FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL

SECTION 20

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SECTION 20. COACHING DISCONNECTED YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE/GED

If a young person is not enrolled in an academic setting, the Coach's role is to re-engage them and enroll them in an appropriate setting. The academic Goal should be "Re-engage & Re-enroll in a best-fit high school/GED program."

If the young person does not want to go back to high school, follow the steps in Fair Futures Program Manual Section 20A.

For those youth who are already motivated to re-enroll/re-engage in a high school section, skip to Fair Futures Program Manual Section 20B and follow the Required Steps to re-enroll them in a best-fit setting.

A. RE-ENGAGING/MOTIVATING YOUNG PEOPLE

All young people want to succeed. If a young person is disengaged/disconnected, it is often because they did not have the academic and/or adult support they needed and became discouraged, and/or due to the trauma and instability in their lives. As human beings, we need to be able to envision success and see a pathway that others have followed. It is not uncommon for foster youth to not have many – or any – adults in their lives who went to college; some may also be the first in their families to graduate high school.

Many students in foster care enter high school academically behind. If a student enters the 9th grade academically below grade level and they are not in a quality school and/or if there is not an effective intervention in place, they can become discouraged and disengaged.

Repeating a grade can take a big toll on one's self-esteem. That, combined with the trauma and instability young people in foster care often experience, can understandably lead them to want to engage in activities that help them "feel good." Going to school every day, when they may be struggling and/or cannot envision success in school, may not make them feel good. Interacting with peers, earning money, engaging in other behaviors to release endorphins, and/or isolating themselves are all common coping mechanisms.

48%

OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN FOSTER CARE IN NYC REPEATED 9TH GRADE

IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-18

Re-engaging young people who have disengaged from school usually entails helping them to:

- Believe in themselves and their potential
- Increase their self-esteem, sense of self, and sense of belonging
- Envision success in school and/or a potential career pathway
- Understand the critical importance of a high school degree for future stability

There are a variety of effective approaches a Coach can take to help young people believe in themselves, increase their self-esteem and sense of belonging, and envision a pathway.

To complete the Re-engage & Re-enroll in a best-fit high school/GED program, the **Potential Steps** that a Coach should take if the young person needs to be motivated to re-engage in school include:

- ☐ **Connecting the young person to a peer group or credible messenger**
  Peers who have been in the same situation and have succeeded can help inspire and motivate the young person.
  See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 25 for more information.

- ☐ **Connecting the young person to an extracurricular activity in line with their interests** (e.g., art, martial arts, a youth leadership program). This can help youth build the self-esteem, sense of purpose, and broader network of adult/peer supports they need to re-engage in school.

  Buffalo has free youth development, extracurricular, and community service programs. Engaging in one of these activities can also help young people build their resumes and the critical soft skills needed for the world of work.

- ☐ **Taking a trip or having a new experience**

  Bringing a young person on a group trip or engaging them in a new recreational experience (e.g., a museum, hiking, a boat ride) can be transformative. Simply being in a new/different environment that is positive and peaceful can help them to broaden their horizons and reflect on their goals and potential. Trips and experiences can facilitate "breakthrough" moments.

Career exploration is also important in helping young people envision success and understand the importance of a high school (and advanced) degree.

Many young people are unaware of different career pathways. Like other young people, they are only aware of what they have been exposed to. Understanding what opportunities are available to them and what the academic requirements are can help them understand why they need to re-engage and persist in school. The Coach can engage the young person in Career Exploration activities.

As the Coach is re-engaging the young person, the Coach should also start thinking about what type of high school environment may be a best fit.

B. RE-ENROLLING YOUNG PEOPLE IN AN ACADEMIC SETTING

To complete the Re-engage & Re-enroll in a best-fit high school/GED program, the following are the **Required Steps** a Coach should take if/once a young person is motivated to re-enroll in a high school setting:

- ☐ Obtain most recent transcript and records (including attendance records and IEP/504 Plan, if applicable) from the previously attended high school, and review them. *This will help the Coach understand the number of credits earned, any Regents completed, attendance patterns, and any special education needs.*
- ☐ Evaluate what type of high school setting may be a best fit based on youth's age, credits earned, student needs, etc. (e.g., a different high school, GED program, alternative school, etc.). Also consider whether the most recently attended school/program could be a good fit. Refer to Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D for an overview of the various types of schools/programs and key factors to consider.
- ☐ Once the type of high school setting is determined, create a vetted list of specific high schools/programs with the young person based on location, quality (graduation rate, school safety, etc.), student needs, and student interests and select some to visit. (Review Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D).
  See Appendix H0_GED Programs and Appendix F9_List of Alternative High Schools.
- ☐ Discuss plans with parent and Case Planner
- ☐ Reach out to potential schools/programs to ask about open houses, process, eligibility criteria, services offered, etc.
- ☐ Visit potential schools/programs with young person (and/or have parent visit with young person)
- ☐ Follow-up with school/program and young person after visit(s) to debrief and hear their thoughts
- ☐ Apply to a best-fit school or GED program; support young person through any interviews
- ☐ Enroll in best-fit school or GED program; complete any paperwork
- ☐ Celebrate acceptance into the new school/program
- ☐ Follow up with young person before the first day of school to provide support/encouragement
- ☐ Follow up with young person after the first day to debrief/reflect on experience
- ☐ Follow up with young person after the first week to debrief/reflect on experience

If young person is still enrolled at this point, close the Goal and mark as "completed" in the Online Platform.

If the young person is not accepted to a particular school or program, keep repeating the above steps until the student is accepted. Also refer to the Appendix F8_Alternative High School Selection and Application Guide for additional guidance.

Once a student is re-engaged and re-enrolled in a best-fit high school setting, the Coach should refer to the Roadmap of High School Goals to see what the next Goal is.

The Coach will then assist the student with persistence/graduation - review Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18E for more information.