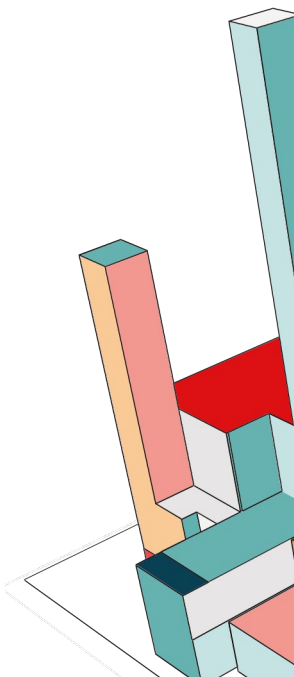




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AGENDA

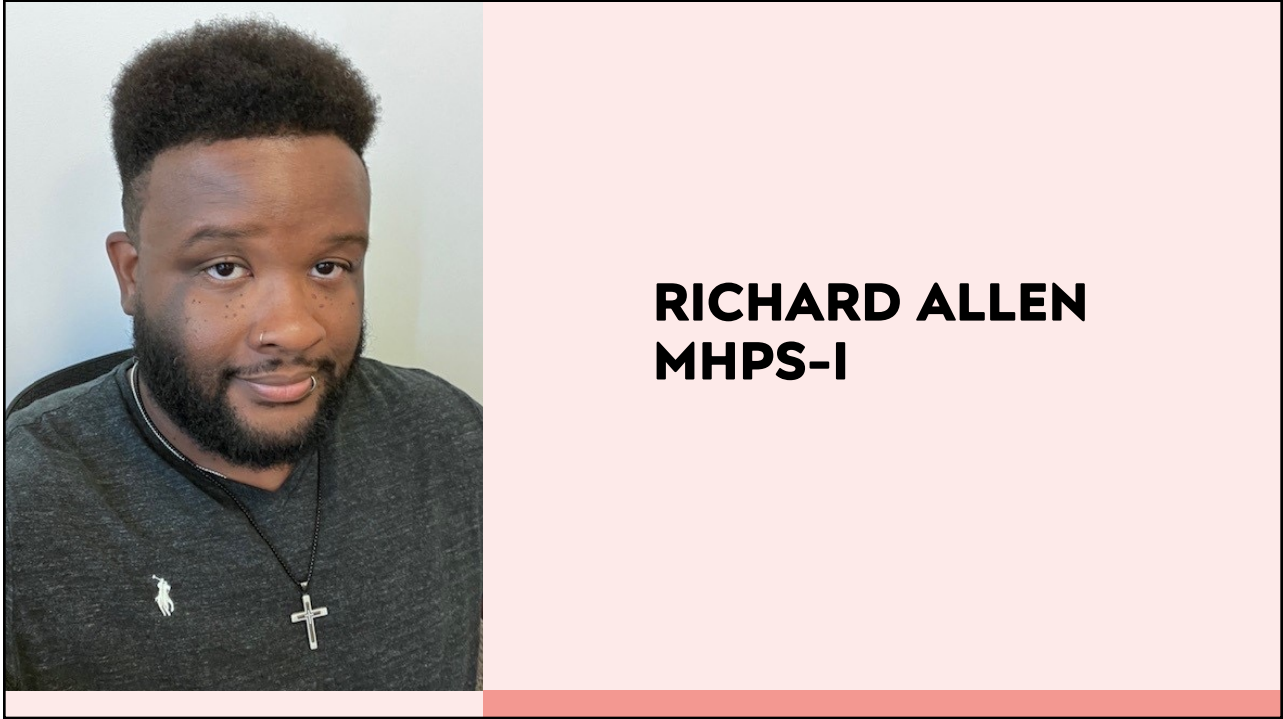
- Introductions
- Transition Aged Youth Overview
 - Who Are They?
 - Challenges for TAY
- Why Peer Support?
- Considerations for Working with TAY
- Highlighting/Reframing Strengths
- Outcomes
- Q&A



2



3




4

**CHELSEA
BIGGERSTAFF,
PSS, RSPS**

A portrait of Chelsea Biggerstaff, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark top with a white bow at the neck. The image is positioned on the right side of a slide with a light beige background.

5

A photograph showing two women in a meeting. One woman, wearing a yellow jacket, is standing and gesturing with her hands. The other woman, wearing a dark blazer and glasses, is sitting at a table with a white mug and a blue pen. The background is a bright, modern office setting.

LIFEWORKS AUSTIN

LifeWorks is a fearless advocate for youth and young adults pursuing a life they love and a stable future for themselves and their families.

LifeWorks provides services for youth and their families seeking housing, counseling, education and workforce programs.

