

Recommended Reading:

- **Kicked Out**– January 1, 2010; by Sassafras Lowrey (Editor), Jennifer Clare Burke (Editor), Judy Shepard (Foreword)

In the U.S., 40% of homeless youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer(LGBTQ). *Kicked Out* brings together the voices of current and former homeless LGBTQ youth and tells the forgotten stories of some of our nation's most vulnerable citizens. Diverse contributors share stories of survival and abuse with poignant accounts of the sanctuary of community and the power of creating chosen families. *Kicked Out* highlights the nuanced perspectives of national organizations such as The National Gay & Lesbian Task Force and The National Alliance Against Homelessness and regional agencies, including Sylvia's Place, The Circus Project and Family Builders. This anthology, introduced by Judy Shepard, gives voice to the voiceless and challenges the stereotypical face of homelessness.

- **Almost Home: Helping Kids Move from Homelessness to Hope** – August 24, 2012; by Kevin Ryan (Author), Tina Kelley (Author)

Inside the lives of homeless teens--moving stories of pain and hope from Covenant House *Almost Home* tells the stories of six remarkable young people from across the United States and Canada as they confront life alone on the streets. Each eventually finds his or her way to Covenant House, the largest charity serving homeless and runaway youth in North America. From the son of a crack addict who fights his own descent into drug addiction to a teen mother reaching for a new life, their stories veer between devastating and inspiring as they each struggle to find a place called home. Includes a foreword by Newark Mayor Cory Booker. Shares the personal stories of six homeless youths grappling with issues such as drug addiction, family violence, prostitution, rejection based on sexual orientation, teen parenthood, and aging out of foster care into a future with limited skills and no support system. Gives voice to the estimated 1.6 million young people in the United States and Canada who run away or are kicked out of their homes each year.

- **Multi-systemic Therapy and Neighborhood Partnerships: Reducing Adolescent Violence and Substance Abuse.** Cynthia Cupit Swenson (Author), Scott W. Henggeler (Author), Ida S. Taylor (Author), Oliver W. Addison (Author), Patricia Chamberlain (Foreword)

Based on the proven technology of Multi-systemic Therapy (MST), this unique book provides an exemplary approach to empowering communities to reduce youth violence and substance abuse and promote school success. Effective strategies for working with at-risk youth are embedded in a comprehensive framework that enlists the talents and resources of clinicians, human service professionals, neighborhood residents, community organizations, and outside stakeholders. Using an extended case example to illustrate all aspects of implementing MST on a neighborhood-wide scale, the volume covers empirical and clinical foundations, program planning, and strategies for building collaboration with key community players.

- **(c) 2012 National Juvenile Defender Center : Models for Change**

An effort to create successful and replicable models of juvenile justice reform through targeted investments in key states, with core support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. *Models for Change* seeks to accelerate the progress toward a more efficient, fair, and developmentally sound juvenile justice system that holds young people accountable for their actions, provides for their rehabilitation, protects them from harm, increases their life chances, and manages the risk they pose to themselves and the public. The initiative is underway in Illinois, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, and Washington, and through the action networks focusing on key issues in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Wisconsin.

- **(c) 2009 AFCC Guidelines for Court-Involved Therapy**

For the purposes of these guidelines, court-involved therapists are mental health professionals who provide therapeutic services to family members involved in child custody or juvenile dependency Court processes. Family and juvenile Court cases involving therapeutic services introduce unique factors and dynamics that require consideration in the treatment process. Both the treatment process and information provided to the therapist are likely to be influenced by the family's involvement in a legal process. While appropriate treatment can offer considerable benefit to children and families, inappropriate treatment may escalate family conflict and cause significant damage.

The Guidelines for Court-Involved Therapy are the product of the Court-Involved Therapist Task Force, appointed by AFCC President Robin Deutsch in 2009. Task force members were: Hon. Linda S. Fidnick, Co-Chair; Matthew Sullivan, Ph.D., Co-Chair; Lyn R. Greenberg, Ph.D., Reporter; Paul Berman, Ph.D.; Christopher Barrows, J.D.; Hon. R. John Harper; Hon. Anita Josey-Herring; Mindy Mitnick, M.Ed., M.A.; and Hon. Gail Perlman.

- **MacArthur Foundation Research. Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice. Temple University, Department of Psychology, Philadelphia, PA 19122. www.adjj.org**

The Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice is an interdisciplinary, multi-institutional program focused on building a foundation of sound science and legal scholarship to support reform of the juvenile justice system. The network conducts research, disseminates the resulting knowledge to professionals and the public, and works to improve decision-making and to prepare the way for the next generation of juvenile justice reform.

Additional Resources:

Resources for LGBT Youth in the Juvenile Justice System <http://equityproject.org/resources.html>

National Alliance to End Homelessness - www.endhomelessness.org

National Network for Youth - www.nn4youth.org

Lambda Legal - www.lambdalegal.org

National Center for Lesbian Rights - www.nclrights.org

From: ***THE NATIONAL RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES FOR SERVING LGBT HOMELESS YOUTH.***
Organizations Supporting the Dissemination of the National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth:

Ali Forney Center, New York, NY
The Attic Youth Center, Philadelphia, PA
Avenues for Homeless Youth/GLBT Host Home Program, Minneapolis, MN
Children's Service Society of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI
The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth Support Project of Health Care of Southeastern Massachusetts, Inc., Brockton, MA
Green Chimneys Children's Services, NYC Programs, New York, NY
Larkin Street Youth Center, San Francisco, CA
Latin American Youth Center, Washington, DC
Metropolitan Community Churches, Global Justice Ministries, New York, NY
Metropolitan Community Churches, Homeless Youth Services, New York, NY
Milwaukee LGBT Community Center, Milwaukee, WI
National Black Justice Coalition, Washington, DC
San Diego Youth Services, San Diego, CA
Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League, Washington, DC
Sylvia Rivera Law Project, New York, NY
Teen Living Programs, Chicago, IL
Transgender Health Empowerment, Inc., Washington, DC
Utah Pride Center, Salt Lake City, UT
Walden Family Services, Inc., San Diego, CA
YouthCare, Seattle, WA



RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

To Promote the Safety and Well-Being of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth and Youth at Risk of or Living with HIV in Child Welfare Settings



This publication consolidates and summarizes recommended practices derived from previous publications of the Child Welfare League of America, the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law: Opening Doors for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care Project, Diane E. Elze, the Family Acceptance Project, Lambda Legal, Legal Services for Children, Gerald P. Mallon, Robin McHaelen, the National Alliance

to End Homelessness, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the National Center for Transgender Equality, the National Network for Youth and the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, among others. We encourage agencies to refer to the original publications for additional contextual information about LGBTQ youth in foster care as well as detailed commentary supporting the practices recommended in the following pages.

Additional resources include:

A Place of Respect: A Guide for Group Care Facilities Serving Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth

http://www.nclrights.org/site/DocServer/A_Place_Of_Respect.pdf?docID=8301

A Practical Guide for Youth Workers Serving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth

<http://www.cwla.org/pubs/pubdetails.asp?PUBID=1385>

Child Welfare League of America Best Practice Guidelines: Serving LGBT Youth in Out-of-Home Care

<http://www.nclrights.org/site/DocServer/bestpracticeslgbtyouth.pdf?docID=1322>

Getting Down to Basics: Tools to Support LGBTQ Youth in Care

<http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/getting-down-to-basics>

It's Your Life

http://www.americanbar.org/tools/digitalassetabstract.SIGNIN.html/content/dam/aba/migrated/child/PublicDocuments/its_your_life.pdf

Moving the Margins: Curriculum for Child Welfare Services with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth in Out-of-Home Care

<http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/moving-the-margins>

National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth

<http://www.nclrights.org/site/DocServer/national-recommended-best-practices-for-lgbt-homeless-yo.pdf?docID=5821>

Opening Doors for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care: A Guide for Lawyers and Judges

http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/center_on_children_and_the_law/lgbtq_book.authcheckdam.pdf

Out of the Margins: A Report on Regional Listening Forums Highlighting the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth in Care

<http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/out-of-the-margins>

Publications of Gerald P. Mallon regarding this population

<http://www.garymallon.com/publications.htm>

Understanding Transgender: Frequently Asked Questions About Transgender People

http://www.transequality.org/Resources/NCTE_UnderstandingTrans.pdf

Youth in the Margins: A Report on the Unmet Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Adolescents in Foster Care

<http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/youth-in-the-margins>

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PURPOSE

Through these Recommended Practices, the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)¹ and co-authors² seek to provide guidance to the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), state and local child welfare agencies and their contract providers on how to fulfill their professional and legal obligations to ensure safe and proper care consistent with the best interest and special needs of each and every lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ)

child in the child welfare system.³ On April 6, 2011, the ACYF Commissioner, Bryan Samuels, issued a memorandum encouraging protection and support of LGBTQ youth in foster care.⁴ These Recommended Practices elaborate on the provision of services to LGBTQ youth in the areas of foster care, child protection, family preservation, adoption and youth development. They aim to assist state child welfare agencies to meet the needs of this particularly vulnerable and underserved population by promoting safe, competent and supportive settings for LGBTQ youth.

1 Established in 1920, and headquartered in Washington, DC, CWLA strives to advance sound public policy on behalf of the more than 3 million abused, neglected and vulnerable children served by its nearly 560 member agencies. CWLA's mission is to engage people everywhere in promoting the well-being of all children, youth, and their families, and protecting every child from harm.

2 American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law: Opening Doors for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care Project; Diane E. Elze, Associate Professor and Director of the M.S.W. Program, University at Buffalo School of Social Work; Family Acceptance Project; Lambda Legal; Legal Services for Children; Gerald P. Mallon, Julia Lathrop Professor of Child Welfare, Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College of the City University of New York; Robin McHaalen, Executive Director, True Colors; National Alliance to End Homelessness; National Center for Lesbian Rights; National Center for Transgender Equality; National Network for Youth; and Sylvia Rivera Law Project.

3 The federally mandated State Plan for Foster Care and Adoption Assistance requires that there be a case plan for each child placed in the child welfare system. The plan must be designed such that "the child's health and safety shall be the paramount concern[.]" 42 USC § 671(a)(15)(A)(2011); *see also* § 671(a)(22)(2011). The plan must include "a discussion of the safety and appropriateness of the placement[.]" 42 USC § 675(1)(A)(2011), and "address the needs of the child while in foster care, including a discussion of the appropriateness of the services that have been provided to the child under the plan." § 675(1)(B)(2011). Additionally, a procedure must be in place for review of the case plan on a regular basis, to ensure that the plan remains "consistent with the best interest and special needs of the child[.]" § 675(5)(A)(2011).

4 U.S. Dept of Health & Human Servs., Admin. on Children, Youth & Families, Information Memorandum ACYF-CB-IM-11-03, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth in Foster Care* (Apr. 6, 2011).

LGBTQ YOUTH ARE OFTEN UNDERSERVED AND UNSAFE IN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS

LGBTQ youth are over-represented in child welfare systems across the country.⁵ For some LGBTQ adolescents in care, their sexual orientation or gender identity and/or expression is the reason they may be living out of the home. Families hostile to their children's LGBTQ identities may have rejected, abused or neglected them, causing them to enter the child welfare system in the first place.⁶ Case workers may believe that young LGBTQ people in the system are harder to place in permanent settings or reunify with families, which results in many LGBTQ youth emancipating from care without these important lifelong connections. If given appropriate support, acceptance and access to coping strategies, young LGBTQ people demonstrate high levels of resilience and positive outcomes.⁷ Conversely, if LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system are given little or no support by caregivers and child welfare professionals, they face poor prospects of successfully transitioning to adult living and face elevated health and behavioral risks compared to their non-LGBTQ peers.⁸ Research has shown that LGB youth are more likely than their heterosexual peers to be at risk for substance use, sexual behaviors that can lead to HIV infection

and other sexually transmitted infections, attempted suicide and violence.⁹ Community reports show high levels of victimization among LGBTQ adolescents¹⁰ related to the social stigma and harassment they face from their peers and adults in their lives.¹¹ LGBTQ youth who experience the highest levels of family and caregiver rejection are most at risk for serious health problems in adulthood.¹²

LGBTQ youth routinely experience harassment and abuse in the child welfare system. This includes harassment and victimization from peers, and may also include sexual abuse. Moreover, many report discrimination, harassment and abusive reactions from child welfare staff and foster parents. They may be subjected to coercive and harmful conversion or reparative therapies attempting to change their sexual orientation or gender identity,¹³ put in isolation from other young people in congregate care settings, or cycled through multiple foster homes when one after another unsuitable placement turns out to be a poor fit.¹⁴ Blatant hostility and verbal abuse are often an accepted aspect of institutional culture. Because of such treatment, many LGBTQ youth feel forced to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity in

5 See *id.* See also Shannan Wilber, Caitlin Ryan & Jody Marksamer, *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines for Serving LGBT Youth in Out-of-Home Care* 1 (2006) [hereinafter *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines*]; Child Welfare League of Am. & Lambda Legal Def. & Educ. Fund, *Getting Down to Basics: Tools to Support LGBTQ Youth in Care* (2010) [hereinafter *Getting Down to Basics*], LGBTQ Youth Risk Data.

6 See *Getting Down to Basics*, *supra* note 5, LGBTQ Youth Risk Data.

7 See Nat'l Gay & Lesbian Task Force Policy Inst. & Nat'l Coal. for the Homeless, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness* 84-85 (2006) (crediting "programs established to work specifically with LGBT homeless youth" with helping clients "feel good about [their] emerging identit[ies]" and saving clients' lives, "getting [them] off drugs, into safe housing and reconnected with [their] famil[ies]") [hereinafter *LGBT Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness*]; Caitlin Ryan et al., *Family Acceptance in Adolescence and the Health of LGBT Young Adults*, 23 *J. Child Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing* 205, 213 (2010) ("Family acceptance predicts greater self-esteem, social support, and general health status; it also protects against depression, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation and behaviors.").

8 See *LGBT Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness*, *supra* note 7, at 41-82.

9 Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention, *Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Risk Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9-12 – Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance, Selected Sites, United States 2001-2009*, 60 *MMWR Early Release* (June 6, 2011); Caitlin Ryan et al., *Family Rejection as a Predictor of Negative Health Outcomes in White and Latino Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Young Adults*, 123 *Pediatrics* 346 (2009).

10 See *LGBT Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness*, *supra* note 7, at 41-46.

11 See Child Welfare League of Am. & Lambda Legal Def. & Educ. Fund, *Out of the Margins: A Report on Regional Listening Forums Highlighting the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth in Care* 2-3 (2006) [hereinafter *Out of the Margins*].

12 Ryan et al., *supra* note 7.

13 Nat'l Ass'n of Soc. Workers, *"Reparative" and "Conversion" Therapies for Lesbians and Gay Men* (2000); Am. Psychological Ass'n, *Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation* (2009).

14 At listening forums for LGBTQ youth in out-of-home care, one teenager shared a story of being beaten by other residents and then told by group home staff that it was his own fault for being a "faggot." Another youth told of a foster family that took away her clothes and called her a "dyke." *Out of the Margins*, *supra* □□□□□□□□□□

order to survive. Others, unable to hide, may run away from their placements and end up on the streets.¹⁵

Transgender youth, whose circumstances and needs are particularly misunderstood, often suffer especially poor treatment in child welfare systems.¹⁶ They are regularly targeted for harassment and assault, denied necessary medical

treatment for Gender Identity Disorder (GID), given sex-segregated rooming assignments inconsistent with their gender identities, called by their names assigned at birth rather than their preferred names and forced to dress in ways that allow no room for their gender expression.¹⁷

15 *LGBT Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness*, *supra* note 7, at 11-23.

16 *Getting Down to Basics*, *supra* note 5, Working with Transgender Youth.

17 *See id.*; Jody Marksamer et al., *A Place of Respect: A Guide for Group Care Facilities Serving Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth* (Spring 2011) [hereinafter *A Place of Respect*].



“LGBTQ YOUTH WHO EXPERIENCE FAMILY AND CAREGIVER REJECTION ARE MOST AT RISK FOR SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS IN ADULTHOOD.”

LEADING CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR SUPPORTING LGBTQ YOUTH IN CARE

The overwhelming consensus among the country's leading and most respected child welfare, social science and medical health organizations is that LGBTQ youth and adults deserve respect and support from professional service providers. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the American Psychological Association (APA), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) oppose discrimination against LGBTQ youth.¹⁸ These professional organizations agree that all youth should be afforded the same treatment and respect regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.¹⁹ Specifically, the major professional associations caution against use of therapies to attempt to change sexual orientation. For example, the American Psychiatric Association “opposes any psychiatric treatment, such as reparative or conversion therapy, which is based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or based upon the a priori assumption that the patient should change his/her homosexual orientation.”²⁰ The



American Psychological Association advises parents, guardians, young people and their families to avoid sexual orientation treatments that portray homosexuality as a mental illness or developmental disorder and instead to seek psychotherapy and supportive services for LGBTQ youth that provide accurate information on sexual orientation, decrease rejection and increase family and school support.²¹

Consistent with the professional standards governing this field, LGBTQ youth should receive culturally competent child welfare services, including: positive youth development programs; LGBTQ-affirming preventive services; foster care services focused on permanency; safe foster placements where an LGBTQ youth's sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are respected; referrals to LGBTQ-competent physical and mental health care providers; LGBTQ-affirming mentors and role models who can provide long-term sources of support in their lives; and transitional services that help establish independent life skills, taking into account the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ people

18 *Getting Down to Basics*, supra note 5, What the Experts Say: Position & Policy Statements on LGBTQ Issues from Leading Professional Associations.

