



Youth Development Toolkit for Parent Centers

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Youth Development and Parent Centers

Welcome to RAISE's Youth Development Toolkit for Parent Centers. Developed in 2020 by RAISE in collaboration with other stakeholders, this toolkit is a resource for Parent Center professionals who are engaging youth on a regular basis and looking to take the next step in supporting youth development. This toolkit is meant to guide professionals and organizations in finding the many opportunities to incorporate programming centered in youth development. Providing meaningful participation to the youth that you serve will propel them forward in their journey of becoming empowered young adults.

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RAISE offers Technical Assistance (TA) to seven PTIs across the country, including: REACH, New York Parent Partnership, Open Doors for Multicultural Families, STELLAR, The LINK Center, Project LAUNCH, and Shift. In addition to formal TA, RAISE supports youth and young adults with disabilities and their families through the transition from secondary school and into competitive employment and independent living.

Ali Hrasok has her Masters in Psychology and has worked in many different capacities to support the development of young adults both with and without disabilities in increasing their independence and leadership skills. Ali continues to support the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network (PYLN) and currently works at a community college providing programming and direct service support within their Inclusive Higher Education program.

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Part 1
Welcome / About

INTRODUCTION

It is becoming increasingly apparent that incorporating youth voice and engaging them in their own development is essential in having the greatest impact on both the individual and the community¹. Professionals and organizations are continuing to make strides in providing programming that works with youth, instead of around them. However, these experiences must go beyond simply bringing youth to the table. Programming must make a conscious and direct effort to provide youth development and leadership experiences. As a result, youth will enjoy the positive effects on their skills related to self-advocacy, self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-determination^{2,3}. In turn we can expect to see higher student achievement, lower dropout rates, and better post-school outcomes overall^{2,3,4}.

For this reason, we have developed a series of toolkits meant to guide you through the Youth Engagement Continuum¹. The first toolkit Youth Engagement Toolkit for Parent Centers, serves as an introduction to the steps beyond the intervention phase and into higher level youth engagement. The next two toolkits are focused on two specific steps of this continuum that fall into the development phase. These are youth development and a specific subset of that development: youth leadership. The toolkit you are reading now will focus on youth development. It is our hope that you have begun at the first toolkit in our series, Youth Engagement Toolkit for Parent Centers, and are now feeling more confident in reaching an increasing number of youth and young adults and gaining traction on actively engaging them. As you begin to question what is next, take time to read through these documents and engage in discussions with your colleagues and youth on how to take the next steps.

This toolkit is meant to provide a framework to inform your work with youth. We encourage you to take these tools and dig deeper with those around you. In order to ground these toolkits, and the way you translate this information into your own work, we will be utilizing components of an assessment tool that you can use with your agency. The Assessment of Youth/Young Adult Voice at the Agency Level (Y-VAL) allows agencies and organizations to assess the extent to which these entities utilize authentic youth voice and meaningful participation⁵. As you work through the toolkit, we will provide strategies for checking in with these documents to gauge your progress and efficacy.

¹"An Emerging Model for Working with Youth," Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing. Retrieved June 26, 2020, https://fco.org/uploads/resources/8141_Papers_no1_v4.qxd.pdf

² Larson, R.W. (2000). Toward a psychology of positive youth development. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 170-183.

³ Edelman, A., Gill, P., Comerford, K., Larson, M., & Hare, R. (2004). Youth development and youth leadership: A background paper. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth.

⁴ Sagawa, S. (2003). Service as a strategy for youth development. In Lewis, A. (Ed.) *Shaping the future of American youth: Youth policy in the 21 st century*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum.

⁵ Youth MOVE National & Regional Research Institute, Portland State University. (2016). *Assessment of Youth/Young Adult Voice at the Agency Level (Y-VAL)*.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



Thriving, Learning, Working, Connecting, and Leading⁶. These five developmental areas will be the lens with which we approach our first stop: Youth Development. Youth Development is described as a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help [youth] to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent³. While there are many perspectives and definitions, we will focus on activities and opportunities that specifically target these competencies.