6

COMMUNITY-BASED PEER SUPPORT



A team of Peer Specialists (Traditional and Family) who work with youth, **ages 16 to 26**, who are referred by another LifeWorks program and **would like support creating maintaining, and/or enriching their own recovery journey.**

Peer Specialists **meet with individuals either in one of our offices or in a mutually agreeable location in the community.** E.g. Their home, coffee shops, etc.

7

Join at menti.com | use code: 8431 4534

What word(s) do you think come to mind for most people when they hear the term "youth"?



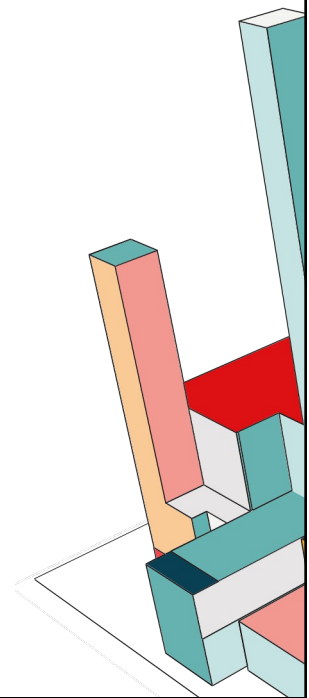
Mentimeter interface showing account, content, design, settings, and help & feedback options.

8

WHO'S CONSIDERED A TRANSITION-AGED YOUTH?

- The term Transition-Aged Youth (TAY) is used to describe youth and young/emerging adults
- TAY is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. That's why as a category TAY is more fluid than any other fixed-aged groups.
- Typical age range is roughly 16-15 to 24-26, but some definitions range anywhere from 13-30.

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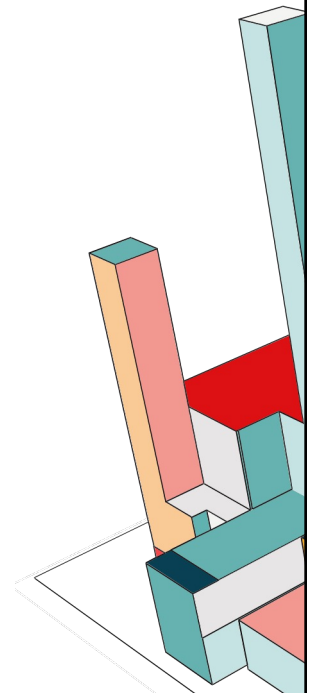


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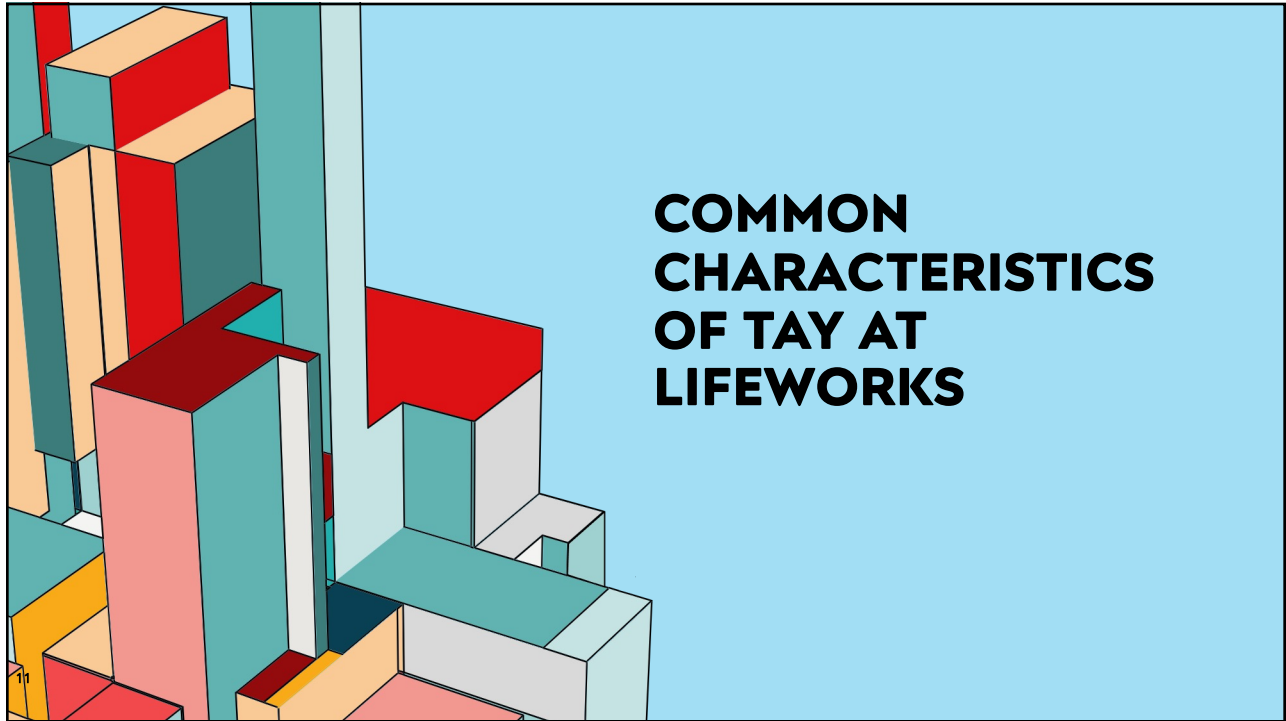
STATS ABOUT TAY

