CASA

Alaska CASA's foster youth advocacy group, Facing Foster Care in Alaska, and a committee of the Court Improvement Project teamed up to produce a court guide for youth. There are two documents: the main booklet, *Youth in Court Guide*, and useful [hearing checklists](#).

America's Literacy Directory

A searchable directory of programs that provide help with math, reading, writing and GED preparation as well as a directory of GED test centers.

Casey Family Programs

Offers free publications on topics related to older youth including a section on [Transition to Adulthood](#).

Casey Life Skills

Easy-to-use tools to help young people prepare for adulthood.

Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

An independent policy research center whose mission is to build knowledge that improves policies and programs for children and youth, families and their communities.

Child Welfare Information Gateway

Promotes the safety, permanency and well-being of children, youth and families by connecting people to information, resources and tools. Topics covered include child welfare, child abuse and neglect, out-of-home care and adoption.

College Scholarships.org

This site lists several [scholarships](#) available for young people who are or who have been in the foster care system.

The Education Training Voucher (ETV) Program

ETV awards grants to current and former foster youth to help pay for college or specialized education. Grants are funded by the federal government and administered by the states.

The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color

Dedicated to increasing the number of young men of color who are prepared to succeed and graduate from college. Provides research on the issues confronting these young men and the disparate educational outcomes of various groups in the United States. Of particular interest may be the first-hand [stories](#) of young men and how they faced the roadblocks and challenges of higher education.

The Finance Project

The Finance Project's Youth Transitions Resource Center provides links to resources on how to develop and sustain supports and services for youth transitioning out of foster care. One helpful tool is their *Guide to Mapping Community Assets for Transitioning Youth*.

Foster Care Alumni of America

A national nonprofit founded and led by alumni of the foster care system. Their mission is to connect youth with the alumni community and to transform foster care policy and practice.

Foster Care to Success

Helps former foster children become successful adults. Provides scholarships and grants, mentoring and moral support as well as internship opportunities.

FosterClub

The national network for young people in foster care. Their *Transition Toolkit* is designed to help youth and their adult supporters take inventory of the youth's current assets, identify resources and map out a plan. Also provides a tool called *Permanency Pact*, which guides youth in assembling positive, kin-like relationships with supportive adults.

Fostering Connections Resource Center

A gathering place of information, training and tools related to furthering the implementation of the *Fostering Connections* law.

FDIC Money Smart Program

A free, independent-study, computer-based curriculum to help youth ages 12–20 learn the basics of handling their money and finances.

Guide to Independent Living for Transitional-Age and Emancipated Foster Youth

Created to give foster youth transitioning to independent living a thorough understanding of their legal rights and how to best utilize the resources available to them. Although written for Alameda County, CA, much of the information, tips and tools will be applicable across states.

It's Your Responsibility to Talk to Youth: Pregnancy Prevention for Youth in Foster Care

A tool for caregivers and service providers to raise awareness; to suggest ways to approach sex, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) with youth; and to provide resources.

Judicial Guide for Implementing the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008

Presents a brief overview of each section of *Fostering Connections*, outlines some general judicial considerations for implementation and provides questions to be asked from the bench to help ensure compliance with the law and best practice.

National Indian Child Welfare Association

Improves the lives of American Indian/Alaska Native children and families by helping tribes and other service providers implement services that are culturally competent, community-based and focused on the strengths and assets of families. One resource found on their site is a *Youth Suicide Prevention Toolkit*.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

Has a section on emancipating/older youth, including a list of resources.

National Resource Center for Youth Development

Works with states and tribes to implement all the requirements of the *Foster Care Independence Act of 1999*. The site includes information on youth engagement, permanency and transition planning.

Possible Selves

Daphna Oyserman, a professor at the University of Michigan, is one of the nation's leading researchers on the concept of possible selves. She is quoted in this curriculum, and many of her research articles can be found on her website.

Ready by 21

An innovative set of strategies developed by national experts at the Forum for Youth Investment. Their decades of youth policy experience helps communities improve the odds that all children and youth will be ready for college, work and life.

Books***Flux: Life After Foster Care* (Foster Care Alumni of America)**

Written by members of the foster care alumni community for those in care who are facing the transition to adulthood. The purpose of the book is to describe, predict and support some of the emotional aspects of that journey. It addresses issues such as dealing with your biological family, developing a new identity and creating intimate relationships.

