



Tools for Permanency

Asking the Right Questions

- ✚ Don't give up! Youth may be so traumatized or exhausted at the point of intake that they can't think of any resources. Come back to them later and ask them the same questions.
- ✚ Remember: *Connectedness is Everyone's business.* Young people in our systems have been told repeatedly that all they need is "independent living skills" to succeed. Ignoring relationship questions, however difficult they may be, allows youth to continue to believe they can do everything on their own.
- ✚ Enlist everyone on your team to support the development of healthy relationships as an "independent living" skill and find ways to incorporate relationship-based questions into everyday conversation.
- ✚ The following list is just a sample. Listen, listen, listen. And ask questions that branch out from the individual's story. But ASK!
- ✚ Look for hints of hopefulness despite the risks.

Key Questions for ALL WORK:

1. Who do you, or would you, call if you were in serious trouble? (in the emergency room, at the police station, etc)
2. Who is programmed into your phone?
3. Who do you call for advice or to just talk?
4. When something great happens to you, who do you feel like calling?
5. Do you have a best friend? Do they know where you are right now?
6. When something bad happens, is there an adult that seems to understand you better than other people do?
7. Regardless of whether you feel ashamed or embarrassed or afraid, is there someone you think might be worried about you if they knew you were in this situation? Is there someone we can call just to tell them you are safe and ok?
8. What adult do you know whose advice you respect (even if you don't feel you can take it right now)?
9. Can you tell me whom you trust?
 - a. If they say, "No one", ask: Is there someone you have trusted the most in your life?
 - b. Can you tell me if there is someone with whom you would like to build a trusting relationship?
10. With what person or people do you feel most comfortable?
11. Where in your life do/did you feel most comfortable?
12. Can you tell me about the places you were where you felt most at home?

13. Describe the place you lived with or without birth family, where you felt most at home. Who lived there and why did it feel like home?
14. What it would be like to try to build a family for yourself from your network of caring adults?"
15. Who do you want to be connected to in the future, next year, in 5 years or more?
16. Who praises you and makes you feel good about yourself?
17. Who believes in you?
18. If you could choose where you were going to live, (with no restrictions) where would that be and why?
19. Who have you visited in the past that you'd like to reconnect with?
20. Is there anyone who makes you feel useful?
21. What are your favorite things to do? Interests, hobbies, etc.???
22. What things would you like for your life?
23. What would you like someone to know about you if meeting you for the first time?
24. Can you think of someone who knows you're not stupid?
25. Who really listens to you and follows through for you?
26. Who cared for you when your parents couldn't?
27. Who do you want to help you plan for your future?

Detailed Questions about History/Connections to keep in mind as you work with youth and ask where relevant. These are especially helpful when creating Connectedness Maps.

1. Do you have older brothers or sisters? Can you tell me how we can reach them? Are any of them in foster care? Have any of them been adopted? Do you know how to reach their foster or adoptive parents?
2. Do you have younger brothers or sisters? Can you tell me how we can reach them? Are any of them in foster care? Have any of them been adopted? Do you know how to reach their foster or adoptive parents?
3. Are there friends from current or past school(s) you are close to? Where can we reach them? Are you close to their parents? Where can we reach them?
4. Is there anyone else from school you feel close to, look up to, admire or respect: a teacher, a coach, a mentor, a guidance counselor, a staff member?
5. Were you ever in foster care before? Who were your foster parents? Would you like to see them again? Were you ever in a group home or residential setting before? Were there any staff members you felt close to or trusted? Do you know how to reach them?
6. Are there any adults from your place of worship, your neighborhood, your job, your after-school activities you are close to or feel comfortable spending time with? Any family friends? Friends' parents? Boyfriend or girlfriend's parents?
7. Are there any other adults you close to or feel comfortable spending time with? Any adults whom you admire? Any adults whom you would turn to for advice? Any adults who compliment or praise you? Any adults who took care of you when your parents couldn't? Any adult who listens to you?

Engaging Identified Connections in Planning with the Youth

- Once people have been identified, it is time to begin getting them **engaged, or re-engaged in the youth's life and on board as partners** for this particular young person - this may and often does require many contacts both informal and formal.
- With the young person's permission, begin by talking individually with each person, either in person or by phone.
- Ask them about their own remembered relationship with the youth.
- Invite them to be part of a process in helping to identify a permanent support network.
- Be sensitive to and responsive to their questions or concerns.
- Ask them if they can identify anyone else who should be part of this process and obtain contact information.
- Once they agree to be a participant in the process, invite them to a team meeting with a goal of creating and strengthening the youth's support network.
- Be sure they have everything they need to attend - directions, transportation, etc.
- Encourage and promote their active participation in the meeting, but assure them that you are not expecting any additional commitment from them at this time