- Transition-age youth (16-29 years old) are the highest risk age group for onset of serious mental illness (SMI; mental illnesses that cause substantial functional impairment, the single most disabling group of disorders worldwide. *(Nesbitt, et al., 2022)*
- In 2021, 42% of adolescents [reported](#) feelings of sadness and hopelessness - which can be indicative of depressive disorder - up from 28% in 2011. *(KFF, 2024)*
- Suicides are the second leading cause of death among adolescents.
- In 2018, 5.2 million young adults or 1 in 7 aged 18-25 needed substance use treatment, only 1.6% or 547,000 received treatment.
- About 9.7 million [young adults](#) age 18 to 25 battled a substance use disorder in the past year, which equates to 27.8% of this population. *(American Addiction Centers, 2024)*

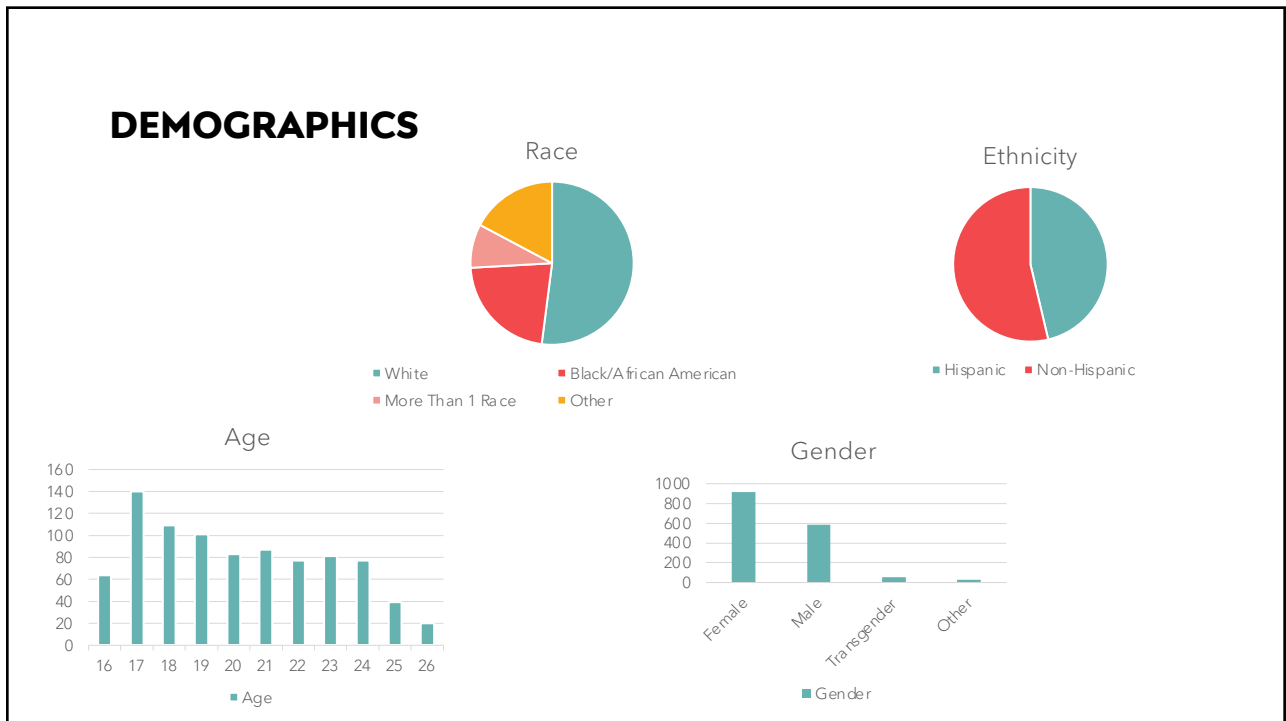
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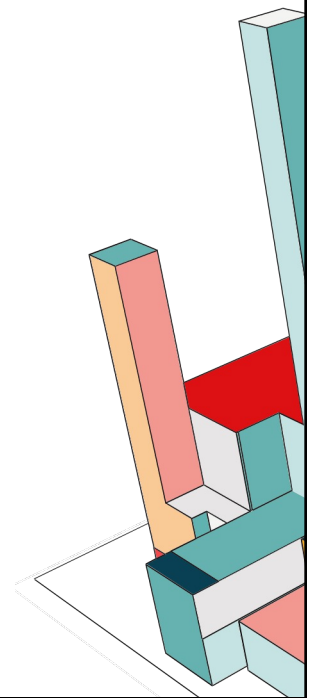


