YOUTH FORCE 2016

ESSENTIAL YOUTH FORCE ELEMENTS

A Guide to Providing Robust Youth Development Services

Children's Services Council of Broward County

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WHAT WORKS/BEST PRACTICES

◆ **BEST PRACTICE MODELS**

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is not merely a good practice but is a neurological imperative (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2011). Neuroscience has discovered that the brain is not completely developed by age six as previously thought, but continues to develop in adolescence, providing a window of opportunity similar to that of early childhood. James Heckman, the economist famous for promoting early childhood programming as offering the highest return on investment, has recently turned his attention to the benefit of adolescent programming to improve adult success. A 2014 paper, co-authored by Heckman, asserts that both cognitive (intellectual) and non-cognitive (socio-economic) skill development is a dynamic process. The early years are important in shaping all skills and in laying the foundations for successful investment and intervention in the later years. During the early years, both cognitive and non-cognitive skills are highly malleable. However, during the adolescent years, non-cognitive skills are more malleable than cognitive skills.

Adolescent remediation is possible for children who grow up in disadvantaged environments in their early years. The most promising adolescent interventions are those that target non-cognitive skills as well as programs that offer mentoring, guidance and information. Many adolescent programs that focus only on academic skills are only successful in the short run although short-term results can often appear to be spectacular (Kautz, Heckman et al., 2014). The differential plasticity of different skills by age supports the value of positive youth development programming focused on non-cognitive skills.

There are a number of different theoretical models for Positive Youth Development. While they use different terminology, they share similar concepts. Positive Youth Development (PYD) in general, includes a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences to assist youth in developing social, moral, emotional, physical, and cognitive competence within their community. It focuses on building healthy communities and the conviction that youth experience optimal development when they are welcomed to participate in civic and public affairs as participants, not solely as recipients (McKay, 2011).

- *The 40 Development Assets Model by Search Institute* identifies a set of skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that enable young people to develop into successful and contributing adults. Having a greater number of these developmental assets reduces a young person's likelihood of risky behavior (e.g. alcohol use, tobacco use, illicit drug use, antisocial behavior, violence, school failure, gambling, sexual activity, attempted suicide). However, developmental assets do more than prevent problem behaviors. They help youth "thrive" to overcome adversity, delay gratification, succeed in school, value diversity, help others, demonstrate leadership, and be physically healthy. For the complete list of assets, please see **http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18**.

- *The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)* identifies five interrelated sets of core competencies that comprise the process of "social and emotional learning" (SEL), essential to healthy youth development. These are: self-awareness (identifying emotions and recognizing strengths), social awareness (perspective-taking and appreciating diversity), self-management (managing emotions and goal setting), responsible decision making (analyzing situations, assuming personal responsibility, respecting others, and problem solving), and relationship skills (communication, building relationships, negotiation, and refusal) (Shek et al., 2012). The graph to the right is from CASEL's website:

- ***The Social Development Strategy (SDS): The Basis of Communities That Cares CTC)*** http://www.communitiesthatcare.net/how-ctc-works/#prettyPhoto/7/ was developed by Catalano and Hawkins based on 30 years of research that showed the most effective methods for promoting positive youth development and preventing problem behaviors involve addressing both risk and protective factors. Reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors can help prevent a child from a negative trajectory, hence the term "Prevention Science". Protective factors provide the supports and opportunities youth need to develop resiliency that buffer exposure to risk factors. The SDS identifies three broad categories of protective factors -- healthy beliefs and clear standards, bonding, and individual characteristics – that work together to promote positive youth development and healthy behaviors as shown in the graph below:
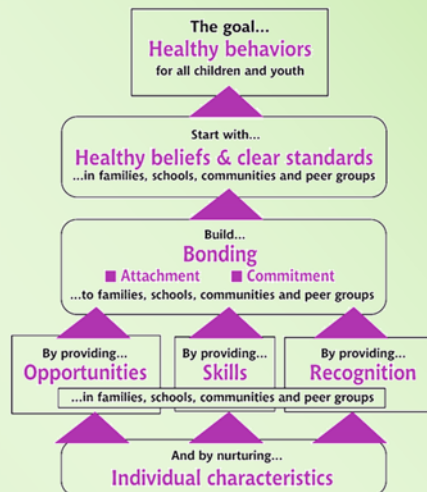
√ *Promotion of behavioral competence*: ability to use nonverbal and verbal strategies to perform socially acceptable and normative behavior in social interactions and to make effective behavior choices, such as resisting peer pressure.

√ *Promotion of moral competence*: orientation to perform ethical behavior, ability to judge moral issues, as well as promoting the development of justice and altruistic behavior in adolescents. It is noteworthy that moral confusion is a common problem among contemporary young people.

√ *Development of self-efficacy*: beliefs in one's abilities and to use such abilities to attain certain goals.

√ *Fostering prosocial norms*: clear and healthy standards, beliefs, and behavior guidelines which promote prosocial behavior such as cooperation and sharing.

√ *Cultivation of resilience*: ability of an individual for adapting to changes in a healthy way, a reintegration process for an individual to recover, or positive outcomes after experiencing adversity. It refers to adolescents' capacity against developmental changes and life stresses in order to "bounce back" from stressful life experience and achieve healthy outcomes.

√ *Cultivation of self-determination*: ability to set goals and make choices according to his/her own thinking. Skills and strategies which promote self-determination include self-awareness of strengths and limitations, goal setting and action planning, problem solving, choice-making, and self-evaluation.

√ *Cultivation of spirituality*: promotion of the development of beliefs in a higher power, cultivation of a sense of life meaning, and values about life choices.

√ *Promotion of beliefs in the future*: hope and optimism, including valued and attainable goals, positive appraisal of one's capability and effort (a sense of confidence), and positive expectancies of the future.

√ *Development of clear and positive identity*: building of self-esteem and facilitation of exploration and commitments in self-definition.

√ *Opportunity for prosocial involvement*: events and activities that promote young people's participation in prosocial behaviors and maintenance of prosocial norms.

√ *Recognition for positive behavior*: development of systems for rewarding or recognizing participants' positive behavior such as prosocial behavior or positive changes in behavior.

Communities That Care

Risk Factors — Adolescent Problem Behaviors

Risk Factors	Substance Abuse	Delinquency	Teen Pregnancy	School Drop-Out	Violence
Community					
Availability of drugs	●				●
Availability of firearms		●			●
Community laws and norms favorable toward drug use, firearms and crime	●	●			●
Media portrayals of violence					●
Transitions and mobility	●	●		●	
Low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization	●	●			●
Extreme economic deprivation	●	●	●	●	●
Family					
Family history of the problem behavior	●	●	●	●	●
Family management problems	●	●	●	●	●
Family conflict	●	●	●	●	●
Favorable parental attitudes and involvement in the problem behavior	●	●			●
School					
Academic failure beginning in late elementary school	●	●	●	●	●
Lack of commitment to school	●	●	●	●	●
Peer and Individual					
Early and persistent antisocial behavior	●	●	●	●	●
Rebelliousness	●	●		●	
Friends who engage in the problem behavior	●	●	●	●	●
Gang involvement	●	●			●
Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior	●	●	●	●	
Early initiation of the problem behavior	●	●	●	●	●
Constitutional factors	●	●			●

Source: Substance Abuse & Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
http://www.sdrg.org/ctcresource/Prevention%20Strategies%20Guide/introduction.pdf

- ***The Five C's*** by Richard Lerner theorizes that youth will thrive if they develop five behaviors:

  √ Competence: intellectual ability and social and behavioral skills
  √ Connection: positive bonds with people and institutions
  √ Character: integrity and moral centeredness
  √ Confidence: positive self-regard, a sense of self-efficacy, and courage
  √ Caring/compassion: humane values, empathy, and a sense of social justice

  Youth with the above five behaviors are considered likely to attain the sixth "C" of:

  √ Contribution**:** to self, family, community, and civil society.

All of the above Positive Youth Development (PYD) models are based on a strength based approach that addresses youth holistically to promote a positive trajectory, unlike "deficit-based" programs that focus narrowly on fixing the youth's problems (e.g. drug abuse). The underlying principles of PYD is that the absence of problems and risk behaviors does not necessarily lead to well-being and "thriving". A PYD approach that provides support for youth to develop appropriate skills can effectively result in, not only reducing risky and problem behaviors, but also help the youth "thrive" (Lindstrom Johnson et al. American Journal of Community Psychology, 2015).

