Bridging Expertise: Collaboration to Support the Successful Transition of DCFS Youth in Care

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Overview

At-Promise DCFS Youth

Counselor Implications

Benefits of Supporting Youth

Resilience

Interventions and Supports

Investing In Our Future
Ethics and Laws: Support at-promise youth

PSC’s ethical and legal responsibilities

• Support for at promise students – ESSA, 2015; NCLB, 2004, Title 1, IDEA, 2004
• Comprehensive Program – ISCA International Model; 2011; ASCA National Model; 2005
• Cultural and cross-cultural competencies - ISCA, 2008; ACA, 2005; ACA 2014; AMCD 1991, 2015
• Diversity of all stakeholders – ASCA, 2010
• Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (P.L. 110–351) (Fostering Connections Act)
  • California Fostering Connections to Success Act (AB12 extended care)
• McKinney Homeless Vento Homeless Assistance Act (1987)

ASCA

• A.1.b. Cultivate maximum potential of every student; A.9.g Effective programs and accountability measures for closing the gaps
• E.2.a Expand social justice and multicultural awareness and competencies
• F.4. Collaboration and education about school counselors and school counseling programs with other professionals

ACA: Creative Arts

• A.6. Appropriate Referrals and Advocacy; A.7. Group Work
• C.7.a. Scientific Basis for Treatment; C.7.b. Development and Innovation
• E.5.b. Cultural Sensitivity
• F.11.c. Multicultural/Diversity Competence
DCFS Youth: Who are they?

- DCFS Care or adopted
- Homeless & low SES
- DCFS Family Affiliation
- First Generation College
- Gifted & children w/ disabilities
- Immigrants
- All races
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Overcoming Childhood Adversity

Seventy-six percent of children who experienced trauma by age three were likely to incur developmental delays (language, brain emotional), which increased their risk of addictions, poverty, psychological challenges, and physiological complications.

There were approximately.......  
- 26% of children who had experienced direct or vicarious trauma by age four.  
- 60% of individuals had been exposed to trauma (abuse, family challenges) during their childhood.  
- 43 % of students were classified as first-generation college  
- 45% of students lived in low-income families

In 2015, there were 29.4 million children under age 18 living in poor families (i.e., family SES was 200% below federal poverty threshold). 2 million children face a period of homelessness. According to National Center for Homeless Education approximately 1.4 million students experienced homelessness annually.

Resilience  
- Approximately 64% of individuals who experienced extreme childhood challenges had become successful adults.
Approximately 30,000 (500,000) children in Illinois are involved with DCF
Over 20,000 DCF youth exit annually
67% graduated with diploma or GED
32% enrolled in educational program and 3% earned bachelor’s degrees
52% were employed

-153 aged out of foster care at age 18
-399 aged out of foster care at age 21

-43% experienced homelessness
-20% instantly became homeless once they reached 18
-50% of DCF and JDC were homeless within 6 months of aging out
-50% of DCF Youth had difficulty with obtaining health care and 44% reported major difficulties with their health

College Barriers Reported by DCF Youth
-60% lack of knowledge regarding rights to college
-60% lack of money to fund college
-50% lack of support from family/friends

Natural Disaster
Abuse/Neglect
Parental Violence
School Violence
Historical Trauma
Incarcerated Parent
Parental Substance
Using DCFS Youth Strengths to Promote their Transitions

- Identify their strengths, needs, potential risks, circumstances, challenges, diagnosis, supports, and worldview.
DCFS Youth in Transition Video
Case Scenario and Activity
Counseling and Programs
Multicultural Competent Professionals
Cultural Pedagogy
Family-School-Community Collaborations
Alternative Group Therapies
Goal Setting
Extracurricular Involvement
Mentoring

Supporting At-Promise Youth
Transition Programs and Services for DCFS Youth

General Programs
- Cunningham Children’s Home Transitional Living Program (TLP)
- Work-Attitude-School Study (WASSup) Program
- Youth Build Programs
- Find Your Future (FYF) Internship Program
- My Time Program
- Hire the Future (HTF) Program
- TRIO Programs
- J.O.Y. (Job Opportunities for Youth) Program
- Disability Determination Services (SSDI)
- Educational Services Independent Living, and Vocational Rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities

DCF Resources in Illinois
- Annual High School Academic Planning Meetings
- County based education advisors

IL DCF Youth Process
- Transition Plans (age 14)
- Casey Life Skills Assessment (ages 16 and 19)
- Youth Driven Transition Plan (age 17 and final review 90 days prior to DCF discharge)

1. ISU First Star Academy
2. NIU Educational Access Project
3. Community College Payment Program
4. Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program
5. Youth in Scholarship Program
6. Youth in College/Vocational Training Program
7. Employment Incentive Program (EIP)
8. Life Skills Program
9. Countdown to 21
10. Youth Housing Assistance Program
11. Independent Living Program (ILO)
12. Added Chance Program
13. Fostering Learning Program
14. Youth Scholars, Skills, and Services (out of school youth)
COUNSELING APPROACHES AND TRAUMA INFORMED PROGRAMS

Strategies and Resources

MTFC-A
Motivational Interviewing

SPARCS
TF-CBT
CBT
Solution Focused

ARC

TTE
Alternative Group Therapies

Relationship Education

Foster Care Chronicles

Bowen’s Family Systems

Alternative Counseling Approaches

CPP
ALTERNATIVE GROUP INTERVENTIONS

- High Adventure
- Drama and Cinema
- Music
- Arts and Imagery
- Dance
- Writing & Bibliotherapy
- Equine
- Play
# Benefits of Supporting At-Promise Students

Students who experienced behavior, cognitive, situational, or traumatic issues benefited from alternative therapy. Benefits included:

- Improved self-regulation
- Increase in group cohesion
- Increased good behavior
- A decrease in behavioral problems (i.e. disruptions, acting out, lack of focus)
- Increased coping skills
- A decrease in disciplinary action
- Increased resilience
- Enhanced moral reasoning

Alternative therapy, also helped….

- Neurodevelopmental issues
- Decrease anxiety and symptoms of PTSD
- To cultivate coping skills, resilience, and wellness
- Strengthen positive family relationships
- To buffer and decrease health, behavioral, academic, and financial risks associated with unaddressed trauma
- To increase in personal values
- With empowerment
- To increase creativity and appreciation of the arts
At-Promise Students

• Alternative therapy helps improve areas of behavioral, emotional, cognitive, physical, and traumatic issues that affect at-promise youth

• Can assist with behavior, cognitive, emotional, physical, and traumatic issues that regular group or individual counseling may not reach.

• Supports and addresses underdeveloped skills (social, motor) through team building, collaboration, and cooperative community ties.

• Helps to promote friendships and increases supports

• Increases teamwork and cooperation among group members

• Increases mindfulness and awareness

• Improves mood

• Helps improve emotional regulation

• Improves confidence and self-esteem

• Increases empathy

• Increases the ability to pay attention and focus

• Improves individuals ability to express themselves better

Support!
IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELORS AND EDUCATORS
Pop Quiz

1. What are the challenges and strengths of DCF youth? How can this information help professionals support (i.e., mitigate barriers) youth?

2. What’s the role and responsibilities of the school counselor as it pertains to supporting DCF youth?

3. How can you build rapport with at-promise youth?

4. What ethical and legal mandates are important to know when working with this population?

5. How can professionals initiate collaborations to support DCF youth?

6. What resources are available to support the healthy transitions of DCF youth?

7. What challenges may DCF Workers and PSC’s incur when supporting youth?
References