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SYSTEMS INVOLVEMENT

- Most TAY have a history of involvement in one or more public systems, such as:
 - Child welfare
 - Juvenile justice
 - Foster care
 - CPS
- These systems typically have not provided services in a strengths-based, client-centered manner
- Systems involvement can result in disrupted attachments and delays in the usual developmental milestones of adolescence

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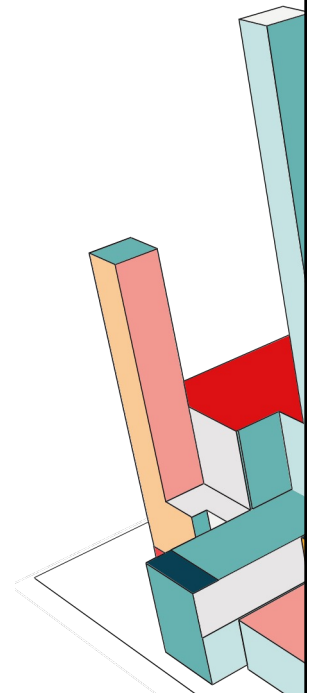


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HISTORY OF TRAUMA

- Transition-aged youth served by LifeWorks usually have lived experience with complex trauma.
- Most common types of complex trauma we see with youth at LifeWorks:
 - Physical abuse
 - Sexual abuse
 - Emotional/Psychological abuse
 - Homelessness
 - Experiencing and/or witnessing violence
 - Systemic barriers

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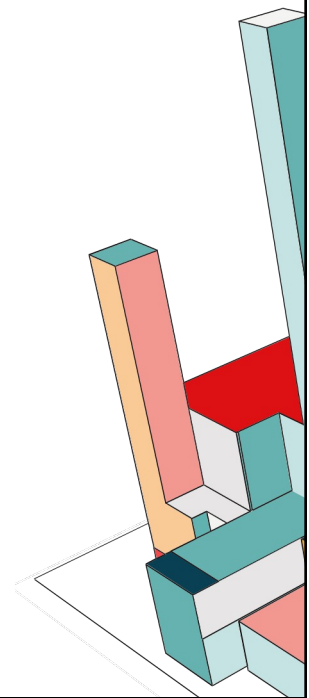


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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE

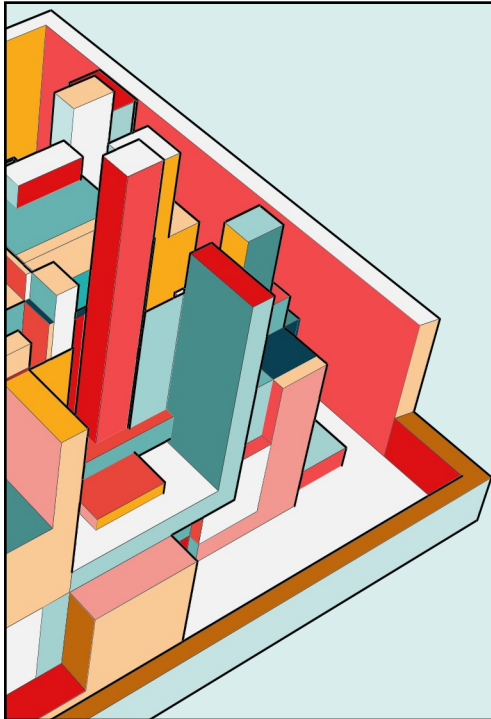
- Traumatic experiences faced by transition-aged youth often result in or exacerbate mental health challenges.
- Youth facing these circumstances and challenges often use substances to cope.

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WHAT IS YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT PEER SUPPORT AND HOW CAN IT HELP?



