

Questions and Issues to Consider When Assessing Child's Needs And Developing Goals and Strategies for PCP's

Relationships with Adults, Peers and/or Siblings

- Does the youth have a mental health diagnosis or history of past trauma, abuse, depression, disrupted relationships, separations, multiple placements?
- Consider the impact of these events on the youth's ability to experience and receive nurturing from adults, peers and siblings.
- Who are the most significant adults in the youth's life?
- With whom does the youth currently report or is know to have a nurturing, caring relationship?
- What does that person do that demonstrates "caring" to the youth?
- Consider what makes the youth feel "safe." How will caregivers help the youth feel safe?
- What about this relationship makes it positive?
- Consider skills and activities that would help the youth develop a positive relationship with other adults/authority figures, as well as peers and/or siblings.
- Consider how life events might have an impact on how the youth generally sees adults/authority figures.
- Does the youth have a typical way of responding to adults/authority figures: as mad, sad, or scared?
- What do adults/authority figures need to do to help reduce the youth's anger, sadness, or fear and to foster improved relationships with the youth?
- What skills might help the youth respond differently?
- What skills are already strengths for the youth? How can those be used to develop new ones?
- What does the youth believe most "gets in the way" of having positive relationships with adults or authority figures and peers and/or siblings?
- What does this youth like to do with adults? With peers and/or siblings?
- How can that be used to help motivate the youth to gain additional skills?
- What skills does the youth have/need to "get along" with adults (conversational, following instructions, cooperation, manners, etc.)? With peers and/or siblings?
- Consider how the youth demonstrates s/he cares about adults, peers and/or siblings.
- Does the youth demonstrate compassion and empathy toward adults, peers, and/or siblings?
- Does the youth understand the concept of "reciprocity" (give and take, fairness, "golden rule") in relationships?

Educational Needs

- What are the youth's academic strengths/weaknesses?
- What does the youth like about school?
- Has the youth experienced success at school – academically, developmentally, or socially?

- What contributed most to that success?
- Has the youth been identified as having exceptional educational needs? Does the child have an IEP?
- What do you know about “how” this youth learns best?
- Is there someone at school who is a positive advocate for this youth?
- How can s/he help this child be successful?
- Who can this youth go to at school if he has a problem?
- What do you know about this youth’s actual reading ability?
- Does he avoid having to read by being disruptive, “clowning,” or getting others to read for him?
- Are there positive activities at school that are motivating to this youth? (e.g., sports, music, clubs, etc.)
- How might these interests be used to help motivate the youth?
- If the youth has ADHD, what specific strategies does the youth need help with in order to organize school materials, have uninterrupted study time, have adequate and frequent attention and help when working on assignments, etc., in order to be successful at school?
- What do you know/need to know about the expectations of the youth’s teacher(s) for being successful in their classrooms?
- What do you know/need to know about the overall rules and expectations at the youth’s school?
- Reading – everyday, some way!
- What will tell you that the youth is improving his/her performance in an educational setting?

Impulse Control

- Does the youth have a mental health diagnosis? Depending on age, what understanding does the youth have about his/her diagnosis?
- Are there events in the youth’s life that have had an impact on the youth’s ability to recognize and identify his/her feelings? To use words, instead of behavior, to demonstrate feelings?
- What skills does the youth need that are most likely to help him/her understand and manage feelings?
- What do the adults in the youth’s life need to do to help support the development of these skills?
- How will you know/the youth know if he/she improves in this area?
- Consider the importance of structure, predictability, routine, and choices made by the youth whenever possible as interventions to help the youth learn to better control impulses.

Problem-Solving/Decision Making and Planning

- Consider what problems/decisions that the youth REALLY gets to solve or decide on his own.
- How does the youth solve problems now?
- How does the youth go about making decisions?

- What skills does the youth need in order to improve his problem-solving and decision-making skills?
- Consider “real world” (and lower risk) opportunities everyday to help the youth solve a problem or make a decision.
- Consider at every turn: Is this a decision the youth can make?
- What help might the youth need in order to make a decision?
- What opportunities does the youth have to be involved in determining consequences for his/her choices?

Develop Individual Competencies Leading to Increased Confidence and Self-Esteem

- What does the youth really *like* to do (*not* necessarily do well)?
- Is there something that the youth reports being “good at?”
- Can that activity be used to help develop other skills the youth needs? Or to work on other goals of the youth?
- Consider opportunities to expose the youth to interests that may be new or unfamiliar.
- How will the youth know what he likes or might be good at?
- What will adults do to help the youth identify his/her interests?

Selecting Positive Peers as Friends

- Who does the youth choose as peers now?
- Does the youth have long-term friendships?
- Are the youth’s peers “prosocial,” or positive?
- Does the youth have opportunities to spend time with positive peers? What interests does the youth have that can provide opportunities for involvement with positive peers?
- How likeable is the youth? What skills does the youth need to be more likeable?
- Does the youth have a sense of humor?
- Does the youth’s humor help or harm efforts to develop relationships with positive peers?
- How can the youth’s sense of humor be used as a strength to help in the selection of positive peers as friends?

Re-establish Sobriety and Maintain Abstinence

- Consider whether there is a family history of substance abuse.
- What impact does this have on the youth’s risk for using/abusing substances in the future?
- Consider the degree of the youth’s problem-solving and decision-making skills in adhering to an abstinence plan
- Consider what supports the youth needs (people, structure, opportunities, etc.) in order to adhere to his/her abstinence plan.
- What role do substance abuse professionals or other interventions play in helping the youth adhere to an abstinence plan?

Making Responsible Choices about Sexuality

- Does the youth have a mental health diagnosis or history of past trauma, abuse (especially sexual abuse), depression, disrupted relationships, separations, multiple placements?
- Consider the impact of these events on the youth's understanding about his/her sexuality and the choices the youth makes in this area.
- What is the youth's accurate understanding of information related to sexual matters?
- What else does the youth need to learn about sexuality?
- Is the youth already sexually active?
- What is needed to help keep the youth safe?
- How might progress on other goals help the youth make responsible decisions and choices regarding sexual matters?

Independent Living Skills and Career Development

- Consider where the youth will most likely live when he/she turns 18.
- What does the youth already know how to do that will also be needed as a young adult.
- How those strengths be used to develop needed skills?
- What skills does the youth need in order to be as independent as his abilities will permit at age 18?
- What daily, "real-world" opportunities can the youth have EVERYDAY that directly relate to skills needed for independent living? (e.g., chores, grocery shopping, menu planning, money management, trip planning, using community resources, taking initiative)
- Consider opportunities to expose the youth to work and career interests that may be new or unfamiliar.
- How will the youth know what he likes or might be good at?
- Does the youth have a diagnosis that might have an impact on making successful career or job choices?
- What skills does the youth need in order to make the best career choices, given his/her strengths and needs?
- Consider opportunities to learn skills that would apply in a job-seeking scenario or job setting.