Applying a Positive Youth Development Framework to Emerging Adult Justice

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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

- **Child Welfare System**
  - Safety, Permanency, and Child/Family Well-Being

- **Juvenile Justice (Delinquency) System**
  - Rehabilitation

- **Adult Criminal Justice System**
  - Deterrence and Retribution
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**

PYD Framework

Health & Mental Health
Data: Medicaid, DPH, DMH health indicators

Neighborhood/Community
Health & mental health services; substance abuse services; nutrition

Family
Family health insurance; family member & mental health issues; substance abuse; nutrition

Youth
Civic/community engagement

Safes & Housing
Data: FBI, DYS; Probation; MassCourts

School & Work
Data: Attendance/graduation rates, MCAS; DET Employment Rates...

Relationships
Data: US Census
Family Composition

Civic & Community Engagement
Data: Voting Rates; Religiosity; Sports participation

Transportation

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Special thanks to America’s Promise
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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Approach</th>
<th>PYD Approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Focus: Fix problems</td>
<td>• Focus: Assets &amp; relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Anger management</td>
<td>• Learn woodworking from community program</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Drug Testing</td>
<td>• Community elder mentor (outside JJ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• School attendance</td>
<td>• Assist connection to health services</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Curfew</td>
<td>• Restorative approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Community services</td>
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<td>• No association with peer</td>
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“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