



FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL

**A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL SERVING FOSTER
YOUTH FROM 6TH GRADE – AGE 26**

FairFutures ➤

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FEBRUARY 2023

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FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL

SECTIONS 1-4

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MANUAL OVERVIEW & CONTRIBUTIONS

BACKGROUND

Fair Futures is a coalition of over 100 non-profit organizations and foundations advocating for all young people in New York City's foster care system to have access to the long-term supports they need to achieve their potential. The Fair Futures advocacy is fully youth-led by the Youth Advisory Board.

Fair Futures is also a youth-centered, comprehensive model that serves young people who have been in the foster care system from 6th grade through age 26. The model includes a robust middle school program that prepares students for success in middle and high school and a long-term coaching program from 9th grade until age 26 that includes professional coaching, tutoring, and comprehensive social-emotional, academic, career development, employment, housing, and independent living supports.

The Fair Futures model was developed through a 1.5 year-long research project that included the expertise of New York City's executive and program-level leadership in child welfare and youth development. The model's services and service-delivery are based on best practice programs in NYC and nationally that serve young people in foster care. The model integrates many of the key components of Graham Windham's SLAM program (individualized coaching from 9th grade through age 26) and The New York Foundling's Road to Success program (robust middle school academic supports and quality, 1:1 tutoring); both programs have achieved strong outcomes for young people in care in NYC over the last six years. The model also infuses best practices at critical junctures derived from other NYC-based foster care agencies, educational and workforce development organizations, and evidence-based national models.

The Administration for Children's Services received \$10 million from the City for 2019-2020 to implement Fair Futures across the child welfare system in NYC. In Year 2 (2020-2021), \$12 million was received; in Year 3 (2021-2022), \$20 million was secured, of which \$12 million was baselined in the NYC budget... **Fair Futures funding in NYC is currently limited to serving youth in foster care ages 11 to 20; advocacy will continue by the Fair Futures coalition and Youth Advisory Board to fully baseline and extend funding to all youth until age 26.**

The Administration for Children's Services also formed a public private partnership with the Foster Care Excellence Fund foundations. These foundations pooled over \$3 million in funding over three years (2019 – 2022) to fund the infrastructure needed to implement the Fair Futures model citywide. The infrastructure includes the creation of this manual and the accompanying materials, robust trainings for all Fair Futures staff, technical assistance for all 26 child welfare agencies, and the development of an Online Platform to track youth progress and house materials/resources.

The Fair Futures Youth Advisory Board is comprised of a full-time youth leader and 15 youth members from across agencies. The Youth Board leads all advocacy activities, including rallies and virtual events, and meets regularly with elected officials and the ACS Commissioner.

A MODEL THAT MEETS YOUNG PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

The model, and this manual, are **fully centered around meeting the needs of current/former foster youth**, regardless of their academic status or life situation. As such, this manual and the Fair Futures "Goals & Steps" framework can apply to any young person.

This manual serves as a guide on how to engage young people, help them gain academic and career development experiences in line with their interests and goals, and support them through the challenges they commonly face in the transition to adulthood. The Fair Futures manual offers evidence-based strategies for middle school and high school success, effectively engaging youth in a long-term coaching relationship, and helping youth develop and make progress towards their academic, career development, and housing/independent living goals so that they can achieve their potential.

The manual maps out, step by step, how to support young people based on their current situation. It also links to a comprehensive set of tools, materials, and vetted resources that staff can use to assist young people throughout their journey.

MODEL FLEXIBILITY AND STRUCTURE

There is inherent flexibility to the Fair Futures model, as it is centered around young people's needs and meets a youth where they are. However, it also provides a lot of structure to assist staff with "how to" help a young person at every juncture on the journey they choose. It maps out the steps on how to navigate various systems and access the academic, career, and housing resources, programs, and opportunities available to youth in NYC, based on where they are and where they want to go.

Innovation is always encouraged! Agencies adopting this model can continue to use or develop their own program branding, infuse additional program components or best practices, or slightly alter staff titles/roles, as long as they deliver all of the key components of the model.

All of the existing program models that NYC foster care agencies have fit within the Fair Futures framework. Fair Futures serves to fill service gaps, extend the length of service, enhance supports, and provide a structured framework to these programs **so that no young person falls through the cracks due to staff knowledge, capacity, or program design.**

This coaching component of the Fair Futures model can also be tailored for use in supportive housing settings and/or used to coach other young people outside of the child welfare system.

MODEL LIMITATIONS & POTENTIAL ADDITIONS

While Fair Futures is not a clinical model, Coaches help facilitate access to any mental health or supportive service a young person needs and help ensure follow-through. As Coaches build strong relationships with young people, they often become aware (or informed) of any mental health, health, or substance abuse challenge(s), as these issues often get in the way of academic and career development progress. Thus, Coaches can help ensure young people are accessing Medicaid Care Management services and are meeting with their Care Managers and/or Case Planners to address any needs or challenges.

Coaches also provide social/emotional support to young people and the program sticks with them, no matter what. As part of the model, young people are connected to peer groups and extracurricular activities, both of which can be important forums for healing and self-expression.

The Fair Futures model also is designed to integrate enhancements. Examples of additional components that could be infused into the Fair Futures model through private funding include, but are not limited to:

- Quality, 1:1 college tutoring
- Additional on-site job readiness and/or internship programs
- "Gap-year" programming or other academic/vocational bridge programs
- Partnerships with alternative high schools that start in the 9th grade
- Professional mentors for students in a post-secondary setting
- Yoga, meditative, and healing groups
- Clinical supports for young people with mental health challenges
- Credible messenger leadership programs
- Youth advocacy/organizing activities (beyond participation in the Fair Futures Youth Board)

THE ONLINE PLATFORMS, CARE4 AND ONE DEGREE



The Excellence Fund foundations funded the development of an Online Platform to support the Fair Futures model, called Care4. It was piloted at two agencies and scaled system-wide in December 2019. It is now used by all ~400 Fair Futures staff across all 26 agencies.

CARE4 IS A USER-FRIENDLY, CLOUD-BASED, PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TOOL THAT SERVES THREE KEY FUNCTIONS:

#1. Tracking youth progress using the Fair Futures “Goals & Steps” framework.

In this framework, **Goals** are standardized and represent positive outcomes and **Steps** represent progress towards goals. Steps also serve to help guide Coaches on how to help a young person achieve that particular goal.

The Online Platform will allow Coaches to work with young people to develop academic and career development goals based on where they are and track progress in a visual way. For young people aging out of care, it can be used to track progress in obtaining and maintaining housing and building independent living skills.

This framework is also used for the middle school component to track academic progress and services.

#2. Generating automated reports on a youth-level, Coach-level, program-level, and aggregated-level that show progress towards Goals and other key academic and career development data.

For individual agencies, these reports will be helpful for Coach Supervisors and Program Directors to monitor young people's progress and effectively support/supervise Coaches. It will also be helpful in attracting additional private funding.

For the system, aggregating Goals & Steps and other key data across agencies will help facilitate continued public funding and future program evaluation.

#3. Housing codified materials, tools, and vetted resources in the areas of education, career development, and housing & life skills. These materials were developed collaboratively by NYC foster care agency staff and external experts in each topic area. These materials are updated twice each year, and as needed. These materials are incorporated into the all of the “Goals & Steps” Worksheets on Care4 so that they can guide staff as they are working on a particular step.

TIP! Throughout this manual, the functions associated with the Online Platform are outlined. Please note that these may change slightly as the platform continues to be improved.

ONE DEGREE

Care4 also links to an online directory called **One Degree**. Fair Futures brought One Degree to NYC so that staff can go to one place to find best-fit schools, programs, and career opportunities for young people that are up-to-date.. The site currently contains over 1,500 high school, post-secondary, and career development opportunities and is searchable by eligibility criteria, age, program structure, geography, etc.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The Fair Futures model was developed based on effective programs in NYC that serve young people involved in the foster care system. The model also infuses best practices at critical junctures from other NYC-based academic and workforce development organizations and evidence-based national models.

The funding for this research and development of this manual and accompanying materials/resources were made possible through a public-private partnership between the **Administration for Children's Services** and **The Foster Care Excellence Fund**, housed at the **New York Community Trust**.

The Foster Care Excellence Fund members are:

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
The New York Community Trust
Redlich Horwitz Foundation
The Tiger Foundation
Ira W. De Camp Foundation
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
Stavros Niarchos Foundation

The following child welfare agencies participated in a landscape assessment that led to the identification of best practices that constitute the backbone of the Fair Futures model:

Graham Windham
New York Foundling
HeartShare St. Vincent's Services
Children's Village
Children's Aid
Sheltering Arms
Good Shepherd Services
Forestdale
JCCA
Rising Ground
SCO Family of Service

The following individuals/organizations made significant contributions to the writing and revision of the Fair Futures Manual:

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Michael Zink (formerly of The New York Foundling, currently founder of At The Table)
Liz Northcutt, City Living NY
Aisha van Ter Sluis
Administration for Children's Services Education and Employment teams, including Yuriy Pawluk and Ray Singleton

The Fair Futures Goals & Steps framework was developed, refined, and tested collaboratively with Coaches, Specialists, Supervisors, and Directors from the following agencies and non-profit partners/ experts:

Fair Futures Consultants: Katie Napolitano, Nadine Yuvienko, and Michael Zink
Graham Windham
Good Shepherd Services
New York Foundling
HeartShare St. Vincent's Services
Children's Village
Forestdale
Advocates for Children
City Living NY

The following agency experts and young people were interviewed by Fair Futures consultants Aisha van Ter Sluis and Katie Napolitano to develop the Fair Futures Staff Screening/Hiring Toolkit:

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Pilar Larancuent, Graham Windham
Emil Ramnarine, Graham Windham
Brooke Rosenthal, HeartShare St. Vincent's Services
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The academic, workforce development, and housing/independent living tools were developed, refined, and/or reviewed by the following parties, most of whom participated in one or more of the Fair Futures Committees over 2018-2019:

Fair Futures Consultants: Katie Napolitano, Michael Zink, Aisha van Ter Sluis, and Nadine Yuvenco
Graham Windham
New York Foundling
HeartShare St. Vincent's Services
Children's Village
SCO Family of Services
Good Shepherd Services
Rising Ground
Administration for Children's Services
Advocates for Children
iFoster
Juvenile Law Center
City Living NY
Workforce Professional Training Institute
Center for Youth Employment
Columbia Workforce Center
Pinkerton Foundation
Hats and Ladders
The Door
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow
Workforce Funder's Group
Youth Communication
Lawyers for Children
CUNY Foster Care Initiative
First Star CSI Academy
Office of Supportive/Affordable Housing and Services, Human Resource Administration

PART 1: FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM SUMMARY

SECTION 1. BACKGROUND AND NEED

All young people need long-term, healthy relationships with caring adults and access to resources and opportunities to succeed. The Fair Futures model upholds the notion that young people in the child welfare system, most of whom have experienced trauma and loss, have the same capabilities as children without such experiences, but can face multiple obstacles to reaching their full potential. Additionally, when foster youth “age out” of the system, typically at age 21, they – like most young people – are often not prepared for independent living.

Youth in foster care in NYC who do not have access to long-term, comprehensive support have significantly lower rates of high school graduation, post-secondary persistence and completion, and employment. Without a high school degree, young people are at high risk of facing chronic unemployment and/or system involvement. Youth who age out of foster care are among the populations at greatest risk for becoming homeless, incarcerated, or experiencing early pregnancy/parenthood.

However, outcomes for young people who receive access to long-term coaching and quality academic and career services are significantly stronger.

Foster youth are incredibly resilient. They have dealt with more adversity and trauma than most adults will ever experience, and when they are equipped with consistent, caring, authentic adult relationships and the individualized supports that every young person needs, these youth can make tremendous strides in their social/emotional, academic, and career development.

SECTION 2. GOALS

The overarching goal of the Fair Futures model is to provide young people with the long-term coaching, social/emotional, academic, and career development supports they need to:

- Develop relational skills and a strong network of positive peer and adult supports;
- Prepare for and graduate high school;
- Connect to and persist in post-secondary settings;
- Build progressive career development experiences in line with their interests and academic/vocational plans that will help them navigate onto a living wage career pathway;
- Access and maintain affordable housing (for young people who age out of foster care) and gain independent living skills.



SECTION 3. FAIR FUTURES STAFF & KEY MODEL COMPONENTS

At scale, Fair Futures serves young people in foster care starting in the 6th grade and sticks young people until age 26, regardless of their permanency status. (Note: Current NYC funding is limited to youth active in foster care ages 11-20.)

There are no eligibility criteria and coaching is voluntary; a young person can choose to leave and return to the program at any time. The model is all about meeting young people where they are, believing in them, and helping them reach their full potential.

The model* includes, at scale, the following positions:



Program Director



Middle School
Education Specialist
(maximum 1:50 ratio)



Coach Supervisors
(1:4 – 1:5 ratio)



Coaches
(1:15 ratio)



College Specialist**



Tutors[‡]
For 6th–12th graders
(1:18 ratio)



Tutor Supervisors[‡]
(1:4 – 1:5 ratio)



Career Development
Specialist



Housing
Specialist**



Outreach
Coordinator

A best practice that agencies could adopt is to have an **Outreach Coordinator** who was previously in foster care and received support. They can serve as a Credible Messenger and help recruit young people to the program who have not engaged (or who have disengaged).

* In Year 1, this staffing model and these ratios were recommended (but not required) for receipt of city funding.

** Some agencies may not need Specialists if they have a smaller number of older youth in foster care (see roles below).

[‡]Tutors are for students in grades 6-12. Agencies can to sub-contract with a quality tutoring vendor or create their own tutoring program; see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 6](#).

[‡]This position is only for agencies that would like to implement a tutoring program; see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 6](#).

Key components of the model include:

A ROBUST MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM PREPARES STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS IN HIGH SCHOOL

In middle school, Fair Futures students will receive educational advocacy, access to in-home, weekly tutoring, individualized assistance with the high school selection process, and connections to extracurricular activities.

Two key components of the middle school program include the Middle School Education Specialist and in-home, quality tutoring:



The Middle School Education Specialist:

The Middle School Education Specialist works with up to 50 students at a time (including elementary students, if there are less than 50 middle school students at any given agency).

The key duties of the **Middle School Education Specialist** include:

- Proactively monitor the academic performance of all middle school students;
- Provide educational advocacy to middle school students, as needed, and ensure students are receiving the supports they need to succeed;
- Connect middle school students to trauma-informed, weekly, in-home tutoring by a quality tutoring provider (New York Foundling or TierNYC);
- Connect students to extracurricular activities afterschool and in the summer;
- **Provide individualized assistance with the high school selection processes to all 8th grade students and their families.** The Specialist will ensure that all students apply to quality, best-fit schools.

This is a critical component of the role, and one of the reasons why the caseload of students should not exceed 50.

In-home Tutoring:

From 6th to 8th grade, students will receive weekly, in-home tutoring from a Tutor (at a 1:15-18 ratio) who works from a strength-based, youth development lens and provides the individualized academic and social-emotional support students need to excel in middle school and prepare for high school. Tutors will report academic progress, needs, and concerns to the Middle School Education Specialist and also work with the Specialist to help ensure young people are connected to extracurricular activities.

To implement the tutoring component, agencies can subcontract a quality third party tutoring provider or build their own tutoring program, ideally with training and technical assistance from a quality tutoring provider see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 6](#).

COACHING FROM 9TH GRADE THROUGH AGE 26 BY FULL-TIME, TRAINED, PROFESSIONAL COACHES



Starting in the 9th grade, young people are matched with a Coach who works from a caring, authentic, trauma-informed, strength-based approach and builds a trusting relationship with the young person.

Coaches are trained in Motivational Interviewing (and a variety of other skills – see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 8](#)), which allows them to tap into a youth's intrinsic motivation and collaboratively set goals and develop plans.

The relationship between the Coach and the young person is the central part of the model; without this relationship, Coaches cannot help young people achieve their goals.

COACHES ARE NOT CASE PLANNERS OR CASE MANAGERS

Case Planners are required to focus on keeping the young person safe, making diligent efforts towards permanency planning, and working according to court-mandated timelines. The primary job of a Coach is to form a trusting, authentic, and transformational relationship with the young person (one that is not protocol-bound). Coaches are able to meet young people wherever they feel most comfortable and with greater frequency than mandated by a Case Planner. Coaches collaborate with young people on their level and always use a strength-based, youth development approach. Overall - the Coach's focus is on meeting the young person where they are, building a trusting relationship, believing in them, helping them achieve their academic and career development goals, and sticking with them – no matter what.

Coaches receive weekly supervision and support from Coach Supervisors, and a Program Director supports the Supervisors and oversees the program.

At a high level, Coaches perform the following activities:

(See [Appendix A Fair Futures Staff Screening & Hiring Toolkit](#) for a full job description)

Build relationships with up to 15 young people

Provide **ongoing social/emotional support**

Work 1:1 with young people to **develop goals** based on their interests and take measurable steps towards their goals

Connect young people to Specialists to help them identify and apply to best-fit schools/programs, career development experiences, and opportunities in line with their goals;

Help young people persist in academic/career development settings by checking on them weekly, visiting the school/program, forming a relationship with the Primary Person at the school/program

- Help them navigate any challenges that arise and celebrate their successes

Help young people **plan/prepare** for the next step on their journey

- Should a youth not be successful in any particular school/program setting, Coaches help young people reflect on the experience, provide support, and work with them to set new goals and transition to the next opportunity

Collaborate with Case Planners, Tutors, Specialists, and parents, as needed, to help youth achieve their goals and ensure their overall well-being

Connect young people to **peer group supports** and build positive relationships

Ensure young people who are aging out can access and **maintain stable, affordable housing** and **build independent living skills**

TUTORS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NEED



At scale, the Fair Futures middle school tutoring component continues throughout high school. High school students in need of individualized support should be connected to quality, weekly tutoring (in-home or in the community, wherever the young person prefers).

Tutors, like Coaches, should work from a strength-based, youth development lens and build a positive relationship with the young person. Tutors provide the support students need to improve their academic skills and post-secondary preparedness. Tutors should report to Coaches on a monthly basis and inform them of student progress, needs, and any concerns.

(See [Fair Futures Program Manual, Section 19](#))

To implement the tutoring component, agencies can subcontract a quality third party tutoring provider or build their own tutoring program, ideally with training and technical assistance from a quality tutoring provider ([see Fair Futures Program Manual Section 6](#)).

CAREER DEVELOPMENT, COLLEGE, & HOUSING SPECIALISTS



After Coaches build a relationship with young people and help them develop goals, they connect youth to Specialists to assist them in conducting specific tasks to achieve their goals. These usually include assistance with identifying and applying to a best-fit school/college, program, or housing opportunity in line with their goals.

All Specialists receive additional training in their respective areas of focus and provide **three key benefits**:

1. Supporting the Coach (and Case Planners) of some of the more time-consuming aspects of educational advocacy, college application, financial aid, job and housing applications, etc.
2. Ensuring that at least one person is well-trained and knowledgeable about the multitude of resources and pathways available for foster youth in NYC
3. Expanding the young person's network of positive staff/adult support

Specialists can also provide one-off, "targeted services" (specific services, such as assistance with filling out an application) to young people who do not want to participate in longer-term coaching but still need supports in certain areas.

(See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 16](#))

PEER GROUPS

Peer groups are an important component of the Fair Futures model. To stick with the program over the course of years, young people need to feel connected not only to their Coach, but to the program itself and other adult and peer supports.

Peer groups help young people develop positive relationships with their peers and serve as important motivational and skill-building forums. They are often a space that allows young people to start or continue the process of healing by learning about managing stress, healthy communication and self-expression, and mental/physical wellness.

Peer groups are not typical workshops; they have a Facilitator (not an Instructor) who lets the young people drive the discussion/activity. Coaches (or other Fair Futures staff) should take turns organizing and facilitating peer groups. Coaches can learn a lot about young people's thoughts, concerns, and challenges through these groups, which can help them in their coaching sessions. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 25](#))

SECTION 4. SUMMARY OF SUPPORTS YOUNG PEOPLE RECEIVE THROUGH COACHING

Coaches work with Specialists and Tutors, as needed, to provide young people with robust social/emotional, academic, career development, and housing/independent living supports.

2. SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL SUPPORT & EMPOWERMENT THROUGH COACHING

Coaches build a trusting relationship with young people and provide ongoing emotional support. Without this supportive relationship, Coaches cannot help young people set goals or make progress toward their goals.

To build a strong relationship, the model emphasizes consistency, constancy, and creativity. Be consistent in reaching out at least once per week, and when one approach does not work, try another! And when you do connect, remember to be your authentic self. Suggest fun activities in line with their interests to get to know them better.



Coaches should be in touch with young people regularly (minimum once/week), and not always about their academic or career development progress! They should engage young people in activities and have conversations about various aspects of their life – their concerns/fears, relationships with others, interests, challenges, etc. If there is a crisis situation or something to celebrate, Coaches should be there for the young person and provide the support that they need.

Once Coaches have built a positive rapport with young people, they can help them set goals, based on their interests and where they are. They play a critical role in helping young people regain control over their own lives and their future.

1. ROBUST ACADEMIC SUPPORT



Coaches help oversee a young person's academic journey and progress – they ensure they are enrolled in a best-fit school, attending school, and have the supports and resources they need to be successful, graduate, and enter and persist in a post-secondary setting.

ROLE OF A COACH AS IT RELATES TO ACADEMIC SUPPORT:

For young people who are disconnected and without a high school degree/ equivalency, Coaches help them re-engage and reconnect them to a best-fit academic setting. However, they do not simply tell the young person why they should go back to high school - the young person knows this, and has likely heard it from many other adults in their lives. Coaches try to understand the drivers as to *why* that young person may have disconnected, and perhaps first help that young person connect to experiences in line with their interests. This could include any type of extracurricular activity, job, or other type of career development experience where they can build their self-esteem, sense of self, and start to envision success. Coaches meet them where they are, and when they are ready they can help them enroll in a best-fit high school setting. For more creative, innovative approaches see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 20](#).

For students in high school or a high school equivalency (HSE) program, Coaches review transcripts and academic data when it becomes available,, visit the school with the young person at least 1x per semester, and discuss graduation and post-secondary plans (and include other adults in these conversations). If/when needed, Coaches provide educational advocacy, connect students to quality tutoring, and assist with transferring students into a better-fit high school or high school equivalency (HSE) program. Coaches also coordinate with the student's Case Planner, tutor, teachers, and parents to support their academic needs and plans. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18](#))

Coaches help all young people explore post-secondary opportunities, including college and/or vocational programs, starting in the 9th grade, or as early as possible if the young person joins the program at an older age. Even if the young person is not interested, it is the role of the Coach to make sure they are aware of all of the opportunities available to them. For example, they should know that CUNY colleges are not only free for them, but that the financial aid will cover most (if not all) of their living expenses. If the young person is not interested in college, they should know about all the free sector-based training programs in NYC with paid internships that could lead to a higher-wage career path. The young person will make the decision, but they need to know all of the possibilities. For young people who are interested in a post-secondary setting, Coaches will often work in conjunction with Specialists to help young people develop plans. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#))

For students on a college-bound pathway, the Coach will connect the young person to the College Specialist to explore and identify best-fit colleges, complete college and financial aid applications, access opportunity programs, re-enroll each semester, and reapply to all forms of funding each year. However, the Coach will play an important role in providing persistence support at critical junctures before, during, and after each semester. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#))

For students on a vocational or direct employment pathway, the Coach will connect the youth to the Career Development Specialist to identify and apply to best-fit vocational/workforce programs, civil service pathways, internships, employment, and/or apprenticeship opportunities. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#) and [Section 22](#))

Once a young person is enrolled in a post-secondary setting, the Coach helps the young persist by following up during critical junctures, connecting them to resources, and providing ongoing social/emotional support.



TO PROVIDE POST-SECONDARY SUPPORT, A COLLEGE SPECIALIST SHOULD:

- ☐ Meet with young people interested in college to have an exploratory and informational session, after they are referred by their Coach, and discuss what that roadmap/timeline would look like at their particular high school or HSE program
- ☐ Monitor PSAT/SAT scores of those students who do take them, and meet with them to discuss/refine college options
- ☐ Organize college tours
- ☐ Help young people apply to colleges in line with their interests, preferences, and performance
- ☐ Assist students with college essays and personal statements, where needed
- ☐ Review any college applications or financial aid forms filled out by the student's school/guidance counselor to ensure they are correct
- ☐ Sit with students and help them apply to FAFSA, TAP, ETV, and all applicable scholarships, including reviewing their essays and helping with letters of reference
- ☐ Ensure that students apply to any Opportunity Programs available to them
- ☐ Ensure students are signed up for any entrance interviews/exams
- ☐ Fill out all of the required paperwork for The Dormitory Project and ACS College Room & Board, if applicable
- ☐ Reach out to students to ensure they are enrolled in the proper classes each semester, and assist with enrollment, if needed
- ☐ Help young people reapply to all forms of financial aid and scholarships each year
- ☐ Assist students with transferring colleges, if needed

2. CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS

Coaches ensure **all young people engage in at least one career exploration activity each year**, either with them or the Career Development Specialist. All young people, regardless of their situation, are also encouraged to engage in **at least one career development experience/activity** each year based on their interests, strengths, needs, and academic situation.

It is extremely important for young people to start building their resumes at any early age, including through extracurricular, leadership, and community service activities. Engaging in career development experiences can also help young people build their self-esteem, sense of belonging, network of adult and peer supports, and the soft skills required for success in life. It can also help young people re-engage in school and improve their performance, as these experiences can help them envision pathways to success and why a degree is so important.

Both the Coach and Career Development Specialist can help young people make progress toward their career development goals.



ROLE OF A COACH IN PROVIDING CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT EACH YEAR:

- ☐ Conduct career exploration activities with young people (a required Goal - [see Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#));
- ☐ Ensure the young person has working papers, if needed, and has an updated resume each year (a required Goal - [see Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#));
- ☐ Work with the young person and/or refer the young person to a Career Development Specialist to engage in a discussion at least 1x each year around potential career development experiences that young person could have that year based on the their interests, strengths, and academic plans (a required Goal - [see Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#));
- ☐ Assist all young people in selecting at least one career development experience each year that is in line with their interests and academic situation/background (a required Goal - [see Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#)).

To do so, the Coach can:

- Expose youth to extracurricular, youth development, community service, and/or leadership activities, which help youth build their resumes, self-esteem, and develop critical soft skills needed in the workplace;
- Refer young people to on-site/agency opportunities at agencies, including any job readiness programs (e.g., YA WORC) or internship programs (e.g., the Mentored Internship Program);
- Refer young people to the Career Development Specialist to help them apply to external youth workforce programs, vocational programs, employment, etc.
- Provide persistence coaching to young people employed or enrolled in any external program by checking in with them regularly and building a relationship with the “primary person” at that program.



ROLE OF A CAREER DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Typically oversees any on-site job readiness program(s) (e.g., YA WORC), including enrollment and scheduling of program cycles; ☐ Oversees any on-site internship programs (e.g., Mentored Internship Program); ☐ Helps young people develop or refine their resumes and conduct career assessments (in some cases, Coaches may do this with young people); ☐ Meets with young people who are on a vocational pathway, or who have left college, to explore alternative post-secondary pathways and career paths in line with their interests and skills; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Helps young people apply to external programs, including vocational and workforce development programs (after speaking with their Coach); ☐ Meets with young people who are enrolled in college to do career planning; ☐ Builds relationships with external programs and employers to serve as pipeline; ☐ Assists with job applications, when needed; ☐ Checks-in with employers after the 3-month, 6-year, and 1-year mark to verify persistence. |
|--|--|

3. HOUSING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

For young people aging out of foster care, Coaches work closely with the **Case Planner** and **Housing Specialist** to help them access stable, affordable housing.

While Coaches often help facilitate permanency by helping young people build trusting relationships with adults, the roles/responsibilities associated with permanency are in the domain of the Case Planner. **The goal is always to help the young person find a safe, stable, loving family and a broad network of supportive adults.**

When full funding for Fair Futures is available, Coaches will stick with young people regardless of their status, as all young people need assistance with their academic and career goals and more positive adult relationships in their lives. However, in the instances where a young person does age out, the Coach will help them navigate the difficult transition into independent living.

ROLE OF A COACH IN PROVIDING HOUSING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SUPPORTS:

- ☐ Coaches the young person on ALL of the types of housing available to them - read the Housing Section of the manual. Reach out for technical assistance if needed! Encourage the young person to apply to all, or at least to two different kinds so that they have options - remind them that they can always turn it down;
- ☐ Helps the young person coordinate with a Housing Specialist (and/or Case Planner, if the agency does not have a Housing Specialist) to ensure that all young people's housing applications are submitted as early as possible (by age 19 if their goal is to age out);
- ☐ Accompanies the young person to visit supportive housing residences, and on any housing interviews (the Housing Specialist could also play this role, once they have a relationship with the young person);
- ☐ Helps young people move in and obtain furniture; reaches out every day that first week to provide emotional support during this often scary transition;
- ☐ Helps young people obtain public assistance, if/when needed;
- ☐ Helps young people maintain their housing by providing independent living supports such as budgeting, obtaining a bank account, and advocating with landlords, if needed.



A HOUSING SPECIALIST:

- ☐ Works with young people who are aging out to submit all forms of housing applications, as early as possible
- ☐ Checks in on young people's application status; follows-up with NYCHA and supportive housing residences, when needed
- ☐ Helps young people transition into permanent housing, when applicable, by helping them obtain Section 8 vouchers, apply to the NYC affordable housing lottery, etc.
- ☐ Liaises with the Case Planner and Coach, as needed

4. CONNECTIONS TO POSITIVE PEER GROUPS

Coaches should connect young people to peer groups, whenever possible. As mentioned above, peer groups help young people develop positive, supportive relationships with their peers. A best practice is for agencies to convert their PYA (Preparing Youth for Adulthood) workshops into peer groups. The difference between a workshop and a peer group is that peer groups are youth-led/co-facilitated. The young people decide the topics and help lead the discussion, versus having an Instructor lead the workshop. This also helps with empowerment and buy-in!

Peers also serve as credible messengers. If a young person is disconnected or struggling and one of their peers talks about how they went through the same experience and were able to overcome it, that can be incredibly motivating. Agencies have often found that peer group forums can be the source of breakthroughs and "ah-ha" moments; literally one conversation can help a young person reframe their situation and start moving forward with their goals.

Peer groups can also help young people improve their job readiness by helping them improve critical soft skills (listening, responding respectfully, etc.).

To recap, peer groups help young people to:

- Form positive peer relationships and build their support network
- Avoid involvement in negative peer groups
- Be heard, feel that they are not alone, and part of a larger community
- Meet credible messengers that they can relate to and be inspired by
- Learn about topics related to wellness and stress management
- Build and reinforce critical soft skills
- Gain leadership/community service experiences that they can include on their resumes
- Stay connected to the Fair Futures program
- For agencies who do not have enough young people to implement peer groups, the Fair Futures Youth Board Director will be organizing and forming system-wide Youth Board events with young people.

PART 2: FAIR FUTURES MIDDLE SCHOOL MODEL

In middle school, all students should receive educational advocacy and individualized assistance with the high school selection process from a **Middle School Educational Specialist**. Students should also have access **to in-home, weekly tutoring**, if needed, and connections to extracurricular activities.

To summarize:



Middle School Education Specialist:

A Middle School Education Specialist works with up to 50 students at a time (including younger or older students, if there are less than 50 middle school students at any given agency). See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 5](#) for a detailed list of responsibilities.



In-home Tutoring:

From 6th to 8th grade, students in need should receive weekly, in-home tutoring from a Tutor Coach (at a 1:15-18 ratio) who works from a strength-based, youth development lens and provides the individualized academic and social-emotional support students need to prepare for high school.

The Tutor Coach should report academic progress, needs, and concerns to the Middle School Education Specialist, and also work with the Specialist to help ensure young people are connected to extracurricular activities.

To implement the tutoring component, agencies can subcontract a quality third party tutoring provider or build their own tutoring program, ideally with training and technical assistance from a quality tutor provider. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 6](#) for more information.

FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL

SECTION 5

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SECTION 5. MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATION SPECIALIST



This section summarizes the role of the Middle School Education Specialist. However, the Middle School Education Specialist should also review the K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual by Advocates for Children to receive more detailed guidance on how to advocate for students in certain areas.

See [Appendix F1 K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#).

A. OVERVIEW OF ROLE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATION SPECIALIST

AT A HIGH LEVEL, ROLE OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATION SPECIALIST IS TO:

- ☐ Monitor the academic performance of all students in middle school. The Middle School Education Specialist can use the Online Platform to record progress and create automated reports.
- ☐ Work with up to 50 middle school students and their families and Case Planners, providing educational advocacy and ensuring students are receiving the supports/services they need to succeed in school. The Middle School Education Specialist can use the Online Platform to check off Steps as they are taken and record progress notes.
- ☐ Refer all students in need to quality tutoring and follow up with tutors regarding the student's performance, needs, and any concerns.
- ☐ Provide individualized assistance with the high school selection processes to 8th grade students and their families. The Middle School Education Specialist will ensure that all 8th grade students apply to quality, best-fit schools, and enter these schools into the Online Platform once they are submitted.
 - ☐ When possible, the Middle School Education Specialist should provide individualized assistance to all 5th grade students with the middle school selection process as well. *(This will depend on the total number of 5th and 8th grade students at each agency – smaller agencies should be able to assist both cohorts.)*
- ☐ Connect students to afterschool and summer extracurricular activities.

Common educational advocacy services provided by the Middle School Education Specialist include:

- **Special education support and advocacy**, including requesting that the school make a referral for evaluations, participating in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, monitoring service implementation, and helping families exercise their due process rights;
- **Disciplinary support and advocacy**;
- **Truancy prevention and support**;
- **Tutoring referrals**;
- **School enrollment and transfers**, including participating in best interest determinations and securing transportation when students enter foster care or move between foster care placements;
- **Referrals to other services/supports**, as needed

B. KEY QUALITIES/COMPETENCIES

They are tenacious advocates.

They are strong communicators.

It is vital that the Middle School Education Specialist build consensus among parties to best advocate for a student.

They are independent.

The Middle School Education Specialist needs to be able to take initiative and make judgment calls without a supervisor present. After applying an intervention, the Specialist should be able to self-assess and figure out what went well and what could have gone better.

They are resourceful.

Often, there is no single obvious answer to a challenge that a student faces. The best Specialist develops a deep knowledge of New York City's educational resources, policies, and best practices, and deploys this knowledge to the benefit of their students. When they do not know something, they look it up or ask someone who does. They are always looking for new programs and opportunities for the students they serve.

See [Appendix A Fair Futures Screening and Hiring Toolkit](#) for additional tips and best practices in hiring and screening Middle School Education Specialists and for a full job description.

C. COORDINATING WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Collaborating with stakeholders allows the Middle School Education Specialist to create a team of support and advocacy for students.

PARENTS/FOSTER PARENTS

It is imperative to engage the student and their family, including both parents and foster parents, as these are the people that will benefit most from the advocacy.

Parents who maintain their parental rights have the right to be included in educational planning for their children, should be invited to school events, and their consent is required for many special education decisions. It is the responsibility of the Middle School Education Specialist to contact parents for discussion about issues such as special education services, attendance concerns, behavioral issues in school, and school transfers.

Foster Parents are another group of stakeholders that the Middle School Education Specialist should engage with. As the current caregiver for students, they often have first line information about students' attendance and progress in schools. Foster parents should be attending parent/teacher conferences, as well as receiving notification letters from the school regarding attendance concerns, suspension hearings, promotion in doubt letters, and a wealth of additional information.

It is important for the Middle School Education Specialist to include foster parents in educational planning because they will often interact with school staff on a regular basis.

In cases where parents' rights have been terminated or their whereabouts are unknown, foster parents typically act as the point person when planning for the student's education, and their consent will be needed for special education evaluations and services.

COORDINATING WITH CASE PLANNERS

In addition to direct work with students and families, the Middle School Education Specialist should coordinate with Case Planners on the student's academic progress and follow up on any needs/concerns.

All students in care have a Case Planner who is responsible for supporting them throughout their time in foster care. Case Planners work with children, parents, and foster parents to ensure that children are placed in safe homes and ultimately either return to live with their parents or are adopted/secure an alternative permanent placement. Case Planners do everything from scheduling parent and sibling visits and conducting home visits to making sure everything is going well with a child's foster home placement and attending family court hearings.

Case Planners are also required to communicate with the school at least once per service review period regarding a student's progress and conduct best interest determinations regarding school placements. Since Case Planners communicate regularly with students and their foster parents/parents, they are usually the best point of contact for getting up-to-date information about students' living situations, if needed.

The Middle School Education Specialist should also be in touch with any concerns that arise and make themselves available to assist with any educational questions that the Case Planners may have.

The Middle School Education Specialist should provide a monthly report to the student's case planning team (i.e., Case Planner, Supervisor, Socio-Therapist, Nurse or Care Coordinator, if applicable), that includes progress notes and key academic data.



These reports will be available on the Online Platform.

The Middle School Education Specialist contacts a student's Case Planner if:

- The Middle School Education Specialist is unable to reach a student, parent or foster parent after multiple attempts;
- There are persistent scheduling issues with tutoring. If the student regularly misses sessions or the foster parent is proving difficult to schedule with, Case Planners can provide support. Since Case Planners are also in charge of scheduling students' medical appointments and family visits, it is helpful to touch base with them to make sure the tutoring schedule does not conflict with other agency-related appointments.
- If a student is experiencing a serious academic challenge, such as disciplinary action at school. This should be reported to the Case Planner immediately upon learning of the concern.

COORDINATING WITH THE SCHOOL

School staff and community resources are other stakeholders that the Middle School Education Specialist will work with. Teachers, counselors, social workers, school psychologists and the school administration all have a direct interest in the student's success, as their success contributes to the overall mission and goals of the school. As a result, the Middle School Education Specialist will collaborate with the school to explore options for students to improve and benefit from services offered such as academic intervention services, afterschool programming, special education services, and other supports.

It is a best practice to visit all 6-8th graders' schools at least once a year. Here is a document that summarizes everything you need to know about conducting an effective school visit – see [Appendix C5: Conducting Effective School Visits](#).

In working with schools, the Middle School Education Specialist should request the student's most recent records immediately upon entry into foster care (including updated attendance, progress reports, latest report card, transcript, and latest IEP, if applicable). The Specialist should then get the students' report cards again in November and March (after parent teacher conferences) and at the end of June. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 5E: Monitoring Academic Performance](#).

The Middle School Education Specialist should also schedule school visits to meet with the student's guidance counselor and/or teachers and services providers, when possible. If the student has a special education teacher for multiple periods of the day, it would be ideal for the Specialist to meet with them. If there are concerns about how the student is doing in a particular class, it is best to meet with that teacher instead of the guidance counselor, and/or observe the student in that class (after first letting the student know they will be doing an observation).

Students in 8th grade should attend any meetings with the Middle School Education Specialist and guidance counselor. At these meetings, the Middle School Education Specialist should discuss the student's progress as well as any issues occurring in the school. The Middle School Education Specialist and counselor/teacher/service provider can then collaborate on a plan (with knowledge/ approval of the parent, who remains the primary decision-maker) to address any needs including improving attendance, grades, and behavior as well as ensuring that IEP services are being appropriately provided.

Once these initial meetings have occurred and records have been obtained, the Middle School Education Specialist should maintain regular contact with school staff to ensure the continued success of the students as well as follow up on progress towards goal achievement. Specialists may want to attend parent-teacher conferences with some families and invite parents and foster parents to school visits and other meetings when appropriate.

Middle School Education Specialists should have access to ATS and to NYCSA to obtain educational data. They can contact the Office of Education and Employment Initiatives at ACS by email: education.unit@acs.nyc.gov to request information on how to get access.

COORDINATING WITH EXTERNAL PROVIDERS.