What to Expect

As we mentioned in our introduction, this toolkit is meant to provide a framework that can spark ideas and conversations amongst you and your colleagues and youth so that you may translate it into your own work. Each competency will be highlighted in one section and review the following:

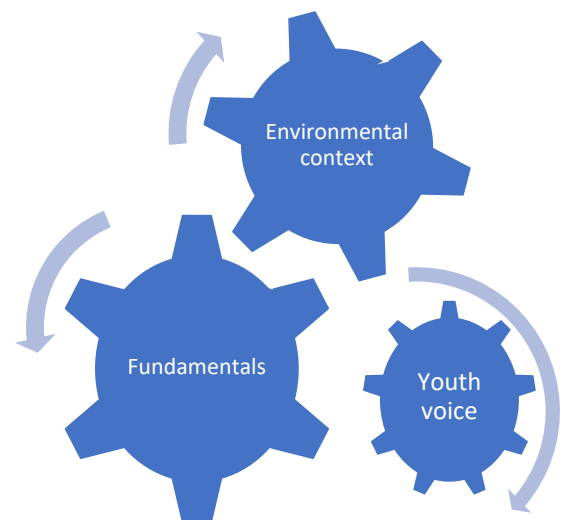
- Introductory information and/or research on that competency
- Guiding framework for translating into your own work with youth
- Tips and/or examples on how to incorporate youth voice

In addition, we will provide suggestions along the way for how some of these strategies fit into the overall assessment of your organization in relation to how well you are engaging youth and utilizing their voices.

Why is this important?

Youth are the priority. You are the facilitator.

While youth perspective and involvement is our top priority, it is critical that you understand how important your role as a facilitator is. Youth and young adults, especially those with disabilities, are not often presented with opportunities to intentionally develop all of these competency areas. Your task is to create spaces that support and foster this development so that they can continue to grow as individuals and ultimately participate meaningfully in their communities. This will not be a linear path. As the definition suggests, youth development is a *process*. This means that you will be in a constant state of learning, reviewing and turning the collective gears of fundamentals, environmental context, and most importantly – youth voice.



⁶ Ferber, T. & Pittman, K., with Marshall, T. (2002). State youth policy: Helping all youth to grow up fully prepared and fully engaged. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment.

THE BASICS

This toolkit is going to provide background information about competency areas that may cause you to feel overwhelmed. We hope that you will notice many of these overlap with one another which provides many opportunities for your activities to cover growth in more than one competency area. Throughout each section you will be able to catch some of our tips along the way regarding sticking to the basics of youth development programming.

The term “basics” here is meant to provide a ground-level framework for your work with youth. In this toolkit, and in the resources, we have shared, there is a lot of information regarding each specific content area. The information in this toolkit is meant to provide a frame of reference and context on what your focus should be when working to help guide youth development. The basics of youth development can be thought of as the tenets to be woven into all you do. In an effort to help ground your work and set you on a path to use what you have learned in your own individual ways; we will list them here. Each item listed is either a focus area or opportunity to include in your work as you develop youth competencies. This is also where your YVAL will come in to play. To help make the connection as you utilize the assessment at your organization or agency, we have listed some YVAL themes that fit best with the following basics.

Progressive leadership

- Theme 8: Leading initiatives and projects - leading projects *they* design

Decision-making

- Theme 6: Participation in developing programming/program policies
- Theme 7: Participation in evaluation – from how it will be evaluated, to gathering information and reporting

Sense of belonging

- Theme 1: Overall vision and commitment - clear efforts to promote participation
- Theme 2: Collaborative approach - respecting and valuing youth as partners

Peer interaction

- Theme 1: Overall vision and commitment - clear efforts to promote participation

Identity

- Theme 3: Empowered representatives – maximizing potential and seeing the impact of their decisions

Relationship building

- Theme 4: Commitment to facilitation and support of youth/young adult participation - through dedicated staffing

Creative arts, physical, health education

Strength-based

- All of the above!

Part 2
Core Content

SOCIAL COMPETENCY

A person’s culture plays a large role in how social competence is defined so, for these purposes, we will look at their effectiveness and appropriateness of their interactions with other people⁷. This means that prescribing what a successful interaction looks like is not an accurate way to determine competency. John may not communicate with Sally the same way I would, but did that interaction make either of them uncomfortable? Did they both leave having met whatever goal initiated this interaction? If we are happy with the answers to those questions, the method that got them there becomes less important.

To better structure the way we consider competency in this area, below is a chart listing some behavioral categories considered when thinking of social competency. Within each behavior, there is a list of examples that describe what being competent in that area may look like⁸. It is important to note that competency in any area will look differently across the youth that you work with.

