

From Insight to Action:

Best Practices Learned from the Supporting Vulnerable Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care Demonstration Project

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Meet the Presenters



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Agenda

- Framing the Conversation
- Project Overview and Key Themes
- What Worked Across Multiple Sites
- Promising Practices and Innovations
- Challenges and Lessons Learned
- Measuring Impact
- Translating Lessons into Action
- Key Takeaways and Closing Reflection

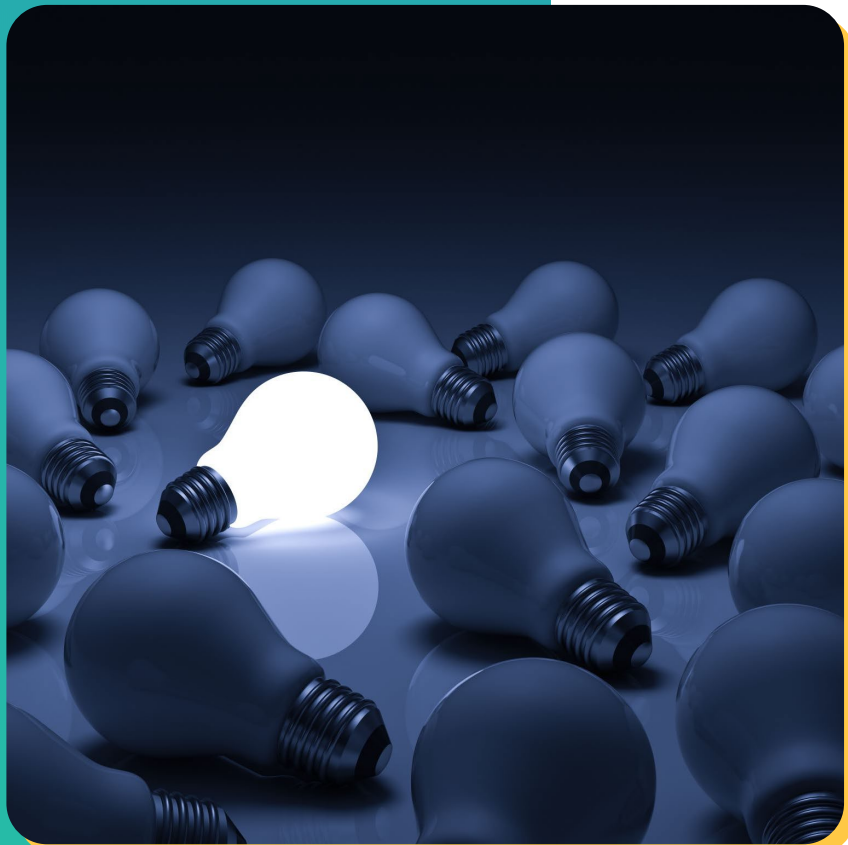
Framing the Conversation



Framing the Conversation

- Share lessons learned from the project
- Highlight practices that demonstrated impact across sites
- Identify challenges and barriers encountered during implementation
- Translate lessons learned into actionable strategies for providers and systems





Opening Framing Reflections

- What do we want people who were not part of this project to take away from this work?
- What practices can organizations realistically implement in the next 30–180 days?
- What did this project teach us about supporting transition-age youth more effectively?