◆ BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS

The National Research Council of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) identified Positive Youth Development features proven to be effective (Family Youth and Services Bureau [FYSB] of USDHHS, 2007). ***Proposals must incorporate and demonstrate the following set of standards throughout current programming and in ongoing program improvement:***

- ***Physical and Psychological Safety.***   The program provides a safe haven both physically and emotionally. Policies and practices increase safe peer group interaction and decrease unsafe or confrontational peer interactions.

- ***Appropriate Structure.***   The program has clear rules, expectations, and responsibilities which youth are more likely to follow when they have direct input into their development. Too little or too much adult-imposed program structure results in poor program outcomes. Young adolescents require consistency and structure along with increasing opportunity to manage their own behavior. Their desire to provide input increases as they mature. Motivation for participation is enhanced when they see their input results in real change. Key features of successful programs include clear rules about expected behavior, staff regularly involved in monitoring behavior, and program structure that permits age-appropriate levels of autonomy.

- ***Supportive Relationships***. The program offers activities and events that foster trusted connections between caring adults and youth.

- ***Opportunities to Belong.***   The program provides opportunities for meaningful inclusion regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disabilities. Socio-cultural identity formation and cultural and bicultural competence are promoted. Activities and events foster friendships and provide youth with a sense of a positive group experience.

- ***Positive Social Norms.***   The program's culture, including habits and expectations, that governs behavior and daily interactions involves conventionally positive social norms.

- ***Support for Efficacy and Empowerment.*** Youth-based empowerment practices support autonomy, making a real difference in one's community, and provide meaningful challenges.

- ***Opportunities for Skill Building.*** The program develops skills and competencies through its activities and teambuilding experiences and provides youth the opportunity to build skills that include leadership, sound decision-making, cultural competence, media literacy, positive communication, problem-solving, and civic responsibility.

- ***Active Learning.*** The program provides learning opportunities that are interactive, reflective, and engage multiple learning styles. For example, programs employ experiential learning opportunities and encourage young people to take positive risks. Youth are encouraged to try new experiences. Whether they are successful or unsuccessful, these attempts are viewed as part of the learning process. Youth learn how to take risks and also learn how to fail courageously.

- ***Opportunities for Recognition.*** The recognition conveys a positive view of youth where youth are sincerely acknowledged for their achievements and contributions.

- ***Integration of Family, School, and Community Effort.*** The program coordinates its efforts and communicates regularly with families and schools to ensure similar norms and expectations across settings. The program offers a variety of activities and events that involve parents, such as social events, parental workshops, and volunteer opportunities.

YOUTH FORCE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

◆ SUPPORTIVE, QUALIFIED STAFF

- ***Employing the Right Staff.*** Research shows that personal attributes of the staff can result in better or worse program outcomes, even when model programs are used (Pierre et al., 2007). Staff should be able to connect with youth, motivate, and encourage them. Program outcomes are positively impacted when staff have good interpersonal skills; ability to help youth apply newly-developed skills to everyday settings; and sensitivity to individual developmental abilities and cultural backgrounds (Durlak et al., 2010). Proficiency in managing group dynamics among adolescents is essential as prevalent adolescent behaviors include jockeying for higher social status through ostracism and putdowns. Pro-social norms of programs are increased when youth have positive relationships with adult staff who serve as good role models (IOM).

  Gains in academic achievement are more likely when staff are well-trained and supervised, use evidence-based instructional strategies, are supportive and reinforcing to youth during learning activities, use pre-assessments to identify strengths and academic needs, and coordinate teaching or tutoring with school curricula (Durlak et al., 2010).

- ***Professional Development, Coaching, & Training.*** Research has found the following factors important to attract and retain out of school time staff (Hartje et al., 2008; Sheldon et al., 2010)
    - √ A supportive, inclusive work environment that includes appropriate supervision and a climate of collaboration;
    - √ Clear role descriptions and perceived competence to perform those roles;
    - √ Opportunities for professional development and training;
    - √ A sense that staff members' work and input in decision-making are valued;
    - √ Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) strategies;
    - √ Opportunities for professional networking;
    - √ Adequate compensation (and benefits, e.g., health and paid vacations for full-time staff);
    - √ Intentional career paths and career "ladders" that differentiate levels of direct service workers by linking increased education and/or training to increased compensation; and
    - √ Clearer paths from direct service to management.

> ***Proposals should incorporate a professional development schedule and mentoring/coaching process, as described in this section.***

Staff Mentoring and Coaching are newer approaches where one-on-one modeling and support replaces or supplements group sessions. Mentoring pairs a less experienced worker with a more experienced staff person to help him or her master multi-dimensional competencies over time (Mattingly et al., 2010). Coaching is a promising strengths-based technique. By providing positive feedback on observed strengths and skills, coaches help staff to see how their own actions and behaviors can improve youth outcomes. When people feel they are making a positive difference, their job performance improves (Curtis et al., 2011). Strong evidence indicates when coaching is part of an overall quality improvement model that includes performance assessment with aligned training/coaching, positive results are seen in improved staff behavior, better management practices, reduced staff turnover, and improved youth outcomes (Yohalem et al., 2010; Sheldon et al., 2010).

Trauma-informed training for staff is strongly encouraged. Adverse childhood experiences, e.g. child maltreatment, increase the likelihood of social risk factors, substance abuse, violence, mental health and even physical health issues into adulthood (American Academy of Pediatrics). Many youth exhibiting high risk or negative behaviors may have experienced trauma that has never been addressed. It is important that direct service staff have an awareness of this dynamic.

- ***Staff-to-Client Ratios.*** The Council on Accreditation (COA) indicates that the staff to student ratio for out-of-school time services is based on ages and abilities of youth but should not exceed 1:15 for groups of children age six and older. This standard applies to the program as a whole, rather than for a particular room or group of youth. For example, a youth program with 60 participants would need at least four staff members overall to meet the specified ratio, but this does not necessarily mean this has to be applied to each individual group activity. For example, while one adult might be supervising a group of 19 youth doing line dancing, another adult might be helping a group of 11 youth with their homework. Volunteers should not be included in this ratio unless they meet personnel qualifications, as noted in COA standard YD 14.08 at the following link **http://coanet.org/standard/ml-yd/12/#practice-02**

- ***Background Screening Requirements.*** All staff working in the Youth FORCE program must comply with Level 2 background screening and fingerprinting requirements in accordance with Sections 943.0542, 984.01, Chapter 435, 402, 39.001, and 1012.465 Florida Statutes and Broward County background screening requirements, as applicable. The program must maintain staff personnel files which reflect that a screening result was received and reviewed to determine employment eligibility prior to employment.

    An Attestation or Affidavit of Good Moral Character must be completed annually for each employee, volunteer, and subcontracted personnel who work in direct contact with children. Youth FORCE program providers will be required to re-screen each employee, volunteer and/or subcontractor every five (5) years.

- ***Bicultural Competence & Bullying Prevention.*** Students who feel rejected by teachers and classmates are more likely to drop out of school. Youth development programs can provide a sense of belonging through strategies for positive bonding. When youth feel valued, they are less likely to become involved in high-risk behavior and their academic performance and attitude toward school improves.

    Issues of ethnic identity become more important to adolescents as they face how they fit into the diverse, and sometime conflicting, cultural messages and identities. Adolescents who perceive prejudice among their peers report high levels of emotional stress. Youth with stronger ethnic identity have more positive self-esteem, greater school involvement, and are less likely to engage in violence. However, a sense of belonging to a group can become destructive if it involves exclusion or hostility to others. **Programs need strategies to develop "bicultural competence" in youth, which is the ability to function and be comfortable in multiple cultural settings.** Simply bringing different cultural groups into contact with each other does not necessarily result in mutual understanding and respect. Critical strategies for

cultivating positive intergroup relationships through inclusiveness include the following strategies from the Institute of Medicine:

√ Activities should be designed to inspire cooperation toward a mutual goal rather than competition.

√ Interactions must be on a level of equal status.

√ Individual contact between members of different groups should be maximized.

√ Adult staff must support intergroup understanding by acknowledging group differences and avoiding "institutional silence". An atmosphere in which race is never mentioned can lead to intergroup tensions and unspoken perceptions of discrimination.

√ Staff must act as role models, arbitrators, peacemakers, interpreters, and promoters of civic ethics.

