

FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL

SECTIONS 1-4

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>MANUAL OVERVIEW & CONTRIBUTIONS</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>PART 1: FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM SUMMARY</i>	<i>12</i>
SECTION 1. BACKGROUND AND NEED	<i>12</i>
SECTION 2. GOALS	<i>12</i>
SECTION 3. FAIR FUTURES STAFF & KEY MODEL COMPONENTS	<i>13</i>
SECTION 4. SUMMARY OF SUPPORTS YOUNG PEOPLE RECEIVE THROUGH COACHING	<i>16</i>

MANUAL OVERVIEW & CONTRIBUTIONS

BACKGROUND

Fair Futures is a coalition of over 100 non-profit organizations and foundations advocating for all young people in New York City's foster care system to have access to the long-term supports they need to achieve their potential.

Fair Futures is also a comprehensive model that serves young people who have been in the foster care system from 6th grade through age 26. The model includes a robust middle school program that prepares students for success in middle and high school and a long-term coaching program from 9th grade until age 26 that includes professional coaching, tutoring, and comprehensive social-emotional, academic, career development, employment, housing, and independent living supports.

The Fair Futures model was developed through a year-long research project that included the expertise of New York City's executive and program-level leadership in child welfare and youth development. The model's services and service-delivery are based on best practice programs in NYC and nationally that serve young people in foster care. The model integrates many of the key components of Graham Windham's SLAM program (individualized coaching from 9th grade through age 26) and The New York Foundling's Road to Success program (robust middle school academic supports and quality, 1:1 tutoring); both programs have achieved strong outcomes for young people in care in NYC over the last six years. The very first coaching program in NYC was Children's Village's WAY program. The model also infuses best practices at critical junctures derived from other NYC-based foster care agencies, educational and workforce development organizations, and evidence-based national models.

The Administration for Children's Services received \$10 million from the City for 2019-2020 to implement Fair Futures across the child welfare system in NYC. **In Year 1, Fair Futures funding is limited to serving youth in foster care ages 11 to 21; advocacy will continue by the Fair Futures coalition to extend funding to all youth until age 26.**

The Administration for Children's Services also formed a public private partnership with the Foster Care Excellence Fund foundations. These foundations pooled over \$2 million in funding over two years (2019 – 2021) to fund the infrastructure needed to implement the Fair Futures model citywide. The infrastructure includes the creation of this manual and the accompanying materials, robust trainings for all Fair Futures staff, technical assistance for all 26 child welfare agencies, and the development of an Online Platform to track youth progress and house materials/resources.

There is also a Fair Futures Youth Board, comprised of over 50 youth members from across agencies. The Youth Board participates in advocacy activities and serves as a peer group forum. A Youth Board Coordinator will organize regular activities and assist agencies with engaging young people in coaching, when needed.

A MODEL THAT MEETS YOUNG PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

The model, and this manual, are **fully centered around comprehensively meeting the needs of current/former foster youth**, regardless of their academic status or life situation. As such, this manual and the Fair Futures "Goals & Steps" framework can apply to any young person.

This manual serves as a guide on how to engage young people, help them gain academic and career development experiences in line with their interests and goals, and support them through the challenges they commonly face in the transition to adulthood. The Fair Futures manual offers evidence-based strategies for middle school and high school success, effectively engaging youth in a long-term coaching relationship, and helping youth develop and make progress towards their academic, career development, and housing/independent living goals so that they can achieve their potential.

The manual maps out, step by step, how to support young people based on their current situation. It also links to a comprehensive set of tools, materials, and vetted resources that staff can use to assist young people throughout their journey. By 2020, the manual will be organized by topic area in the [Online Platform](#).

MODEL FLEXIBILITY

There is inherent flexibility to the Fair Futures model, as it is structured around young people's needs. Agencies adopting this model can continue to use or develop their own program branding, infuse additional program components or best practices, or slightly alter staff titles/roles, as long as they deliver all of the key components of the model.

All of the existing program models that NYC foster care agencies have fit within the Fair Futures framework. Fair Futures serves to fill service gaps, extend the length of service, enhance supports, and provide a structured framework to these programs **so that no young person falls through the cracks due to staff knowledge, capacity, or program design.**

This coaching component of the Fair Futures model can also be tailored for use in supportive housing settings and/or used to coach other young people outside of the child welfare system.