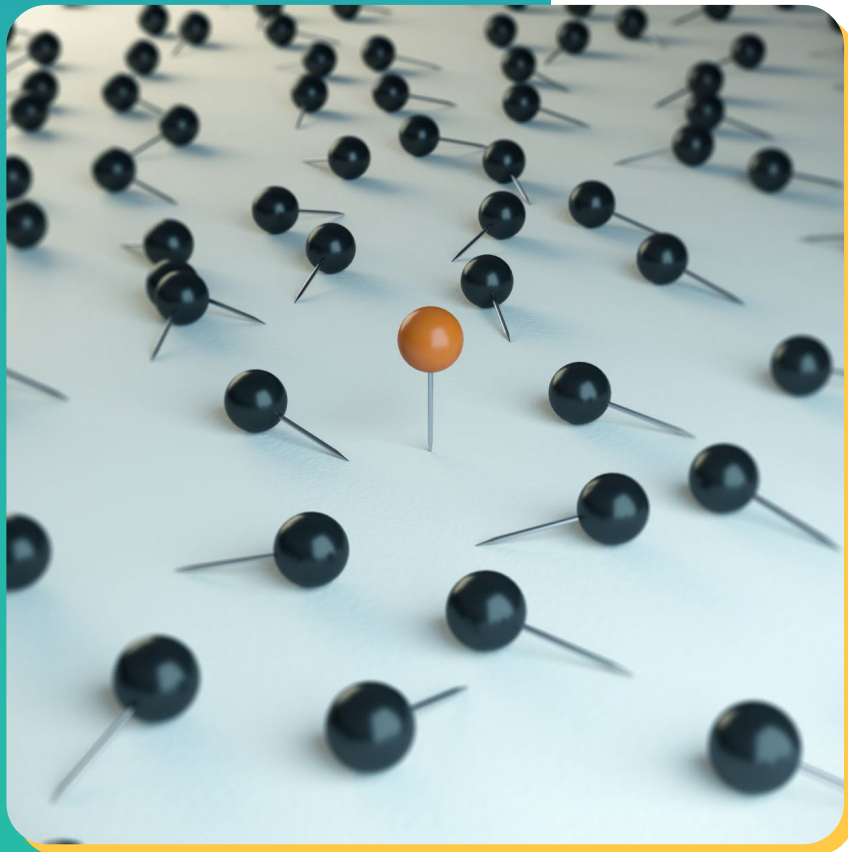
Project Overview and Key Themes



Supporting Vulnerable Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care

- **Goals and focus areas**
 - Serving youth transitioning out of foster care and juvenile justice
 - Creating responsive treatment models
- **Participating sites and systems**
 - Cohort 1: RYSE, Jackson Street, Core Collective, LUK, Epworth, FLITE
 - Cohort 2: Youth Advocates Sitka, Holy Cross, Christian City
- **Role of Youth Collaboratory**
 - Training and Technical Assistance
 - Monthly Cohort Calls
 - Yearly Conference





Key Themes that Emerged Across Project Sites

- Youth engagement
- Transition planning
- Relationship-based practice
- Community connection
- Flexibility and responsiveness
- Sustainability challenges

What Worked Across Multiple Sites



Youth Voice and Engagement

- **Key Practices**

- Youth Listening Sessions
- Youth Advisory Boards (YABs)
- Surveys and feedback loops
- Intentional youth-centered language

- **Lessons Learned**

- Programs became more responsive when youth helped shape services
- Youth engagement increased trust and participation
- Closing the feedback loop mattered as much as collecting feedback

- **Examples of Impact**

- Program changes influenced by youth feedback
- Increased participation and retention
- Stronger relationships between staff and youth

Relationship-Based and Intentional Technical Assistance (TA)

- **Key Practices**

- Mandated TA with relationship-building focus
- Strengths & Readiness Finder implementation
- Ongoing coaching and collaboration

- **Lessons Learned**

- Trust increased site engagement and implementation success
- Modeling youth-centered practice mattered
- TA was more effective when it focused on partnership rather than compliance



Meet the Team

- Regina Dix
- Dash Togi
- Kendel DeHart
- Martine Jones





Flexible and Responsive Supports

- **Key Practices**

- Real-time problem solving
- Individualized support approaches
- Consistent follow-up and connection

- **Lessons Learned**

Youth benefited most from systems that were:

- Flexible
- Fast/responsive
- Consistent
- Relationship-centered

Promising Practices and Innovations



Jackson Street

- Credit reporting systems
- Regular house meetings
- Community engagement





Epworth

- Diversifying referral pathways
- Youth engagement to improve program responsiveness
- Positive Youth Development strengthened practices

FLITE

- Hope Court
- Program milestone achievement initiatives
- Individualized housing & workforce retention support