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PEER SUPPORT

Peer Support Definition:

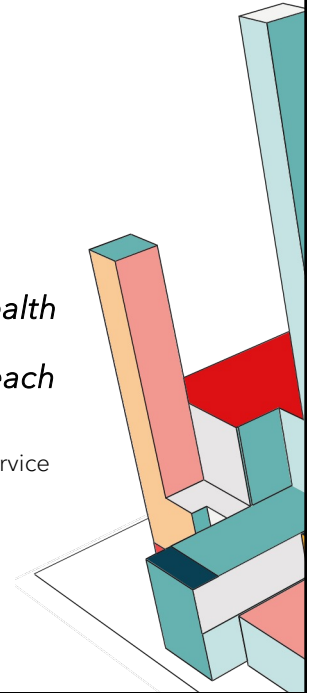
- *The act of people who have similar lived experience giving each other encouragement, hope, assistance, guidance, and understanding that aids in healing and/or recovery.*

(Darcy Kues and Jessi Davis, 2023)

Definition of Recovery:

- *Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.*

(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA))



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PEER SUPPORT CORE VALUES

1. Peer support is **voluntary**.
2. Peer supporters are **hopeful**.
3. Peer supporters are **open minded**.
4. Peer supporters **empathetic**.
5. Peer supporters are **respectful**.
6. Peer supporters **facilitate change**.
7. Peer supporters are **honest and direct**.
8. Peer support is **mutual and reciprocal**.
9. Peer support is **equally shared power**.
10. Peer support is **strengths-focused**.
11. Peer support is **transparent**.
12. Peer support is **person driven**.

(National Association of Peer Supporters, 2019)

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WHAT DOES YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT PEER SUPPORT LOOK LIKE?

A peer specialist working with youth uses formalized training and their own lived experience to support young people.

A peer specialist working with youth offers non-clinical support based in mutuality and shared lived experience, and helps a young person identify goals in their lives and advocate for themselves.

A peer specialist working with youth may or may not be close in age to the young person.

(Darci Kues and Jessi Davis, 2023)

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PEER SUPPORT FOR TAY – WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Youth can have a reluctance to work with authority figures or people with perceived power because they are often dismissed or not considered in decision making processes due to their age.

The peer support relationship is based on mutuality and equal shared power.

Peer support views all individuals as the experts in their own lives and promotes personal agency.

Peer support is voluntary.

TAY are often told what they have to/need to do with little explanation. Often these conversations are a result of what others view as youth doing the “wrong thing”.

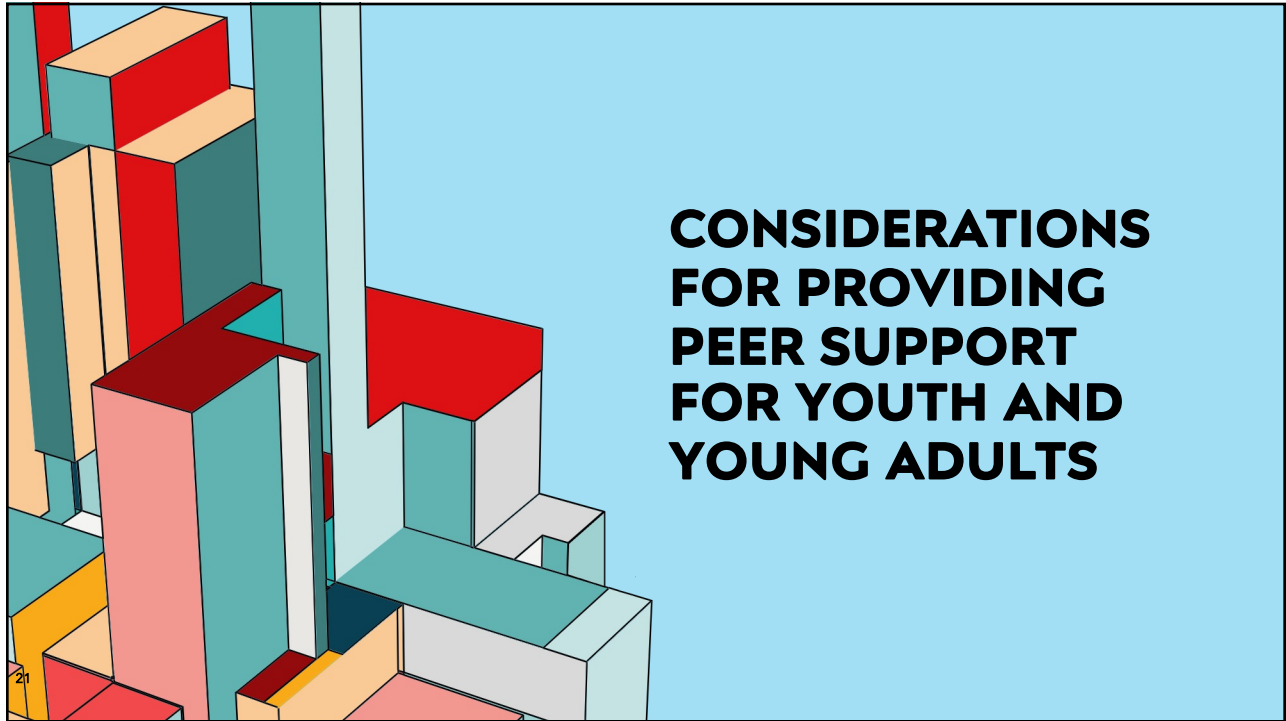
Peer support is person-driven and transparent.