<p>Social Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring • Honest • Flexibility 	<p>Positive Self-Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-aware • Sense of worth • Positive view of personal future 	<p>Interpersonal Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates ideas and needs • "Reads" social interactions • Acknowledges other peoples' rights 	<p>Self-Regulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controls impulses • Resists peer pressure • Exhibits prosocial behavior
<p>Planning and Decision Making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes choices • Solves problems • Carries out positive actions to achieve social goals 	<p>Cultural Competence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge, comfort, and respect of people with people of varying backgrounds • Interacts effectively with people of varying backgrounds • Recognizes and questions unfair treatment 	<p>Emotional Intelligence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labels emotions and communicates them constructively • Manages negative emotions in healthy ways • Gives and receives emotional support 	

Keep in mind that often times individuals, and especially youth, with disabilities are isolated from many things. This creates a skill deficit since they are not required to engage in many of these behaviors and cannot learn from the success or failure of those interactions. Providing information and trainings on these behaviors is a great strategy, but it should not be done in isolation. The best way for humans to learn is to engage in natural experiences and integrate what they have learned in their day to day life.

⁷ Han, H.S., Kemple, K.M. Components of Social Competence and Strategies of Support: Considering What to Teach and How. *Early Childhood Educ J* 34, 241–246 (2006). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-006-0139-2>

⁸ Kostelnik, M. J., Whiren, A. P., Soderman, A. K., Stein, L. C., & Gregory, K. (2002). *Guiding children’s social development: Theory to practice* (4th ed.). New York: Delmar.

Your Social Competency Framework

Some Do's

- **DO** consider what they like
 - If your youth enjoy video games - set up a tournament! Beginning with familiar environments will increase their willingness to participate and provide a natural environment for socializing to occur.
- **DO** start slow, then expand
 - Now that they are comfortable, bring in other populations. This could be parents, other staff, community members, etc. It is great to be comfortable, but the best way to expand skills is through experience. Build in a diverse range of individuals so that your youth can learn how to vary interactions depending on context.
- **DO** recognize opportunities for growth
 - If you notice that your youth tend to be silent around adults, use this as a growth opportunity! Using our example above, set up an event where they are teaching their parents or other staff about video games. Utilize the comfort zone to take a small step towards diverse interactions.

Some Don'ts

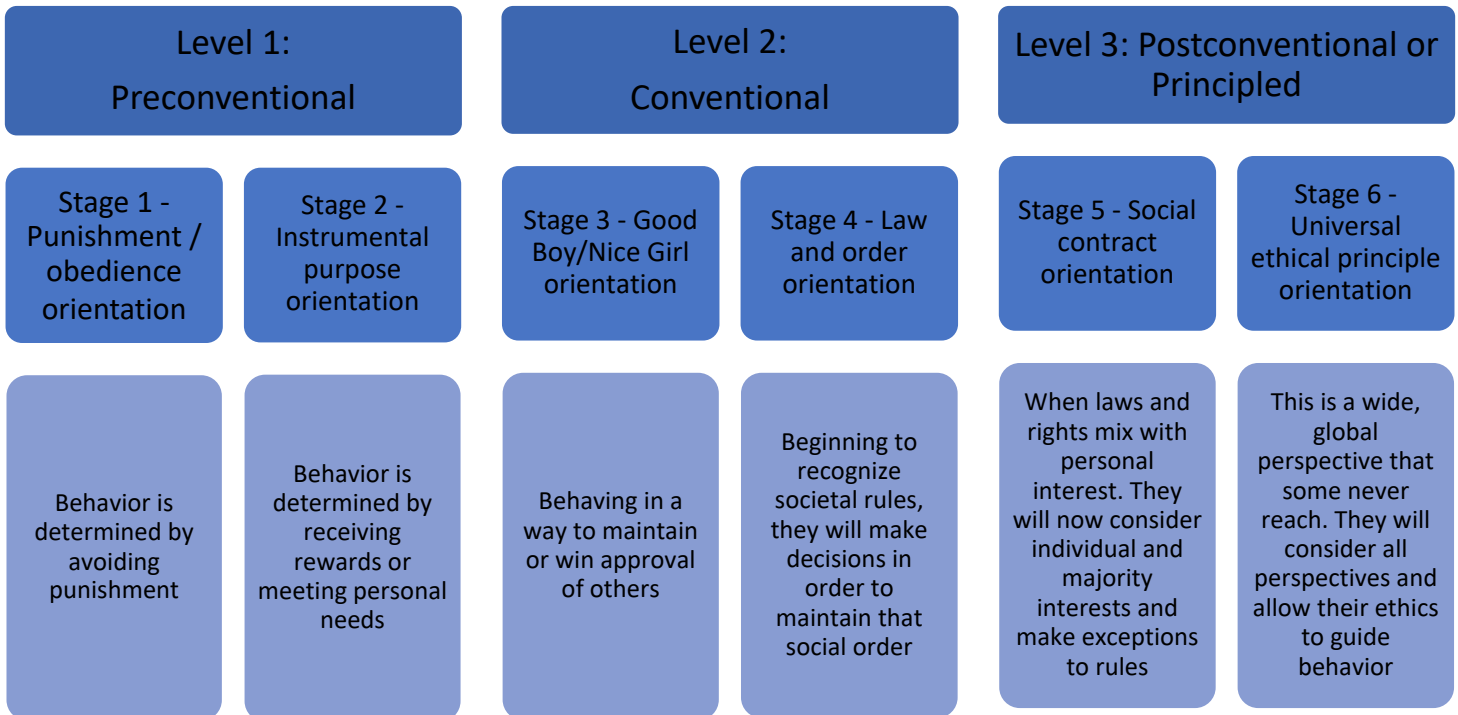
- **Do NOT** shy away from negative interactions
 - Encountering and dealing with negative social interactions is a natural part of life. Individuals with disabilities have a high rate of being bullied so our tendency is to develop hyper-protective programming. Allow youth to learn how to resolve conflict, advocate for themselves, and when to walk away.
- **Do NOT** think one size fits all
 - As we mentioned above, culture plays a huge role in what their definition of effective socialization means. Listen to your youth and help them respect their perspective and the perspective of others.