19 “NASW recognizes that there is considerable diversity in gender expression and identity among our population and believes that people of diverse gender—including those sometimes called ‘transgender’—should be afforded the same respect and rights as any other person.” Nat'l Ass'n of Soc. Workers, Abstract, *Transgender and Gender Identity Issues*, *Social Work Speaks* (2009) [hereinafter *NASW Transgender*]. NASW also states “that same-gender sexual orientation should be afforded the same respect and rights as other-gender sexual orientation.” Nat'l Ass'n of Soc. Workers, Abstract, *Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Issues*, *Social Work Speaks* (2009).

20 Am. Psychiatric Ass'n, *Psychiatric Treatment and Sexual Orientation. Position Statement* (1998). See generally Am. Psychological Ass'n, Abstract, *Resolution on Appropriate Affirmative Responses to Sexual Orientation Distress and Change Efforts* [hereinafter *Appropriate Affirmative Responses*]; Am. Psychoanalytic Ass'n *Position Statement on Reparative Therapy* (1999) (“Psychoanalytic technique does not encompass purposeful efforts to ‘convert’ or ‘repair’ an individual's sexual orientation. Such directed efforts are against fundamental principles of psychoanalytic treatment and often result in substantial psychological pain by reinforcing damaging internalized homophobic attitudes.”); Am. Psychiatric Ass'n, *Therapies Focused on Attempts to Change Sexual Orientation (Reparative or Conversion Therapies)* (2011) (“APA recommends that ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals' sexual orientation[.]”).

21 *Appropriate Affirmative Responses*, supra note 20.



Photo: Corbis. Models used for illustrative purposes only.

because of pervasive discrimination.²² By implementing these Recommended Practices, state child welfare agencies will help remedy neglect suffered by LGBTQ youth, as well as prevent abuse and improve outcomes for these vulnerable young people, consistent with professionally accepted standards of care.

“LGBTQ YOUTH
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²² *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines*, *supra* note 5.

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS OF CARE FOR LGBTQ YOUTH IN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS

In the 1990s, Lambda Legal began a national initiative to focus on the needs of LGBTQ youth experiencing discrimination in foster care and juvenile justice systems. In 2001, Lambda Legal published *Youth in the Margins: A Report on the Unmet Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Adolescents in Foster Care*.²³ The report surveyed policies and practices in 14 states and found that LGBTQ youth were neglected and marginalized by the state child welfare systems charged with safeguarding them. While many child welfare professionals recognized and endeavored to address the plight of these young people, they lacked best practice guidelines, training and resources to provide competent services to the LGBTQ young people in their care. Many of these gaps have been filled in the ensuing years with the following resources.

In 1991, CWLA published *Serving Gay and Lesbian Youths: The Role of Child Welfare Agencies, Recommendations of a Colloquium*, one of the first publications addressing obstacles to providing quality services to LGBT youth in foster care and making recommendations for policy, practice and advocacy to better meet their needs.²⁴ In subsequent years, Gerald P. Mallon, Julia Lathrop Professor of Child Welfare at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College and Executive Director of the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections, published multiple books and articles on issues faced by LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system and suggestions for improving agency environments and establishing LGBT-affirming child welfare services.²⁵ In 1998, Mallon published *We Don't Exactly Get the Welcome Wagon: The Experiences of Gay and Lesbian Adolescents in New York City's Child Welfare Systems*,²⁶ the first comprehensive research on

the experiences of gay and lesbian youth in the child welfare system, with recommendations to social work practitioners and policymakers on providing competent child welfare services to LGBTQ youth. In 2002, Mallon co-authored *There's No Place Like Home: Safety, Permanency, and Well-being for Lesbian and Gay Adolescents in Out-of-Home Care*, a publication examining the challenges of ensuring permanency, safety and well-being for LGBT youth.²⁷ Mallon has also written extensively about social work practice with transgender and gender-variant children.²⁸

In 2002, Legal Services for Children and the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) launched the Model Standards Project to develop and disseminate model professional standards governing services to LGBTQ youth in out-of-home care. The Model Standards Project, in partnership with CWLA, published a resource entitled *Best Practice Guidelines: Serving LGBT Youth in Out-of-Home Care (CWLA Best Practice Guidelines)* in 2006, the first set of comprehensive professional guidelines for how child welfare and juvenile justice professionals can best serve LGBTQ youth in state care. The *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines* include accurate, up-to-date information about the best practices for supporting positive youth development; meeting the health and educational needs of LGBTQ youth; managing confidential information; and creating safe, respectful and nurturing home and social environments for LGBTQ youth in care.²⁹

In 2002, social work experts Caitlin Ryan and Rafael Díaz developed the Family Acceptance Project, a community research, intervention, education and policy initiative to decrease major

23 Lambda Legal Def. & Educ. Fund, *Youth in the Margins: A Report on the Unmet Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Foster Care* (2001).

24 Child Welfare League of Am., *Serving Gay and Lesbian Youths: The Role of Child Welfare Agencies, Recommendations of a Colloquium* (1991).

25 See <http://www.garymallon.com/publications.htm>.

26 Gerald P. Mallon, *We Don't Exactly Get the Welcome Wagon: The Experiences of Gay and Lesbian Adolescents in Child Welfare Systems* (1998); see also Gerald P.

Mallon, *Let's Get This Straight: A Gay and Lesbian Affirming Approach to Child Welfare* (2000).

27 Gerald P. Mallon et al., *There's No Place Like Home: Safety, Permanency and Well-Being For Lesbian and Gay Adolescents in Out-of-Home Care*, 80 *Child Welfare* 78 (2000).

28 See *Social Services With Transgendered Youth*, Gerald P. Mallon ed. (1999); Teresa DeCrescenzo & Gerald P. Mallon, *Transgender Children and Youth: A Child Welfare Practice Perspective*, 85(2) *Child Welfare* 215 (2006); *Social Work Practice with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People*, Gerald P. Mallon ed. (2d ed. 2008).

29 *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines*, *supra* note 5.

health and related risks for LGBTQ youth, such as suicide, substance abuse, HIV and homelessness by emphasizing the need for familial support.³⁰ The Family Acceptance Project has delivered the first major serial studies of parents' and caregivers' reactions and adjustment to adolescents' coming out processes and LGBTQ identities, and is advancing a family-related intervention approach to help families increase support and promote the well-being of their LGBTQ children. The Family Acceptance Project's intervention model uses a behavioral approach to help ethnically and religiously diverse families reduce their LGBTQ children's risk of suicide, depression, substance abuse, HIV, homelessness and placement in custodial care, while respecting each family's individual values. This work is being conducted in English, Spanish and Chinese with families from all ethnic backgrounds, including immigrant and very low income families, and those whose children are in foster care and juvenile justice facilities.

In 2006, CWLA, with partner organization Lambda Legal, released *Out of the Margins: A Report on Regional Listening Forums Highlighting the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth in Care*.³¹ This report summarized the findings of listening forums held around the nation, attended by representatives from state and private child welfare agencies, mental health experts, lawyers, judges and LGBTQ youth in care, on the experiences of LGBTQ youth and gaps they experienced in care and services. That same year, CWLA and Lambda Legal also released *Getting Down to Basics: Tools to Support LGBTQ Youth in Care*,³² a toolkit that offers practical information and resources for youth in care, foster and adoptive parents, professionals and agencies in child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

In 2008, the American Bar Association (ABA) Center on Children and the Law: Opening Doors for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care Project published *Opening Doors for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care*, intended to provide the legal and child

welfare community with tools, resources and support for improving outcomes for LGBTQ youth in foster care.³³ In 2010, ABA Opening Doors for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care Project published *It's Your Life*, a guide to help LGBTQ youth understand what to expect in the child welfare legal system.³⁴

NASW and Lambda Legal partnered in 2009 to create *Moving the Margins: Training Curriculum for Child Welfare Services with LGBTQ Youth in Out-of-Home Care*.³⁵ This train-the-trainer manual leads participants through a series of learning labs, discussion sessions and role-playing activities to help them better understand the challenges faced by LGBTQ youth in out-of-home care systems and to learn strategies to provide services to this population.



In 2009, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, Lambda Legal, the National Network for Youth and NCLR co-authored the *National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth*,³⁶ a policy brief that provides an overview of homelessness among LGBTQ youth and makes recommendations to service providers about how to improve practice, organizational culture and residential services.

In 2010, CWLA also released a new, revised edition of *LGBTQ Youth Issues: A Practical Guide for Youth Workers*, bringing recent research and clinical practice regarding LGBTQ youth into focus for all kinds of youth-serving professionals. This book, by Gerald P. Mallon, provides a combination of practical tips, research findings and personal vignettes (where the youth are able to speak for themselves) to guide workers who want to help LGBTQ youth confront challenges with their families, at school, in out-of-home care or in the wider

30 The Family Acceptance Project, <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/> (last updated Dec. 1, 2010).

31 *Out of the Margins*, *supra* note 11.

32 *Getting Down to Basics*, *supra* note 5.

33 Mimi Laver & Andrea Khoury, Am. Bar Ass'n. Ctr. on Children & the Law, *Opening Doors for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care* (Claire Chiamulera ed., 2008).

34 Krishna Desai, Mimi Laver & Andrea Khoury, Am. Bar Ass'n. Ctr. on Children & the Law, *It's Your Life* (2010).

35 Diane Elze & Robin McHaelen, Nat'l Ass'n of Soc. Workers & Lambda Legal, *Moving the Margins: Training Curriculum for Child Welfare Services with LGBTQ Youth in Out-of-Home Care* (2009).

36 Nat'l Alliance to End Homelessness, Lambda Legal, Nat'l Network for Youth & Nat'l Ctr. for Lesbian Rights, *National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth* (2009).

community. New in this edition are a chapter on transgender youth issues, a chapter on other special populations of LGBTQ youth and specially highlighted sections in each chapter that answer the question, “What Can Youth Workers Do?”

Most recently, in 2011, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project and NCLR created *A Place of Respect: A Guide for Group Care Facilities Serving Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth*.³⁷ This compilation provides comprehensive guidance and model policies for the treatment of transgender and gender non-conforming youth in detention centers, correctional facilities, group homes and other group care facilities.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through the Children’s Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), established several Training and Technical Assistance Networks (T&TA Networks) to provide assistance to states and tribes in improving child welfare systems.³⁸ These T&TA Networks also work to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families by offering training, technical assistance, research and consultation.

The National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections (NRCPPFC) offers onsite technical assistance and in-depth information services in collaboration with family partners to assist in the implementation of new strategies, expanding knowledge, increasing competencies and expanding commitment to family-centered practice by child welfare professionals at all levels. The NRCPPFC has incorporated LGBTQ issues into the core of its work as it strives to increase the capacity of child welfare systems to enhance child and family outcomes

³⁷ See *A Place of Respect*, *supra* note 17.

³⁸ U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Admin. for Children & Families, *Training and Technical Assistance*, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/ta/> (last updated July 29, 2011).



in this area, offering an array of resources for LGBTQ youth and those who work with them.³⁹ Child welfare systems across the country are encouraged to utilize these resources to assist in permanency achievement, placement stability and a wide range of other foster care and well-being issues.

A growing number of state and local agencies have adopted comprehensive policies to address appropriate delivery of services to LGBTQ youth in care.⁴⁰ The Recommended Practices that follow consolidate and summarize recommended practices developed by experts in the field, offering guidance to state and local agencies nationwide on competently

serving LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system.

³⁹ Nat’l Res. Ctr. for Permanency & Family Connections, *LGBTQ Issues & Child Welfare*, http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcp/infoc_services/lgbtq-issues-and-child-welfare.html (last updated Aug. 24, 2011).

⁴⁰ City of New Orleans, Human Servs. Dep’t, Youth Study Ctr., Policy No. 12.3, *Non-Discriminatory, Developmentally-Sound Treatment of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Youth* (2011); N.Y.C. Admin. for Children’s Servs., Policy No. 2011/05, *Promoting a Safe and Respectable Environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth and their Families Involved in the Child Welfare System*; and *Guidelines Promoting a Safe and Respectable Environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth and their Families Involved with DYFJ* (2011); State of Cal. Health & Human Servs. Agency, Dep’t of Social Servs., All County Information Notice I-81-10, *Serving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth, LGBTQ Caregivers and LGBT Prospective Foster and Adoptive Parents* (2010); State of Ill., Dep’t of Children & Family Servs., Procedures 302. Appendix K, *Support and Well-Being of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youths* (2009); State of N.Y., Office of Children & Family Servs., PPM 3442.00, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth* (2008); S.B. 518, 2007 Leg. Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2007); State of Haw., Dep’t of Human Servs., Office of Youth Servs., Haw. Youth Correctional Facility, Policy No. 1.43.03, *Non-Discriminatory, Developmentally-Sound Treatment of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) Youth* (2007); State of Conn., Dep’t of Children & Families, Policy No. 30-9, *Non-Discrimination of LGBTQI Individuals* (2004); A.B. 458, 2003 Leg. Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2003).

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES TO PROMOTE THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF LGBTQ YOUTH AND YOUTH AT RISK OF OR LIVING WITH HIV IN CHILD WELFARE SETTINGS

The primary goal of these Recommended Practices is to improve the safety, permanency and well-being of LGBTQ youth and their families who receive services through the child welfare system.

Federally funded state and local child welfare agencies should ensure that state-run child welfare programs and contracting direct service private providers adhere to the following standards.

Adopt and Implement Written Policies Prohibiting Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and HIV Status

- All child welfare agencies should adopt and implement written policies that prohibit discrimination against and harassment of youth, staff and foster and adoptive families, ranging from physical violence to denial of services to the use of slurs, on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or HIV status.
- The nondiscrimination policies should be included in agency manuals and posted prominently and distributed to all staff, foster families and youth in the system. Contracting agencies should be required to adhere to them as well. Every agency should offer a formal grievance procedure for confidential reporting of violations of the nondiscrimination policy, and should provide prompt, neutral third-party investigations.

Treat LGBTQ Youth with Respect and Competence

- Child welfare staff should not assume that all children in care are heterosexual, non-transgender or gender-conforming. They should examine their own beliefs and attitudes that might negatively impact their professional responsibilities to LGBTQ youth. Child welfare staff owe a professional duty of competent care to LGBTQ youth.
- State child welfare agencies and direct service providers should use intake forms that include questions about a youth's sexual orientation and gender identity in demographic sections, but should not make it a requirement that youth answer these questions. This recommendation is directed to agencies that already have some competence with LGBTQ youth. The information must be kept private, should not be shared with anyone without the youth's express consent and should be updated appropriately.
- Child welfare staff should not characterize an LGBTQ or gender non-conforming identity as deviant or pathological.
- Child welfare staff should be aware of their language and eliminate anti-LGBTQ slurs. They should understand the difference between the concepts "sexual orientation" and "gender identity," and use such terms as "gay," "lesbian," "bisexual," "transgender" and "questioning" in appropriate contexts.
- Child welfare staff should not assume that LGBTQ people are identifiable by stereotypical mannerisms or characteristics. They should also avoid the assumption that all LGBTQ people have similar life experiences or share a common sense of community.
- Child welfare staff should create a positive environment in their work spaces that welcomes and affirms LGBTQ people. Displaying recognizable symbols of support, such as rainbow flags, lets LGBTQ young people know that they are in a safe, welcoming setting.