Peer support is respectful.

Peer support is strengths-focused.

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COMMUNITY SETTINGS

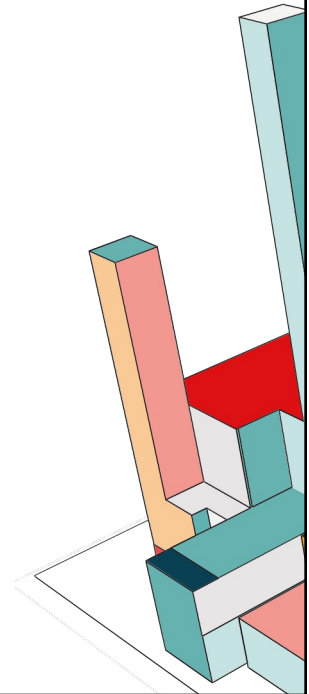
Meeting youth where they are most comfortable is key to building rapport and creating a sense of safety. This can include their own home, school, parks, coffee shops, etc.

Peer specialists meet people where they are at - literally.

Exploring wellness and recovery activities that youth have an interest in can help youth build their own community and help youth find a sense of purpose.

Activities can include physical activity (playing sports, working out), artistic expression (art, music, poetry, cooking), social activities (bowling, gaming, etc.)

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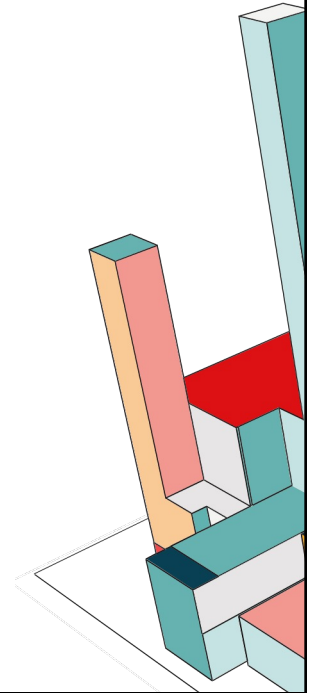


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INITIAL ENGAGEMENTS

- Most youth dress very casual. Dressing casual can avoid giving off the perception of a power dynamic and to help make youth more comfortable with engagement.
- Offer youth have not been given the information or support to learn certain life skills or build healthy habits. It's important to evaluate our own privileges before engaging with youth, and to set aside any judgment or preconceived notions about what they "should" know or do.
- Building rapport can take time. It's not a one size fits all approach and should be tailored to the youth's comfortability.

23



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IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

Person-first language: Puts the person before a challenge, and describes what a person has, not who a person is.

Recovery Oriented Language: Emphasizes the potential for recovery and growth, reducing the shame and stigma associated with mental health and substance use disorders.

Language Inclusive of Youth and Their Experiences: Does not minimize or discount youth experiences based on their age.

Trauma Informed and Healing Centered: Entails not only choosing sensitive words but also adopting respectful tones and cultivating mindful body language.

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REFRAMING AND HIGHLIGHTING STRENGTHS

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
Troubled, At-Risk	Surviving
Naïve, Young	Inexperienced
Kid	Youth
Lazy	Unmotivated, Uninterested
Manipulative	Resourceful

Reframing perceived deficits in youth as strengths can help reduce stigma and encourage and empower youth.

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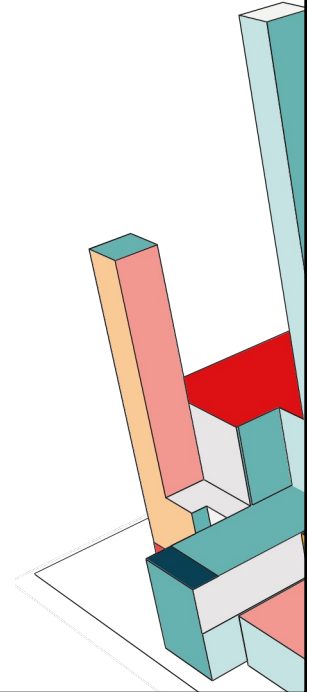
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SELF ADVOCACY

Often, youth and young adults have not had many opportunities to advocate for themselves, as caregivers typically have taken on this role throughout their lifetime.

Learning how to advocate for one's needs and to be able to use their own voice is a common goal of youth. Peer Specialists can support these efforts by accompanying youth to situations they feel intimidated by or unsure of and encouraging the youth to voice their needs and concerns. It can be helpful to practice advocacy skills and role play with youth prior to engagements, if this is an area of growth that they have identified for themselves.