Colleague Conversations

- **Who is your population?** Be sure to consider the age and skill level of the youth you work with. Is it a wide range? Do you need multiple approaches? youth are all individuals with different backgrounds so be sure to consider your diverse population when developing programming. The best way to ensure this is to include them in the process!
- **Where can we start?** Remember the basics. This is a great place to utilize basics such as strength-based approaches, peer interactions, relationship building, and a sense of belonging.
- **Check these places out too:** The Division on Career Development and Transition created a Fast Facts on Social Skills. You can find that and other fast tracks here - <https://community.cec.sped.org/dcdt/publications/fast-facts>

MORAL COMPETENCY

Just as in our social competence section, moral development can be defined in many different ways. Psychologists have long operated on the idea that there are stages of moral development and processes by which individuals make moral decisions. Kohlberg describes a series of levels, each with 2 stages. The next graphic is going to *feel* like you have entered a psychology class, but we have highlighted the context for the terms and what is most relevant to understanding where your youth are at in the bottom row. As individuals move through each level and stage the emphasis begins with the self and evolves to a broader perspective of others and eventually systems.



This particular competency is noted amongst psychologists and lawyers alike as being the most difficult to define for individuals with intellectual disabilities¹⁰. Morality is often linked to the traditional definition of intelligence and therefore argued as having limits for these individuals in terms of what “stage” they can reach. While this toolkit is meant for engagement with youth identified as having any disability, it is important to acknowledge that some competencies have been ignored depending on an individual’s disability. We encourage you to never define limitations in competencies by an individual’s disability. Just as in the social competency section we want you to remember that while the literature sets a definition, you do not have to. Use the information as a general guide but listen to your youth and never second guess their abilities. This is important to note as we develop programming for any youth in that every person will have their limits. Remember the beginning of this toolkit: development is a *process*. As long as we are acting to engage youth in this process, everyone involved is succeeding.

⁹Sanders, C.E. (2020, May 28). *Lawrence Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development*. Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/science/Lawrence-Kohlbergs-stages-of-moral-development>.

¹⁰Langdon, Peter E. and Clare, Isabel C. H. and Murphy, Glynis H. (2010) Developing an understanding of the literature relating to the moral development of people with intellectual disabilities. *Developmental Review*, 30 (3). pp. 273-293. ISSN 0273-2297.

Your Moral Competency Framework

Some Do's

- **DO** use modeling
 - Morality is the one competency that is one of the most theoretical in nature. It is not something you can easily see, hear, or feel. Be intentional in the way you discuss behavior or choices and how they relate to different values.
- **DO** diversify the setting
 - Make sure youth get to experience many different perspectives. Morality is developed through the understanding of a progressively larger social contexts. Try taking them to environments that are different from their own and support them recognizing their place in a larger community.