- If a youth discloses that he or she is LGBTQ, child welfare staff should use the disclosure as an opportunity to show unconditional support for the youth, find the resources that the youth and his or her caregivers need and assist the youth in deciding to whom, where, when and how to come out in order to ensure safety while maintaining privacy.
- Child welfare staff should be prepared to work effectively with transgender youth and affirm their gender identities in ways that are most appropriate for the youth, including referring to them by the names and pronouns they prefer and by allowing them to dress, groom and express mannerisms consistent with their gender identities.
- LGBTQ youth should have the same rights and privileges as other youth who receive child welfare services. They should not be subjected to harsher or more restrictive standards of behavior because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Child welfare staff should establish ground rules for the behavior of all youth, including standards for acceptable sexual behavior that are the same for all youth regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Ensure Effective Child Protection Practices that Correctly Identify Abuse and Neglect of LGBTQ Youth

- When performing initial assessments of the safety of and risks for youth who may identify as or be perceived to be LGBTQ, child protection staff should assess whether the parents' or caregivers' attitudes towards the child's sexual orientation and gender identity are impacting the immediate safety of the youth or putting the youth at risk of emotional or physical harm.
- Child protection staff should be trained and prepared to perform family assessments that promote an understanding of the effects of family rejection and acceptance on the well-being of LGBTQ youth.
- Child protection staff should consider whether the youth is at risk of maltreatment and rejecting behaviors, such as physical punishment because of the youth's sexual orientation or gender identity or expression; verbal harassment or name-calling because of the youth's LGBTQ identity; being required to be "straight" as a condition of remaining in the home; being forbidden from dressing or grooming consistent with the youth's gender identity; being subjected to psychologically-damaging reparative therapy or religious conversions designed to change sexual orientation or gender identity; or pressure to be more masculine or feminine.⁴¹
- Caseworkers should continue to assess the risk to and safety of LGBTQ youth once placed in foster or kinship care settings.

⁴¹ See Caitlin Ryan et al., *Supportive Families, Healthy Children: Helping Families with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Children* (Family Acceptance Project, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA) (2009) (for information on empirically derived family rejecting and accepting behaviors). See generally Family Acceptance Project, *FAPrisk Screener for Assessing Family Rejection & Related Health Risks in LGBT Youth*, <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/> (for research-derived risk assessment tools to identify levels of family rejection for LGBT youth).

Ensure Effective Services That Address Family Rejection of LGBTQ Youth and Help Reunification

- Child welfare agencies should engage families of LGBTQ youth in identifying and achieving family-level outcomes that reduce parents' and caregivers' rejecting behaviors toward youth who may identify as or be perceived to be LGBTQ.
- Child welfare agencies should provide families with services and support to help parents and caregivers make the connections between their specific reactions to a youth's actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity and the youth's emotional and physical well-being.
- For those families of LGBTQ youth who are already affirming and accepting, child welfare agencies should provide effective services to alleviate the circumstances that led to the removal of the child.

Provide Mandatory LGBTQ Competency Training to All Agency Employees and Volunteers

- Child welfare agencies should mandate that all staff, including administrators, managers, supervisors, social workers, case workers, direct service staff, support staff, facilities maintenance personnel, volunteers and mental and medical health providers with whom the agency contracts, receive mandatory initial and ongoing comprehensive LGBTQ competency training.

“CHILD WELFARE STAFF SHOULD HELP FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS UNDERSTAND THAT BEING LGBTQ IS A CORE PART OF SOMEONE’S IDENTITY.”



Ensure Safe and Supportive Foster or Adoptive Placements for LGBTQ Youth

- When seeking a foster or adoptive home placement for an LGBTQ young person, child welfare staff should be sure that the home is accepting of LGBTQ people.
- All foster and adoptive parents should receive training on caring for an LGBTQ young person, as any child may be LGBTQ.
- Child welfare agencies should engage in outreach to LGBTQ adults and non-LGBTQ adults who are supportive, in order to be able to provide a range of homes that are safe and nurturing for LGBTQ youth.
- Child welfare agencies should not discriminate against prospective or present foster and adoptive parents based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Child welfare staff should not put LGBTQ youth into placements, services, schools or programs where they will be unsafe or unsupported.
- Child welfare agencies should actively recruit and support prospective LGBTQ foster parents. Every national professional child welfare organization strongly supports licensing LGBTQ foster and adoptive parents according to the same standards applied to non-LGBTQ applicants. Child welfare staff should support awareness that LGBTQ people can be good foster and adoptive parents.

Require Mandatory Training for Staff and Foster and Adoptive Parents in Caring for an LGBTQ Child

- Child welfare agencies should require mandatory training for staff and foster and adoptive parents on nondiscrimination policies regarding sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and HIV status; sensitivity to sexual orientation and gender identity and the challenges facing LGBTQ youth; supporting a youth coming out as LGBTQ; and educating LGBTQ youth about their sexuality and sexual health, including prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
- Child welfare staff should help foster and adoptive parents understand that being LGBT is a core part of someone’s identity and not a choice or something the foster or adoptive parents are permitted to try to change in a young person in their care. The leading mental health and child welfare associations have long recognized that a same-sex sexual orientation is a normal variation of human sexuality and no more susceptible to change than a heterosexual sexual orientation. Similarly, gender identity is an innate, immutable part of one’s self that is deep-seated and unchangeable.
- Child welfare staff should ensure that caregivers understand that their acceptance or rejection of a youth’s sexual orientation and gender identity affects the health and well-being of the LGBTQ youth in their care.

Ensure the Safety and Emotional Development of LGBTQ Youth in Congregate Care

- Child welfare staff have an obligation to protect the physical and psychological well-being of LGBTQ youth in their care, whether these young people are placed in group homes, residential treatment centers or other congregate care facilities, as well as in the schools associated with those placements. Congregate care providers should take immediate steps to address anti-LGBTQ harassment within their facilities. Child welfare staff should send a clear message that anti-LGBTQ harassment will not be tolerated, and they should not blame LGBTQ youth who are open about their identities when others subject them to harassment or violence.
- When LGBTQ youth express typical age-appropriate romantic behaviors, such as hand-holding or kissing, they should be supported in adhering to the same rules that non-LGBTQ youth are required to follow in congregate care settings. LGBTQ youth in congregate care should be afforded the same rights and privileges that non-LGBTQ youth have regarding dating, displays of affection and romantic relationships. LGBTQ youth should be able to express age-appropriate romantic behavior and to feel validated and worthy. Selective enforcement of rules for LGBTQ youth is unacceptable.
- Child welfare staff in congregate settings should make appropriate, individualized classification and housing decisions. They should not make housing decisions based on myths and stereotypes about LGBTQ people, who are no more likely to engage in sexual behaviors than their non-LGBTQ peers. Rather than isolating or segregating LGBTQ young people or prohibiting them from having roommates as a means of ensuring their safety, child welfare staff should work with all youth to ensure that they adhere to nondiscrimination requirements. LGBTQ youth should not be deprived of opportunities to interact with their peers or made to feel more isolated because of their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.
- Child welfare staff should help reduce the alienation and isolation often experienced by LGBTQ youth by providing them opportunities to interact positively with their LGBTQ peers and to see that other people their age share their experiences. Such opportunities help foster the development of life skills, including creating and maintaining friendships, developing communication skills and handling interpersonal dynamics. If peer support and social groups for LGBTQ youth are not available locally, child welfare staff should assist in developing them.

Support Access to Appropriate Medical and Mental Health Care Services for LGBTQ Youth and Youth at Risk of or Living with HIV

- Child welfare agencies should ensure that health care providers who treat LGBTQ youth are trained and educated on the heightened risks these youth may face. Health care providers should be able to discuss sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual behaviors openly and comfortably.
- Child welfare agencies should ensure that LGBTQ youth receive developmentally appropriate sexual health education and services. Child welfare staff should provide developmentally appropriate information and resources to all young people about sexuality and sexual health, including LGBTQ issues and prevention of HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. If not already in place, child welfare agencies should adopt written policies providing children access to free and confidential HIV testing without parental or guardian consent or notification. Child welfare staff should always protect the privacy of a young person's HIV status, with disclosure only on a need-to-know basis.
- At each stage of HIV-related illness, youth living with HIV who are in care should receive appropriate medical and psychosocial treatment. Medical follow-up and counseling should be available for youth with HIV who are asymptomatic. Group homes, foster parents and caregivers should be encouraged to develop supportive attitudes towards youth in their care affected by HIV or AIDS in order to combat fear and prejudice about people living with HIV or AIDS.
- Child welfare staff should never allow an LGBTQ youth to be subject to conversion or reparative therapy for the purpose of changing the youth's sexual orientation or gender identity. The major national professional associations caution against use of such therapies, which are unsubstantiated and harmful.

Support Access to Safe Educational Services

- It is essential that LGBTQ youth have access to educational environments where they can learn without fear of harassment or assault. School and child welfare staff should work together to make schools safer by helping to implement school safety training on LGBTQ issues. Schools should have policies and training on bullying and nondiscrimination that specifically enumerate and include an LGBTQ focus. School staff should be encouraged to show their support of LGBTQ students by displaying “Safe Zone” stickers or posters and other supportive symbols. If LGBTQ students are able to identify supportive school staff, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging, develop positive self-esteem, cope with bias and work toward improving school climate.
- Child welfare staff should work with a transgender youth’s school to ensure that the youth’s gender identity is respected. This includes use of the youth’s preferred name and gender pronouns and respecting the choice of age-appropriate attire that matches the youth’s gender identity.
- It is essential that transgender youth have access to safe and convenient restroom and locker room facilities. Child welfare staff should make sure that schools make appropriate restroom and locker room facilities available, honoring the child’s gender identity, privacy, dignity and safety needs.
- Child welfare staff should take immediate action to protect an LGBTQ youth facing harassment or discrimination at school. This may include informing the school administration of the harassment and ensuring that remedial steps are taken to respond to the offending behavior. If the youth has been injured or threatened with serious bodily harm, child welfare staff should be prepared to contact local law enforcement authorities to file a report and to advocate for fair treatment within an investigation and subsequent prosecution. If appropriate actions are not taken as a result of their advocacy, child welfare staff may need to meet with the school board and local police to file an official complaint, or consult an attorney where the situation calls for legal action or remedy.

“LGBTQ YOUTH IN CONGREGATE CARE SHOULD BE AFFORDED THE SAME RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES THAT NON-LGBTQ YOUTH HAVE.”



Support Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Youth

- In order to competently serve and safeguard transgender and gender-nonconforming youth, child welfare staff should understand what it means for a youth to be transgender or gender-nonconforming and should be familiar with and use appropriate terminology.
- Child welfare staff should receive mandatory cultural competency training on gender identity and expression, including education regarding medical treatment for transgender youth diagnosed with GID.
- Child welfare staff have a legal duty to protect the physical and emotional safety of transgender and gender-nonconforming youth. Child welfare staff should take immediate action to end any form of harassment or bullying against transgender and gender-nonconforming youth, whether perpetrated by staff, foster parents or peers.
- Child welfare staff should maintain confidentiality regarding the gender identity of transgender and gender-nonconforming youth in their care and be aware of legal obligations to treat such information confidentially. Staff should not disclose information about a youth's gender identity without first obtaining the youth's permission.
- Child welfare staff should respect a transgender or gender-nonconforming youth's preferred name and gendered pronouns that best reflect the young person's gender identity.
- Child welfare staff should allow transgender and gender-nonconforming youth to express their gender identity through preferred attire, grooming and mannerisms without punishment or ridicule. Child welfare staff should not assume that transgender and gender-nonconforming youth are "acting out" inappropriately when expressing their gender identity.
- Child welfare staff should not consider or classify youth as sexually aggressive simply because they are transgender or gender-nonconforming. These youth are no more likely than any others to be sexually aggressive.
- Child welfare staff should avoid making assumptions about the sexual orientation of transgender and gender-nonconforming youth. Transgender and gender-nonconforming youth may identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, queer, heterosexual, etc. Sexual orientation is separate from, and not determined by, one's gender identity and expression.
- Child welfare staff should be aware of health care protocols for medical treatment for transgender individuals and should ensure that transgender youth have access to competent and LGBTQ-affirming mental and medical health services, including access to treatment for GID, if deemed medically appropriate. Treatment of GID is focused on providing support, not changing a person's gender identity, and may include services such as individual and family counseling, hormone therapy and surgery to align the physical body with the gender identity of the youth. Staff should ensure that existing transition-related treatment is provided after a youth arrives at an agency or facility.
- In sex-segregated facilities, transgender youth should not be assigned to the girls' or boys' units strictly based on the sex assigned to them at birth. Instead, child welfare staff should make individualized decisions based on the physical and emotional well-being of the youth, taking into account the young person's wishes, the level of comfort and safety, the degree of privacy afforded, the types of housing available and the recommendations of mental health and medical professionals. The safety of transgender and gender-nonconforming youth should be protected without resorting to isolating or segregating the youth from the general population. However, single occupancy rooms, if available in units that correspond with the young person's gender identity, are often appropriate for transgender youth in sex-segregated facilities.
- Transgender youth should be permitted use of bathrooms that correspond to their gender identity. The facility should counsel others that the youth is entitled to use the bathroom corresponding to the youth's gender identity, and can make available private single-person bathrooms as an option. Transgender youth should not be singled out as the only people allowed to use or routed to private single-person bathrooms.
- Child welfare staff should support the academic achievements of transgender and gender-nonconforming youth and ensure that they are safe in schools. The gender expressions of transgender and gender-nonconforming youth make them more visible, and therefore more vulnerable, to harassment and violence at school. Some school dress policies make it more difficult for youth to dress consistently with their gender identities. Child welfare staff should take immediate action to protect transgender youth facing harassment or

discrimination at school, either on-site or off-site, including protection from being disciplined for expressing their gender identity or being denied access to locker rooms, showers and bathrooms that match their gender identity.

- Child welfare staff should locate and develop resources to help transgender youth with their legal issues. Transgender youth may need assistance and advocacy to obtain proper legal identity documents reflecting gender identification and preferred names, such as birth certificates, state identification cards, driver's licenses, health insurance cards, social security cards, passports and school identification cards.



“TREATMENT OF
GID IS FOCUSED ON
PROVIDING SUPPORT,
NOT CHANGING A
PERSON’S GENDER
IDENTITY.”

Provide Access to LGBTQ Community Programs and Services

- Child welfare agencies should help LGBTQ youth access LGBTQ community services and supportive adult mentors.
- Child welfare agencies should develop an up-to-date list of LGBTQ resources in their local community and distribute it throughout the child welfare agency, including to youth who may wish to contact community resources on their own.

Adopt Confidentiality Policies

- Child welfare agencies should adopt strict policies for managing confidential information about a young person's sexual orientation and gender identity, in addition to other sensitive information, such as HIV status. Child welfare staff should always respect and maintain an LGBTQ young person's privacy and never disclose confidential information about sexual orientation or gender identity without the child's permission. Information related to the past, present

or future physical or mental condition of an individual is private medical information that may be protected by state and federal privacy laws. Moreover, members of NASW are bound by a code of ethics requiring a young person's express consent before the release of confidential information.⁴²

⁴² Nat'l Ass'n of Soc. Workers, *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers* (approved 1996, rev. 2008).

Ensure that Faith-Based Providers Working with LGBTQ Youth Fulfill their Professional and Legal Obligations

- State child welfare agencies should respect federal and state prohibitions against religious discrimination in the provision of governmentally-supported social services. Faith-based agencies that receive government funds to provide social services or that care for children in state custody must adhere to professional and legal standards of care, providing for nondiscriminatory, competent and nonjudgmental services to LGBTQ youth and foster and adoptive parents.
- LGBTQ youth should be placed in homes and facilities that will support them. They should be protected from condemnation based on caregivers' or providers' religious and cultural beliefs related to their LGBTQ identity. Child welfare staff and foster parents should acknowledge and examine any anti-LGBTQ biases they might have. If these personal beliefs might prevent offering nonjudgmental care to an LGBTQ young person, the practitioner or foster parent should seek outside support and make alternative care arrangements. They must put the needs of young people above their own personal beliefs.
- Prior to placing an LGBTQ youth, child welfare staff should consider whether the religious or cultural beliefs of a prospective caregiver could cause the placement to be outside of the child's best interests. Foster families may need guidance to understand the line between their obligations as caregivers and their religious and cultural beliefs. LGBTQ youth should not be placed in settings where caregivers' religious and cultural beliefs might place LGBTQ youth at risk.
- Child welfare staff should locate LGBTQ-affirming religious communities that can be a resource for finding nurturing foster and adoptive families and mentors for LGBTQ young people. LGBTQ-affirming religious communities can also provide a supportive community for LGBTQ young people in care who wish to participate in religious activities.
- Staff of faith-based agencies should not discriminate against prospective or present foster and adoptive parents based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Collect and Evaluate Data

- State child welfare agencies should include participants' sexual orientation and gender identity status in demographic data elements and evaluation tools to determine accessibility and outcomes specific to LGBTQ youth. They should ensure

that data is collected by individuals trained to respectfully ask questions about sexual orientation and gender identity, and that confidentiality is respected. The data should be aggregated anonymously and updated regularly.

CONCLUSION

CWLA and co-authors hope that state child welfare agencies will use these Recommended Practices to increase their baseline knowledge of LGBTQ issues, influence their programmatic decisions and priorities, and set higher expectations and performance standards for the services provided to LGBTQ young people in care.

In addition, state child welfare agencies can use these LGBTQ competence standards in planning, organizing and administering services; establishing state and local licensing and accreditation requirements; developing recruiting and hiring practices; and developing content for training, in-service and staff development programs. In this way, state child welfare agencies can promote increased public interest, understanding and support for LGBTQ-competent services that will more effectively promote the well-being of LGBTQ youth in care.