***A Future Near Me—Questions to Guide a Young Adult Toward Self-Sufficiency* (Mark Kroner)**

A pocket workbook for youth who are thinking about moving out on their own. It includes 100 questions to guide a young adult toward self-sufficiency.

***The Path Before Me—Questions to Guide American Indian Youth Toward Responsible Living* (NRCYS)**

Written specifically for American Indian/Alaska Native youth, this pocket workbook asks 100 questions—the answers to which can guide Indian youth through two worlds: their tribal community and the larger society. These are the questions that youth face when they prepare for the future.

Possible Selves: Nurturing Student Motivation (Michael Hock, Jean Schumaker, Donald Deshler)

A classroom program which guides students through the possible selves process. Can be ordered by calling Edge Enterprises at 877-767-1487 or clicking on the above link to the order form.

Appendix 2: Optional Possible Selves Tree Exercise

The following exercise can be incorporated as part of your work with youth in Chapter 2. If desired, complete this step before Activity 2E on Page 22.

Activity A: The Possible Selves Tree

This part of the activity uses the metaphor of a tree to transfer some of your earlier thoughts into a powerful mental and visual image. The trunk of the Possible Selves Tree represents the whole person, and the various parts of the tree represent significant areas of your life, your hopes and your fears.

The tree has three major limbs corresponding to the three columns on your sketching worksheet. Label the limb on the left as *person*, the middle limb as *learner* and the limb on the right with the *strength* you identified.

For each hope and expectation recorded on your worksheet, draw and label a branch growing out of the appropriate limb on your tree.

Include the descriptions of yourself from your worksheet as roots. Think of roots as personality or behavioral traits or your own history that is stuck in the soil of who you are. Draw positive statements as long, thick roots and negative statements as short, thin roots.

Your fears or potential dangers to your growth (illness, death of a loved one, unemployment) can be represented by lightening, wind, rocks, clouds, toxins in the soil—anything that could attack your tree and damage its health.

On the following two pages you will find examples of Possible Selves Trees, one completed by a CASA volunteer, the other by an adolescent.

