

Youth Interview General Instructions

The purpose of this process and use of this tool is to glean information perhaps not otherwise found in documentation and records for youth, ages 14-21 in foster care. *Youth In Progress* believes that given the opportunity and if engaged in a manner that is considerate, patient, and respectful, youth in foster care are the best source of information about the services that they receive. Combining a case file review with an interview of the adolescent involved in the case, will insure a broader scope of information for the review team to consider.

Youth In Progress: New York State's Foster Care Youth Leadership Advisory Team was formed in 2003 and represents the more than 12,000 youth ages 14-21 in foster care in New York. The mission of Youth In Progress is "To enhance and advance the lives of today's and tomorrow's foster care youth. To do this, YIP pledges to educate everyone involved to the realities of this experience. We will accomplish this mission by listening to youth in care and by offering them guidance that will allow them to achieve success in their lives and to realize their full potential."

Youth In Progress recommends that the following steps be used as guidelines for conducting the interview with an adolescent in foster care whose case file is being reviewed:

- Secure a private, interview space,
- Reviewer should initiate interview by identifying self and explaining the purpose of the interview,
- Interviewer should explain that the interview format is designed to elicit information, however, the interviewer may elaborate on a question to explore or better understand the youth's response.
- Interviewer may choose to provide interviewee a copy of the interview tool so that they can follow along with the questions,
- Reviewer should inform the youth that their answers will be confidential, collected anonymously, and used solely for the purpose of improving services provided to all youth in foster care, in their county and across the state.
- Reviewer should inform the youth that information disclosed regarding child abuse, maltreatment, or unsafe practice must be shared. However, prior to the information being shared, the reviewer and youth should develop a plan for how to proceed with discussion of the issue,

- Prior to the interview, it is important for the reviewer to have read the case file. In circumstances when this is not logistically possible, the reviewer should know significant treatment issues, type and location of placement, and the PPG, and
- Youth interviewed should represent a combination of placement types, lengths of stay, and treatment levels.

The person from the review team selected to conduct the interviews should, wherever possible, be someone that relates well with adolescents. The interviewer should demonstrate the *Interpersonal Helping Skills* of genuineness, empathy, and respect. It is essential that while gathering information that the interview be an interactive and as conversational as possible. It is recommended that the interviewer be accompanied by an additional person from the review team for the specific purpose of documenting the interview. In addition, *Youth In Progress* recommends that the review team consider utilizing an identified youth leader who has been trained in the skills necessary, to assist with conducting the interviews. Specifically, NYS OCFS has successfully utilized foster care youth interns to conduct interviews. The youth who were interviewed expressed that they felt comfortable and better able to relate with a peer than another member of the review team.