MODEL LIMITATIONS & POTENTIAL ADDITIONS

While Fair Futures is not a clinical model, Coaches help facilitate access to any mental health or supportive service a young person needs and help ensure follow-through. As Coaches build strong relationships with young people, they often become aware (or informed) of any mental health, health, or substance abuse challenge(s), as these issues often get in the way of academic and career development progress. Thus, Coaches can help ensure young people are accessing Medicaid Care Management services and are meeting with their Care Managers and/or Case Planners to address any needs or challenges.

Coaches also provide social/emotional support to young people and the program sticks with them, no matter what. As part of the model, young people are connected to peer groups and extracurricular activities, both of which can be important forums for healing and self-expression.

The Fair Futures model also is designed to integrate enhancements. Examples of additional components that could be infused into the Fair Futures model through private funding include, but are not limited to:

- Quality, 1:1 college tutoring
- Additional on-site job readiness and/or internship programs
- "Gap-year" programming or other academic/vocational bridge programs
- Partnerships with alternative high schools that start in the 9th grade
- Professional mentors for students in a post-secondary setting
- Yoga, meditative, and healing groups
- Clinical supports for young people with mental health challenges
- Credible messenger leadership programs
- Youth advocacy/organizing activities (beyond participation in the Fair Futures Youth Board)

THE ONLINE PLATFORM



The Excellence Fund foundations are funding the development of an Online Platform to support the Fair Futures model. The Online Platform will be piloted at two agencies and will become available to all NYC foster care agencies implementing the Fair Futures model in 2020.

THE ONLINE PLATFORM WILL BE A USER-FRIENDLY, CLOUD-BASED, PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TOOL THAT WILL SERVE THREE KEY FUNCTIONS:

#1. Tracking youth progress using the Fair Futures “Goals & Steps” framework.

In this framework, **Goals are standardized and represent positive outcomes** and **Steps represent progress towards goals**. Steps also serve to help guide Coaches on how to help a young person achieve that particular goal.

The Online Platform will allow Coaches to work with young people to develop academic and career development goals based on where they are and track progress in a visual way. For young people aging out of care, it can be used to track progress in obtaining and maintaining housing and building independent living skills.

This framework can also be used for the middle school component to track academic progress and services.

#2. Generating automated reports on a youth-level, Coach-level, program-level, and aggregated-level that show progress towards Goals and other key academic and career development data.

For individual agencies, these reports will be helpful for Coach Supervisors and Program Directors to monitor young people’s progress and effectively support/supervise Coaches. It will also be helpful in attracting additional private funding.

For the system, aggregating Goals & Steps and other key data across agencies will help facilitate continued public funding and future program evaluation.

#3. Housing codified materials, tools, and vetted resources in the areas of education, career development, and housing & life skills. These materials were developed collaboratively by NYC foster care agency staff and external experts in each topic area. These materials will be updated each year. **The Resource section** of the Online Platform will be publicly available, and also interactive with the “Goals & Steps” framework; tools/materials will pop up as relevant Goals/Steps are selected.

The Resource section will include a link to a **Career Development Directory** of over 400 vetted internship, job readiness, workforce development, and vocational programs that is searchable by eligibility criteria, age, program structure, geography, etc.

TIP! *Throughout this manual, the functions associated with the Online Platform are outlined. Please note that these may change slightly as the platform is being developed.*

Until the Online Platform becomes available, there are tools available to agencies that can be used in the interim to track progress. They include:

- **Goals & Steps Worksheets:** these worksheets help Coaches/Specialists to visualize the steps associated with each of the Goals and check them off as they complete them. The worksheets can also be brought to supervision to review progress.
- An **Excel Tracking Sheet** that is pre-formatted and can track key youth info, academic and career data, goals, completed steps, and progress notes. Please note that agencies are not required to use this, and it is recommended that staff receive the core 2.5 day Fair Futures first.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The Fair Futures model was developed based on effective programs in NYC that serve young people involved in the foster care system. The model also infuses best practices at critical junctures from other NYC-based academic and workforce development organizations and evidence-based national models.

The funding for this research and development of this manual and accompanying materials/resources were made possible through a public-private partnership between the **Administration for Children's Services** and **The Foster Care Excellence Fund**, housed at the **New York Community Trust**.