The Middle School Education Specialist will also work with community resources including tutoring programs, mental health services, and afterschool programs. Collaborating with these stakeholders allows students to receive assistance and services on a broad spectrum that can foster continued success educationally as well as emotionally.

D. MIDDLE SCHOOL GOALS & STEPS – USING THE ONLINE PLATFORM

OVERVIEW

The Middle School Education Specialist can use the Online Platform to:



- Track academic performance
- Track educational advocacy services and supports provided
- Enter contact notes
- Document the list of high schools the student selected
- Track tutoring and extracurricular referrals

There are four Middle School Academic Goals in the Online Platform that the Middle School Education Specialist should complete for every middle student each year.

THE FOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL ACADEMIC GOALS INCLUDE:

- **Complete school year promoted with 90%+ attendance** and better prepared for high school by monitoring performance, providing educational advocacy, and referring them to tutoring and other services, as needed
- **Help all 8th graders enter a best-fit, quality high school** by providing individualized assistance with the high school selection process
- **Connect students to extracurricular activities**, ideally both afterschool and in the summer;
- **Ensure all students with an IEP or 504 Plan are receiving appropriate special education services or accommodations**

Each Goal has a series of **Required** and **Potential Steps** which represent progress towards those Goals. The Middle School Education Specialist should check off the Steps in the Online Platform as they are completed.

TIP! The Specialist can also always create their own step if one is not listed.

E. MONITORING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

USING THE ONLINE PLATFORM.

The Middle School Education Specialist can use the Online Platform to monitor progress towards the four Middle School Academic Goals and their associated steps.

The **Required Steps** for the "[Complete school year promoted with 90%+ attendance](#)" Goal include:

- ☐ Monitor attendance (monthly, or as frequently as provided)
- ☐ Monitor grade promotion status (in March and in June)
- ☐ Monitor grades (as frequently as provided)
- ☐ Monitor NYS exam scores when they become available

The Middle School Education Specialist should check off each of these steps as they are completed for every student each year. There is also space to record the attendance rates, grades, and promotion status.

The following sections provide guidance around what to look for when monitoring academic data, and what follow-up Steps could be taken if support is required.

MONITORING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: ATTENDANCE

Attendance is a key piece of academic data.

There are two particular categories to focus on when monitoring academic performance:

1. Students that have a major drop in attendance from one month to the next
2. Students with less than 85% attendance

Specialists should ensure that they follow up with the family and case planning team with regards to both categories of students. An updated list of these students should be sent to each Case Planner, as well as their Supervisor and related staff. Specialists should follow up to determine why there was a drop-in attendance and/or what is causing students to miss an excessive amount of school.

Case planning teams and Specialists should work together with foster parents (and/or parents, when applicable) to develop and implement a plan to address the attendance issues. Specialists should continue to monitor attendance closely to ensure that the student's attendance improves.

EXAMPLES OF ATTENDANCE-RELATED ISSUES AND STEPS THAT CAN BE TAKEN TO RESOLVE THEM INCLUDE:

Medical issue: The case planning team should work on getting medical documentation to the school in order to excuse the student absences. The Middle School Education Specialist should also contact the school to ensure that the student is being provided work in order to keep up with school curriculum. If doctor's appointments are regularly scheduled during school hours, the team may need to work with the agency's clinical, medical, or care coordination team to ensure that appointments are scheduled outside of school hours or to explore other providers. Case planning may also need to support foster parents so that they do not keep students out of school all day for a short appointment.

Transportation/busing issues: If the student has an IEP that includes transportation or otherwise qualifies for busing, check with the school and family to ensure that busing is being provided and that the bus is arriving on time. If busing is not on the IEP but is needed, follow up with the school and the parent (who must consent to the service) to see if it can be amended to include busing. Specialists should also refer to the ACS School Stability Transportation protocol to see if the student qualifies for other DOE transportation or if there are other ways the agency or ACS could provide transportation support.

Issues with school climate or program: Sometimes a student's attendance drops because of a problem going on in the school, such as bullying, the school's failure to provide mandated special education or English as a New Language services, or the student's need for a different type of school environment entirely. If a student's attendance difficulties do not appear to be related to medical, transportation, or other easily identifiable issues, the Middle School Education Specialist and case planning team will need to discuss any concerns with the student to determine the reason behind their school refusal before coming up with a plan to address those needs.



Any steps taken should then be checked off - or created - in the Online Platform.

MONITORING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: GRADE PROMOTION

In March, DOE provides ACS and the foster care agencies with lists of all students whose promotion is in doubt. These are the students that are in danger of being retained in their current grade. Agencies can also access this information via ATS or NYCSA.

Often times, these students should not be retained but promoted to the next grade level with the appropriate academic supports in place. Once students reach second grade, research shows that grade retention is almost never beneficial to students, and in fact, being retained a grade is by far the greatest single predictor of high school dropout.

While **ACS will share Promotion in Doubt (PID)** lists with agencies in early March, schools are required to inform families if a student's promotion is in doubt by February 15th, and many schools send out PID letters as early as the last week of January. Schools are also required to inform families if students are at risk of not meeting standards during Fall parent-teacher conferences.

Whenever the Middle School Education Specialist learns that a student is at risk or promotion may be in doubt, the Specialist should immediately alert the student's Case Planner and family to collaborate on developing an effective plan to assist the student. They should also contact the school to ensure that an appropriate plan is put into place for each student to assist in successfully promoting them to the next grade level.

Any student who is at risk of not meeting grade level standards is entitled under NYS regulations to **Academic Intervention Services (AIS)**.

Schools have discretion as to what form the AIS will take, but it must be targeted to address the area(s) in which the student is struggling.

AIS can include:

- Before school, after school, or Saturday tutoring;
- Small group and/or individual teacher instruction;
- At risk speech, counseling, or SETSS services;
- Remedial small-class instruction

Aside from mandated AIS, Specialists may consider requesting make-up or extra-credit work for the student, including additional homework packets and projects, referring the student for additional tutoring, applying to a summer program for the student that includes academic supports, or referring the student for special education services. If the student already has an IEP, they may need a re-evaluation to determine if additional or more intensive special education services are needed. As always, parental consent is required.

Once these supports are put into place, Specialists should closely monitor the student's progress and follow up with schools in June to determine if the student has been recommended for summer school or if the student was successfully promoted.

In mid-June, ACS provides agencies with a list of students who must attend summer school; agencies can also access this info on their info via ATS or NYCSA. If the student was recommended or mandated for summer school, Specialists should contact the case planning team and the family immediately to ensure the student enrolls in summer school, confirm their attendance on the first day, and monitor their attendance throughout the summer. ACS also provides data to agencies on summer school attendance during the summer months. When summer school concludes in August, Specialists should follow up with schools on final promotion decisions and, if a student is retained, consider appealing the holdover decision.

MONITORING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: GRADES

A student's grades are key pieces of academic data. Typically, schools give out elementary and middle school report cards in the fall (November) and spring (March) parent-teacher conferences, as well as at the end of June (and if the student attends summer school, at the end of the summer). There are interim grades as well, but those are the most important junctures.

After reviewing grades, the Middle School Education Specialist should complete the following **Steps**:

- ☐ Follow up on any failed classes and the drivers;
- ☐ Inquire what happened if a grade is below 75 or if there was a 10+ point drop in the grade from one period to the next.

Potential Steps the Middle School Education Specialist could take if a student has low grades include:

- ☐ Refer students to a tutor, especially if grades are below 75 (or mostly 1s and 2s for those schools with a 1-4 system);
- ☐ Consider afterschool programming or Response To Intervention support;
- ☐ Speak to/meet with the school staff to discuss performance, progress, and any needs;
- ☐ Speak to/meet with the student's Case Planner and/or parent to discuss performance, progress, and any needs;
- ☐ Help young person enroll in summer school;
- ☐ Help student obtain IEP or 504 Plan;
- ☐ Conduct advocacy with DOE/school to help student obtain particular service or accommodation.

MONITORING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: NEW YORK STATE EXAMS

In the Spring each year, students in grades 3 to 8 take the New York State Common Core exams in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. Fourth and 8th grade students also take science exams.

Scores range from 1-4 and reflect the following performance:

- 1:** Far below grade level standards
- 2:** Approaching grade level standards
- 3:** At grade level standards
- 4:** Exceeding grade level standards



After NYS Exam scores are released the Middle School Education Specialist should enter these in the Online Platform. If students are receiving low scores, supports should be put into place (see above Potential Steps).

To accomplish the Goal of being promoted each year with 90%+ attendance, the Middle School Education Specialist may have to perform educational advocacy (See Fair Futures Program Manual [Section 5F](#) and [Section 5G](#)) and/or connect students to tutors (See Fair Futures Program Manual [Section 6](#)), as needed.



Once the school year is complete, the Middle School Education Specialist will close out the Goal and indicate whether it was completed successfully or not. If the student attends summer school, the Goal should be closed out after the final grades/promotion status have been obtained (likely by mid-September).

F. GENERAL EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM ADVOCACY

The Specialist offers both **long-term individualized interventions** for students with complex or ongoing educational needs and **targeted short-term supports** to ensure every student has access to a particular service or opportunity.

A **long-term** or **caseload intervention** is generally defined as *any educational intervention that progresses toward a goal that will require more than one week or 4 contacts to accomplish*. An example of a case that would qualify a long-term intervention would be following up on a student who is being denied IEP services or improperly excluded from the classroom. An example of short-term assistance could include connections to advocacy or referrals to supports, as needed.

Middle School Education Specialists should use Progress Notes to formulate action plans for students and document the advocacy steps taken. **Progress Notes** can be submitted in the Online Platform and can be inputted with specific Goals or Steps. Progress Notes for each student can be downloaded from the Online Platform by generating a Report.

SUSPENSION ADVOCACY

A student may receive a **Principal's Suspension** of 1 to 5 days. During a Principal's Suspension, students remain in their school but are removed from their classroom for the duration of the suspension. When a Principal's Suspension occurs, the school must hold a Principal's Suspension conference with the parent to discuss the events that led to the suspension and develop a plan to avoid future suspensions. Middle School Education Specialists should participate in these meetings with families whenever possible, work with schools to develop plans to address student behaviors, and advocate for additional supports when needed.

During a **Superintendent Suspension**, a student may be suspended for more than 5 days (up to 1 year). A Superintendent Suspension is served outside of the student's school at a designated suspension site. A Superintendent Suspension requires a formal hearing.

In the event of a superintendent suspension, the Middle School Education Specialist needs to:

- ☐ Obtain a copy of the suspension letter, which will include the date and time of the suspension hearing, the charges, and the location of the suspension site. The parent should receive the suspension letter within 24 hours of the suspension, however, if they do not, request a copy from the school or the suspension office.
- ☐ Obtain the suspension packet from the school. This will include any witness statements, occurrence reports, and other information the school will use as evidence at the hearing.
- ☐ Speak with the student, parent, and/or case planning team to get the student's side of the story.
- ☐ Confirm with the family and suspension site that the student is attending consistently and receiving school work.
- ☐ Contact the school to find out the length of suspension they will be recommending to the hearing office. Try to assess if they might consider a shorter suspension if the student pleads no contest and/or agrees to engage in services.
- ☐ Review the suspension packet. Considering the available evidence and the student's version of the events, think about how you might argue for a shorter suspension or dismissal of the charges altogether, where appropriate. Consult with one of the resources below if unsure or would like to obtain representation for the child.
- ☐ Provide the suspension packet to the representation team and meet with all parties so the student can provide their account of the event to the representation team.
- ☐ Attend the hearing with the student, parent, and representation present. *Note: In the event that one or all parties are unable to attend the hearing, it can be adjourned to another date so that representation can be secured before the hearing.*
- ☐ If the student has an IEP, the school will conduct a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) meeting to determine if the infraction was the result of the student's disability. The date of the meeting will be included in the suspension letter. Specialists should participate in the MDR, along with the parent/foster parent and student, when appropriate.

Note: If it is determined that the infraction was a result of the student's disability or the school's failure to implement the student's IEP, the student must be reinstated to their school immediately.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES SPECIALISTS CAN USE IN THE EVENT OF A SUPERINTENDENT SUSPENSION INCLUDE:

- **Legal Aid Society:** Will only be able to take the case if the student has a Legal Aid attorney (and no conflict of interest).
- **Advocates for Children:** Will take the case if they can make a significant difference and if staff is available.
- **Suspension Representation Project:** Will accept most other cases in the event that Advocates for Children or Legal Aid Society is unable to do so; this should be the third course of action, however.

G. ADVOCACY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students in care can struggle academically for many reasons including experiencing significant gaps in school attendance and transferring multiple times, as well as mental health and behavioral concerns. Due to these issues, Education Specialists often find themselves advocating for students to receive academic intervention services to help bring them up to speed and bridge any gaps in their education.

Some students may just need an **afterschool program, Response to Intervention, or 504 accommodation**. In other cases, it may be in the student's best interest to be referred to an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** right away.

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI)

One way to collaborate with school stakeholders on assisting students is to advocate for **Academic Intervention Services (AIS)**.

One form of AIS is **Response to Intervention (RTI)** services. RTI is a manualized program that follows a strict structure/ curriculum, should be evidenced based, and should be modified as needed based on the student's performance on periodic assessments. It could be delivered in a small group or 1:1. RTI services are to be implemented whenever a student is at risk of not meeting grade level standards. Schools are required to provide RTI services prior to referring students for an Individualized Education Program (IEP). However, if a parent wants to refer their child for special education services, the school district is required to move forward with the evaluation, while also implementing RTI for the student.

The Middle School Education Specialist should advocate for students to receive the most appropriate services available. At times, students may need extra assistance to bridge gaps in their education prior to receiving a more comprehensive evaluation or an IEP. This is why it is important to have schools support students with RTI services first before evaluating for an IEP due to a suspected learning disability.

A student may be found ineligible for an IEP. In this case, the school can also offer RTI services in place of Special Education Services. The student may also qualify for a 504 Plan.

504 PLANS

A student may have a disability that does not necessitate special education services. **This can occur when the student has a medical or mental health diagnosis that requires accommodation**, but their grades and academic progress are on track. **Accommodations** could include testing accommodations, extended time to complete homework or classwork, schedule breaks, or large print books or materials. In these instances, a 504 plan can ensure that the student receives needed accommodations and serves as a preventive measure to inhibit future academic issues.

THE SPECIAL EDUCATION REFERRAL PROCESS

Only the parent or the school can refer a student for a special education evaluation. However, agency staff can request that the school refer the student when appropriate. The Middle School Education Specialist should recommend (or request) that a parent or school refer a student for a Special Education Evaluation if it is believed that the student has a learning or other disability that interferes with their ability to progress in school.

To refer a student for a Special Education Evaluation, the parent or school must submit a referral letter to the school-based support team at their school. If the student attends a charter or private school, the letter should go to the Committee on Special Education (CSE) where the school is located.

Whenever possible, the Specialist should write the referral letter on behalf of the parent and have the parent sign the letter. *School districts are required to accept referrals from a student's parent but can decline referral requests from other sources.*

If the parent cannot be located and a surrogate parent is required or waiting on the parent's signature would cause inordinate delay, the Middle School Education Specialist can submit a request for referral to the school. Once the school or CSE receives the request, they will contact the parent to schedule a meeting, called a social history, and seek consent to proceed with the evaluations. In the event that the parents' rights have been terminated, surrendered or limited, or if the parent is deceased, the foster parent or legal guardian can consent. *Foster care agency staff may never provide consent for special education services.*

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY AT INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) MEETINGS

Middle School Education Specialists can be powerful advocates for students with disabilities. Students often do not have an effective advocate on their side with regard to IEP development and services. Specialists can ensure an IEP focuses on the best interest of the student and that the student is receiving the services they need to be successful.

Effective advocacy includes working with the student (if age appropriate), family, and case planning team to determine a course of action that would be in the best interest of the student. Once a plan is developed, Specialists should attend the meeting well informed of their student's needs in order to work with the school IEP team on developing an appropriate IEP. Specialists should be present at all IEP meetings for students on their caseloads along with the parent(s), foster parent(s) (when they are the education decision-maker, or if the parent would like them to be present), and Case Planner.

Upon completion of the IEP meeting, Education Specialists should follow up with the school and/or CSE to obtain a copy of the finalized IEP, confirm that the services are being implemented, and monitor the student's progress.

Once a student has been found eligible for an IEP, effective advocacy can also include **requesting new evaluations or a re-evaluation, requesting an independent educational evaluation, and requesting mediation or an impartial hearing:**

Requesting new evaluations: If a student is not progressing despite receiving special education services, the Middle School Education Specialist can request additional evaluations, such as an assistive technology, auditory processing, speech/language, functional behavioral assessment, or other specialized evaluation, as well as an updated psycho-educational evaluation, to determine if the IEP needs to be amended or additional services need to be provided in order to meet the student's needs. The student's parent would need to consent to the evaluation for it to take place.

Requesting an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE): If the student is not demonstrating progress and the evaluation that the school district conducted is not accurate or adequate, a Specialist can request an independent evaluation at the school district's expense. The student's parent would need to initiate and consent to an independent evaluation as well.

Requesting an impartial hearing: In the event that the district is not providing the student with appropriate evaluations, programming or services, the parent/guardian can request mediation or an impartial hearing. An effort should be made to work with the teacher, and IEP team first before pursuing an impartial hearing.

GOALS & STEPS



The Middle School Education Specialist should monitor progress toward the Goal: **"Ensure that all students with an IEP or 504 plan are receiving appropriate special education services or accommodations,"** and its associated steps using the Online Platform.

Required Steps, based on the guidance above, include:

- ☐ Obtain copy of most recent IEP/504 Plan and ensure it is current within the last year
- ☐ Participate in annual IEP meeting and/or 504 meeting; try to ensure the student and student's parent participates in meeting
- ☐ Confirm student is receiving all accommodations and services mandated by 504 or IEP, and is in the right classroom setting

Potential Steps, based on relevance and/or need, include:

- ☐ Renew 504 Plan
- ☐ Obtain copy of most recent psycho-educational evaluation and ensure it is current within the last 3 years (required for students with IEPs but not 504s)
- ☐ Request new accommodation(s), if needed (requires parent's consent)
- ☐ Request that the school conduct a new IEP or 504 evaluation, if needed (requires parent's consent)
- ☐ Request that the school make changes to IEP, if needed (requires parent's consent)
- ☐ Request an independent educational evaluation if student is not demonstrating progress and the school evaluation is not comprehensive (requires parental consent)
- ☐ If needed, work with educational decision-maker to exercise due process rights on behalf of student (e.g., request mediation or an impartial hearing. *This should only happen after talking with the student's teachers, IEP team, and case planning team (and when needed, the District Superintendent).*

H. MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL SELECTION PROCESS

BEFORE FAIR FUTURES, APPROXIMATELY 50% OF STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE IN NYC REPEATED THE 9TH GRADE, AND ONLY 21% OBTAINED A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE/EQUIVALENCY BY AGE 21.
(ACCORDING TO ACS DATA AS OF DECEMBER 2018)

The Fair Futures model upholds that in addition to better supporting students in middle school, ALL students and their families should be provided with **individualized assistance with the high school selection process**. High school fit and quality are important drivers of graduation and post-secondary readiness. If a student starts off in a best-fit high school environment, they will be more likely to succeed.

The NYC high school selection process can be extremely challenging and confusing, and students in foster care often do not get the individualized assistance they need from guidance counselors (due to very high ratios), Case Planners, or foster parents. As a result, students often end up in local, lower-performing schools.

INDIVIDUALIZED ASSISTANCE TO ALL STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

In the Fair Futures model, the Middle School Education Specialist provides guidance to all 8th grade students around the high school selection process and ensures that the final list of schools submitted does not contain any low-performing schools.

School fairs and tours begin in early fall; students typically receive access to their online applications in October and must submit a list of up to 12 high schools by early December. The Middle School Education Specialist should assist as much as possible with developing that list and must ensure that all eligible students submit a completed application.

To provide the best guidance possible, the Middle School Education Specialist will receive comprehensive training from Advocates for Children and be equipped with a guide to the high school admissions process. See [Appendix F5 New York City High School Application Guide](#) for a detailed overview of the high school selection process and how to assist students in selecting best-fit schools based on their interests, academic performance, and needs.

The overall goal is for the Middle School Education Specialist to optimize the chances that students will enter best-fit, quality high schools by strategically selecting a list of 12 schools. To do so, the Middle School Education Specialist must be:

- Knowledgeable of the key metrics of high school quality (e.g., safety, academic outcomes, graduation rates, etc.) and how they can vary by borough;
- Able to research high schools based on student's interests, performance, needs, and geographical preference;
- Familiar with admissions criteria and what constitutes a realistic match based on a student's interests, performance, and preferences.

Whenever possible, the Middle School Education Specialist should also assist 5th graders with the middle school selection process, which is similar but often less complicated as there are fewer options. The Specialist's ability to provide individualized support will depend on their caseload and the total number of 5th and 8th graders at any particular agency. Even if the Middle School Education Specialist will not be providing individualized assistance to all 5th graders with the middle school applications, they can try to ensure that all 5th graders complete one. See [Appendix F4.0 Middle School Selection and Admissions Guide](#) for more information.

COORDINATING WITH FAMILIES, THE SCHOOL, AND CASE PLANNERS

To successfully assist with the high school selection process, the Middle School Education Specialist must meet with the student, foster parent, and birth parent to discuss options. They will also need to coordinate with the student's school and Case Planner and conduct or coordinate visits to high school fairs and potential high schools.

While ultimately the student and parent can submit a list of any 12 high schools that they would like, it is the responsibility of the Middle School Education Specialist to guide that process as much as possible. This includes establishing trust, explaining why the process is so important, and providing information and guidance when a selection may not be appropriate.

Tips for navigating this process are covered in detail in the [Advocates for Children mandated training](#). See also [Appendix F5 High School Selection Guide](#).

GOALS & STEPS

For the “**Help all 8th graders enter a best-fit, quality high school**” Goal, the Required and Potential Steps include:

Required Steps:

- ☐ Meet with the student/family to explain the process and develop preliminary list of schools in line with the student's interests, preferences, and performance
- ☐ Visit at least one high school with student, or coordinate visit with case planner/family to ensure student's attendance
- ☐ Check student's online application as soon as available to ensure demographic information is accurate
- ☐ Review student's application and list of schools before it is submitted
- ☐ Ensure student/family submits completed application by the deadline
- ☐ Check in with student/family when they receive their offer letter in the spring

Potential Steps:

- ☐ Attend high school fair with student, or coordinate visit with case planner/family to ensure student's attendance
- ☐ Meet with student's guidance counselor to discuss their application
- ☐ Arrange tutoring for the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) prep in the spring/summer
- ☐ Ensure student signs up for the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) with their guidance counselor and attends testing date
- ☐ Help the student complete their portfolio (if applying to a visual arts school)
- ☐ Help student prepare, sign up for, and attend an audition (if applying to a performing arts school)
- ☐ Schedule school interview and/or assessment (if required)
- ☐ Complete charter school application(s)
- ☐ Monitor student's placement on waitlists
- ☐ Celebrate acceptance into desired school/program



List all 12 high schools that 8th graders applied to in the second tab of the Goal Worksheet. Once a school is selected, make sure to record it!

I. CONNECTIONS TO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

As discussed in the Career Development section, career development experiences include extracurricular activities, community service, and youth leadership programs. It is important for students to gain these types of experiences as early as possible, as they help build critical social/emotional skills, self-esteem, and a sense of purpose/belonging. Research also shows that it is especially important for middle school students to stay active after school and during the summer.

The Middle School Education Specialist should track in the Online Platform which students are involved in extracurricular activities. This information can be obtained through the student, parent(s), school, Tutor, or Case Planner. If a student is not involved in an afterschool or summer activity, the Specialist should make a referral. **Keep in mind that applications for summer programs, including scholarships and free programs, become available in January-February and often fill up quickly.**



ACS also has a partnership with the Department of Youth and Community Development to better connect middle school students in foster care to extracurricular programming.

GOALS & STEPS

For the **“Connect students to extracurricular activities” Goal**, monitor progress by completing Steps in the Online Platform.

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Connect the student to an afterschool program or extracurricular activity, ideally one in line with their interests
After this Step is checked off, the Online Platform will prompt the Middle School Education Specialist to input the program name and date of enrollment (if known).
TIP! If the attempt was unsuccessful, the Middle School Education Specialist should check the “could not connect” box and enter a note explaining why
- ☐ Connect the student to a summer program or extracurricular activity, ideally one in line with their interests
After this is checked off, the Online Platform will ask what the program name is and date of enrollment (if known)
If the attempt was unsuccessful, the Middle School Education Specialist should check the “could not connect” box and enter a note explaining why
- ☐ At the end of the summer and school year, check in to see how long the student was engaged in the program/activity
After this is checked off, the Online Platform will prompt the user to input how long the student was engaged
If the student was never connected, the Middle School Education Specialist should check “N/A.”

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ Discuss options with the parent and/or ask the tutor to discuss options with the parent
- ☐ Coordinate with ACS to secure an open DYCD program slot
- ☐ Coordinate with school
- ☐ Research options in line with students' interests
- ☐ Help the student enroll, if needed

J. CONNECTION TO WEEKLY, IN-HOME TUTORING

A Potential Step of the Goal **“Complete school year promoted with 90% attendance”** is to **“Refer student to a tutor, as most students can benefit from tutoring”**. Connecting 6th to 8th students to supports like tutoring is an important component of the Middle School Education Specialist position.

If there is not enough capacity to provide ALL students with a tutor, those who are in the 7th grade should be prioritized, along with any students with Promotion in Doubt or with grades under 75.

The Middle School Education Specialist should track all tutoring sessions attended by the student in the platform.

The Middle School Education Specialist should read the progress reports from the Tutor and provide follow-up educational advocacy support with the school, if required.

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SECTION 6. WEEKLY, IN-HOME TUTORING

A. OVERVIEW



An important component of the Fair Futures model is one-on-one, weekly, in-home tutoring from 6th – 12th grade for those students in need. **If resources are limited, critical junctures for tutoring are grades 7-9.** Tutors should use a trauma-informed, strength based, youth development lens and track student progress.

Agencies can choose to implement their own in-house tutoring program or contract with a quality provider.

Two quality NYC tutor providers that meet the above criteria include:

The New York Foundling's (NYF) Road to Success Program.

To contract with the NYF, please contact Joni Rivera at Joni.Rivera@nyfoundling.org.

NYF also offers training and technical assistance for agencies interested in developing their own program.

Tier NYC.

To contract with Tier NYC, please reach out to info@tiernyc.com.

B. ROLE OF THE TUTOR VS. OTHER AGENCY STAFF

Regardless of whether the Tutor is in-house staff or contracted, Tutors are responsible for:

- Building a collaborative relationship with the student;
- Helping them to improve their academic skills and grades;
- Reporting progress and any needs or concerns to the Middle School Education Specialist (for students in grades 6 to 8) and Coaches (for students in grades 9 to 12).

It is the Middle School Education Specialist's role, for students in 6th-8th grade, and the Coach's role, for students in 9th-12th grade, to make records requests to schools, check in with guidance counselors, and perform interventions (e.g. suspension advocacy, requesting evaluations, etc.) on behalf of students.

Should a need arise that the Tutor flags, The Specialist or Coach can then provide necessary advocacy with the school and/or connect the student to services.

In addition to regular progress reporting, Tutor should inform the Middle School Education Specialist (for students in 6th-8th grade) or the Coach (for students in 9th-12th grade) immediately if:

- The student displays signs of depression, suicidal thoughts, severe anxiety or other mental health problems.
- The Tutor is aware of concerning behaviors or activities a student is participating in (e.g. drug use, involvement in gangs, unhealthy relationships, etc.). Tutors should inform their Supervisor about troubling behavior as well.
- The Tutor learns of a potential medical issue that may be affecting a student (including needing glasses). This should be reported to the Specialist and Case Planner.

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PART 3: FAIR FUTURES COACHING MODEL

(9TH GRADE THROUGH AGE 26)

SECTION 7. JOB DESCRIPTIONS & SCREENING/HIRING COMPETENT STAFF

A. STAFF ONBOARDING

Once a new Fair Futures staff is hired, they should follow the **Onboarding Process** (in addition to an onboarding process your organization follows). This includes an initial Fair Futures Orientation/Onboarding, and all the steps to take. See [Appendix C18: Onboarding Process For New Staff: 6 Steps-2-Success](#).

B. KEY PROGRAM STAFF

The key program staff for the Coaching component of the model (9th grade through age 26*) includes, at scale:



Program Director



Coaches
(1:15 ratio)



Coach Supervisors
(1:4 – 1:5 ratio)



College Specialist



Tutors
(During high school)



Housing Specialist



Career Development Specialist



Outreach Coordinator**

*ACS funding is only for young people up until age 21.

A best practice is also to have an **Outreach Coordinator help recruit young people to the program who have not engaged (or who have disengaged). Ideally, this should be a young person who was previously in foster care and received support so that they can serve as a **Credible Messenger**.

The relationship between the Coach and the young person is the central component of the model. Without a trusting relationship, the Coach cannot help the young person set and achieve their goals, and the Coach will not be the person that the young person turns to when they need assistance. **The relationship between the Coach and the young person is both the backbone and the glue to the model, and what often drives youth progress.**

The **interpersonal qualities of Coaches and all Fair Futures staff**, and the specific approaches they take to engage with young people, **are paramount to the success of the program**. When hiring for any Fair Futures staff position screen for interpersonal skills first, before screening for professional or organizational skills.

All Fair Futures potential staff should have the following interpersonal qualities:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Ability to adopt a non-judgmental, strength-based, trauma-informed, collaborative approach to working with young people | ☐ Warm, compassionate, and empathetic |
| ☐ Genuine care for young people and a love of working with them | ☐ Believe that change is possible, and be able to express genuine care while maintaining healthy boundaries |
| ☐ Strong ability to relate to young people and engage them in conversation | ☐ Ability to remain calm during moments of tension and in stressful situations |
| | ☐ Consistent, patient, and reliable |

It can be difficult for adults to screen for some of these qualities, particularly for how well they would be able to engage young people. Therefore, it is strongly recommended – and a best practice – **to have a young person present on interviews, particularly with Coaches**. Young people have a radar, an innate sense as to whether that adult genuinely cares.

TIP! See [Appendix A Fair Futures Staff Screening & Hiring Toolkit](#) for guidance on how to prepare young people and listen to their feedback, as well as a list of other best practice hiring/screening tips.

After screening for interpersonal and Fair Futures-specific qualities, there are other educational and professional requirements, depending on the specific staff position. A full job description and hiring/screening techniques for each position can be found in [Appendix A Fair Futures Staff Screening & Hiring Toolkit](#).

For each Fair Futures position, the Fair Futures Staff Screening & Hiring Guide includes:

- An overview of the role;
- A description of desired qualities and competencies for the role;
- A detailed job description, in line with the Fair Futures manual/model;
- A synthesis of best practice screening and interviewing techniques, which have been implemented and refined over decades of combined practice across NYC non-profit organizations that have coaching programs for foster youth.

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SECTION 8. STAFF TRAINING

A description of all trainings for all Fair Futures staff can be found in [Appendix B Fair Futures Trainings](#).

In addition to mandatory training, Fair Futures staff receive a wide array of technical assistance support - 1:1, small group, and system-wide. Please see a list of current offerings here: <https://www.fairfuturesny.org/training>.

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SECTION 9. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Important tips and best practices for implementing a successful, sustainable Fair Futures program.

CHECKLIST FOR IMPLEMENTATION SUCCESS: PHASE 1

BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPLEMENTING A SUCCESSFUL, SUSTAINABLE COACHING PROGRAM & CULTURE

- ☐ **Identify a champion within the senior ranks of your agency; the Fair Futures program should be housed within their branch.**

- ☐ **Do not create silos within the Fair Futures program; all coaching, education, career development, and housing services for youth should be housed under the same program umbrella.**

While your agency may be delivering the Fair Futures model in different geographies and settings (e.g., residential and family foster care), it is important to have a cohesive program model with streamlined communication and a shared culture. There should ideally be a dedicated director overseeing the work across multiple sites that helps convene teams periodically. All existing education, youth development/PYA, or Specialist staff serving young people should be a part of the Fair Futures program.

- ☐ **Hire the right staff. Staff should use a strength-based, trauma-informed, youth development lens.**

- ☐ Have a young person help screen/interview staff, particularly the Coaches.
- ☐ Use the [Fair Futures Staff Screening & Hiring Toolkit](#) for best practice interview questions/tips.

- ☐ **Create shared program language to use with youth - do this as a team, and share it with all agency staff.**

It is very important for all Fair Futures staff to be using the same language to describe the program and its goals – both with young people and with adults (foster parents, Case Planners, etc.). That way, there will be no confusion as to what your program does and does not do. Staff need to be able to clearly describe to young people how the program can benefit them, including both emotional benefits as well as specific services, and emphasize that the program is all about THEM. The language should be “real” and resonate with young people. It is also important for staff to be able to describe what their role is within the broader program.

Technical assistance is available to take your team through this important exercise. Including all critical parties is important. After developing language, share this language in a workshop/peer group with young people to introduce the program and develop a name, if you haven't already. Also have a senior leader distribute the language agency-wide so that all staff know what the program does (and does not do).

- ☐ **Create a program name - ideally with young people.**

For staff and youth to feel connected to a program, it has to have a name that resonates with them. Agencies do not have to call the program “Fair Futures;” they can develop a name and branding that is meaningful to their stakeholders and reflective of that agency's culture/community. To do so, a best practice is to convene key stakeholders, including young people, to develop/vote on a program name - this should help build team spirit and buy-in!

- ☐ **Develop collaborative approaches and role clarity.**

Implementation success also happens when all involved have the opportunity to provide input. Also, when multiple staff are working with the same youth, the youth will be most likely to succeed when staff are collaborating, sending the same message, and clear on who is doing what.

- ☐ Select a leadership champion to facilitate the implementation process. Have that champion arrange a launch meeting* with executive leadership, case planning staff, new Fair Futures staff, any other existing education/youth development staff, quality management/ improvement staff, and ideally some young people currently served in existing youth programs. The purpose of the meeting is for staff to come together to learn about the Fair Futures program, ask questions, express concerns, and get clarity regarding roles and implementation.
- ☐ Have department or program heads meet to discuss areas of collaboration and possible challenges that may arise. Develop a plan for when programs are working with the same child (e.g. foster care, mental health, Health Homes) are in different parts of the agency. Ensure senior leaders of these branches agree on role definitions and protocols for collaboration and crisis response.

- ☐ **Schedule regular technical assistance sessions with Fair Futures Technical Assistance providers.**

These sessions are tailored to your staff needs and help build team cohesion. Best practice approaches are shared across agencies.

TIP! THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS TAKES TIME... TRUST THE PROCESS, AND STICK WITH IT!

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SECTION 10. YOUTH RECRUITMENT

A. NO EJECT, NO REJECT MODEL

Fair Futures has a “no reject, no eject” model. The Fair Futures program is voluntary and serves any young person who is interested, as long as they meet the age/funding requirements.¹ **Currently, Fair Futures funding is only for youth active in foster care, ages 11-20. However, private funding can be used to serve young people over age 21.**



There are no screening mechanisms or requirements to participate, and young people cannot get ejected from the program based on engagement or performance. This is a very intentional component of the model. If there were requirements (such as academic criteria or mandatory minimum engagements), the program could inadvertently screen out the youth who are most in need of support and/or not be able to assist youth during times of crisis.

Once the Fair Futures program is fully funded, the young person is eligible to receive supports until they reach the age of 26. The young person can decide whether and to what extent to engage, whether it be through long-term coaching or receiving targeted services. Making services voluntary is empowering and allows the young person to be in control, which often results in greater willingness to engage. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 16](#))

The young person can also leave the program and return at any time, and young people who decide to leave the program for any reason are welcomed back.

B. RECRUITING PRIORITY POPULATIONS

FOSTER CARE STUDENTS IN THE 8TH GRADE SERVE AS A KEY PIPELINE TO THE COACHING PROGRAM

Approximately **50% of foster youth fail the ninth grade** in NYC and could benefit from a Coach upon entering this grade.

Throughout the course of the year, 8th graders should ideally hear about the benefits of Fair Futures coaching from the Middle School Education Specialist and their tutor (if they have one). Another best practice is for all 8th grade students to be invited to a Fair Futures Orientation in the summer before 9th grade. While students do not have to participate in Fair Futures, the Orientation helps encourage enrollment prior to 9th grade. The Orientation should include staff, young people, food, and relationship-building activities. This will help facilitate connection to the program and allow staff to meet with young people.

OTHER PRIORITY POPULATIONS

Until there is full funding, it is up to agencies to determine what populations should be served. In addition to the upcoming cohort of 9th graders, providers may also wish to focus on other critical populations who might benefit from coaching, including:

- Young people without a strong adult connection in their life
- Students repeating the 9th or 10th grade, or at risk of not being promoted
- Youth disconnected from school/work and without a high school degree/equivalency
- Seniors in high school seeking assistance with post-secondary enrollment
- Older youth aging out
- Young people who are pregnant/parenting and in need of support or at risk of being involved in the justice system

OPT-OUT METHOD

Once a program reaches scale, a best practice to ensure maximum participation in the coaching program is the “opt-out” approach. In this approach, a young person is automatically assigned a coach upon entry to 9th grade (or upon entry to foster care) and has to opt-out of coaching.

¹ However, services may be discontinued if the young person threatens a staff member or is violent.

WHERE TO RECRUIT?

A prime recruiting ground is at agencies existing **Independent Living/Preparing Youth for Adulthood** (PYA) meetings, where youth come to receive their monthly stipends. As discussed in [Section 9](#) and [Section 25](#) of the Fair Futures Program Manual, these PYA meetings can be turned into peer groups.

Agencies launching new programs should hold a launch meeting where the Fair Futures program is presented to young people, using the youth-appropriate language (see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 9](#)), ideally by a credible messenger or the Fair Futures Youth Coordinator. During this meeting, youth can brainstorm program names and vote on one; this will help with buy-in and engagement in coaching.

There are many other ways to recruit young people. Case Planners and foster parents may refer youth and staff can reach out to these youth to describe the benefits of the program (using youth language!) and gauge interest before assigning a Coach. However, credible messengers serve as the best recruits. It is a best practice to have a young person engage other young people into the program.

C. RECRUITING USING THE ONLINE PLATFORM



As discussed in [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 5](#), academic information for all middle school students in foster care will be entered into the Online Platform. This information will provide the future Coach with valuable information regarding their academic background.



Coach Supervisors are encouraged to monitor the list of upcoming 9th graders in the Online Platform and begin the Intake & Enrollment process with each one ([See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 11](#)).

If the young person is interested in coaching, then the appropriate Supervisor is notified, and the Intake & Enrollment process begins. ([See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 11](#)).

If they are not interested, the young person should remain on a “To Engage” list. Someone should be reaching out regularly to these young people (a best practice is 2x per month) to remind them that the program is there for them, and what the benefits are, using appropriate youth language. A best practice is to use a credible messenger or staff member who is very engaging. ([See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 16](#)).

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SECTION 11. INTAKE AND ENROLLMENT

A. INTAKE

In the Fair Futures model, there are no mandated intake or enrollment processes - each agency can implement whatever approach they find most effective. **Below is a recommended best practice, which can be adopted and/or tweaked.**

See [Appendix C2 Recommended Recruitment, Intake, and Enrollment Pathways Flow Chart](#) for a visual map of the recommended Recruitment, Intake, and Enrollment pathways described below.



Coach Supervisor(s) should meet with all new young people coming into the program before assigning them a Coach. Ideally, Supervisor(s) should meet with every 8th grader/upcoming 9th grader before the 9th grade begins (whether they attended the Orientation or not).

Before meeting with the young person, the Coach Supervisor will reach out to the Case Planner to learn more about the young person. Questions the Supervisor should ask include:

- What have been the challenges to vocational/educational development, if any?
- Are there any challenges/barriers to working with youth and/or family?
- What is the best form of communication for the youth?
- Who are the youth's permanent resource or support system?