The Possible Selves Tree

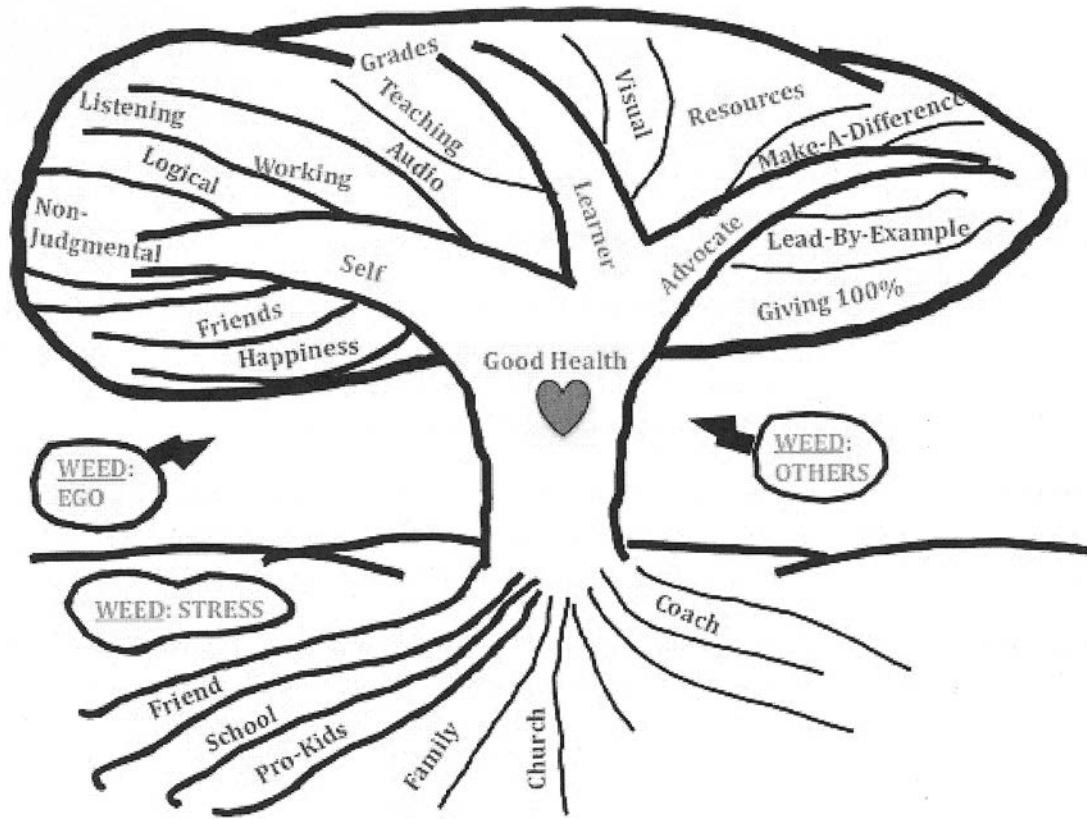


Source: Hock, M., Schumaker, J. & Deshler, D. *Possible Selves*. (2003) Lawrence, KS: Edge Enterprises, Inc.

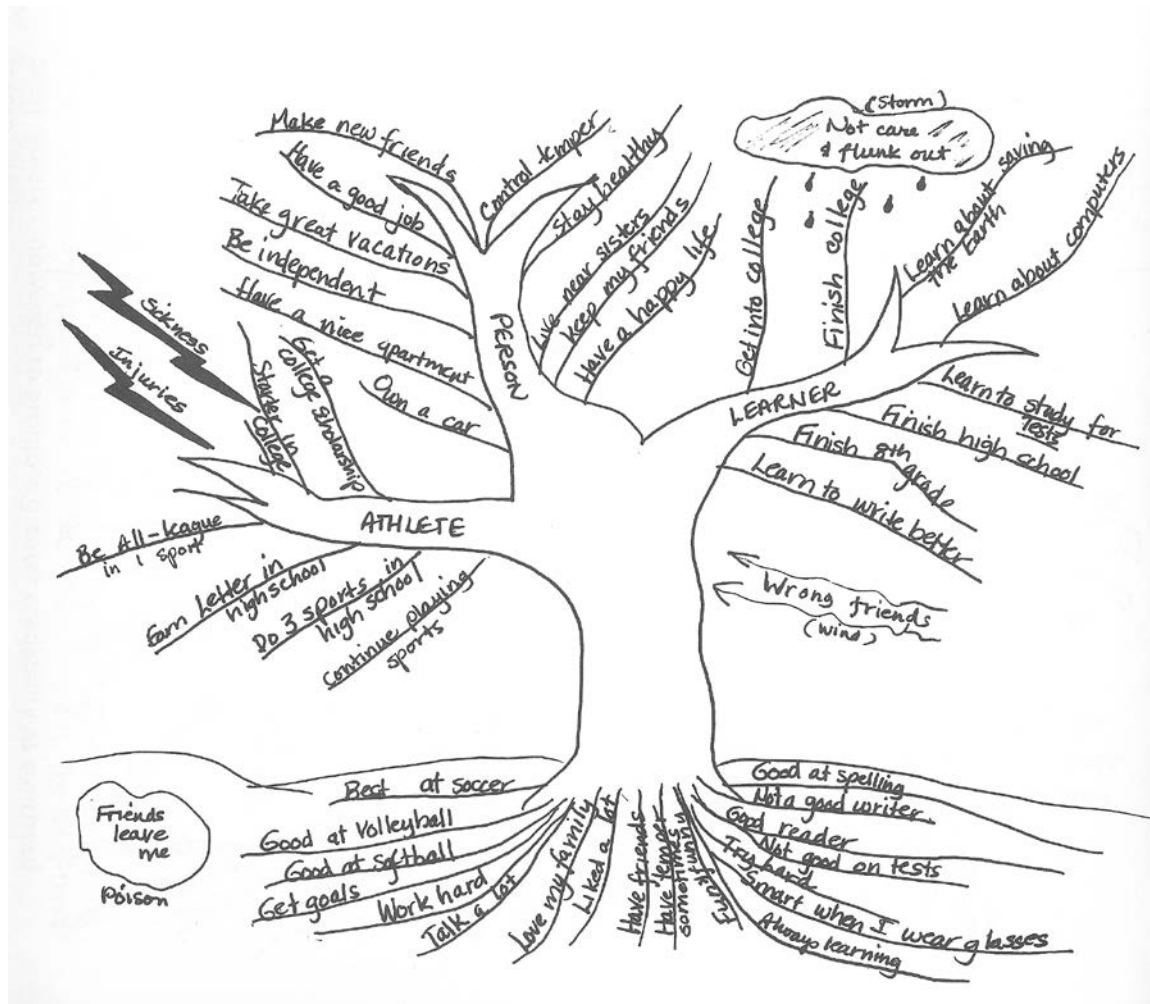
Instructions: Sketch out this diagram for your Possible Self.