Some Don'ts

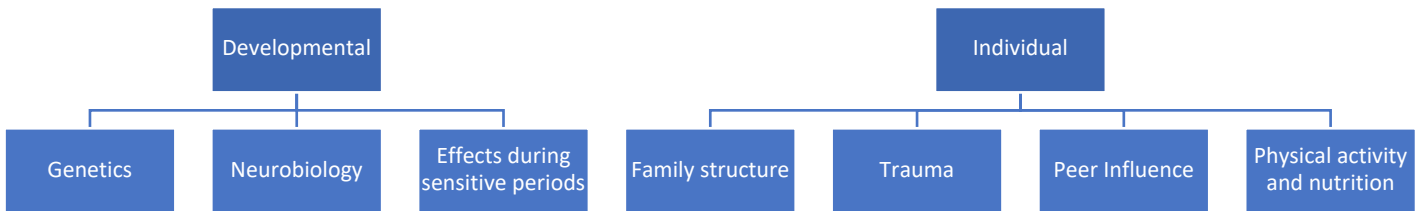
- **Do NOT** ignore disagreements
 - Part of moral development is recognizing the different perspectives around you. Remember the rules you created together? Discuss them often! It is possible that ideas and values are changing in a group. Teach your youth how to come together and work on collective agreements.
- **Do NOT** be judgmental
 - It is easy to associate negative behavior or poor decision making with bad morals. Make sure to create environments where everyone recognizes differences and learns to be open to change. Setting rules together can create an opportunity to identify important values and behave within a structure.

Colleague Conversations

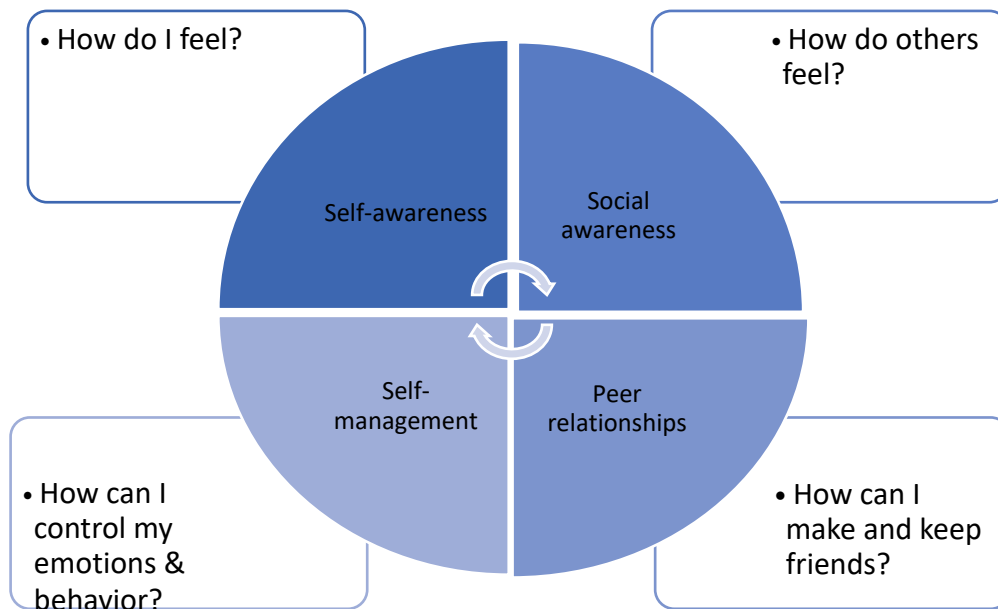
- **Who is your population?** For this competency it is important to consider age and relevant experience. We shouldn't be developing programs or setting expectations beyond what would be considered age appropriate unless our youth tell us to go there.
- **Where can we start?** Remember the basics. This is a great place to utilize basics such as decision-making, identity, and peer-interaction.
- **What are our morals?** Don't forget you are also a developing human in all of this! Think about what your morals and values are and how that may impact your work.
- **Check these places out too:** The US Department of Health and Human Services produced a document regarding many of these competencies in adolescent development. The section on moral development provides tips for adults to support moral growth! www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/explained/

EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY

There are several models regarding the number and type of emotions that exist. There are even more theories about how these emotions come to exist in the first place. For our purposes of helping youth develop emotional competency we will focus on factors that affect emotional growth and the processes that help support positive emotional growth. As you can imagine, just about every aspect of our lives from the moment we are born can have an effect on how we develop. Below are some broad categories to consider when fostering emotional health and well-being¹¹.



All of the factors listed above can make an impact on emotions in both the short-term and long-term. There are often complicated interactions that affect how youth develop and process these emotions. Specifically, McNeely and Blanchard point out what many likely already know: emotional and social development work hand in hand. Learning about others allows you to see more about yourself. Having looked at some factors that affect emotional growth, we will now look at areas of development to target that are often termed social-emotional¹².



Emotional competency may only be the third one on our list, but it could easily be interwoven into all other competencies. This is important to note as it will be a critical component underlying all work you do with youth.