One of the questions the Coach Supervisor will ask is whether the Case Planner has a positive/strong relationship with the young person and if he/she thinks it would be beneficial to attend the Intake meeting. If the young person has a positive relationship with them, having the Case Planner there will help facilitate the introduction to coaching and make the young person feel supported. However, if there is not a positive or solid relationship in place, then having them there could deter the young person from enrolling.

After speaking with the Case Planner, the Supervisor will reach out to the young person to set up the first meeting (the Intake Session).

INTAKE/INITIAL ENGAGEMENT SESSION

The young person and Coach Supervisor will be in this initial meeting. It may be appropriate for the case planner to attend as well, depending on his/her relationship with the young person. The meeting will be held at whatever location the young person feels most comfortable, whether that be at the office, in their home, or in the community.

During that first meeting, the Supervisor gets to know the young person, provides him/her with an overview of the program (what it is, what it is not, using youth language developed – see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 9](#)), and answers any questions. **The Coach Supervisor's primary job during this meeting is to make the young person feel comfortable and welcome, and infuse the session with cheerful, optimistic, and positive energy; it should not feel transactional or like an actual "intake" session.**

The Coach Supervisor will tell the young person about the next upcoming Orientation, and gauge whether the young person is interested and ready to be assigned a Coach.

AFTER THE INITIAL MEETING, THE COACH SUPERVISOR PROCEEDS AS FOLLOWS:

If the young person expresses interest in Coaching, the Supervisor will assign the young person a Coach in the Online Platform.

- Where possible, young people should be matched with Coaches based on gender preference and personality fit. However, sometimes a match will have to be driven by caseload/availability.

If the young person expresses interest only in receiving a specific service, such as getting documents, applying to a job, or enrolling in the Mentored Internship Program (for example), then the Supervisor will channel that young person to the appropriate Specialist to provide targeted services. The Specialist will record any service(s) provided in the Online Platform via the “Targeted Service Form.”

If the young person is not interested or the Supervisor is unsure, then they will enter them under a “To Engage” list. From there, the Outreach Coordinator (or whoever conducts outreach) will reach out to the young person. Check-ins with that young person should occur regularly for the next three months, and then once a month thereafter.

TIP!

Some programs may choose to skip all of the Intake and Initial Meeting steps and assign a Coach to a youth in need. If that young person does not respond to their Coach or engage, the Coach should practice consistent, relentless engagement and try new approaches – see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 12](#).

B. ENROLLMENT

Once the Supervisor assigns a Coach, the young person is considered Enrolled. The Supervisor should assign them to the Coach in the Online Platform. The Coach can then fill out the “Coached Youth Enrollment Form,” which captures where that young person is when they begin coaching.



I'm your Coach!

The Coach should make contact with the young person (ideally within 2 business days, as a best practice) to set up a meeting. That first meeting ideally happens within a week of the initial contact between the Coach and the young person, or as soon as feasible, so that the young person feels engaged. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 12](#) for tips on how to engage young people!

However, before reaching out to the young person, the Coach should set up a Technical Assistance session to ensure they feel comfortable with how to introduce themselves and their role. The Coach needs to be able to clearly describe to young people how the program can benefit them, including both emotional benefits as well as specific services, and emphasize that the program is all about THEM. The language should be “real” and resonate with young people.

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SECTION 12. EFFECTIVE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & THE FIRST 90 DAYS OF COACHING



Following enrollment, the next 90 days begins a period of relationship building between the Coach and the young person. If Coaches cannot build relationships with youth, they cannot help them make progress with their goals! The Coach will also start the process of building relationships with the key adults in the young person's life – his/her Case Planner, the parent(s)/family, and school/program staff. During this period, the Coach should also visit the young person's school/program and start to collect key data. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 13](#)).

TIP! *This time period does not have to be exactly 90 days – it is just a general guideline!*
Some young people may form an instant relationship with their Coach, and others may be struggling with life/other issues and take much longer to build trust.

See [Appendix C3 First 90 Days of Coaching](#) for a summary of the first 90 days of coaching.

A. EFFECTIVE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Young people in the child welfare system are often more accustomed to transition than stability, and they lack a consistent, positive support system. Older youth who are still involved in the foster care system are also more likely to have lived in multiple homes and experienced a higher level of caseworker turnover. As a result, it is not uncommon for these young people to feel uncomfortable with new relationships; some feel that the system has let them down and that the adults who they have been mandated to interact with do not truly care about them and/or will not be there for them in the long term.

Therefore, Coaches need to be patient, compassionate, consistent, and trauma-informed. They should engage the young person in a strength-based, positive youth development approach that focuses on **what youth are able to achieve, not past behaviors**.

Sometimes, trust is established once the young person sees that the Coach is helping them in a way that no one ever has before. Thus, the Coach should be proactively engaging with the adults in that young person's life, asking questions, expressing interest, and reassuring that young person that they are there for them.

IMPORTANT ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES INCLUDE:

Coaches make communication comfortable and meet youth where they prefer. Coaches travel to meet young people wherever they feel most comfortable — in the community, their home, a pizza joint, etc. This facilitates a more casual conversation and allows the young person to begin the process of building trust.

TIP! The best conversations tend to happen over food!

Coaches should also use whatever form of communication that young person is most comfortable with, including texting and various forms of social media.

TIP! Texts/messages should be casual and engaging, not transactional.

Meet them where they are. Coaches get to know the youth's interests, listen carefully, and are always strength-based. Don't ask the young person about their academic performance or career goals on their first conversation, unless they bring this up. Get to know who they are as an individual, what they like to do in their free time, etc. If they are hesitant to open up, open up to them and share your own interests.

TIP! If you are struggling to engage them in conversation, share something about yourself - relationships are a two-way road. Open up to them as you hope they would open up to you and try to find a common bond. If you don't have one – create one! Learn more about whatever it is that interests them (a particular game, sport, activity, TV show, etc.).

Coaches are consistent and don't give up! Many young people in foster care have suffered from inconsistent and/or disrupted adult supports, which can make it challenging to form trusting, long-term relationships. Coaches should reach out at least once a week to young people – whether they are responding or not. They should also try new approaches – if reaching out by phone or text does not elicit a response, then try social media. If that does not work, find out their schedule and run into them – engage them in conversation, or ask if you can bring them to lunch.

Coaches show up consistently, even if the youth doesn't! For youth who do not engage after multiple attempts, Coaches should continue to reach out and visit them. Some youth take time to trust that the adult is truly interested in their well-being, and they will seek assistance once they know the intentions are coming from a genuine, caring place.

TIP! Coaches should use “out of the box” approaches to engaging that young person – send them a GIF, a TikTok video, send along a credible messenger, bring them on a trip, etc. New experiences can serve as conversation-starters and can help facilitate relationship-building (keep reading).

Coaches should always be their authentic self. If we want young people to open up to us and allow us to assist them, we have to be genuine and open with them, too! What we hear most from young people is that they appreciate when we are “real” and do not put up our walls.

Validate their feelings. An important step in engaging a young person – or any person – is to validate their feelings, regardless of whether or not you agree with them. This includes:

- Finding the kernel of truth in another person's perspective or situation, verifying the facts of a situation;
- Acknowledging that a person's emotions, thoughts and behaviors have causes and are therefore understandable;
- Not providing solutions or problem solving;
- Not necessarily agreeing with the other person or validating what is actually invalid.

THE FIRST MEETING BETWEEN THE COACH AND THE YOUNG PERSON:

- **As discussed above, the first meeting should take place wherever the young person feels comfortable** – in their home, school, agency, or community. Typically, a first meeting over food is a good way to start building the relationship.
- **Meet the young person on their terms**, letting them drive the direction of the conversation, and expressing genuine interest about who they are. Be open and engaging, and mindful of your body language to not appear closed off. Share things about yourself as well.
- **Learn about their interests - the first meeting is NOT meant to focus on goal-setting (unless they are ready).** Sometimes, if a Coach inquires about the young person's academics or career goals, the young people could disengage at that point, as they may not fully believe in their potential and do not want to disappoint. It is easier to disengage and push away than it is to fail to meet expectations.

The initial conversations should include casual discussions around what the young person's interests are, what they enjoy and do not enjoy, and where they see themselves. This is both fact-gathering – information that will be helpful with goal-setting – as well as a useful process for the young person to start doing some self-reflection. It is also helpful for the Coach to understand the extent/depth (or lack thereof) of that young person's vision for themselves and understanding of their own skills, abilities, and interests.

It is not uncommon for a young person to have been so consumed by trauma and survival (the day-to-day), that he/she has little-to-no vision for the future, or even what opportunities could be plausible for them. They may also have not had much exposure to potential career pathways or seen what is possible. Some young people may even need to start from a much more basic place – forming their identity and interests. The Coach can help them explore and identify their interests (see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 15](#)).

- Should the young person start talking about their academic, career, or personal goals, **the Coach should be ready to start the goal-setting process and move at their pace!**
- **If there is some hesitancy on the part of the young person during the first meeting**, that is completely normal. This is because many young people with foster care histories will be hesitant to commit to any sort of long-term engagement with a new adult in their life. It is the responsibility of the Coach and the program to change that mindset, and help the young person know that the Fair Futures program will stick with them through the ups and downs.

During the 90 day period, Coaches should build-in and prioritize their time to participate in relationship-building activities with young people, and focus on creating a positive, healing, and/or inspiring environment. Activities could include a walk in the park, playing sports, having lunch, listening to music, or any sort of activity that the young person is interested in. New experiences can also serve as conversation-starters and can help facilitate relationship-building.

Examples of free activities in NYC include:

- A trip to Bryant Park;
- A free ride on the Staten Island Ferry to see the Statue of Liberty;
- A walk along the Brooklyn Promenade;
- A trip to the Seaport in southern Manhattan;
- A walk in Central Park.



WHEN THERE ISN'T A CONNECTION



Sometimes coaching is about the chemistry (or lack thereof) between the Coach and the young person. After the 90-day period, the Supervisor should have a conversation with the Coach and the young person, separately, about how it's going.

Some signs of potential lack of a connection between a young person and a Coach are if the young person is difficult to reach, non-responsive, not showing up, or not following through.

During the meeting with the young person, the Supervisor should let them know that if they want, they can request another Coach. The Supervisor should reiterate that the program is there for them no matter what, and that young person knows what is best for them, including if they want to switch Coaches. **This is critical, as many young people have gone from home to home with no input; empowering the young person to make this decision is important.** However, it should be done in a very delicate manner – it may be the case that the young person likes his/her Coach but is still warming up to them. The Supervisor should not make the young person feel like the Coach no longer wants to coach them.

If the young person wants to try out another Coach, the Supervisor should try to re-assign a Coach, if possible, based on the young person's interests and personality. The Supervisor can change the Coach assignment in the Online Platform, and the new Coach should ideally reach out within five business days (and repeat the above steps).

B. COACH'S ROLE IN INTERACTING WITH CASE PLANNERS

Within first week after the initial enrollment (the first face-to-face session), the Coach should be in touch with the Case Planner and the Middle School Specialist. Building a positive rapport with the Case Planner is important as there needs to be open lines of communication. It's important that the two work together as a team. *The Middle School Specialist may not have much to report, but they may have important information for the Coach as the student begins 9th grade.*

In the first interaction with the Case Planner, the Coach should:

- ☐ **Establish clarity on the goals of the program.**
For those Case Planners that may be new to the agency or not have a strong background in Fair Futures, it may be helpful for the Coach to briefly touch on the goals of Fair Futures and how their role is to work with the young person on their academic goals, career development goals, and the transition to independent living.
- ☐ **Discuss any helpful background information**, including that young person's current home situation, permanency goal, and any school-related information they have.
- ☐ Ask for copies of the young person's documentation, including copies of their birth certificate, social security card, state ID/license, working papers, etc. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 13](#)).
- ☐ Let the Case Planner know that the Coach looks forward to working with him/her that the Coach will be providing them with a monthly update and progress notes. This is helpful for the Case Planner's records and Family Court process.

TIP! A monthly contact report can be automatically generated from the Online Platform –it will include all progress notes and contact dates.

It is important to note that if the young person's case file is requested, it may contain incomplete information, and in some cases, statements of opinion as opposed to fact. To this end, the case file is simply additional context to be considered and to further inform the Coach's trauma-sensitivity.

After the first interaction, Coaches and Case Planners should work together not only when there is a crisis but should collaborate to celebrate the young person as well.

The Coach should also attend the Family Team Conferences, which take place at least twice per year, and build a rapport with any other adults in the young person's life – including his/her therapist, or health care coordinator. If there is regular communication between the Coach and the various adults in that young person's life, then these adults can work together as a team, surrounding the young person with a network of support. It can also help prevent crises from happening; if a Case Planner or other staff has important information related to that young person's safety, mental health, physical health, or well-being that they can share with the Coach, the Coach can use that information to help address the situation and provide social-emotional support to the young person.

C. COACH'S ROLE IN INTERACTING WITH PARENTS

Within the first month of enrollment, the Coach should reach out to the family and have an in-person meeting. Ideally, the Case Planner is present as well, along with the young person, to create a circle of support.

TIP! In instances where the young person does not have a positive relationship with the Case Planner and/or the parent(s), the Coach should build independent relationships with these individuals.

The first meeting can include an explanation of the program and what supports the Coach provides – this is another reason why it's important to have program language prepared (see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 9](#)). Often times, the parent is very happy to hear that someone is helping the young person with his/her academic progress and career path.

After the initial engagement, the Coach should follow up with the parent as needed. If there is no information to gain, the Coach can inform them of the young person's progress, share information, and celebrate the young person, whenever possible.

D. COACH'S ROLE IN ENGAGING WITH THE YOUNG PERSON'S SCHOOL/PROGRAM

Within the first month of enrollment, the Coach should make a visit with the young person to their high school, HSE program, or any other program he/she is enrolled in. If the young person is already enrolled in college, the Coach should visit the college with that young person (if possible).

The purpose of the visit is to:

- Show support; show the young person that the Coach cares about them and is there for them on their journey
- Ensure that they are in a "best fit" high school environment and making progress towards graduation (see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18](#))
- Ensure that they are accessing available supports
- Form a relationship with any key staff that the young person interacts with at the school (e.g., a guidance counselor, school therapist, etc.), so that the school staff know to reach out to the Coach if any challenges, issues, or opportunities arise as it relates to that young person.

On the first visit, the Coach should obtain, if possible/available:

- ☐ Any permissions to access the student's data (a FERPA release), if the student is 18 and/or no longer in care
- ☐ A copy of the current or most recent transcript
- ☐ Attendance records
- ☐ Any disciplinary or other records
- ☐ The student's IEP or 504 Plan, if they have one

See [Appendix C5 First School Visit](#) and [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18](#)) for more detailed information on how to conduct the visit, key questions the Coach can ask, what to look out for.

If the young person is no longer enrolled in an academic setting, the Coach should obtain that young person's most recent high school transcript and any records. This data provides important information once the young person is ready to re-engage in an academic setting. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18](#))

E. ORIENTATION

Within the first 90-day period, the young person is strongly encouraged to attend a Fair Futures Orientation. It serves as a universal orientation and welcome, which helps to build culture and collaborative relationships. It is an opportunity for new participants (and potential participants) to learn about the program in an informal way. Whenever possible, representatives from the Fair Futures Youth Board will be present.

Case Planners should also attend.

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SECTION 13. INITIAL DATA COLLECTION AND THE PLATFORM

As the Coach is building the relationship with the young person and the significant adults in his/her life, the Coach should also be gathering important documents, data, and assessments to help with the goal-setting, supervision, etc., ideally within the initial 90-day period.

A. VITAL DOCUMENTS

Within the first few weeks after enrollment, Coaches should obtain copies of the following documents:

- ☐ Social security card
- ☐ State ID/Driver's license
- ☐ Birth certificate and citizenship records, *if applicable*
- ☐ Working papers
- ☐ Most recent transcript (high school or college)

The Coach can obtain these documents from the Case Planner. If the young person does not have working papers, the Coach should help them obtain papers. They should be stored in a safe file.

B. COACHING DATA

All young people active in foster care from the 9th grade on (or age 14+ if they are disconnected from school) are eligible to receive coaching.

Once a youth is assigned a Coach, the Coach should fill out the Coaching Enrollment Form, which captures key data including the enrollment date and the academic/career status upon enrollment.

C. ACADEMIC DATA

MIDDLE SCHOOL ACADEMIC DATA

If the young person was in middle school while in foster care with the agency, the middle school academic section will be populated. This will provide the future 9th grade Coach with valuable information regarding their academic background.

HIGH SCHOOL DATA

If the young person has a Coach and does not yet have a high school degree, the High School Section in the Youth Profile will automatically populate after the High School Goal worksheet is filled out.

If the young person does not have a Coach, the academic status of that young person will be tracked on Care4 via a Form.

COLLEGE DATA

If the young person has a Coach and is enrolled in college, the College Section in the Youth Profile will automatically populate after the College Goal worksheet is filled out.

If the young person does not have a Coach, the academic status of that young person will be tracked on Care4 via a Form.

D. RESUME DEVELOPMENT



After the young person is engaged, the Coach or Career Development Specialist should help the young person on developing, updating, or refining their resume.

If the young person does not have a resume, the Coach or the Career Development Specialist can create one with the young person. If they do have a resume, they can refine/update it.

The purpose of doing this is to ensure that all young people have resumes. **It is also an effective way to start discussing career development goals through an experiential activity.** The goal is to learn about what experiences the young person has had, their reflections on them, and what their interests are. It is a way to highlight skills or areas of interest on their resume that they may have never thought of including before.

If a young person clearly has had no previous jobs/internships, the Career Development Specialist can hone-in on any extracurricular or other experiences they have had, including in an informal setting. This could include helping their friends, cooking for their families, writing music lyrics or poetry, etc. The point is not to make the young person feel like he/she does not have any previous work experience or career goals – it should be a **self-esteem building and exploration exercise.**

Ideally within the first 90 days, or as soon as the young person is ready, the Coach should also work with the Career Development Specialist to do a career assessment. The results of the assessment will help the Coach and Career Development Specialist with the longer-term planning. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#))

E. HOUSING DATA

The Coach should discuss the young person's permanency status with the Case Planner. If the young person has an APPLA (Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement) permanency planning goal, then it should be indicated in the Online Platform that they young person is eligible for housing.

The Coach should work with the Case Planner and Housing Specialist on ensuring their housing applications are submitted as soon as possible (see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 23](#)).

FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL

SECTION 14

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SECTION 14. COACHING FRAMEWORKS & ONGOING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

"As coaches, we help turn the vision into reality, the dream into an achievement and the goal into an accomplishment."

- International Coach Academy

A. WHAT IS COACHING?

Coaching¹ is a method of interacting and supporting that helps others:

- Focus on self-discovery
- Articulate their goals
- Learn how to problem solve
- Safely make mistakes and learn from them
- Develop healthy patterns
- Achieve personal growth
- Achieve incremental progress toward their goals
- Ultimately achieve long term life goals

B. THE BENEFITS OF COACHING

Coaching can provide a multitude of benefits including helping a person articulate their goals, focus on self-discovery, and learn how to problem solve. This should be done in a safe, caring environment.

When coaching is done with intentionality and focus, coaching can:

- Build self-awareness, empower choice, and lead to change.
- Supports a person in becoming who they want to be.
- Helps a person achieve their personal best and to produce the results they want in their lives.
- Help people set S.M.A.R.T. goals and follow through with their goals.
- Increase hope, focus, and self-esteem.

Creating a warm, engaging culture centered around a coaching framework is critical to program success. It will also help with staff retention and youth engagement, as both staff and young people need to feel connected to the program and its culture.

Some of the most effective Coaches in the work are the ones that are self-aware, have an understanding of who they are and value learning about the WHY and the WHAT of each of their young people.

WHY is my youth making the choices they make?

WHY are they struggling in school?

WHY are they struggling with work?

WHAT are their dreams and aspirations?

WHAT motivates them?

Great Coaches are constantly working to understand their own WHY and WHAT.

WHY am I being triggered?

WHY do I carry this bias or judgment?

WHY Am I Talking (W.A.I.T.), when I could do more listening?

WHAT can I do to be a better Coach?

WHAT more can I do to be a support in this young person's life?

¹From *Disability and Rehabilitation*, An international, multi-disciplinary journal, "Client-centered coaching in the pediatric health professions: a critical scoping review," October 7, 2014, "The International Coach Federation (ICF) provides the following definition: coaching is "partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential" (ICF webpage). This definition of coaching is quite open to interpretation, but it does highlight four key components that are deemed necessary to coaching. According to this definition from the ICF, coaching consists of a client-centered partnership, where the client and the coach work collaboratively. The definition highlights the need for creativity and self-discovery (reflective), and it focuses on future growth and development (capacity) of the client's potential.

C. THE 4 CORE COMPONENTS OF COACHING

In Coaching there are 4 core components. In each of these components you will find the 4 P's to help you remember how to show up your best when in your coaching conversations:

#1. Establish Understanding & Purpose

- Clearly communicate what coaching, and your coaching program, is and isn't. The Coaching Agreement helps with this.
- Refer to other support professionals when out of your scope of practice. *For example: a therapist, medical professional, Case Planner*

#2. Establish a Trusting Relationship - Understand the past, focus on the present and have a future-oriented mindset

- Be present and flexible.
- Show genuine concern.
- Admit when you don't know something.
- Champion new behaviors, be aware of light bulb moments.

#3. Facilitate the Learning

- Set S.M.A.R.T. Goals & Plans: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely.
 - The Goals & Step framework is comprised of all S.M.A.R.T Goals!
- Celebrate successes and growth. Acknowledge what has been accomplished.
- Provide gentle accountability.

#4. Communicate Effectively – Stay focused on changing needs and goals.

- Use active listening to understand the meaning of what is being said.
- Ask open-ended questions that promote discovery, action and insight.
- Remind the youth of their goals and objectives.

REMEMBER THE 4 P'S

Maintain your coaching **P**resence
Practice **P**ower Listening
Ask **P**owerful Questions
Pactice coaching as much as possible

The four key components of Coaching and the 4 P's are reviewed in the Fair Futures 2.5 day training in greater detail. See [Appendix B Fair Futures Trainings](#) for more information.

D. CREATING A COACHING AGREEMENT

The Coaching Agreement allows the Coach and Coachee to come to an understanding of what the partnership will look like. It also helps a Coach, and the Coaching program, know what bounds or parameters they are working in.

According to the International Coach Federation a Coaching Agreement can help with the following:

1. The Coach helps the Coachee identify, or reconfirm, what s/he wants to accomplish in a coaching session.
2. The Coach helps the Coachee to define or reconfirm measures of success for what s/he wants to accomplish in the session.
3. The Coach explores what is important or meaningful to the Coachee about what s/he wants to accomplish in the session.
4. The Coach helps the Coachee define what they need to address or resolve in order to achieve what they want to accomplish in the session.
5. The Coach continues the conversation in direction of Coachee's desired outcome unless Coachee indicates otherwise.

To see a sample Coaching Agreement please see [Appendix C6 Sample Coaching Agreement](#).

E. COACHING FRAMEWORKS

The ability to guide young people through the process of goal achievement requires working within a coaching framework. While there are numerous coaching frameworks in existence, the **G.R.O.W. Model** is one simple yet powerful framework for structuring coaching sessions. For another coaching script please see [Appendix C7 Sample Coaching Script](#).

The acronym **G.R.O.W.** is as follows. It is accompanied by sample questions that can be used in a coaching session:

G

GOAL

What goal, or goals, do you want to achieve?
Why is this important?
What do you want to get out of your time in this Coaching program?
What would you like to work on?
What are the benefits of you achieving this goal?

R

CURRENT REALITY

Where are you now in relation to your goals?
What steps have you already taken, if any?
What challenges have you faced in trying to reach your goals?

O

OPTIONS

What are your options?
What would you like your first step to be?
What is the first step you'd like to take?
Who in your life is supporting you?

W

WILL, OR WAY FORWARD

When will you start?
What support do you need?
When would like to get started?
How will you know when you've been successful?
How committed to this goal are you on a scale from 1-10?

Sometimes, young people may not know what their academic or career development goals are. They may not know any adults who attended a post-secondary setting or know of what career pathways are available to them. **A Coach's role is to help them explore their interests, inform them of different pathways, expose them to opportunities, and ultimately help them build a series of academic/career experiences that are in line with their interests.**

Other times, young people may have goals that may seem counter-productive to their longer-term success (e.g., a young person may have a goal of dropping out of high school to get a job) or may not seem feasible (e.g., becoming a famous sports athlete or rapper). A Coach's role is not to critique/dismiss their goals - **Coaches should meet youth where they are, try to understand the drivers of their goals/interests and any considerations, and help connect them to opportunities in line with their interests.** [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 20](#) provides a detailed example of how to coach a young person who is disconnected from high school and does not want to re-enroll.

The Goals & Steps framework allows Coaches to track young people's progress towards their goals (see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 15](#)).

ADDITIONAL COACHING TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

Different structured models can be used to train and support coaching techniques. These include but are not limited to:

Motivational Interviewing:

This includes specific engagement strategies for maximizing the chances that individuals will choose adaptive behavior change. MI takes advantage of the natural tendency of human beings to choose what is best for them in the long run by working collaboratively to identify individuals' desire for change within apparently destructive behaviors. ACS' Motivational Interviewing is a required course.

Collaborative Problem Solving:

This is a behavior management model that focuses on a central philosophy that people want to meet expectations and do well. A primary goal of the model is to build staff/adult empathy by helping them understand the root of what can get in the way of people meeting expectations and being successful.

F. PROVIDING ONGOING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

CONSTANCY & CONSISTENCY

To reiterate - young people in foster care have experienced trauma and instability, and their relationships with adults have often been inconsistent and/or abruptly disrupted. To begin to heal from trauma and trust others, young people need to experience consistency and constancy in their relationships. It is the role of the Coach to provide that consistency and constancy, even if the young person does not initially engage or always respond. By calling them on the same day or repeatedly showing up, the young person will begin to realize that they can trust their Coach. This may happen immediately, or it may take weeks or months.

Because of the consistency and constancy that a Coach models, is not uncommon for the Coach to be the first adult in a long time – or perhaps ever – that the young person trusts.

Once the Coach and the young person have established a trusting relationship, a primary role of the Coach is to continue to provide emotional support, as needed, through the critical junctures and transitions in their lives, and also the day-to-day issues that arise. It is important that the Coach not only be in touch with the young person to discuss progress towards their goals, but also be there to discuss their relationships, fears, concerns, interests, dreams, and challenges. It is also often the social-emotional challenges young people face that can inhibit the progress they make towards their goals! Also, if there is a genuine personal connection, the young person will be more likely to allow the Coach to help them progress. They will also be more likely to turn to their Coach for guidance and support when a challenge arises (and therefore possibly help prevent a situation from escalating further).

Some other important tips:

- It is important that Coaches continue to be reliable – if they say they are going to show up, they show up. If they speak to a young person every week, they should not go two weeks without being in touch.
- If the Coach is going on vacation and for some reason cannot be in touch, they should communicate this to the young person in advance and provide them with their Supervisor's contact information.

FREQUENCY OF CONTACTS

Coaches should reach out to **all young people on their coachload at least once a week** - even if it is just to send an encouraging/supportive text message.

Beyond that, the frequency of contact between the Coach and the young person should be **driven mostly by making progress towards their Goals and Steps, providing ongoing emotional support, and addressing any issues that may arise.**

TIP! A best practice is a minimum of 2x in person each month, with weekly contact by phone/social media. Some young people may require weekly in-person meetings, or more, during critical transitions or crises.

The Coach should be flexible with the frequency of engagement, but also draw appropriate boundaries, when needed.

CELEBRATING SUCCESSES

It can take time before a young person starts to realize their potential, and how their hard work is paying off and changing their life. Therefore, it is important for Coaches (and the program) to celebrate a young person's success, praise their effort, and encourage them to reflect on how their actions are helping THEM make progress towards their goals.

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH CRISIS SITUATIONS

With a crisis situation arises, the Coach may be the first person the young person contacts, before his/her Case Planner, due to their relationship with the young person. It is the Coach's responsibility to follow agency protocol and inform both their Supervisor and the Case Planner of the situation, and to work together as a team to address the issue. A Critical Incident Report should be filled out.

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH, HEALTH, OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE CHALLENGES

While Coaches do not provide clinical/mental health services, Coaches can help facilitate access to needed services and follow-through. Coaches also provide social-emotional support over a long period of time, which can be healing.

As Coaches build strong relationships with young people, they are often become aware (or informed) of any mental health, health, or substance abuse challenge, as these often get in the way of academic and career development progress. Coaches can help ensure young people are connected to the services/supports they need. Coaches will continue to provide social/emotional support to young people and stick with them, no matter what.

If a young person's situation is severe, the Coach can hold off on helping the young person with their Goals until they are in a better state to proceed. The support they receive from a Coach during this period could help speed up that process.

SELF-REGULATION & SHIFTING BELIEFS

Supporting young people – or people in general – can be challenging at times. It is important to practice self-care and to be able to debrief with your Supervisor.

It is important for Coaches and all Fair Futures staff to be aware of their body language and how they are feeling, and to gauge where they are on this spectrum (and try, whenever possible, to work from the left side).



It can also difficult at times to understand why our young people are making the decisions they make, but it is important that we do not place our own belief system on them. Be intentional about shifting and changing language to remove judgment, spark curiosity about the young person and gain understanding. Here are some examples:

OLD JUDGMENTS

She lied about...

He was angry so he...

She doesn't seem motivate to...

She is not interested so she missed the appointment....

He says one thing and does another...

NEW BELIEFS

I will work to gain her trust.

I will acknowledge his past and learn how it impacts him today.

I will seek to understand what drives her.

I will be curious about her dreams and aspirations.

I will be patient while walking this path with him.

FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL

SECTION 15

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SECTION 15. GOAL-SETTING & TRACKING PROGRESS WITH THE GOALS & STEPS FRAMEWORK

A. ENGAGING THE YOUNG PERSON AROUND GOAL-SETTING

The Coaches should make it clear to the young people from the start that they – and the program – are there to support them in making progress towards their goals. Some young people may be ready to engage in goal setting immediately upon enrolling in the program, even before developing a relationship with their Coach and gathering data. For these young people, working with their Coach towards their goals may be what helps build the relationship and establish trust over time.

Other young people may need to first establish a trusting rapport with their Coach. The Coach can build that trust simply by continuing to engage them and being consistent. The Coach can take a number of approaches to gauge their readiness – inquiring about their interests, their school, their dreams, in a way that does not invoke pressure or expectations. ***It may be the case that the young person is not ready or willing to discuss their progress in school because they do not believe in their potential, and/or they are afraid of failing and disappointing their Coach.***

An important part of the role of a Coach is to be flexible and able to discern a young person's needs, and gauge when they are ready to take that next step on their journey.

B. OVERVIEW OF GOALS & STEPS FRAMEWORK & PURPOSE

Young people will have any number of aspirations – to become a nurse, a lawyer, a bus driver, a famous music artist - the possibilities are endless. *The Goals & Steps framework does not outline these different career pathways and how to specifically achieve that desired profession.* Instead, the framework can be thought of a series of **mini-goals, or building blocks, that can be used to meet a young person exactly where they are and help take them where they want to go.**

For example, a young person may know they want to pursue a specific career pathway: they want to become a Case Planner, and maybe someday a leader of a child welfare organization. However, if they are in the 10th grade, they still have to: complete the 10th grade, and then the 11th grade, and then graduate high school, then enroll in college, complete a semester, re-enroll, and complete another semester, until they earn a BA. Along their academic journey, that young person should also be accumulating a series of career development experiences, ideally in the non-profit/child welfare sector, and/or related to leadership activities.

And if that young person is aging out, they will need to obtain stable, affordable housing and build independent living skills so they can continue to focus on their academic and career goals. ***The Goals & Steps framework will help that young person take all of these necessary steps, in all areas of their life, to help them where they are going!***

AND if they do not know what career path they are interested in yet, the Goals & Steps framework helps them explore options, make progress towards earning a degree(s) that will be helpful regardless of the pathway they choose, and build a series of career development experiences based on their interests and life situation.

WHAT ARE “GOALS” AND “STEPS”?

Goals:

- All goals are considered a “positive outcome.”
- Goals are standardized. Goals cannot be added, or it would not be possible to aggregate outcomes.
- The goals are designed to be broad enough so that any young person's goal falls into one of the buckets.
- Having standardized goals also provides a map for the Coaches and young people to see what the next goal could/should be.

Steps:

- A way to track progress towards goals.
- A guide for Coaches (particularly new Coaches) around what steps they can potentially take – and what steps they should take – to help a young person reach any given goal.
- A way give credit to Coaches and young people for all of the hard work they do!

STEPS are either: **Required Steps**, which are based on best practices/critical junctures; or **Potential Steps**, which are based on need and the young person's situation.

TIP! Coaches can also add/create their own steps to allow for innovative approaches to reaching goals.

PURPOSE: GOALS & STEPS ARE A FRAMEWORK THAT ALLOWS COACHES AND STAFF TO TRACK A YOUNG PERSON'S PROGRESS.

Goals & Steps are based on the key principles of **Motivational Interviewing**: an approach of meeting a young person “where they are” and taking small steps toward their goals.

They are also based on **SMART plans**, as they are: Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Time-bound.

Note: Goals & Steps are often, not always, time-bound.

- Some goals are naturally time-bound: the goal “[Complete school year promoted](#)” will take an academic year.
- Other goals are more open ended: the goal “[Re-engage and re-enroll young person in a best-fit academic setting](#)” may take weeks or it may take many months to complete.

The aim is to achieve goals as soon as feasible and continue on to the next goal.

As many steps will be taken as needed to reach that goal in as short or long a timeframe as needed. Most Goals can be accomplished in less than a year.



The Online Platform systematically tracks Goals & Steps so that at any given time, Coaches, Supervisors, and the Program Director can see where young people started the program, where they are now, what goal(s) they have accomplished, and what steps have been taken. For a new Coach adopting an existing caseload of young people, that Coach can see the profile of each young person and what goals/steps they have taken to date.

C. GOALS & STEPS DO NOT DRIVE THE RELATIONSHIP

Tracking Goals and Steps should not interfere with the relationship dynamic between the Coach and the young person.

The Coach should continue to be the engaging, supportive figure that they are, and let the young person drive the conversation. If the young person needs to discuss a personal issue or an emotional concern, the Coach should not immediately redirect the conversation toward goals. It is easier for a young person to refocus on their goals after they release their stress, anxiety, pain, or trauma. Often times, providing emotional support and constancy is the most important way a Coach can help the young person move forward.

Helping young people develop goals and take steps is important, but it should not feel transactional. There is an artful way of engaging a young person in a conversation around goal-setting – through coaching (see above). Helping the young person tap into their innate interests and strengths, envision what success could look like for them, and helping them take that next step is what it's all about. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 15G](#) for a concrete example.)

In practice, tracking Goals & Steps in the Online Platform is usually what should happen after the conversation/meeting. Some young people may want to see what their Youth Profile page looks like, how far they have come, and visualize their next steps. Other young people may be turned off by this tracking of progress. It is part of the Coach's role to discern what the best approach is for that particular young person.

D. TYPES OF GOALS & DETERMINING GOALS USING THE ROADMAPS

In the Goals & Steps framework, there are academic, career development, and housing/independent living goals and associated steps with each goal. See [Roadmaps of the Academic, Career Development, and Housing/Independent Living Goals](#), based on a young person's situation [here](#).

It is highly recommended to go through the 2.5 day training before starting to use Goals & Steps!

ACADEMIC GOALS

- Middle School Goals (*applies only to the Middle School Education Specialist*)
- High School Goals
- Post-Secondary Exploration/Exposure Goal
- College Goals

CAREER DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Each year, all young people (regardless of their academic situation) should:

- ❑ Complete the annual “[Conduct Career Exploration & Preparation](#)” Goal, which includes [doing at least one career exploration activity](#), creating/updating a resume, and doing career development goal setting with their Coach. The career exploration activity should be tailored to their interests.
- ❑ Complete at least one [Career Development Experience](#) each year.
Ideally, young people have at least one meaningful career development experience during the school year and one during the summer. The selected experience should be in line with that young person’s interests, developmental stage, academic situation, needs, and longer-term goals.

A career development experience can include participating in, for example:

- An on-site job readiness program/internship program
- An external internship program (e.g., Summer Youth Employment Program)
- A leadership/youth development program or community service experience
- A workforce development program
- An accredited vocational, sector-based program, or apprenticeship
- A civil service exam
- Part-time or full-time employment

Housing & Independent Living Goals

These goals will only apply to young people who are aging out or who have already aged out of foster care.

- Applying for housing
- Obtaining housing
- Maintaining housing
- Building independent living skills
- Transitioning into permanent housing (if needed)

TIP! All young people aging out of foster care with an **APPLA** permanency planning goal should apply for all forms of housing for which they are eligible by age 19, as it can take a couple of years to obtain housing.

At a minimum, young people should apply to:

- ❑ NYCHA
- ❑ **NY/NY 3 and NYC 15 Supportive Housing**
(if a young person’s application is submitted to either NY/NY 3 or NYC 15, it will be considered for both)

It is important to apply to these supportive housing pathways as it is less restrictive than NYCHA, particularly if the young person is a full-time student, and more supportive.

While it is not the role of a Coach to fill out the housing applications (the Case Planner and/or Housing Specialist do that), they can play an important role in overseeing the process to ensure that a young person’s housing is moving along.

Once the young person obtains housing, they will no longer have a Case Planner, and it becomes the responsibility of a Coach to assist them with maintaining housing (e.g., asking if they are paying their rent each month) and building basic independent living skills (e.g., creating a budget). This is important because if a young person does not have a stable housing situation, it will greatly impact their academic performance and/or career development.

[Fair Futures Program Manual Section 23](#) discusses Housing & Independent Living and the role of a Coach in more detail.

It is important for Coaches to help young people with their academic, career development, AND housing/independent living goals each, while providing social-emotional support, because they are all intertwined.

For example:

- A young person's career interests/aptitudes could influence their academic/post-secondary pathway;
- If a young person does not have progressive career development experiences on their resume, it will be challenging to obtain/maintain employment and navigate onto a living-wage career path;
- A young person's academic performance/situation could influence what types of career development experience(s) they can have that year;
- If a young person is not stably housed, that could easily impact their academic/career performance;
- Because if a young person does not have someone that they can count on that can provide social/emotional support, any area of their life could unravel.

REQUIRED GOALS FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

The aim is for 100% of coached young people to have completed, by the end of the year, a set of goals based on where they are:

For young people who do not yet have a high school degree or equivalency (including those who are disconnected):

- ☐ 1+ high school academic goal(s);
- ☐ 1+ post-secondary exposure/exploration goal(s);
- ☐ 1+ career development experience(s), along with the yearly required "Career exploration & preparation" goal

For young people enrolled in college:

- ☐ 1+ college goal(s);
- ☐ 1+ career development experience(s), along with the yearly required "Career exploration & preparation" goal

For young people enrolled in a non-college post-secondary setting (such as a vocational program):

- ☐ 1+ career development experience(s), along with the yearly required "Career exploration & preparation" goal

For young people with a high school degree/GED who are not enrolled in college:

- ☐ 1+ post-secondary exposure/exploration goal(s);
- ☐ 1+ career development experience(s), along with the yearly required "Career exploration & preparation" goal

Review the Goal Roadmaps and select specific Goals in each category above, based on a young person's situation and interests. Once a Goal is selected, go to that Worksheet to see the specific steps.

It is highly recommended to go through the 2.5 day training before starting to use Goals & Steps!

E. SETTING GOALS COLLABORATIVELY

Goals should be set collaboratively with young people, and eventually (ideally) young people should drive this process on their own. Goals & Steps can be tracked/checked off in the Online Platform whether it was the Coach or the young person completing any particular Step.

If the young person is at a stage where they are not yet ready to talk about their goals, the Coach can sometimes move forward with selecting Goals and following Steps, based on the young person's situation and interest. You never know what may spark a youth's interest and get them engaged!