- Trunk = You (the whole person)
- Main Limbs = The three parts of the you who you hope to be in the future
- Smaller Branches = Individual, smaller, shorter-term goals to keep that main limb growing
- Roots = Descriptions or short phrases describing you now. Draw positive statements as long, thick roots and negative statements as short, thin roots
- Dangers = Things you fear might disrupt your growth. These can be represented by lightening, wind, rocks, clouds, toxins in the soil, etc.

Example from ProKids, Cincinnati, OH—An Advocate/GAL Perspective



Example from Possible Selves: Nurturing Student Motivation, Page 94—A Youth Perspective



Activity B: Reflecting

Reflecting on your Possible Selves Tree, answer the following four questions and then complete the third part of the goal-setting worksheet.

The Possible Selves Tree Reflection

1. What stands out for you on your tree?
2. Which limb has the most branches?
3. Which limb needs to be strengthened the most?
4. What are the main hopes you have for your life based on the parts of your tree?

Appendix 3: Forms and Handouts to Use in Your Work with Youth

Fostering Futures *Goal-Setting Worksheet: Part 1—Who Am I?*

What am I **good** at?

What would others (my **friends, teachers, colleagues**) say I'm good at?

What do I **like** to do?

What do I want to be doing **a year** from now?

What do I want to be doing **five years** from now?

Fostering Futures Goal-Setting Worksheet: Part 2—A “Sketch” of My Life

As a person...	As a learner or “student”...	As a _____... (select something that you have strengths in)
...describe yourself	...describe yourself	...describe yourself
...what are your hopes?	...what are your hopes?	...what are your hopes?
...what are your fears?	...what are your fears?	...what are your fears?
...what are your expectations?	...what are your expectations?	...what are your expectations?

Possible Selves Reflection—What Can I Be?

1. What stands out for you in your sketch?
2. Which column lists the most hopes?
3. Which column needs to be strengthened the most?
4. What are the main hopes you have for your life based on your sketch?

Fostering Futures Goal-Setting Worksheet: Part 3—Aiming for the Future

Hope 1:	
Goal 1:	
Goal 2:	
Goal 3:	

Hope 2:	
Goal 1:	
Goal 2:	
Goal 3:	

Hope 3:	
Goal 1:	
Goal 2:	
Goal 3:	

Fostering Futures *Action Plan—Achieving My Goals*

One of my hopes is to: _____

A goal to help me attain this hope is: _____

Planning Action Steps to achieve this goal (refer to driving/restraining forces)	Deadline	Performing Summary of progress toward completing action steps

Based on: Hock, M., Schumaker, J. and Deshler, D. *Possible Selves*. (2003) Lawrence, KS: Edge Enterprises, Inc.

Older Youth Needs and Resources Assessment

Assessment tool based on Benchmarks/Criteria resource developed in New Mexico by CASA 1st Judicial District's Power Up program, Court Improvement Project and CYFD Youth Transition Task Force's Transition Blueprint Committee.

Instructions

- This assessment is designed to provide information on the areas of need for the older youth on whose behalf you're advocating.
- This form should be completed by you (the CASA/GAL volunteer) after you have had a chance to speak with a youth about his or her situation and expressed wishes (some of the questions on this form may help guide conversations you have with your youth).
- Keep in mind that this is an instrument to help you in your advocacy for older youth; this is *not* to be used as a replacement of the normal assessment performed by your program's staff upon a case being assigned, nor is this a substitute for an independent living or transition plan.
- For youth with special needs, there might be additional activities or benchmarks to consider. Use the blank space to add these.