¹¹National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019). *Fostering Healthy Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Development in Children and Youth: A National Agenda*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17226/25201>.

¹²McNeely, C., & Blanchard, J. (2009). *The teen years explained: A guide to healthy adolescent development*. Center for Adolescent Health at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Baltimore, MD.

Your Emotional Competency Framework

Some Do's

- **DO** consider risky situations
 - Throughout this toolkit and others we will ask that you allow youth to develop through some level of risk. However, it is important to monitor and provide guidance when something could be too detrimental. If these situations do occur, be sure to process with your youth and bring in experts when needed.
- **DO** build emotion-based language
 - Encourage the act of naming and discussing feelings. As a whole, our society is very behavior-driven. This can lead a lot of emotional processing on the table and missed opportunities for social-emotional growth. Try digging deeper when conflict arises and model how to discuss where emotions came into play.

Some Don'ts

- **Do NOT** disrespect identity
 - Each youth will have their own identity, their own history, and their own perspectives. Having and sharing emotions can feel particularly vulnerable in a group setting, so make sure that your structure creates supportive environments.
- **Do NOT** ignore the process
 - Especially when trying to manage a group, it can be easy to get a classroom/punishment mindset. Try using any behavioral disruptions as a teaching moment for regulating and discussing emotions.

Colleague Conversations

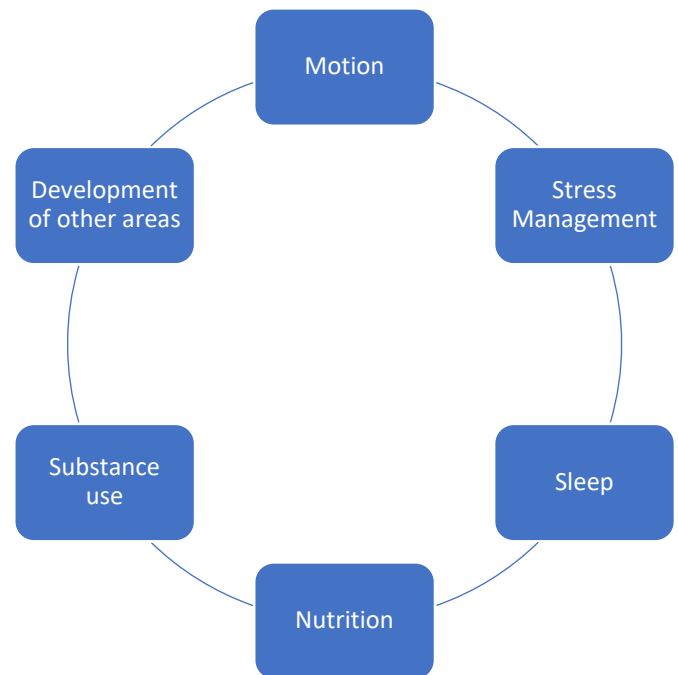
- **Who is your population?** As we mentioned above, there are several factors throughout a youth's development that can affect their emotional well-being and growth. Be sure to listen and observe the youth you work with to understand where each youth is at in their own individual development.
- **Where can we start?** Remember the basics. This is a great place to utilize basics such as peer interaction, sense of belonging, identity, and decision-making.
- **Check these places out too:** The BC Centre for Ability focuses on the social-emotional health and well-being of youth by including families and their communities as resources. Check out their website for information and resources – bccfa-seed.org. Another resource for online modules can be found by creating a free account and logging in here - <https://www.cadeworks.org/resources/cadre-materials/your-journey-self-determination-series>.

PHYSICAL COMPETENCY

Physical development varies widely from person to person¹². The American Academy of Pediatrics describes a range of physical, sexual, cognitive, social, and emotional changes that happen during various stages. Since you may work with youth and young adults of a wide range of ages, each stage is summarized below.

Early Adolescence (Age 10-13)	Middle Adolescence (Age 14-17)	Late Adolescence (Age 18-21+)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More rapid physical growth and changes • Concrete, black and white thinking • Bodily changes produce curiosity and anxiety in relation to gender identity, self-image, and privacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical changes occur due to puberty • Romantic and sexuality development • Frontal lobes not fully developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall completed physical development • Brain development largely complete • Able to control impulses more and think long-term

Since there are so many factors that affect physical well-being, it is important to think of physical development holistically. This includes going beyond the body and thinking of external influences as well. Physical activity and good nutrition are the most commonly discussed when thinking of a healthy physical development. However, there are external factors that can affect our bodies development and are often critical factors at risk throughout adolescence and young adulthood. Increased stress, lack of sleep, substance use, and underdeveloped social-emotional health can all have negative impacts on their physical well-being. When we think of each of these factors and support healthy attitudes around each of them, we will ultimately support a well-balanced individual.



