

YOUTH THRIVE™

PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING



John, youth who had been in foster care

I'm not going to give up until I have a happy ending...



Faith, youth advisor for CSSP

Despite the position you hold, the car you drive or house you live in everyone has something in common that connects us. Whether it be coming from a single parent home or just having the same interest in music, in some way, shape or form you are just like me.



Wilton, youth advisory council member

It's about building a network, support system and soft skills so you can be in a position where you can thrive. It means being in a situation where you can move forward with all the tools you need.

Well-being is a cornerstone of public and private sectors' efforts to help children and youth. Ensuring young people involved with child welfare are safe, healthy, happy and have the tools they need to be successful is not only a federal mandate, but something *all* youth deserve.

Youth Thrive is an approach developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) that uses the latest science to advance work based on five protective and promotive factors for youth's success. It is not a specific program or intervention, rather Youth Thrive is a lens for assessing current efforts and for making changes to the policies, programs, training, services, partnerships and systems that impact young people in foster care. CSSP reviewed and synthesized extensive research on positive youth development, resilience, brain development, the biology of stress and the impact of trauma to identify and define these five factors:

- 1. Youth Resilience:** Managing stress and functioning well when faced with stressors, challenges or adversity. The outcome is personal growth and positive change.
- 2. Social Connections:** Having healthy, sustained relationships with people, institutions, the community and a force greater than oneself that promote a sense of trust, belonging and feeling that the youth matters.
- 3. Knowledge of Adolescent Development:** Understanding the unique aspects of adolescent development (e.g.,

brain development, the impact of trauma); implementing developmentally and contextually appropriate best practices (e.g., positive youth development strategies).

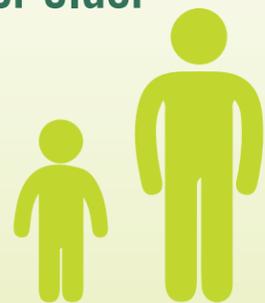
- 4. Concrete Support in Times of Need:** Understanding the importance of asking for help and advocating for oneself; receiving a quality of service designed to preserve youth's dignity, providing opportunities for skill development and promoting healthy development (e.g., strengths-based, trauma informed practice).
- 5. Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence:** Acquiring skills and attitudes that are essential for forming an independent identity and having a productive, responsible and satisfying adulthood (e.g., self-regulation, executive functions and character strengths).

The overarching goal of the Youth Thrive Framework is to achieve positive outcomes by mitigating risk and enhancing healthy development and well-being of youth (ages 9-26). This approach is designed for anyone and everyone who works with youth: public child welfare system administrators, supervisors and caseworks, private agencies and nonprofits, judges and legal advocates, parents, caregivers, for youth themselves and so many more.

Youth Thrive complements CSSP's Strengthening Families approach, a set of five protective factors aimed at parents of young children (birth-five).

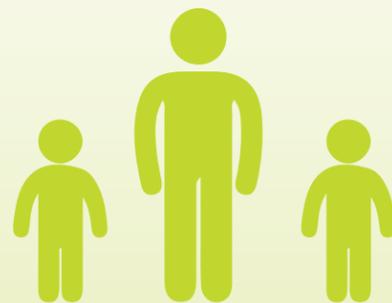
42%

Of the 400,000* total children and youth in foster care are age 11 or older



1 in 3

of children who enter foster care are over 11 years old.



By understanding and embracing the Youth Thrive approach – and the research behind it – we can make sure youth flourish.

HOW ARE WE DOING IT?

CSSP has established a multi-faceted approach to put Youth Thrive ideas into action:

- Working with jurisdictions:** Youth Thrive is working with the state of New Jersey, Brevard County, Florida and other locations to make significant changes in their child welfare system policies, operations, contracts, licensing and partnerships to implement strategies that build protective and promotive factors for youth. We intend to translate the lessons from these jurisdictions for other places and into a national policy agenda impacting youth in foster care.
- Building a national network:** CSSP conducted a national search to identify on-the-ground examples of innovative programs using protective/promotive factors to achieve better results with adolescents in the child welfare system. Fifteen exemplary initiatives were selected and, along with experts in the field and other allies, make up a Youth Thrive national network of practitioners, policymakers and young leaders that share ideas, challenge each other and advocate for change.

- Developing tools and resources:** Youth Thrive is supporting the development of a new training curriculum, materials and other tools. These resources – aimed at caseworkers, judges, resource parents and youth themselves – specifically address the unique needs of adolescents and provide information on the myriad options for making practice and policy improvements.
- Translating knowledge into action:** Youth Thrive is continuing to build the knowledge base for this approach by engaging with researchers, articulating what it means to “do” Youth Thrive and capturing the difference this approach can make for system transformation and for youth.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Ready to get involved or learn more? Visit www.cssp.org, connect with the Center for the Study of Social Policy on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) or contact us directly.

Children of color are disproportionately over-represented in the child welfare population:

African American	24%
Latinos	22%
American Indian	2%
White	42%

While many individual youth who have been in the child welfare system are doing well, there are far too many who are struggling. As a group, their outcomes are troubling:

24% don't graduate from high school (compare to 7% of general population)

they have **twice the rate** of unemployment

a third report being homeless for at least a day by age 24.



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