While a Coach should never decide that the young person should participate in "XYZ Program" or apply to "XYZ College", they can select the following Goals and proceed with the Steps, regardless of whether a formal conversation happens with the young person:

☐ **Re-engage and re-enroll in a best-fit high school/GED program Goal**

For any young person who is disconnected without a high school degree/equivalency, the Coach should be selecting this goal, even if the young person says they never want to go back to school. We know that the young person will have a very bleak future without a degree.

Instead of pushing them to go back to school (that never works!), there are other, much more effective approaches outlined in the "potential steps" associated with this Goal. For example, the Coach could connect the young person to a credible messenger, an extracurricular activity, or a new experience that could eventually help them realize why a degree is important. Review a real-life example in [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 15G](#).

☐ **Any Goal related to high school/GED persistence**

(e.g., "[Complete school year promoted](#)," "[Advance 1 grade level/Pass a section of the GED exam](#)", etc.).

Any young person enrolled in school can always have a persistence goal. The Coach will need to monitor the academic performance regardless, and there are many potential steps associated with supporting the student's success.

☐ **Post-Secondary Exposure/Exploration Goal**

Even if a young person thinks they will never graduate high school and they don't like school, there are ways to explore post-secondary pathways that can be eye-opening and inspiring. For example, a college trip to another city or a visit to a construction site can be no-pressure, fun experiences that enable the young person to *envision* themselves in a post-secondary setting.

☐ **Career Exploration**

Same thinking as above – a fun trip, an inspiring career panel, or an online tool are all career exploration activities that can help young people *envision* potential career pathways and build self-esteem.

☐ **Enrolling in any extracurricular, youth development, or community service activity**

Even if a young person says they are not interested in school or work, they will likely be interested in some sort of activity, whether that be music, art, sports, etc. The Coach can help them find an activity based on their interests, which can help them build soft skills, self-esteem, a sense of purpose, and supportive peers – all things that studies show lead to increased participation in school and work.

F. USING THE ONLINE PLATFORM TO TRACK GOALS & STEPS

HOW TO SELECT GOALS & STEPS

- ❖ **STEP 1: The Coach adds Goals to the platform, based on the young person's situation.**
[Use this visual as a guide.](#)
- ❖ **STEP 2: Step(s) are checked off as they are completed, whether by the Coach, Specialist, or the young person.**
Some steps are Required; other steps are Potential Steps, or examples of common/potential actions that can be taken to achieve that goal and may depend on the young person's situation. A new step can always be created, and a note can always be added next to each step, if more information is needed.
- ❖ **STEP3: Repeat Step 2 until Goal is "Completed" or "Not Completed" and close out the Goal on the Online Platform. If a Goal changes, it would be marked as "Did Not Complete" and the reason selected.**

After a meeting or a conversation with a young person, the Coach should reflect and ask themselves:

Did that young person's goal change for any reason?

Was a step taken (progress made), either by the young person or the Coach, that should be entered in the system and checked off?

What else does the young person need to reach their goals, and how does that translate into a step?

The Online Platform should be updated accordingly after each meeting or conversation with a young person.

ULTIMATELY, THE AIM IS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO ACCOMPLISH GOALS ON THEIR OWN AND THE COACH JUST TRACKS THEIR PROGRESS!

Let's imagine: One day, that young person texts their Coach that they got an internship. Even though the Coach may not have directly helped the young person obtain that internship, a positive outcome was achieved. The Coach should log into the Online Platform, select the ["Engage in Career Development Experience"](#) Goal and then check off **"COMPLETED"** with a note that the young person obtained it themselves.

USING THE ONLINE PLATFORM TO TRACK CONTACTS PROGRESS NOTES & STATUS.

There is space to add a note under each Goal or Step in the Online Platform. For notes that are not necessarily tied to a goal/step (e.g., related to a crisis situation, mental health, or another issue), then they can enter it under the "Contacts" section.

G. REAL-LIFE SCENARIO APPLYING GOALS & STEPS

MEET ANTHONY: A young person who has a Coach. When he joined the program, he was 19 years old.

UPON ENROLLMENT, THIS WAS HIS SITUATION:

Academic

Anthony was disconnected from school and had no high school degree/equivalency. He had not attended school since he was 17 years old.

Career development

Anthony held a series of minimum wage, odd-jobs and tended to lose them after 1-2 months. He had not participated in any extracurricular/ community service activities, except for in middle school, where he did an art program that he loved.

Housing

Anthony was aging out of foster care and his agency had not yet helped him apply for housing. He did not have a good relationship with his Case Planner and often did not show up for mandated housing meetings. He wanted to get his own apartment but did not want a NYCHA apartment.

Interests

Anthony expressed a strong disinterest in school and did not want to go to college. Upon further probing, the Coach found out that Anthony loves boxing, art, and music, and often wrote lyrics and recorded in a music studio. Other than the art program in middle school, where he learned some graffiti techniques, he did not have any formal training/experience in any of these areas.

Needs

Anthony wanted to be Coached because he wanted assistance getting a job, ideally a higher paid job, in one of his areas of interest (boxing, MMA, music, or art). He was adamant that he did not have to first get a high school degree to be successful in these areas and pointed out many famous individuals who never got their degree or went to college.

THE COACH FIRST FORMED A TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP WITH ANTHONY BY DOING THE FOLLOWING:

- He discussed his interests in boxing/MMA and they debated the results of the recent tournaments;
- They went to Shake Shack for a burger, and then the Coach showed Anthony around a new part of the City he had never been to;
- The Coach listened to some of the music Anthony had created, provided positive feedback, and shared his own music interests with Anthony;
- The Coach told Anthony about the long-term supports of the program and how they would stick with him, no matter what, to help him achieve his goals;
- The Coach introduced Anthony to the Career Development Specialist to update his resume. The Specialist highlighted the art program he participated in, which Anthony never thought to include on his resume. He had actually gotten a certificate through the program, so the Specialist had him add a section called "Certificates & Awards." The Specialist also added his music studio experience as an extracurricular activity on his resume.

ONCE HE FELT HE HAD BUILT A SOLID RAPPORT WITH ANTHONY, THE COACH LOOKED AT WHAT GOALS HE SHOULD HELP ANTHONY ACCOMPLISH FOR THE YEAR.

Given that he was aging out, disconnected, and without a high school degree/equivalency, the following Goals applied:

- ☐ 1+ high school academic Goal(s);
- ☐ 1+ post-secondary exposure/exposure Goal;
- ☐ 1+ career development experience(s), along with the yearly required "Career exploration and preparation" Goal;
- ☐ Housing Goals (Applying to as many forms of housing as possible).

[Refer to the High School Roadmap.](#) Based on Anthony's situation, interests, and expressed needs, the Coach selected the following Academic Goal:

["Re-engage and re-enroll young person in a best-fit high school/GED program."](#)

Even though Anthony was adamant about not getting a high school degree/equivalency, the Coach knew that the chances of becoming famous in music, boxing, or MMA are very slim. Even if that is the eventual goal, a degree is always needed and will always provide the young person with additional career flexibility.

THE COACH TOOK THE FOLLOWING **STEPS** TO HELP ANTHONY MAKE PROGRESS TOWARDS THIS GOAL:

Potential Step: Help young person understand why a degree is important through coaching; motivate them to re-enroll.

- The Coach walked through how a degree could help Anthony get a higher-paid job while he was exploring his fields of interest.
- The Coach also shared a number of career pathways in line with his interests that require a degree, including a boxing/MMA trainer, an Art Program Coordinator, and many positions within the music industry.
- While Anthony listened and absorbed, he was still hesitant, and the Coach could sense that perhaps he had some self-esteem issues when it came to school and his academic performance.

Potential Step: Help young person understand why a degree is important by connecting them to an extracurricular program or experience; motivate them to re-enroll.

- The Coach connected Anthony to a boxing program and got funding for it through the agency.
- Anthony loved it and built a relationship with his boxing trainer and some of the other young men at the gym.
- The Coach built a rapport with the boxing trainer and asked the trainer to help support him in getting back into high school.
The trainer had some conversations with Anthony about the steps he could take to become a trainer someday, which included getting a high school degree.
- *Anthony was feeling really good about the positive affirmations and relationships he made at the boxing gym.*

AT THIS POINT:

The Coach checked off the Career Development Goal ["Engage in career development experience"](#) in the Online Platform. The Online Platform prompted the Coach to input the **type** of experience. The Coach wrote "extracurricular – boxing."

While this would not be Anthony's only career development experience for the year, the Coach was excited that connecting Anthony to boxing both helped him with his resume and helped him become closer to re-engaging in school.

Potential Step: Help young person have a "breakthrough" by taking them on a trip or engaging in a new experience that broadens their horizons.

- The Coach felt like now that Anthony was engaged in a productive activity and had a greater sense of self-esteem, he should approach the conversation about re-enrolling in school again. The Coach took him to the seaport area of Manhattan, and they walked around and then sat on bench by the water.
- The Coach asked him to reflect on his future, and whether he was ready to re-engage in school. Anthony agreed it would be a good idea but said he did want to first make some money. The Coach shared with him that he could help him get a paid internship or part-time job while enrolled in a high school or GED program. Anthony agreed to explore some options with the Coach.

AT THIS POINT:

Anthony was re-engaged, so the Coach could start taking the Required Steps toward re-enrolling Anthony in a best-fit academic environment.

After discussing with the youth's foster parent and Case Planner, THE COACH TOOK THE FOLLOWING **REQUIRED STEPS**:

Required Step: Obtain transcript and records from previously attended school and review them.

- The Coach got the necessary permissions and obtained Anthony's transcript and records from the previous high school.
- The Coach found out that Anthony had obtained only 7 credits and did not pass any Regents exams.
- Anthony had been evaluated for an IEP and did not need one.
- His lack of credits seemed to be due to poor attendance (below 50%).
- The Coach also noticed that while Anthony failed all of his math classes, he passed some English classes with an 85+. He asked Anthony about his high marks in English, and Anthony said that he loved writing and channeled this love into his music lyrics.

Required Step: Explore/identify high schools or programs with young person (and their family, if applicable)

- The Coach used the [Alternative High School Guide](#) to help assess what type of high school environment would be best given Anthony's age (19.5), number of credits (7), and other factors. ([See Appendix F8 Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#))
- As Anthony would likely not be able to graduate from a traditional high school or transfer high school by age 21 given his lack of credits and Regents exams, the Coach thought it was best to explore GED programs with Anthony. ([See Appendix F8 Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#))
- The Coach checked in with his Supervisor about this plan. The Supervisor confirmed that a GED program was the best route to explore and suggested looking into programs that also had paid internships given Anthony's desire to work.
- Anthony and his Coach went through the GED programs in [OneDegree](#) and found one that offered both paid internships and access to a music recording studio.
- They selected three different programs to visit together, two of which were in Anthony's borough of residence.

Required Step: Visit potential schools/programs with young person once some are identified (and/or have parent visit with young person).

- The Coach reached out to Anthony's foster parent and Case Planner to discuss this potential plan, and both agreed and were supportive. The foster parent very much wanted Anthony to be engaged in a productive activity, and she said she would attend the GED program with Anthony and the Coach.
- The Coach arranged a visit to a GED program and debriefed with Anthony beforehand.
- Anthony, the Coach, and the foster parent visited the top GED program they identified together. Anthony went on a tour and learned about the internship program and recording studio. He seemed very motivated. The Coach was able to get the contact information of his Primary Person/Counselor at the program.
- While Anthony wanted to enroll right away, the Coach convinced him to visit one more program. The second visit only reconfirmed to Anthony how much he liked the first one, so the Coach helped him through the application process.

Required Step: Apply/Enroll in best-fit school or GED program.

The GED program required Anthony to take a **TABE exam** to determine his grade level.



The Coach then checked off that **Potential Step** on the Online Platform as well.

It turns out Anthony had a 9th grade ELA (GED-level) and 6th grade Math (pre-GED level).

For the GED program application, Anthony did not have access to the documents he needed, so the Coach reached out to his Case Planner to obtain copies.

Anthony found out that he could not enroll in the paid internship program right away, as it was reserved for students who had 90%+ attendance for a 3-month period. However, once he qualified, he could get an internship in their recording studio!

The Coach reiterated that it was important to attend every day so that he could get into the internship program.

The Coach finished the enrollment process with Anthony and informed his Case Planner and foster mother that he was officially enrolled and would start classes in another month. He would be taking evening classes so that he could eventually work and do other activities during the day.

Required Step: Follow up with the young person before the first day, after the first day, and after the first week.

A week before Anthony's classes started, his birth mother was hospitalized. Anthony was taking it really hard and fell into a spell of depression. The Coach took Anthony out for pizza and listened to him talk about his relationship with his mother. They also discussed how it was important to stay focused on his goals and moving forward.

- **The Coach called or texted Anthony every day that week** to provide support.
- **The night before the first day**, the Coach texted Anthony a reminder about when to leave the next day. Anthony responded that he wasn't sure he was up for going the next day. The Coach said to get some sleep and that he'd call in the morning.
- **That next morning**, the Coach called Anthony and heard him out. He reminded Anthony of their conversations, of the music recording studio opportunity, and told him how proud of him he was for taking these steps. Anthony then opened up more and shared that he was afraid of failing, especially in math, like he always had in school. The Coach reassured him that it was natural to feel that way, and that all he should focus on for now was showing up, on time, every day, and trying his best. It didn't matter how he did because he would get the support he needs. The Coach said that showing up was all he cared about, and asked Anthony if he could start with that. The Coach reminded Anthony that he had also been trepidatious about starting the art program (see Career Development section below), but now he was rocking it. Anthony said that was true and he promised to show up on time to his first class.
- **That evening**, the Coach texted Anthony asking how it went. Anthony said he showed up and that it went well!
- **After the end of the week, Anthony was still attending.**

AT THIS POINT:

The Academic Goal "[Re-engage and re-enroll in a best-fit high school/GED program](#)" was complete. Yay!

The Coach closed out this Goal in the Online Platform and marked it as Completed Successfully.

The Online Platform prompted the Coach to select the next Academic Goal. The Coach looked at the Roadmap of High School Academic Goals to verify. As Anthony was not ready to take the GED exam yet, the Coach selected the Goal, [Advance grade level in GED Program and/or pass section of GED exam](#)

ANTHONY'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT GOAL(S)

The Coach took the following actions to help Anthony conduct the yearly required Career Development Goals.

CAREER EXPLORATION & PREPARATION GOAL

This includes three **Required Steps**:

- ☐ **Conduct Career Exploration.** The Coach knew Anthony loved art, writing, music, and boxing/MMA, so the Coach suggested sitting down together to do a career assessment online. They went to the Online Platform and took an assessment together using the Hats & Ladders tool. They found out that there were many different pathways that incorporated Anthony's interests, particularly in the human services/non-profit field. Becoming a boxing or personal trainer or involved in the music industry were also potential options.
- ☐ **Create or refine/update a resume**
Anthony already sat down with the Career Development Specialist to do this, but now Anthony had new things to add to his resume: a GED program, a summer internship in line with his interests, and boxing!
After these were added, the Coach checked off this Step.
- ☐ **Discuss career development goals for the year, and potential activities and opportunities in line with these goals.**
Even though Anthony was still boxing, which counted as a career development (extracurricular) experience, the Coach wanted to help him explore other opportunities in line with his other interests so he could stay engaged, motivated, keep building his resume, and earn some money. The Coach figured that it would be a good idea to try to help enroll Anthony in some sort of non-profit program where he could explore his interests and get something on his resume that was directly in line with his artistic and/or writing interests.

AT THIS POINT:

The Career Development Goal "[Conduct Career Exploration](#) & Preparation" was complete. Yay!

The Coach closed out this Goal in the Online Platform and marked it as Completed Successfully.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE/GOAL

The Coach sat down with Anthony to discuss some activities he could engage in over the next month while he waited for classes to begin. The Coach also reminded Anthony that once he started classes, he needed three months of 90%+ attendance before he could start the paid internship at the music studio. That meant that Anthony would have his days free for the next 4 months, possibly more.

The summer was coming up, so the Coach thought a good approach would be to enroll Anthony in the **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)** and try to link him to an arts-based non-profit program. Anthony and the Coach went to the SYEP website together and also searched for youth development programs. They discovered an SYEP program called Groundswell, where Anthony could participate in the design of a mural in the community. They also found a summer writing workshop with Youth Communication where Anthony refined his writing skills and potentially get an article published in their youth magazine.

It turned out that Anthony was not accepted into the writing workshop (it was at capacity), but he did get into Groundswell's SYEP program where he could earn money and explore his artistic talents.

AT THIS POINT:

The Coach added the Goal, "[Engage in Career Development Experience](#)" and selected "summer internship."

ANTHONY'S POST-SECONDARY EXPLORATION/EXPOSURE GOAL

While Anthony had never discussed college or a post-secondary certificate, and even seemed initially opposed to it, his Coach knew that exposure to post-secondary opportunities can help young people with envisioning a pathway. The Coach also knew that many of the career pathways that Anthony was interested in required one and that Anthony would have more options with a post-secondary credential/degree.

One day, the Coach had Anthony meet him close to La Guardia College. He brought Anthony on a tour and Anthony learned that they had a Music Recording degree. He had no idea that was even an option, and he loved the campus feel. While Anthony was still insecure about his academic skills, the Coach assured him that if he worked hard to get his GED, college would be within reach.



The Coach also had Anthony meet with the **College Specialist**, who showed him the pathway to applying and the "[College Budget Tool](#)" for students in supportive housing. Anthony was shocked to learn that not only would he not have to pay a dime for college tuition, but that he could actually earn money through various scholarships and grants to help with his living expenses! See [Appendix G19_College Budget Tools](#).

After meeting with the Specialist, the Coach set up a meeting with Anthony and his GED counselor to discuss the potential timeline for college enrollment, based on where Anthony was in the program. The Coach helped create a supportive environment, and for the first time in his life, Anthony felt like college could be a reality.

AFTER THIS EXPERIENCE

The Coach closed out the Goal, "[Conduct Post-Secondary Exploration/Exposure](#)" and marked it as successful.

ANTHONY'S HOUSING/INDEPENDENT LIVING GOAL(S)

Anthony had an **APPLA goal (Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement)**, which meant he was aging out of foster care. However, he had not yet applied for housing as he would not show up for the appointments that his Case Planner had set up for him with the **Housing Specialist**.

The Coach explained to Anthony that he had to show up for the appointments if he wanted to get his own apartment, and Anthony started showing up. While he did not want a NYCHA apartment as he didn't want to live in "the hood," his Coach convinced him to go through the process anyway as there was always a chance he could secure an apartment in a more desirable area of Manhattan. Anthony agreed.

AT THIS POINT:

After meeting with Anthony, the Goals "[Apply to NYCHA](#)" and "[Apply to Supportive Housing](#)" were both selected. *The Coach made sure that Anthony attended all of his meetings with the Housing Specialist and the process was moving along.* Once Anthony had paychecks and his supportive housing application was submitted, these Goals were closed out in the platform.

The Coach then added the goals "[Obtain NYCHA apartment](#)" and "[Obtain Supportive Housing](#)"

The Coach called a couple of supportive housing residences in the areas where Anthony was open to living (*which is one of the Potential Steps*), but no one answered, so they just showed up one day.

- The Coach "coached" Anthony to dress up, bring his resume, and prepped him beforehand.
- They walked in, introduced themselves, and ended up speaking with the Housing Director.
- The Director saw that Anthony was serious about his future, had goals, and needed housing.
- The Director said he would interview Anthony for a spot that was opening up soon.
- The Coach helped Anthony prepare for the interview, and he nailed it!

The Coach helped Anthony move into his new apartment. And, after working with the Housing Specialist to secure the ACS Furniture grant, the Coach also helped Anthony go furniture shopping.

AT THIS POINT:

The Goal "[Obtain Supportive Housing](#)" was checked off as "COMPLETE".

The Goal "[Obtain NYCHA apartment](#)" was marked as "DID NOT COMPLETE" with an explanation that Anthony obtained an apartment through supportive housing.

The Online Platform prompted the Coach to select the Goals "[Maintain Housing](#)" and "[Gain Independent Living/Life Skills](#)".

SUMMARY OF ANTHONY'S COMPLETED GOALS

Despite starting off the year not motivated to re-engage in school, by the end of the year, through coaching, Anthony had significantly **exceeded** the minimum goals and accomplished the following goals:

☐ **2 High School Goals:**

- ☐ [Re-engage and re-enroll in a best-fit high school/GED program](#)
- ☐ [Advance a grade level in a GED Program and/or Pass a section of the GED exam](#)
Anthony advanced a grade level in Math!

☐ **1 Post-Secondary Exploration/Exposure Goal**

☐ **1 Career Exploration & Planning Goal**

☐ **3 Career Development Experience Goals:**

- ☐ [Participate in extracurricular, youth development program, or community service experience](#)
Anthony completed a full year of boxing
- ☐ [Participate in summer internship program](#)
Anthony completed the Groundswell SYEP program
- ☐ Participate in [External Internship](#)
Anthony was accepted into the music studio program after 3 months of near perfect attendance

☐ **3 Housing Goals:**

- ☐ [Apply to Supportive Housing](#)
- ☐ [Obtain Supportive Housing](#)
- ☐ [Maintain Housing \(for that year\)](#)

Anthony ended up getting his GED, completing his Associates in Music Recording, and is currently enrolled in John Jay College!

H. USING THE ONLINE PLATFORM

The Fair Futures Online Platform tracks Goals & Steps in a user-friendly manner and creates automated reports. It is highly recommended to go through the 2.5 day training before starting to use Goals & Steps.

After the Coach determines what the young person's current Goals are in each category, the Coach can use the Goal worksheets to track the steps taken in the Online Platform.

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SECTION 16. PROVIDING TARGETED SERVICES

Some young people may not choose to participate in coaching, but still want to receive assistance with specific services (e.g., applying for a job, renewing financial aid, participating in an onsite internship program, etc.).

If this is the case, the young person can be referred to the relevant **Specialist**. The Specialist will follow up with the young person to schedule a meeting and assist the young person with the service he/she requested.

When possible, staff should first help the young person fully understand how they could benefit from coaching instead of just receiving a specific service. For example, a young person may request assistance with applying to a job or college and say they do not need or want a Coach. However, it is likely that young person will need support to persist and succeed in that job or in college, and to plan for the next step.

The **Outreach Coordinator** (or relevant staff) should outline how receiving longer-term coaching would help them, using very specific examples:

- **In the case of a young person who wants a job**, the Outreach Coordinator can tell them that a Coach will help them keep that job and prepare for a higher-paid position in the future.
- **In the case of a young person who needs assistance applying to college**, the Outreach Coordinator can tell them that a Coach will also help them during the semester if/when college feels overwhelming and provide assistance every year with reapplying to financial aid and ensure they are getting the most funding possible.

Targeted services can be tracked on the Online Platform.

The staff/Specialist providing the service can add a Targeted Service Form, check off the service provided, and add any notes. There are three Targeted Service Forms - Academic, Career Development, and Housing/Independent Living.



EXAMPLES OF TARGETED ACADEMIC SERVICES

HIGH SCHOOL/HSE

- Help student obtain tutor
- Provide educational advocacy service
- Help disconnected youth enroll in a high school/HSE program
- Help youth transfer to a better-fit high school
- Other

POST-SECONDARY EXPLORATION

- College exposure/exploration
- Vocational or other post-secondary exploration

COLLEGE

- College application assistance
- College enrollment assistance
- College financial aid/funding assistance
- Assistance enrolling in CUNY Start or Math Start
- College persistence support
- Assist with transferring college
- Other

See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#) for information about applying to other post-secondary programs.

EXAMPLES OF TARGETED CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

EXPLORATION/JOB-READINESS

- Assist youth with career exploration/exposure
- Have a conversation around career aspirations and what type of career development experience(s) could be a good fit this year, based on interests, academic situation, etc.
- Assist youth with obtaining working papers
- Assist with creating/updating resume
- Provide other job-readiness support (e.g., cover letter, interview preparation, etc.)

INTERNSHIPS, EMPLOYMENT, AND ENROLLMENT IN PROGRAMS

- Assist youth with enrolling in:
 - On-site, agency-based program.
 - Summer internship program (e.g., Summer Youth Employment Program)
 - An external internship (school-year or year-round)
 - An extracurricular, community service, or youth development program
 - An external workforce development program (e.g., The Door, Co-Op Tech)
 - ACCES-VR
 - An accredited vocational, sector-based training, or apprenticeship program
- Assist youth with taking a civil service exam
- Assist youth with obtaining a part-time/seasonal job, full-time job, or living wage job.
- Provide persistence support (e.g., help youth persist in program/job)

HOUSING/INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

APPLYING TO HOUSING

- Assistance with applying to NYCHA
- Assistance with applying to supportive housing (NY/NY 3, NYC 15)
- Assistance with applying to other supportive housing residence program (e.g., Harlem Dowling, McLaughlin East Harlem Residence, etc.)
- Assistance with applying to Section 8 Housing while in foster care
- Assistance with applying to ACS Housing Subsidy
- Assistance with exploring other stable living arrangement
- Assistance with applying to the NYC Affordable Housing Market

OBTAINING HOUSING (AFTER APPLYING)

- Assistance with obtaining NYCHA housing
- Assistance with obtaining supportive housing (NY/NY 3, NYC 15)
- Assistance with obtaining other supportive housing residence program (e.g., Harlem Dowling, McLaughlin East Harlem Residence, etc.)
- Assistance obtaining Section 8 Housing
- Assistance with using a portable Section 8 voucher to transition from temporary to permanent housing
- Assistance with obtaining the NYC Affordable Housing Market
- Assistance with transitioning into market-rate housing
- Other

MAINTAINING HOUSING & INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

- Assistance with maintaining housing
- Assistance with gaining Independent Living skills
- Other

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SECTION 17. ONGOING OUTREACH TO YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DO NOT ENGAGE

A. ROLE OF THE OUTREACH COORDINATOR



The **Outreach Coordinator** is a potential position that could be created, particularly for larger organizations. Ideally, they are a former program participant or a “**Credible Messenger**” who can speak to the benefits of coaching. **They are responsible for following up with young people who have not yet engaged with the program and those who may have disengaged from the program.**

The Outreach Coordinator (or Coach, if there is none) should try to engage youth regularly.

Once the Outreach Coordinator is able to connect with these young people, he/she provides an overview of the benefits of coaching, using the appropriate youth language (see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 9](#)).

Should the young person only want help in a specific area, the Outreach Coordinator refers them to the appropriate **Specialist** (e.g., the Career Development Specialist for assistance with a job application, etc.). However, the Outreach Coordinator’s role is also to help young people who could benefit from coaching connect to a Coach.

After the initial conversation with the young person, the Outreach Coordinator will take one of the following actions:

- **If the young person decides they want coaching after this discussion**, then the Outreach Coordinator will tell a Supervisor. At this point, Supervisor will go through the Intake Process and assign a Coach. [See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 11](#).
- **If the young person still would like a specific service only**, then the Outreach Coordinator will refer them to the appropriate Specialist to provide that service. Once the service is provided, the young person will be “checked off” the “To Engage” list and the Specialist will track the service(s) provided in Care4. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 16: Providing Targeted Services](#).
- **If the Outreach Coordinator was not able to engage the young person**, the young person will remain on the “To Engage” list, and outreach will continue.

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SECTION 18

EDUCATION: COACHING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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SECTION 18A & 18B

A. BACKGROUND

Young people in foster care are incredibly resilient. However, some young people in foster care can struggle academically due to a variety of factors, including school/home instability (moving from home to home and/or switching schools, which can cause gaps in learning and credit obtainment) and experiencing trauma (which could impede executive functioning associated with academic success).

For a young person who may have academic gaps, a learning disability, and/or be several grade levels behind, obtaining a high school degree/GED can be very challenging.

However, when young people receive the supports and guidance they need, the sky is the limit. Resilience can translate into grit and determination, and in NYC there are many programs and resources for foster youth who are college-bound.

No matter the academic challenges or gifts a young person has, the **Coach's role is to ensure that young person is enrolled in a best-fit school/program, persists in that setting, and has the supports and resources they need to reach their full educational potential.**

B. COACH'S ROLE IN HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE ACHIEVE THEIR ACADEMIC GOALS

The aim is to help all young people graduate high school and eventually navigate onto a living wage career path. In today's economy, with some exceptions, a living wage career requires a college degree and/or vocational credentials.

Without a high school degree, there is little-to-no chance that a young person will be able to be economically self-sufficient in New York City. These young people will be at very high risk of further system involvement. **Therefore, it is the role of a Coach to ensure that all young people get their high school degree or GED, no matter how long that takes!** From there, Coaches help young people navigate onto a best-fit post-secondary pathway and persist in that setting.

Should a young person not be ready to enroll, Coaches can help them connect to career development experiences and/or academic remediation supports to help build their resumes, skills, and post-secondary preparedness.

Should a young person not persist in any particular school/program, the Coach helps them to reflect on the experience, explore other opportunities, and re-engage in a better-fit setting.

Very few young people, if any, will transition right from high school onto a living-wage job without any post-secondary credentials. There are some civil service positions where this is possible – for example, firefighters do not require any college degree and earn over \$55,000 the first year. However, these exams only come out every few years or so and are extremely competitive. And even where these jobs do exist, having some sort of post-secondary degree/ credentials will ultimately help the young person advance, earn more, and/or have more mobility and overall economic stability.

Therefore, Coaches also expose all young people to post-secondary options as early as possible, including college and accredited vocational programs, to help them start to plan and prepare. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#).

WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE ENROLL IN THE FAIR FUTURES COACHING PROGRAM, THEY WILL COME IN WITH VARYING LEVELS OF ACADEMIC SKILLS AND CREDENTIALS. COACHES MEET YOUTH WHERE THEY ARE AND HELP THEM ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL, WHETHER THEY ARE DISCONNECTED OR A STAR STUDENT.

A COACH'S ROLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT A DEGREE, BASED ON WHERE THEY ARE, INCLUDES:

FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN HIGH SCHOOL:

Coaches help young people persist with the overall goal of helping with grade promotion and attaining 10+ credits that year.¹ They do so by providing emotional support, visiting the school, connecting them to needed services/resources, checking in at critical junctures, and helping them to navigate challenges, as needed.

FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN AN GED PROGRAM:

Coaches help them persist with the overall goal of helping them obtain their GED. They do so by visiting the program, providing emotional support, connecting them to needed services/resources, checking-in at critical junctures, and helping them to navigate challenges, as needed. [See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D.](#)

FOR DISCONNECTED YOUTH WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE/GED:

The Coach helps reconnect them to an appropriate academic setting. Even if a young person is initially not interested in getting a high school degree/GED, the Coach's role is help them understand why they need their degree. While a young person should always be driving his/her own goals and a Coach should be supportive of whatever pathway they choose, a high school degree is a necessity for their success. It is the Coach's responsibility to find ways to help them realize this in a way that is motivating and supportive. **Telling a young person is degree is important usually doesn't work – they know that!** There are other effective, innovative approaches to use. [See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 20.](#)

OVERALL, FROM AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE, COACHES:



- **Ensure young people are enrolled in a best-fit school, college, or program** (and connect them to one if they are not)
- **Help young people persist in that academic setting**
- **Build relationships** with the primary people at the young person's school/program, and work with the young person's family/adult figures to support them
- **Plan and prepare** for the next step on their journey

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¹ Students with intellectual disabilities who are alternately assessed will have a modified persistence goal. See Goals & Steps framework.

SECTION 18C

C. COACHING 9TH GRADE STUDENTS/1ST YEAR OF COACHING

COACHING 9TH GRADE STUDENTS

Many students will begin coaching in the 9th grade. This is a critical transition year for all young people, as it can be overwhelming both academically and socially. High school students have to adjust to a new school environment, are expected to perform more independently in their academic work, and also start feeling increased social pressures and influences.

For students in foster care, who often enter 9th grade academically behind or over-age, these academic expectations, combined with the social pressures, can lead them to repeat 9th grade. It doesn't feel good to fail. At this juncture, the desire to be accepted by their peers, the pull of the streets, and/or the allure of getting a job and earning money, can lead them to negative outcomes, such as dropping out and/or experiencing early parenthood.

Students who enter the 9th grade on/above grade level can also get deterred if they do not have the right supports or if they are in an under-performing school. Instead of getting on a 4-year graduation, college-bound or vocational track, they can also slip through the cracks.



Coaches can play a critical role in helping students transition successfully to high school so that the first year does not feel as challenging. Ideally, Coaches will begin building a trusting relationship with the student in the summer before the 9th grade. During this period, Coaches can help students mentally prepare for what they may expect in high school and let them know that they will be there for them.

Coaches should follow up with students the day before their first day of high school, the first day after to reflect on the experience, and check in on them every week thereafter. If a young person knows that there is a caring, supportive adult in their lives who believes in their potential, cares about their emotional well-being, and monitors and supports their academic performance, the young person will often strive to live up to that adult's expectations. They often will not do it for themselves until a later developmental stage.

DURING THE 9TH GRADE, COACHES SHOULD:

- ☐ Set up the first school visit (See [Appendix C5: Conducting Effective School Visits](#))
- ☐ Check in with the student's guidance counselor each semester, or more frequently if needed
- ☐ Continue to build a trusting relationship with the young person, so that the young person comes to them before a challenge becomes a major issue
- ☐ Provide emotional support to young people, including helping them navigate new social dynamics (friends, relationships, etc.)
- ☐ Ask about homework assignments and tests, and attempt to connect them to a tutor (as most students could benefit);
- ☐ Connect students to afterschool and summer activities in line with their interests to keep them engaged, and/or to a paid internship (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#)).
- ☐ Connect them to summer school, if needed
- ☐ Start engaging youth in post-secondary exposure, career exploration, and career development activities. Even if a young person is struggling academically, these activities can help them envision a pathway and/or build self-esteem, which can lead to increased engagement in school. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#))

THE FIRST SCHOOL VISIT

For students in 9th grade, Coaches should set up a school visit as soon as possible, in September or October of their first term.

For those who come into the program in other grades or junctures, the Coach should visit the school/GED program (with the young person, whenever possible) ideally within the first 30 days, as discussed in the "Initial Engagement" section.

Coaches should visit the school at least once per semester for all students enrolled in high school; a best practice is monthly for struggling students.

48%

**OF YOUNG PEOPLE
IN FOSTER CARE
REPEATED 9TH GRADE**

IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-18

To conduct an effective school visit, please see [Appendix C5: Conducting Effective School Visits](#). The content of this document is summarized below, but it is recommended to read the attachment as it contains many specific tips!

The meeting should take place with the young person, the student's guidance counselor and any other school staff, as needed, and the parent (if they are able to attend).

The purpose of the visit is to:

- Show the young person that the Coach cares about them;
- Ensure that they are enrolled in a safe, productive environment ([See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#));
- Help create a plan for graduation and post-secondary exploration;
- Ensure that the student is receiving any needed supports from the school/program;
- Form a working relationship with key staff, so that the school knows to reach out to the Coach if any challenges, issues, or opportunities arise as it relates to that young person.

Before the first visit

The Coach should obtain required documentation:

- ☐ For youth in foster care, prepare the ACS school records request letter or obtain a signed release from the youth's parent, legal guardian, or the youth (if they are over 18, on final discharge, or adopted).
See [Appendix F2 School Records Request Letter](#).
- ☐ Review the student's most recent report card, attendance, transcript (if they are in their second year of high school or later), and IEP (if they have one).
- ☐ Explain the purpose of the visit to the young person. By this point, the Coach should already have begun to develop a solid rapport with the young person and ensured that they understand that the Coach is there to support them.
- ☐ Reach out to the parent, as appropriate, to see if they can attend.
- ☐ If they have a good relationship with the student, invite the youth's Case Planner, Socio-Therapist, or other relevant agency staff to participate.

During the first visit

The Coach should set the stage for the meeting, and try to create a warm, engaging, and supportive environment. Sometimes these visits can be traumatic, as some young people associate "school" with another "system," and guidance counselors do not always take a strength-based approach, particularly if a young person is struggling academically or has behavioral concerns. The Coach should model the appropriate tone, try to create a "circle of support" around the young person, and empower the young person to participate in the discussion.

If the student does not have strong performance, **it is the role of the Coach to focus on their potential**, and what steps can be taken. It may be helpful for the Coach to meet with the guidance counselor or other school staff alone before asking the student to join the meeting, to ensure everyone is on the same page. This can be useful if there are sensitive topics to discuss.

The Coach should also be sure to:

- ☐ Let the student talk!
- ☐ Inquire about any needs the student has, particularly if they have an IEP or 504 Plan, and whether the appropriate support services are in place. Ask specific questions (e.g., "Is the student meeting twice each week with the speech therapist, as outlined in the IEP?").
- ☐ Review the student's attendance thus far, including timeliness and attendance in individual classes. It is common for students to attend school regularly but arrive late, skip academic classes, or leave school early. The students should be given a chance to express their thoughts and concerns as well.
- ☐ Review progress towards graduation and any post-secondary plans - see blue box below.
- ☐ Discuss any supports the school has (e.g., afterschool programs, Regents prep, extracurricular activities, etc.), and the student's interests in these activities.
- ☐ Assess the school for quality and fit. Ideally, that young person received individualized support with the high school selection process while in 8th grade. However, students come into foster care at all ages and may not have been assisted with the selection process. If a student is struggling with attendance and performance, among the factors influencing this may be the school setting – in some cases, a small transfer high school, for example, may be a better fit than a larger, traditional one. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#))

IF THE STUDENT IS IN 10TH GRADE OR ABOVE (OR A SECOND-TIME 9TH GRADER), THE COACH SHOULD ALSO:

- ☐ **Discuss the high school graduation goal: What type of degree is the student hoping to earn?**

Options include: **Advanced Regents, Regents, Local Diploma**

An alternative degree called a **Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC)** is also available for students with significant disabilities. *Note: a SACC degree is not a high school diploma and cannot be used to apply to college, the military, or trade schools, as the other degrees can. Students with IEPs should earn a diploma whenever possible, and the SACC should be a last resort.* (See [Appendix F7 High School Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities](#))

A **Local Diploma** is available to students with disabilities who are struggling to earn passing scores (typically a 65 or above) on Regents exams. It is also available to other students who successfully appeal to Regents exams scores.

This should only be discussed as an option if the student is struggling to pass and getting discouraged.

- ☐ **Review the young person's transcript and progress towards graduation with the Guidance Counselor.**

Note: Coaches do not need to discuss the high school graduation goal or type of degree for first-time 9th graders, as all young people should start off aiming for a Regents degree (unless they are already being tracked for a SACC).

See [Appendix F6 High School Graduation Checklist](#).

After the first visit:

The Coach should debrief with the student and talk through any feelings the meeting may have produced, particularly if the student's performance is not optimal. This is an important relationship-building moment – it will reinforce that the Coach is there for them, no matter how they are doing in school, and that they believe in the young person. The Coach should also help the student set goals based on the meeting.

The Coach should also send a warm thank you note to the school and summarize the visit and any next steps.

The Coach should also update the parent if he/she was not able to attend and notify the case planner of any relevant information.

Urgent concerns would include:

- If the student is already cutting classes;
- If there are concerns about bullying;
- If the student's IEP isn't being followed
- If there's a medication form that needs to be completed, etc.

If the student is experiencing suspensions and disciplinary issues:

- ☐ Coaches should review Section V of [Appendix F1 K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#).
- ☐ Additionally, see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 5F](#) for detailed steps to take.

AFTER THE 9TH GRADE

IF THE YOUNG PERSON COMPLETES THE SCHOOL YEAR WITH 10+ CREDITS AND IS PROMOTED:

The Coach should continue to provide coaching/persistence support going into 10th grade and beyond. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18E](#))

IF A YOUNG PERSON REPEATS THE 9TH GRADE:

The Coach should engage their Supervisor, the school guidance counselor, the case planning team, and the student's parent to gather additional information/input on the best course of action.