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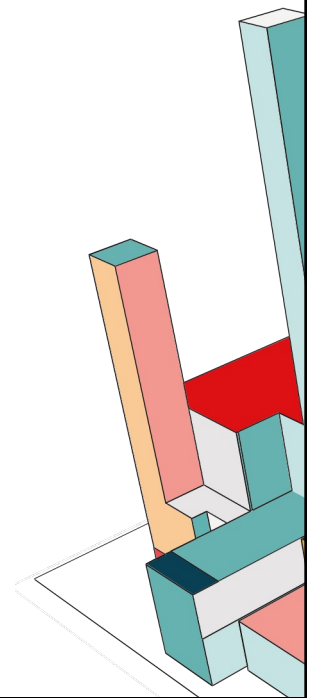
LIFE SKILLS

As youth and young adults begin different life transitions like moving out of the house, going to college, getting their first jobs, they often need support in developing crucial life skills.

Even the basic life skills offer peer specialists opportunities to work with youth to develop goals to become more self sufficient and knowledgeable.

Common goals planning and sessions can include offering support learning household maintenance, financial planning and wellness, preparing for interviews, etc.

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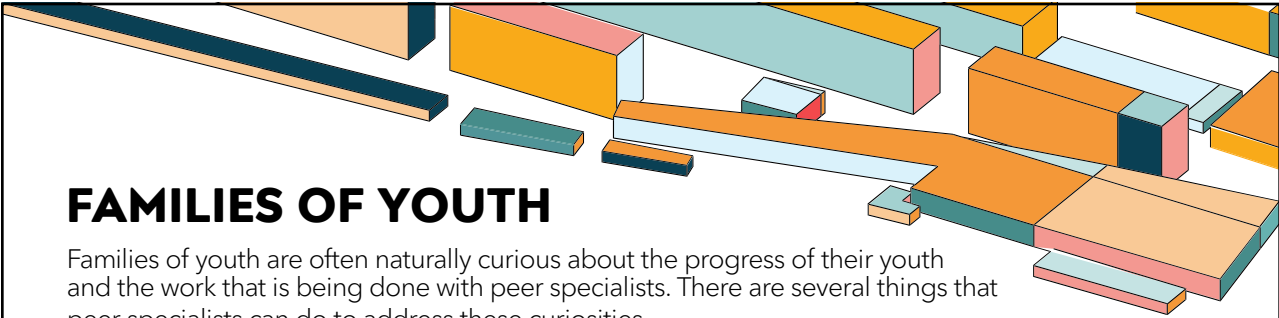
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CONSENTS AND DISCLOSURES

- Be transparent and up front from the beginning. Be sure to inform youth who you must talk to, about what, and when. Ask if they have any questions to make sure they understand their rights and the policies around confidentiality and disclosure.
- Be mindful of past traumatic experiences and that making a report could potentially retraumatize youth.
- If you must make a report or disclose information, include the youth in the process as much as possible and be prepared to support them through the fallout.

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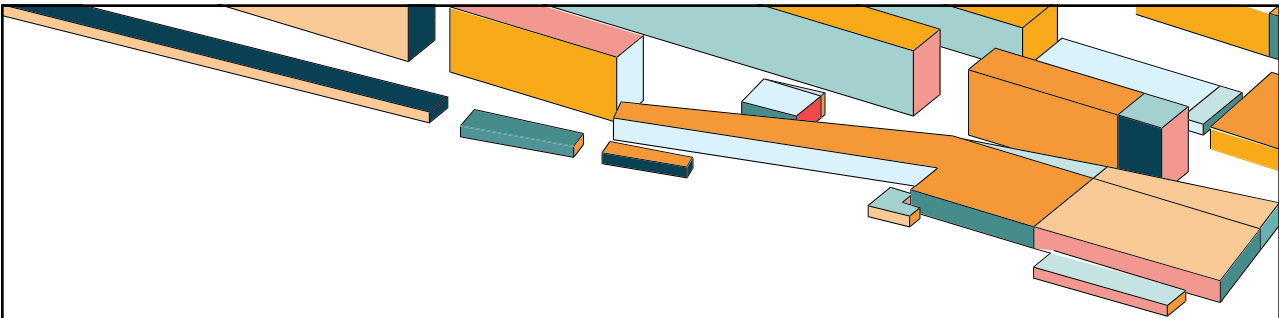
FAMILIES OF YOUTH

Families of youth are often naturally curious about the progress of their youth and the work that is being done with peer specialists. There are several things that peer specialists can do to address these curiosities.

- Let guardians know up front about the importance of privacy and maintaining rapport with youth, as well as the policies around consent and disclosures.
- Make resources available for families/guardians to engage in their own wellness and/or educational opportunities for guardians to learn more about the challenges their youth/young adult is facing.
- Referrals to Certified Family Partners (A person who has lived experience parenting a child experiencing mental, emotional or behavioral health challenges and who can articulate the understanding of their experience with another parent or family member).