Finally, state child welfare agencies may also incorporate LGBTQ cultural competency objectives into federally mandated activities, such as Child and Family Services Reviews and Program Improvement Plans, to maximize LGBTQ-related proficiency, values, principles, policies and practices.





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202-638-1526, www.endhomelessness.org

National Center for Lesbian Rights

870 Market Street, Suite 370, San Francisco, CA 94102
415-392-6257, www.nclrights.org

National Center for Transgender Equality

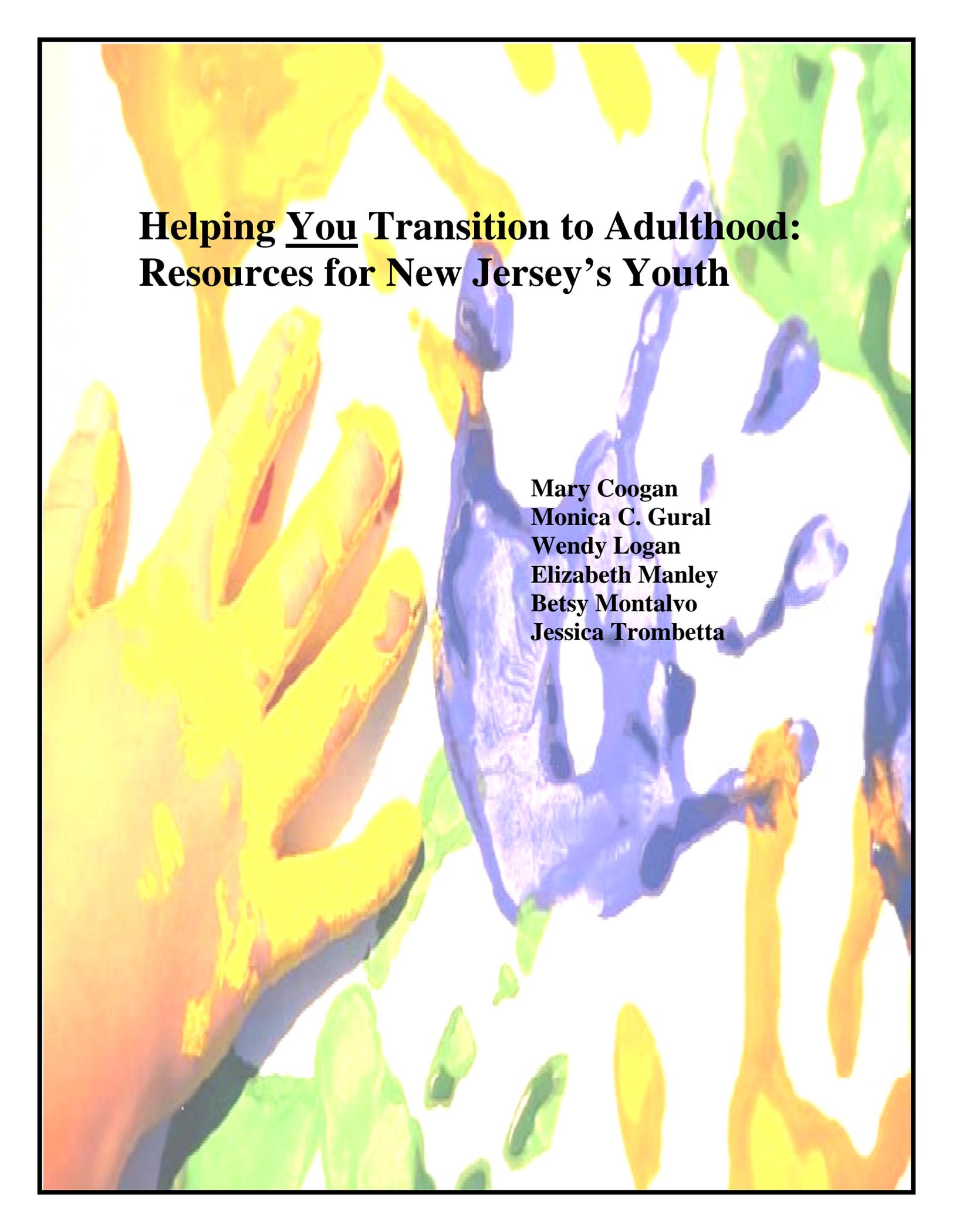
1325 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005
202-903-0112, www.transequality.org

National Network for Youth

741 8th Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003
202-783-7949, www.nn4youth.org

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147 W 24th St, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10011
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**Helping You Transition to Adulthood:
Resources for New Jersey's Youth**

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And finally, we would like to express our thankfulness to the many persons that provide resources and assistance to the young adult population. Thank you for your dedication to making life a little easier for our growing youth!

Thank you!
Sincerely,

Mary Coogan
Monica C. Gural
Wendy Logan
Elizabeth Manley
Betsy Montalvo
Jessica Trombetta

The resource guide is available on the website of the Department of Children and Families at <http://www.state.nj.us/dcf/adolescent/YouthResourceGuide.pdf>

**“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, ‘I will try again tomorrow.’”
– Mary Anne Radmacher**

Introduction

Dear Young Adult,

This New Jersey guide serves as a useful tool to assist you through the transition into adulthood. The information in this guide outlines resources as well as people who are available and willing to help you plan for your future. Ultimately, we want you to reach adulthood successfully!

When we were developing this guide there were three main objectives:

- 1.) To support the concept that you are NOT alone as you journey into adulthood;
- 2.) To give you resources that will make your transition into adulthood easier; and
- 3.) To offer useful activities that will help you organize, focus, and make decisions regarding your future so that you can access the resources you need in a timely manner.

We want to encourage you to believe that YOU ARE more than able to fulfill your dreams, accomplish your goals, embrace new possibilities, and trust the process of growing and learning. As you read through this guide we want you to think about a few things:

- What are my immediate needs?
- What are my long-term desires?
- How can I best use these resources?
- After completely reviewing the guide: Where do I go from here?

We hope that you find this guide helpful! In addition, if there are any New Jersey resources that are not included in the guide that you would like us to know about please email us at: njyouthguide@live.com. Also, please feel free to email us with your feedback, suggestions, and/or how you used the guide.

PART ONE

Transitioning: Know How to Make Your Goals and Dreams a Reality

Chapter 1: What “To Do” Before Reaching 18

Below is a Youth “To Do” Checklist to follow. In this checklist, you will find tasks to focus on/complete based on your age group. For the most part, these tasks are for you to complete while you are in the age bracket listed below. Some of the tasks might overlap in ages or they may need to be repeated (which is okay to repeat tasks if you need to).

It is important to complete each task in this chapter before you reach age 18. You will find boxes next to each task. When you have completed the task place a check mark in the box to show that the task was done. Some tasks will need you to re-visit them; place a check mark each time you complete the task and give dates for when you have placed a check mark for future reference.

YOUTH “TO DO” CHECK LIST

Ages 14 and 15

I am Attending School Regularly and I am Supporting a Safe and Productive High School Environment

It is VERY important that you finish school and get a high school diploma. Here are some helpful tips that will help you graduate from high school. After every marking period, look at the tips again to make sure you are following them. Place check marks in the box above each year to make sure you are attending and participating in school.

- **Monitor** your attendance. Attend school regularly – unless you are REALLY sick. If you need to miss a day of school, get a note from your doctor or guardian for the absence(s).
- **Do** your homework, projects, and classroom work. Homework is the easiest part of your grade so turn in your homework when they are due. If you are having trouble doing the work talk to your teacher and/or school counselor so that you are not punished and can get help.
- **Avoid** peer conflicts! **Avoid** peer pressure to use drugs! **Avoid** getting into fights! Be aware that fights and carrying drugs will lead to suspensions. Conflicts, drug usage, and fights are three things that could appear on your school records that are sent to colleges when you apply. The use of drugs may prevent you from getting a student loan. Drugs and violence can keep you from being successful! Be PEACEFUL and DRUG FREE.
- **Respect** your teachers and do not fall asleep in class! There are some teachers you may not like and some of the things you are being taught may be boring. It is very important for you to respect your teachers even if you don't like what you're doing,

this will keep you from getting into trouble and not cause problems for the other students learning, as well as you.

- **Check-in** with your school counselor for class scheduling, local internships or volunteer positions, employment tips, scholarship and college information.
- **Stop bullying!** Do not get involved in or accept bullying. If you see someone being bullied or are bullied yourself report it to your school bullying advocate or counselor.

I am Forming/Maintaining Respectful Family Relationships

A family can be close friends, biological family, caretakers or anyone that is important in your life. It is important to know who these positive people are to you and how to maintain these good relationships. To learn about what is cool and what is not cool when you meet new people and learn how to build on those relationships visit www.thatsnotcool.com.

I am Surrounding Myself With Positive Friends

If you are involved with DCPD (formerly known as DYFS) or are homeless you can hook-up with other young people around the state by joining a Youth Advisory Board (YAB). To obtain a list of YABs by county visit www.transitionsforyouth.org or contact Adam Staats by phone at 973-353-5775 or via email at astaats@ssw.rutgers.edu for further details. Also, visit www.NJYouth4Youth.org as an additional community network resource or contact Nana Wilson for details about NJYouth4Youth at 973-353-3007.

It doesn't matter if you are involved with DCPD you should learn about the school and community groups that are active. Ultimately, find out how you can join them in order for you to meet new people! One way to do this is by talking to your school counselor about school clubs and activities or visit your town's department of recreation website.

I am Learning About Healthy Relationships

You may start getting involved in romantic relationships. Be aware that there are state laws that do not allow adults over age 18 to engage in sexual intercourse with a minor. These are called "statutory rape laws" and every state is different in their statutory rape considerations and penalties. For statutory rape laws and penalties by state visit <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2003/olrdata/jud/rpt/2003-r-0376.htm>.

Also, it is important to always respect your partner and yourself. You should always feel safe and comfortable in your relationship. You have the right to decide how you will move forward with your relationship. If you are concerned how your partner treats you, you should talk to a trusted adult. You can also contact the National Dating Abuse Helpline, which is available 24 hours a day, at 866-331-9474. All calls and chats are anonymous and confidential. Visit www.loveisrespect.org for further information and to chat online from 4pm-12am CST or please visit www.breakthecycle.org.

I am Adopted and Have Entered into the Adoption Registry

The Adoption Registry can help you get in contact with your birth family members. If you were adopted in New Jersey through the Division of Youth and Family Services or by its earlier agencies, you may be able to get information about your birth family through the Adoption Registry. The Adoption Registry can help you get in contact with your birth family members and can help you with the following services: registration, non-identifying background information, limited search services, information and referrals.

If you have been adopted and would like information regarding your biological family, complete an adoption registry application. In order to obtain any information you must be the age of majority (18) or if a minor then your adoptive parents must give consent. Applications can be obtained from the Registry and should be updated when last names, current address or phone numbers change. To contact the staff of the Registry please call 609-888-7474 or email dcfadoptionregistry@dcf.state.nj.us, or for more information visit: www.nj.gov/njfofosteradopt/adoption/registry/.

I am Participating In Volunteer Work

Volunteering is an important way to give back to your community. These opportunities might be un-paid work but you will learn useful skills, expand your social network, and have something good on your resume. Here are links to volunteer opportunities in NJ:

www.volunteernewjersey.org

www.njcares.org

www.volunteerconnectnj.org

www.volunteernj.org

I Have Identified My Life Goals and Explored Possible Careers

Visit www.njnextstop.org to help you learn more about career and work interest in New Jersey. Visit www.oedb.org/ to get descriptions of careers based on degrees. This website will also help you to find colleges and universities that offer the degrees that match your career interests. Complete Activity One in this resource guide to identify and discover goals, interests, and strengths about yourself. Then complete Activity Three to help you in matching the careers that are a best fit for you.

I Have Explored the Options of Going to College or Pursuing Vocational Training

It is cheaper for a person to attend a vocational school and it takes less time to begin a career and full-time employment, as compared to attending college immediately after high school. Working while attending a vocational school is easily possible; and most vocational programs offer full and part-time schedules. See Chapter 3 “New Jersey High Schools, Vocational High Schools, Colleges, & Universities” for more details. In addition, the private and public post-secondary vocational school database can be found at the following website location www.rwm.org/rwm/tf_newj.html.

I am Preparing for the SATs

Most colleges require that students take SATs or ACTs as part of their application process. Everyone should study and take the SATs and ACTs even if they decide not to

attend college! There are prep classes you can take and practice books you can purchase to study on your own. Ask your school counselor for additional resources and help. Visit the following websites to find out about SAT prep courses: www.princetonreview.com, www.number2.com, and www.kaptest.com.

If you cannot afford to take a class, you can still study on your own using a prep book with sample exams and helpful instructions. Visit the following websites to buy a book to prepare for SATs and ACTs: www.amazon.com and www.barnesandnoble.com. And if you are a DCP (formerly known as DYFS) involved youth, ask your caseworker about funds that may be available to help you with your SAT/ACT preparation.

I Have Successfully Completed A Life Skills Assessment

The Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment is completed by you and your guardian or caregiver to identify the life skills you already know and what skills you need help developing in order to become self-sufficient. The assessment is based on the responses that you and/or your caregiver provide. The Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment is available at www.caseylifeskills.org and should be completed each year. The website is open to everyone and has many resources that you may find helpful.

I Have Discussed With My Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) Caseworker On How I Can Obtain Life Skills

If you are a DCP involved youth, talk with your DCP caseworker about getting involved in your county's "Life Skills Training Program" and how to be referred. Contact information for county programs can be found at www.transitionsforyouth.org.

If you are not involved with DCP, communicate with your school counselor on how you can obtain the necessary skills you need to become a productive and successful adult. Some schools have a School Based Youth Service Program (SBYSP) and provide skills training. Ask your school counselor about whether your school has a SBYSP.

I Have Collected My Working Papers

Working papers can be obtained from your school's main office. You will need several signatures before you can start working. Usually the signatures include a school official, your guardian, your new employer (manager at the job you will start at), and a doctor. You will need new working papers for each job you start while under the age of 18.

Ages 16 and 17

I am Broadening My Social Network

If you are a youth and involved with DCP, you can go onto national network websites for young people in foster care. Visit www.fosterclub.com or www.fostercarealumni.org.

Regardless of whether you are a DCP or non-DCP involved youth look for volunteer opportunities, community activities, and a chance to join school clubs. Ask your school counselor for opportunities. Also, see Chapter 8 for additional networking websites.

I Have Found a Job & Know My Employment Rights

Working helps you to look into careers and determine whether you like that area of work. In order to help you get employment, visit a One-Stop Career Center nearest you. To find a career center visit: www.careeronestop.org/ or www.wnjpjn.net/oscc/; or find a center by visiting: www.lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/wnjpjn/findjob/onestop/services.html.

To learn more about laws and regulations concerning work hours and wages, visit www.lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/wagehour/lawregs/child_labor_law.html.

I Have Adopted Budgeting Skills

Learning how to budget and manage money is very important. Talk to the trusted people in your life about how to budget money. Learn how not to spend more than what you are earning and how to save money. Review “Chapter 6 Financial Assistance” in this guide for some additional information. Also visit these two websites designed to help you with money management: www.moneyandstuff.info/teens.html and www.old.eduguide.org/Parents/Library/EduGuideView/tabid/403/id/2457/Get-Smart-about-Money.aspx

I Have Found a Positive and Influential Mentor

Mentoring programs have been created throughout the state of New Jersey to ensure that young adults transitioning from adolescence to adulthood are receiving positive role models and support. Research local mentoring programs or ask your school counselor. If you are a DCPD involved youth, ask your caseworker to make a local mentoring program referral for you. Complete Activity Four when you have a positive mentor in your life.

I Studied for and Passed My Driver’s Permit Test

New Jersey’s driver education booklets are available at your local Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC). These booklets will help you prepare for taking the written driver’s exam. If you have any questions ask your driver’s education instructor, or contact a MVC nearest you. For MVC locations by county please visit: www.state.nj.us/mvc/Location/.

I Have Found Programs That Will Help Me Prepare For College

If you are a current or former DCPD involved youth or you are homeless attend “A Night with NJFC Scholars Program” which is run by Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS). These events are scheduled year-round and held throughout the state of New Jersey at various housing and life skills programs, high schools, and community centers. During the event FAFS staff provide assistance with completing the free Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application and the NJFC Scholars Program application. The staff will answer questions you may have about attending a vocational/technical school, two year college, four year college or university. If you would like more information about these events or would like to schedule an event in your area please contact Ebony Dean at 800-222-0047 ext. 318 or edean@fafsonline.org.

You can also speak with your guidance or college/career counselor about college fairs or college nights held at your high school or in your area. They are usually held in the fall or spring during the evening hour and often while school is in session.

I am or Was a Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) Youth and I am Aware of Wraparound Funding and Aftercare Services

For youth 18-22, who are currently or were involved with DCPP, investigate “Aftercare Programs.” These programs may help you in getting employment, housing, and post-high school education when your DCPP case is closed or it is getting ready to be closed. Participating in an “Aftercare Program” may allow a youth to have access to “wraparound funds” for short-term related expenses. See “Chapter 6: Financial Assistance” for further information about getting “wraparound funds” and the requirements.

