

Applying a Positive Youth Development Framework to Emerging Adult Justice

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Advancing Juvenile Justice Reform in Vermont Conference

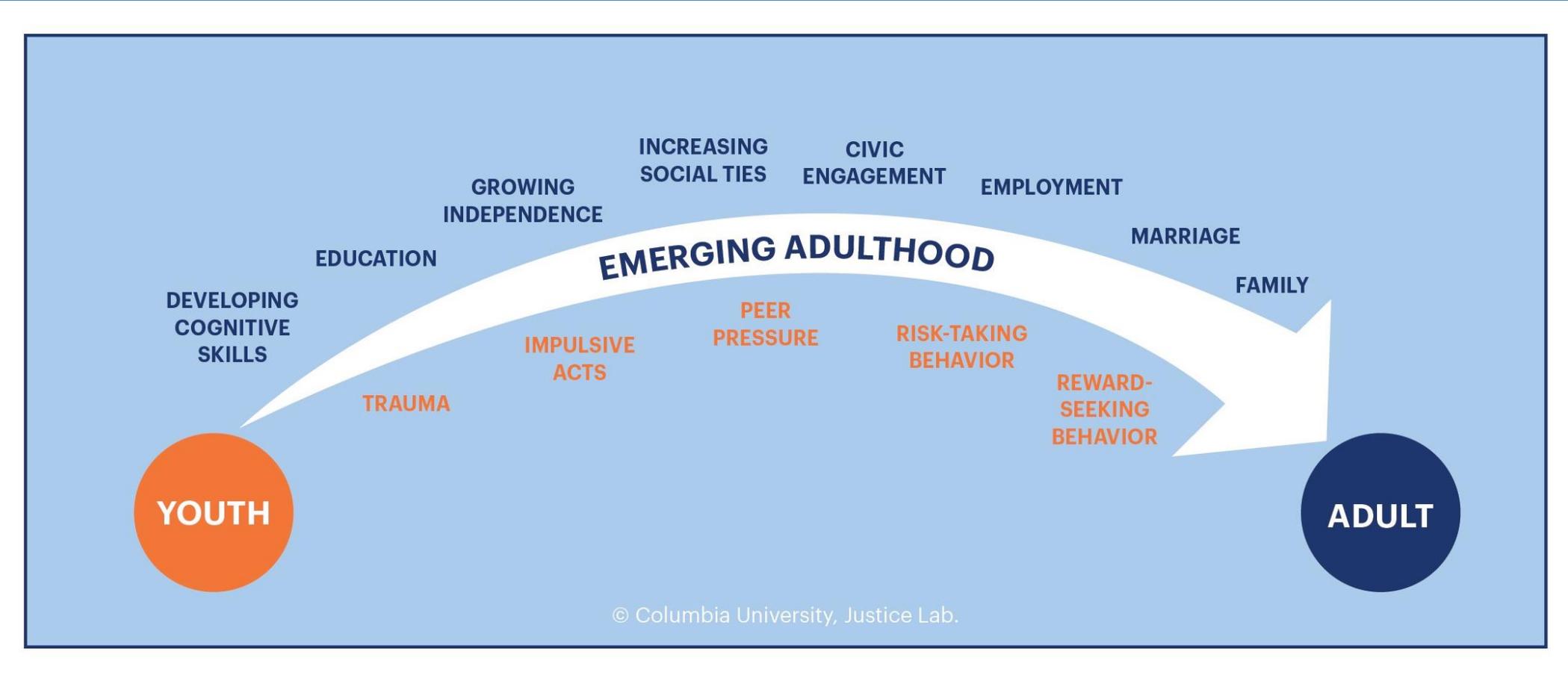
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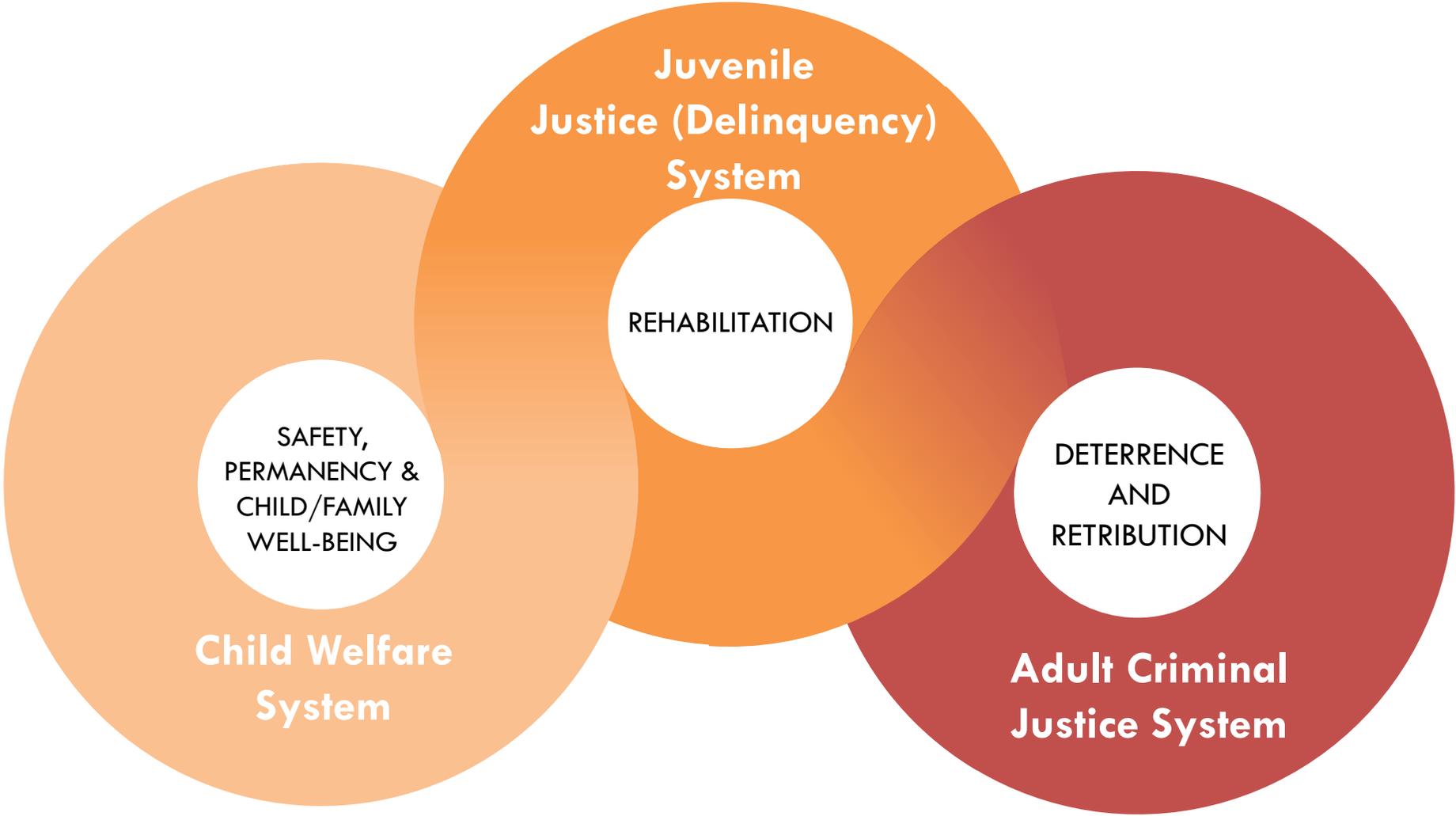
Sneak Preview

- Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework used to increase public safety
- Key PYD areas for emerging adults
- Example of PYD in action

Key developmental factors and milestones along the pathway to adulthood



Youth may navigate multiple systems along the way



Positive Youth Development

- ALL young people can develop positively when connected to the right mix of:
 - **opportunities**
 - **supports**
 - **positive roles**
 - **relationships**
- ALL youth need a **wide range of pro-social experiences** to practice and demonstrate competency and to embrace his or her responsibilities and value to the larger community.

Justice system traditionally focuses on **problems and **deficits**;**

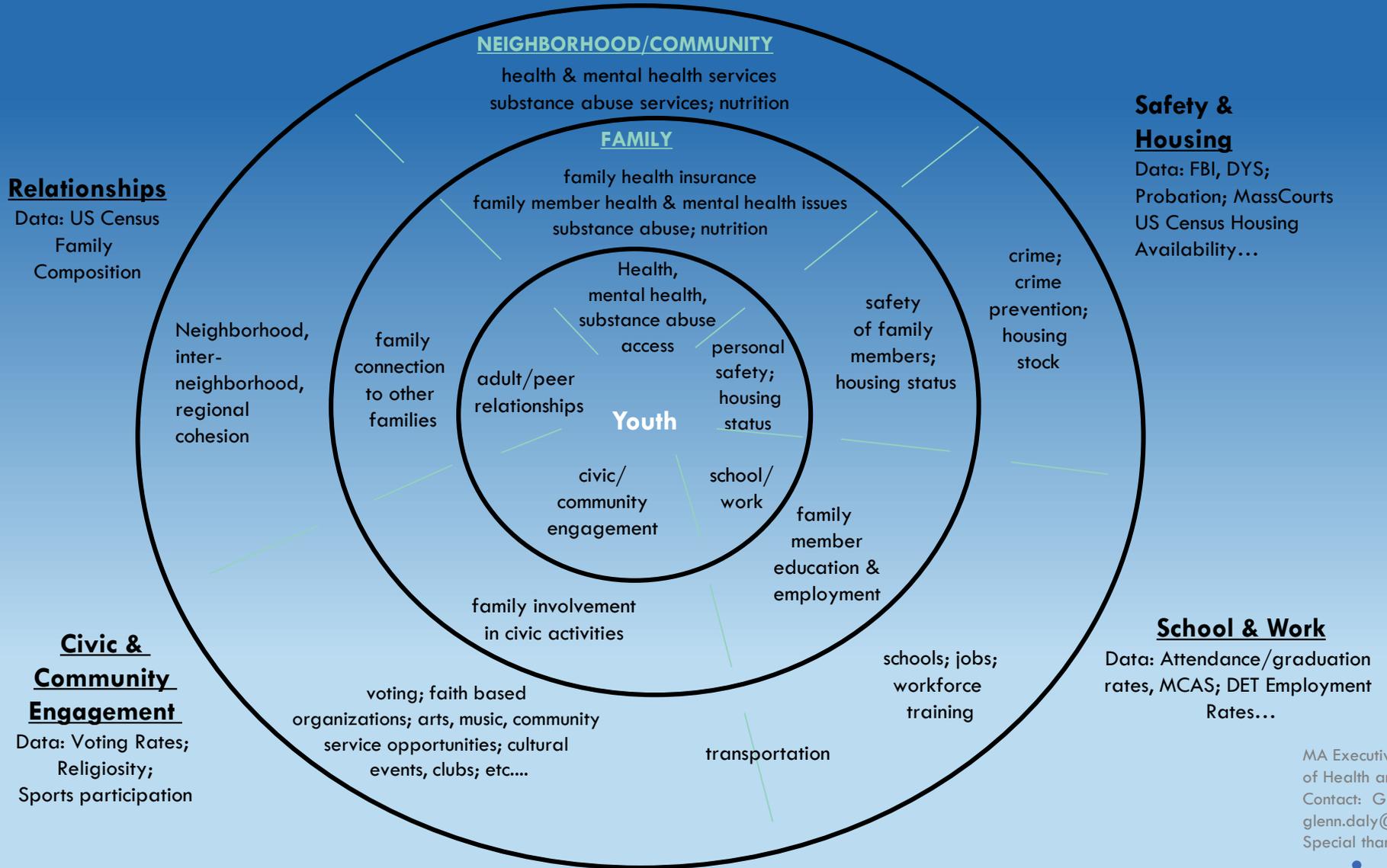
PYD focuses on **protective factors and building new **social assets****