The Foster Care Excellence Fund members are:

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
The New York Community Trust
Redlich Horwitz Foundation
The Tiger Foundation
Ira W. De Camp Foundation
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
Stavros Niarchos Foundation

The following child welfare agencies participated in a landscape assessment that led to the identification of best practices that constitute the backbone of the Fair Futures model:

Graham Windham
New York Foundling
HeartShare St. Vincent's Services
Children's Village
Children's Aid
Sheltering Arms
Good Shepherd Services
Forestdale
JCCA
Rising Ground
SCO Family of Service

The following individuals/organizations made significant contributions to the writing and revision of the Fair Futures Manual:

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The Fair Futures Goals & Steps framework was developed, refined, and tested collaboratively with Coaches, Specialists, Supervisors, and Directors from the following agencies and non-profit partners/ experts:

Fair Futures Consultants: Katie Napolitano, Nadine Yuvienco, and Michael Zink
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HeartShare St. Vincent's Services
Children's Village
Forestdale
Advocates for Children
City Living NY

The following agency experts and young people were interviewed by Fair Futures consultants Aisha van Ter Sluis and Katie Napolitano to develop the Fair Futures Staff Screening/Hiring Toolkit:

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The academic, workforce development, and housing/independent living tools were developed, refined, and/or reviewed by the following parties, most of whom participated in one or more of the Fair Futures Committees over 2018-2019:

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New York Foundling
HeartShare St. Vincent's Services
Children's Village
SCO Family of Services
Good Shepherd Services
Rising Ground
Administration for Children's Services
Advocates for Children
iFoster
Juvenile Law Center
City Living NY
Workforce Professional Training Institute
Center for Youth Employment
Columbia Workforce Center
Pinkerton Foundation
Hats and Ladders
The Door
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow
Workforce Funder's Group
Youth Communication
Lawyers for Children
CUNY Foster Care Initiative
First Star CSI Academy
Office of Supportive/Affordable Housing and Services, Human Resource Administration

PART 1: FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM SUMMARY

SECTION 1. BACKGROUND AND NEED

All young people need long-term, healthy relationships with caring adults and access to resources and opportunities to succeed. The Fair Futures model upholds the notion that young people in the child welfare system, most of whom have experienced trauma and loss, have the same capabilities as children without such experiences, but can face multiple obstacles to reaching their full potential. Additionally, when foster youth “age out” of the system, typically at age 21, they – like most young people – are often not prepared for independent living.

Youth in foster care in NYC who do not have access to long-term, comprehensive supports have significantly lower rates of high school graduation, post-secondary persistence and completion, and employment. Without a high school degree, young people are at high risk of facing chronic unemployment and/or system involvement. Youth who age out of foster care are among the populations at greatest risk for becoming homeless, incarcerated, or experiencing early pregnancy/parenthood.

However, outcomes for young people who receive access to long-term coaching and quality academic and career services are significantly stronger.

Foster youth are incredibly resilient. They have dealt with more adversity and trauma that most adults will ever experience, and when they are equipped with consistent, caring adult relationships and the individualized supports that every young person needs, these youth can make tremendous strides in their social/emotional, academic, and career development.

SECTION 2. GOALS

The overarching goal of the Fair Futures model is to provide young people with the long-term coaching, social/emotional, academic, and career development supports they need to:

- Develop relational skills and a strong network of positive peer and adult supports;
- Prepare for and graduate high school;
- Persist in post-secondary settings;
- Build progressive career development experiences in line with their interests and academic/vocational plans that will help them navigate onto a living wage career pathway;
- Access and maintain affordable housing (for young people who age out of foster care), gain independent living skills, and build a network of positive adult and peer supports.



SECTION 3. FAIR FUTURES STAFF & KEY MODEL COMPONENTS

At scale, Fair Futures serves young people in foster care starting in the 6th grade and sticks young people until age 26, regardless of their permanency status. (Note: in Year 1, funding is limited to youth in foster care ages 11-21.)

There are no eligibility criteria and coaching is voluntary; a young person can choose to leave and return to the program at any time. The model is all about meeting young people where they are, believing in them, and helping them reach their full potential.