I Have Selected a Possible Career Path

Be true to yourself! Select a career path or several possible career options that you believe you will be happy with, and obtain the necessary skills through training and education in order to reach your goals. If you decide to attend college or would like to pursue further training after high school, start researching schools that offer education and programs in your area of interest. Links to websites that list different schools and colleges in NJ can be found in “Chapter 3: New Jersey High Schools, Vocational High Schools, Colleges, & Universities.”

I Shared My Career Interests and Goals with My School Counselor

Talking with your school counselor about your education dreams is extremely important. School counselors are responsible for helping you select further educational options and are knowledgeable of the resources that would meet your specific needs. You should schedule an appointment with your school counselor to discuss future plans and keep in contact to stay updated on other opportunities available based on your interests.

I Investigated Whether I’ll Have Medical Insurance Coverage at 18

If you are a DCPP involved youth, talk with your caseworker and/or guardian about medical insurance options between the ages of 18-21.

If you are not a DCPP involved youth, investigate if you are eligible to receive medical coverage in New Jersey until the age of 26 or 31. For information, visit the Department of Banking and Insurance website at www.state.nj.us/dobi/division_consumers/du31.html. Also, read “Chapter 7: Medical/Behavioral Health/Counseling” for extra information.

ACTIVITY ONE:

“The discipline of writing something down is the first step toward making it happen.”
- Lee Iacocca

List your goals and desires:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

What are the top five tasks you want to do in the next 5-years?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are five characteristics that you like about yourself?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are habits that you need to work on?

What do you like to do (hobbies, recreational activities, etc.)?

What kinds of skills are you good at doing?

Chapter 2: Transition to Adulthood

Happy 18th birthday! It is exciting to officially be considered an adult and to be able to work towards your future goals. Along with all of the excitement there are some new responsibilities. This chapter provides two lists that tell you what CAN and CANNOT be done once you turn 18. Also, please complete Activity Two below by reading the messages in the colorful circles. Then write in each blank circle under the diagram your plan on how you will avoid experiencing these hardships. Visit appropriate chapters in this guide to assist you.

ACTIVITY TWO:



18-Year-Old Guideline Charts

What You CAN DO As An 18-Year-Old

1. Vote in federal, state, and local elections and can serve as a jury member
2. Able to be elected for county and local office
3. Can sign a binding contract
4. Legally sue a person(s) or company & can be sued
5. Obtain individual medical and dental care without legal parental consent
6. If DCPP youth, even after signing self out-of-care, can sign up for "Medicaid Extension"
7. If were adopted, can access copy of birth certificate
8. Allowed to obtain a resource family parent license and potentially adopt a child
9. Register to enter the military service/armed forces without legal guardian consent
10. Get married; get a tattoo, and/or body piercing without legal guardian consent
11. Buy a lottery ticket
12. Obtain an unrestricted drivers' license
13. Can get a Commercial Drivers' License (CDL) and operate or drive a large passenger vehicle or heavy goods vehicle
14. Work hours without age labor law restrictions
15. Open a bank account without having a "co-signer"
16. Obtain academic school records if leaving or graduated from the school you attended
17. Buy and sell real-estate and stock
18. Can professionally study-abroad
19. Must file and pay taxes for self
20. Create a Will and/or Living Will and can indicate if you want to leave your body for experimental study or donate organs if when die by age 18
21. Legally classified "an adult" in ALL USA states and will be prosecuted as an adult for any criminal activity, which may result in going to jail rather than a juvenile facility

What You CANNOT DO As An 18-Year-Old

1. Cannot legally purchase or drink alcohol
2. Cannot legally purchase cigarettes or tobacco in New Jersey
3. Cannot gamble at a casino
4. Cannot keep a criminal record "private"
5. Cannot get out of a contract due to age
6. Cannot seek DCPP protection or services from abuse or neglect unless in a DCPP program or have an "open case"
7. Cannot supervise a "learner driver" in any vehicle
8. Cannot enter 21+ bars and clubs
9. Cannot rent or drive a "rental car"
10. Cannot obtain an airline transport pilot's license in order to operate an airplane, helicopter, and/or gyroplane

ACTIVITY THREE:

Instructions: Match the career options with the specific degree area of study. Place the letters that are in front of the career options on the line of the area of study it would be under.

Career Options

- A.) Fashion Design, Interior Design, Photography, Digital Arts, Animation, and more...
- B.) Avionics, Airframe, Powerplant Maintenance, and more...
- C.) Cosmetology, Hair Design, Skin Care, Esthetics, Makeup, Nail Technology, and more...
- D.) Accounting, Marketing, E-commerce, Admin. Support, Management, and more...
- E.) Court Reporting, Criminal Justice, Paralegal, Legal Office Admin., and more...
- F.) Culinary, Baking & Pastry, Hospitality & Restaurant Management, and more...
- G.) Elementary Education, Secondary Education, and more...
- H.) Nursing, Dental Hygiene, Medical Assisting, X-Ray Tech., Medical Billing & Coding, and more...
- I.) English, Sociology, Psychology, Art History, Language Arts, Foreign Languages, Science, Biochemistry, and more...
- J.) Massage Therapy, Nutrition, Personal Trainer/Fitness, Holistic Health, Physical Therapy, and more...
- K.) Software Development, Networking, IT, Web Development, and more...
- L.) Auto Body Tech., Automotive Tech., Electrician, HVAC, Welding, and more...
- M.) Animal Training, Casino, Sports Writers, Bartending, Travel Agent, and more...

Areas of Study

- _____ Health Care
- _____ Arts/Design/
Fashion
- _____ Liberal Arts &
General Studies
- _____ Technology/
Computers
- _____ Massage/Spa/
Wellness
- _____ Education
- _____ Criminal Justice
- _____ Business
- _____ Aviation
- _____ Trade
- _____ Unique &
Alternative Careers
- _____ Culinary Arts
- _____ Beauty

Note: Answers to activity three can be found at the end of this guide.

After Completing Activity Three:

What are the top three areas of study you may want to pursue?

1.) _____

2.) _____

3.) _____

What are five career options you would like to further research?

1.) _____

2.) _____

3.) _____

4.) _____

5.) _____

PART TWO

Education and Employment: *Discover all the Resources Available for You*

Chapter 3: New Jersey High Schools, Vocational High Schools, Colleges, and Universities

What are my education choices? Many youth think about this question. Believe it or not, there are more schools out there than just your public high school. In this chapter, you will learn different high school options. You will also learn why it is important to complete high school in order to get a good job. Also, you may get a job that will want you to get more education or training at a college or other community training/vocational program. This chapter might help you with knowing where to look for such educational opportunities.

Think about what your goals are and read the definitions to see what you decide to do. Talk to someone you trust about your thoughts. You can also call the local school you might like to attend and ask them your questions. They can tell you more about what they have to offer, schedule a visit, and help you make a decision.

High School

High School - a school that usually teaches students in grades 9 through 12. There are also other schools that provide a high school education such as; Charter and Alternative schools. Charter

schools are public schools that receive state money to teach youth with a similar education. Some of the schools have a different way of teaching youth. You can only attend a Charter school if you are selected through a lottery drawing. The schools are usually run by a group of people who want to see a change in education. These folks can be your parents or other community members. Each school has different standards and education requirements.

Alternative High Schools is a school that covers all educational programs but is taught in a different manner than a regular public high school. These programs are for students who are at risk of failing school or who have not been successful in a general education program. To find out what alternative schools are available in your area, contact your local school district.

N.J. State School Directory -

Find a NJ public school by county or district here:
www.state.nj.us/education/directory/

“All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them ... If you can dream it, you can do it.” - Walt Disney

N.J. Vocational High School

Vocational School - a school that teaches youth about different jobs such as mechanics, carpentry, plumbing, and construction. Some teach computer and cooking skills.

Some youth will like to learn a job or a trade while in public high school. If you prefer this option, look for vocational schools in your area when you are ready to enter high school and after you complete high school. New Jersey has 21 counties that have vocational high schools. Most counties offer full or part-time programs, as well as two and four-year trainings, to students in grades nine through twelve. The goal of vocational high school is to prepare students to be successful and capable of caring for their well-being.

Vocational high schools let you to earn a high school diploma and get on the job training experience. Many vocational high schools offer internships, public education, and other school-to-career programs that teach youth to prepare for a job skill. Also, many vocational programs allow you to earn college credits while still in high school.

Usually there are fewer openings in these types of schools, so it is important that if you are interested, you look into vocational school programs as early as seventh grade. Usually an application needs to be sent in the beginning of eighth grade if you plan to participate in a four-year program or in the beginning of tenth grade for a two-year program. These schools look at your grades, attendance and department reports when deciding on who can attend their school.

N.J. Vocational High Schools –

Find a NJ public vocational school here:
www.publicschoolreview.com/state_vocationals/stateid/NJ

College

Two-year College – is a place where someone can learn about career in two years or complete a certification program. It is also known as junior or community college. Community colleges do not have housing on campus. They also do not offer bachelor degrees, only an associate degree.

Four-year College – a place that offers classes for young adults to teach them a career in four years to earn a bachelor's degree. You can also earn a minor degree, and/or a certification opportunity. Colleges have housing on campus.

University - a large place that offers education for youth to obtain a bachelor's degree, master degree or a doctoral degree. They also offer housing on campus.

N.J. County Community Colleges -

Find a community college here:
www.communitycollegesinnewjersey.com/

N.J. Four-Year Public/Private Colleges & Universities -

Find a four year college here:
www.collegesinnewjersey.com/
www.nj.gov/higheducation/colleges/schools_sector.htm

N.J. Private & Public Vocational /Trade School

In every county in New Jersey, there are public adult vocational school programs. New Jersey also offers basic skills, English as a Second Language (ESL), and General Education Diploma (GED) programs. These programs are offered by the adult education schools in every county, at little or no cost. There is also a large selection of vocational/career programs with tuition and fees that change by course and program. This way of teaching provides training (including guidance, counseling and placement assistance) at different levels of employment, which include semi-skilled and skilled workers, technicians and paraprofessionals. The specific programs available differ by county; however, the purpose of all the programs is to provide students with educational opportunities to learn the skills necessary to enter into and compete in the labor market. Financial aid is available to students who apply and qualify.

For an adult, going to a vocational school can be cheaper than attending college and a shorter path to a career and full-time employment. Also, working while going to a vocational school is easier, since most programs are offered in the day and evening and on a full and part-time basis.

Anyone who has a high school diploma or equivalency certificate (GED) and is at least 18 years of age can attend the adult education vocational and technical school. Some schools require young adults to take a test before entering their program. A small number of courses do not require a high school diploma or GED and a few allow admission beginning at age 16, with

“All successful people men and women are big dreamers. They imagine what their future could be, ideal in every respect, and then they work every day toward their distant vision, that goal or purpose.”

- Brian Tracy

parental consent. In general, you are given the opportunity to attend this school before someone from another county. If the classes are not full then other non-county residents can attend.

The private and public vocational school database can be found at the following website location www.rwm.org/rwm/tf_newj.html. This database provides access to both private and public vocational/technical schools listed by program and by city. This will help you access the vocational/technical schools that offer the specific career option of interest. The database also allows for access to schools available by city.

N.J. Career, Business, and Computer Schools –

Find a specialized career, business, or computer school here:

www.careerschoolsinnewjersey.com/

www.businessschoolsinnnewjersey.com/

www.computerschoolsinnewjersey.com/

Chapter 4: Academic Scholarships

Further your education! Not always the most thrilling thought, but this is truly an exciting next step in your life. There are so many possibilities for where you can attend to further your education after high school. However, reality might settle in – how am I going to pay for it? It is possible to make it work! One way to make it work is to apply for student aid and scholarships!

There are many scholarships that are available to students based on their experiences, geographic location, gender, race, chosen course of study, whether you were or are presently in foster care, were adopted, have a disability, or other factors. This chapter will provide you with the tools you need to try and access various scholarships and financial aid to help you pay for school.

4 TO DO's to Help Ensure that You Receive Student Aid and Scholarships

1ST TO DO: All applications for student aid forms for college or other post-high school education begin with completing the FREE application for Federal Student Aide (FAFSA). This form has to be completed in the beginning of your high school senior year, before Feb 1st of your graduating year, as well as in the beginning months of every year while you are enrolled in a college. For more information, visit the FAFSA website at: www.fafsa.ed.gov/index.htm.

2ND TO DO: Know the common and local types of scholarships that are available to students of your current academic level (www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scholarship) with the main purpose of finding two or more scholarships that match your plan and student description. Example: Foster care youth have the option to apply for scholarships specifically offered to youth who have transitioned from the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) system. **Read further for options.**

3RD TO DO: Make a list of your political and/or community topic interests, sports and hobbies, passions, skills, unique qualities and/or experiences, social clubs and affiliations, highest grade

level achieved and grades! Then search for scholarships where the student applicant requirements match items from your list. There are scholarships available for a wide variety of youth!

4TH TO DO: Lastly, locate the financial aid offices of each college you are interested in. Contact the office and make an appointment with a financial advisor to find out the most up-to-date financial aid information as well as scholarships that you might qualify for. Do not wait until the last minute to apply!

Aid and Scholarships

The SmartStudent™ Guide to Financial Aid: This online resource provides complete information regarding financial aid, scholarships, loans, military assistance, and more. For more information visit: www.finaid.org.

New Jersey Foster Care (NJFC) Scholars Program: The goal of the NJFC Scholars Program is to provide funding for eligible foster, adoptive, kinship, youth living in transitional programs and homeless youth to pursue a post-secondary education at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university, trade or career school. The youth must be between the ages of 16-22 and meet one of the following eligibility criteria: (1) was in a DCPD out-of-home placement for 9 months or more after your 16th birthday or 18 months or more after your 14th birthday; (2) was adopted through DCPD after your 12th birthday (must be receiving an adoption subsidy at the time of application); (3) was adopted through DCPD after your 16th birthday; (4) was in an out-of-home DCPD placement and left to enter KLG after your 16th birthday; or (5) resides in or has resided in an independent living arrangement or transitional living program for 3 months or more that is operated or approved for payment by DCPD, the federal government pursuant to the Runaway & Homeless Youth Act, or the New Jersey Homeless Youth Act.

In addition, a youth must have a high school diploma or GED and be admitted to a degree or certificate granting post-secondary institution that has been accredited to receive Title IV funding. The two sources of funding utilized by the NJFC Scholars Program are the Education Training Voucher (ETV) and the State Tuition Waiver program. Each source of funding has its own eligibility criteria. If a youth is approved for ETV funding, a maximum of \$5,000 per academic year may be awarded to a full or part-time student attending a public or private school. If a youth is approved for the State Tuition Waiver program, funding will be provided to cover the cost of tuition and fees (after federal financial aid has been applied) for a full-time student at a New Jersey public institution. For more information please contact Foster and Adoptive Family Services at 800-222-0047 or visit: www.fafsonline.org.

“A Night with the NJFC Scholars Program”: If you are a current or former DCPD involved youth, living in a transitional living program, or you are homeless please attend the event called “A Night with the NJFC Scholars Program.” This year-round event is hosted by Foster and Adoptive Family Services (FAFS) and held throughout New Jersey at various housing and life skills programs, high schools and community centers. During the event FAFS staff provide assistance with completing the free application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the NJFC Scholars Program Application, and answer any questions you may have related to your post-

secondary education plans. If you would like more details about these events or would like to schedule an event in your area please contact Ebony Dean at 800-222-0047 ext. 318 or edean@fafsonline.org. For more information call 800-222-0047 or visit www.fafsonline.org.

Orphan Foundation of America (OFA): Offers funding, support, connects students with internships, and provides virtual mentoring. Youth eligible for this program must be enrolled in or accepted into an accredited post-secondary program and be under the age of 25. Eligible applicants had to have been in foster care for one year at the time of their 18th birthday or have been adopted or taken into legal guardianship out of foster care or upon the death of their parents after their 16th birthday. Youth are also eligible if both their parents died before he/she turned 18 and if the youth has not been adopted or taken into legal guardianship. Applicants must have been orphaned or a foster care youth while living in the United States. U.S. citizenship is not required. Graduate school assistance is also available. For information visit: www.orphan.org.

Note: Some youth who are eligible for the OFA Scholarship funding are also eligible for federal Education and a Training Voucher, or Chafee dollars. For more information visit: www.statevoucher.org.

National Foster Parent Association Youth Scholarship: Offers scholarships to foster youth for college, vocational training schools, correspondence courses and even GED prep programs. They award five scholarships of \$1,000 each. Three are awarded to foster youth and two are awarded to birth or adoptive children residing in a foster home. To apply you must complete the application, obtain two letters of recommendation, and write an essay. For information visit: www.nfpainc.org/content/?page=YOUTHSCHOLARSHIP.