If the issue does not seem to be academic driven and related more to engagement, potential steps include:

- ☐ Help young person understand why school is important by connecting them to a peer group or credible messenger;
- ☐ Help young person understand why a school is important by connecting them to an extracurricular program or experience in line with their interests to build self-esteem & help them envision pathway;
- ☐ Help young person have a "breakthrough moment" by taking them on a trip or engaging in a new experience that broadens their horizons.
- ☐ Work with young person to improve attendance; coach young person, text/call young person in the mornings.

If the student is engaged but struggling due to mostly academic reasons, common actions include:

- ☐ Refer the student to a tutor (and follow-up with tutor on performance);
- ☐ Help the student enroll in afterschool programming or Regents exam prep;
- ☐ Create a study plan;
- ☐ Advocate with the school/DOE to help the student obtain a particular service or accommodation;
- ☐ Request that the school submit an evaluation for an IEP or 504 Plan (requires parent's consent - refer to [Appendix F1_K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#));
- ☐ Evaluate whether the school is a good fit with Supervisor (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#)).

IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER IF TRANSFERRING SCHOOLS SEEMS LIKE A GOOD OPTION:

- ❖ **Many 9th graders experience a dip in performance**, due to the adjustment period and other social and social-emotional factors.
- ❖ **If a student is doing poorly in school, an assessment should be made whether the school is a good fit**, including the size of the school and what services/supports it offers. Because this is an important and nuanced decision, the Coach should engage their Supervisor and review [Appendix F8 Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#).
- ❖ **If the student has an IEP**, determine if their current school has sufficient supports to meet their needs.
- ❖ **Students who were enrolled in 12:1 or 12:1:1 classes in middle school often find the transition to high school particularly difficult.** Many NYC public high schools, especially the smaller ones, do not offer self-contained 15:1 classes, or may only offer 15:1 classes for ELA and math. Even if the school has a 15:1 setting, the larger class size and lack of additional adult support may be hard for students to manage. Additionally, the student will likely be in general education classes for electives, and they will need to navigate the building on their own unless they qualify for a health or crisis para. For these students, you may need to consider other options, like District 75 inclusion, nonpublic schools, or specialized programs for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) or Intellectual Disabilities (ID).

Refer to the Special Education section of [Appendix F1_K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#) for more information and next steps.

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SECTION 18D

D. TRANSFERRING STUDENTS TO AN ANOTHER HIGH SCHOOL

Students may need to transfer into another high school for a variety of reasons. Remember that this is an important and nuanced decision, and all stakeholders should be consulted before taking action – the young person, parent, school/guidance counselor, Case Planner, the Coach's Supervisor, etc.

Should this become a goal, the Coach should select the "[Transfer student into a better-fit high school setting](#)" goal in the Online Platform and follow the Required Steps.

TYPES OF SCHOOL TRANSFERS

❖ **Transfer via the high school selection process:**

First-time 9th graders who are unhappy with their high school match can go through the high school admissions process again to apply for a 10th grade seat at a new high school. See [Appendix F5 High School Selection Guide](#).

❖ **Transfer to an alternative high school setting: Transfer schools, YABCs, or a High School GED Program**

All of these models are tailored to serve overage, under-credited students and provide them with the supports they need to graduate in a condensed timeframe. See [Appendix F8 Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#) for a description of each type of alternative high school, the supports they provide, the application process, and coaching guidelines around enrollment and persistence.

- When selecting a program, the Coach should refer to [Appendix F8 Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#)
- A directory of all transfer schools, YABCs, and GED programs with other onsite opportunities can be found on One Degree - <https://www.1degree.org>
- A list and description of screened transfer high schools can be found in [Appendix F9 Vetted List of Alternative Middle and High Schools](#).
- Coaches should motivate the student and help them apply. See "[Transfer student into a better-fit high school setting](#)" Goal for Potential Steps a Coach can take with the student.
- The Coach should visit the program with the young person

❖ **Transfer to another traditional high school setting**

Students can request a school transfer for medical, safety, or travel hardship. They can also request a guidance transfer if they are struggling with academics, behavior, social-emotional concerns or attendance, and a different school could address the problem. Since transfer high schools and other alternative settings mostly serve students age 16 and older, these types of transfers may be the best option for younger students who need a new school. For more information, refer to [Appendix F10 Requesting School Transfers](#).

❖ **Transfer to an international high school**

If a student has newly arrived in the country and is an English Language Learner (ELL), they may want to consider an international high school. International schools are designed to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of newly-arrived immigrant students. They offer additional English as a New Language (ENL) supports and have some flexibility with Regents exams requirements. To enroll, students must list the school on their High School application or be placed through the [Family Welcome Center](#).

❖ **Transfer to a specialized setting including: Day Treatment Programs and non-public special education schools**

Students who require intensive special education supports beyond what is available in a District 1-32 high school will need to consider a specialized setting. These settings should only be explored if a traditional high school or alternative setting cannot meet the student's needs. In order to enroll in a specialized setting, students will need updated psychological testing and a current psychiatric or other specialized evaluation. They also likely will need a new recommendation on their IEP.

For more information on the different types of specialized settings available to students with disabilities and how to apply, see [Appendix F1 K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#).

If a Coach is not sure which type of program to help a student pursue, they can visit a **Referral Center** for more information. Social workers at Referral Centers can counsel students on their options, refer students to schools with available seats, and help students enroll.

SELECTING THE BEST-FIT ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL

If an alternative high school transfer is needed, the next step is to figure out what type of alternative school/program would be a best fit: an GED program, transfer high school, or YABC school. See [Appendix F8 Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#) for more information. Key factors to consider when determining the type of alternative high school include:

□ Age, Number of Credits Earned, Regents Passed

For example: A student cannot remain in a YABC program or transfer high school past the end of the school year when they turn 21. If a young person transfers into a transfer high school at age 19 but does not earn a degree by age 21, they will have to leave the school and enroll in an GED program. *Therefore, it is important to consider the student's age, number of credits, and Regents exams passed when considering options.*

There is a rough visual in [Appendix F8](#) that provides guidelines around the type of school/program based solely on age and number of credits obtained.

□ Any special needs a student has and whether their needs can be met in that setting.

Most transfer schools and YABCs do not provide the full range of IEP programs that may be available in other schools. To enroll in some transfer schools and YABCs, sometime the student's IEP needs to be adjusted. Coaches will need to weigh the potential benefits of a transfer school, such as the ability to earn credits in a shorter time frame, with a student's need for specialized services.

Students with significant mental health needs or learning disabilities may require a more specialized setting, such as a nonpublic school.

Once the type of alternative high school is established, the Coach should help the young person **find the best school/program** within that category. Also refer to the [Appendix F8 Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#) for additional guidance.

FACTORS THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN SELECTING THE BEST-FIT HIGH SCHOOL/PROGRAM:

Location

- What borough(s) can the student reasonably travel to, and want to travel to? Was the student's attendance at their previous school impacted by travel?

School quality (graduation rate, safety/climate, etc.)

- To assess key performance measures, including the graduation rate, climate, etc., look online at the schools' dashboard: <https://tools.nycenet.edu>
- Note: a graduation rate around/over ~50% for a transfer school is average/acceptable, as the 6-year graduation rate of overage/under credited students is closer to ~15%. Some schools may have lower rates than others because they accept students with little/no credits.
- Refer to the [One Degree Directory](#) for transfer schools with a 50%+ graduation rate and additional details on program structure.

Student needs and whether they can be accommodated

- Does the student have an IEP or 504 Plan? If so, can the school of interest can accommodate their needs?
- If the school cannot meet the needs as outlined in the student's plan, is getting the student's IEP/504 Plan reevaluated an option that makes sense?
 - The Coach should discuss with their Supervisor, and this conversation should be had with the school's team, the student, and the student's parent. The Case Planning team should also be looped in.

Student's interests

The student's interests should be placed front and center and be considered alongside the above factors. Some factors to consider include:

- Is the student motivated to attend a particular school that also meets the above criteria?
- Does the student want/need a paid internship?
- Is there a particular area of study or extracurricular that the student is passionate about that one school has and another doesn't?

All of the above can help inform this important and nuanced decision.

The remaining Required Steps for the "[Transfer student into a better-fit high school setting](#)" goal include:

- ☐ Create a vetted list of specific high schools/programs to visit with the young person (based on the above);
- ☐ Discuss plans with parent and Case Planner
- ☐ Reach out to potential schools/programs to ask about open houses, process, eligibility criteria, services offered, etc.
- ☐ Visit potential schools/programs with young person (and/or have parent visit with young person)
- ☐ Follow-up with school/program and young person after visit(s) to debrief and hear their thoughts
- ☐ Apply to a best-fit school or GED program; support young person through any interviews
- ☐ Enroll in best-fit school or GED program; complete any paperwork
- ☐ Celebrate acceptance into the new school/program
- ☐ Follow up with young person before the first day of school to provide support/encouragement
- ☐ Follow up with young person after the first day to debrief/reflect on experience
- ☐ Follow up with young person after the first week to debrief/reflect on experience (if still enrolled at this point, check off goal as "completed")

If the young person is not accepted to a particular school or program, keep repeating the above steps until the student is accepted.

Transferring schools sometimes requires some advocacy from the Coach! The fact that the Coach is not giving up and sticking with the student throughout the entire process will help strengthen their relationship.

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SECTION 18E

E. PERSISTING IN HIGH SCHOOL/GED PROGRAM

Once a student is enrolled in a best-fit school or program, the Coach will provide persistence coaching until a high school degree or GED is obtained.

To determine a young person's Academic goal, refer to [Appendix E Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#). Use the [High School Roadmap](#) to review the Student Situations and the corresponding goals.

See examples of student situations and goals below:

- ❖ **If the student is enrolled in high school (including a transfer high school or YABC),** the goal will be: ["Complete school year promoted with 10+ credits"](#) if they are in grades 9-11. Once the student is a high school senior or have approximately one year left to graduate, the goal becomes: ["Obtain high school degree"](#)
- ❖ **If the student is in an GED program,** the goal will be: ["Advance a grade level in a High School / GED Program and/or Pass a section of the GED exam."](#) Once they are ready to take the full exam or are close to passing most of it, the goal becomes: ["Obtain High School Equivalency"](#)
- ❖ **If the student is enrolled in an alternate assessment (non-degree) high school program,** the goal is: ["Complete school year with 90%+ attendance and mastery of IEP Goals."](#) Once the student is one year away from graduating, the goal becomes: ["Obtain Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential"](#)

Depending on the **Goal**, there are some **Required Steps**, which are in line with best practice, and necessary to help student achieve their potential.

The Required Steps that apply to students enrolled in high school who have a goal of ["Complete school year promoted with 10+ credits"](#) or ["Obtain high school degree"](#) include:

- ☐ Monitor attendance
 - This should happen at whatever frequency attendance data is provided.
 - If a student is in a traditional DOE high school, monthly attendance data is currently provided.
 - If a student is in a transfer high school, some provide biweekly data. The Coach should form a relationship with the student's Counselor (who typically work at much lower ratios than traditional schools) and request a regular update.
- ☐ Monitor grades
 - This should happen on whatever frequency data is provided (typically quarterly).
 - Some transfer schools offer grades on a biweekly basis.
- ☐ Monitor student's transcript
 - In February and July (for students on a semester schedule), and in December, March, and July (trimester schedule).
 - This ensures that Coaches are monitoring not just a student's grades but their cumulative credits, the Regents exam that they have completed, and which exams are still needed to graduate.
 - For students with a GPA below 75, grades should be monitored ideally biweekly, if possible.
- ☐ Speak to/meet with the guidance counselor/staff regarding young person's attendance or performance
 - The Coach should do this at least once per semester (or more if needed) to ensure the student is on-track for graduation and receiving the supports they need. These conversations will also be centered around planning and preparing for a post-secondary setting. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#))
 - The Coach should bring the [Appendix F6 High School Graduation Checklist](#) and ensure the student has the appropriate high school graduation goal (Advanced Regents diploma, Regents diploma, Local Diploma, or CDOS—see [Appendix F7 High School Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities](#)).

- ❑ Provide weekly coaching, support, and encouragement around school persistence: *Text, call, or meet student*
 - Regardless of the academic setting, the Coach should check in each week with the young person. If needed, this can include an in-person visit to discuss any concerns.
 - If they are doing well, it can be a weekly text message to send an encouraging, supportive message (e.g., “Good luck on that quiz today! You have been working so hard – let me know how it goes.”).
 - A weekly contact also helps with continuing to build the relationship, even if the young person does not respond, they will know that their Coach is still there for them. **Consistency and constancy!**

If the student is engaged in school but struggling academically, some common actions include:

(all are **Potential Steps** under the “[Complete school year promoted with 10+ credits](#)” or “[Obtain high school degree](#)” goals)

- ❑ Refer the student to a tutor (and follow-up with tutor on performance);
- ❑ Help the student enroll in afterschool programming or Regents exam prep;
- ❑ Create a study plan;
- ❑ Advocate with the school/DOE to help the student obtain a particular service or accommodation;
- ❑ Request that the school submit an evaluation for an IEP or 504 Plan (requires parent's consent)
(Refer to [Appendix F1 K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#))
- ❑ Evaluate whether the school is a good fit with Supervisor (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#))

If the student also needs support around engagement in school (not just academic support), effective suggestions/
Potential Steps include:

- ❑ Help young person understand why school is important by connecting them to a peer group or credible messenger;
- ❑ Help young person understand why a school is important by connecting them to an extracurricular program or experience in line with their interests to build self-esteem & help them envision pathway;
- ❑ Help young person have a “breakthrough moment” by taking them on a trip or engaging in a new experience that broadens their horizons.
- ❑ Work with young person to improve attendance; coach young person, text/call young person in the mornings.

If the student is experiencing suspensions and disciplinary issues, Coaches should review [Section V of Appendix F1 K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual](#). See also [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 5F](#) for detailed steps to take.

If the student is in an GED program, the Required Steps to help them persist include:

See “[Advance a grade level in a High School Equivalency Program and/or Pass a section of the GED exam](#)” goal

- ❑ Monitor attendance and performance biweekly (check-in with the young person's Primary Person at the program);
- ❑ Provide weekly persistence coaching, support, and encouragement to advance grade level (text, call, or meet).
- ❑ If the student is struggling, follow the Potential Steps listed above under the student situation “If the student is engaged in school but struggling academically”

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SECTION 18F

F. ADVOCACY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 5G](#) for a detailed overview on how to provide educational advocacy for special education students and students with disabilities, and [Appendix F1_K-12 Educational Advocacy Manual, Section V](#).

Students who require accommodations to make sure their educational needs are met may have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or a 504 plan. For these students, an additional required goal is “[Ensure receipt of appropriate accommodations or special education services](#).” This is important because sometimes students can fall through the cracks and not receive the services they need to succeed academically.

The **Required Steps** that ensure students are receiving appropriate services include:

- ☐ Obtain copy of most recent IEP/504 Plan and ensure it is current within the last year. If it's not, contact the school to see if a more recent version exists; if needed, work with the school and family to schedule a new meeting as soon as possible
- ☐ Participate in annual IEP meeting and/or 504 meeting; try to ensure the student and student's parent participates
- ☐ Confirm student is receiving all accommodations and services mandated by 504 or IEP, and is in the right classroom setting

Some **Potential Steps** include (depending on the course of action needed):

- ☐ Renew 504 Plan;
- ☐ Obtain copy of most recent psycho-educational evaluation and ensure it is current within the last 3 years (required for students with IEPs but not 504s);
- ☐ Request new accommodation(s), if needed (requires parent's consent);
- ☐ Request that the school conduct a new IEP or 504 evaluation, if needed (requires parent's consent);
- ☐ Request an independent educational evaluation if student is not demonstrating progress and the school evaluation is not comprehensive (requires parental consent);
- ☐ Request that the school make changes to IEP, if needed (requires parent's consent);
- ☐ If needed, work with educational decision-maker to exercise due process rights on behalf of student (e.g., request mediation or an impartial hearing).
This should only happen after talking with the student's teachers, IEP team, and case planning team (and, when needed, the District Superintendent).
- ☐ Work with school [to apply to ACCES-VR](#); proceed to Career Development Goals in [Appendix E Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#) or in the Online Platform.

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SECTION 18G

G. CONNECTING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO TUTORS



In most circumstances, tutoring would be beneficial for any high school student. If the student is behind, it will help bring them closer to being on grade-level. If the student is an A student, tutoring could help them prepare for the PSATs or SATs to become eligible for a better college and/or more scholarships.

However, if tutoring is not available to all students for whatever reason, students who are at risk of not being promoted or have below a 75 average should be prioritized.

After the Coach has formed a relationship with the student, the Coach should make this suggestion to the student and his/her parent. If the student is open to it, the Coach will refer the student to a Tutor. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 19](#))

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SECTION 19. TUTORING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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SECTION 19. TUTORING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Review [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 6](#) for a full overview of how agencies can sub-contract with a quality tutoring provider or implement a quality tutoring program.

Regardless of whether the Tutor is in-house staff or contracted, **Tutors are responsible for:**

- Building a relationship with the student;
- Helping them to improve their academic skills and grades;
- Reporting progress and any needs or concerns to the Coach on a monthly basis.



It is the Coach's role (for students in grades 9 to 12) to make records requests to schools, check in with guidance counselors, and perform interventions (e.g. suspension advocacy, requesting evaluations, etc.) on behalf of students. Should a need arise that the Tutor flags, the Coach can provide necessary educational advocacy with the school and/or connect the student to services.



The number of tutoring sessions and dates of these sessions should be tracked in the Online Platform by either the Coach (if they have one) or another Fair Futures staff.

In addition to regular progress reporting, the Tutor should inform the Coach/agency immediately if:

- The student displays signs of depression, suicidal thoughts, severe anxiety or other mental health problems. All other mental health concerns should be reported within 24 hours of the Tutor learning of the concern.
- The Tutor is aware of concerning behaviors or activities a student is participating in (e.g. drug use, involvement in gangs, etc.). Tutors should inform their Supervisor as well.
- The Tutor learns of a potential medical issue that may be affecting a student (such as needing glasses). This should be reported to the Case Planner within 24 hours of the Tutor learning of the concern.

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SECTION 20. COACHING DISCONNECTED YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE/EQUIVALENCY

If a young person is not enrolled in an academic setting, the Coach's role is to re-engage them and enroll them in an appropriate setting. The academic Goal should be "[Re-engage & Re-enroll in a best-fit high school/HSE program](#)."

If the young person does not want to go back to high school, follow the steps in [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 20A](#).

For those youth who are already motivated to re-enroll/re-engage in a high school section, skip to [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 20B](#) and follow the Required Steps to re-enroll them in a best-fit setting.

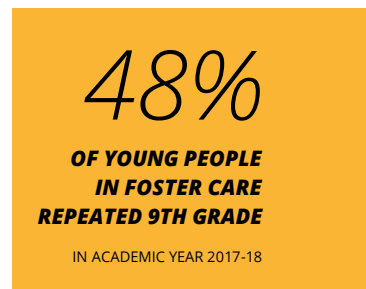
For best practices and tips from young people and Coaches on how to re-engage a young person who left or is struggling in high school and how to help them persist, download [Appendix F24](#).

A. RE-ENGAGING/MOTIVATING YOUNG PEOPLE

All young people want to succeed. If a young person is disengaged/disconnected, it is often because they did not have the academic and/or adult support they needed and became discouraged, and/or due to the trauma and instability in their lives. As human beings, we need to be able to envision success and see a pathway that others have followed. It is not uncommon for foster youth to not have many – or any – adults in their lives who went to college; some may also be the first in their families to graduate high school.

Many students in foster care enter high school academically behind. If a student enters the 9th grade academically below grade level and they are not in a quality school and/or if there is not an effective intervention in place, they can become discouraged and disengaged.

Repeating a grade can take a big toll on one's self-esteem. That, combined with the trauma and instability young people in foster care often experience, can understandably lead them to want to engage in activities that help them "feel good." Going to school every day, when they may be struggling and/or cannot envision success in school, may not make them feel good. Interacting with peers, earning money, engaging in other behaviors to release endorphins, and/or isolating themselves are all common coping mechanisms.



Re-engaging young people who have disengaged from school usually entails helping them to:

- Believe in themselves and their potential
- Increase their self-esteem, sense of self, and sense of belonging
- Envision success in school and/or a potential career pathway
- Understand the critical importance of a high school degree for future stability

There are a variety of effective approaches a Coach can take to help young people believe in themselves, increase their self-esteem and sense of belonging, and envision a pathway.

To complete the [Re-engage & Re-enroll in a best-fit high school/HSE program](#), the **Potential Steps** that a Coach should take if the young person needs to be motivated to re-engage in school include:

- ☐ Connecting the young person to a peer group or credible messenger
Peers who have been in the same situation and have succeeded can help inspire and motivate the young person.
See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 25](#) for more information.
- ☐ Connecting the young person to an extracurricular activity in line with their interests (e.g., art, martial arts, a youth leadership program). This can help youth build the self-esteem, sense of purpose, and broader network of adult/peer supports they need to re-engage in school.
NYC has hundreds of free youth development, extracurricular, and community service programs. Engaging in one of these activities can also help young people build their resumes and the critical soft skills needed for the world of work.
See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#) for more information.
- ☐ Taking a trip or having a new experience
Bringing a young person on a group trip or engaging them in a new recreational experience (e.g., a museum, hiking, a boat ride) can be transformative. Simply being in a new/different environment that is positive and peaceful can help them to broaden their horizons and reflect on their goals and potential. Trips and experiences can facilitate "breakthrough" moments.

Career exploration is also important in helping young people envision success and understand the importance of a high school (and advanced) degree.

Many young people are unaware of different career pathways. Like other young people, they are only aware of what they have been exposed to. Understanding what opportunities are available to them and what the academic requirements are can help them understand why they need to re-engage and persist in school. The Coach can engage the young person in Career Exploration activities.

As the Coach is re-engaging the young person, the Coach should also start thinking about what type of high school environment may be a best fit.

B. RE-ENROLLING YOUNG PEOPLE IN AN ACADEMIC SETTING

To complete the [Re-engage & Re-enroll in a best-fit high school/HSE program](#), the following are the **Required Steps** a Coach should take if/once a young person is motivated to re-enroll in a high school setting:

- ☐ Obtain most recent transcript and records (including attendance records and IEP/504 Plan, if applicable) from the previously attended high school, and review them. *This will help the Coach understand the number of credits earned, any Regents completed, attendance patterns, and any special education needs.*
- ☐ Evaluate what type of high school setting may be a best fit based on youth's age, credits earned, student needs, etc. (e.g., HSE program, transfer school, YABC, specialized high school, etc.). Also consider whether the most recently attended school/program could be a good fit. Refer to [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#) and [Appendix F8 Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#) for an overview of the various types of schools/programs and key factors to consider.
- ☐ Once the type of high school setting is determined, create a vetted list of specific high schools/programs with the young person based on location, quality (graduation rate, school safety, etc.), student needs, and student interests and select some to visit. (Review [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#))
You can find all alternative high schools on [One Degree](#)
- ☐ Discuss plans with parent and Case Planner
- ☐ Reach out to potential schools/programs to ask about open houses, process, eligibility criteria, services offered, etc.
- ☐ Visit potential schools/programs with young person (and/or have parent visit with young person)
- ☐ Follow-up with school/program and young person after visit(s) to debrief and hear their thoughts
- ☐ Apply to a best-fit school or HSE program; support young person through any interviews
- ☐ Enroll in best-fit school or HSE program; complete any paperwork
- ☐ Celebrate acceptance into the new school/program
- ☐ Follow up with young person before the first day of school to provide support/encouragement
- ☐ Follow up with young person after the first day to debrief/reflect on experience
- ☐ Follow up with young person after the first week to debrief/reflect on experience

If young person is still enrolled at this point, close the Goal and mark as “completed” in the Online Platform.

If the young person is not accepted to a particular school or program, keep repeating the above steps until the student is accepted. Also refer to the [Appendix F8 Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide](#) for additional guidance.

Once a student is re-engaged and re-enrolled in a best-fit high school setting, the Coach should refer to [Appendix E Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#) and use the [Roadmap of High School Goals](#) to see what the next Goal is.

The Coach will then assist the student with persistence/graduation. Review [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18E](#) for more information.

FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL

SECTION 21

POST-SECONDARY EXPOSURE, PLANNING, & PERSISTENCE

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SECTION 21A, 21B, & 21C

A. OVERVIEW

An important goal of the Fair Futures program is for young people to navigate onto a living wage career path that offers opportunities for growth and fulfillment. Many career paths that meet this standard require a college degree and/or other post-secondary credential(s), combined with career development experiences.

There are some specific careers where a high school degree may suffice; however, those opportunities are limited and often extremely competitive (e.g., becoming a firefighter, an MTA motorman, etc.). Even with these positions, having some sort of post-secondary degree/credential can ultimately help the young person advance, increase their earning power, and/or have more career mobility.

Therefore, Coaches and Specialists should expose young people to various post-secondary options as early as possible, including college and accredited vocational programs, and help them start to plan and prepare.

This exposure and planning should begin in the 9th grade, ideally. College and career assessment tools can help youth to determine what post-secondary path may be best for them.

TIP! See [Career Exploration Tools](#) (coming soon!) for more information.

B. POST-SECONDARY GOAL-SETTING

Unless a young person is already enrolled in a post-secondary setting, **all young people should have at least 1+ post-secondary exposure/planning goal each year.**

This includes young people who are disconnected and without a high school degree. For these young people, the goal could simply be exploration. For example, the Coach could take them to a college campus or vocational program. That exploratory experience could be what motivates the young person to re-engage in high school and/or visualize a pathway for themselves!

See [Appendix E Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#) to determine which post-secondary goal would apply to the young person based on their situation.

For those not ready to apply to a post-secondary setting, an exposure/exploration goal should be selected – either “[Conduct College Exploration/Exposure](#)” and/or “[Explore vocational or other sector-based certificate programs/post-secondary pathways](#).”

IMPORTANT FACTORS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN SETTING POST-SECONDARY GOALS:

Students enrolled in a high school or HSE program should engage in the “[Conduct College Exploration/ Exposure](#)” Goal, even if they do not express a strong interest in college.

This is because for many young people, college was never on their radar (and/or they may not know any adults who attended college), so it may take some time for them to believe that it is a viable pathway.

To complete this goal, the Coach could even take the student to visit a college during one of their coaching sessions together – a trip to Bryant Park to see Guttman Community College, or a tour of City College or John Jay.

For students who express an interest in the trades or a vocational setting:

The Goal “[Explore vocational or other sector-based certificate programs/post-secondary pathways](#)” should be selected.

See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21J](#).

The College Exploration Goal could also be selected, too, however; many advanced careers in the trades require a college degree (e.g., Construction Project Managers typically need a Bachelor’s degree in Construction Project Management or a related field).

For these students’ Career Development Goal, the Coach could help them explore [classes/paid internships at Co-Op Tech](#) so they can earn a credential(s) while enrolled in high school. Refer to [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#) for other pathways into the trades during and after high school.

Students with disabilities who are in an Alternate Assessment program and tracked toward a Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC) rather than a Local Diploma, Regents Diploma, or High School Equivalency will not be eligible to enroll in college, some trade schools, or the military. The first step in long-range planning for these students should always be to verify that the alternate assessment designation is appropriate (i.e. that the student has a severe intellectual or developmental disability that will prevent them from graduating from high school). Sometimes students are erroneously categorized as Alternate Assessment (due to outdated evaluations or evaluations conducted after a profound trauma) when in fact they have the potential to complete a high school course of study. If there is any doubt at all that a student should be on alternate assessment, then updated psychoeducational evaluations, and, if necessary, independent evaluations, should be sought for these students. For these students who are appropriately designated for Alternate Assessment, the Post-Secondary Goal should be [“Explore vocational or other sector-based certificate programs/post-secondary pathways”](#) and the Career Development Goal should be [“Apply to ACCES-VR”](#).

It is also important to note that students attending online correspondence high schools such as Penn Foster, Keystone Credit Recovery, or K12 **cannot receive credit for these programs from any school district in New York State.** This means that they will not receive a valid high school diploma, cannot be admitted to most colleges, and will not be able to access financial aid in college. It does not matter if the school claims to be nationally or regionally “accredited” – [New York State law bans the acceptance of these programs for credit toward a diploma](#). It is vital that students considering enrollment in online correspondence high schools be counseled toward diploma-granting options such as the high school equivalency exam (GED/HSE) or options through NYC DOE, such as the newly launched online School Without Walls.

AFTER GRADUATION

After graduation, some young people may need more time to develop their academic skills or take a “gap year” before enrolling in a post-secondary setting. Taking a gap year or gap semester between high school and college, as long as it is a productive one that allows that young person to develop skills/experiences in line with their longer-term goals, is a pathway that may work well for some young people.

Young people could engage in a Career Development Experience (e.g., a workforce program) to earn money, build their skills, and/or earn a credential. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#) for pathways/options and refer to the Career Development Directory.

Young people with a high school degree/equivalency who are not yet enrolled in any post-secondary setting should also have at least one exploration/exposure goal. Even if they are not yet ready to enroll (and want to work, for example), post-secondary exposure/exploration is important.

If they need to earn money, there are ways for them to get a paycheck while working on earning a post-secondary credential:

- The young person could attend college full-time (and likely receive significant funding - see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21F](#)) and also get paid \$15/hour to do work/study
- The young person could attend college part-time and have a part-time job or paid internship
- The young person could enroll in a workforce development program that offers sector-based training in their area of interest along with a paid internship (and work part-time, if needed/possible)

C. ROLE OF A COACH IN HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH POST-SECONDARY GOALS

The Coach’s role in helping young people explore their post-secondary goals will depend on where they are. Coaches should also involve birth and/or foster parents in the post-secondary planning process to ensure the young person is being supported.

AT A HIGH LEVEL, THE ROLE OF THE COACH BASED ON A YOUNG PERSON’S SITUATION

For young people in high school/HSE program and interested in college:

- Coaches work with the student and their guidance counselor (or HSE program staff) to ensure they are on-track for high school graduation and have a plan in place for college. The student will also meet with the College Specialist to identify best-fit colleges, complete admissions and financial aid applications, apply to support and opportunity programs, reapply each semester, and renew all forms of financial aid each year.
- The student should meet with the College Specialist to identify best-fit colleges, complete admissions and financial aid applications, submit verification documents, apply to classes, and renew all forms of financial aid each year.

For young people in high school/HSE program and interested in a vocational/other post-secondary pathway:

- Coaches work with the student and their guidance counselor (or HSE program staff) to ensure they are on-track for graduation and exploring post-secondary pathways.
- For youth who are not yet ready to enroll in a vocational program upon graduation, there are workforce bridge programs that help prepare youth to gain skills/credentials and take the next step toward their goals.
- The Coach will connect these students to the Career Development Specialist to discuss best-fit programs and other options (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#), [Section 22](#), and the [Career Development Directory](#)).

For young people already enrolled in college:

- The Coach helps the young person persist by following up during critical junctures, connecting them to resources on and off campus, providing emotional support, and ensuring they meet with the College Specialist to renew their financial aid and funding each semester.

For young people with a high school degree/equivalency but not enrolled in a post-secondary setting:

- The Coach will help them explore college or vocational pathways and connect them to the appropriate Specialist. If a young person is not yet prepared for the rigors of a post-secondary program, the Coach and Career Development Specialist can assist the young person in identifying a work experience or a program that can help them earn money while gaining the skills they need to prepare for a post-secondary setting.

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SECTION 21D - SECTION 21G

D. COLLEGE EXPOSURE & PREPARATION

TIP! See [Appendix G2 College Exposure, Planning, Enrollment and Persistence Flow Chart](#).

COLLEGE EXPOSURE/EXPLORATION

Coaches help expose students to post-secondary pathways starting in 9th grade (or as early as possible, if they come into foster care at a later age). Sometimes, young people cannot envision themselves attending or succeeding in college or a post-secondary setting, as they may not have performed well in school and/or they may not know many (or any) adults who graduated.

Early post-secondary exposure, combined with career exploration and career development activities, can help young people envision success and start to plan and prepare for their post-secondary journey.

If **“[Conduct College Exploration/Exposure](#)”** is selected as a Goal*, some of the associated Steps include:

- ☐ Young person to meet with College Specialist and/or Coach to learn more about college
- ☐ Attend peer group related to college
- ☐ Explore colleges online
- ☐ Attend a college fair
- ☐ Visit college(s)
- ☐ Discuss college experience with current/former student or credible messenger
- ☐ Engage foster parent/parent and/or significant adult figure(s); encourage them to provide support
- ☐ Discuss college options with other adults involved in the young person's life

*If youth is still in high school/HSE program, Coach to meet with the high school guidance counselor and student to discuss options, progress towards graduation, and a plan for the remainder of high school. (see [Appendix F6 High School Graduation Checklist](#)).

If the young person is interested in a trades, vocational, or other post-secondary pathway, the Goal **“[Explore vocational or other sector-based certificate programs/post-secondary pathways](#)”** should be selected.

In this case, the next step would be:

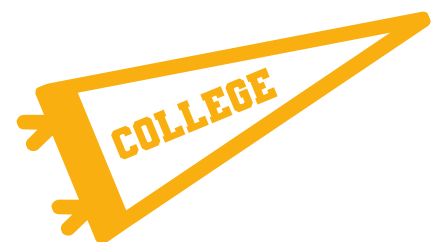
- ☐ Meet with Coach and/or Career Development Specialist (and high school counselor, if applicable) to explore other post-secondary pathways. (Then proceed to the [Career Development Goals Roadmap](#) in [Appendix E Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#).)

If after this meeting a vocational or other career pathway seems to be the best fit, then the appropriate goals should be selected in the Career Development section (e.g., enrolling in a workforce or vocational program, etc.).

PREPARATION/PLANNING FOR COLLEGE

If the young person is in a high school and wants to attend college, the goal **“[Conduct College Preparation](#)”** should be selected. It is the Coach's role is to ensure that students have the supports they need to succeed in high school and are enrolled in the proper coursework in order to graduate and pursue their post-secondary goal.

In the 9th grade, the student should be meeting with their Coach, Guidance Counselor, and the College Specialist. These meetings can take place separately, but all parties should be on the same page.



Key preparation/planning activities include:

- ❑ **Review the student's current (or most recent) transcript** with them to determine what their college roadmap could look like, based on their performance and the high school that they are enrolled in. For students in the 9th grade, even if performance was not strong in previous years, it should be emphasized colleges only look at grades from high school (not middle school) and they will have a wide range of great college options if they remain on-track with their studies.
- ❑ **Provide an overview of 2-year vs. 4-year college pathways**, and what each would entail in terms of their high school performance. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22E](#) for additional guidance.
- ❑ **Review cost of attendance and the financial resources available to students with foster care experience**
This is important, as some students may be under the impression that they cannot afford college. In reality, as long as the student maintains good academic standing and attends a CUNY or SUNY school, in almost all cases the student will have to pay little or nothing toward the cost of college. Thanks to the College Choice Program, out-of-state public schools and many private schools are also now viable options for students so long as they remain in foster care until they begin college. If they and their Coach/College Specialist follow all of the application and financial aid steps appropriately, the student will likely be able to cover most or all of their living expenses (food, transportation, etc.) without having to earn additional income. See [Appendix G19 College Budget Tools](#).
- ❑ Inform young person about **The College Choice Program** (see [Appendix G13 Fair Futures Guide to College Choice Funding](#)). It is important to make sure that the young person is aware of the eligibility requirements for College Choice, which include being currently in foster care as of the time you enroll in the program, as well as attending an accredited not-for-profit college, applying for all financial aid, and maintaining a full-time courseload and good academic standing.
- ❑ If appropriate, discuss out-of-state and private college options, and their pros and cons. The most competitive private colleges (like Vassar and Harvard) have "100% of need met" financial aid policies that cover the full cost of attendance. Out-of-state public schools and private schools without 100% of need met financial aid are much more expensive and may require extensive funding through College Choice to be viable.

TIP! For all post-secondary planning/preparation activities, broken by grade and semester, see [Appendix G4 College Planning and Preparation Timeline](#).

GOALS & STEPS

For students whose Goal is to "[Conduct College Preparation](#)":

Required Steps include:

- ❑ Meet with high school counselor, Coach, and/or College Specialist to put a plan in place; ideally engage parent/foster parent
- ❑ Develop a college list (6 CUNY, 4+ SUNY, and others if eligible)

Potential Steps include:

- ❑ Enroll in A.P. classes
- ❑ Take PSATs
- ❑ Work with school to request needed accommodations on PSATs, SATs and A.P. exams
- ❑ Receive PSAT or SAT tutoring (or enroll in prep program)
- ❑ Take SATs
- ❑ Re-take SATs
- ❑ Re-take Regents exams to bring scores up to SUNY/CUNY's college readiness standards (70+ in Common Core Algebra and 75+ in Common Core ELA at CUNY and most SUNYs).

TIP! Students with disabilities should refer to [Appendix G3 College Planning for Students with Disabilities](#).

E. COLLEGE APPLICATION & SELECTION

COLLEGE ADVISING



The College Specialist should assist the student in applying to colleges at the appropriate juncture, typically in the summer/early fall of that student's final year of high school. However, if students are applying to 4-year colleges, they should be preparing their materials in their Junior year.

Students should aim to have their college applications and the FAFSA completed by the end of October ideally, and by the end of November at the latest - they should not wait until the school's admissions deadline to apply. This will put them in the best position to be accepted into opportunity programs, receive school-based financial aid, and more.

However, if students are applying to selective 4-year colleges that will require essays and recommendations, it is especially important that they begin preparing these materials in the summer prior to their senior year, or earlier.

See [Appendix G4. College Planning and Preparation Timeline For High Schoolers](#).

FOUR KEY QUESTIONS THAT STUDENTS SHOULD THINK ABOUT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS:

Question 1: Is the student qualified for and interested in attending a 4-year college directly out of high school, or is a 2-year CUNY college more appropriate?

Generally speaking, 4-year colleges should be the starting point for students who are academically eligible to attend, as students attending 4-year schools tend to experience better on-time graduation outcomes than students who start at 2-year schools. (It also often takes high performing students 2.5 to 3 years to earn an Associate's degree, and another 2+ years to transfer and finish a Bachelor's degree.) Students with GPAs in or above the 75-80 range can feasibly begin to look at 4-year schools, particularly if they also have SAT scores above 400 per section.

That said, many students enter their senior year without the academic credentials needed to obtain admission to a four-year college, or with developmental needs in reading, writing, or math. These students should be matched with a two-year college and great care should be taken to ensure that they are connected with a support program or enroll at Guttman Community College, as students in these programs are much more likely to graduate college in a timely fashion.

Question 2: What majors/fields of study is the student interested in? This will help narrow down potential colleges.

Question 3: Where does the student want to live during college, and what is the student's housing situation right before entering college? This may be informed by the student's housing/permanency status.

The major categories here are:

- Somewhere out of the city.
- Somewhere in the city but in a dorm (for instance, in one of the dorms partnered with College Choice).
- Somewhere in the city and not in a dorm (i.e. in a foster home).

Question 4: Are there other aspects of a potential school that are especially meaningful to the student?

These might include prestige, demographics/diversity of the student body, proximity to family, size of the school, and more. It's vital that everyone involved in the college coaching process listen carefully to what the student considers to be important in evaluating a school match.

For each potential school match, it is important to consider the graduation rate and cost of attendance of the school.

Graduation rates differ widely between schools; some graduate just 10 or 20% of their students, while others have graduation rates of 98 or 99%. Some of this has to do with the preparedness and affluence of the students who attend those schools, but the level of support available at the school is also an important factor in graduation rate.

Resources for assessing graduation rate and cost of attendance include:

[College Scorecard](#), a publicly available resource from USDOE that includes information about annual costs, timely graduation rates, long-term outcomes for students who enrolled as freshmen, and socio/economic and racial diversity at the school.

[College Results Online](#), which offers a deeper dive into graduation rates for specific student demographics, as well as information about collateral statistics such as first-year retention and transfer rates.