When bicultural competence is not addressed, negative behaviors such as bullying, harassment, and exclusion become more likely. While national data shows that LGBTQ youth suffer high rates of being victims of bullying/harassment, no youth is immune to bullying. Staff need to be skilled in effectively managing group dynamics. Staff can be instrumental in helping youth develop positive peer relationships which contribute not only to youths' satisfaction with programs but also their academic performance, behavioral functioning, and social skills (Frazier et al., 2007).

Bullying prevention may be infused by staff throughout the entire program by creating a climate that demonstrates respect, support, and caring and that does not tolerate harassment or bullying (CDC, 2008). Bullying is a learned behavior that can be unlearned. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is one behavior management approach proven to decrease bullying and other negative behaviors in students. PBS is an environmental approach rather than a packaged curriculum, scripted intervention, or manualized strategy. See www.pbis.org. Youth FORCE programs are expected to coordinate strategies with efforts, participate on community-planning activities, and be integral partners in the anti-bullying movement.

Bullying is a form of victimization, not conflict. Research indicates conflict resolution and peer mediation are <u>not </u>appropriate approaches for <u>bullying</u> and can actually be harmful in such situations. It is no more a "conflict" than are child abuse or domestic violence (USDHHS HRSA). Mediating a bullying incident may send incorrect messages to the students who are involved (e.g., "You are both partly right and partly wrong," or "We need to work out this conflict between you"). The appropriate message to the child who is bullied should be, "No one deserves to be bullied, and we are going to do everything we can to stop it." The message for children who bully should be, "Your behavior is inappropriate and must stop." Mediation may further victimize a child who has been bullied. It may be very upsetting for a child who has been bullied to face his or her tormenter in mediation. Group therapeutic treatment for children who bully (e.g., anger management, empathy and self-esteem building) are also often counterproductive, as group members tend to serve as role models and reinforce each other's antisocial and bullying behavior. A Restorative Justice approach can be an effective way to address bullying. When bullying occurs, the goals becomes one of restoration and reintegration for all parties. Restorative community conferences or circles are sometimes held to engage all persons affected by the bullying. This is an occasion for all to hear the harm and to plan steps to accountability and reintegration (Stutzman Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Please refer to: http://www.stopbullying.gov/resources-files/myths-about-bullying-tipsheet.pdf

Please see Council on Accreditation Standard (COA) YD 5: Promoting Positive Behavior and Healthy Peer Relationships at the following link**:** **http://coanet.org/standard/yd/5/#practice-04.** COA states: "Given the increased incidence of cyberbullying, it is also important to teach youth how to navigate the internet safely and responsibly if they will have access to computers at the program, as addressed in YD 12.10. "

COA **Research Note:** *Bullying is an extreme form of peer conflict that is deliberate, repeated, and involves a power imbalance. Bullying may take different forms, from physical assaults, to name calling, to rumor spreading and social exclusion. This <u>includes cyberbullying, which is bullying that occurs through the use of technological </u>devices. Bullying typically peaks in early adolescence, during the middle-school years, and can be physically and psychologically harmful. (COA)*

Program staff should stay informed about the most popular means of social media and establish a dialogue with youth about their social media habits. Youth should be made aware (without using "scare tactics") that "sexting" and cyberbullying may expose them to legal issues. As with all issues affecting youth, it is important to refrain from giving the message that a negative behavior is "epidemic" among youth since research indicates the when youth think "everyone else is doing it," they are more likely to engage in that behavior. A better message is to remind youth that most kids don't bully other kids (cyber or otherwise) and that those who do are exhibiting abnormal behavior (The Online Safety and Technology Working Group, 2010).

Please also see COA Standard PA-YD 4 Building Healthy Relationships Between Youth and Adults, which has relevant guidelines at the following online link: **http://coanet.org/standard/yd/4/#practice-04**

◆ INTEGRATION OF FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY

The need for family participation in school and after school activities is well-established by research. It is not enough for providers to just invite parents. Proactive strategies include directly asking them about how they would like to participate, joint planning, reciprocal communication that enable parents to feel comfortable sharing ideas and voicing concerns, written policies that promote family participation, and explicit opportunities for their involvement.

Immigrant parents are often mistakenly thought to be uninterested in the education of their children. However, research shows many become strongly involved when they feel respected by staff, language translation is provided, and their work schedules are accommodated (Sanderson & Richards, 2010). Inviting parents to share their talents, foods, and unique cultures with other parents, staff, and youth has been found to have positive results.

◆ YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION EXPECTATIONS

The following recruitment strategies were found in high-retention programs for middle and high school youth (Deschnes et al., 2010):

√ Staff outreach to youth and parents in the community and communicate the program's quality features;
√ Promote word-of-mouth peer recruitment;
√ Cultivate organizational relationships with teachers, principals, etc.,
√ Provide opportunities for youth to make positive friends;
√ Offer high interest activities (fieldtrips, swimming, chess competitions);

Successful strategies for engaging middle school youth target the specific developmental needs that distinguish them from high school students (Deschenes et al., 2010):

√ Middle schoolers have a strong need to be with friends. It is important to incorporate many ways and times for them to socialize, such as offering small, interactive group activities.
√ Middle school youth require structure and routine within an environment of exploration. It is the nature of middle schoolers to be "consistently inconsistent". Structure and routine help them to feel safe and supported. Staff need to be good listeners, have patience with inconsistencies, and be able to decipher nonverbal communication and body cues to understand what their program participants need. Programs can provide consistency in the form of simple routines, and even more importantly, by reliably delivering on promises and expectations.
√ Middle school students need to try new activities as they explore different aspects of their developing identities. Programs should offer them choices among a variety of activities, as middle schoolers are still exploring and identifying which interests appeal to them. Peer interaction can be helpful to facilitate their involvement. Putting on a play is an example of a group endeavor that offers choice among many different activities requiring different skills, e.g., acting, singing, costume design, lighting, set design, etc. In middle school, youth may choose which career paths to explore.

√ A strategy for improving the attendance of middle school age adolescents is to offer **flexible attendance options**, such as attending only three days of programming per week. However, flexible attendance should be balanced with strategies that encourage more intensive involvement. Research has found that middle school students with greater intensity of participation in afterschool programs have improved attendance at school. Participation intensity can be promoted with appealing programming, staff that can connect with adolescents, and clear messages about expected attendance (Roth et al., 2010).

Empirical evidence shows that the following program features were significantly related to retention for middle school and high school students (Deschenes et al., 2010):

√ many leadership opportunities for youth;
√ staff keep informed about youth participants' lives;
√ located in community-based settings;
√ serve larger numbers of youth; and
√ have regular staff meetings about programs.

In Broward County, the public schools are implementing Behavioral and Academic Student Info System (BASIS), a new system to identify and assist at-risk students. It is CSC's intention to work collaboratively with the school system by using BASIS to enhance recruitment for Youth FORCE programs, where possible.

The number of leadership opportunities offered by a program was the strongest single predictor of retention (Deschenes et al., 2010 HRFP). Students with and without disabilities need opportunities to lead, just as they need developmentally appropriate training and opportunities for academic skills achievement. Unfortunately, students with disabilities or those seen as less talented may not be considered for leadership roles, or are offered opportunities much less often than their peers who are viewed as having a natural affinity for leading. Experiencing opportunities to be a leader can improve a student's self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-perception (Lieberman 2007). Therefore, Youth FORCE programs should provide strength-based activities by identifying each youth's talents and interests and offering leadership opportunities that allow all youth to participate**.**

In a recent focus group, we asked Youth FORCE participants what they thought about the program:

:

WHAT DO YOUTH THINK?	
Reasons for Participating	Their Favorite Part of Youth FORCE
Have friends Feel safe Be happy Have case manager to talk to and get help Do well in school/better grades It's FUN Stay off streets and out of trouble	Swimming Activities (clubs) Improving grades

> *Program participants will be expected to attend a minimum of 10 days per month since research has shown significant positive effects are not seen with lesser engagement (LA Best longitudinal study).*

Studies find that children need to spend a minimum amount of time in an afterschool program for it to be truly effective, i.e. more than 45 hours (Lauer et al. 2006). However, research indicates engagement is even more strongly linked to positive outcomes than attendance (Hirsch et al 2010). Engagement involves the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional attributes necessary to connect to the people and activities of the program. A welcoming environment where youth feel valued and activities are presented in interesting ways can help increase engagement.