The model* includes, at scale, the following positions:



Program Director



Middle School Education Specialist
(maximum 1:50 ratio)



Coach Supervisors
(1:4 – 1:5 ratio)



Coaches
(1:15 ratio)



College Specialist**



Tutors‡
For 6th–12th graders
(1:18 ratio)



Tutor Supervisors‡
(1:4 – 1:5 ratio)



Career Development Specialist



Housing Specialist**



Outreach Coordinator

A best practice that agencies could adopt is to have an **Outreach Coordinator** who was previously in foster care and received support. They can serve as a Credible Messenger and help recruit young people to the program who have not engaged (or who have disengaged).

* In Year 1, this staffing model and these ratios were recommended (but not required) for receipt of city funding.

** Some agencies may not need Specialists if they have a smaller number of older youth in foster care (see roles below).

‡Tutors are for students in grades 6-12. Agencies can to sub-contract with a quality tutoring vendor or create their own tutoring program; see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 6](#).

§This position is only for agencies that would like to implement a tutoring program; see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 6](#).

Key components of the model include:

A ROBUST MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM PREPARES STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS IN HIGH SCHOOL

In middle school, Fair Futures students will receive educational advocacy, access to in-home, weekly tutoring, individualized assistance with the high school selection process, and connections to extracurricular activities.

Two key components of the middle school program include the Middle School Education Specialist and in-home, quality tutoring:



The Middle School Education Specialist:

The Middle School Education Specialist works with up to 50 students at a time (including elementary students, if there are less than 50 middle school students at any given agency).

The key duties of the **Middle School Education Specialist** include:

- Proactively monitor the academic performance of all middle school students;
- Provide educational advocacy to middle school students, as needed, and ensure students are receiving the supports they need to succeed;
- Connect middle school students to quality, weekly, in-home tutoring;
- Connect students to extracurricular activities afterschool and in the summer;
- **Provide individualized assistance with the high school selection processes to all 8th grade students and their families.** The Specialist will ensure that the all students apply to quality, best-fit schools. *This is a critical component of the role, and one of the reasons why the caseload of students should not exceed 50.*

In-home Tutoring:

From 6th to 8th grade, students will receive weekly, in-home tutoring from a Tutor (at a 1:15-18 ratio) who works from a strength-based, youth development lens and provides the individualized academic and social-emotional support students need to excel in middle school and prepare for high school. Tutors will report academic progress, needs, and concerns to the Middle School Education Specialist and also work with the Specialist to help ensure young people are connected to extracurricular activities.

To implement the tutoring component, agencies can sub-contract a quality third party tutoring provider or build their own tutoring program, ideally with training and technical assistance from a quality tutoring provider see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 6](#).

COACHING FROM 9TH GRADE THROUGH AGE 26 BY FULL-TIME, TRAINED, PROFESSIONAL COACHES



Starting in the 9th grade, young people are matched with a Coach who works from a trauma-informed, strength-based approach and builds a trusting relationship with the young person.

The relationship between the Coach and the young person is the central part of the model; without this relationship, Coaches cannot help young people achieve their goals.

Coaches are trained in Motivational Interviewing (and a variety of other skills – see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 8](#)), which allows them to tap into a youth's intrinsic motivation and collaboratively set goals and develop plans.

COACHES ARE NOT CASE PLANNERS OR CASE MANAGERS

Case Planners are required to focus on keeping the young person safe, making diligent efforts towards permanency planning, and working according to court-mandated timelines. The primary job of a Coach is to form a trusting, authentic, and transformational relationship with the young person (one that is not protocol-bound). Coaches are able to meet young people wherever they feel most comfortable and with greater frequency than mandated by a Case Planner. Coaches collaborate with young people on their level and always use a strength-based, youth development approach. Overall - the Coach's focus is on meeting the young person where they are, building a trusting relationship, believing in them, helping them achieve their academic and career development goals, and sticking with them – no matter what.

Coaches receive weekly supervision and support from Coach Supervisors, and a Program Director supports the Supervisors and oversees the program.