A student's permanency and housing status may influence their decision. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 23](#)).

For example, student situations may impact eligibility for certain programs:

Students in foster care and or who have previously received funding from College Choice, are eligible for a \$60/day stipend, up to \$15,000 toward tuition, and up to \$30,000 toward room and board through the College Choice program.

Students who are adopted, reunified, or aged out; and with housing, and who have not received College Choice funding before are not eligible for College Choice benefits.

See [Appendix G13 Fair Futures Guide to the College Choice Program](#) for more information.

TIP!

If a student is currently in foster care or has previously received College Choice funding, the Coach should refer the student to the College Specialist to help the student apply. **All eligible students should apply for the College Choice program each semester.**

EXPLORING 4-YEAR COLLEGES

For students exploring 4-year colleges, the major categories are: SUNY schools, CUNY schools, and private schools.

FOR EVERY YOUNG PERSON IN CARE, THERE IS OFTEN A SCHOOL THAT THE STUDENT WILL BE ABLE TO GRADUATE FROM WITHOUT DEBT.

Guidelines for students applying to 4-year schools include:

Students are encouraged to submit, at a minimum, the full complement of free applications to CUNY and SUNY schools. See [Appendix G5 Applying to CUNY Tip Sheet](#) and [Appendix G6 Tips for Applying to SUNY for Youth in Foster Care](#).

Students interested in 4-year CUNYs are counseled to include no more than one 2-year CUNY, ranked at the bottom of the application (since they will be accepted there automatically).

- They can always direct admit to a different 2-year CUNY later in the process if they want; 2-year CUNYs other than Guttman accept 100% of first-time applicants on a rolling basis.

Students are encouraged to apply for **Opportunity Programs**, which provide additional financial assistance and a range of supports. See [Appendix G8 Opportunity Programs](#) (and [Appendix G9 CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#)).

Students should consider non-profit private schools as long as these schools have **100% of need met financial aid policies** and/or are willing to commit to covering the student's tuition/room and board gap. Out-of-state public schools should generally be avoided unless the student has a clear plan for establishing residency in that state or is receiving a substantial scholarship (since public schools charge much higher tuition for out-of-state students and generally do not offer much financial aid). These considerations become less pressing if the student is eligible for College Choice, but it is generally good to avoid choosing schools where a student would be fully dependent on this kind of funding in order to pay cost of attendance.

Schools that students in care can attend for free (and have 100% of need met financial aid policies) include all of the Ivies (e.g. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Cornell, Columbia), Barnard College, Georgetown University, Vanderbilt University, Union College, and more. There are also organizations such as the Posse Foundation that offer full tuition scholarships at some schools.

Other private schools, like St. John's, Long Island University, and Mercy College, have high tuition costs and do not offer full financial aid to students currently and formerly in foster care. Students who wish to attend these private schools should be advised of CUNY/SUNY options which may, in many cases, be an equivalent or better fit and be far less costly to attend. Outside scholarships will usually not provide enough money to pay for private schools without 100% of need met financial aid policies.

Students should avoid applying to for-profit schools! In almost every case, these schools require students to take on student loan debt while also offering a lower-quality education and credential than the student could get at a college that they could attend without taking loans. **These schools are also not eligible for College Choice funding.**

Guidelines for students planning to attend 2-year/community colleges:

- Incoming 2-year college students should usually start at CUNY due to the support programs and proximity to agency resources. The student generally guides the decision regarding the specific CUNY school choice based on proximity to where they expect to live and choice of majors. See [Appendix G5 Applying to CUNY Tip Sheet](#).
- While there is some variation between the quality of CUNY community colleges, and it is worth reviewing graduation rates in the process of considering options, the differences are generally fairly small, with the exception of Guttman Community College, which has a 3-year graduation rate of 45%, much higher than the CUNY average.

KEY NOTES ON GUTTMAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE:

All students looking at 2-year colleges should consider **Guttman Community College**, which has a range of on-site supports and a higher graduation/persistence rate compared to other 2-year CUNY schools.

The Guttman Community College model is based on national best practices and incorporates experiential learning. While it is academically rigorous, it also can be a good fit for students with remedial needs. While every CUNY school now offers “co-requisite” courses rather than remedial classes, meaning that students with remedial needs can fulfill them while earning credits at the same time, Guttman has by far the most experience with these course offerings, as they adopted the co-requisite model years before their other CUNY counterparts. It also has an extended-year schedule (the semesters are “Fall 1, Fall 2, Spring 1, and Spring 2”) which allows students to take more coursework if needed.

The Guttman Community College application process and other considerations when applying includes:

Guttman accepts students on a first-come, first-serve basis and typically does not accept applications after the February 1st admissions deadline. Thus, the key to getting in is to apply via the CUNY portal as soon as it opens in the fall and to make sure to sign up for an informational session as soon as it is offered.

In January/February, the student should receive an email for an Orientation/Informational Session at Guttman. If the student does not sign up for one, he/she cannot proceed with the application process. Guttman will not allow students who miss the Orientation/Informational Session to enroll. There are no exceptions under any circumstances.

- **The Coach should be aware of this deadline and remind the student to check their email.** The Coach should also ensure that the student still has access to the original email address the student provided on the CUNY application.

After the Orientation/Informational Session, students will have to sign-up for an interview. While the interview is technically not to screen for academic eligibility, it does not hurt to prep the student so that they can explain why Guttman is a good fit for them.

Reasons Guttman Community College may NOT be a good fit:

- There is a limited number of majors.
- Students are not encouraged to hold full-time (or even part-time) jobs during Year 1, which is very intensive academically. As most students in foster care should receive full financial packages (including College Choice stipends for eligible students), and are eligible for work/study, this typically should not be an issue, unless the young person has other life/financial responsibilities (e.g., parenting).
- Guttman Community College is a single-site school, class sizes are small, and the model is heavily focused on peer/group work. For some students, this provides a very supportive, collegial environment. Other young people may find this socially overwhelming (particularly if they are very introverted) or might just prefer a more conventional college campus setting.

COLLEGE SELECTION

Once the student receives letters of acceptance, the student should sit down with the Coach, College Specialist, Guidance Counselor, and parent/caregiver (if applicable) to discuss selection. If a meeting with all of these individuals cannot happen in one setting, separate meetings can occur; Coaches should ensure, however, that the advice given is consistent.

Review [Appendix G12 Selecting a Best-Fit College](#), which outlines key factors to consider when selecting a college.

Key Factors for Selecting a Best-fit College:

LIFESTYLE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Housing options;
- Campus location;
- School size;
- Campus diversity & demographics;
- Food plans;
- Safety statistics.

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATIONS:

- Majors offered;
- Academic standing requirements;
- Support Programs;
- Retention & graduation rates;
- National college rankings.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

TIP! See [Appendix G19: College Budget Tools](#).

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Once the student selects the college, they need to officially send their acceptance (typically by May 1st for selective 4-year colleges) and accept all financial aid grants (while rejecting all loans unless they are absolutely necessary to meet the cost of attendance). Schools typically request that students submit a “commitment deposit” in order to secure their space in the incoming class; this fee can often be waived by contacting the admissions office at the school and requesting a waiver due to the student’s foster care status.

F. FUNDING COLLEGE & FINANCIAL AID



There are many financial resources available to college-bound students in foster care. The key funding streams available to foster youth (some require maintaining a 2.0 or higher GPA) that students should apply for include:

Federal PELL Grant

New York State TAP grant

ETV (Education & Training Vouchers)

Opportunity Programs (SEEK/CD, EOP, HEOP, CUNY ASAP)

Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI)

The nsoro Scholarship

ACS College Choice Program

(if currently in foster care or already received College Choice funding)

The Coach should ensure that the student is meeting with the College Specialist to apply for all of the above forms of aid. Applying for all forms of aid and College Specialist meetings are **Required Steps** to ensure that no student “falls through the cracks” due to a lack of staff knowledge about these supports.

TAP AND PELL GRANTS

The PELL grant is a federal grant and TAP is for students living and attending school in New York State. Both applications should be filled out as soon as the student applies to colleges. While TAP and Pell usually consider family income when determining financial aid eligibility, students who are in foster care, aged out of foster care, or were adopted out of foster care after reaching age 13 are considered independent students, which means that they do not need to submit financial information for their parents or foster parents, even if they were adopted. In practice, current and former youth in care almost always receive the full TAP and Pell awards. If a student is applying to a CUNY or SUNY school, these awards alone will fully cover their tuition and fees, and they will receive a \$2,000+ reimbursement per semester to use for dorming or other living expenses.

See [Appendix G7 Completing the FAFSA & TAP Applications](#) for detailed information on how to apply and important tips.

ETV

The Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) typically provides youth who are in foster care, or were adopted or discharged to kinship guardianship (KinGAP) from foster care after age 16, or were reunified with parents after age 14, or aged out of foster care, with up to \$5,000 per year, depending on financial need. **Students must receive their first payment by age 21 in order to be eligible.** ETV funding can be used for accredited college or vocational/technical training programs. If students have outstanding balances on their college accounts, ETV will issue a check directly to the college; otherwise, students receive a monthly check in the mail, which helps them with income smoothing. ETV funding levels were temporarily increased to up to \$12,000 during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years in a recent COVID relief package.

See [Appendix G10 Educational and Training Vouchers](#) for detailed information, how to apply, and key tips.

OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS (SEEK/CD, EOP, HEOP, CUNY ASAP)

First-time freshmen who enroll in college in New York State have access to a group of programs called “Opportunity Programs”.

These programs include benefits such as:

1. Admissions to the college for students whose applications would normally be rejected
2. Additional funding (type and amount varies by school)
3. Connections to supportive adults
4. Academic tutoring and career support
5. A summer program to help students get oriented to the school

Opportunity programs are very similar across colleges, but they have different names like SEEK, CD, EOP, or HEOP depending on the type of college where the program is located (see the table below).

Type of College	Name of Opportunity Program
City University of New York (CUNY) 2-Year Colleges	CD (College Discovery)
City University of New York (CUNY) 4-Year Colleges	SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge)
State University of New York (SUNY) All Colleges	EOP (Educational Opportunity Program)
Private Colleges (i.e. Colgate, Columbia, Cornell)	HEOP (Higher Education Opportunity Program)

Note that CUNY has other outstanding program offerings outside of its Opportunity Programs, including [ASAP, ACE, and Start](#). (Students cannot be in SEEK/CD and ASAP/ACE/Start at the same time - for more information about these programs and how to choose between them, see our guide to Support and Opportunity Programs at CUNY ([Appendix G9 CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#))).

It is critical for students going to CUNY or SUNY schools to apply for the opportunity programs if they can, particularly if they are applying to competitive 4-year colleges; the opportunity programs at these schools can vastly increase the chances of being accepted, particularly when the school is an academic “reach”. Students interested in enrolling in an Opportunity program should check [Appendix G8 Opportunity Programs](#) for more information and make sure to apply well before the college’s regular admissions deadline: ideally, their application and any needed supporting documents should be submitted by the end of October of their senior year, as Opportunity Program spaces fill up quickly.

CUNY ASAP AND ACE

In addition to its Opportunity Programs, CUNY offers two key support programs to students attending its 2-year colleges and some of its 4-year colleges. They are called ASAP and ACE and are highly recommended to students in care.

ASAP is a program that focuses on helping students graduate from CUNY community colleges as soon as possible (in 3 years or less) through a combination of advisement, tutoring, early registration, block scheduling, free MetroCards, book vouchers, and other resources. Students in ASAP have a 3-year graduation rate of 53%, which is more than double that of their peers who are not in a support program - students not in ASAP graduate in three years 25% of the time.

While ASAP is only available at 2-year colleges, a similar program called **ACE** is now available at CUNY four-year schools including John Jay, Lehman College, and York College.

Students cannot participate in both ASAP/ACE and College Discovery/SEEK - they need to pick one of the two.

For more information on ASAP/ACE and on how to choose between the program offerings, see [Appendix G9 CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#).

Finally, students attending CUNY and enrolled in any support or opportunity program (including SEEK, CD, ASAP, ACE, or Start) can receive additional foster-care specific support and resources through CUNY’s Foster Care Initiative (FCI).

SCHOLARSHIPS

There are several scholarships available to current/former foster youth. See [Appendix G11 School-Based Aid and Outside Scholarships](#).

Two important scholarships to know about include:

- **The nsoro Foundation scholarship:** Any current/former foster youth who is aging out or aged out of foster care and applying to college or in college is eligible (adopted students are not eligible). The scholarship requires a 2.0 high school/college GPA upon enrollment and encourages students to maintain above a 2.0. It provides a minimum of \$2,000 per student each year towards tuition, room, board, fees, books, and/or a laptop. Once accepted, students do not have to re-apply each year, and nsoro will fund them all the way through the completion of a Master's program. Every year, two scholars are selected to receive a \$10,000 scholarship.
- **New Yorkers For Children Nick's Scholars Program:** This scholarship is for youth who are aging out or aged out and have a 2.5 GPA or above; it's competitive, but provides a \$500-\$700 monthly stipend to students among other supports.

THE FOSTER YOUTH COLLEGE SUCCESS INITIATIVE (FYCSI)

FYCSI is a program specifically for students who have experienced foster care to provide them with additional financial assistance to help them succeed in college. Students are eligible if they were in foster care at/after age 13 and admitted and enrolled in a SUNY or CUNY college or university, or at a private college or university that has an HEOP program. Students need to send a consent form (which can be found [here](#)) to FCY4College@ocfs.ny.gov and then visit their college's financial aid office to receive FYCSI funds. See [Appendix G20 Foster Youth College Success Initiative Information Sheet](#) for detailed information on the supports, application process, etc.

THE ACS COLLEGE CHOICE PROGRAM

The College Choice Program is an ACS funding program jointly administered with New York Foundling (a foster care agency) that connects youth in care in NYC with coaching and tutoring support as well as **extensive** funding. Financial resources available through College Choice include a \$60/day stipend, coverage of dorming costs (not including meal plans) up to \$30,000/year, and coverage of tuition expenses up to \$15,000/year. **All college students in ACS foster care, so long as they are going to an accredited not-for-profit 2/4 year degree granting institution full-time, are eligible for College Choice and should apply for this program.**

College Choice is designed to offer an unprecedented level of financial and practical flexibility to students in foster care who are attending college. Participation in tutoring and coaching is not mandatory to receive funding, and students can choose where to dorm, including on-campus and off-campus options both inside and outside of NYC and New York State. Because of the amount of funding available, college options that were once very difficult for students in care to fund are now possible to graduate from debt free, including HBCUs like Howard University and Morehouse University, and Spelman College, so long as students continue meeting program requirements (see below).

While the financial rewards of this program are immense, they also come with substantial documentation requirements to which students, coaches, and college specialists should pay careful attention throughout the year. In order to maintain College Choice funding, students must send in an application due several weeks before the start of their semester, and then follow up with documentation including a schedule, proof of enrollment, transcripts (for continuing students), bursar bills, lease agreements, and more. In addition to meeting the documentation requirements, students must also maintain a 2.0 GPA at their college of attendance (students who fall below this requirement must submit an academic plan developed in conjunction with their academic advisor to maintain funding) and maintain full-time enrollment in school (though part-time enrollment will be accepted on a short-term basis if "approved" by the student's college, for instance, as a disability accommodation). Students who miss documentation or application deadlines may lose thousands of dollars of funding for that semester.

Finally, because College Choice is a "last dollar" funding program, students must apply for all available financial aid, each semester, including TAP, Pell Grants, ETV, and FYCSI funding, in order to receive College Choice.

Once students are enrolled in the program, they are able to continue receiving College Choice benefits even if they leave foster care in the meantime. How long a student can stay in the program is based on a number of semesters rather than the student's age: students pursuing an Associate Degree have 9 semesters of College Choice eligibility, while students in a Bachelor's Degree program can remain in College Choice for up to 15 semesters. Finally, when students leave college, they can elect to continue receiving the College Choice stipend for up to 6 months post-graduation as they pursue job or postgraduate degree opportunities.

See [Appendix G13 Fair Futures Guide to College Choice](#) for additional information on how to apply, supports received, and key tips. The College Choice application can be found at www.fosteringcollegesuccessinitiative.org.

OTHER SOURCES OF POTENTIAL FUNDING FOR CURRENT/FORMER FOSTER YOUTH APPLYING TO COLLEGE INCLUDE:

Loans: Students are also eligible for subsidized and unsubsidized loans. However, given the abundance of resources, loans are strongly discouraged. Students should be advised that loans must be repaid, and because of interest, the amount of money to be repaid is going to be larger than the amount received. Also, federal student loan debt is one of the only kinds of debt that cannot be resolved by filing personal bankruptcy. Building strong relationships with students and giving advice about alternatives proactively rather than waiting until the student is faced with the choice about whether to accept loans is absolutely critical.

The NYS Excelsior grant is also available to students in foster care and covers any remaining gap for the cost of attendance at CUNY and SUNY schools after TAP and Pell grants are applied. However, given that the financial aid typically available to current/former students in foster care exceeds CUNY/SUNY's cost of attendance, this is usually not needed. The main group of students with foster care experience who benefit from the Excelsior scholarship is for certain undocumented students formerly in care, since DREAM Act TAP doesn't always cover the full cost of college attendance.

The Excelsior Scholarship is very restrictive – for example, it requires students to stay on track to graduate from a bachelor's program in 4-years, which can be challenging for some. Students may also have to return Excelsior funds they've already received if they stop meeting the academic progress or residency requirements.

G. REMEDIAL/DEVELOPMENTAL/CO-REQUISITE COURSES

When students enroll at a CUNY or at a 2-year SUNY school, they may need to take a remedial or co-requisite course to bring their academic skills up to a "college ready" level.

At 2-year SUNY colleges, and at most community colleges across America, students whose grades or test scores are below the level that corresponds to the college's standard of college readiness in Math, Reading, or Writing must enroll in zero-credit remedial courses in the corresponding subject before taking credit-bearing college introductory courses.

CUNY colleges have a similar system for measuring college readiness, but have fully shifted to a co-requisite model for addressing developmental needs, meaning that students who once would have had to take remedials are instead given credit-bearing classes with extra instructional hours built in to address fundamental skills. As of this writing, **no remedial courses are being offered anywhere in the CUNY system.**

Because remedial courses are very time-consuming, do not offer college credits, and generally are associated with poor academic outcomes, students are advised to avoid remedial courses wherever possible. One sure way to do this is for 2-year-college-bound students to attend CUNY rather than SUNY! If a student is determined to attend SUNY for community college, then they should familiarize themselves with SUNY's remediation requirements and the various methods by which they can test or place out of remedials (see below for more info).

Co-requisite courses are less punitive, but students who can place out of CUNY co-requisites and into a typical introductory course will save themselves a considerable amount of added time and effort in their first semester.

At SUNY 2-year colleges students will generally need to either score highly on the Regents exams or SAT/ACT, pass a placement test offered by the college, OR already have passed a college course in the subject in order to place out of remedial classes. Remedial policies and cutoff scores can vary somewhat based on the college and can typically be found on the college's website.

At all CUNY schools, students can place out of co-requisites by:

- Scoring above the cutoff score on the Regents exam (70+ on Common Core Algebra and 75+ on Common Core English).
- Earning a high ACT or SAT score
 - 480+ on the SAT ERBW section or 20+ ACT English score to place out of Reading/Writing
 - 500+ on SAT Math or 21+ ACT Math score to place out of Math
- Passing a college-level course in the subject
- Being considered "college ready" by CUNY's Proficiency Index, which weighs students' GPA and standardized test scores to evaluate their chances of passing a college-level course in English or Math. Little is known about how the Proficiency Index is calculated, and coaches working with students in care should not count on the Proficiency Index as a way of waiving remedial requirements.

Students with Regents scores below their target school's college readiness cutoff should be encouraged to retake the Regents exam as long as there is a reasonable chance that they will be able to earn a score high enough to place out of remedial or corequisite courses. Students in NYC schools can retake the Regents exam as many times as the test is offered.

To avoid taking co-requisite courses at CUNY, another option is to participate in either **CUNY Start and/or Math Start**, which do not require financial aid, but do not allow students to earn any credits. It's also worth noting that they carry very strict attendance requirements.

- **CUNY students with two or more developmental needs** can consider enrolling in a semester-long remedial support program, called CUNY Start, before starting credit-bearing classes at their college.
- **Students can resolve their math remedial need through a related program called Math Start** during the summer prior to their freshman year of college (or during the year). Math Start is an intensive 8 to 12-week program for students who need assistance building college-ready math skills.

See [Appendix G9 CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#) for more information on applying to CUNY Start and Math Start and some key considerations.

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SECTION 21H & 21I

H. PERSISTING IN COLLEGE

The Coach plays a critical role in helping young people persist in college, from enrollment through graduation. See [Appendix G16 College Persistence Checklist](#).

PREPARING FOR THE FIRST SEMESTER

Once a student is enrolled in college and applied to all forms of funding, the Goal becomes: "[Prepare for and Complete College Semester with 2.0+.](#)"

To complete this goal, the Coach should follow the **Required Steps** to ensure that the student:

- ☐ Ensure that the student has applied to College Choice and submitted all necessary documentation.
- ☐ Ensure student has food, transportation, and basic minimum living expenses before stipends/financial aid comes in
- ☐ Check in with young person before AND after first day of the semester to debrief on experience
- ☐ Ensure student has a plan to purchase books
- ☐ Check student's financial aid balance after the first week of school to ensure there is nothing owed and no holds; *follow up with Bursar/Financial Aid office if needed*
- ☐ Ensure student understands how to use college systems (e.g., Blackboard, CUNYFirst, etc.)
- ☐ Ensure student's address is correct in the college system
- ☐ Ensure student understands consequences of class attendance policies, which can be found in the syllabus
- ☐ Walk through all syllabi with student and put assignment due dates in calendar (*time management is a critical skill for success*)
- ☐ Check in with young person before "withdrawal" period is over
 - ☐ If they need to withdraw from any classes, see Advisor.
If failing a class is inevitable, it is usually better to receive a "W" than to get a failing grade, which can more significantly affect financial aid, scholarships, etc. **Whenever possible, students should wait until after 60% of the semester has passed before withdrawing in order to avoid having to return Pell Grants.**
See [Appendix G17 How to Properly Withdraw from College Classes](#)
- ☐ Check in with young person during mid-terms (*a highly stressful time*)
- ☐ Provide emotional support to student; check-in on them weekly
- ☐ Check in with young person during finals (*another stressful juncture*)

**All of these Required Steps are based on best practices and align with critical junctures where young people tend to become discouraged/overwhelmed and drop-out.*

Potential Steps to help students persist and/or improve their GPA include:

- ☐ Attend any orientation
- ☐ If student is enrolled in an Opportunity Program, ensure student attends any mandatory summer programs
- ☐ Assist student with accessing mental health supports and/or peer group supports to emotionally prepare for college
- ☐ Visit college to get familiar with campus
- ☐ Apply to ASAP program if in CUNY (and if not already enrolled in Opportunity Program)
- ☐ Create study plan
- ☐ Connect young person to tutoring (most colleges have a tutoring center and some agencies have college tutors)
- ☐ If a student wants to withdraw from classes or drop out completely: discuss pros/cons, financial implications, and meet with an advisor. See [Appendix G17 How to Properly Withdraw from College Classes](#)
- ☐ Check in with college counselor (or ACS Coach/Tutor) as needed
- ☐ Connect youth with campus Disability Services office
- ☐ Enroll in work-study
- ☐ Celebrate finishing with 2.0 or higher GPA

Any student who had an IEP or 504 Plan in high school should be referred to the campus Disability Office.

Students can receive additional time to take tests or other needed supports, which can make a big difference in academic performance. As students can feel self-conscious entering the office and discussing their disabilities, the Coach or College Specialist should offer to accompany the student.

At CUNY, in partnership with ACCES-VR, there is a program called **CUNY LEADS Plus** designed to serve students who need extra support, including with paid internships. LEADS Plus is located on five campuses: Bronx Community College, College of Staten Island, Guttman Community College, Kingsborough Community College, and Queensborough Community College. See [Appendix G9 CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#) for more information.

AFTER EACH SEMESTER

if the student wants to continue in college the Goal becomes "[Re-enroll in another semester of college](#)".

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Ensure that the student re-applies for College Choice funding and submits all required documentation.
- ☐ Ensure student's grades are submitted to all scholarship providers and/or ETV upon completion of last semester (so that they continue to receive funding)
- ☐ Check student account to ensure there is no outstanding balance and no holds on the student account
- ☐ Apply to classes
- ☐ Submit class schedule to scholarship provider and/or ETV

ONCE RE-ENROLLED

The academic goal becomes: "[Prepare for and Complete College Semester with 2.0+](#)" until the student graduates.

See all associated steps in [Appendix E Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#)

EACH SEMESTER

Coaches should select the Goal "[Reapply to all sources of financial aid](#)" and check with the College Specialist to ensure that all financial aid (FAFSA & NYS TAP), ETV, and scholarships are reapplied to.

See [Appendix G16 College Persistence Checklist](#)

I. RECAP: ROLE OF THE COLLEGE SPECIALIST VS. COACH

To summarize, the Coach and College Specialist both play an important role in helping young people plan/prepare for, apply/pay for, and persist in college.





THE ROLE OF THE COACH IS TO:

- ☐ Provide exposure to college and post-secondary pathways, starting in 9th grade, and throughout high school;
- ☐ Meet with the student's guidance counselor to discuss post-secondary pathways, and ensure that students are enrolled in the correct coursework to graduate high school on time;
- ☐ Refer young people to the College Specialist in the 9th grade (if the student is engaged in school); for young people who come into foster care when they are older, they should be referred to the Specialist if the Coach thinks that college could be a potential pathway and/or once they express an interest in college;
- ☐ Refer all young people who are not on a college-bound track to the Career Development Specialist to explore vocational and other post-secondary pathways/ programs and develop a career plan;
- ☐ Communicate with the student's parent(s) about their post-secondary plans;
- ☐ Visit potential colleges with the young person, and/or sign them up for college tours;
- ☐ Ensure the student takes the PSAT and SAT, if they are interested in applying to a 4-year college, and receives tutoring
- ☐ Ensure that the student work with the College Specialist to apply to colleges and all forms of financial aid, opportunity programs, and scholarships that are available;
- ☐ Assist with the college selection process, if needed;
- ☐ Ensure students are prepared for the first semester, including
 - ☐ Support the student and College Specialist with submitting documents for College Choice
 - ☐ Having all books and supplies (including a laptop through New Yorkers for Children's Back to School Package program and, if dorming, dorm supplies);
 - ☐ Developing a plan and structure for organizing their documents and college coursework;
 - ☐ Checking their email regularly for information from the school;
 - ☐ Registering for classes;
 - ☐ Attending orientation or any mandated summer programming
- ☐ Provide persistence coaching to help ensure students remain enrolled in good standing, are connected to the supports they need, and reapply to college and financial aid/funding each year. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21H](#).
- ☐ Help dorming-away students waive their campus health insurance by transitioning their Medicaid to a provider recognized by the campus.



THE ROLE OF THE COLLEGE SPECIALIST IS TO:

- ☐ Meet with young people interested in college to have an exploratory and informational session, after they are referred by their Coach, and discuss what that roadmap/timeline would look like for them at their particular high school;
- ☐ Monitor PSAT/SAT scores of those students who do take them, and meet with them to discuss/refine college options;
- ☐ Organize college tours;
- ☐ Help young people apply to colleges in line with their goals, and assist with essays/personal statements, where needed;
- ☐ Ensure that each student applies to any Opportunity Programs available to them;
- ☐ Review any college applications or financial aid forms filled out by the student's school/guidance counselor
- ☐ Sit down with students and help them apply to FAFSA, TAP, ETV, and all applicable scholarships. Review scholarship essays and help with obtaining letters of reference as needed;
- ☐ Ensure students are signed up for any entrance interviews/exams;
- ☐ Work with students to apply to and submit the paperwork needed for College Choice;
- ☐ Reach out to students each semester to ensure they have a course schedule that will move them toward on-time graduation and assist with enrollment, if needed;
- ☐ Help young people re-apply to all forms of financial aid and scholarships each year;
- ☐ Assist students with transferring colleges, if needed. See [Appendix G18. Transferring Colleges Guide](#).

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SECTION 21J & 21K

J. EXPLORING A “GAP YEAR” OR DELAYING COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Some youth may not be prepared to attend college immediately after graduating high school, and/or may want to take time to build skills through academic remediation and/or a career development experience (e.g., work, an internship, a workforce/training program, a meaningful volunteer experience(s), etc.).

In other cases, a young person might graduate over the winter or at the end of the summer and may not want to rush into college weeks after their high school graduation. If the time is spent productively, taking a semester or a year between high school and college can provide young people with time to mature, build skills and confidence, and be better prepared for post-secondary success. Pathways and programs that help young people build their skills/credentials before enrolling in college or an accredited vocational program:

CUNY Start: a semester-long program for students with developmental needs in reading, writing, and/or math; it is free and does not use any of the student’s financial aid. Note that CUNY Start, as well as Math Start, below, have very stringent attendance policies that students must adhere to in order to remain in the program. (See [Appendix G9 CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#))

Math Start: an intensive 8 to 12-week program for students with developmental needs in Math that would normally require them to start in corequisite courses. Unlike CUNY Start, it can be taken over the summer before college, or at other “off-cycle” times that do not align with the start of CUNY’s Fall/Spring semester. This program could also be helpful for youth interested in vocational programs that require a higher math level, which is not uncommon. (See [Appendix G9 CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#)).

Workforce development bridge programs: some of which offer job readiness, sector-based training, remedial coursework, college coursework in a specific area (often leading to a certification), internships, and/or job placement support.

- **The Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project (YASEP) Program:** a sector-based training program that allow youth to build skills, earn certificates/credentials (sometimes college credits), and have a paid internship. To be eligible for these programs, students sometimes need to pass a TABE exam at a certain grade level. Learn more: www.jobsfirstnyc.org/uploads/2018.8.24YASEP_Scorecard.pdf

Youth workforce programs: For students who are not eligible for bridge programs, there are a variety of workforce development programs that have flexible and multiple pathways for young people, including job readiness, employment placement, certificate programs, college remedial and access programming, etc.

Example: [The DYCD’s Train & Earn and Learn & Earn](#) programs.

Refer to [Appendix H7 Progressive Career Development Programs for NYC Youth](#) for a diagram of some effective programs.

Once a program type is selected, go to the [Fair Futures Career Development Directory](#) to explore specific programs based on the young person’s interests, geographic preferences, etc.

K. EXPLORING VOCATIONAL & OTHER PATHWAYS

Some young people may be interested in another post-secondary pathway, such as the trades or another vocational, sector-based training program. The Coach should work with the young person and the Specialists to explore options. Using assessment tools can help youth to determine what post-secondary path is best for them.

For simplicity purposes, all vocational, workforce training, and direct-employment pathways fall under Fair Futures “Career Development” umbrella. [See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22.](#)

Youth should be aware that **vocational programs can be just as challenging and time-consuming as college (as sometimes there is this misperception!).**

For example, many accredited vocational programs in the trades require advanced skills/credentials just to apply. Union jobs in particular take several years of on-the-job experience (and/or a long apprenticeship) before one can apply and these exams are extremely competitive in themselves.

Young people should never be discouraged from embarking on a pathway in the trades, but they should exhibit a strong interest in the industry, as the credentials and experiences they earn will be mostly limited to that broader industry.

PROGRAMS TO EXPLORE (BOTH DURING HIGH SCHOOL AND AFTER GRADUATION) IF YOUNG PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS OR DIRECT EMPLOYMENT:

The School of Cooperative Technical Education (Coop Tech): a half-day vocational program that offers students hands-on training in a variety of trade areas. Coop Tech serves students who are 17 to 21 years of age; students are either in high school, an HSE program, or high school graduates. Coop Tech offers classes in all five boroughs and students are given the opportunity to take part in a Work Based Learning Program which provides job readiness skills, knowledge of basic safety and OSHA procedures, CPR, and real world of work exposure. Upon recommendation from program faculty, each student can be matched with one of Coop Tech's intern partnership sites.

See [Appendix H5 CoOp Tech Application](#) and visit www.co-optech.org for eligibility information.

There are a number of youth workforce training programs in NYC.

Some of these also offer on-site HSE programs, internships, assistance with obtaining and maintaining jobs, and sector-based trainings that offer credentials and certifications. Search the [Fair Futures Career Development Directory](#) to explore specific programs based on sector, industry, eligibility requirements, certificates earned, etc.

Examples include:

- **The DYCD's Train & Earn, Learn & Earn, and Advance & Earn programs.**
See <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/jobs-internships.page> for a description of these programs and a list of providers by borough. These will also be included on the [Fair Futures Career Development Directory](#).
- **Youth Build:** Offers HSE programming and 9 months of training/certifications in the trades to young people ages 17-24. Learn more: www.youthbuild.org
- **Job Corps:** Offers HSE preparation and career technical skills training in 10 high-growth sectors. Some sites offer residential placement where students can reside on campus. Learn more: www.jobcorps.gov
- **Young Adult Sectoral Based Employment Programs (YASEP):** These are sector-specific bridge programs where non-profit providers partner with at least one employer and industry skills training entity. Programs often include several weeks of remediation and soft-skills training to prepare young people for the longer skill-based training (and often a hands-on, paid internship) that leads to a certificate(s), credential(s), and/or college credits. Upon completion, job placement and retention support are offered. See www.yasepnetwork.org.

There are other adult **vocational/sector-based training programs** (which youth over age 18 can participate in) that offer free, sector-based, employer-recognized trainings in the trades/construction, IT, culinary, hospitality, healthcare, transportation, and other fields. Search the [Fair Futures Career Development Directory](#) to explore specific programs based on sector, industry, eligibility requirements, certificates earned, etc.

- **NYC's Small Business Services offers training programs for in-demand occupations across sectors at different locations throughout the city:** nyc.gov/site/sbs/careers/access-training.page

College certificate programs offer young people with a high school degree/HSE an opportunity to take courses and earn certificates and/or college credits in a specific area that can help them improve their employment credentials in that field. (It can also provide exposure to a college setting.) Most of the CUNY schools offer these certificate programs – see their websites to search by sector/program.

Union Jobs and Apprenticeships: Union-affiliated career pathways are a time-tested opportunity for youth with a strong interest in the trades or considering an alternative pathway to college. Union careers offer sustainable wages and viable career-tracks that offer skill development, leadership opportunities, and upward mobility. Many jobs in New York City's economy have union affiliation and apprenticeship training programs leading to entry-level and middle-skills jobs. There are approximately 100 apprenticeship programs in NYC, and over 90% are in the trades. Most apprenticeship programs are 1-6 years and can be competitive.

- **The NYS Department of Labor** has general information on union apprenticeships here: labor.ny.gov/apprenticeship/general/registration.shtm
- **Currently available union apprenticeships** are listed here (note that this is a statewide list broken down by district, so you have to scroll down to New York City): labor.ny.gov/pressreleases/apprenticeshiparchive.shtm
- **Technology apprenticeships in NYC:** p2atrades.org
- **One pre-apprenticeship program in the trades in NYC is called Building Works.** It's a 17-week program that offers free training and technical coursework to prepare candidates for an apprenticeship in the Carpenters Union. It requires a high school degree/HSE and participants have to test at a certain math and reading level.

Civil Service: There are also career opportunities in city government for young people with at least a high school degree/equivalent. Young people must pass a competitive civil service exam before they can be hired to become permanent employees. These exams assess a candidate's qualifications for a particular Civil Service job title. The exams can be very competitive, and many require college credits and/or experience in that area – they are often not entry-level jobs. ACS provides a test prep guide – see [Appendix H6 ACS Civil Service Test Prep Guide](#).

ACCES-VR: Students with IEPs and certain disabilities could enroll in ACCES-VR, which provides vocational rehabilitation services and should have opportunities to work in jobs integrated within their communities.

See [Appendix H4 ACCES-VR Information](#) to learn more.

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FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL

SECTION 22

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SECTION 22. CAREER DEVELOPMENT

A. OVERVIEW

One of the goals of the Fair Futures program is to help young people do **early career exploration and gain progressive career development experiences in line with their interests, strengths, and academic plans/goals** so that they can eventually navigate onto a living wage career path.

As such, via the Goals & Steps framework, we encourage **all young people who are coached to: 1) conduct career exploration each year; and 2) engage in at least one career development experience each year**. Career development experiences can include an internship, extracurricular, job training, employment, etc. These two Goals apply to all young people, regardless of their age or academic situation. That said, the type of career exploration they do and the type of career experience they engage in should always be tailored to their interests, academic situation, and developmental stage.

Why is it critical for young people to begin the process of **career exploration** early on? Most young people are unaware of the career opportunities out there and what skills and credentials are required. Career exploration is important to do as an ongoing activity (at least once/year), as young people's skills, interests, and credentials evolve. Conducting career exploration with young people who have not yet developed many interests is important, as it can help them start to build their sense of self. With these young people, doing career interest assessments such as Hats and Ladders can be helpful. When young people do know what they are interested in, conducting career exploration activities such as job shadowing or holding an informational interview can help them learn more about that particular career pathway, what it entails, what skills/credentials are required, and what the day-to-day is like.

Why is engaging in career development experiences each year so important (ideally that are in line with their interests and academic situation)? These experiences help young people:

- Build their resumes;
- Envision a potential pathway for themselves;
- Improve self-esteem and confidence;
- Gain soft skills that help them succeed in other areas of their life;
- Figure out what they like, what they don't, what they are good at;
- Develop a broad network of positive adult and peer supports.
- Reconnect/re-engage in an academic setting.

It is important to keep in mind that some foster youth can face a number of social-emotional challenges that can impede their ability to manage the demands/expectations of the workplace. For some young people, achieving "job readiness" will take time, experimentation, and multiple attempts. **If a young person experiences a setback, it can and should be used as a learning opportunity.** Losing a job or not completing a program is a natural part of the process, and best to learn these lessons while they are young and have the support of Fair Futures! While we never want to set a young person up for failure, an unsuccessful attempt in many ways can be a good learning experience, as long as **the Coach is there to help support them, reflect on the experience, and connect them to the next opportunity.**

B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT GOAL-SETTING

At a minimum, every actively coached young person should complete the "[Conduct Career Exploration & Preparation](#)" Goal each year. Ideally, they also complete the "[Engage in a Career Development Experience](#)" Goal for the reasons outlined above.

Upon program enrollment, the Coach should select both Goals in the Online Platform and work with the young person on these goals throughout the course of the year.

CONDUCT CAREER EXPLORATION & PREPARATION GOAL

This Goal includes doing at least one career exploration activity each year, either with the Coach or the Career Development Specialist. This activity can help identify potential career pathways for young people and ensure that their academic goals are aligned with these pathways.

Potential Steps/activities include:

- ☐ Complete Career Assessment with Coach or Career Specialist
Vetted career assessment tools include: Hats and Ladders and Career Cruiser
(See [Appendix H1 Career Exploration Tools – Hats and Ladders & Career Cruising](#))
- ☐ Complete Career Interest Assessment (YA WORC, etc.)
- ☐ The young person should work with the Career Development Specialist to complete a career assessment.
The results of the assessment will help the Coach and Career Development Specialist set goals that are in line with the young person's longer-term pathway, recognizing that this may shift over time.
- ☐ Discuss and explore career pathways with Career Development Specialist
- ☐ Participate in an informational interview in a career of interest
- ☐ Attend networking event
- ☐ Participate in a job shadowing experience in a career of interest
- ☐ Prepare for and attend a Career Fair/event

This goal also includes these two **Required Steps**:

- ☐ Create or refine/update resume with the Coach or Career Development Specialist to accurately and professionally reflect the young person's experiences to date. Resumes should include a summary section upfront, an extracurricular/leadership/community service activity section, and any scholarships or awards.
- ☐ Discuss career development goals for the year, and select at least 1 Career Development Experience/Activity that is in line with the young person's academic situation, interests, strengths, skills, and goals. The Coach or Specialist can then help the young person apply once they are ready.