Challenges and Lessons Learned





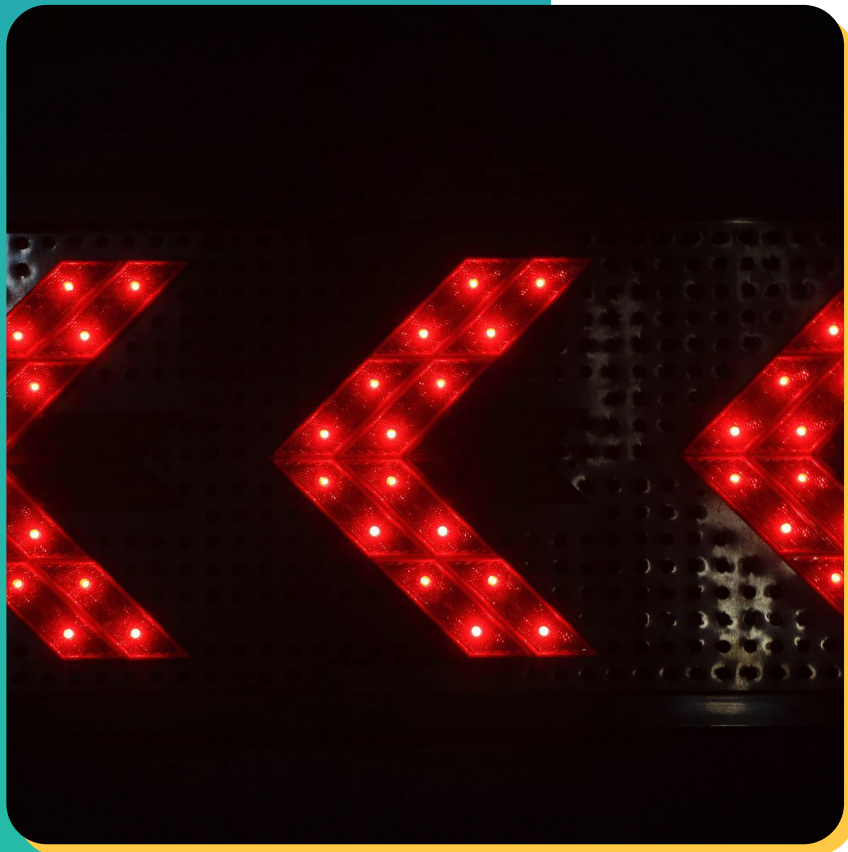
Sustainability Challenges

- OJJDP funding provided flexibility in how sites responded to YYA needs, while raising questions about sustaining those approaches beyond the grant period
- Some sites struggled to plan for long-term continuation of services
- Several Project Sites had significant personnel turnover which made continuous communication difficult

Treatment Model Understanding and Inconsistency

- Some sites lacked clear or fully developed service models
- Flexibility without structure sometimes created confusion
- Many Project Sites confused guiding principles for treatment models





Systems-Level Barriers

Fragmented systems communication resulted in service gaps, continuity challenges, and community disruption.

Let's Discuss!

How do service providers and system administrators more effectively partner to ensure better outcomes for youth and young adults?

Translating Lessons Into Action



Start with Youth Partnership

- Create meaningful opportunities for youth input through listening sessions, advisory groups, or ongoing feedback.
- Close the feedback loop by communicating how youth input informs decisions.
- Use youth-centered language and practices across programs.

Why It Matters

Programs were more responsive, engagement increased, and trust grew when youth helped shape services.

Invest in Relationships, Not Just Services

- Prioritize relationship-building as a core practice.
- Build regular follow-up and consistent points of contact into service delivery.
- Approach technical assistance as coaching and partnership rather than compliance.

Why It Matters

Trust consistently strengthened implementation, youth engagement, and organizational readiness for change.

Build Flexible, Individualized Supports

- Empower staff to respond to emerging needs.
- Balance flexibility with clear service expectations and program structure.
- Review policies that unintentionally create barriers for youth.

Why It Matters
Youth
experienced
better outcomes
when services
were responsive,
individualized,
and relationship-
centered.

Strengthen Long-Term Stability

- Incorporate financial capability supports, including credit-building opportunities where feasible.
- Hire and meaningfully engage staff with experiences of systems and services.
- Create and regularly update Succession Planning for staff turnover.
- Reconnect youth to supportive adults, community organizations, and natural supports.

Why It Matters

Preparing youth for adulthood requires more than meeting immediate needs—it requires building long-term stability and belonging.

Plan Beyond the Grant

- Begin sustainability planning early.
- Standardize transition planning across programs.
- Strengthen cross-system partnerships before youth exit services.
- Define clear service models while maintaining flexibility.

Why It Matters

Many implementation challenges stemmed from fragmented systems rather than individual programs. Sustainable, coordinated approaches are more likely to improve long-term outcomes.

Group Discussions





Discussion Questions

- What is one practice your organization could implement immediately?
- What barriers exist within your system?
- How can youth voice be strengthened in your current work?

Key Takeaways and Closing Reflection





Key Takeaways

- Youth are more likely to engage when systems are built with them rather than for them
- Relationship-based support matters
- Flexibility and responsiveness improve outcomes
- Sustainability planning must begin early
- Transition planning should be intentional, individualized, and ongoing



Closing Reflection

"You can't manage what you can't model." - Rico Ruiz

Thank You!