At a high level, Coaches perform the following activities:
(See [Appendix A_Fair Futures Staff Screening & Hiring Toolkit](#) for a full job description)

Build relationships with up to 15 young people

Provide **ongoing social/emotional support**

Work 1:1 with young people to **develop goals** based on their interests and take measurable steps towards their goals

Connect young people to Specialists to help them identify and apply to best-fit schools/programs, career development experiences, and opportunities in line with their goals;

Help young people persist in academic/career development settings by checking on them weekly, visiting the school/program, forming a relationship with the Primary Person at the school/program

- Help them navigate any challenges that arise and celebrate their successes

Help young people **plan/prepare** for the next step on their journey

- Should a youth not be successful in any particular school/program setting, Coaches help young people reflect on the experience, provide support, and work with them to set new goals and transition to the next opportunity

Collaborate with Case Planners, Tutors, Specialists, and parents, as needed, to help youth achieve their goals and ensure their overall well-being

Connect young people to **peer group supports** and build positive relationships

Ensure young people who are aging out can access and **maintain stable, affordable housing** and **build independent living skills**

TUTORS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NEED



The Fair Futures middle school tutoring component continues throughout high school. High school students in need of individualized support should be connected to quality, weekly tutoring (in-home or in the community, wherever the young person prefers).

Tutors, like Coaches, should work from a strength-based, youth development lens and build a positive relationship with the young person. Tutors provide the support students need to improve their academic skills and post-secondary preparedness. Tutors should report to Coaches on a monthly basis and inform them of student progress, needs, and any concerns. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual, Section 19](#))

To implement the tutoring component, agencies can sub-contract a quality third party tutoring provider or build their own tutoring program, ideally with training and technical assistance from a quality tutoring provider ([see Fair Futures Program Manual Section 6](#)).

CAREER DEVELOPMENT, COLLEGE, & HOUSING SPECIALISTS



After Coaches build a relationship with young people and help them develop goals, they connect youth to Specialists to assist them in conducting specific tasks to achieve their goals. These usually include assistance with identifying and applying to a best-fit school/college, program, or housing opportunity in line with their goals.

All Specialists receive additional training in their respective areas of focus and provide **three key benefits**:

1. Supporting the Coach (and Case Planners) of some of the more time-consuming aspects of educational advocacy, college application, financial aid, job and housing applications, etc.
2. Ensuring that at least one person is well-trained and knowledgeable about the multitude of resources and pathways available for foster youth in NYC
3. Expanding the young person's network of positive staff/adult support

Specialists can also provide one-off, "targeted services" (specific services, such as assistance with filling out an application) to young people who do not want to participate in longer-term coaching but still need supports in certain areas.

(See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 16](#))

PEER GROUPS

Peer groups are an important component of the Fair Futures model. To stick with the program over the course of years, young people need to feel connected not only to their Coach, but to the program itself and other adult and peer supports.

Peer groups help young people develop positive relationships with their peers and serve as important motivational and skill-building forums. They are often a space that allows young people to start or continue the process of healing by learning about managing stress, healthy communication and self-expression, and mental/physical wellness.

Peer groups are not typical workshops; they have a Facilitator (not an Instructor) who lets the young people drive the discussion/activity. Coaches (or other Fair Futures staff) should take turns organizing and facilitating peer groups. Coaches can learn a lot about young people's thoughts, concerns, and challenges through these groups, which can help them in their coaching sessions. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 25](#))

SECTION 4. SUMMARY OF SUPPORTS YOUNG PEOPLE RECEIVE THROUGH COACHING

Coaches work with Specialists and Tutors, as needed, to provide young people with robust social/emotional, academic, career development, and housing/independent living supports.

1. SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL SUPPORT & EMPOWERMENT THROUGH COACHING

Coaches provide emotional support to young people and build a trusting relationship with them. Without this supportive relationship, Coaches cannot help young people set goals or make progress toward their goals.



Coaches should be in touch with young people regularly, and not always about their academic or career development progress! They should engage young people in activities and have conversations about various aspects of their life – their concerns/fears, relationships with others, interests, challenges, etc. If there is a crisis situation or something to celebrate, Coaches should be there for the young person and provide the support that they need.

Once Coaches have built a positive rapport with young people, they can help them set goals, based on their interests and where they are. They play a critical role in helping young people regain control over their own lives and their future.

2. ROBUST ACADEMIC SUPPORT



Coaches help oversee a young person's academic journey and progress – they ensure they are enrolled in a best-fit school, attending school, and have the supports and resources they need to be successful, graduate, and enter and persist in a post-secondary setting.