◆ ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF SPECIAL POPULATIONS

- *Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ).* These youth are considered an underserved population. As with all youth, LGBTQ youth benefit from increasing protective factors and decreasing risk factors. Creating caring connections, especially with supportive adults is one of the strongest protective factors. All youth need to feel accepted and safe and free from physical and verbal harassment. LGBTQ youth suffer high rates of being victims of bullying/harassment. Gender identity distress is significantly predictive of psychological distress (Kelleher, 2009). LGBTQ youth may benefit from counseling to help with self-acceptance and coping skills related to harassment, discrimination and victimization associated with increased mental health symptoms and suicidality.

  The American Psychology Association recently made their 2015 guidelines for serving transgender and gender nonconforming available for free online at the following link: **http://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/transgender.pdf**

  A free online guidebook "National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth" is also available at **http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/national-recommended-best-practices-for-serving-lgbt-homeless-youth**. It includes many tips that would apply to any agency serving LGBT youth. For example, it points out that youth are very aware of environmental cues and can make a quick assessment regarding whether program staff will be accepting of their gender expression. It is helpful when service providers:
  - √ Display LGBT supportive images, e.g. rainbows, hate-free/safe zone stickers;
  - √ Demonstrate knowledge on LGBT youth issues and offer support and leadership in implementing LGBT competent services;
  - √ Use community outreach material that enforces program practices in welcoming LGBT youth and reassures them there is a safe space for the youth in the facility; and,
  - √ Offer materials and accessible services to parents/guardians to learn about sexual orientation and gender expression.

  Family Youth and Services Bureau has a free online training "Creating a Safe Space for LGBTQ Teens" (as well as "Introduction to Positive Youth Development"). It is free to create an online account to access these at **http://ncfy-learn.jbsinternational.com/**. The following are recommendations of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN):
  - √ Implement comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies;
  - √ Support Gay-Straight Alliances;
  - √ Provide training for staff to better respond to LGBT harassment; and
  - √ Increase student access to LGBT-inclusive curricular resources
    (For more information, please see (**www.glsen.org.**)

- _**Inclusion**_.   In terms of out-of-school time, inclusion is the practice of providing programming for youth regardless of their abilities or readiness by offering involvement to all youth. Inclusion promotes environments which value the uniqueness of others and acceptance of diversity. It is a practice that allows all children to learn about patience, giving, compassion and friendship. In accordance with State and Federal laws, youth with special needs must be afforded the same opportunities as youth in the general population.

  An overview of the literature on inclusive practices identifies the positive influences of inclusion that affect not only the youth with special needs, but also the general population youth, program staff, parents, and the community as a whole. Best practices are those that benefit all youth. In order to be considered an inclusive program, the majority of the following conditions must be met:
  - √ Zero Reject - no youth is excluded from the program, regardless of the level or severity of disability, provided that they can be safely accommodated.
  - √ Ratio - Able to gain knowledge, interact, communicate, and maintain active engagement in a group setting with minimum eight (8) of his/her peers to maximum twenty-five (25) of his/her peers and one (1) staff person.
  - √ Naturally Occurring Proportions - the proportion of youth with disabilities in the program setting closely matches the proportion of children with disabilities in the community. Statistics from the Broward County School District indicate that, in the 2009/10 school year, approximately 12% of the children enrolled had a disability requiring an Individual Education Plan (IEP).
  - √ Full Participation - each child is given the same options for the length and duration of participation in the program.
  - √ Appropriate Program Planning - staff are trained and knowledgeable in adaptation and modification of curriculum and the learning environment in order to reach all youth. The Provider is responsive to the needs of youth related to learning, socialization and play. School Individualized Educational Plans (IEP's) are obtained and utilized to inform program staff of the youth's strengths and needs. Additional supports and assistive technology are provided by the Provider as needed. Current best practices are continuously sought out and implemented.
  - √ Outreach and Recruitment - the program uses a variety of methods to reach all youth in order to inform them about the availability of the program to all youth.

  The following sites provide information on inclusion: Council for Exceptional Children, **http://www.cec.sped.org/** and TASC, **http://www.tascorp.org/**. Programs should make reasonable accommodations to help youth with special needs fully participate. For helpful guidelines, please refer to COA Standard 4.05 **http://coanet.org/standard/ca-yd/4/#practice-05**

  In cases where an enrolled youth has special needs or behavioral issues that program staff consider beyond their scope, they should, in accordance with COA Standard 5.05, initiate a conversation with the youth, his/her family, and appropriate school personnel to exhaust all possible accommodations and interventions before deciding that the youth is not appropriate for the program. The program should also coordinate with CSC to ensure that the family obtains information about programs and services that may be more suitable for the youth.

  Providers with experience in complex special needs or behavioral issues may propose a program that specifically works with this population.

- _**Youth with Special Needs Including Behavioral Health Needs**_. Most professionals readily acknowledge that many students need a wide variety of academic and behavioral programs, services, and supports to succeed. Considerable professional literature has described these interventions for students with high-incidence disabilities including behavioral health. Strategies most frequently noted for youth with special needs including Emotional Behavioral Disturbances (EBD) are the same as those that have been found effective with youth in the general population and include the following (Wagner et al., 2006):

√   a structured teaching environment, including the provision of explicit, systematic, and highly interactive direct instruction delivered in learner-friendly, memorable ways;

√   independent learning strategies;

√   opportunities for peer-mediated learning, including reciprocal peer tutoring and cooperative learning; and

√   staff with strong positive behavior-management skills to decrease inappropriate behaviors and increase pro-social behaviors (e.g., Positive Behavior Support).

Research has shown that youth with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often experience social exclusion. Improvement of socio-communicative abilities in individuals with ASD is possible with appropriate strategies, and has been linked to positive changes in the ability to make and maintain friendships, to experience empathy, and be successful in school and in the community. These are critical elements of thriving (Weiss and Riossa, 2015). Thriving is related to skills in the context of home, school, and community inclusion -- not in isolation. Inclusion requires self-determined and developmentally appropriate participation and an experience of belonging. The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder (NPDC) developed professional resources for teachers, therapists, and technical assistance providers who work with individuals with ASD, and it is available for free at this link http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/evidence-based-practices. Resources include detailed information on how to plan, implement, and monitor specific evidence-based practices, e.g. modeling, prompting, reinforcement, etc.

- *__Gender-Specific Programming.__* Research has shown that male African American adolescents benefit from strategies that address their Future Education Orientation (FEO) which tends to be lower than that of female African American adolescents. Adults can play a critical role by raising achievement expectations for African American male youth, helping to reverse hopelessness based on beliefs about barriers to school and work achievement, and by acknowledging their academic achievements. Ethnic identity can serve as a buffer against factors that may decrease school engagement and academic efficacy. When youth feel connected to their ethnic group and do not believe that academic achievement is a rejection of their ethnic group values, they have better academic outcomes (Kerpelman et al., 2008).

Becoming A Man (BAM) is a program specifically for disadvantaged males in 7th through 12 grades, especially those with high risk of criminal activity. BAM offers nonacademic intervention through exposure to prosocial adults and skill training based on cognitive behavioral therapy. The program focuses on teaching character and social-emotional skills including considering another person's perspective, thinking ahead, evaluating consequences ahead of time, and reducing automatic decision-making. There are two versions of this program in school and after school. Both include interacting with role model adults on a regular basis and teach adolescents to recognize and reduce problematic automatic behaviors and biased beliefs, such as hostile attribution bias. The after-school component is made up of 1- to 2-hour sessions in which adolescents are taught non-traditional sports (e.g., boxing, weightlifting, and archery) and encouraged to reflect on their automatic behaviors. The program is manualized, and the treatment cost is $1,100 per participant. The program can be implemented by college-educated staff without a specific background in social work or psychology. See more at:

√   **http://www.childtrends.org/?programs=becoming-a-man#sthash.kEbkzeRy.dpuf**

"Girls Circle" and "The Council of Boys and Young Men" are examples of other gender-specific programs. Although there has not been enough empirical studies to deem these evidence-based models, they are based on best practice principles. For more information **http://www.onecirclefoundation.org/**

- *__Youth with Unaddressed Trauma.__* The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente's Health Appraisal Clinic found traumatic stressors in childhood negatively impact later-life health and well-being. ACEs include emotional, physical or sexual abuse; neglect; mother treated violently; household substance abuse; household mental illness; parental separation or divorce; incarcerated household member. The higher the number of ACEs, the higher the incidence of health problems and/or risky behavior, e.g. alcoholism, depression, sexually transmitted diseases, suicide attempts, unintended and adolescent pregnancies. Toxic stress response can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity without adequate adult support. This kind of

prolonged activation of physiological stress response can disrupt the development of brain architecture and other organ systems, and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment well into adulthood. Toxic stress is different from "Tolerable stress response" which results from severe difficulties e.g. loss of a loved one, natural disaster, or frightening injury. With "Tolerable stress response", the activation of body alert systems is time-limited and buffered by relationships with supportive adults, enabling the brain and other organs to recover from what might otherwise by damaging effects (Harvard University).