HESAA: A website that provides NJ grants and scholarship information offers tips for when selecting a college and applying, gives definitions of the different student loan types, and more. For more information visit: www.hesaa.org.

OEDb: An amazing online database that lists career descriptions, offers college and university degree program information, and more. The website also lists different specialty scholarships, subject/degree-based, ethnicity-based, and religion-based scholarships, as well as scholarships based on the degree type and educational level you are pursuing. For a list of NJ scholarships and others visit: www.oedb.org/scholarship/new-jersey.

Enotes.com: Provides a list of scholarships and funding options for a diverse group of individuals. Scholarship and program descriptions, requirements, deadlines, contact information, and recipient responsibilities are listed after clicking the links of the scholarship offered. A list of NJ scholarships can be found by visiting: www.enotes.com/scholarships-loans/NJ.

CollegeScholarships.org: Offers lists of scholarships by categories, such as “Foster Children.” View the categories that apply to you, please visit: <http://www.collegescholarships.org/>.

NJYouth4Youth: Is a foster care youth driven website that provides numerous documents, links, and tips regarding a wide variety of topics. In addition, scholarship information is available if you visit: www.njyouth4youth.org (go to “Hot Topics” and then “College”).

The Kidlaw Resource Center: A program of ACNJ that provides an online library source of publications, fact sheets, manuals, and other resources. To access a list of scholarship information visit: www.kidlaw.org/main.asp?uri=1003&di=1703.

Tips for Completing Financial Aid and Scholarship Applications and Forms:

1. Become aware of all of the deadlines! It is important to know that deadlines can change. Keep track of the deadlines through the scholarships website. Give yourself enough time to get all the documents needed and apply.

2. Carefully read all eligibility requirements. Take the time to carefully read through the requirements because there may be scholarships that you will not be eligible for. If you are unclear on whether you qualify then contact the scholarship provider to get answers to your questions and make sure you are eligible.

3. Proofread your application. Do not assume that a question simply does not apply to you. Answer all of the questions on the application to the best of your ability. Make sure that your answers make sense, directly answer the question asked, and contain accurate information. Double-check for spelling and grammar errors!

4. Letters of recommendation are important. Make sure that the person(s) you are asking to write a letter of recommendation for you has been given advanced notice so they are not rushing to write your letter. People with enough time most likely will be: (1) willing to write a letter for you; (2) ensure the quality of the letter is good; and (3) may seek your input. Before selecting your letter of recommendation person(s), consider what this reference person can write about. Think: What can this person express in my letter that will appeal to the scholarship application reviewers? When picking a reference, asking a coach or teacher who knows you well is a better choice than selecting someone who has not known you for long. Pick people who seem to be fair, objective, skilled in writing, and who want to see you reach your goals. After getting your letter(s) it is very important that you write thank you cards for all persons that wrote a letter for you.

5. Leave yourself plenty of time to write the essay(s). Make sure you really answer the question asked and proofread carefully. Having someone else look at your essay is a good idea. Show that you are serious by taking your time. Answer the essay(s) in an organized, thoughtful, and creative manner.

6. Write each application as if it was your first. Do not just copy and paste your answers from one application to the next. Honesty is very important and many scholarships will require proof of activities.

7. Leave plenty of time to get documents. Documents may be required from your school, work, volunteer positions, etc. Make sure that you allow for enough time between how long it may take someone to send out the document you need and the deadline.

8. If you have to mail materials in then go to the post office. The post office will make sure that you have correct postage. Do not make the scholarship pay for postage due. And do not miss a scholarship application deadline because your package was returned to you.

Chapter 5: Employment Opportunities

Finding a job can sometimes be a job in itself! Below are some resources to help make your search easier. These resources can help you locate jobs as well as job training. It is also a great idea to visit your local neighborhood stores and ask if anyone is hiring. Even if they are not seeking new employees ask for an application to fill out. Employers can keep your application on file and contact you if a position becomes available. Maybe you have been looking for work for awhile and have not been too successful? Try volunteering in a place where you would like to someday work. If a position opens up the employer will be more likely to hire you after seeing your hard work and dedication to the company.

The NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development: Has an outstanding website that can assist you in exploring employment opportunities. This website offers resume tutorials, a cover letter template, links to scholarship and loan websites, salary details based on occupation, and more. Visit http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/wnpjpin/wnpjpin_index.html. Also the Department of Labor administers the website www.njnextstop.org, which is another helpful resource that can assist you in beginning to explore and think about career options. An additional way to receive career information is by visiting www.careeronestop.org/.

NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services: NJDVRS works with individuals with disabilities who may need assistance in order to prepare for, get, and keep a job. DVRS counselors can consult with students as young as 14 regarding vocational planning. Youth can apply for services up to 2 years prior to leaving high school. For more information and to get a list of the local DVRS offices call DVRS Central Office at (609) 292-5987 or visit www.lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/dvrs/DVRIndex.html.

NJ Youth Corps: A year-round voluntary program that encourages community involvement and offers personal as well as career counseling to participants ages 16-25. For more information please visit <http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/wfprep/edtrain/ged/Youth.html> or call the state headquarters at 609-292-2060; and to find your county's representative read the below pdf www.lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/forms_pdfs/edtrain/NJYouthCorpsWebSiteContactUs.pdf.

NJ Job Corps: A free job training and educational program. Youth 16-24 years old can receive guidance in getting a high school diploma or GED, learn necessary job skills, and gain assistance in finding and keeping employment. For more program information visit: www.jobcorps.dol.gov or contact the Edison NJ headquarters office at 732-985-4800.

AmeriCorps: Is a national network program that partners with other organizations in order to offer participants of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to receive guidance and training to develop their talents and enhance skills. For more information call 202-606-5000 or visit www.americorps.gov/about/ac/index.asp.

Chapter 6: Financial Assistance

Learning about good credit and bad credit, budgeting, how to balance a checkbook, and ways to get additional funds are all part of being an adult. First you need to learn what they mean and how they can effect your future. Take note that these are all things that will not only impact your ability to rent an apartment now, but can even effect you trying to buy a house ten years from now. Check out these definitions and resources; then you can be on top of it!

Credit and Budgeting

Why is building a good credit history important?

Establishing a good credit history makes it possible for you to get loans for items such as a car or a home in the future. Your credit record may also impact the interest rate you pay and the amount of money a lender/bank is willing to offer you. It may also be looked at when you rent an apartment. So it is important to pay your bills on time and keep the amount of debt you incur at a manageable amount.

How can I get a report of my credit history?

You can always obtain your “credit report” online. Some services may require you to pay a service charge and others may be free. Be mindful, that some websites are scams claiming that they’ll provide you with your latest credit report but really just want your money or personal information. It is important to not easily place your personal information on unsecured sites due to identity theft possibilities. Asking an adult like your school counselor, mentor, DCPD caseworker or a program staff member that you are working with for help is a good choice.

Prevent bad credit by budgeting:

Budgeting allows you to track your monthly expenses so that you can plan ways to save money for important short and long-term goals. Having a financial budget, you will find that 5-10 percent of your total spending may be for purchases that are not needed. The main goal is to stop impulse buys and instant gratification and to use that 5 to 10 percent of your income to achieve short or long-term goals.

The following websites provide strategies for efficient budgeting:

www.sayplanning.com/saygoodcredit/

www.moneypants.com

www.thebeehive.org/money

www.nefe.org

www.yacenter.org

www.financial-education-icfe.org/children_and_money/index.asp

**“Never spend your money before you have it.”
– Thomas Jefferson**

How can I establish good credit to prepare for the future?

To establish good credit you should first pay your **bills on time**. Second, it is important not to have too much outstanding credit so remember to only borrow what you can afford to repay. Meaning: **DO NOT** make large purchases with your credit card if you are not able to pay the amount purchased with your next paycheck. While having a credit card can allow you to build a credit history, it can also place you in debt. To minimize your chances of going into debt having one credit card is sufficient. Make payments **on time** and pay the billing amount.

How to build good credit:

Open a checking account. Checking and savings accounts are included in your credit report. Opening a checking account will grant you the right to receive a book of checks as well as a debit/visa card to use. When using your debit/visa card, money will automatically be taken from your account. You will want to avoid using the debit/visa card when there are not enough funds in your account to pay for the purchase, because the bank will charge you “overdraft fees.” For example: Say you have \$100.00 dollars in your checking account and you want to purchase a GPS, which is \$150.00. You allow a Walmart cashier to swipe your debit/visa card and the \$150.00 is automatically taken from your account. But you only had \$100.00 in your account, so now you have a negative \$50.00 balance and the bank will charge you a penalty fee.

In regards to checks, if you write and then mail a check, please allow the check recipient at least 5 business days or more to cash that check. Meaning, the funds will not be automatically taken out of your account until the recipient receives and then goes to his/her bank to cash the check. So you will need to be sure that the amount of money written on the check stays in your account. If the recipient tries to cash the check but you do not have the amount you wrote on the check in your account then your check will be considered a “bounced check” and the person will not be able to receive the funds you wrote out. The bank may charge you with a penalty fee.

Make sure you keep track of your spending! You can do this by writing down whenever you use your debit/visa card or write a check, by saving receipts, and signing up to view your account online. Always ask your bank provider any questions you might have. One question might be: What is the difference between a checking and savings account? Or maybe: I am a student, what type of special offerings do you have?

Apply for and receive a credit card. To build credit you will need to hold the credit card in your own name, not in a parent's name, although a parent or other adult may need to be a co-signer. Before you apply for a card educate yourself about possible traps in credit card contracts and use. The following websites provide information on choosing a credit card:

www.financial-education-icfe.org

www.federalreserve.gov/pubs/shop/default.htm

www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/credit/eight/

You may also find that applying for a local department store credit card where you shop regularly is an option. Be sure that the company reports the status of its accounts to credit reporting agencies. After you receive the credit card, make only small purchases, and pay the bill in full when it arrives and well before the due date. Doing this regularly over time helps build your credit history as a prompt payer. Never be late and never skip payments (these practices hurt your credit and typically cause your interest rate on the card to skyrocket). Do not fall into the traps of credit cards—overspending or only making minimum payments!

Secure a small loan for a planned purchase. If you have been saving to purchase a used vehicle you might also want to take out a small loan to help to pay for the automobile. Look for the best rates. It is even possible that the auto retailer might offer a loan, but their rates are usually high. To build good credit you will need to make all of your loan payments on time. You do not even

want to be one day late with your payments because lateness will negatively impact your credit report and you will be charged a late payment fee!

Social Services

For cash benefits, medical assistance, food stamps, emergency housing, and other services, youth age 18 (including parents) can visit their county Board of Social Services. In some instances, municipalities provide cash assistance to single adults in another office. Ask for details when visiting the board of social services. For further information, please review the link below: www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/programs/foodstamps/cwa/.

Other Financial Resources

Communications Lifeline: This is a free basic service that offers credit on monthly household phone bills as well as 50% discount on installation. This does not apply to cell phones. Applications for the program are available and reviewed at the local welfare offices. Mail or fax to Verizon before establishing service. For more information, call “NJ Shares” at 888-337-3339 or visit www.verizonnj.com/about/community/nj/tele/njlifelinerev.asp.

LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program): This program helps with the costs of home heating and medically necessary cooling. Even if the youth is renting and heat is included in rent, services can be accessed. The application period is usually October through March. Forms can be found at libraries and local welfare offices.

Freecycle: This website provides listings of items that people are giving away for free. Visit www.freecycle.org and type in your city and state for item listings.

DCPP Youth

Local Office Flexible Funding Account

A DCPP case manager, with appropriate approval, can access “Local Office Flexible Account Funds”. This funding would be used to provide goods or services to meet the individualized needs of a youth or family under supervision.

Wraparound Funds

Wraparound funds are short term emergency funding, not to go over four (4) months, may be available to aging out and homeless adolescents in life skills training, aftercare, transitional living, or supportive housing programs. These funds must address a specific need or goal. These funds are flexible, and can be used to pay security deposits, a limited number of months' rent, driving lessons, furniture, and other items and services that support an adolescent's transition to independence. The lifetime maximum that a young adult can receive is \$4,000, but these funds are not an entitlement, and need to be accessed after all other funding sources have been explored and exhausted. In order to be eligible for wraparound funds, a young adult must complete a life skills program that covers pregnancy prevention. In addition, youth eligible for wraparound funds must meet one of the following criteria:

- Adolescents with an active DCPP case, must be 16 years of age or older, be working with an independent living skills program, or reside in a transitional living program.
- Adolescents with closed DCPP cases or homeless must be 18 years of age or older, and are working with an Aftercare agency, or who are in a transitional living program, supervised transitional living program or permanent supported housing program who are contracted to provide this service.
- Adolescents under 21 years of age, who graduated from an aftercare program or housing program can return to the program for additional assistance to meet the needs of a goal or emergency for approved needs. Youth can access these funds until their 22nd birthday.

Independent Living Stipend

A youth who is 16 to 21 years of age who has an open DCPP (Division of Child Protection and Permanency) case may be eligible for an “independent living stipend” when no family members are appropriate or available, and if neither adoption or kinship legal guardianship are suitable options. The stipend consists of \$40 per week for food and \$45 per week for rent.

The youth must be sufficiently mature and be able to function responsibly without immediate or continuous supervision; and must be engaged in a vocational or educational training program, treatment program, or working a minimum of 30 hours, a week while earning less than 150% of the federal poverty income levels for a family of one.

Also youth in any independent living arrangement, whether receiving the “independent living stipend” or not, are eligible for other supports such as clothing allowances. Talk with your DCPP worker or their supervisor about this available stipend.

PART THREE

Additional Resources: Do Research to Find What You Need

Chapter 7: Medical/Behavioral Health/Counseling

“But I never get sick.” Have you said this? That does not mean you should not have health insurance! It is important to have medical coverage. Are you working? If so, ask your employer what coverage they offer. Are you under 26? Ask your parents how long their health insurance will cover you and if you have to be in school for it to apply. Were you in DCP (formerly known as DYFS) care? Check out your available options below. Aside from physical health, you may have mental health needs. “But people will judge me for having a therapist.” It is important **not** to ignore your needs! Read below for information on how you can get necessary treatment for yourself.

Medical Coverage

Medicaid Extension: Youth involved with DCP will have Medicaid coverage until their case is closed. Medicaid Extension is available to young adults ages 18-21 who were in a DCP placement on their 18th birthday. Medicaid Extension for young adults can be accessed once the DCP case is closed by calling 1-888-235-4766.

- The Medicaid Extension for Young Adults (MEYA) provides continued Medicaid coverage for an adolescent who meets all of the following requirements:
 - The youth was living in a Division of Youth and Family Services placement and turned 18 years old on or after October 1, 2000
 - Meets Medicaid eligibility requirements, except for income.
- Coverage is given regardless of income until the adolescent’s 21st birthday. A toll-free number is available for further information about MEYA: 1-888-235-4766.

Private Insurance: Individuals may be carried under their parents/caregiver’s health insurance plan until the age of 26 or 31. Check to see if you are covered under an existing policy and visit the New Jersey Department of Banking and Insurance website for additional information:

www.state.nj.us/dobi/division_consumers/du31.html. Also, it may be helpful to read the second website below for information about individual medical insurance policies. Please visit:

www.state.nj.us/dobi/division_insurance/ihcseh/ihcguide/obtaincoverage.html

Medical Care

Federally Qualified Health Centers: In the State of New Jersey the major providers of comprehensive community-based primary health care are the 20 community health centers and their additional sites that are federally funded/qualified. FQHCs provide much needed care to the poorest citizens in the state. Although the structure and how they offered services may be different, FQHCs focus on the health care needs of the medically underserved within their service areas. Find a FQHC in your area at www.njpca.org.

Planned Parenthood: Planned Parenthood has health centers around the state that assist males and females while providing high quality, affordable medical care. These services include comprehensive gynecological care, birth control services, pregnancy testing, first-trimester abortion, STD testing and treatment, pre-natal care, primary care and cancer screenings. Since not all services are available at each location, it is best to check before making an appointment. Fees are based on the ability to pay and no one is turned away. Find a Planned Parenthood in your area at www.plannedparenthoodnj.org.

NJ Family Planning Centers: These centers also service males and females. They are not part of Planned Parenthood but can assist in many of the areas already mentioned above including testing for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). For a family planning list visit: www.state.nj.us/health/std/locations.shtml.

Maternal and Child Health Consortia: These are private non-profit organizations, licensed and regulated by the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services, which provide programs, activities, education, and infant and pediatric follow-up to pregnant women parents to help improve health outcomes for children. For New Jersey locations and contact information visit: www.nj.gov/health/fhs/professional/mchfact.shtml.

Jersey Parent Link: Is an early childhood, parent and professional resource center that provides information regarding pregnancy and different stages of development as well as state resources for parents. Visit: www.state.nj.us/njparentlink/health/before/.