Basic Information:

Volunteer Name: _____

Date: _____

Youth's Name: _____

Youth's Age/DOB: _____

CASA/GAL Program Name: _____

Education			
	Yes	No	N/A
Youth is enrolled in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a person to help him or her make decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has an academic plan with academic-related goals for the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth is literate and has the ability to read and write.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth plans to attend college or a vocational school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has copies/access to educational records.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth needs tutoring services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If needed, youth is receiving tutoring services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has knowledge of financial assistance she or he may have access to in order to pursue post-secondary education/training.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has an individual identified to assist with post-secondary education planning, applications and financial aid assistance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has documents needed to apply for financial aid and scholarships, including birth certificate and proof of child welfare involvement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education will be one focus of my work, advocacy and action planning with this youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments regarding the educational needs of the youth:			

Employment			
	Yes	No	N/A
Youth has participated in a vocational assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has expressed wanting a job and has established employment goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has developed a resume.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has at least two people from whom he or she may obtain references for employment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has filled out a job application.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has adequate interviewing skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has appropriate clothing for a job interview.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has been involved in volunteer service or an internship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a telephone number, email address, library card and personal calendar for appointments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a social security card, birth certificate and other important documentation for employment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment will be one focus of my work, advocacy and action planning with this youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments regarding the employment needs of the youth:			

Housing			
	Yes	No	N/A
Youth has been exposed to life skills topics including housing issues, budgeting and independent living.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth understands the concept of independent living.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has been exposed to information on legal rights and responsibilities regarding housing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth is able to create and maintain a budget.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a plan for permanent housing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth is connected to a person who can help conduct a housing search.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has knowledge of financial assistance she or he may have access to in order to pursue housing/independent living.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing will be one focus of my work, advocacy and action planning with this youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments regarding the housing needs of the youth:			

Life Skills			
	Yes	No	N/A
Youth knows how to make healthy decisions and advocate on her or his own behalf.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth knows the physical, social, emotional and legal risks associated with alcohol, drug and tobacco use and understands the impact of peer pressure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth can make well thought-out decisions and can problem solve.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth knows how to appropriately respond to prejudice and discrimination.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth understands the importance of good hygiene.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth knows how to stay healthy and care for minor illnesses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth understands the basic concepts of nutrition and knows how to prepare basic meals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth understands services provided by a bank such as checking and savings accounts and how to make a basic budget.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a checking or savings account.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a driver's license.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life skills will be one focus of my work, advocacy and action planning with this youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments regarding the life skills needs of the youth:			

Supportive Relationships/Community Resources			
	Yes	No	N/A
Youth has at least one meaningful connection with an adult in whom he or she can trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth is connected to at least one adult mentor, not including the youth’s attorney, social worker or independent living coordinator.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a healthy connection to at least one peer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has contact information of community legal resources, attorneys, case workers and mentors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has the ability/opportunity to create, maintain and strengthen supportive and sustaining relationships with foster families and significant others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has the ability/opportunity to create, maintain and strengthen supportive and sustaining relationships with members of his or her birth and kinship families, including parents and siblings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a healthy sense of ethnicity, cultural identity and personal identity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth understands civic responsibility and is registered to vote.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationships and resources will be one focus of my work, advocacy and action planning with this youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments regarding the relationship/resource needs of the youth:			

Physical/Behavioral Health			
	Yes	No	N/A
Youth has had a comprehensive screening to assess physical health, developmental needs, mental health and substance abuse.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has been exposed to information about healthy social relationships, home safety and preventing accidents/violence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has an understanding of issues related to STIs and HIV.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has the skills to maintain good emotional and physical health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has a copy of all medical, dental and mental health records.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth has information and appropriate understanding of any ongoing medical, dental or mental health conditions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth knows what medications (if any) she or he is currently taking.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth is covered by Medicaid or another insurance plan (currently).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth will be covered by Medicaid or another insurance plan (once he or she emancipates from the system).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth understand what (if any) SSI benefits she or he is eligible for.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth knows and understands when and how to seek medical attention.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth is connected to a “clinical home” as appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health will be one focus of my work, advocacy and action planning with this youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments regarding the health needs of the youth:			

CASA ACTION PLAN

(FOR AGING-OUT TEENS 15+)

Note: This is an example from Capital Area CASA, Baton Rouge, Louisiana and should be adapted to or replaced with a localized plan from court reports or an independent living skills program.

Case Name: _____ Date _____

CASA/GAL Volunteer Name: _____

Identification#: _____

Youth's Date of Birth ___/___/___

Youth's court-approved permanent plan:

Reunification Alternative Permanent Living Arrangement

Transfer of Custody to Relative Adoption

Is the youth at risk for aging out at age 18? Yes No

If yes, explain why. _____

Independent Living Skills

(Attach Ansell Casey Report if used locally)

Complete this section at age 15 and annually thereafter.

Desired Outcome: Teens leave foster care with the skills needed to live independently.