Research consensus is that the number one strategy to prevent – and even reverse - the damaging effects of toxic stress is to provide supportive, responsive adult relationships as early in life as possible, including, but not limited to, parents/caregivers (Harvard University). Even after early childhood, initiatives that promote healthy positive development among children and youth within the contexts of their family, community, and culture, provide the best outcomes for those who have experienced trauma (American Psychological Association). That said, some youth will benefit from trauma-specific treatment.

- *Youth Vulnerable to Human* **Trafficking.** Delinquency, substance abuse, and prior abuse are high risk factors associated with commercial sexual exploitation of children/youth. Verified youth were more likely to have alcohol and drug use history, twice as likely to have 3 or more prior Department of Children and Families (DCF) placements, and 2.7 times more likely to have over 5 instances of running away (source: Stop Trafficking & Rescue Survivors (STARS) Children's Strategic Plan Committee). Youth FORCE providers are encouraged to take Kids Safe training which includes how to identify victims of human trafficking. This training will be available through the Broward Training Collaborative for only $10 per person.

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THE MANDATORY SERVICE COMPONENTS
For Year-Round Youth FORCE PROGRAMING
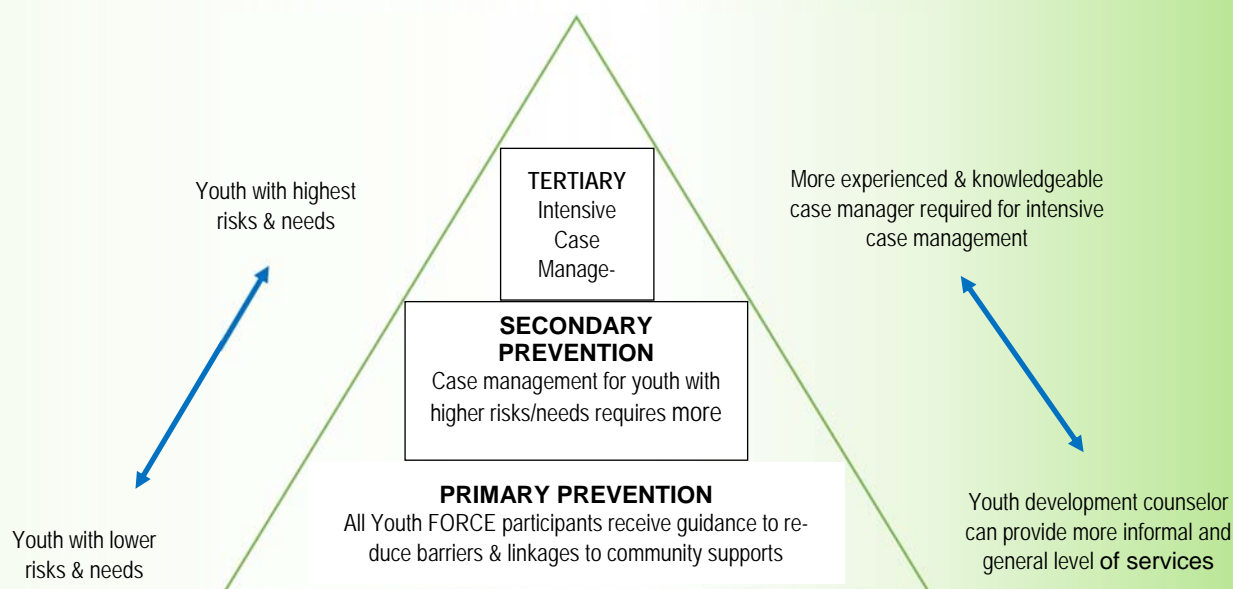
◆ **INDIVIDUALIZED ASSESSMENT & SERVICE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

- *General Assessment*. Shortly after entering the program, all youth should be assessed to determine their individual, family, and neighborhood strengths and risks. Strengths such as interests, aptitudes, and abilities, as well as risks and barriers to success, e.g., academic failure, substance abuse or family dysfunction, should be identified to determine the level and type of support needed.

- *Mental Health Assessment*. Not all Youth FORCE participants will be required to have mental health assessments, but it is important for those identified with high risk factors for mental health issues. For example, any youth who has lost a family member or close friend due to death from any cause, but especially if due to suicide, would be considered at high risk. Evidence asserts that children and teens frequently involved in bullying behavior either as victims or as perpetrators should be actively screened for mental health issues (Lieberman and Cowan, 2011). Certain populations of students are especially vulnerable to developing suicidal ideation and behaviors as a result of bullying, including students who are being cyberbullied; students with disabilities and mental health problems; and LGBTQ youth. Youth may be referred to appropriate mental health providers to administer these assessments, or providers with experienced, licensed staff may perform these assessments in-house. Recent research encourages University/Community partnerships to provide counseling by psychology/mental health grad students. Using the term "life coaching" instead of counseling or therapy helps to de-stigmatize it (Castro-Atwater, 2013). A local service provider in a focus group said they developed a successful university relationship to provide deeper-end counseling and parents find it less stigmatizing than government-provided mental health services.

- *Goal Development*. Case managers should review assessment information and work with each youth to create appropriate program goals towards which the youth will work during program participation. Both long and short-term goals should be identified during this phase of the program, with the short-term goals acting as stepping stones to help youth work towards longer term objectives. Goals may address issues identified in community, family, school, or individual/peer domains.

- *Individualized Service Strategy*. Counselors should work with youth to create a "road map" identifying specific strategies and action steps that will help them overcome obstacles identified during assessment to achieve their goals. It is critical to involve youth in this process in order to gain their buy-in for future activities, as well as to empower them to take control of their own destinies. Youth should also be connected with natural supports in the community to ensure positive behaviors will continue after program participation has been completed. Service strategies should include developmentally and culturally appropriate interventions that will be re-evaluated on an ongoing basis, with services adjusted to meet the current needs of each youth.

◆ **CARE MANAGEMENT/CONNECTING ACTIVITIES**

- *Tiered or Triaged Case Management*. This approach utilizes a continuum of care coordination for addressing individualized levels of need revealed by assessment. "One size fits all" is not an effective strategy since not all youth are equally at risk. The Primary/Secondary/Tertiary model used in clinical settings and risk-prevention programs is accepted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC 2008) for physical diseases and risks such as drug and alcohol abuse. The framework is now recommended for addressing Internet safety and bullying (The Online Safety and Technology Working Group, 2010). It has also been found to be useful in the Youth FORCE case management approach of increasing intensity of services and connecting with more community resources based on levels of need.

A pyramid is often used to illustrate the increasing level of supports/services needed by a smaller number of people at the top of the pyramid. The base of the pyramid represents Primary Prevention; the middle – Secondary; and the third – Tertiary. Please see the figure below:

Youth with highest
risks & needs

TERTIARY
Intensive
Case
Manage-

More experienced & knowledgeable
case manager required for intensive
case management

**SECONDARY
PREVENTION**
Case management for youth with
higher risks/needs requires more

PRIMARY PREVENTION
All Youth FORCE participants receive guidance to re-
duce barriers & linkages to community supports

Youth with lower
risks & needs

Youth development counselor
can provide more informal and
general level of services

Modified & adapted from Rosenbaum et al 2009 pyramid illustration of Case Management Services Levels of Need to Promote Healthy Child Development with modified text from the Online Safety and Technology Working Group, 2010.)

Researchers (Boustani et al., 2014) identified a small set of practice elements for socio-emotional skills common to successful youth programs, and assert that it would be cost effective to provide these skills to all youth in a program, while only providing more targeted interventions to youth with deeper-end needs. "Problem solving" (training in the use of techniques, discussion, or activities designed to bring about solutions to targeted problems) was the most common practice element, followed by "communication skills" (training in how to communicate more effectively with others), and "insight building" (activities specifically designed to help achieve greater self-understanding).