ROLE OF A COACH AS IT RELATES TO ACADEMIC SUPPORT:

For young people who are disconnected and without a high school degree/ equivalency, Coaches help them re-engage and reconnect them to a best-fit academic setting. They employ creative, innovative approaches to help the young person envision success and re-engage, if needed, and do not give up. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 20](#))

For students in high school or a high school equivalency (HSE) program, Coaches review transcripts and academic data regularly, visit the school with the young person, and discuss graduation and post-secondary plans (and include other adults in these conversations). If/when needed, Coaches provide educational advocacy, connect students to quality tutoring, and assist with transferring students into a better-fit high school or high school equivalency (HSE) program. Coaches also coordinate with the student's Case Planner, tutor, teachers, and parents to support their academic needs and plans. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18](#))

Coaches help all young people explore and plan/prepare for a post-secondary setting, including college and/or vocational programs, starting in the 9th grade, or as early as possible, if the young person joins the program at an older age. Coaches will often work in conjunction with Specialists to help young people develop plans. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#))

For students on a college-bound pathway, the Coach will connect the young person to the College Specialist to explore and identify best-fit colleges, complete college and financial aid applications, access opportunity programs, re-enroll each semester, and reapply to all forms of funding each year. However, the Coach will play an important role in providing persistence support at critical junctures. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#))

For students on a vocational or direct employment pathway, the Coach will connect the youth to the Career Development Specialist to identify and apply to best-fit vocational/workforce programs, civil service pathways, internships, employment, and/or apprenticeship opportunities. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21](#) and [Section 22](#))

Once a young person is enrolled in a post-secondary setting, the Coach helps the young person persist by following up during critical junctures, connecting them to resources, and providing ongoing social/emotional support.



TO PROVIDE POST-SECONDARY SUPPORT, A COLLEGE SPECIALIST SHOULD:

- Meet with young people interested in college to have an exploratory and informational session, after they are referred by their Coach, and discuss what that roadmap/timeline would look like at their particular high school or HSE program
- Monitor PSAT/SAT scores of those students who do take them, and meet with them to discuss/refine college options
- Organize college tours
- Help young people apply to colleges in line with their interests, preferences, and performance
- Assist students with college essays and personal statements, where needed
- Review any college applications or financial aid forms filled out by the student's school/guidance counselor to ensure they are correct
- Sit with students and help them apply to FAFSA, TAP, ETV, and all applicable scholarships, including reviewing their essays and helping with letters of reference
- Ensure that students apply to any Opportunity Programs available to them
- Ensure students are signed up for any entrance interviews/exams
- Fill out all of the required paperwork for The Dormitory Project and ACS College Room & Board, if applicable
- Reach out to students to ensure they are enrolled in the proper classes each semester, and assist with enrollment, if needed
- Help young people reapply to all forms of financial aid and scholarships each year
- Assist students with transferring colleges, if needed

3. CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS

Coaches ensure **all young people engage in at least one career exploration activity each year**, either with them or the Career Development Specialist. All young people, regardless of their situation, are also encouraged to engage in **at least one career development experience/activity** each year based on their interests, strengths, needs, and academic situation.

It is extremely important for young people to start building their resumes at any early age, including through extracurricular, leadership, and community service activities. Engaging in career development experiences can also help young people build their self-esteem, sense of belonging, network of adult and peer supports, and the soft skills required for success in life. It can also help young people re-engage in school and improve their performance, as these experiences can help them envision a pathways to success and why a degree is so important.

Both the Coach and Career Development Specialist can help young people make progress toward their career development goals.



ROLE OF A COACH IN PROVIDING CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT EACH YEAR:

- Conduct career exploration activities with young people (a required Goal - [see Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#));
- Ensure the young person has working papers, if needed, and has an updated resume each year (a required Goal - [see Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#));
- Work with the young person and/or refer the young person to a Career Development Specialist to engage in a discussion at least 1x each year around potential career development experiences that young person could have that year based on their interests, strengths, and academic plans (a required Goal - [see Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#));
- Assist all young people in selecting at least one career development experience each year that is in line with their interests and academic situation/background ([a required Goal - see Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#)).