¹³Allen, Brittany, and Helen Waterman. "Stages of Adolescence." HealthyChildren.Org, American Academy of Pediatrics, 2019, www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/Pages/Stages-of-Adolescence.aspx.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Adolescent Health, Adolescent Development Explained. Washington, D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 2018.

Your Physical Competency Framework

Some Do's

- **DO** bring in experts
 - You will definitely want to boost your own knowledge of any specific physical needs your youth may have and general information regarding healthy habits. However, there may be many situations that are outside of your scope, and that is normal! If you aren't an expert on exercise, or feel uncomfortable discussing sexual development, call up an expert. Your youth will enjoy a different perspective and will have gained the most accurate knowledge available to them.
- **DO** get out of the bubble
 - Being in a routine creates complacency. If you always meet at your organization or agency building, try meeting up at a bowling alley or the neighborhood park. Structure can be great but start building diverse activities into the plan!

Some Don'ts

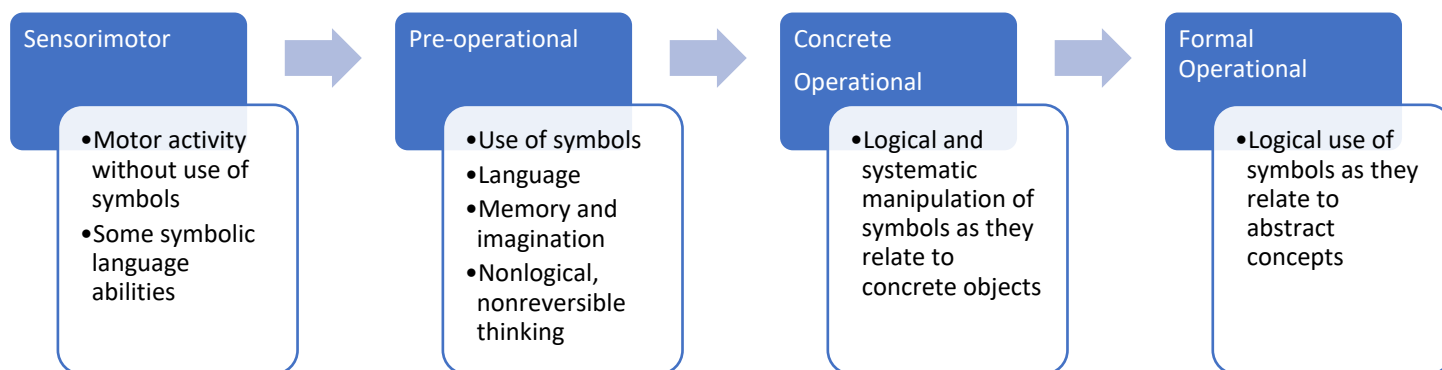
- **Do NOT** exclude mental
 - Even as adults we struggle to maintain a healthy perspective about our physicality and well-being. Add a developing body to the mix and it can feel like an uphill battle. Be supportive of diverse body types and activity levels. Talk about all aspects of healthy living and model self-respect and self-esteem.
- **Do NOT** fight resistance
 - This could be the competency that youth put up the most resistance to. Some may not want to be physically active due to barriers, lifestyle, or any number of reasons. Instead of fighting and forcing an activity, provide opportunities and information, and bring them into the process. Incorporate their interests into what you're trying to do!

Colleague Conversations

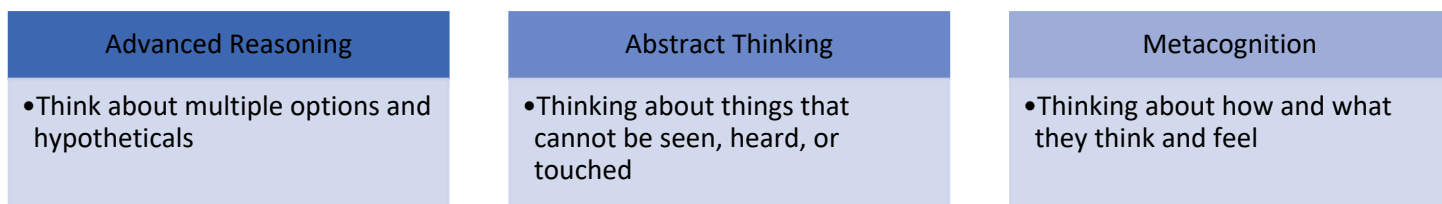
- **Who is your population?** Many assumptions can be made when working with individuals with disabilities when thinking about physical ability. Be sure to ask the youth themselves and their team about what they feel comfortable doing. You may also find differences amongst youth in terms of culture, race, and gender identity. Support an environment that welcomes these physical diversities and be knowledgeable about the differences they may be experiencing.
- **Where can we start?** Remember the basics. This is a great place to utilize basics such as creative arts, physical, and health education, peer interaction, relationship building, and decision-making.
- **Check these places out too:** The President's Council on Sports, Fitness, & Nutrition is a hub for resources and activities that support healthy lifestyles for people of all ages and abilities - <https://www.hhs.gov/fitness/index.html>.