Butts, Jeffrey A., Gordon Bazemore, & Aundra Saa Meroe (2010) *Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development*.

PYD Framework

Health & Mental Health

Data: Medicaid, DPH, DMH health indicators



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Positive Youth Development – 5 domains

Physical & Mental Health

Nurturing/Positive Relationships

Safe Places to Live and Learn

Educational and Economic Opportunity

Structured Activities & Civic Participation

Sample of key issues for emerging adults

Education, Employment, Family, Health, Housing

Education

- In the general public, >70% of males ages 18-24 have at least a H.S. diploma or GED
- Among incarcerated males ages 18-24 , <20% have at least a H.S. diploma or GED
- Two-thirds (68 percent) of African-American male high school dropouts have been imprisoned by the time they reached age 35.
- Impact? Over the past four decades, the earnings of young men without college education have declined significantly.

Employment

- Emerging Adults are very likely to be “disconnected,” meaning they are out of both school and work.
- According to the most recent available census data, the unemployment rate for 16-19-year-olds in Vermont was 13.5%, almost twice the rate of those 20-24 years old (7.2%) and more than three times the rate of those 25 and over (ranging from 1.4% to 3.7%).
- According to 2016-2017 data, only 38% of 18- and 19-year-olds in Vermont were employed.
- Steady employment, in the context of a stable family, facilitates normative transition towards desistance from lawbreaking.

Family

- Greater degree of independence from family than younger adolescents but still financially/practically dependent
- For this age, “family” includes intimate partners, older siblings, mentors, grandparents, coaches, etc.
- In 2007, 44.1% of young adults aged 24 or younger in state prisons were estimated to be parents.

Mental Health

- EA is age when many mental health issues present themselves
- The first onset of schizophrenia, for example, usually occurs in late adolescence and emerging adulthood (early 20's).
- Youth mental health services cut off; adult services may be inappropriate/non-responsive to EA mental health needs or EAs may not meet accessibility requirements

Housing

- Research shows that nationally, **1 in 10** young adults, or **3.5 million young people ages 18-25** experience homelessness in a year, **73%** for one month or more.
- Includes: sleeping outdoors, in emergency shelters, in cars, or couch surfing.
- At greatest risk are young people who are LGBTQ+, Hispanic, African American, unmarried parents, or do not have GED/H.S. diploma
- Parents are no longer legally required to house them.

See Lisa Pilnik, *Implementing Change: Addressing the Intersections of Juvenile Justice and Youth Homelessness for Young Adults*

Example: PYD in Action

Diversion

Example: Diversion for peer assault case

Traditional Approach

- Focus: Fix problems
- Anger management
- Drug Testing
- School attendance
- Curfew
- Community services
- No association with peer

PYD Approach

- Focus: Assets & relationships
- Learn woodworking from community program
- Community elder mentor (outside JJ)
- Assist connection to health services
- Restorative approach



"We're encouraging people to become involved in their own rescue."

Questions and Discussion

Focus on building the EA's strengths through relationships

“Positive youth development (PYD) is an approach to working with youth that emphasizes **building on youths' strengths** and providing **supports** and **opportunities** that will help them achieve goals and transition to adulthood in a productive, healthy manner.” - U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Servs. Definition of PYD

<https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/positive-youth-development/index.html>