Providing specialized curriculum or counseling would be reserved for only those identified as high risk for specific issues. For example, anger management was found to be unique to violence prevention. Empirical data indicates intense anger and emotion dysregulation tends to precede violent behavior but is not associated with other poor outcomes e.g. sexual risk-taking, substance use, or depression/anxiety. Therefore, anger management would be appropriate for those assessed to be at high risk for violence e.g. youth exposed to domestic and/or neighborhood violence.

"Problem solving" was the most cross-cutting practice element prevalent in all categories (life skills, substance abuse, violence prevention, sexual health, and mental health) except for depression/anxiety programs where it came second after "Cognitive Coping" (techniques designed to alter interpretation of events through examination of the youth's reported thoughts). Therefore, those identified with depression/anxiety or at high risk for internalizing problems may benefit from more specific targeting of their cognitive coping skills.

A recent study found improvement in academic performance was associated with lower risk for teen pregnancy – but only for girls with few behavioral problems - not for girls with more significant behavioral issues. Those with more substantial behavioral problems may need additional strategies that address other important correlates of risky behavior (Thomas 2015, Child Trends).

Future orientation can be a "protective factor" for adolescents, especially for those who are low-income and members of minority groups. Compelling empirical evidence indicates that special attention must be

paid to strengthening the Future Education Orientation (FEO) of male African American adolescents which tends to be lower than that of female African American adolescents. Self-efficacy beliefs are more predictive of high FEO than actual ability. For example, African American males with high grades who believed social and economic barriers will keep them from attaining entry into higher education had low FEO. Adults can play critical roles in reversing the negative beliefs that result in negative academic behavior (Kerpelman et al., 2008).

- *Support Services*. Youth may need supportive services to help them successfully participate in the program, such as transportation assistance or adaptive equipment for a youth with special needs. Ongoing issues may also arise where the youth's family requires emergency financial assistance to meet basic needs for food, shelter, utilities, etc. Case managers should also be aware of youth at high risk of homelessness, e.g. LGBTQ youth who may be living on the streets due to family rejection and in need of safe shelter, e.g. Covenant House. Case managers should connect youth with appropriate community resources that will help them meet their goals as part of the service strategy process. Such supports may be provided by the agency, or may be referred out to other agencies that specialize in providing such services. Because no single provider can meet all the needs of each family, it becomes critical for case managers to have a working understanding of the program(s) provided by their agency, as well as familiarity with external resources that can be accessed to help youth achieve positive outcomes.

- *Service Coordination*. Quality case management can be the thread that ties all other youth development activities together into a cohesive set of services designed to meet the needs of each youth. Depending upon the proposed program model, activities may be internal or involve participation in external service options or requirements. Some youth participants may be involved with other systems of care, such as the dependency or juvenile justice systems that require an additional level of service coordination. Youth with special needs may have an IEP that requires coordination with the school system. It is important for case managers to communicate appropriately with these other systems and service providers to ensure appropriate service delivery.

- *Counseling*. Developing and expanding personal support systems becomes critical as youth work through the emotional stages of adolescence, and counseling activities offer an avenue through which youth may be connected to caring adults who can advise them during this critical phase of their lives. Youth should receive counseling services appropriate to their level of need. For example, individual counseling may be provided informally as needed during the course of the school year as staff cultivate trusting relationships with the youth they are serving. Crisis counseling may be needed so that youth have someone to talk to when they are having difficulty coping with personal problems. Group counseling sessions may be provided to address specific topics that will help prepare youth for adulthood, such as positive peer relationships, conflict resolution, or dealing with cultural diversity.

Motivational Interviewing (MI), empirically supported in the areas of substance use, is increasingly being used for behavior change in other areas. There is strong evidence indicating its effects are greater when used with another active intervention, e.g. as **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) (SAMHSA NREPP).**

Partnerships may be appropriate to meet the unique needs of some youth populations such as LGBTQ youth and youth with special needs.

For youth requiring more intensive mental health services, such as youth with an emotional behavioral disability (EBD), the provider may offer specialized counseling in-house, or the youth may be referred to appropriate service providers.

Suicide is a complex behavior that is usually caused by a combination of factors in the absence of protective factors. Research shows that some types of suicide prevention programs for youth have proven to be counter-productive and have unintended negative effects. For example, distributing lists of warning signs associated with suicide can "promote suicide as a possible solution to ordinary distress or suggest that suicidal thoughts and behaviors are normal responses to stress" (The Surgeon General DHHS,1999). Because of the complexity and seriousness inherent in the issues of suicide and self-injury, interventions should be conducted by licensed clinicians who specialize in this area.

Youth who exhibit suicidal ideations should immediately be connected to an appropriate clinician for individual assessment and treatment. Likewise, self-injury is also a symptom of serious mental and/or emotional distress that requires diagnosis and treatment by a trained clinician. These services should be made available on a referral basis to address individual need, and counselors/case managers must follow-up with clients and mental health providers to ensure that the problem is addressed in a time-efficient manner.

Programs need to be sensitive to anything that can increase what is referred to as suicide "contagion" (Otsuki et al., 2011). Youth are particularly influenced by exposure to suicide including media stories which have been found to increase the likelihood of copycat actions. Projects involving dedicating a tree, a plaque, or a yearbook as a memorial to a suicide victim are not recommended as it may cause suicide to be glorified and construed by some adolescents as a way to become immortalized. However, there are some ways for youth to acknowledge their grief for a friend or peer that psychologists consider appropriate, e.g., contributions to support suicide prevention (Lierberman and Cowan, 2011). For more information, see the websites of the American Association of Suicidology and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).

> **For programs under this RFP, counseling sessions may be provided in an individual or group setting and may be conducted at the program site, in the home, or in the community. Within the body of the application, providers should describe the strategies that will be in place to ensure counseling services are readily available to youth as needs arise, whether conducted in-house or through collaborative partnerships. For programs that will refer youth to outside services, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) must be created with a local mental health provider and included with the proposal to ensure that clients will receive needed services in a timely manner.**

Providers who conduct their own mental health counseling should utilize evidence-based therapeutic models shown to be effective with at-risk populations Counseling models that are strength-based rather than deficit-focused are considered most appropriate for youth development (Kaczmarek, 2006).

Staff providing case management (i.e., connecting activities) will be required to be trained in ACCESS to public benefits offered by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). In addition, staff not experienced with case management are strongly encouraged to take case management/case documentation courses offered by CSC and/or the Broward Training Collaborative.

◆ ACADEMIC SERVICES & SUPPORTS

- *Academic Assessment*. During the assessment process, program staff determine if youth are experiencing difficulty in a particular subject area, and an appropriate service strategy is assigned to address the area of need. Academic information can be gained from report cards, FCAT scores, IEP's, and other school reports. Program operators may also conduct their own academic assessments utilizing an appropriate tool such as the California Achievement Test (CAT/5). Issues related to school attendance and behavior should also be addressed to promote academic success.

- *Instruction and Remediation*. Assessment information should be used to develop a plan for academic instruction and remediation targeting the specific skills where the student has a learning deficit, and instruction should be provided to build skills in that area. For example, a youth who is struggling in math class may need targeted instruction on performing mathematical operations related to fractions. There are also many types of educational software on the market that can run diagnostic reports to identify deficit areas with "prescriptions" for specific lessons that will help build the specific skills in which the student is lacking. The type of strategy used should maximize the effectiveness of instruction. For example, research indicates that one-on-one-tutoring is an effective strategy for reading. However, math instruction appears to affect outcomes more positively in small group instruction than in large group or individual tutoring (Lauer et al., 2006).

- *Peer Tutoring Programs*. These programs are an important best practice strategy for providing homework assistance and/or individual tutoring. Instructional techniques associated with academic success include

matching academic level to instructional level, opportunities to practice, immediate corrective feedback, and engaging and motivating lessons.

Reciprocal tutoring is a type of peer tutoring in which each student takes turns in the tutor and tutee roles. A meta-analysis of 90 studies found peer-assisted learning programs resulted in moderate to high achievement gains and was especially beneficial for low-income students (Cappella et al., 2008). One of the strongest findings of a meta-analysis of 35 out-of-school-time (OST) programs is that one-on-one tutoring is important for reading improvements for at-risk students (Lauer et al., 2006).

Peer-to-peer education is an especially powerful, influential tool with youth in middle school, especially when developing important life skills such as giving and receiving constructive feedback (Deschenes et al., 2010). A key to effective peer tutoring is adequate training that includes how to provide explicit instruction, pacing, and appropriate feedback for correct and incorrect responses (Herring-Harrison et al., 2007). Studies have shown that peer tutoring can have a more positive effect on social skills than specific social skill interventions (Cappella et al., 2008).