The teen

has completed the Ansell Casey Living Skills Assessment ___/___/___

will complete ACLSA by ___/___/___

Strengths identified in ACLSA: _____

Areas for improvement identified in ACLSA: _____

Services needed to improve independent living skills: _____

CASA goals to address this issue: _____

Teens who are unlikely to be able to live independently after reaching 18 due to physical or mental disabilities should be referred for an ISC meeting at the age of 16.

If appropriate, has the teen’s ISC meeting occurred?

Yes, on ___/___/___

No, but referral will be made by ___/___/___

Support System

Complete this section at age 15 and older.

Desired Outcome: Teens will have a support network of caring adults when they leave foster care at 18.

List individuals who currently provide a positive support system for teen: _____

Identify at least one caring adult who is committed to the teen (ask the teen!): _____

Does the teen have siblings? Is he or she in contact with them? _____

Is the teen still in contact with family? If so, is this positive? _____

The major issues with teen's current and future support network are: _____

CASA goals to address these issues: _____

Education

Complete this section at age 15 and older.

Desired Outcome: Teens leave foster care with a realistic plan for receiving a high school diploma or equivalency and a realistic and achievable plan for post-secondary training or education.

Teen is on track to receive Diploma GED Certificate by: ___/___/___

If not, why? _____

The teen's current plan for post secondary training/education is: _____

If the teen does not have a plan for post secondary training/education, why not? _____

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) is an annual federal grant provided to states to fund youth who have aged out of the foster care system and who are enrolled in college, university and vocational training programs. Students may receive up to \$5,000 a year based on their cost of attendance.

Does teen qualify for an ETV (Education and Training Voucher) Yes No

Teens pursuing educational goals may qualify for services beyond age 18 through the Young Adult Program (YAP) administered by OCS.

Teen is familiar with YAP? Yes No

Teen has contracted with YAP? Yes No Will contract by ___/___/___

The major issues regarding future participation in YAP are: _____

CASA goals to address these issues: _____

Vocational/Employment Skills

Complete this section at age 16 and older.

Desired Outcome: Teens leave foster care with a realistic and achievable career plan.

Has the teen expressed an interest in a job/career? Yes No

If yes, describe briefly: _____

- Teen referred to Vocational Rehab? Yes No Not appropriate
- Teen referred to OCDD? Yes No Not appropriate
- Did teen have a career assessment? Yes No Not appropriate
- Teen referred to LA Works? Yes No Not appropriate
- Does teen have real-life work experience? Yes No Not appropriate

If yes, describe briefly: _____

The major issues regarding the teen’s vocational and employment skills: _____

CASA goals to address these issues are: _____

Housing

Complete this section at age 16 and older.

Desired Outcome: Teens will have a place to live when they leave foster care at 18.

Where does the teen want to live at age 18? _____

Is this feasible? _____

Other housing options at 18: _____

The major issues with housing after age 18: _____

CASA goals to address these issues: _____

Additional Items

According to OCS policy, teens aging out shall have copies of the following documents.
Has the teen received:

- Copy of her or his health and education records
- Birth certificate
- Life Book
- High school diploma or equivalency certificate
- Social Security card

If not, CASA will contact OCS case manager.

I have developed the above guidelines for my CASA case in collaboration with my CASA Advocate Supervisor. I agree to meet the set goal dates, and I have received the information necessary to begin my Action Plan.

Advocate Signature _____ Date _____

Advocate Supervisor Signature _____ Date _____

Our next meeting is scheduled for: ___/___/___

Performance Evaluation completed and signed ___/___/___

3 month CAP update due: ___/___/___

6 month CAP update due: ___/___/___

Document created and used by Capital Area CASA Program (Baton Rouge, LA)

The Possible Selves Tree



Source: Hock, M., Schumaker, J. and Deshler, D. *Possible Selves*. (2003) Lawrence, KS: Edge Enterprises, Inc.

Instructions: Sketch out this diagram for your Possible Self.

- Trunk = You (the whole person)
- Main Limbs = The three parts of the you who you hope to be in the future
- Smaller Branches = Individual, smaller, shorter-term goals to keep that main limb growing
- Roots = Descriptions or short phrases describing you now. Draw positive statements as long, thick roots and negative statements as short, thin roots
- Dangers = Things you fear might disrupt your growth. These can be represented by lightening, wind, rocks, clouds, toxins in the soil, etc.