HiTOPS: Is a New Jersey organization that offers health services and group support resources for people ages 13 to 26. Their health center is located in Princeton New Jersey and they offer health check-ups, advice and counseling, contraceptives, pregnancy testing, smoking cessation counseling, camp and sports physicals, screening and referrals for depression and eating disorders, and Gardasil vaccine. Visit: www.hitops.org.

Behavioral Health Services

New Jersey provides behavioral health services through different agencies depending on the level of need. To connect to behavioral health services contact 1-877-652-7624. The state contracted systems administration (CSA), PerformCare, does an assessment to determine the level of need and authorizes the care. The telephone number is a 1-877-652-7624.

- Multi-lingual Language line available
- 24 hours-a-day, 7 days a week access
- Services are available locally in all 21 counties

Who Can Get Services? Youth eligible for services through PerformCare are mostly between the ages of 5 and 18 reside in the State of New Jersey, and have an emotional or behavioral problem. Special consideration is given for services to youth under age 5.

Teens under the age of 18 need their parents' or guardians' permission to get non-emergent behavioral health treatment. For children still living with their parents, the parent makes the

treatment decision. When a child is living in a DCP (formerly known as DYFS) placement, it is DCP who make the final treatment decision.

Young adults ages 18 to 21 are eligible for services if they received services before that age of 18 from the child-serving systems in New Jersey which could include: the Division of Children’s System of Care also referred to as DCSOC (formerly known as DCBHS), Division of Child Protection and Permanency also referred to as DCP (formerly known as DYFS), the Juvenile Justice Commission, or any other child-serving state agency. Young adults ages 18 to 21, who demonstrate a clinical need for the continuation of services provided by the DCSOC system of care, may be eligible as part of the transition into adult services.

If you have questions about getting services, call the toll-free number 1-877-652-7624 (TDD: 866-896-6975). Services are also available through the New Jersey Department of Human Services for adults and addictions. Department of Human Services can be contacted at 1-800-382-6717. Or for information regarding the Division of Children’s System of Care (DCSOC) visit www.nj.gov/dcf or www.performcarenj.org.

Behavioral Health/Counseling

Division of Children’s System of Care: www.state.nj.us/dcf/behavioral

Division of Mental Health Services: www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhs/home

Division of Addiction Services: www.state.nj.us/humanservices/das/home

Some counties have websites that teens, their caretakers, and others persons helping teens can find services both within the community and statewide. These services may be in relation to housing and shelter options, employment, financial assistance, crisis and safety, childcare, food pantry locations, and more. For information, visit any of these links below:

www.monmouthresourcenet.org

www.passaicresourcenet.org

www.mercerresourcenet.org

www.morris-sussexresourcenet.org

www.statenj.us/humanservices/

www.statenj.us/dcf/behavioral/

**“As we advance in life it becomes more and more difficult, but in fighting the difficulties the inmost strength of the heart is developed.”
- Vincent van Gogh**

Chapter 8: Peer-to-Peer & Mentor/Group Support

Doesn't it feel great to connect with someone who really knows what you are going through or who can actually say, "I felt that way too!"? We understand! It is very important to surround yourself with positive role models and people who will encourage the healing process, discovery, and change. Below are various groups and organizations that may be of interest to you. We encourage you to reach out and develop these relationships.

National Networks to Connect DCPY Youth

Foster Club: www.fosterclub.org

Foster Care Alumni of America: www.fostercarealumni.org

All Stars Project Inc.: www.allstars.org

“Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart.”

– Eleanor Roosevelt

New Jersey Young Adult Groups

“Mutual Help”

New Jersey Self-Help Group Clearinghouse helps individuals find free self-help support groups that meet throughout New Jersey. The link below will assist in finding a community support group that relates to your particular stressful life situation. Call the toll-free helpline 800-367-6274. For more information visit: www.selfhelpgroups.org.

Eating Disorders

Eating Disorders Association of New Jersey supports persons with eating disorders, their families, friends, and interested professionals. \$5 donation/meeting. Dues \$50/yr. There are various meeting locations throughout New Jersey. For more information visit: www.edanj.org.

Sexual Orientation

Gay and Lesbian Political Action and Support Group offers an opportunity for individuals in isolated areas to be politically active and establish support groups where they are needed. For more information visit: www.gaypasg.org.

NJ Lesbian and Gay Coalition offer resources for LGBT youth. Helpline numbers, housing information, legal resources, physical health agencies, etc. are incorporated in this site. Call 732-828-6772. For more information visit: www.njlgc.org/publications/youth_guide/index.html.

HiTOPS is a New Jersey organization that offers health services and group support resources for people ages 13 to 26. They developed two support groups called “First & Third” and “PFLAG” for the LGBTQ youth and their loved ones. For more information visit: www.hitops.org/youth/support-groups-for-young-adults/.

The Pride Center of New Jersey offers numerous social, supportive, educational, entertaining, and fun events and groups for the LGBTIQ community every month. For more information and a calendar of events visit: www.pridecenter.org.

Keeping-It-Safe (KIS) is a peer-centered program in Camden City New Jersey that supports gay young men to maintain a healthy lifestyle and encourages them through group work. For more information visit: www.camden-ahec.org/health/keeping-it-safe.html.

Bereavement

Rainbows, Inc. offers peer-to-peer support for children and teens who are grieving the loss of a parent due to death, divorce, or abandonment. Meetings are held in various locations throughout New Jersey. This agency also helps to implement programs throughout the state. Call 800-266-3206. For more information visit: www.rainbowsnj.org.

Grief Speaks provides a listing of support groups held throughout New Jersey for persons dealing with grief and loss. For more information visit: www.griefspeaks.com/id45.html.

Good Grief, Inc. provides peer support groups for children, teens, and young adults who have lost a parent or sibling to death. They also offer support services for the children's surviving parent(s) or caretaker. For more information visit: www.good-grief.org/.

Comfort Zone Camp (CZC) is a non-profit organization that provides free services to New Jersey children who are dealing with the loss of a loved one. Youth spend weekends camping at a New Jersey campground with other youth and focus on dealing with their grief and the struggles of moving on. For more information visit: www.comfortzonecamp.org.

Anger, Depression, Anxiety, etc.

GROW in America has a mutual self-help group trying to prevent and help youth recover from depression, anxiety and other mental health problems. Meetings are held in various counties in New Jersey. Call 888-741-GROW. For more information visit: www.growinamerica.org.

Recovery, Inc. is a community mental health organization that uses a self-help method-of-will training. It gives techniques and strategies on how to control temperamental behavior and change attitudes towards nervous symptoms, fears, depression and anxiety. Meetings are held in different locations throughout New Jersey. Call 866-221-0302. For more information visit: www.recovery-inc.com.

Mental Illness

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) provides a wide variety of information about mental illness, diagnosis, and treatment for persons experiencing a mental illness. NAMI also offers free online discussion groups. For more information visit: www.nami.org.

Substance Abuse

The Division of Addiction Services has an online treatment directory, which provides lists of treatment agencies by NJ counties. Each agency may have specific programs, groups, and meetings. For more information visit: www.njsams.rutgers.edu/dastxdirectory/txdirmain.htm.

The Agape Center offers a state-by-state listing of organizations that provide counseling, treatment recovery services, support groups, education, and other resources. The website also

provides a page for a person to research locations for Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings. For more information visit: www.theagapecenter.com/Treatment-Centers/New-Jersey.htm.

Sexual Abuse

New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) provides resources and treatment for survivors of sexual violence and their families. The NJCASA website gives data on prevention, training techniques, advocacy, programs and support groups, as well as other facts for survivors and officials. For more information visit: www.njcasa.org.

HiTOPS is a New Jersey organization that offers health services and group support resources for people ages 13 to 26. They developed a Sexual Assault Survivors Support Group (SASS) for young women. For more information visit: www.princetonhealthcenter.org/youth/support-groups-for-young-adults/sexual-assault-survivors-support/.

Making Daughters Safe Again (MDSA) offers support and resources for daughters who have been sexually abused from mother figures. For more information visit: www.mdsasupport.homestead.com.

HIV/AIDS

Grief Speaks provides a listing of support groups held throughout New Jersey for persons affected with HIV/AIDS. For more information visit: www.griefspeaks.com/id109.html.

Buddies of New Jersey, Inc. offers case management, substance abuse, oral care, housing, transportation, peer support groups, and much more for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. For more information visit: www.njbuddies.org.

ACTIVITY FOUR:

Who is a person you strongly admire and look up to? This person can be in your life daily or someone you have become a fan of. First answer the questions below. Then in the boxes surrounding the stick figure (that represents the person you consider your role model) write different personality traits that you like about the person. The likeable attributes in the boxes can be physical characteristics, personality qualities, and/or quotes said by the person.

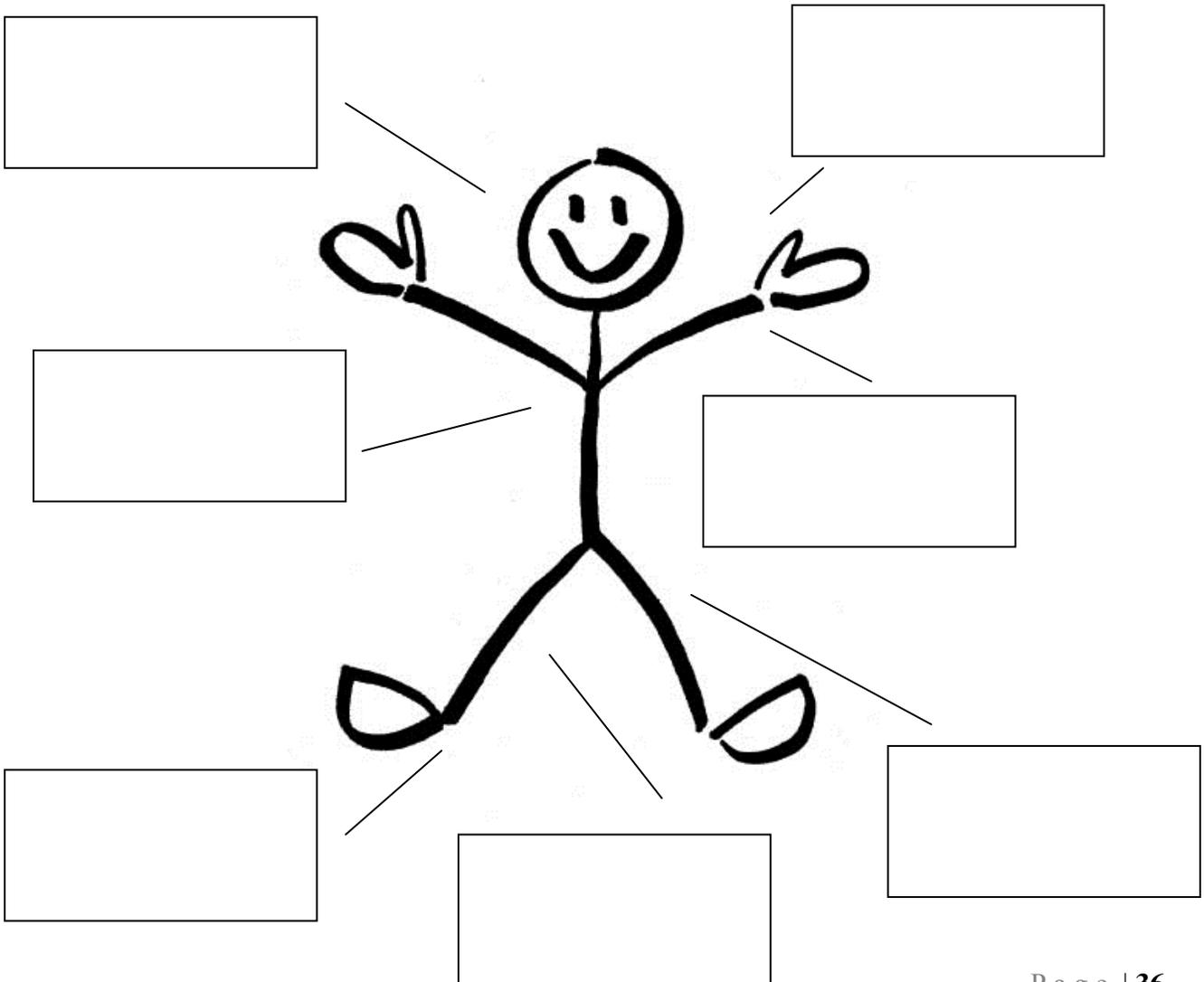
Who is your role model?

When did you start “looking up” to this person? Why?

What are some likeness and/or differences between the two of you?

What is a lesson that this person has taught you? How have you learn from the lesson?

What more would you like to learn from this role model and others in order to help you become a mature and productive adult?



Chapter 9: Housing Services

Housing is available for homeless and DCF involved youth ages 16-21 (i.e. foster care youth aging out of care and DCSOC involved youth) through a variety of programs. Typically, these housing programs will provide shelter to a youth for 18 months to 2 years depending on the program and their agency guidelines. Read this chapter for housing options and to access housing programs please call the Adolescent Housing Hub at 1-877-652-7624, visit www.performance.org or www.transitionsforyouth.org.

Youth Self-Refer Shelter List

<u>Atlantic</u>	<u>Burlington</u>	<u>Camden</u>	<u>Essex</u>	<u>Mercer</u>
<p>Covenant House 929 Atlantic Ave. Atlantic City, NJ 609-348-4070 Ages: 18-21</p> <p>Atlantic County Division of Intergenerational Services 201 So. Shore Road Northfield, NJ 08225 609-645-7700, Ext. 4700</p>	<p>Crossroads 610 Beverly- Rancocas Road Willingboro, NJ 08046 609-880-0210</p>	<p>Center for Family Services 584 Benson Street Camden, NJ 08103 856-964-1990</p> <p><u>Cape May</u></p> <p>Oasis Youth Shelter Cape May Court House, NJ 609-465-5045 Ages: 12-17</p>	<p>Covenant House 330 Washington St Newark, NJ 973-621-8705</p> <p>Youth Consultation Services 384 Broadway Newark, NJ 07104 973-482-4291</p>	<p>Anchor House Shelter 482 Centre Street Trenton, NJ 609-396-8329 Ages: 12-17</p>
<u>Ocean</u>	<u>Passaic</u>	<u>Somerset</u>	<u>Philadelphia</u>	
<p>Ocean Harbor House 2445 Windsor Avenue, Toms River, NJ 732-929-0660 Ages:10-21</p>	<p>Hispanic Information Center 270 Passaic Street Paterson, NJ 07501 973-881-0280</p> <p>Father English Community Center Project Youth Haven 435 Main Street Paterson, NJ 973-881-0280</p>	<p>Somerset Youth Shelter 49 Brahma Avenue Bridgewater, NJ 08807 980-526-6605</p>	<p>Covenant House 31 E Armat Street Pennsylvania 215-951-5411 Ages : 18-21</p>	

Housing and Resources for Teen/Young Adult Parents

- "Capable Adolescent Mothers" is a Crossroads Inc. program. A residential facility for females ages 15 to 18 who enter any time during pregnancy and may stay until the child's first birthday. Call 609-386-3342 for more information.
- "Second Chance Homes" is a program that is available through your local county welfare office. It helps teen mothers ages 17 and under, and their children, live in private host homes in the community to help them with housing and caring for their baby. The host homes are monitored by Cross Roads and Tri-Cities. To be considered, the teen mothers must be Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) eligible, not DCPD involved, not ready for independent living, and unable to live with relatives. A youth must personally go to their local county welfare or social services office.
- "Center for Great Expectations" is a residential facility for pregnant individuals ages 13 and older with an addiction or who have a family history of addiction. Call 732-247-7003 for more information.
- "Teen-Age Parents Program" is hosted by Twin Oaks Community Services (formerly named Family Service of Burlington County). This program provides counseling, case management, consultation, and home visits for pregnant and parenting teens. Call 609-518-5470 for more information.

Other Housing Options

Project COPE for Runaway Youth: www.cehs.montclair.edu/academic/fcs/COPE/runaway.shtml
Housing options for homeless youth: www.centerforwomennj.org/resources/Housing.pdf

Youth seeking housing assistance from the state should go to your local housing authority. For more information please visit www.nls.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/nj.cfm.

Also, youth can apply for Section 8 through the housing authority. So if you are on the waiting list for Section 8 you may be able to be placed on the list for the Supplemental Rental Assistance Program (S-RAP). In order to be put on this list visit your regional Department of Community Affairs field office for further details. For office contact information please review the website link: www.state.nj.us/dca/codes/affdhousing/affdhsgguide/appendix_b.shtml.

ACTIVITY FIVE:

What are the top 15 things that are most important for you to have in your house in order to consider it a home?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

Chapter 10: Transportation and Auto Coverage

Driving is a serious responsibility. Obtaining a driver's license is a sign that you are reaching adulthood. To learn about how to get your driver's license visit the NJ Motor Vehicle Commission's website at www.state.nj.us/mvc. Questions call: 888-486-3339.