Program providers may choose to operate their own educational component, which should take place after school hours, including early release and non-school days, at either a school or community site. Or providers may choose to connect youth to a community partner for this activity. For programs that will refer youth to outside academic services, a description of the services provided, as well as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a local educational program operator, must be included with the proposal to ensure that clients will receive appropriate services.

- **STEAM Projects.** STEAM is an educational approach to learning that uses **S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering, the **A**rts and **M**athematics for guiding student inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking. Today's students are less patient with lecture-based instruction, and increasingly prefer the use of technology and active learning. High-quality out-of-school time programs provide an excellent opportunity to support students in learning and pursuing STEAM careers. To be effective, they must be student-centered, employ cooperative learning strategies, and foster skills and attitudes toward STEAM through "authentic, hands-on activities". There must be time for "reflection", the process of contemplation that helps to connect new ideas and information with previous ones to produce new understanding (Barker et al. 2013). Local service providers in a recent focus group shared examples of their STEAM projects facilitated by STEAM teachers and offered as "clubs" on certain days of the week. Projects that successfully engaged youth included robotics (which helps them learn code) and building little roller coasters with motors. Youth also created their own research projects which involved developing their own hypothesis, critical analysis, and writing.

> **While academic activities are required year-round, the types of activities offered may be different for the school year and summer program components, as described in the following sections.**

- Youth said young people should have an active role in designing research projects and collecting data. This will equip them with skills to generate and analyze data on key issues that affect their lives, enabling them to take the lead in advocating for a sustainable future.

- *School Year Academic Component*

    - √ *Homework Assistance.* After school programs that provide high quality support to complete homework have resulted in positive gains in academic achievement due to improvement in teachers' perceptions of students' efforts and increased student self-confidence. Consensus among researchers asserts that essential components of effective homework assistance include (Huang & Cho, 2009):

        ° Pre-set time for homework completion;

        ° Allotting sufficient time for homework completion as part of a routine schedule;

        ° Structured settings that provide materials and space with no distractions;

- Instructional support for students;

- Teaching of general study skills critical to all academic subjects, e.g., time management, how to use reference materials, note-taking and general test preparation skills;

√ Motivational strategies to encourage students to complete their homework, e.g., reward systems; and

√ Reciprocal communication between program staff and school teachers including tracking of student progress and written forms completed by teachers to notify afterschool staff about specific homework assigned.

> *It should be noted that homework programs using untrained or minimally trained volunteers have not been found to improve students' academic performance.*

√ Advocacy. In addition to connecting youth with direct instructional support, staff shall act as advocates to help participants access necessary educational resources provided by the school system and in the community. Many parents and caregivers have difficulty navigating the school system, so program staff should help them access parent conferences, meetings with guidance counselors, and other opportunities to become involved in their child's education. Students served through Exceptional Student Education (ESE) should be assisted in connecting with appropriate developmental and rehabilitative services.

- *Summer and Non-School Academic Enrichment*. During the summer component, which should operate for a minimum of six (6) weeks, youth will participate in fun and engaging enrichment activities designed to build a variety of skills and competencies. Research shows that focusing primarily and directly on the academic remediation of students in low-performing schools is ineffective, as students don't want to attend and do not receive enough remediation to change academic outcomes (TASC, 2007). Boredom was found to be the reason why one third of students drop out of OST programs. Research indicates that OST programs do not have to focus solely on academic activities to positively impact student achievement (Lauer et al., 2006). A recent meta-analysis of after school programs that emphasized personal and social skills found significant improvement in school grades, level of academic achievement and bonding to school in addition to increased positive social behaviors and reduced problem behaviors. Programs should include a variety of activities that address the developmental needs of the youth holistically.

Project-based and hands-on contextual learning activities are designed to attract teens while embedding curriculum that builds both life skills and academic skills. For example, one OST program used online games as a "hook" to engage adolescent males. Initial findings suggest the program has been successful in teaching teens crucial literacy practices of problem solving, researching and synthesizing information while using the media of their choice, online games (Steinkuehler & King, 2009). These types of active learning strategies often engage students who do not perform well in a traditional classroom setting, as youth are able to utilize talents and abilities that they normally would not be able to display during their regular school day. Programs should incorporate activities that address the following "multiple intelligences" to fully engage all types of learners (Wyman Center):

√ Musical/rhythmic: recognition of tonal patterns and environmental sounds;

√ Body kinesthetic: physical movement;

√ Verbal/linguistic: words and language, both written and spoken;

√ Naturalist: ability to recognize plants, animals, and other aspects of the natural environment;

√ Visual/spatial: sense of sight and the ability to visualize an object and create mental images;

√ Intrapersonal: inner states of being, reflection, spiritual awareness;

√ Interpersonal: person to person relationships and communication; and

√ Logical/mathematical: scientific thinking, dealing with inductive and deductive reasoning.

Youth also need to see the relevance of learning activities to life beyond the school and classroom (IOM). Examples of how math skills can be taught and reinforced within larger experiential projects include requiring students to:

√ convert measurement units of ingredients to increase number of recipe servings in culinary projects;

√ use formulas for calculating area to determine how much paint is needed to cover walls in construction projects; and

√ convert inches into yards to determine how much fabric will be needed for making costumes or designing clothes.

Successful examples of hands-on learning activities shared by local providers in a focus group include "clubs," e.g. Fitness (basketball, volleyball, etc., which were found to be highly popular with girls as well as boys); Bike Building (taking apart, putting together and fixing bikes that they can take home); Culinary Arts (including budgeting, shopping, and cooking); Leadership Program (in which youth who developed leadership skills come back as volunteers); and 3D Printing.

In addition to academic skills, "embedded curricula" can build skills around responsibility, leadership, persistence, and connection to the family, schools, and the community. Sports and physical activity programs can help youth learn how to work as part of a team, respect others, and manage both success and disappointment. However, mixed results in studies of sports programs indicate that participating in activities does not necessarily mean that youth will develop positive social skills such as team work unless they are explicitly taught these skills by program leaders (IOM).

◆ THE TEEN OUTREACH PROGRAM® (TOP)

This prevention education model will be required for all Youth FORCE Providers. Programs with an emphasis on social skills and character development have been shown to have a stronger impact on decreasing the likelihood of delinquent behavior among middle school students than programs without social development goals (Frazier et al., 2007). TOP® is an evidence-based positive youth development model that includes soft skills and life skills development, addresses teen pregnancy, and has a strong community service learning component that can be used to promote civic engagement. **Teen Outreach Facilitator (TOF) certification training, which will be provided by CSC, is required for all direct service staff implementing this component.**

TOP® was the only teen pregnancy prevention program out of seven analyzed by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) 2004 report found to have a positive return on investment. While only 15% of the official TOP® curriculum deals with sexuality, evaluations show that it successfully reduces pregnancy. Often called a teen pregnancy prevention program, it has also been categorized by rating entities as a School Dropout Prevention Program, a Service Learning Program, and a Youth Development Program.

TOP® uses a service learning approach to help youth connect what they learn in school to their community service. The strong community service learning component includes a community mapping exercise which helps them to select their project. They may choose a project that involves them in civic activism and "placemaking" activities (Kemp, 2011) that improve their community while they increase their knowledge, experience, and empowerment. http://wymancenter.org/nationalnetwork/top/

◆ NUTRITION & FITNESS ACTIVITES

In order to promote a healthy lifestyle, youth development programs need to provide youth with opportunities for positive recreation and physical activity. This is especially important today because childhood obesity has become a national epidemic; since 1980 the occurrence of overweight youth has tripled for adolescents. Physical fitness obviously helps improve the body in numerous ways, but regular activity has also been shown to improve moods and self-esteem. In addition, new research has also shown a possible link between higher levels of fitness and higher academic gains in math and reading. Programs should include fitness activities

and nutrition education delivered in a fun, effective and inclusive manner.

Disabled youth are even more likely to be obese than their physically able peers because the majority are unable to join traditional sports such as basketball or baseball. This leaves them fewer outlets for active recreation and makes them more susceptible to weight-related health problems. These youth need to be given the opportunity to move and improve their eating habits.

Nutrition Education should be delivered using creative methodologies to educate youth about the importance of proper nutrition and a balanced diet. Cooking classes, gardening projects, field trips to restaurants, and cultural exploration activities are examples of successful strategies for implementing this component. The nutritional component may be offered as a stand-alone module, or nutrition-related activities may be incorporated contextually into the program on an ongoing basis.