COGNITIVE COMPETENCY

Let’s return to a concept briefly mentioned in the social competency section: the traditional concept of intelligence. It is easy to connect discussions of cognitive competencies with the idea that we are born with an intellectual capacity which can be easily measured. It is for this reason that many youth with disabilities are undervalued and underestimated. In recent years, there have been emerging viewpoints that change this narrative and support the idea that intelligence is not as easily defined. When we discuss developing competencies in cognition here, we will use Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences and recognize that these intelligences are only one aspect of cognition. Cognitive is defined as relating to, being, or involving conscious intellectual activity (such as thinking, reasoning, or remembering)¹⁵. While variations exist based on each individual brain, the literature points to stages of cognitive development that typically occur as people age. Here is where we enter into another psychology lesson to briefly review Piaget’s stages of cognitive development across the lifespan¹⁶.



We again urge you to take this information as a guide and translate it to what works for the individual in front of you. Traditional concepts can hold many different definitions if we choose to look first at the individual. Youth access and communicate knowledge differently. Depending on where the individual is at, you may present information and assess their level of mastery differently. Piaget also described two processes by which individuals adapt: assimilation and accommodation¹⁶. One could argue that individuals with disabilities are constantly required to assimilate and accommodate to fit the world around them. Tap into those skills and support the *individual* in their development, wherever that may be. With that overarching theory in mind, we turn specifically to cognition occurring throughout adolescence. For these purposes you can think of three main components to their cognitive skills¹².



¹⁵“Cognitive.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cognitive>. Accessed 11 Jul. 2020.

¹⁶Huitt, W., & Hummel, J. (2003). Piaget’s theory of cognitive development. *Educational Psychology Interactive*. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved [28, June 2020] from <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/cogsys/piaget.html>.

Your Cognitive Competency Framework

Some Do's

- **DO** use every moment
 - Taking in information, processing, and relating it to our environment is something that is happening constantly. Switch up who gets to choose lunch, ask someone why they chose to take the bus that day, or ask them to solve a problem that you encountered. There is no moment too big or too small to support their thinking processes and begin to help them understand how they arrived at certain conclusions.
- **DO** directly talk about strategy
 - We have talked a lot about finding natural experiences and opportunities for your youth to learn, but this is another excellent place to teach strategies directly. Based on your answer to who your population is, guide them through thinking about options for meals, how to look at options for post-secondary, or even how to chat up the person they like! Scenarios help build out the decision-making process.

Some Don'ts

- **Do NOT** remove risk
 - We could have mentioned the idea of dignity of risk a thousand times throughout this toolkit, but it feels particularly relevant here. Most people would admit that they learn the most from making mistakes. As much as we would like to protect youth that we work with, their learning process is no different. Create space for your youth to make a decision and possibly fail. Follow-up about what went wrong, and how they can think things through better next time. [Look out for this basic in the Youth Leadership Toolkit]
- **Do NOT** do all of the work
 - If you have ever found yourself incredibly stressed out trying to plan and figure out all of the details, you are not alone. You are however not utilizing your youth's potential as much as you could be! Try setting the bounds, offering resources, and letting youth decide details along side of you instead.

Colleague Conversations

- **Who is your population?** This is a key component in each framework because our work has to begin with a good look at who we are working with. For this competency it is important to take into account where each individual is at in their lives. What is going on in their lives? Target realistic scenarios as opportunities for growth.
- **Where can we start?** Remember the basics. This is a great place to utilize basics such as decision-making, opportunities for progressive leadership, and strength-based approaches.
- **Check these places out too:** Whose Future is it Anyway is a student-directed transition planning process, but has excellent strategies for allowing youth to lead the charge.
<https://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/whos-future-is-it-anyway>