Public Transportation

NJ Transit (Bus & Train): www.njtransit.com 973-275-5555 (Operator 7am-7pm)

Taxi Service Directory: www.1800taxicab.com/taxi-new-jersey.htm 800-TAXI-CAB

NJ Certified Driving Schools

MVC has organized a list of licensed driving schools by zip code. These schools can provide driver's education training for a specific rate. Some schools will assist you in obtaining your permit and/or license, and may directly pick you up where you live for each session. For rates and information, please contact the schools close to where you live. Note: Insurance companies will often lower your auto insurance rate if you have completed driver's training. For the list of driving schools, please visit www.state.nj.us/mvc/pdf/Licenses/drs.pdf.

Automobile Insurance

There are numerous auto insurance companies. You can contact any of these agencies listed below to obtain a free quote, which will allow you to calculate how much you will pay for insurance per month. This list of auto insurance companies, all service NJ vehicles and **are not** in any particular order.

IFA: www.ifaauto.com

Progressive: www.progressive.com

GEICO: www.geico.com

USAA: www.usaa.com/Auto

Liberty Mutual: www.libertymutual.com/Auto

Pioneers Insurance: www.pioneersinsurance.com

State Farm: www.statefarm.com

AAA Auto: www.aaa.com

Travelers Insurance: www.travelers.com

21st Century Auto: www.21st.com

High Point Insurance: www.highpointins.com

**“Love yourself first,
and everything else
falls in line. You
really have to love
yourself to get
anything done in
this world.”**

- Lucille Ball

To get information on how to find appropriate auto insurance, insurance definitions, and what your New Jersey auto insurance policy provides, read the NJ Auto Insurance Buyers' Guide, at www.state.nj.us/dobi/division_consumers/pdf/autoguide02.pdf

Chapter 11: Special Services

Feel like we are missing something? We hope not! Below is what we like to call the *kitchen sink* of resources. Read through the categories to see what might apply to you. Looking for legal advice? Need help with your disability? Trying to find local resources? The proper referral for these answers can be found below. Remember, if there is a resource you'd like to share with us please email it to our attention at: njyouthguide@live.com. In the meantime, good luck!

Statewide/National Resources

Department of Children & Families (DCF): DCF provides services that can assist young adults with housing, life skills, mentoring, employment/training, educational needs, youth advocacy, and healthcare. For information visit: <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/>.

NJ Department of Human Services: Offers a website that lists a wide range of programs, information and services designed to assist individuals, families and communities throughout the State of New Jersey. Visitors to the website will discover if they qualify for any of the 28 state and federal programs designed to help find housing, employment, child care, health insurance, prescriptions, pay for food and more. For information visit: www.njhelps.org.

2NDFLOOR: Is a confidential and anonymous statewide helpline for New Jersey's youth and young adults. Youth can call 2NDFLOOR at 888-222-2228 and find information on the website at www.2ndfloor.org. Youth can post messages on the website's message board to get ideas, thoughts, and insight from the 2NDFLOOR staff as well as from peers.

NJ211: Provides information and assistance to all NJ residents in the areas of health, human services, community resources and government assistance programs. You do not have to be in crisis to seek help from NJ211. To access NJ211 **dial 211** or visit the website at www.nj211.org. The alternative telephone number is 1-800-HELP555 (1-800-435-7555).

One Simple Wish: Is a nonprofit that provides basic needs, special requests, and exciting experiences through their wish granting program for children and young adults in foster care and for those who have aged out of foster care. Wishes can be made through social service agencies, churches, as well as schools. The wishes range in value from \$5-\$500 and examples include: clothing and shoes, school assistance, employment fees, transportation expenses, small furnishings and home items, tickets to movies or events, sporting equipment, graduation, prom supplies, and others. For more information visit www.onesimplewish.org or call 609-883-8484.

Resources for GLBTQI Youth

Garden State Equality: Is an organization dedicated to bringing same-sex marriage equality to New Jersey. It is the organizer of campaigns, primarily to get the legislature to pass a marriage equality bill and to accumulate enough votes in the legislature to override a gubernatorial veto. For more information visit: www.gardenstateequality.org.

The Pride Center of New Jersey: Offers numerous social, supportive, educational, entertaining, and fun events and groups for the LGBTIQQ community every month. For more information and a calendar of events visit: www.pridecenter.org.

The New Jersey Lesbian & Gay Coalition (NJLGC): Is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, and transgendered communities. They offer programs, education, groups, advocate for legal reform and are dedicated to fighting discrimination against these communities of people. For more information visit: www.njlgc.org.

NJ Gay Life: Gives a listing of local events happening throughout New Jersey to connect the LGBTQ community members. Also this website provides an online directory of New Jersey businesses as well as a support group calendar that is organized by issues and geographic locations. For more information visit: www.njgaylife.com.

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG): A national non-profit organization located in Washington, DC. The non-profit provides support for the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends. It offers support, online information, events and programs, as well as scholarships and advocacy opportunities. For more information visit: www.pflag.org.

The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN): Is dedicated to make sure that students in schools are being respected regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity and/or expression. The network strives to create school settings that valued differences for a more powerful and diverse community. For more information visit: www.glsen.org/cgibin/iowa/all/about/history/index.html.

Resources for Youth with a Disability

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs: Provides a recreation and leisure service resource directory for individuals with disabilities. The directory gives listings by county. For more information visit: www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/rec/resource_directory.html.

Statewide Parent Advocacy Network: Provide all families in New Jersey with the necessary resources to ensure that caregivers of children with a disability become fully participating and contributing members of our communities and society. For more information visit: www.spannj.org.

Rutgers University: Has a New Jersey Resource Guide for Families and Children. Resources are not strictly for families that have a child with a disability. To review this guide visit: www.specialeducation.rutgers.edu/resource_dir.pdf. See page 9 for disability resources.

The New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (NJDVRS): Provides services that allow individuals with disabilities to find or keep their existing jobs. DVRS works with individuals with all types of disabilities to include significant physical, mental health or substance abuse issues and learning disabilities. For more information call DVRS Central Office at 609-292-5987 or visit <http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/dvrs/DVRIndex.html>.

New Jersey Department of Education: Provides data regarding special education programming and data about students with disabilities successfully transitioning from school into the adult life. For more information visit: www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/transition/.

New Jersey Department of Human Services: Offers a list of offices and programs available to meet the health care, community living, employment-related, community-based mental health and in-patient care, and special needs for people with a disability. For more information visit: <http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/clients/disability/>. Also, the Division of Disability Services created a NJ Disability Resource Guide that lists a variety of state services. To review this guide visit: www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds/documents/REsource%20Directory%202010.pdf.

Brain Injury of New Jersey (BIANJ): Is a non-profit organization that was established to provide people with support groups and information relating to improving the quality of life for persons with a brain injury and their families. For more information visit: www.bianj.org.

Autism Speaks: An autism science and advocacy organization that hosts events to raise funds to discover a cure for autism, and is dedicated to advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. For more information visit: www.autismspeaks.org.

Special Child Health Services: NJ Department of Health and Senior Services have important programs and services through this website that were created to help families with children who have a disability. For more information visit: www.nj.gov/health/fhs/sch/index.shtml.

Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities (ABCD): Is a New Jersey-based organization that offers helpful resource links, which address a number of diverse issues within the developmental disability community. For more information visit: www.abcdnj.org.

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD): Provides a recreation and leisure service resource directory for individuals with disabilities. The directory gives listings by county. For more information visit: www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/rec/resource_directory.html.

Resources for Victims of Domestic Violence

New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women: Provides legal service information, publications, programs, and can link victims to local agencies. For more information visit: www.njcbw.org.

LSNJ-Law: Offers statewide legal information and advice. The website provides a hotline number for persons seeking legal counsel regarding a domestic violence situation. For more information visit: www.lsnjlaw.org/english/family/domesticviolence/index.cfm.

Break the Cycle: Is a national non-profit organization dedicated to promoting healthy and happy teen dating relationships. The website provides resources regarding teen dating violence. For more information visit: www.breakthecycle.org.

Resources for Teen/Young Adult Parents

New Jersey Child Support: Provides financial support forms online, custodial and non-custodial parent information, a listing of county offices, outreach programs, and services for teen parents. For more information visit: www.njchildsupport.org/Article.asp?AID=37.

UIH Family Partners: Offers planning for parenting fathers, who are dedicated to the welfare of children. UIH serves to empower and help men in becoming more actively involved as positive parental figures for their children and families. For more information visit: www.uihfamilypartners.org.

Resources for At-Risk Youth

“Outreach To At-Risk Youth”: Designed to prevent crime/juvenile delinquency and gang involvement. The 21 programs located in Camden, Essex, Mercer, Atlantic, Monmouth, Cumberland, Hudson, Passaic, Middlesex and Union counties provide enhanced recreation, vocational, educational, outreach and supportive services to youth, ages 13 to 18, and possibly until the age of 21. For information, call 609-888-7400 or visit: www.state.nj.us/dcf/prevention.

The National Guard Youth Challenge Program: Is for at-risk youth (ages 16-18) to enter prior to their 18th birthday. Youth participants are unemployed, drug and alcohol free, and high school dropouts. For more information visit: www.ngycp.org.

The New Jersey Courts: Created a general information guide for parents and guardians to assist them in understanding the handling of juvenile delinquency proceedings. To review this guide visit: www.judiciary.state.nj.us/family/juvenilebooklet.pdf.

Legal Assistance

Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ): Offers statewide legal information and advice. For any civil (not criminal) legal issues call 1-888-LSNJ-LAW or visit www.lsnjlaw.org. LSNJ-Law also provides general family law data. Visit: www.lsnjlaw.org/english/family/index.cfm. Also, for legal information regarding family and relationships with involvement of DYFS please visit: www.lsnjlaw.org/english/family/dyfs/index.cfm.

New Jersey Office of the Public Defender: Provides required legal representation for adults and juveniles charged with criminal offenses who are unable to afford private lawyers. Juveniles involved in the courts have a right to representation. For more information about the public defender’s office and services visit: www.nj.gov/defender/div_juvservices.shtml.

Office of the Law Guardian (OLG): Provides legal representation to children and youth who are involved in child welfare matters in family court. Law guardians are appointed by the court in child welfare matters to help youth express their wishes to the court and protect their legal interests, and to assist in helping the youth understand their legal rights. For more information or to find local law guardian offices visit: www.state.nj.us/defender/div_lawguardian.shtml.

Rutgers Child Advocacy Clinic (CAC): Serves New Jersey children and families who are at risk or already living in poverty. CAC assists in meeting the educational, economic, and medical needs of families through legal advocacy and representation. For more information visit: www.law.newark.rutgers.edu/clinics/child-advocacy-clinic and www.njyouth4youth.org. Or feel free to call 973-353-3196.

Rutgers Special Education Clinic: Offers legal assistance for parents of children with disabilities in New Jersey. Clinic law students provide representation and support to parents seeking to obtain appropriate early intervention, educational services, and placements for their child(ren). For more information visit: www.law.newark.rutgers.edu/clinics/special-education-clinic.

Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ): Is a statewide nonprofit organization that advocates for more effective funding and stronger services for children and families. For more information visit: www.acnj.org.

The Kidlaw Resource Center: Is one program of ACNJ that provides information regarding children and the law and legal assistance related to special education. Their website is an online library source of publications, fact sheets, manuals, and other resources regarding the legal rights of New Jersey's children. For more information visit: www.kidlaw.org or call 973-643-3876.

Foster Family Advocates, Inc.: Is a 501(c) (3) charity created to provide foster families with legal and advocacy services, training and education. This organization has a small grant to help youth in foster care or youth aging out of foster care fix their credit through counseling and challenging disputed items on child's credit report. For more information visit: www.fosterfamilyadvocates.org.

Educational Law Center (ELC): ELC serves as the leading voice for New Jersey's public school children, as well as at-risk students, and has become one of the most effective advocates for equal educational opportunity and education justice in the United States. ELC also promotes educational equity through partnership building, litigation support, policy development, communications, and action-focused research throughout the US. Visit: www.edlawcenter.org.

PART FOUR

Closing: Remember That Others Have Made It and So Can You

Closing Remarks

Edward Joyner is a 23-year-old former foster care youth. He is currently enrolled as a full-time student at Seton Hall University. Edward is a public speaker, poet and basketball athlete. He enjoys sharing his poetry with people interested to learn about his experiences in and out of the foster care system. He stated, "...when I read my own poetry and I look out at the listeners, I am stimulated by the sight of aggressive listening indicated by the furrowed brows on their faces. It tells me that my voice is finally being heard and I am leaving my print on the world." Below you will find Edward Joyner's poem entitled "I am From."

I am From

I am from
A land of tears where
I must be too strong to cry
I am from
A foster's care where
When night falls
I keep a watchful eye
I am from
No one cares where
Ears are deaf and
Eyes are blind
I am from
The DYFS desk where
A case number is
My life defined
I am from
The bottom of the barrel
Fighting to climb
The next crabs back
I am from
The projects where
Grounds and hands both bare crack
I am from
A suicidal father who
Left me in this world alone
I am from
A cloudy past
Childhood of bliss
And now I'm grown

I'm now from Future Scholars
Where my little brothers and sisters will
Walk tall despite the painful blisters
That bind their feet and
Try to hinder their advancement in life
Where am I from?
I'm from that sparkle in the night
That one bright star that
Leads the lost to the light
Follow me!
Like Pac said
And even though Pac's dead he
Lives in me
Because he is where I'm from and
I am from the hood
If you're from there
Put a fist up
I am from a place where
You don't have to floss your wrist up
To be like T.I.
You can still be hood and
Be about your B.I.
Isness and
You don't have to ask
Is this the
End all to be all because
I am from a land of opportunity

Written By: Edward Joyner

Special Tips: Oprah's Top 10 Life Lessons

- 1.) What is put out comes back all the time, no matter what.**
- 2.) You define your own life. Do not let other people write your script.**
- 3.) Whatever someone did to you in the past has no power over the present. Only you give it power.**
- 4.) When people show you who they are, believe them the first time (a lesson from Maya Angelou).**
- 5.) Worrying is a waste of time. Use the same energy for doing something about whatever worries you.**
- 6.) What you believe has more power than what you dream, wish, or hope for. You become what you believe.**
- 7.) If the only prayer you ever say is "thank you," that will be enough (from the German theologian and humanist Meister Eckhart).**
- 8.) The happiness you feel is in direct proportion to the love you give.**
- 9.) Failure is a signpost to turn you in another direction.**
- 10.) If you make a choice that goes against what everyone else thinks, the world will not fall apart.**

-Oprah Winfrey (2011)

Activity Answers: Activity Three- Health Care (H); Arts /Design /Fashion (A); Liberal Arts/General Studies (I); Technology/Computers (K); Massage/Spa/Wellness (J); Education (G); Criminal Justice (E); Business (D); Aviation (B); Trade (L); Unique & Alternative Careers (M); Culinary Arts (F); and Beauty (C)

About the Authors

Mary Coogan, Esq.

Mary Coogan is the assistant director of the Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ). Ms. Coogan was admitted to the New Jersey Bar in December 1984 and practiced family law before joining the ACNJ staff in 1993. Currently, at ACNJ she is responsible for ACNJ's Kidlaw Center. Ms. Coogan can be reached by phone at 973-643-3876 or via email at mcoogan@acnj.org. Feel free to visit the ACNJ website at: www.acnj.org.

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Wendy Logan, MSW

Wendy Logan is a former foster care youth who "aged out" of the New Jersey foster care system in 2004. In May 2012, Ms. Logan earned a master's degree in social work from the School of Social Policy & Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. She is a public speaker, youth advocate, educator, freelance writer and event planner. Ms. Logan can be reached by phone at 609-505-4976 or via email at wendylogan@live.com. Feel free to visit her website at <http://wendylogan.blogspot.com/>.

Elizabeth Manley, LSW

Elizabeth Manley was the CEO at Caring Partners of Morris/Sussex and worked at that agency for approximately 7 years. In October of 2012 she accepted the Division Director Children's System of Care position at the New Jersey Department of Children and Families. Ms. Manley has worked specifically with children and adolescents in the mental health field for 24 years as a social worker. She has been a member of the Children in Court Improvement Committee since 2007. Ms. Manley can be reached by phone at 609-888-7200 or via email at Elizabeth.Manley@dcf.state.nj.us. Feel free to visit the DCF website at: www.state.nj.us/DCF.

Betsy Montalvo, CSW

Betsy Montalvo is the Independent Living Coordinator in the Office of Adolescent Services for the Department of Children and Family Services. Betsy oversees the housing, life skills, and aftercare programs for the aging out population, as well as the services for the LGBTQI population and homeless youth. She has 20 years of experience in working with child abuse and neglected children. Ms. Montalvo can be reached by phone at 609-888-7074 or via email at betsy.montalvo@dcf.state.nj.us. Feel free to visit the DCF website at: www.state.nj.us/DCF.

Jessica Trombetta, LCSW

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