All of the above steps and activities can also aid in the trust-building process. The young person will see that the Coach is taking an interest in his/her future and well-being.



Upon completing these activities, the above Steps can be checked off in the Online Platform.

1+ CAREER DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE GOAL

All young people should have at least one career development experience in line with their interests and goals/plans, if possible. Young people should complete as many career development goals as their school/college schedules, overall well-being, and life situations allow.

The five major categories of career development experiences are outlined in detail in below, and can be reviewed on the [Career Development Roadmap](#).

C. CAREER DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES BASED ON A YOUNG PERSON'S SITUATION

Coaches and/or Career Development Specialists should help young people select at least one experience each year, based on their academic situation/goals, interests, strengths, and needs.

There are five major categories of career development experiences. These can be viewed on the [Career Development Roadmap](#) and below.

CATEGORY 1. AGENCY-BASED JOB READINESS & SUPPORTED WORK EXPERIENCES

Some agencies have on-site programs that provide job readiness training and/or that support young people in succeeding in agency-based internships. These goal categories include:

[Participate in agency-based job readiness program \(e.g.: YA WORC\)](#) – this could be a career development goal/experience for young people in need of career preparation support (particularly those with limited/no work experience) and/or for young people who have a full academic schedule.

[Participate in agency-based internship \(e.g., Mentored Internship Program\)](#) – this could be a career development goal/experience for the year for young people who have limited/no work experience (*with the exception of previous participation in the Summer Youth Employment Program*), and/or young people who are:

- Disconnected from school/work
- Not enrolled in an academic setting full-time and have the need for a paid position
- Enrolled full-time in college and have the capacity to take on part-time work

CATEGORY 2. EXTERNAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES & PATHWAYS

These goals include:

["Participate in summer internship program \(e.g.: SYEP\)"](#) is a career development goal for any young person – including those who are disconnected, in high school, or in college – and who would like to earn money and/or have a career development experience over the summer.

- Ideally, the internship should be in a field that the young person is interested in.
- In NYC, the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) employs thousands of youth ages 14-24, and there are priority slots for foster youth.
- There is also an SYEP program called "Ladders for Leaders" that offers more leadership

["Participate in an extracurricular, youth development/leadership program, or community service experience"](#) is a career development goal for any young person, regardless of academic status. Research shows that these types of experiences can help young people not only build their resumes and the critical soft skills needed for the world of work, but also the self-esteem, sense of purpose/belonging, and broader network of positive peer and adult supports they need to succeed in work and life.

- For young people who are disconnected, this type of program could be the motivating factor for re-engaging in school.
- For youth in high school or college, it is a great way to build their resumes with leadership experiences (and obtain college scholarships). It can also be the "foot in the door" for a paid position down the road.
- Joining the Fair Futures Youth Board counts as this type of career development experience!
- NYC has hundreds of free youth development, extracurricular, and community service programs.

["Enroll in external workforce program"](#) is a career development goal for any young person who:

- **Is disconnected without a high school degree/equivalency and wants to enroll in an HSE program** that also offers other pathways such as internships, job readiness and employer-recognized training, part-time or full-time jobs, and credentials and certifications.

Good examples of these programs include the **DYCD's Train & Earn, Learn & Earn, and Advance & Earn** programs.

Co-Op Tech (The School of Cooperative Education) is another option for any young person who is enrolled in high school/HSE program and wants to gain hands-on training in the trades and earn certificate(s). Use [One Degree](#) to search for programs based on age, geography, requirements, etc.

- **Is enrolled in a YABC or evening school program and wants to earn another source of income during the day,** but is in need of job readiness training and/or is having difficulty finding a job and needs a program to assist them;
 - **Has a high school degree/HSE and is not on a college bound pathway,** but not yet prepared for an accredited vocational program or apprenticeship.
- NYC has many free youth workforce programs. Use [One Degree](#) to search for programs based on age, geography, requirements, etc.

[“Obtain \(and Complete\) an external internship”](#) could be a career development goal for a young person in high school, college, or a vocational program who is able to balance their academic schedule with an internship. An internship is also a useful stepping-stone for a young person who is attempting to obtain a part- or full-time job. The internship should ideally be in an area or organization of interest to the young person.

[“Apply to ACCES-VR”](#) is a career development goal for any young person who has a disability and could benefit from vocational rehabilitation services and/or jobs integrated within their communities. Students with IEPs who are on a college track can also receive supports from ACCES-VR. See [Appendix H4 ACCES-VR Information](#).

CATEGORY 3. ACCREDITED VOCATIONAL, SECTOR-BASED TRAINING, OR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

This goal, [“Participate in an accredited vocational, sector-based training, or apprenticeship program”](#) is for young people who have a high school degree/HSE and have determined with their Coach and Specialist, through assessment tools, career exploration, etc., that pursuing a trades or skills-based career is the best fit for them.



The **Career Development Specialist** should help the young person assess which program(s) they are eligible for, as many have grade-level or other skill-based requirements.

In cases where the young person is not yet eligible to enroll, the Coach and Career Development Specialist should work with the young person to gain the skills/experiences required. This can be done by enrolling in youth workforce/bridge programs. (Review [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21K](#))

Use [One Degree](#) to search for programs in line with the young person's interests and qualifications.

CATEGORY 4. CIVIL SERVICE

This includes the goal, [“Pass Civil Service Exam”](#).

It should be noted that many entry-level civil service positions require either college or a few years of experience in lieu of college. If a young person is interested in a particular position, the Coach and/or Specialist should help them read the qualification requirements very carefully and ensure they have those credentials before taking the exam.

It is also important to keep in mind that certain exams are only offered every few years, can be extremely competitive (e.g., hundreds or thousands of applications for a handful of positions), and take a year or more to be graded/certify the individual. If a young person wants to take an exam, the young person should have other career development experiences throughout this period of time.

This includes the goals of “[Obtaining Part-time/Seasonal Job](#)” “[Obtaining Full-time Job](#)”, and “[Obtaining Living Wage Job](#)”. This category can apply to any young person at any juncture. However, it is the Coach’s role to help them determine if a job is the most appropriate goal.

If a young person does not yet have a HS degree/HSE, a full-time job should only be the goal if absolutely necessary (due to their financial situation).

A better option would be for the young person to enroll in a transfer high school, YABC program, or HSE program with a paid internship, or to obtain a part-time job while working toward their degree. If the young person is absolutely opposed to school, then sometimes working a full-time, low-wage job can be a good way for them to realize that it may not be what they want for the rest of their lives.

If a young person has a HS degree/HSE and is not yet interested in college or a vocational program, working full-time can be a good goal to earn an income while they explore their post-secondary goals and options. If the young person needs assistance finding that full-time job, the Coach or Career Development Specialist can connect them to one of the youth workforce programs above (thus, the goal would be “Enroll in a job readiness/youth workforce development program” not “Obtain full-time Job”).

Another option is to encourage the young person to get a part-time job while doing a youth leadership activity/community service or other unpaid experience part-time that is more in line with their career goals/interests. The Coach should continue to support the young person to develop a post-secondary goal that is appropriate for them.

If a young person is enrolled in high school or college and can balance the academic needs with a part-time job, the Coach can help them obtain one in a similar fashion to the above. A paid internship that is in line with their career interests is also a great resume-building experience that could potentially lead to a full-time job after college. Work-study is also a great way to earn money while staying focused on coursework.

If a young person has completed their post-secondary goals, then obtaining a living-wage job should be the goal.

D. USING THE ONLINE PLATFORM

The following actions are taken in the Online Platform:

- ☐ Coach adds Career Goals to the Online Platform.
- ☐ Steps are checked off as they are completed. Coaches can choose to enter a brief note, if needed or relevant, in the “Notes” section. Steps can always be created, too!
- ☐ The above bullet is repeated until the Goal is completed. At which point, the Goal status should be marked as “Completed” or “Not Completed”
- ☐ A new Goal(s) and Step(s) are selected and the process above is repeated.



Should a young person's goal change at any point, then the goal should still be closed out in the platform and marked as “Did Not Complete.” The Coach should select one of the following reasons:

- “Could not complete due to attendance or performance”
- “Did not complete due to fit or continued interest”
- “Did not complete due to other opportunity/positive change in plans”
- “Did not complete due to other personal/health/family issues”
- “Other”

THREE EXAMPLE “GOAL CHANGED” SCENARIOS:

SCENARIO 1:

*If a young person’s goal changes from “**Complete external workforce program**” to another goal, it could be because that young person decided to enroll in college mid-way through the program because they were inspired by one of their peers.*

The Coach then would check off “**Did not complete due to other opportunity**”.

Next, the Coach would either select the academic goal “**Conduct college exploration/ exposure**” or “**Apply to college(s)**” and would also select another career development goal.

SCENARIO 2:

*If a young person’s goal changes from “**Complete external workforce program**” to another goal, it could be because the young person was not regularly attending the program and was kicked out.*

In that case, the Coach should mark off “**Could not complete due to attendance or performance**” and help the young person select another goal.

SCENARIO 3:

*If a young person’s goal changes from “**Complete external workforce program**” to another goal, it could be because the young person was hospitalized.*

In this case, the Coach should mark off “**Did not complete due to other personal/ health/ family issues**” and help the young person select another goal (once they are no longer hospitalized and ready to resume working with their Coach).

E. ROLE OF THE COACH IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The Coach and Career Development Specialist both play a role in helping the young person make goals and progress towards career development goals.

THE COACH’S ROLE, IN TERMS OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT INCLUDES:

- ☐ Assist all young people in obtaining working papers (if needed) and developing/ refining their resume within 90 days of program enrollment (the Career Development Specialist could also do this);
- ☐ Assist with career exploration and refers to the Career Development Specialist when more input/knowledge is required;
- ☐ Discuss the young person’s career development interests, strengths, and experiences, and help them select a career development experience for the year (this could also be done in conjunction with the Career Development Specialist);
- ☐ Refer young people to on-site opportunities to gain experiences in a supportive environment, including the job readiness program (e.g., Career Club, also known as YA WORC) and/or internship program (e.g., Mentored Internship Program);
- ☐ Assist high school students with exploring career development activities, based on their interests, goals, job readiness, etc.;
- ☐ Refer young people to the Career Development Specialist to help them apply to external programs (or for assistance with identifying the best-fit program);
- ☐ Visit any external programs with young people to assist with the enrollment and/or exploration process (the Career Development Specialist could also do this);
- ☐ Refer all young people enrolled in college to the Career Development Specialist to help them develop a career plan, and follows up accordingly;
- ☐ Provide weekly persistence coaching to young people enrolled in any on-site or external program, including checking in with them before and after their first day, and building a relationship with the primary person at the program to discuss attendance/performance.

F. ROLE OF THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST



- ❑ Oversee any on-site job readiness program(s) (e.g., YA WORC), including enrollment and scheduling of program cycles
- ❑ Oversee any on-site internship programs (e.g., Mentored Internship Program)
- ❑ Meet with young people to help them apply to external programs (after speaking with their Coach)
- ❑ Meet with young people who are not on a college-bound track (or who have left college) to explore other pathways/programs and create a career plan that is in line with their track
- ❑ Meet with young people who are enrolled in college to create a career plan
- ❑ Build relationships with external programs and employers to serve as pipeline
- ❑ Check in with employers after the 3-month, 6-year, and 1-year mark to verify persistence

G. ON-SITE CAREER READINESS & INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

A number of agencies offer on-site career readiness programs (YA WORC) and on-site internship programs (e.g. the Mentored Internship Program). The Career Development Specialist(s) could oversee both on-site programs.

YA WORC (YOUNG ADULT WORK OPPORTUNITIES FOR REWARDING CAREERS)

Developed by the Columbia Workforce Center, YA WORC is a developmentally appropriate, evidence-informed, career readiness preparation program for young people ages 13 – 24 who face challenging life circumstances.

Schedule/structure: 16-session curriculum.

Training: The Career Development Specialist is trained by the Columbia Workforce Center and leads the sessions.

Target Population: Completing YA WORC could be a career development goal for young people who have a full academic schedule and/or for young people in need of career preparation support (including those in high school and those with limited/no work experience).

Persistence: Coaches follow up with young people to reflect on their experiences in the program and provide ongoing support around persistence.

MENTORED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In this program, developed by the Pinkerton Foundation, young people are assigned a Mentor (an agency employee) who both supervises the young person's work and helps them to learn workplace norms.

Schedule/structure: It is a 12 week, 20 hours a week, paid internship program (\$15/hour). There is also a monthly learning community with other agencies that have a YA WORC program, which is facilitated by the Workforce Professional Training Institute and Youth Development Institute.

Target Population: Completing the Mentored Internship Program could be a career development goal for young people who have limited/no work experience (with the exception of previous participation in the Summer Youth Employment Program), and/or who are: disconnected from school/work; not enrolled in an academic setting full-time and have the need for a paid position; enrolled full-time in college and have the capacity to take on 20 hours per week of work.

Enrollment: After a young person is referred, the Career Development Specialist(s) sets up a 1:1 meeting with the young person to fill out paperwork, discuss the type of internship the young person is interested in, and the need for professional clothing.

Forms to be filled out include: a W4 form, I9 form, an HRA form, and an intake assessment.

Orientation: The orientation provides an overview of the program and what professionalism at the workplace entails. It also serves as a meet and greet where Mentors meet with Interns.

Persistence: The Career Development Specialist should check in on the participants and Mentors at each site on a biweekly basis, even if there are no concerns.

If there are any performance concerns, the Mentor will set up a meeting with the Career Development Specialist and the young person to discuss. Coaches also follow up with young people to reflect on their experiences in the program and provide ongoing support around persistence.

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SECTION 23

HOUSING & INDEPENDENT LIVING

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SECTION 23A & 23B

A. AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Young people in foster care in NYC who do not achieve permanency by age 21 “age out” of the system.

Permanency, defined in legal terms, is **being reunited** with the young person's birth family, **being adopted** by a foster parent, or **achieving Legal Custody/ Guardianship**.

The overall goal is to ensure that the young person is part of a safe, stable, loving family and has a broad network of supportive adults. There are many other ways a young person can achieve long-term, *relational permanency*, including a moral adoption or a Permanency Pact. However, unless the young person has a legal arrangement (adoption or Legal Custody/Guardianship), the young person will “age out” and leave foster care with an APPLA goal (Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement with a permanency resource).

When the young person has an APPLA goal, they are eligible for various forms of affordable housing in NYC (see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 23C](#) for more information). As it is illegal to allow a young person to be discharged from foster care without achieving permanency or a “stable living arrangement,” young people can stay in the foster care systems past age 21 if they do not obtain housing by then.

A **stable living arrangement** is defined as: a living arrangement reasonably expected to be the young adult's home for at least 12 months following discharge from care. A “stable living arrangement” cannot be a shelter or other temporary housing (such as a hotel or other living arrangement with 10 or more unrelated persons).

If an agency does not have a permanent housing option identified for a young adult nearing or over their 21st birthday, regardless of the extent to which the agency or young adult has made efforts to secure housing, a **Continuation of Care and Support (CCS21+) request** must be submitted to ACS for consideration and review.

B. ROLE OF THE COACH VS. CASE MANAGER VS. HOUSING SPECIALIST

OVERVIEW

While Coaches can help facilitate permanency in a number of ways (e.g., helping the young person regain trust in adults), the roles/responsibilities associated with permanency are in the domain of the Case Planner. Case Planners will also help with the housing application process if the agency does not have a Housing Specialist.

The role of the Coach is to help oversee the housing application process by ensuring that all applications for all forms of housing are submitted as early as possible (ideally by 19 years old, if the young person has an APPLA goal), and assisting the appropriate agency staff, if needed.

Once the young person has housing, it is the role of the Coach to help them transition into the apartment, help them maintain stable housing, build independent living skills, and transition to into permanent housing (if applicable).

ROLE OF THE CASE PLANNER

One of the primary roles of the Case Planner is to help young people achieve permanency. *Some agencies may also have Family Finders and/or Wendy's Wonderful Specialists who aid in the family finding process.*

If a young person has not achieved permanency and there are no plans in the works, a young person's goal (on paper) becomes **APPLA**. Some young people may also voluntarily choose to have an APPLA goal and age out of foster care.

When a young person has an APPLA goal, the Case Planner's role is to help the young person obtain housing/a stable living arrangement. Agencies that have Housing Specialists assist young people with the housing application process.

ROLE OF THE HOUSING SPECIALIST



The Housing Specialist helps young people with an APPLA goal submit applications to all forms of housing.

Once submitted, they help them access housing by following up on the application status, navigating any administrative issues that arise, and keeping in touch with the Coach and Case Planner.

For young people who have housing and are ready to transition into more permanent housing by/before age 26, the Housing Specialist can work with the Coach to assist these young people with the process.

If there is no Housing Specialist (as this role may be phased in over time), then the Case Planner (or Coach) would assist with the housing application process.

Overall, a Housing Specialist:

- ☐ Works with young people who are aging out to submit all forms of housing applications, as early as possible
- ☐ Checks in on young people's application status; follows up with NYCHA and supportive housing residences, when needed
- ☐ Helps young people transition into permanent housing, when applicable, by helping them obtain Section 8 and other housing vouchers, apply to the NYC affordable housing lottery, etc.
- ☐ Liaises with the Case Planner and Coach, as needed

ROLE OF THE COACH



Coaches will stick with young people until age 26, regardless of their permanency status, as all young people need assistance with their academic and career goals and more positive adult relationships in their lives.

In the Fair Futures model, once a young person has an APPLA+ goal, the Coach's role is to liaise with the Case Planner and Housing Specialist (and ACS, when needed) to ensure that the young person accesses stable, affordable housing. Regardless of who helps the young person fill out applications, the Coach will ensure that the process is moving along and that the young person attends their housing appointments.

During the application process and up until the time of discharge from foster care, the Coach serves as oversight and checks off a young person's progress completing "[Housing & Independent Living](#)" Goals. (See [Appendix E Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#) and [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 230](#))

Once a young person ages out and moves into their new home, they will no longer have a Case Planner; it then becomes the full role of the Coach to help them maintain stable housing and build independent living skills.

Overall, Coaches help young people navigate the difficult transition to independent living.

The Coach:

- ☐ Coordinates with a Housing Specialist (and/or Case Planner, if the agency does not have a Housing Specialist) to ensure that all young people's housing applications are submitted as early as possible (by age 19 if their goal is to age out);
- ☐ Accompanies the young person to visit supportive housing residences, when needed;
- ☐ Helps young people move in and obtain furniture;
- ☐ Helps young people obtain public assistance, if/when needed;
- ☐ Helps young people maintain their housing by providing independent living and life skills supports such as budgeting, obtaining a bank account, and advocating with landlords, if needed.

SECTION 23C

C. OVERVIEW OF TYPES OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR FOSTER YOUTH

There are several forms of housing available to foster youth aging out of care. Case Planners and Coaches should ensure that by age 19 foster youth with an APPLA goal apply for all forms of housing for which they are eligible for so that they have options.

That said, there are a number of factors to consider based on the young person's situation, needs, and preferences. Some young people may weigh certain factors more heavily than others or may not be eligible for certain types of housing.

KEY FACTORS:

- Proximity to work/school/family;
- Safety/neighborhood;
- Housing condition;
- Ability/willingness to live alone vs. with roommates;
- Permanent vs. temporary (until age 26) housing;
- Need for on-site supports (for young people with a mental health diagnosis, substance abuse history, or need support with day-to-day functioning);
- Other life/situational factors, including:
 - If the young person is pregnant/parenting;
 - If the young person has a felony record.

TIP! IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE FAMILIAR WITH KEY INFORMATION AND TERMINOLOGY:

Affordable Housing

All of the housing available to foster youth is deemed **affordable**, meaning that tenants will never be charged more than 30% of gross (pre-tax) income, and that public assistance is a form of acceptable income/rent payment.



Reminder: 30% of gross income is actually an estimated 50% of net (after-tax) income.

It is critical to inform youth that their portion of the rent will be approximately one whole paycheck (if paid biweekly) so that they can plan ahead for the cost of living when leaving care.

Supportive Housing

Some housing options are **supportive**, meaning they offer on-site staffing supports and services. These services are almost always voluntary, not mandated, and the quality can vary widely by residence. *Some residences, such as Good Shepherd Services' The Foyer, require young people to participate in services to be accepted into the program.*

Temporary Housing

Some housing options are **temporary**, meaning the young person has to transition out by/before age 26.

Permanent Housing

Some are **permanent housing**, meaning the young person can stay in that apartment as long as needed, as long as they are paying rent and meeting the requirements.

NYCHA

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), a public agency that provides permanent, affordable housing to NYC residents. NYCHA does not provide supportive services.

NY/NY 3

NY/NY 3 is a temporary, supportive housing program that provides housing to certain populations, including foster youth who age out. It includes supportive housing in a residential/congregate setting and scatter-site housing.

NYC 15

NYC 15 is a permanent, supportive housing program that provides housing to certain populations, including foster youth who age out and meet certain eligibility criteria. It includes supportive housing in a residential/congregate setting and scatter-site housing (both of which are permanent). *It has much more robust funding and support services as compared to NY/NY 3.*

TYPES OF HOUSING FOR FOSTER YOUTH AGING OUT

Please refer to the tools in [Appendices I1-I18](#) for each housing type for additional details related to eligibility, pros, cons, and for a full description of the application process, timeline, and tips.

NYCHA Apartments: Permanent housing

Apartments in public housing developments located throughout NYC.

Foster youth are given studios; young people with children typically get a 1-bedroom

Eligibility / How to apply:

- ❖ Youth can be employed or get a Presumptive Budget Letter before getting on public assistance (see NYCHA tool)
- ❖ Youth with a criminal history or pending charges may be denied
- ❖ Rent is based on 30% of gross income and re-evaluated annually (an eligible source of income is required during these reviews); paychecks, SSI and Public Assistance are acceptable means of paying rent
- ❖ Federal laws do not allow tenants to be full-time students; in practice, this can depend on the residence and the case worker – but it is best for tenants in college to have work/study income, a part-time job, or be on public assistance

Staffing & Supports: None

NY/NY 3 Supportive Housing (Residential Setting): Temporary

Apartments in a residence that provides on-site staffing supports and services

Some residences have single apartments/ studios and other residences have a congregate/roommate set-up

Eligibility / How to apply:

- ❖ No proof of income needed upon application
- ❖ Rent is based on 30% of gross income and re-evaluated annually; SSI and Public Assistance are acceptable means of paying rent, and some residences do not require a “formal source” of payment
- ❖ Residences charge \$215/month for young people who are not employed or on SSI
- ❖ Some residences only charge \$50/month for full-time students, whereas other residences (those that use tax credits) do not allow tenants to be full-time students; Coaches/Housing Specialists should be aware of which do and which do not

Staffing & Supports:

Case Managers on-site and sometimes other staff

Workshops and other services (e.g., job application assistance) are sometimes available; quality varies

Temporary Housing

Most residences require tenants to move out by age 26; however, this is difficult to enforce, and some tenants stay longer.

NY/NY 3 Supportive Housing (Scattered-site): Temporary

Youth live in regular apartments throughout the City where landlords accept the NY/NY 3 voucher; these apartments are not always in accessible/desirable areas. Some tenants have roommates, and some are single unit apartments

Eligibility / How to apply:

- ❖ No proof of income needed upon application
- ❖ Rent is based on 30% of gross income and re-evaluated annually; SSI and Public Assistance are acceptable means of paying rent

Staffing & Supports:

A Case Manager makes home visits, but overall there are less supports through scatter-site housing vs. residential

Temporary Housing

Most residences require tenants to move out by age 26; however, this is difficult to enforce, and some tenants stay longer.

TYPES OF HOUSING, CONTINUED

NYC 15 Supportive, Scattered-site Housing (Residential Setting): Permanent Housing

Youth live in regular apartments throughout the City where landlords accept the NYC 15 voucher; these apartments are not always in accessible/desirable areas

Some tenants have roommates, and some are single unit apartments

Eligibility / How to apply:

- ❖ No proof of income needed upon application
- ❖ Rent is based on 30% of gross income and re-evaluated annually; SSI and Public Assistance are acceptable means of paying rent
- ❖ Some residents only charge \$215/month for young people who are not employed or on SSI
- ❖ There are certain eligibility criteria; youth must have a clear need for supportive housing, not just affordable housing

Staffing & Supports:

Full staffing model includes Case Managers, Specialists, a Social Worker, etc.

Workshops and other educational and employment services are available

Permanent Housing:

While residents are not required to leave by age 26, moving on once the young person is ready is often encouraged by providers.

NYC 15 Supportive Housing (Residential Setting): Permanent Housing

Apartments in a residence with on-site staffing and support services. Some tenants have roommates, and some are single unit apartments

Eligibility / How to apply:

- ❖ No proof of income needed upon application
- ❖ Rent is based on 30% of gross income and re-evaluated annually; SSI and Public Assistance are acceptable means of paying rent
- ❖ Some residents only charge \$215/month for young people who are not employed or on SSI
- ❖ There are certain eligibility criteria; youth must have a clear need for supportive housing, not just affordable housing

Staffing & Supports:

Full staffing model includes Case Managers, Specialists, a Social Worker, etc.

Workshops and educational and employment services are available

Permanent Housing:

While residents are not required to leave by age 26, moving on once the young person is ready is often encouraged by providers.

Other Supportive Housing Residences (e.g., Harlem Dowling, The Foyer, McLaughlin Residence)

- ❖ The Harlem Dowling is a newly constructed building with 12 single units for foster youth in an accessible location.
- ❖ The McLaughlin Residence (formerly Edwin Gould Academy) is a housing program for young adults, ages 18 to 25 and has 36 studio apartments.
- ❖ The Foyer is a 2-year transitional supportive housing residence that serves provides supportive housing to young adults in their late teens and early twenties who have aged out of the child welfare system, are homeless, or at risk of homelessness.

Eligibility / How to apply:

Reach out to each individually for requirements.

Staffing & Supports:

All have on-site staffing and supports to varying degrees.

Type:

The Harlem Dowling is a permanent supportive housing residence run by Children's Village. The Foyer is a 2-year transitional program and the McLaughlin Residence is temporary supportive housing (both are operated by Good Shepherd Services).

Section 8 Apartment

A Section 8 voucher allows a young person to rent a market-rate apartment (for 30% of their gross income) anywhere that has a private landlord who accepts Section 8 vouchers. It can be difficult to locate an apartment.

Eligibility / How to apply:

- ❖ Rent is based on 30% of gross income and re-evaluated annually
- ❖ While there are no income requirements to apply to Section 8, young people will often need stable employment to secure an apartment
- ❖ Most youth will need a broker, which ACS will not pay for unless the youth is under 21.5 years of age or on an approved CCS21+. However, HPD will pay the broker fee on their vouchers; NYCHA Section 8 will not
- ❖ A credit score of over 500 is recommended to secure an apartment (some brokers can locate one with less)

Staffing & Supports: None

Permanent Housing:

It is permanent as long as the youth can pay the rent on-time!

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SECTION 23D

D. HOUSING & INDEPENDENT LIVING GOALS & STEPS

All young people aging out of foster care (with an APPLA goal) should apply to all forms of housing for which they are eligible by age 19, as it can take a couple of years to obtain housing.

AT A MINIMUM, YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD APPLY TO:

- **NYCHA**
- **NY/NY 3 and NYC 15 Supportive Housing** (if a young person's application is submitted to either NY/NY 3 or NYC 15, it will be considered for both).

It is important to apply to these supportive housing pathways as they are less restrictive than NYCHA, particularly if the young person is a full-time student, or can benefit from more supportive services.

TIP! [Appendix E Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#) contains a Roadmap of Housing & Independent Living Goals for visual purposes.

APPLYING AND OBTAINING HOUSING SUMMARY:

APPLY ↓	Coaches start by selecting the " Apply to Housing " Goals for as many forms of housing as the young person is eligible (minimally, NYCHA and Supportive Housing).
OBTAIN ↓	Once those Goals are completed and applications are submitted, the Goals will automatically become " Obtain Housing " Goals.
MAINTAIN ✓	Once the young person obtains housing, the Goals automatically become " Maintain Housing " and " Gain Independent Living/Life Skills ";

For young people in **NY NY 3 Supportive Housing**, *which ends at age 26*, the next Goal will become "Obtain permanent housing". One or more of the following Goals would be selected by the Coach or Housing Specialist:

APPLY ↓	" Apply to NYC Affordable Housing Lottery " (if affordable housing is needed)
OBTAIN →	" Use portable Section 8 Voucher to transition from temporary to permanent housing " (if affordable housing is needed and the youth has a Voucher)
	" Transition into Market-Rate Housing " (for young people who are ready for this step)

Young people who are already in permanent housing can also apply to any of the above forms of housing, when they are ready (e.g., once they have stable employment, good credit, and strong financial management/budgeting skills).

Agencies can decide whether the Coach or the Housing Specialist checks off the steps related to applying to and obtaining housing, as some are in the Coach's domain and some are the responsibility of the Housing Specialist. At agencies where there is no Housing Specialist and Case Planners assist with the housing application process, the Coach should be responsible for checking off the steps after they are completed (e.g., overseeing the process and assisting if needed).

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SECTION 23E

E. OBTAINING A NYCHA APARTMENT

It is not uncommon for young people in foster care who are aging out to say that they do not want to apply to NYCHA. Many grew up in NYCHA developments and returning to them feels like coming full circle - going back to where they came from. Other concerns often include safety and the condition of the apartments themselves.

While all of these concerns are valid, Coaches/Case Planners should strongly encourage all young people to apply for all forms of housing. Some NYCHA developments are better than others (and some are in very desirable locations in NYC). A young person can always choose to reject it and pursue other housing options. Many young people also change their minds over the course of the years that they are waiting for housing; it is always better to have the option. If a youth has negative past experiences in a specific neighborhood or borough of the city, encourage the young person to make a borough selection that makes them more comfortable.

See [Appendix I1 Applying to and Obtaining a NYCHA apartment](#) for a comprehensive summary that includes: a description of NYCHA housing; key highlights/information; pros/cons and considerations when applying; eligibility requirements; application details (required documents, application process, and timeline); and tips for Coaches and staff (common mistakes, best practices, etc.).

GOALS & STEPS

All young people aging out should have “[Apply to NYCHA](#)” as one of their Goals for obtaining housing.

For detailed Steps, please refer to the “[Apply to NYCHA](#)” Goal Worksheet in [Appendix E Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#)

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Get [Memorandum of Attestation](#) signed by agency Director
- ☐ Get [APPLA Certification Letter](#) signed by the Case Planner
- ☐ Get [Employment Referral Letter](#)
- ☐ Ensure youth has all vital documents and required documentation
- ☐ Ensure all documents and NYCHA application are submitted to ACS
- ☐ Ensure youth attends NYCHA Eligibility Interview

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ If youth is not employed, request Presumptive Budget Letter
- ☐ Follow up with ACS Housing to ensure application was accepted by NYCHA
- ☐ Advise youth to attend the ACS Housing Academy
- ☐ Prepare youth for eligibility interview

After the “Apply to NYCHA” Goal is complete, the Coach should select the “[Obtain NYCHA apartment](#)” Goal.

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Accompany youth to view the apartment they were offered
- ☐ Request discharge conference to be scheduled as soon as possible if youth does not reject apartment
- ☐ After discharge conference, apply for ACS \$1,000 discharge grant (for home goods, etc.)
- ☐ Help youth obtain the \$1,800 ACS grant to pay first month rent and needed furnishings
- ☐ Take youth shopping to select furniture
- ☐ Provide social-emotional support to young person during the transition process, check in on them

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ If youth is unhappy with apartment, discuss pros/cons of denying first choice
- ☐ Review home goods youth will need
- ☐ If youth is not employed, visit HRA with client to apply for public assistance (will need letter from agency that youth is being discharged)
- ☐ Assist youth with moving in - setting up the home, unpacking home goods, etc.

For detailed Steps, refer to the “[Obtain NYCHA apartment](#)” Goal Worksheet in [Appendix E Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#)

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SECTION 23F

F. OBTAINING SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (NY/NY 3 OR NYC 15)

NY/NY 3 is a temporary, supportive housing program that serves nine distinct populations, including foster youth who age out. In this program, young people need to transition out by age 26.

It includes both **congregate/residential supportive housing**, where services are voluntary, and **scattered-site housing**.

Note: The quality of services varies by housing provider.

NYC 15 is an initiative to provide 15,000 units of permanent, supportive housing over 15 years.

It has more funding than NY/NY 3 and thus more comprehensive staffing supports and on-site services for residents (all of which are voluntary). Under NYC 15, a youth aging out of care can qualify for single adult housing or housing for parenting youth (if they are pregnant/parenting). As NYC 15 is a more recent program, there are more spots open/opening.

The key differences between NY/NY 3 and NYC 15 are:

- NYC 15 is permanent housing and NY/NY 3 is temporary
- NYC 15 includes more robust staffing/on-site supports than NY/NY 3 (both are voluntary)
- While both applications require applicants to show they need supportive housing (not just affordable housing), NYC 15 is stricter about these requirements. Most foster youth aging out should meet these requirements – a clinical diagnosis is not required – if the forms are filled out correctly.

See [Appendix 17 Applying to and Obtaining Supportive Housing NYC 15](#) to ensure that a young person's application is accepted.



When a NY/NY 3 application is submitted, the application is also automatically screened for NYC 15 eligibility.

It is important that all submitted documents align with each other and clearly describe the need for supportive housing (not just affordable housing). While a young person's strengths can and should be highlighted, it is necessary to provide specifics and examples as to why they still need support in order for the application to be approved.

See [Appendix 15 Applying to and Obtaining Supportive Housing NY NY 3](#) and [Appendix 17 Applying to and Obtaining Supportive Housing NYC 15](#) or a comprehensive summary of both programs that includes: a program description; key highlights/information; pros/cons and considerations when applying; eligibility requirements; application details (required documents, application process, and timeline); and tips for Coaches and staff (common mistakes, best practices, etc.).

For a list of housing providers, see [Appendix 16 NY NY 3 Housing Providers](#) and [Appendix 18 NYC 15 Supportive Housing Providers](#).

GOALS & STEPS

All young people aging out should have [“Apply to supportive housing \(NY/NY 3 or NYC 15\)”](#) as one of their Goals for obtaining housing.

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Complete psychosocial; ensure that the psychosocial outlines need for supportive housing and is consistent with the application
- ☐ Obtain documentation of foster care history
- ☐ Submit HRA2010e application via online CAPS system

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ If psychiatric evaluation is required, work with client's psychiatrist to have this completed; if youth does not have a psychiatrist, a LCSW is now permitted by HRA to complete this evaluation.
- ☐ Request a copy of the supportive housing application

After the “Apply to Supportive Housing (NY/NY3 or NYC 15)” Goal is complete, the Coach should select the Goal, “[Obtain Supportive Housing \(NY/NY 3 or NYC 15\)](#)”

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Contact supportive housing providers where packet was submitted
- ☐ Prepare youth for interview once a spot opens
- ☐ Accompany youth on day of interview and ensure youth has all documents
- ☐ Once accepted, schedule trial discharge conference
- ☐ Apply for \$645 ACS grant for first month’s rent
- ☐ Apply for discharge grant for home goods/furniture
- ☐ Provide social-emotional support to young person during the transition process – check in on them

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ Advocate for youth to receive an interview at any agency with a vacancy
- ☐ Visit residences with young person to increase chances of being accepted
- ☐ If youth is not employed, visit HRA with client to apply for public assistance (will need letter from agency that youth is being discharged)
- ☐ Assist youth with moving in - setting up the home, unpacking home goods, etc.

See [Appendix I5 Applying to and Obtaining Supportive Housing NY NY 3](#) and [Appendix I7 Applying to and Obtaining Supportive Housing NYC 15](#) for additional information.

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SECTION 23G

G. OBTAINING OTHER SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

There are some supportive housing residences that do not receive the **NY/NY 3** or **NYC 15** funding, and thus have separate application processes. Two of these residences include: the Harlem Dowling residence and the McLaughlin East Harlem residence.

THE HARLEM DOWLING RESIDENCE

This building has 12 units for former foster youth and provides permanent, supportive housing. It is operated by [Children's Village](#). The residence blends supportive, affordable housing with market-rate units. The studio apartments are large, spacious, and filled with sunlight, and the building is located in a desirable location in Harlem, easily accessible by public transportation.

See [Appendix I10 Applying to and Obtaining Supportive Permanent Housing Harlem Dowling](#) for a comprehensive summary that includes: key highlights/information; pros/cons and considerations when applying; eligibility requirements; application details (required documents, application process, and timeline); and tips for Coaches and staff (common mistakes, best practices, etc.).

THE MCLAUGHLIN EAST HARLEM RESIDENCE

This building is run by [Good Shepherd Services](#). McLaughlin East Harlem Residence is a housing program for young adults, ages 18 to 25, that provides safe, affordable housing to 36 young adults in studio apartments. The residence also has 15 supportive housing units which consist of 15 one-bedroom apartments for a single parent with one child.

In addition to housing, McLaughlin East Harlem Residence offers a host of services and supports which include counseling, peer groups, life-skills training, and referrals-all designed to meet the emotional, employment, housing, educational, and legal needs of youth in one convenient setting.

YOUNG PEOPLE APPLYING TO SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SHOULD ALSO APPLY TO BOTH THE HARLEM DOWLING & MCLAUGHLIN EAST HARLEM RESIDENCES.

GOALS & STEPS

The **Required Steps** associated with the goal, "[Apply to other supportive housing residence program \(e.g., Harlem Dowling, McLaughlin East Harlem Residence, etc.\)](#)", include:

- ☐ Reach out to residence
- ☐ Complete application

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ Submit any other required documentation (e.g., credit check, background check, paystubs, etc.)

Once the Goal "[Apply to other supportive housing residence program \(e.g., Harlem Dowling, McLaughlin East Harlem Residence, etc.\)](#)" is complete, Coaches should select the Goal, "[Obtain other supportive housing residence \(e.g., Harlem Dowling, McLaughlin East Harlem Residence, etc.\)](#)".

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Follow up to ensure application was received and assess for upcoming vacancies
- ☐ Prepare youth for interview process
- ☐ Provide social-emotional support during the transition process - check in on them (*text, call, visit*)

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ If called for interview, accompany youth on day of interview
- ☐ Assist youth with moving in - setting up the home, unpacking home goods, etc

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SECTION 23H

H. OBTAINING SECTION 8 – PERMANENT HOUSING

NYCHA Section 8 is administered by NYCHA and provides **Section 8 vouchers** to youth ages eighteen and older who are transitioning out of foster care.

A **Section 8 voucher** allows a young person to rent a market-rate apartment (for 30% of their gross income) anywhere that has a private landlord who accepts Section 8 vouchers. **In general, this pathway is not recommended for youth aging out of care unless they have very stable employment and good credit, which is not often the case.**

Vouchers for foster youth aging out are also limited and there is a waiting list. Some supportive housing providers also get access to Section 8 vouchers for residents so they can transition out by/before age 26.

GOALS & STEPS

The **Required Steps** for the “[Apply to Section 8 Housing while in foster care](#)” Goal include:

- ☐ Contact ACS with required information to add youth to waitlist

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ Inform youth of long waitlist for Section 8 and the pros/cons of the program
- ☐ If youth is approaching 24 years old, inform ACS of urgency of case

See [Appendix I9 Applying Directly to Section 8 from Foster Care](#) for details about Applying to and Obtaining Section 8 Housing.

GOALS & STEPS

The steps for the “[Obtain Section 8 Housing straight from foster care](#)” Goal:

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Ensure youth has stable employment and good credit before trying to obtain housing
- ☐ Run youth's credit score
- ☐ Once called for voucher, immediately assist youth in locating an apartment (no fee apartments or connect to broker)
- ☐ Discuss with youth and agency staff how the one-month security deposit will be paid to landlord
- ☐ Once a signed lease is secured, submit to ACS Housing staff
- ☐ Provide social-emotional support to young person during the transition process – check in on them

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ Outreach to brokers to find those with section 8 apartments available for viewing
- ☐ If needed, work with youth to build positive credit
- ☐ Counsel youth during this trying and difficult process
- ☐ If a broker was used, apply to the \$1,800 ACS grant and ACS discharge grant to cover the broker fee
- ☐ If a broker was used, discuss with youth and agency how furniture and home goods will be provided for
- ☐ Assist youth with moving in - setting up the home, unpacking home goods, etc.