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RESULTS OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT PEER SUPPORT

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OUTCOMES

Using the CAP Likert, individuals receiving Family Peer Support services from LifeWorks were given the self assessment at their initial entrance into services and again every 30 days.

The initial scores were then compared to their last or most recent assessment.

Of individuals engaged in Community Based Peer Support services for at least 30 days that reported changes:

71.05% reported overall positive changes in the areas of:

- Coping
- Resiliency
- Hope
- Self-Worth
- Internal Locus of Control and/or
- Support (both within and outside of LifeWorks)

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TESTIMONIALS

(When) I met Danny at first, I wasn't too sure about it and was scared, but over time me and Danny have become very close. I look at him like a big brother I never had. He gives me good advice on relationships, helps with any questions I have about anything and if he doesn't know we'll usually look it up together and find out. I can say peer support has been a great choice in my life, it helped me change my path and because of that now I am the successful young man I am supposed to be.

-Charles

"Chelsea has been a great advocate for myself. I love that I can talk about anything with Chelsea and not be judged. She is an awesome peer support specialist and an amazing friend. She helps me when I'm in need of diapers, time to talk, or sometimes even a snack. She even calms me down when I'm breaking or losing my mind. She's a great supporter."

- Jasmine J.

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Mentimeter

What word comes to mind when YOU hear the term "youth"?

transpiration
bold
creative
fast
focus
leader
inspiration

33

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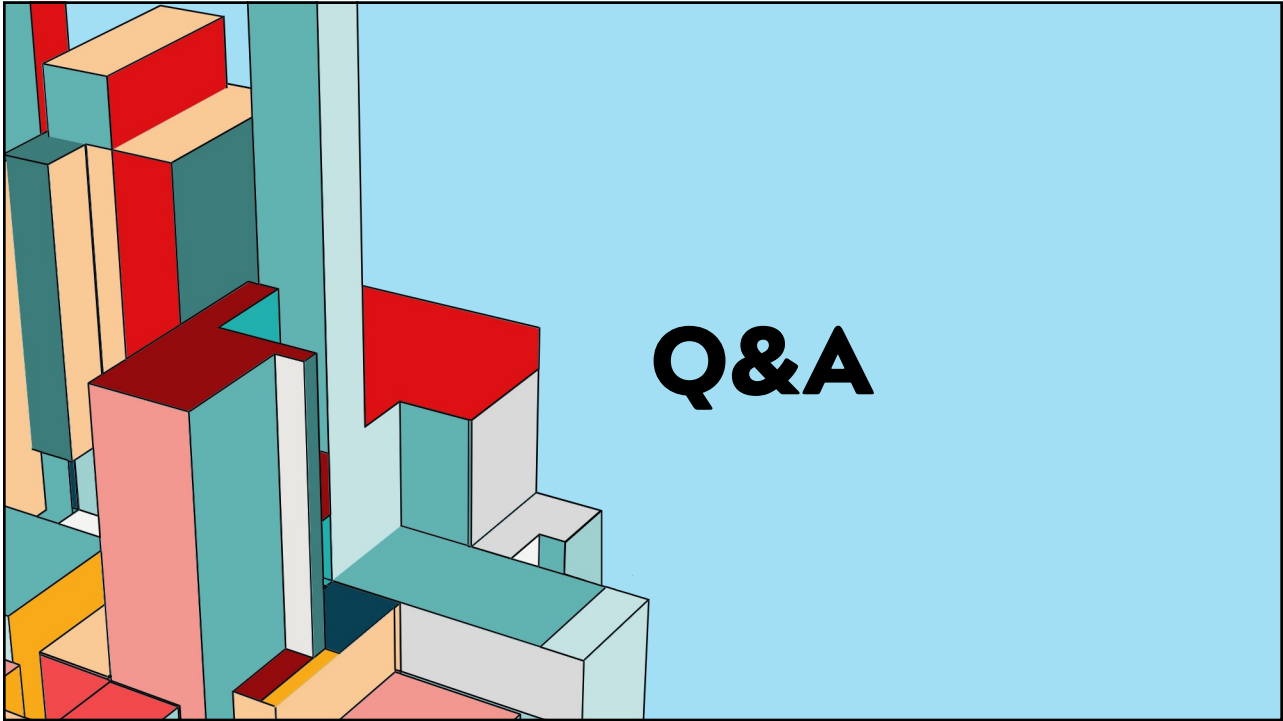
THANK YOU

Chelsea Biggerstaff
Chelsea.Biggerstaff@lifeworksaustin.org

Danny Kay
Daniel.Kay@lifeworksaustin.org

Ricky Allen
Richard.Allen@lifeworksaustin.org

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Q&A

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