

# ***FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL***

## ***SECTION 10***

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## SECTION 10. YOUTH RECRUITMENT

### A. NO EJECT, NO REJECT MODEL

Fair Futures has a “no reject, no eject” model. The Fair Futures program is voluntary and serves any young person who is interested, as long as they meet the age/funding requirements.<sup>1</sup> ***The Fair Futures model provides 1:1 coaching, social-emotional, academic, career, housing, and life skills supports to young people from 6th grade to age 26.***



**There are no screening mechanisms or requirements to participate, and young people cannot get ejected from the program based on engagement or performance. This is a very intentional component of the model.** If there were requirements (such as academic criteria or mandatory minimum engagements), the program could inadvertently screen out the youth who are most in need of support and/or not be able to assist youth during times of crisis.

Once the Fair Futures program is fully funded, the young person is eligible to receive supports until they reach the age of 26. The young person can decide whether and to what extent to engage, whether it be through long-term coaching or receiving targeted services. Making services voluntary is empowering and allows the young person to be in control, which often results in greater willingness to engage. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 16](#))

The young person can also leave the program and return at any time, and young people who decide to leave the program for any reason are welcomed back.

### B. RECRUITING PRIORITY POPULATIONS

#### **FOSTER CARE STUDENTS IN THE 8TH GRADE SERVE AS A KEY PIPELINE TO THE COACHING PROGRAM**

Approximately **50% of foster youth fail the ninth grade** in NYC and could benefit from a Coach upon entering this grade.

Throughout the course of the year, 8th graders should ideally hear about the benefits of Fair Futures coaching from the Middle School Education Specialist and their tutor (if they have one). Another best practice is for all 8th grade students to be invited to a Fair Futures Orientation in the summer before 9th grade. While students do not have to participate in Fair Futures, the Orientation helps encourage enrollment prior to 9th grade. The Orientation should include staff, young people, food, and relationship-building activities. This will help facilitate connection to the program and allow staff to meet with young people.

#### **OTHER PRIORITY POPULATIONS**

Until there is full funding, it is up to agencies to determine what populations should be served. In addition to the upcoming cohort of 9th graders, providers may also wish to focus on other critical populations who might benefit from coaching, including:

- Young people without a strong adult connection in their life
- Students repeating the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade, or at risk of not being promoted
- Youth disconnected from school/work and without a high school degree/equivalency
- Seniors in high school seeking assistance with post-secondary enrollment
- Older youth aging out
- Young people who are pregnant/parenting and in need of support or at risk of being involved in the justice system

#### **OPT-OUT METHOD**

Once a program reaches scale, a best practice to ensure maximum participation in the coaching program is the “opt-out” approach. In this approach, a young person is automatically assigned a coach upon entry to 9<sup>th</sup> grade (or upon entry to foster care) and has to opt-out of coaching.

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<sup>1</sup> However, services may be discontinued if the young person threatens a staff member or is violent.

## WHERE TO RECRUIT?

A prime recruiting ground is at agencies existing **Independent Living/Preparing Youth for Adulthood** (PYA) meetings, where youth come to receive their monthly stipends. As discussed in [Section 9](#) and [Section 25](#) of the Fair Futures Program Manual, these PYA meetings can be turned into peer groups.

Agencies launching new programs should hold a launch meeting where the Fair Futures program is presented to young people, using the youth-appropriate language (see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 9](#)), ideally by a credible messenger or the Fair Futures Youth Coordinator. During this meeting, youth can brainstorm program names and vote on one; this will help with buy-in and engagement in coaching.

There are many other ways to recruit young people. Case Planners and foster parents may refer youth and staff can reach out to these youth to describe the benefits of the program (using youth language!) and gauge interest before assigning a Coach. However, credible messengers serve as the best recruits. It is a best practice to have a young person engage other young people into the program.

## C. RECRUITING USING THE ONLINE PLATFORM



As discussed in [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 5](#), academic information for all middle school students in foster care will be entered into the Online Platform. This information will provide the future Coach with valuable information regarding their academic background.



Coach Supervisors are encouraged to monitor the list of upcoming 9th graders in the Online Platform and begin the Intake & Enrollment process with each one ([See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 11](#)).

If the young person is interested in coaching, then the appropriate Supervisor is notified, and the Intake & Enrollment process begins. ([See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 11](#)).

If they are not interested, the young person should remain on a “To Engage” list. Someone should be reaching out regularly to these young people (a best practice is 2x per month) to remind them that the program is there for them, and what the benefits are, using appropriate youth language. A best practice is to use a credible messenger or staff member who is very engaging. ([See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 16](#)).