Healthy Snacks are important for after school program components, as this simple strategy encourages participation and offers a forum for discussing good nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices. Youth from low-income households may not have adequate food resources available in their homes, it becomes even more important for service providers to address needs related to food security. Programs offering extended hours and weekend activities should include provisions for meals.

During the school year, Youth FORCE providers must ensure all children in their program receive one (1) healthy dinner or snack on all early release and school days. On non-school days all program participants must have two (2) healthy snacks and lunch. Programs operating on school sites can receive snacks through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) sponsored by the Broward County School Board (Florida Department of Education). Programs operating in community-based sites can access the Child Care Food Program (CCFP) operated through the Department of Health. Both CCFP and NSLP are federally-funded programs operated nationally by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and administered at the state level by a state agency. **CSC requires providers to provide snacks and/or meals to youth daily through the CCFP or NSLP, wherever possible**. To begin serving snacks and meals through the CCFP, contact Tina Mazanek (**Tina.Mazanek@flhealth.gov**) or Brenda Lane (**Brenda.Lane@flhealth.gov**) at the Florida Department of Health at (850) 245-4323. If you plan to provide snacks through a school, contact Raymond Papa in the Broward County Public Schools, Food Service Department, at (754) 321-0215.

On non-school days during the school year, parents should be alerted to send their child(ren) with lunch and snack provisions. However, as food insecurity has spread to many Broward households, program staff should be aware of this possibility and prepare to address it to ensure each child has lunch and snacks during program hours. The CSC highly encourages providers to find ways to provide non-school day snacks and emergency lunch provisions in a cost effective way. These provisions can be used to meet the CSC's match requirements. A limited amount may be budgeted for emergency food, which will be reimbursed at the Federal Reimbursement Rates for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): **http://www.freshfromflorida.com**

Program meals are a good time to discuss nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices. Nutrition education can be interwoven throughout this time as well. Nutrition education should be delivered using creative methodologies to educate youth about the importance of proper nutrition and a balanced diet.

Some recommended ways for proposals to incorporate nutrition education are:
- *The Travel-The-World Cookbook* introduces children to basic cooking techniques and world culture with 60 delicious recipes from around the world. Each recipe is accompanied by interesting food facts, cultural information, and activities.
- The traditional food pyramid has been redesigned as a plate divided into basic food groups called *My Plate*, conceived as a crucial part of First-Lady Michelle Obama's campaign against obesity. Please see the website called *Choose My Plate* at **http://www.choosemyplate.gov/**
- *EarthBox* is a maintenance-free, award-winning, high-tech growing system which controls soil conditions, eliminates guesswork and more than doubles the yield of a conventional garden-with less fertilizer, less water and virtually no effort. **http://www.earthbox.com**

During the summer session, two (2) healthy snacks and lunch must be offered to each youth daily via the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The SFSP is a federally-funded program operated nationally by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and administered at the state level by a state agency. The SFSP

provides good, nutritious food during the summer to ensure that children in low-income areas continue to receive nutritious meals when they do not have access to school lunch or breakfast. Local governments, camps, schools, and private non-profit organizations may serve as sponsors in the SFSP. For more information visit: **http://www.freshfromflorida.com** or call Jaren Vass, the South Florida Representative at 239-338-2357.

SFSP will cover only two "meals" which include snacks and meals. The Provider should make every effort to provide children with breakfast and lunch during the summer. If unavailable, the Provider may offer a morning snack instead of breakfast. The afternoon snack should be included in the Youth FORCE budgets and will be reimbursed at the Federal Reimbursement Rates for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

◆ CAREER EXPLORATION

Research confirms that increasing youth's perception of the relevance of schooling to their future career is associated with high levels of student engagement. Positive thinking about the future has been shown to promote resiliency and protect against substance use for urban low-income youth. **Motivational Interviewing (MI)** is emerging as a developmentally appropriate tool through which to discuss future plans including behavioral barriers to a positive future. A 2012 study successfully used MI to improve academic outcomes e.g. class participation and other academic behaviors. More recently, MI is being tested for increasing career readiness (Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2015). Studies indicate 81% of dropouts report lack of relevance as a top reason for leaving school (National Career Development Association). Career exploration has been shown to have a positive effect on both school engagement and academic achievement (Orthner et al., 2010). Middle schoolers are still in exploration mode, so it is helpful to expose them to a variety of career paths they may have never considered, especially in lucrative fields such as those found in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) subject areas. Appropriate career exploration activities for middle school students include guest speakers, field trips to places of employment or post-secondary institutions, hands-on learning projects, and Internet research. The Florida Department of Education's online career planning tool, *My Career Shines*, (which *replaces Florida CHOICES*) shall be utilized for this component. Please see **https://www.floridashines.org/partners/mycareershines-implementation/overview**

A free online source for career exploration for middle school youth provides information on a multitude of career possibilities at **https://kids.usa.gov/teens/jobs/index.shtml**

Soft Skills (also called Socio-emotional or Non-Cognitive Skills). The consensus of recent research is that soft skills, also referred to as non-cognitive skills and socio-emotional skills, are important to success in the work place and school. These are skills, competencies, behaviors, attitudes, and personal qualities that enable youth to navigate their environment, work with others, perform well, and achieve their goals. Child Trends (2015) identified five key soft skills that researchers and employers say are most needed for youth to be successful in the workplace. These are: Social skills (respecting others and expressing appreciation, resolving conflict, and behaving according to social norms); Communication skills (effective expression, transmission, understanding, and interpretation of knowledge and ideas); Higher-order thinking (problem-solving); Self-control (delaying gratification, controlling impulses, and regulating behaviors; and Positive self-concept (i.e. self-confidence, self-efficacy, the most important skills across all youth outcomes).

◆ **CULTURAL ARTS & ENRICHMENT AND OTHER YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

Research finds that participation in cultural and fine arts (defined as music, visual arts, drama, dance, and creative writing) positively influences brain performance and improves academic and emotional development. These activities help reduce stress, improve learning outcomes, increase motivation, regulate brain chemistry, and literally rewire neural pathways. Participating in fine arts stimulates the functioning of the brain that develops capabilities in reading, math, and science, and is linked to stronger commitment to academic success, higher grade point averages and school attendance (Respress & Lutfi, 2006).

Youth from low-income families often lack the resources to experience cultural arts and enrichment activities, which limits their world view and values to what they experience in their immediate, impoverished surroundings. Value Added funds may be used to provide cultural arts activities at program sites or in the community using teaching artists and/or cultural arts educators currently listed in the Broward County Arts in Education Directory. This directory electronically lists individuals and organizations that provide exciting, interactive learning dedicated to cultural arts education and experiences. The directory can be found at: **http://www.broward.org/Arts/ArtsEducation/Pages/Default.aspx** *(*Through Value Added funding, middle school youth may also benefit from attending plays, visiting libraries and museums, and experiencing live musical concerts. These experiences introduce youth to healthy leisure time alternatives while providing cultural enrichment.

Additional Youth Development Activities. In order to provide engaging and holistic services targeting at-risk adolescents, providers are encouraged to creatively offer additional youth development activities, e.g. financial literacy training, intergenerational activities, etc. Early release days and summer offer opportunities in the program schedule to permit time for additional components. Additionally, these types of activities can also be infused throughout the various required components.

- ***Intergenerational Activities.*** The interrelationships between young and old was a recurring theme in responses to the Organization for Economic-Co-operation and Development (OCED) 2015 Survey on Youth. Suggestions included promoting dialogue between young and older people, reciprocal mentoring, intergenerational impacts of policies, and a new social contract between the young and the old. Responders proposed that intergenerational initiatives be considered a component of youth well-being. Providers are encouraged to explore activities with groups, e.g. AARP Broward that has been active in local sustainable community initiatives.

- ***Mentors.*** Positive relationships with caring adults is one of the strongest protective factors for all youth. However, successful mentoring requires appropriate screening, training, matching, monitoring/support; and closure. If not implemented correctly, even well-meaning mentoring can actually do more harm than good. For example, prematurely ending a mentoring relationship may cause the mentee to feel rejected, abandoned, or at fault for the mentor failing to follow through on their commitment. A free online guidebook, ***Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring***, 4th edition (2015) is available at **http://www.mentoring.org/program_resources/elements_and_toolkits**

> Proposals should describe any additional youth development activities that will be offered and how they will be incorporated into the overall program design.