To do so, the Coach can:

- Expose youth to extracurricular, youth development, community service, and/or leadership activities, which help youth build their resumes, self-esteem, and develop critical soft skills needed in the workplace;
- Refer young people to on-site/agency opportunities at agencies, including any job readiness programs (e.g., YA WORC) or internship programs (e.g., the Mentored Internship Program);
- Refer young people to the Career Development Specialist to help them apply to external youth workforce programs, vocational programs, employment, etc.
- Provide persistence coaching to young people employed or enrolled in any external program by checking in with them regularly and building a relationship with the “primary person” at that program.



ROLE OF A CAREER DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST:

- Typically oversees any on-site job readiness program(s) (e.g., YA WORC), including enrollment and scheduling of program cycles;
- Oversees any on-site internship programs (e.g., Mentored Internship Program);
- Helps young people develop or refine their resumes and conduct career assessments (in some cases, Coaches may do this with young people);
- Meets with young people who are on a vocational pathway, or who have left college, to explore alternative post-secondary pathways and career paths in line with their interests and skills;
- Helps young people apply to external programs, including vocational and workforce development programs (after speaking with their Coach);
- Meets with young people who are enrolled in college to do career planning;
- Builds relationships with external programs and employers to serve as pipeline;
- Assists with job applications, when needed;
- Checks-in with employers after the 3-month, 6-year, and 1-year mark to verify persistence.

4. HOUSING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

For young people aging out of foster care, Coaches work closely with the **Case Planner** and **Housing Specialist** to help them access stable, affordable housing.

While Coaches often help facilitate permanency by helping young people build trusting relationships with adults, the roles/responsibilities associated with permanency are in the domain of the Case Planner. **The goal is always to help the young person find a safe, stable, loving family and a broad network of supportive adults.**

When full funding for Fair Futures is available, Coaches will stick with young people regardless of their status, as all young people need assistance with their academic and career goals and more positive adult relationships in their lives. However, in the instances where a young person does age out, the Coach will help them navigate the difficult transition into independent living.

ROLE OF A COACH IN PROVIDING HOUSING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SUPPORTS:

- Coordinates with a Housing Specialist (and/or Case Planner, if the agency does not have a Housing Specialist) to ensure that all young people's housing applications are submitted as early as possible (by age 18 if their goal is to age out);
- Accompanies the young person to visit supportive housing residences, and on the interview (the Housing Specialist could also play this role, once they have a relationship with the young person);
- Helps young people move in and obtain furniture;
- Helps young people obtain public assistance, if/when needed;
- Helps young people maintain their housing by providing independent living supports such as budgeting, obtaining a bank account, and advocating with landlords, if needed.



A HOUSING SPECIALIST:

- Works with young people who are aging out to submit all forms of housing applications, as early as possible
- Checks in on young people's application status and follows-up with NYCHA and supportive housing residences, when needed
- Helps young people transition into permanent housing, when applicable, by helping them obtain Section 8 vouchers, apply to the NYC affordable housing lottery, etc.
- Liaises with the Case Planner and Coach, as needed

5. CONNECTIONS TO POSITIVE PEER GROUPS

Coaches should connect young people to peer groups, whenever possible. As mentioned above, peer groups help young people develop positive, supportive relationships with their peers. A best practice is for agencies to convert their PYA (Preparing Youth for Adulthood) workshops into peer groups. The difference between a workshop and a peer group is that peer groups are youth-led/co-facilitated. The young people decide the topics and help lead the discussion, versus having an Instructor lead the workshop. This also helps with empowerment and buy-in!

Peers also serve as credible messengers. If a young person is disconnected or struggling and one of their peers talks about how they went through the same experience and were able to overcome it, that can be incredibly motivating. Agencies have often found that peer group forums can be the source of breakthroughs and “ah-ha” moments; literally one conversation can help a young person reframe their situation and start moving forward with their goals.

Peer groups can also help young people improve their job readiness by helping them improve critical soft skills (listening, responding respectfully, etc.).

To recap, peer groups help young people to:

- Form positive peer relationships and build their support network
- Avoid involvement in negative peer groups
- Be heard, feel that they are not alone, and part of a larger community
- Meet credible messengers that they can relate to and be inspired by
- Learn about topics related to wellness and stress management
- Build and reinforce critical soft skills
- Gain leadership/community service experiences that they can include on their resumes
- Stay connected to the Fair Futures program

For agencies who do not have enough young people to implement peer groups, the Fair Futures Youth Board Director will be organizing and forming system-wide Youth Board events with young people.