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SECTION 23I

I. HOUSING FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS: THE DORMITORY PROJECT AND ACS COLLEGE ROOM & BOARD

The Dorm Project, as discussed in the [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21F](#), is a collaboration among ACS, CUNY, and the New York Foundling to enable foster youth attending any CUNY college to live in dorms affiliated with Queens College, City College, and John Jay College with a variety of supports, including tutors and college success coaches.

While these are not considered Housing “Goals,” they can be a great option for students who have not yet secured housing and who want to have the dorm experience. Students can remain in the dorm until age 25 or until college graduation (whichever comes first). They are supported with a range of academic, financial, and social supports - on site tutoring, workshops, a living stipend, and College Success Coaches.

Students attending colleges other than CUNY with dorms can also apply to the ACS College Room & Board program, where they receive the financial stipend and all expenses covered.

Benefits:

- Youth can have the ‘dorm experience’ and can move out of the foster home prior to securing independent housing;
- Youth can stay in the dorm while awaiting NYCHA/supportive housing/section 8 approval;
- The cost of college tuition, room, board, books, and transportation is fully covered;
- Youth receive a robust weekly stipend that combines their various forms of financial aid so that they do not have to work and can stay on-track financially (instead of having their funding provided in large lump sums);
- Youth in The Dormitory Project receive comprehensive on site supports (both coaching and weekly tutoring).

Important considerations:

Once young people’s NYCHA apartment or supportive housing spot becomes available, they have to make the difficult decision of whether to take the housing (which will provide them with stability after college) and forgo the robust financial and academic supports they receive through the Dorm Project, or stay at the Dorm Project.

In the event they reject the housing but end up getting kicked out of the Dorm Project or leaving college, the young person is in a difficult situation.

If a youth leaves The Dormitory Project while under 21 years of age they can return to their agency and be placed in a foster home. However, this option is not available to youth who are over 21 years old.

- Youth could apply for Section 8 and reapply for supportive housing, but these options would not lead to an immediate housing solution.
- Youth in The Dormitory Project or ACS College Room & Board are not on CCS21+ status – so they will not be eligible for ACS grants when they secure an apartment if they are past the age of 21.5 years old.
- Youth must secure another apartment before college graduation, and likely will not have a full-time job and the financial resources to do so.
- Depending on student’s college, they may have a long commute.
- Students will share the apartment with 2 to 4 other college foster youth

Eligibility:

Students must be: between 17-24 years old, enrolled in a CUNY college, and in foster care (or have a history of foster care at least one year past 16th birthday).

For more information, including a detailed description of the supports, the application process, and tips for Coaches, see [Appendix G13 Fair Futures Guide to the Dorm Project](#) and [Appendix G14 ACS College Room & Board](#).

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SECTION 23J

J. ACS FURNITURE & HOUSING GRANTS

ACS HAS TWO “ONE-SHOT” GRANTS FOR FOSTER YOUTH:

Note: Youth cannot be older than 21.5 years of age to apply

-  **A move-in grant of \$1,800** which can be used for a security deposit, first month's rent, broker's fee, moving expenses, and/or furniture (as applicable).
Youth moving into supportive housing are only eligible for \$645 of the move-in grant, not the full \$1,800.
-  **A grant of up to \$1,800 for rent arrears;** this can only be used one time

In 2017, ACS reinstated the **Discharge Grant**. This provides additional funding of up to **\$1,000** to assist youth aging out of foster care with essential items needed when moving into their apartment. The grant will cover items such as home goods, metro-cards, food, furniture, children's clothing, toiletries, etc.

The **Discharge Grant** can be used for a TV no larger than 50 inches (limit one), but all other entertainment electronics (video games etc.) will not be reimbursed.

Note: ACS will not reimburse sales tax.

TIP! Coaches should always ensure the young person applies for these grants, when needed, whether it is the Case Planner, Housing Specialist, or Coach assisting in the process.
This is one of the Required Steps in each of the “obtaining housing” goals.

For details on how to apply and tips, see [Appendix I11_ACS Housing Subsidy](#) and [Appendix I13_Discharge Grant Reimbursement Request Forms](#).

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SECTION 23K

K. TRANSITIONING YOUNG PEOPLE INTO HOUSING

The Coach's role is to help ensure that young people transition smoothly into housing. Ideally, the Coach helps the young person set up their apartment. This can be an important bonding experience.

MOVING INTO A FIRST APARTMENT IS A BIG TRANSITION, AND THERE ARE SEVERAL THINGS COACHES CAN DO TO LESSEN THE STRESS INVOLVED FOR THE YOUNG PERSON:

Help them move in and furnish their apartment

- ☐ Work with the Housing Specialist and Case Planner to ensure all grants are applied for as fast as possible. It will be much harder if the youth must live in their apartment for weeks without the basic necessities.
- ☐ Involve the young person in picking out decor items for the apartment (e.g., ask them to think about what color they want for their bedding and bathroom, shop online or in person together to select the items).
See [Appendix I14 FairFutures Home Goods Checklist](#) for a list of items that young people will need for their apartment.
- ☐ Assist the young person in actually setting up the home; open boxes together and put away items, help set up the bedding and bathroom, etc. It will be a better experience for the young person if they have help with the set up and clean up. Many young people do not know how to put together furniture, and guidance can be great independent living skills instruction in the real environment.

Make a budget and explain how rent works

- ☐ Explain housing rules so they know what to expect:
 - Their rent will go up as income increases;
 - Relay to youth that they can expect 50% of their income, or one full paycheck, to be their rent calculation. Help youth plan for rent increases by discussing this when they receive a raise/higher paying job.
 - If they lose a job, they must immediately apply for public assistance and get HRA to pay the rent so they do not accrue arrears while seeking employment;
 - In some situations youth may have their housing assistance turned off, but not fully understand this because they are still receiving food stamps. Youth should check their rent statement monthly to ensure HRA paid the rent. You can also check the HRA site or app with the young person to confirm the benefits being received.
- ☐ Work out a budget with the young person outlining their income and each expense item. It is important to know how much money they can allocate to food/entertainment after paying their rent and necessary bills.
If the young person is working and not eligible for full HRA, they may still be entitled to food stamps.

Seeing their budget broken down will help the Coach determine if this should be explored further.

See [Appendix I16 Independent Living Budget Tool](#).

Provide social/emotional support

- ☐ Talk to young person a lot in the first weeks and months of the transition.
Despite the fact that many young people cannot wait to leave foster care, it is often scarier than they predicted! Many young people are used to having multiple other people in the home, noise, and voices at night; it can be disconcerting to be alone in an apartment for the first time.
- ☐ Understand how hard this transition is and that youth may regress or push away temporarily.
It is more important than ever to remain consistent in their lives!



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SECTION 23L

L. APPLYING FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

If a young person does not have a regular paycheck when they move into NYCHA or supportive housing, they need to apply for public assistance.

TIP! *There may be some exceptions to this, however - some supportive housing residences allow young people enrolled in school/ vocational program to only pay a certain amount.*

Youth who are aging out of care are eligible to apply for Public Assistance through the Special Projects Center.

Youth in any borough are eligible for this location on 109 East 16th Street, 12th floor, NY, NY.

The staff at this HRA location are more knowledgeable about aging out of foster care, the wait time is significantly lower, and the experience is overall less stressful for the young person.

The youth can select a morning or afternoon appointment but will be assigned the specific time.

The Coach or Case Planner should always accompany a young person to obtain public assistance.

It is a very stressful office and can be overwhelming for the young person. The Coach can be there to provide emotional support, model appropriate self-advocacy, and assist in ensuring all needed documents and information are presented.

Coaches should also note the dates for follow up appointments and remind youth of these dates prior to the assigned day. *If a youth misses any of the follow up appointments, the case will be declined and the whole process must begin again.* This can cause an unnecessary delay in securing income, which could lead to the youth accruing arrears immediately after securing an apartment.



Once a youth is out of care for approximately six months, they are no longer eligible to utilize the Special Projects Center. For a young person whose case has closed and needs help re-applying, they must access their local assigned office. Coaches should be sure to verify the correct office prior to meeting a youth. HRA staff will not be able to assist youth who are not zoned for their specific office.

Each agency should apply to become Provider Portal Partners with HRA. This allows for clients to voluntarily opt to share the case information with the Coach or Housing Specialist. Coaches can access upcoming appointments, receive case alerts, assist clients with recertifying without visiting a HRA office, requesting budget letters or fair fares cards, and many other features.

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SECTION 23M

M. MAINTAINING HOUSING

One in 4 youth will be homeless within 3 years of leaving foster care in NYC. The role of the Coach to ensure this does not happen by helping young people who age out maintain stable housing and build independent living skills while supporting them on their academic/career paths.

AVOIDING RENT ARREARS.

Rental arrears are the primary reason why young people lose their apartments. NYCHA can begin eviction proceedings after two months of lack of payment on the account.

IMPORTANT TIP FOR COACHES: Ask about rent every month.

The Coach should ask the young person about their ability to pay their rent, or any fear that they will be unable to pay in the coming months. Catching arrears in the first month or two can make the difference in avoiding housing court.

WAYS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE AVOID RENTAL ARREARS BASED ON THEIR SITUATION:

Loss of employment

- If a young person loses their job, rental arrears can quickly pile up. As soon as a youth is unemployed, they should bring a letter of termination and proof of Unemployment Benefits application (if applicable) to their NYCHA Housing Assistant/Supportive Housing management office. When this is not possible, the youth should write a letter stating their last date of work, and the Coach should write an advocacy letter to support the youth's case.
- The rent cannot be recalculated without proof of income. Therefore, the youth must also immediately apply for public assistance benefits to cover the rent cost while they search for new employment. The Coach can accompany them to public assistance and ensure the youth attends all follow up appointments; since the start of Covid-19, many of these appointments are now handled via phone, so it is important the youth is available at the scheduled time.
- The HRA case will be automatically closed if the young person misses any follow up appointments, and the process will have to start again. It takes HRA 30-45 days to make a determination, so applying immediately is crucial to not incurring ongoing rental arrears.

Loss of public assistance

- For youth on public assistance, it is crucial that their case remain active and open in order for the rent to be paid. **If an HRA case is closed for any reason, the rent will not be paid and arrears will accrue.** Youth and Coaches should check via NYCHA's online portal or app every month for NYCHA residents, and rent statements for voucher holders, to make sure that the rent has been paid by HRA.

Increase in rent

- If a young person has secured their apartment with a presumptive budget letter, the rent will automatically be set at the HRA amount (around \$215) even if the youth is paying the rent on their own.
- If a young person either gains employment or earns a higher wage, their rent will be increased when NYCHA or any subsidized housing does the annual case review. For youth who see a large increase in wages, the increase in rent can be significant. For example, it is very hard for youth accustomed to paying \$200-300 in rent to suddenly owe \$800-900.

YOUTH SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT RENT IS TYPICALLY THE COST OF ONE FULL BIWEEKLY PAYCHECK.



If a youth obtains a new job and makes \$500 every 2 weeks, they should begin to save and budget for an increase in their rent to around \$500 a month. Preparing the youth prior to this increase taking effect allows them to prepare by saving and lessens the potential shock of seeing that level of increase.

AVOIDING EVICTION

NYCHA can start eviction proceedings after two months of lack of payment on the account. It is less common for a supportive housing residence to proceed with eviction, however.

If a young person receives a court notice in the mail, they should tell their Coach immediately. The Coach should always attend any Court appearance with the youth in order to advocate and clearly articulate the issues. While supportive housing, by nature, is not adamant about pursuing eviction of a youth for lack of payment, this can become an issue as they approach 26. Therefore, every step should be taken to avoid accruing large arrears despite the type/level of housing.

There are options for paying rental arrears:

- **HRA One-Shot Deal**
Youth are eligible for an HRA one-shot deal whether on public assistance or not. However, you must have income to receive the one-shot deal; any youth who applies and does not have income (either from employment or public assistance) will be denied.
- **ACS One-Shot Deal**
ACS will pay up to \$1,800 in rental arrears one time per youth. However, the youth cannot be older than 21.5 years of age, making this not a viable option for older youth.

WAYS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE AVOID EVICTION BASED ON THEIR SITUATION:

If the young person is employed:

The young person and the Coach can apply directly for a one-shot deal without applying for any other HRA benefits.

If the rent is more than the \$215 that HRA designates for a single adult, then the youth will owe this money to HRA. HRA will set up a payment plan and the youth would make monthly payments to HRA. *Youth will need proof of identity, proof of residence, proof of income, and a rental breakdown from NYCHA stating how much is owed.*

If the young person is not employed:

The young person and the Coach must apply for overall public assistance. This will both stop further arrears from accruing and will allow the youth to have income. Youth will need proof of identity and residence to apply.

After the case has been opened (30-45 days), then the Coach should accompany the youth to HRA to apply for a one-shot deal.

Eviction Proceeding in Court:

NYCHA can pursue an eviction proceeding either through their NYCHA office (250 Broadway) or one of the borough civil courts. The purpose of these hearings is to create a stipulation to get the arrears paid, which if not done by the date agreed upon, can lead to an eviction.

Court personnel are familiar with HRA timelines, so 3 months is frequently given to allow for payment to be made. The young person and the Coach should bring any Court stipulations with them to HRA, if applying for the one-shot deal after a court date has been attended.

Coaches should explain the housing rules/policies:

The Coach should ensure the young person understands housing rules and policies around smoking, pets, noise, guests, etc.

Young people can be evicted for having unauthorized adults living in the home.

If a young person has someone staying temporarily, the young person should inform NYCHA. The guest can remain off the lease as long as they stay is under 6 months.

For anyone staying longer than 6 months, NYCHA asks that they be added to the lease. The rent would then be increased based on an increase in household composition size. If the individual has certain criminal history, they can be denied.

MAINTAIN HOUSING - GOALS & STEPS

Once housing is obtained, the Coach should select the Goal "[Maintain Housing](#)" and complete the Steps listed in the worksheet.

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Every month, ask young person if rent was paid, or if they expect any difficulty paying rent in the future
- ☐ Discuss the lease renewal process with youth and how rent can increase/decrease based on changes in income
- ☐ Walk through any housing rules/regulations so the young person is clear on what could get them kicked out

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ Have youth download NYCHA app and create online account
- ☐ Coach youth on how to use the NYCHA app to submit tickets for repairs, check balances, make payments, etc.
- ☐ If applicable, ask youth if any issues paying utilities
- ☐ Meet with housing manager to rectify any issues (rent too high, repairs needed, etc.)
- ☐ If youth becomes unemployed, help youth get rent re-adjusted and get on public assistance while seeking employment
- ☐ If facing eviction, Coach/Housing Specialist to immediately meet with youth to review notices and gather documents needed for Court
- ☐ If facing eviction, Coach/Housing Specialist to accompany youth to any court or NYCHA hearings
- ☐ If facing eviction and there is no current income source, Coach/Housing Specialist to accompany youth to open a PA case so they can get a one-shot deal to pay for the arrears
- ☐ Coach/Housing Specialist to accompany youth to HRA to apply for a one-shot deal to pay arrears
- ☐ If facing eviction, Coach to stay in contact. Communicate with youth every 1-2 days to manage the anxiety and stress that proceedings cause.

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SECTION 23N

N. BUILDING INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

Once housing is obtained, the Coach should also select the Goal “[Gain Independent Living/Life Skills](#)” and follow the Required and Potential Steps to help a young person maintain housing.

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Obtain copies of all vital documents;
- ☐ Obtain bank account;
- ☐ Create a monthly budget.
(See [Appendix I16 Independent Living Budget Tool](#)).

Potentials Steps include:

- ☐ Discuss means of building positive credit and take steps to enact plan;
- ☐ Open a savings account;
- ☐ Take financial management workshop or course;
- ☐ Learn how to grocery shop and make meals;
- ☐ Discuss home organization/maintaining a home;
- ☐ Encourage youth to attend networking events, workshops, and agency events to build professional adult relationships.

The best way to gain skills is through experiential activities. See [Appendix I15 Building Independent Living Skills](#) for examples of critical independent living skills and experiential activities.

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SECTION 230

O. TRANSITIONING TO PERMANENT HOUSING

Young people living in temporary housing will have to transition out by age 26. In practice, some young people stay past 26, but the goal should always be to help them successfully transition by/before then. Other young people living in NYCHA apartments may reach the point where they would like to obtain a nicer apartment.

TIP! The Coach and the Housing Specialist should help with this second transition into independent living, which will require stable employment, good credit, and financial management/budgeting skills.

If the young person needs to maintain affordable housing (which many will, living in NYC), the two primary pathways are through a **portable Section 8 Voucher** or the **NYC Affordable Housing Lottery**.

PORTABLE SECTION 8 VOUCHERS

Some supportive housing providers get access to **Section 8 vouchers** for residents so they can transition out by/before age 26.

A Section 8 voucher allows a young person to rent a market-rate apartment (for 30% of their gross income) anywhere that has a private landlord who accepts Section 8 vouchers. Landlords will often require stable employment/income and good credit.

See [Appendix I17 Transitioning to Permanent Housing – Using a Portable Section 8 Voucher](#), for a summary that includes: key highlights/information; pros/cons and considerations; eligibility; and tips on securing an apartment.

GOALS & STEPS

For young people with the Goal [“Use Portable Section 8 Voucher to transition from temporary to permanent housing”](#):

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Ensure young person has stable employment and solid financial management/budgeting skills
- ☐ Outreach to brokers to find those with Section 8 apartments available for viewing
- ☐ Run youth's credit score
- ☐ Assist youth in locating/visiting apartments (no fee apartments or connect to broker)
- ☐ Discuss with youth how the one-month security deposit will be paid to landlord
- ☐ Provide social-emotional support to young person during the transition process – check in on them.

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ If needed, work with youth to build positive credit
- ☐ Counsel youth during this trying and difficult process
- ☐ Assist youth with moving in - setting up the home, unpacking home goods, etc.

NYC AFFORDABLE HOUSING LOTTERY

There are many affordable, rent-stabilized apartments throughout NYC at a variety of income levels. If/when a young person is ready to transition out of their supportive housing or NYCHA apartment into permanent, affordable housing, they should apply to the **NYC Affordable Housing Lottery**. Many of the buildings are new and in desirable locations.

All young people can apply to the NYC Affordable Housing Lottery, as long as they have stable employment

(public assistance is not an eligible form of income for most apartments, unless the youth is also holding a voucher or has an additional source of income such as SSI). While the apartments are considered affordable housing, they are not subsidized housing – meaning the rent will not fluctuate with changes in income which could put a youth at risk of eviction if they have frequent income changes (loss of employment at times, big changes in income, etc.)

Once a young person is nearing a living-wage career path and has been able to maintain steady employment, the Coach or Housing Specialist should help them apply to the **NYC Affordable Housing Lottery**, as it can take 1-2+ years to get called.

During that waiting period, the Coach should help the young person build stronger financial management and budgeting skills, perhaps by connecting them to workshops.

See [Appendix I18 Transitioning to Permanent Housing – NYC Affordable Housing Lottery](#) for details

GOALS & STEPS

For young people with a Goal “[Apply to NYC Affordable Housing Lottery](#)”:

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Ensure young person has stable employment and solid financial management/budgeting skills before considering this transition
- ☐ Meet with youth to create an online account on [NYC Housing Connect](#)
- ☐ Apply for any housing youth is currently eligible for

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ Review and explain to the youth how to use the website

GOALS & STEPS

Once the “Apply to NYC Affordable Housing Lottery” Goal is complete, Coaches should select the Goal, “[Obtain NYC Affordable Housing Lottery](#)”:

Required Steps include:

- ☐ Discuss plan with youth for moving from current housing situation
- ☐ Provide social-emotional support to young person during the transition process – check in on them

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ If contacted for an apartment, assist youth in completing application
- ☐ Prepare youth for interview
- ☐ Follow up with youth after interview
- ☐ Coach youth on length of time the process can take, and provide regular support
- ☐ Assist youth with moving in - setting up the home, unpacking home goods, etc.

See [Appendix I18 Transitioning to Permanent Housing – NYC Affordable Housing Lottery](#) for details.

MARKET-RATE APARTMENTS

Some young people may be ready to transition into a market-rate setting (although if this is the case, they should still apply to the NYC Affordable Housing Lottery).

For young people exploring this option, the Coach should help them understand the financial implications/responsibilities as well as the pros/cons of leaving affordable housing:

They should help them understand that this often requires a broker’s fee, first/last month rent, and a security deposit, a substantial amount of money.

They should also be very clear that once a young person moves into a market-rate apartment, there is no option for rental adjustment if they lose their job or get another (lower-paying) one. The young person would have to make sure never to leave their job until they have another one secured.

GOALS & STEPS

For young people that have the Goal of “[Transition into market-rate housing](#)”, the **Required Steps** include:

- ☐ Walk through the pros and cons of leaving current situation/giving up their apartment for market-rate housing
- ☐ Create a budget with young person: assess ability to pay rent for the first and last months, and pay a security deposit

Potential Steps include:

- ☐ Encourage young person to explore options in affordable areas outside of the 5 boroughs (e.g., New Jersey)
- ☐ Assist young person in searching for and viewing apartments
- ☐ Assist youth with moving in (e.g., setting up the home, unpacking home goods, etc.)

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FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL

SECTION 24

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SECTION 24. EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION & PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

A. ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR



The Supervisor's overall job is to empower, inspire and motivate their team of Coaches and/or Specialists to work together to achieve programmatic goals. This includes helping the team build and develop healthy relationships with the young people they serve. The recommended direct report ratio is 1:5 (one Supervisor to five direct reports).

Other key responsibilities included the following:

- ☐ **Encourage** Coaches and Specialists to share effective engagement techniques
- ☐ Guide Coaches and Specialists in utilizing the coaching framework and coaching language to partner with the youth to develop and create action plans that lead to goal achievement
- ☐ Support Coaches and Specialists with the academic, career development, and post-secondary goal-setting processes, including walking through how to use the process maps and dashboards, and selecting goals based on that young person's situation
- ☐ Help Coaches navigate the DOE and other systems, as needed
- ☐ Help Coaches and Specialists prevent and navigate crises, as they arise
- ☐ Collaborate and communicate with co-workers from other departments, in particular the case planning teams. This includes advocating on behalf of your team when necessary.

As a Coach and Specialist job can be challenging and emotionally taxing at times, Supervisors should be available to provide emotional support and to their team to help them build resiliency. During Supervision the Coach/Specialist may need to decompress or may need reassurance that he/she is taking the right steps to help the young person.

Supervisors step in for Coaches when they are sick or on vacation and are a constant for young people in the program. When Coaches leave/move on, it is the Supervisor who is responsible for maintaining the relationship with the young person and helping to facilitate the transfer to a new Coach.

B. COACH SUPERVISOR COMPETENCIES AND QUALITIES

Like Coaches, the most effective Supervisors apply a leadership mind-set and coaching approach where they motivate and empower their team to work together to achieve programmatic success. Influence and inspiration separate leaders from managers, not power and control. Some of the key qualities in a supervisor include the following:

- Use a coaching approach to help empower your team to set goals and own their own performance.
- Create a trauma-informed environment by providing staff with the space and resources needed to manage any secondary trauma
- Be open to receiving feedback and giving your team a space to share. For example, using formal supervision (see Kadushin model of supervision below).
- Be empathetic and show genuine care, model pro-social behavior, and must be able to express empathy and genuine caring, while maintaining healthy boundaries. Supervisors should "coach" the Coaches!

Coach Supervisors are often promoted from the role of a Coach.

Supervisor qualifications should include the following:

- At least a Bachelor's degree.
- A minimum of three years of experience working with young people (ideally working with at-risk adolescents, preferably in the field of child welfare)
- A proven track record of at least one year of successful supervisory experience is preferred.

See [Appendix A Fair Futures Staff Screening & Hiring Toolkit](#) for a full list of best practices in hiring and screening Coach Supervisors.

C. SUPERVISION AND TEAM MEETINGS

SUPERVISION

Supervision, when conducted well, is a powerful opportunity for you to better understand your staff, empower them to own their own performance, provide a safe space for them to share any struggles or challenges and help boost their confidence. Additionally, this provides the supervisor with an opportunity to learn how the young people in their program are progressing.

Supervision sessions should take place on a recurring schedule. As a best practice this is typically weekly or biweekly for 1-hour. For newer Coaches, Supervisors should provide weekly supervision and assist them more closely.

To prepare for Supervision Sessions:

Coaches/Specialists should send their agenda to their Supervisor 2 to 3 days in advance of the meeting so they can be reviewed prior to the meeting. In return the Supervisor should also send their agenda items to their staff 2 to 3 days in advance of the Supervision meeting. The Supervisor will then combine their agenda items with those of their direct report.

Note: Some agencies use the [Kadushin model](#) of supervision and break down their meeting agendas accordingly.

The Supervisor should review reports from the Online Platform, which will contain contact notes and outline the goals/steps taken for each of the young people. The Supervisor should bring the reports to the meeting with any follow-up questions related to a particular young person's progress.

[Appendix K3: Instructions for running Fair Futures Reports in Care4](#) includes information about how to run the Online Platform reports that are helpful to review before supervision with a Coach. [Appendix K2: Using the Care4 Reports/Platform to Supervise Fair Futures Coaches](#) walks through HOW to use these reports to support/supervise staff, step by step.

COACH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Supervisor should help Coaches:

- ☐ Acknowledge and celebrate their strengths and progress;
- ☐ Identify areas for growth;
- ☐ Provide appropriate skill development opportunities;
- ☐ Conduct team meetings with Coaches and facilitate relevant conversations, such as: Best-practice engagement and coaching techniques; Shared challenges across the team; Upcoming events, training, and/or group activities.

ADDITIONAL KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COACH SUPERVISOR INCLUDE:

- ☐ Meeting with young people and assigning Coaches;
- ☐ Matching young people to new Coaches, as needed;
- ☐ Work collaboratively with other professionals, such as foster care staff, school administrators, guidance counselors, etc.
- ☐ Participate in all Coach hiring;
- ☐ Work collaboratively with other staff and system providers driving towards similar goals in a coordinated fashion;
- ☐ Help staff facilitate therapeutic peer groups which can focus on skills such as healthy communication, positive peer relationships, dealing with peer pressure, and service learning
- ☐ Work with the Program Director to conduct outreach to outside community agencies and provide direction to all staff;
- ☐ Ensure that administrative and financial procedures are in place

D. SUPERVISION PHILOSOPHY

Some agencies use the **Kadushin philosophy and template**, which is based on three areas:

SUPPORTIVE

This has to do with the maintenance of harmonious working relationships, provision of support to reduce stress, and assistance with challenges that the Coach is unsure of how best to tackle. This could include struggles with how to support a young person or how to navigate a conflict or tension with another staff member.

EDUCATIONAL

This relates to the educational and professional development of staff. This could include addressing any skill gaps Coaches have, instruction around how to use Goals & Steps or teaching effective coaching practices. Supervisors help Coaches think through their professional development plans, what growth areas they want or need to focus on, and how the Supervisor can be supportive.

ADMINISTRATIVE

This relates to complying with policies of administration to ensure an efficient and smooth-running office. Specifically, this could include a discussion around any questions related to dates/meetings, fiscal procedures, technology issues, etc.

With this framework, supervision meetings start with the Supportive area, which can be the most challenging to discuss and often comprise about 50%-75% of the meeting. Administrative items do not comprise more than 10% of the meeting. *If there is not sufficient time to cover administrative items, the Coach and Supervisor can discuss over email.*

E. PROGRAM DIRECTOR QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALITIES



Program Directors should have a Master's in social work, education, or related field, significant experience working with at-risk or system-involved youth, and 3+ years of management experience, ideally.

Exceptions can be made for candidates with Bachelor's degrees who have significant managerial experience and who are credible messengers.

The Program Director should also:

- ☐ Have 4+ years management experience including oversight of staff, budgets and program outcomes;
- ☐ Be a self-directed, strategic thinker with ability to engage community and government stakeholders;
- ☐ Be a leader and able to work under pressure to meet deadlines;
- ☐ Possess excellent interpersonal, written and verbal communication skills.

The Program Director is responsible for creating a warm, inclusive, strength-based, non-judgmental, and trauma-informed culture. The Program Director models pro-social behavior with all staff and young people, and must be able to express empathy and genuine caring, while maintaining healthy boundaries.

F. PROGRAM DIRECTOR ROLE

When it comes to supervising and supporting staff, the role of the Program Director closely mirrors that of a Supervisor, but at scale. The Supervisors report to the Program Director and engage in weekly or biweekly supervision meetings.

The role of the Director is also to:

- ☐ Promote a youth development philosophy and framework and work cross-divisionally to infuse youth development principals and skills across the program and agency;
- ☐ Lead, manage, and directly supervise the Fair Futures staff;
- ☐ Provide direct, regular supervision to Supervisors;
- ☐ Ensure data is being entered into the Online Platform on a regular basis and review monthly reports;
- ☐ Ensure peer groups are in place and running effectively;
- ☐ Be the outward face of the program to both public and private stakeholders;
- ☐ Partner externally to develop workforce, internship, and career exposure partnerships;
- ☐ In concert with Human Resources, develop and/or reassess the staff recruitment plan;
- ☐ Ensure all Coaches, Supervisors, and Specialists receive the proper trainings;
- ☐ Ensure that efficient administrative procedures are in place within the program and that financial and physical resources are effectively used.

The Program Director is also responsible to ensure that the 4Ps are in place to ensure long-term sustainability and success of their Fair Futures program.

The 4Ps are: **People, Process, Program & Performance** – see [Section 26](#) and [Appendix C00: Checklist For Program Integration And Long-Term Success: Phase 2](#).

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SECTION 25. PEER GROUPS

A. BENEFITS

Peer groups are an extremely important component of the Fair Futures model. To stick with the program over the course of years, **young people need to feel connected not only to their Coach, but to other adult and peer supports.**

Peer groups help young people develop positive, supportive relationships with their peers and serve as important motivational and skill-building forums. They are often a space that allows young people to start or continue the process of healing by learning about managing stress, healthy communication and self-expression, and mental/physical wellness. Coaches and staff can learn a lot about young people's thoughts, concerns, and challenges through these groups, which can help them in their coaching sessions.

Peers also serve as credible messengers. If a young person is disconnected or struggling and one of their peers talks about how they went through the same experience and were able to overcome it, hearing about that can be incredibly motivating. Agencies have often found that peer group forums can be the source of breakthroughs; one conversation can help a young person reframe their situation and start moving forward with their goals.

Peer groups can help young people improve their job readiness by helping them improve critical soft skills (listening, responding respectfully, etc.). They can also help them build career development experiences by incorporating community service and leadership activities.

To recap, peer groups help young people to:

- Form positive peer relationships and build their support network;
- Avoid involvement in negative peer groups;
- Be heard, feel that they are not alone, and that they are part of a larger community;
- Meet credible messengers that they can relate to and be inspired by;
- Learn about topics related to wellness and stress management;
- Build and reinforce critical soft skills;
- Gain leadership/community service experiences that they can include on their resumes;
- Stay connected to the Fair Futures program.

PEER GROUPS ARE DISTINCT FROM WORKSHOPS.

Workshops can also serve as important skill-building forums where young people can learn about financial management, healthy eating, and other important life skills, and are strongly encouraged.

What makes a peer group a peer group, however, is that it is youth-centered and youth-driven. There is not an Instructor (as there often is in a workshop) – there is a Facilitator. It is collaborative and everyone has a voice. The focus is not the topic per se as much as it is the discussion, the relationship building, the inspiration, the healing, the self-expression.

TIP! Whenever possible, staff should encourage young people to join a peer group. There should ideally be enough peer groups to meet the varying interests/needs that young people have.

B. BEST PRACTICES IN FACILITATING PEER GROUPS

Peer groups can focus on a variety of topics.

Peer groups that have been popular/heavily attended and produced meaningful results include:

The Bengals Positive Peer Group, which is based on the Positive Peer Culture model.

Each young person completes an eight-session training on skills such as healthy communication, dealing with peer pressure, and service learning. The Bengals plan and complete community service and recreational activities.

Network, where Coaches facilitate peer groups focused on helping young people support each other in managing stress and their behavior (sharing challenges, practicing self-affirmation, etc.).

Male Forum, where all youth who identify as male come together to participate in activities and/or discussions around topics that they identify and lead.

Ladies that Lunch, a group of youth who identify as female who come together for lunch to discuss topics that they identify and lead.

College Crew, a peer group that shares stresses and concerns related to college, effective practices and coping mechanisms, etc. It is a space for students to recognize that others are going through the same things they are and to learn from their peers.

BEST PRACTICES AROUND FACILITATING PEER GROUPS INCLUDE:

- ☐ Offer food to recruit more young people to the group;
- ☐ Set up the room so that everyone feels a part of it (e.g., a circle – tables should not be separated);
- ☐ Welcome youth into an inviting space that is already set up;
- ☐ If there are two Facilitators, be clear on who is leading what aspect;
- ☐ Set ground rules for the community; the young people should be a part of creating the community rules and adults abide by them, too;
- ☐ Be upfront that what may be disclosed could be heavy, but that they are in a safe space/circle of trust and that things will not be shared outside of the group;
- ☐ Be transparent on how the adults will follow up on any concerns and reiterate the importance of each person's well-being;
- ☐ Have a topic to introduce and a curriculum prepared, but allow for flexibility when you are having a conversation; the topic is a guide but if something is happening that is rich and the young people are interested and engaged, do not change the subject to stick to an agenda;
- ☐ Let the young people lead and drive the conversation;
- ☐ Make it fun; incorporate movement and interaction;
- ☐ Bring questions to the group for their input on topics, etc.;
- ☐ If there are clinical issues discussed that are beyond the capacity of the staff, bring in mental health clinicians to consult with staff and talk with the young people (e.g. if a young person shares suicidal thoughts in a previous session);
- ☐ Follow up individually after the session with any young person who may have unleashed a lot and/or could have been struggling to ensure they are receiving the support they need.

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SECTION 26. PROGRAM INTEGRATION AND LONG-TERM SUCCESS - THE 4PS

CHECKLIST FOR PROGRAM INTEGRATION AND LONG-TERM SUCCESS: PHASE 2

THE 4 P'S: PEOPLE, PROCESS, PROGRAM & PERFORMANCE

The final phase in making your Fair Futures program part of the “DNA” of your agency is Integration and Long-Term Success. We encourage you to review [Checklist For Implementation Success: Phase 1](#) prior to reading below.

In this next phase, your Fair Futures program is ideally operating with efficiency, hitting all or most of the key goals/objectives, and most importantly - making a positive impact on the lives of the young people served. In order to achieve this level of excellence, you will need the 4 P's:

1 THE RIGHT
PEOPLE
& CULTURE

2 A STRONG
PROGRAM
MODEL

3 EFFECTIVE
& CLEAR
PROCESSES

4 STRONG
PERFORMANCE
MANAGEMENT

PEOPLE & CULTURE

- ☐ **Program leadership have created a culture where staff feel supported, safe, and empowered.**
This is reflected in low staff attrition rates, high staff morale, job satisfaction and strong performance metrics.
- ☐ **Leadership fully understands and supports the needs, wants and goals of the program.**
They actively respond and collaborate in problem-solving challenges when they arise. This includes the Executive Director/CEO and agency's board.
- ☐ **The program champion recruited other champions (e.g. Foster Care Director) and collectively working on the program's goals.**
- ☐ **The program champions have dissolved silos between the Fair Futures program and other programs.**
- ☐ **The program actively hires staff who view the work from a strength-based, trauma-informed, youth development lens.** These staff are also the right “fit” for the work and program culture.
- ☐ **Staff are able to build relationships with young people through employing consistency, constancy, and creative approaches**
- ☐ **All program staff know their role and are able to execute with intention and purpose.** This includes having a full understanding of the Fair Futures model and the continuum of services.
- ☐ **All program staff, and most agency staff, are using a coaching framework. This includes:**
 - ☐ Using a coaching mindset
 - ☐ Engaging and always working to build trust with one another
 - ☐ Partnering with the young person when goal setting; working collaboratively with young people
 - ☐ Partnering with co-workers to problem-solve and support
 - ☐ [Celebrating youth successes](#)

PROGRAM MODEL IS SOLIDIFIED

- ☐ There is one umbrella program (no siloed programs) that supports youth, middle schoolers to age 26, with all coaching, education, career, college and housing services.
- ☐ The Executive Director, board, and all agency staff know the name of your Fair Futures program, what your Fair Futures program does and does not do and understands the value in helping young people.
- ☐ The Fair Futures program staff are using the developed shared program language to communicate to the youth and other key stakeholders. This includes messaging on your agency website and social media.
- ☐ There are peer-led peer groups (in addition to independent living workshops) led by Coaches, Specialists and/or Independent Living specialists.
 - ☐ Calendar of events can be easily accessed – shared drive, website, agency newsletter and/or bulletin board.
 - ☐ Agency staff are invited to attend to provide support and encouragement to the young people (*when applicable*).

PROCESSES IN PLACE

- ☐ **Processes to ensure streamlined communication and collaboration:**
 - ☐ The full Fair Futures team meets minimally once per month.
 - ☐ Program leadership is meeting with, and presenting to, Case Planning staff on a consistent basis to inform them about any program changes, recruit and/or re-educate and educate new staff.
- ☐ **Supervision processes are in place**
 - ☐ Weekly or biweekly as a best practice
 - ☐ A supervision structure is being used (e.g. [Kadushin model](#))
 - ☐ Review Care4 report in advance – contacts, goals
- ☐ **A clear youth recruitment/referral process is in place.**
 - ☐ [Can use guidance in manual](#)
- ☐ **All agency staff know who to contact in the Fair Futures program for any requests or referrals.**
- ☐ **The [Fair Futures Staff Screening & Hiring Toolkit](#) is part of program practice/policy**
- ☐ **Staff onboarding practices are being followed (see [Checklist for Implementation Success: Phase 1](#))**
 - ☐ All staff receive the Fair Futures manual, a Fair Futures onboarding session, and [sign up for all trainings](#) in first 1-2 weeks
- ☐ **Staff coverage processes are in place**
 - ☐ How are youth supported when a staff person is out on PTO or leaves the agency?
- ☐ **Meetings with co-workers who support the Fair Futures program are scheduled and happening at a regular frequency – e.g. Case Planning, Fiscal, Data/AQ**
- ☐ **Program Director(s) and all Supervisors use Data to Inform Work – “Walking Dashboard”**
 - ☐ Run ACS report 2 weeks before due, each month. Follow up with staff.
 - ☐ Run youth-level reports regularly to check on contacts and goal progress. Follow up with staff.
- ☐ **All trained staff are demonstrating mastery of Care4**
 - ☐ Staff have completed all necessary platform trainings and are returning for refreshers, if needed.
 - ☐ Staff have mastered key functionality of the platform, based on their role.
 - ☐ Staff review reports applicable to their role.

☐ **Fiscal management**

- ☐ Program leadership knows and understands the program's budget.
- ☐ Program leadership helps staff understand what can be spent on youth activities – trips, food, school, vocation programs, technology, travel and more.

☐ **Staff have taken full ownership of their learning and professional development. This includes:**

- ☐ All new staff have completed all Fair Futures and ACS mandatory trainings within 12 months.
- ☐ Staff are registering for all [ACS mandatory trainings](#)
- ☐ Staff are utilizing the [Fair Futures website](#) to register for trainings and optional workshops.
- ☐ Staff are proactively scheduling [Technical Assistance \(TA\)](#) and [1 on 1 coaching](#).
- ☐ Staff are seeking out and participating in the [Learning Communities](#) for the purposes of self-care, networking and sharing.